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All Good People: Professional Development Sessions For Educational Equity At The High School Level

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ALL GOOD PEOPLE:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Capstone Project Introduction

"All good people, won't you come around?" - Delta Rae

I am a white teacher in a suburban high school increasingly populated by students of color. Diversity has made its way to our school's community from a major metropolitan area in the Midwest. As I interact more frequently with students of color, I realize how little I know about their culture, their lives, or how that culture impacts their learning. Historically, our largely homogenous district has not had to address issues of equity and cultural competence, but that is changing as the community grows in diversity. With no current plan in place to help teachers better respond to the needs of our diverse population, I have chosen to explore the question: *What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching?*

All Good People

"All good people, won't you come around?" This question from Delta Rae's 2015 song "All Good People," changed how I see the world. It was shared by a Hamline classmate during a course on educating for equity and social justice. Written in reaction to the 2015 mass shooting of African-Americans at a church in Charleston, South Carolina, the song's message implores listeners to act for justice, to support one another

and hold each other up in love and solidarity. To be fair, the messengers (OSA Vocal Rush from Oakland, California) made just as much of an impact on me as the message. They appeared in an online video, a dozen high school students of different races, artistically dressed in black and white. Listening to their a cappella version of this song, delivered with such haunting beauty and passion, was simply transcendent. It was invitation to listen to one another, to right injustices and to look beyond our shared humanity to value and understand the differences between us. Their eloquent, powerful performance made clear to me the urgent importance of addressing inequities and injustices present in our schools.

As I continued my studies at Hamline, the song stayed with me; a constant reminder to take action and stand up in support of the oppressed in our society. It was the catalyst for my reading list, which grew to include authors from many diverse perspectives. It fueled my desire to participate in community events on racial equity. Most importantly, this song became the inspiration for research: an opportunity to join with other educators at my school to examine issues of privilege, bias and effective, culturally responsive teaching. My research specifically examines the question: *What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching?* This chapter outlines my personal background and motives for this project, establishes the need for such work in my school district, and clarifies the nature of the project.

Personal Background and Motives

I am a White female; heterosexual, middle-class, European-American. My neighborhood, school and even my hobbies (running and singing) are full of faces that look like mine. Until studying educational equity and social justice, I would have said that I was colorblind. I felt that race did not matter and the commonalities we share as humans were stronger than our differences. Fearful of saying or doing something offensive, I avoided interactions that I perceived would involve conflict, even in the classroom. In my French classes, my students primarily learned about White French people and culture, despite the rich amount of material available about diverse people throughout the French-speaking world. I struggled to understand movements like Black Lives Matter and the actions of those in the African-American community especially. In discussions with friends, I voiced my frustration: I did not understand the anger of oppressed groups in our society. I thought that because I had not personally committed injustices against them, that I had no role to play in solving the issue. My privilege as a member of cultural/racial majority communities blinded me. In short, as Freire suggested, I projected ignorance onto others and never perceived my own (Freire, 2014).

As I learned more about oppression and my role in it, I struggled with emotions of guilt, shame, confusion and sadness. Freire's work gave me clarity, highlighting the importance of dialogue, honesty and trust. His perspective on authentic education led me to see the value in directly connecting with those who are different than me. Because I had such little interaction with oppressed groups, I lacked this kind of authentic opportunity. Such dialogue would involve attentive listening, critical thinking and sincere questioning in order to deepen my understanding.

To improve my cultural competence, I began to seek out the perspectives of those different than me, to make time to listen and dialogue with them. As I continued to learn more about the perspectives of oppressed groups, I have focused on learning from others' experiences through their writing. New authors, including Jamelle Bouie, Michelle Alexander, J.D. Vance, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Imbolo Mbue, Yaa Gyasi, Jesmyn Ward, Kao Kalia Yang and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have appeared in my personal library. In particular, I have broadened my understanding of race relations in America. Current events have provided an abundance of material for learning and reflection. The struggle for equity is everywhere, and now I read this information with a strong desire to understand the point of view of diverse communities.

At my school, I began to support the Diversity Club and the Gay-Straight Alliance as an ally to both groups. Their primary purpose is to serve as safe spaces for students of color and students in the LGBTQIA community to celebrate, navigate social relationships and address issues within our school community. Our staff has also begun to recognize the need for cultural responsiveness. Based on their knowledge of my graduate work, members of the professional development committee asked me to create a session for teachers during a staff development day. I partnered with two teachers of color to prepare a presentation and questions for dialogue. The session was well-received by the staff and administrators who attended, and the overwhelming consensus was that further conversation and skill development in cultural responsiveness is needed. I was invited to be a member of our district's Equity Leadership Team, which spent two days in training and will coordinate efforts to educate staff about race, culture, equity and diversity.

Outside of my district, I participated in the Twin Cities Pride festival with Hamline and the coalition of private colleges. I also attended workshops on racial equity through our state's teachers' union and through Hamline University. Through our district Equity Leadership Team, an opportunity presented itself to join a S.E.E.D. cohort (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity). The monthly meetings are intended to help participants to become leaders in their own districts, facilitating conversations around race, privilege, bias and equity. Taking these actions was a good start, but it was just that, a place to begin. To make a bigger impact on resolving injustices and improving relationships in my school community, I would need an action plan that could engage other staff in this work, as well.

Project Rationale: Why Us, Why Now?

My high school is located in a conservative, partially suburban, partially rural area outside a major Midwestern metropolitan area. Historically, the town's majority White population has had little exposure to different races or cultures: they have mainly seen their own heritage and race reflected back in the faces of those in their school community. Over the last eight years, however, the town's population has become more diverse; counting increasing numbers of African-American, Latinx and Asian students among its number. In addition, the community has grown in the number of members who openly identify as part of the LGBTQIA community. Many students of both minority and majority cultures are open and accepting, working comfortably together in classes, on athletic teams or in extracurricular activities. Still, I noticed that there were frequent misunderstandings and conflicts between the majority-culture students and those they

perceive to be “different.” Especially in light of recent racial and political tensions, I have observed an increase in the poor treatment of those perceived to be “different” by majority students.

While all adults in our school care about our students and colleagues, we might describe ourselves as colorblind. We might say that race, sexual orientation or gender identity do not matter and the bonds of the humanity we share are stronger than the differences between us. Though it is painful to acknowledge, I believe we minimize these differences out of ignorance and privilege. This perspective, though never maliciously intended, leads us to act and teach in ways that perpetuate injustice. For example, we often avoid interactions or discussion topics that we perceive would involve conflict, even those that could serve as teachable moments for students, or moments of personal growth. In failing to acknowledge and address differences, we diminish the voices of students and staff in marginalized groups.

The diversity of our students is not reflected in our predominantly White, Euro-American and heterosexual staff. As members of majority cultures, we are afforded privilege that is not currently extended to all people. We must acknowledge that fact, and use the knowledge in ways that promote respect, equity and justice for all of our students. It is not only our responsibility to honor our students’ individuality and provide exposure to a variety of perspectives in our classrooms, but also to help foster understanding between various groups of students. Certain populations of students, as well as the few staff members of color, feel disconnected from our school community. Others feel that they cannot present the truest version of themselves for fear of ridicule or rejection.

These students and staff feel that their perspectives are not valued, that there is no place for their voices in our school, and that the majority culture (including teachers/colleagues) does not understand them. This simply, in the words of my students, is “not okay.” There must be a place for everyone in our school, and school must be a place where each person can feel respected, valued and understood.

When students feel disconnected from their teachers and school community, they are less likely to engage academically and socially. Misbehavior in the classroom and low academic performance are just two of the negative outcomes that can stem from conflict fueled by ignorance. Lambert, Herman, Bynum and Iolango (2009) suggested that when students of color experience racism at school, the impact is profound, and can result in a loss of perceived control in academic work, as well as long-term depression and anxiety. If we want all of our students to be successful people, we must honor and nurture their social and cultural selves as well as their academic work. As such, all teachers in my building must be invested in learning more about our diverse student population, and helping students to understand each other's perspectives.

Project Impact

In considering how my project could inform action in our school, I think about two primary areas of impact: increasing teachers’ use of culturally diverse curricular materials and strengthening relationships between minority-culture students and staff members. In considering the impact on teachers’ use of diverse materials, I want students see to diversity reflected in our classrooms and in common spaces at school. Student should see themselves in our worksheets, slide presentations and educational videos. We

need to ask ourselves, as students learn about a given topic, are they approaching it from multiple perspectives? Do they have an opportunity to hear testimony from different voices? Are different races, ability levels, genders and sexual orientations represented in the presentation of the curriculum? Style's work stressed that curriculum should provide windows out into the experiences of others, as well as mirrors of the student's own reality (Style, 1996). That work further suggested that schools should be spaces where students explore the unfamiliar, but also see their own lived experiences validated and valued (Style, 1996). For students whose racial, cultural, linguistic, or economic backgrounds differ significantly from that of the majority, being able to see their experience validated or mirrored in the curriculum is incredibly powerful. I imagine that currently, many of my school's minority-culture students do not see their experiences reflected in their academic work. My research question provides an opportunity to explore what kind of impact would result if we helped teachers to see the importance of windows and mirrors in their work with diverse groups of students.

To illustrate the potential action of strengthening relationships, I consider the beginning of the academic year. Many teachers will begin the first day with an ice-breaker; a question or activity that aims to introduce everyone and begin to build community. But how many of us will dig deeply to uncover information about our students that could impact their academic success? Will we be content with the "fun facts" we learn about students on day one? As Lessing suggested, "Getting to know you exercises should not just be first day events but sprinkled throughout the year" (Lessing, 2009, p. 671). He further explained that the real teaching that takes place in our

classrooms is in the relationships, and that those connections must be authentic in order for students to connect to any material (Lessing, 2009). Though relationships at my school are generally strong, I sense that we have greater work to do in understanding each other's experiences profoundly. By posing sincere (and sometimes tough) questions, by listening and reflecting, and by developing our intercultural competence in professional development sessions, we all improve our ability to value the differences each person brings to our school community.

In better understanding each other's perspectives, we also pave the way for truly hearing diverse voices in the classroom. As hooks suggested, "Making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformative pedagogy" (hooks, 2014, p. 40). When we have a solid foundation of classroom community, I believe we can achieve the sense of shared commitment, binding common good and the climate of "openness and intellectual rigor" (hooks, 2014, p. 40) that hooks described. All of our students need an environment that exposes them to a variety of perspectives and challenges them to think critically about their role in creating an equitable, just society.

Project Outline

My work is directed at understanding *What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching?* In this project, I will create materials for five monthly professional development sessions on equity for staff in my building. To create the materials, I will coordinate with the members of our district's Equity Leadership Team. Together, we will examine

enrollment data and determine themes for each session based on staff and student needs. The team's input here will help to develop presentations, discussion topics, suggested reading and activities so our staff can gain greater competence in cultural responsiveness. These activities will include reading and discussion about personal culture, colorblindness, white privilege and personal bias, and diversity in curricular materials. A small group format will provide a safe beginning step for staff who might be interested in this topic. Attendance at the professional development sessions will be open to all staff members at my school, with the understanding that group members adhere to internally-created norms that allow the group to operate effectively and respectfully. The one-hour sessions will take place monthly; with time planned to present information, engage in discussion, connect our learning to relevant issues at our school, problem-solve together, set goals and plan next steps for future action.

In developing this project, I also believe it will be important to hear student voices. Here, Freire's (2014) work supports the importance of dialogue, honesty and trust. His perspective on authentic education: not carried on for or about students, but in partnership with them (Freire, 2014), leads me to see the value in having teachers directly connect with minority students both in and outside the classroom. As a staff, we could read about equity in teaching or watch videos and discuss, but it will also be powerful to hear the voices of our own students. Part of our work must involve creating time to listen to students, dialogue and work *with* them to find solutions to the unique issues we face in our school. Because we have such little time in our academic day for deep interaction, we lack this kind of authentic opportunity to know those who are different than we are. Such

dialogues would involve attentive listening, critical thinking and sincere questioning in order to deepen our understanding. Genuine effort on the part of the staff would make students feel valued, and we would learn much from the experience of listening to so many different perspectives.

Conversations around race, privilege, bias and cultural competence are difficult, and I intend to create a space where teachers can read, learn and openly dialogue about these issues. We need to engage in thoughtful dialogue, coordinated by a staff member experienced in leading conversations about race, privilege and bias, as many people feel vulnerable when discussing such emotionally charged topics. The work of becoming culturally competent teachers must be done in a thoughtful, considered, measured way. It requires planning and care for relationships, as well as a commitment to critical listening and the examination of our own bias and prejudices. Making meaningful change will involve willingness to critique our own practices and to move beyond "colorblindness" to seeing and honoring all of the colors present in our community of learners. It is true that this work will not be easy, and it will challenge us to move outside of our comfort zones. Still, as my district grows in diversity, the work of becoming culturally competent educators will be important to both my school community and potentially, a larger community of educators.

Depending on the outcome of our work together, staff members might be able to move forward in leading other small groups of teachers in similar discussions, or advocating for a stronger district-coordinated response to our growing diversity. I envision teachers involved in this initial work feeling compelled to attend additional

training or courses to further their skills at helping to lead conversations about race, sexual orientation, gender, equity or social justice issues. I see this work as a grassroots movement among teachers with a passion for equity work; using these sessions to create a larger community of teachers who are committed to addressing inequities and improving relationships with diverse groups of students.

Chapter Summary

My journey towards greater cultural competence began with the powerful version of the song, "All Good People." It continues now with a thoughtful plan to engage other educators in my building in conversations about how we educate, care for and engage with diverse populations of students. A thoughtful analysis of relevant literature will be presented in chapter 2, where I explore the educational precedent for this work and the resources available for professional development in the area of culturally responsive teaching.

In this time, more than ever, our students are in need of teachers who can positively model respect, tolerance and courage. Now is the critical time to take action to protect and nurture the diverse students whose education has been trusted to our care. The education they receive from us and the relationships we forge together: these are our legacy. In my district, we do that legacy a disservice if we do not take care to reflect and critically analyze our own behaviors and practices with regard to cultural competence. In addressing the question, *What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching?*, we empower ourselves to grow

in cultural competence, and we take the first steps towards addressing inequity and injustice in my school.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

"The truth is, they're my brothers, and they're my countrymen…" -Delta Rae

Introduction

Taking the first steps to address inequity and injustice will involve teachers coming together to dialogue about issues of awareness, privilege, bias and cultural competence. Together, we will examine those factors and their influence on our curricula and teaching methods. We will use our newfound understanding to make changes that benefit our students' academic learning and their relationships within our school community. But first, we must ask the question, *What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching?*

In this chapter, I examine the three components most critical to answering that question: best practices for adult learning, culturally responsive teaching, and teacher reflection/awareness. First, I investigate and describe the actions that constitute best practices for delivering professional development to adult learners. I will then present information about culturally responsive teaching: what it is, why it has become an essential part of the conversation in modern educational practice, and key features of this movement for both teachers and schools. I also examine a series of resources for the

development of culturally responsive teaching skills. Finally, additional information will highlight the importance of addressing teachers' self-reflection and awareness in becoming culturally responsive educators. Each of the components of this literature review provides a foundation of knowledge, as well as support and guidance for the creation of professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching.

Best Practices for Adult Learning

In creating materials for educators, it is important to understand the people who will participate in professional development sessions. Without this knowledge of participants' experiences, preferences, skills and needs, the important messages of the sessions may be lost, miscommunicated or dismissed. In that case, educators are no further along in the development of their skills, and the presenters' time and efforts have been poorly spent. Effective professional development is "structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student outcomes" (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017). It takes into account the needs of its participants, the school setting and the available resources. In this section, I examine andragogy, the study of adult learning; the complexity of fitting professional development to the audience receiving training; and the traits of effective professional development.

Andragogy

Do adults learn differently than children or adolescents? Their maturity and life experiences certainly afford them different perspectives and motivation for learning! In creating learning experiences for adults, it is important to understand how and why they

choose to engage in learning. Defined by Knowles (1980) as the art and science of adult learning, andragogy explores the ways that adult learning differs from the learning experiences of children. Knowles' work (1980) outlined four assumptions that can be made about adult learners. The first, self-concept, assumes that as humans grow to adulthood, that their personalities shift from dependence on others toward independence and self-direction. The second assumption, adult learning experience, states that as a person matures, s/he steadily builds a collection of experiences that serve as a resource for learning. The third, readiness to learn, assumes that as adults mature and grow into different social roles, they are increasingly ready to learn in those areas. The fourth assumption, orientation to learning, states that as people come into adulthood, their perspective shifts to valuing immediate application of learning, and a focus on learning as a way to solve problems (Knowles, 1980). Knowles (1984) later added a fifth assumption, the motivation to learn. This assumes that adults are increasingly motivated to learn by internal, rather than external factors.

Knowles further outlined four guiding principles of adult learning (1984). These principles suggest that adults' learning is problem-focused, rather than content-based; that adults must be involved in the planning of their learning; that experience should provide the basis of learning activities; and that adults are most interested in learning that has relevance to an impact on their professional or personal lives (Knowles, 1984). Because adults learn differently than children or adolescents do, their learning activities must be similarly differentiated. It cannot be assumed that the same structures or activities that work for young learners can be transferred seamlessly to adult learners.

Those creating adult learning experiences can use this knowledge to capitalize on the strengths of adult learners and increase the effectiveness of their activities. Those seeking to harness the power of adult learners must engage them in meaningful problem-solving. Activities should preferably be created with the input of the adult learners. Care should be taken to assess the relevance of the activities to the learners' personal or professional needs. Creators of adult learning experiences may consider using either self-directed or collaborative approaches in learning, as adults are capable of greater independence. Learning activities should also be structured so adults easily see how the learning will apply to their lives.

One-Size-Doesn't-Fit-All

While Knowles' work (1984) outlined principles and assumptions for adult learners, it is important to note that they do not apply to every situation that involves adult learners. Some of Knowles' assumptions may hold true for a particular group, while others do not. Likewise, certain groups of adults may possess some of the characteristics Knowles attributed to adult learners, but not others. In nearly all of the research I explored for this section, the authors were clear and united on one point: "one size" learning experiences do not fit all learners. The authors wrote of the importance of understanding the audience of learners; their needs, prior experiences, and current perspectives (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2003; O'Leary, 2017). It was evident that care should be taken to mine group participants' experiences and knowledge; as well as plan meaningful, relevant content before embarking on learning activities.

Guskey (2003) analyzed lists of characteristics of effective professional development, and found that the lists varied widely in the characteristics they identified as most effective. Moreover, he found that these lists were derived in different ways, and used a variety of criteria to determine the effectiveness of certain characteristics of professional development activities (2003). The factors that influence successful adult learning or professional development are, in fact, multiple and complex. It would be unreasonable to assume that there is a single "best practices for professional development/adult learning" list that could be equally effective for all audiences (Guskey, 2003).

Despite the fact that a universal "best practices for professional development" list does not exist, the body of research suggests that certain criteria can be used to determine components of effective professional development sessions. First, planners must bear in mind professional development's ultimate goal: improvements in student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2003). In organizing learning activities for adults, it should be evident to participants how their learning will connect to action in the classroom with students. Evidence from student outcomes can be broadly defined, but may include portfolios, scores from standardized tests, assessment results or grades. Evidence of impact on student learning may also appear in affective/behavioral outcomes, such as student attitudes, attendance or participation (Guskey, 2003). Second, planners of professional development must anticipate the complexity of the work before them. Carrying out work in real-world contexts introduces a variety of factors that influence the success of the learning. It is not always known whether the planned learning will lead to the desired

results (Guskey, 2003). Finally, in creating professional development, it is important to take research-based decision making *and* successful local teaching practices into account. Guskey stated that, "In every school there are teachers who have found ways to help students learn well" (p. 750, 2003). Leveraging the successful strategies of these teachers and facilitating the sharing of their knowledge through coaching or modeling can be a powerful asset to others' professional development.

Traits of Effective Professional Development

Again, though no single "best practices" list for professional development exists, many educators have used the criteria mentioned in the previous section to plan professional development learning experiences. Bearing in mind the goal to improve student learning outcomes, planners must create activities that deepen educators' knowledge of content and pedagogical skill. Two primary categories emerged from the research in this area: planning, types of professional development. Information from each category is detailed in the following sections, including resources necessary for effective professional development sessions.

Planning for professional development. Planners of adult learning/professional development experiences must first consider timing, including decisions about when and how often such experiences will happen. For maximum impact, it is best to plan professional development sessions at a time when other school events will not compete for teachers' attention. Davis (2015) suggested that organizers inform teachers as early as possible about professional development activities and provide periodic reminders in advance of the date. Also critical is avoiding professional development during dates/times

when teachers are typically overburdened (i.e. testing, school-wide activities, end of the grading period) (Davis, 2015).

Time is also a consideration in the execution of professional development activities themselves. Adequate time must be allotted for the actual session for educators to complete activities thoughtfully and thoroughly. Time must further be devoted after the sessions, so educators may put into practice what they have learned. It is important for organizers to clearly outline the time commitment needed for post-session practice, research, reflection and application (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; O'Leary, 2017).

The consideration of available financial resources is important to the sustainability of professional development efforts. Here, the input of district and building administrators is essential, as they will have fiscal knowledge and a wider perspective on how the professional development fits into strategic, long-term planning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Especially if the professional development is part of a district-wide initiative, if it will require outside support from consultants or experts, or if it will be undertaken over an extended period of time; planners will want to carefully budget to fully support the work. Because the most effective professional development is sustained, additional financial consideration may be needed after the initial sessions. It is critical to the success of professional development that planners account in the early stages for the necessary financial resources of the entire initiative.

A final consideration in planning is determining who will lead and attend professional development sessions. Teachers are empowered by opportunities to share expertise and educate one another (Davis, 2015). Excellent delivery of professional

development can often be found by mining a school's own human resources! This peer leadership can be an effective way to present information, share resources or demonstrate skills and knowledge. Teachers also want to collaborate with administrators and colleagues, and work together with them to implement new strategies (Nussbaum-Beach, 2015). When administrators learn with their staff, group reflection, problem-solving and relationship-building can occur. Administrators can also gain unique perspectives on the successes and challenges teachers experience in the classroom. Building trust through genuine participation can make the experience a meaningful one for teachers and administrators alike (Nussbaum-Beach, 2015). Finally, after the delivery of professional development, peer coaching and expert support can provide additional assistance as teachers try out new strategies with students.

Types of professional development. When it comes to delivery methods of professional development, the research is clear that the best method for a particular school is the one that fits the purpose and audience. No matter how it is delivered, professional development must remain focused on improving student learning outcomes and deepening educators' knowledge and pedagogical skill. There are many ways to achieve this kind of learning, including face-to-face sessions, online webinars, peer coaching and collaboration. The research indicated that active learning and modeling effective practice were among the most important factors in delivering professional development, and are discussed in detail here.

Professional development must provide educators with opportunities to be active in their learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; O'Leary, 2017). Organizers of

professional development activities should provide frequent opportunities for participants to engage with the material and apply their learning to the classroom. This engages teachers directly in designing and testing teaching strategies, and provides them a way to engage in the same style of learning they are designing for students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Engaging in active learning helps teachers to construct their own foundation of knowledge, and moves away from traditional lecture formats that have limited connections to student outcomes or classroom practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Modeling effective practice in the delivery of professional development is another essential component. When effective practice is modeled in delivery, educators can see how the strategy works and might apply to their own classrooms. Here, it is important to understand the audience and personalize the professional development to suit their needs. Certainly, the sharing of information in lecture style has merit, but not for an entire session. Just as students can, professional development participants can benefit from time for reading, reflection, discussion or collaboration within the session. Perhaps collaboration in small groups would be most effective, or perhaps it would be advantageous to strategically pair participants to coach or share expertise. Having high quality samples available for teachers to consult, such as lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations or video of peer teaching examples; can provide teachers with a "clear vision of what best practices look like" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, para.7).

Using technology to deliver professional development has become a popular option, and another way to personalize to fit the needs of a group. Participants can take advantage of a vast collection of online resources that can be accessed at convenient

times (O'Leary, 2015). Such content can be accessed independently, and learning can be self-directed by the participants. However, care must be taken when undertaking virtual professional development. The resources used must be of high quality and must fit the goals of deepening educator knowledge, pedagogical skill, or improving student learning outcomes. The use of technology should be supported by carefully planned reflection, assessment for learning and face-to-face engagement. Planners must support teachers who undertake independent professional development in this way by providing guidance and opportunities to meet with colleagues to discuss and practice the concepts learned.

Summary. As a result of their maturity, experience and motivation, adults learn differently than children or adolescents. It is by extension important to tailor their learning experiences in ways that appeal to their particular needs. Adults find learning rewarding and effective when it is applicable to their personal/professional lives, when they are engaged in the planning of learning activities, and when they can use their own experience as a foundation for learning. Adult learning in the area of professional development, therefore, is most effective when it is personalized to specific needs of the group. Planners of such learning experiences must consider the resources of time and finances, as well as the method of delivery most effective for their audience. Adult learning is complex, and embedded in real-world contexts. Learning should be variable, depending on the content, use of technology and learning objectives.

In the next section, I explore how the work of adult learning can foster the development of culturally responsive teachers. A definition of culturally responsive teaching will be shared, as well as an analysis of why such a teaching style is needed in

modern educational practice. I examine key features of culturally responsive teaching, and will present actions to be taken by both teachers and schools to support this style of instruction. Finally, I will investigate several works with the potential to be included in the curriculum of a group on culturally responsive teaching.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

A community of colleagues working to improve their professional practice is a fitting place to begin the examination of personal culture and its impact on learning. Culture includes worldviews, beliefs, language and values. It is a filter that helps human beings make sense of ordinary things and events in daily life. In a school community, students approach each learning experience through the lens of their personal culture. According to Gay, far from being cultural "blank slates" (as cited in "Introduction to culturally relevant pedagogy," 2010), students bring to the classroom values, experiences, assumptions, opinions and beliefs influenced by their cultural perspectives. It is in welcoming, honoring and using these perspectives, values and learning styles to the classroom that educators find themselves moving towards cultural responsiveness. In culturally responsive teaching, educators serve as bridge builders, making connections between students' lived experiences and curricular content. Culturally responsive teaching also accounts for the diversity of learners in the classroom. Rather than insist that all students experience learning from a school-imposed perspective, culturally responsive teaching suggests that educators adapt both their curriculum and the delivery of content to honor the cultures of learners in their community.

Within this section, I will examine what culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is, and why it is needed in current educational practice. Key features of CRT from various models will be presented, compared and contrasted. Actions that can be taken by schools to promote and support CRT will be discussed; including an examination of school-university partnerships, individual teacher inquiry, and professional learning communities that make CRT a focus of their work with students. An analysis of several works with the potential to be included in PLC work on culturally responsive teaching will be presented at the end of the section.

What Is Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Though slight differences exist in the definition of culturally responsive teaching, many sources agree on its principal components. Gay stated that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is instruction that "connects students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to academic knowledge and intellectual tools in ways that legitimize what students already know" (Gay, personal communication, June 17, 2010). CRT teaches "to and through" (Gay, 2000) the strengths of *all* students. Plainly, culturally responsive teaching strives to honor the different cultural experiences and values that students bring to the classroom, to make use of them in connecting to content, and to allow students to work and demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways. Gay's definition is similar to the frameworks presented by Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995), Ladson-Billings (2001), and Villegas and Lucas (2002). All agree on the importance of building an inclusive classroom community, where teachers and students feel cared for and mutually respected. Each of these frameworks highlights educator

knowledge of cultural diversity and an affirming view of culturally diverse students. They emphasize the importance of cultural competence, or knowing how to successfully interact with those whose cultures differ from our own. Finally, these frameworks recognize the essential component of culturally relevant curriculum, one where events and information are presented from multiple perspectives, and instruction is designed using knowledge of the students in a particular classroom.

Though they share common ground, each framework is also slightly different in its focus. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) focused on the connection between motivation and culture. Their work emphasized the need for curriculum to connect strongly to students' lives and experiences, so that they felt that their learning was meaningful, relevant and fulfilling (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). The Ladson-Billings framework prized a focus on individual student achievement, with emphasis on clear goals and multiple forms of assessment. It also looked for evidence of students' and teachers' growth in sociopolitical consciousness, or their ability to recognize and address inequity and injustice outside the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Gay's work (2000) featured a point on congruity in classroom instruction,or understanding student learning styles and using them to advantage in instruction. Villegas and Lucas' (2002) work included a component that addressed educators views of themselves as both capable of, and responsible for the educational change needed to make schools responsive for all students.

Culturally responsive teaching challenges educators to first educate themselves, becoming aware of their own views, bias or prejudice, as well as how to overcome these

in working with many different kinds of students. It encourages educators to learn and care deeply about their students, understanding their motivation, home culture, values and perspectives. Exploring these themes in a PLC allows teachers to develop culturally responsive skills in a structured way, and with the support of colleagues. Armed with that knowledge, educators can make informed decisions about appropriate curriculum, activities and ways to demonstrate learning that best fit their classroom population. Having established what culturally responsive teaching is, we move now to why such techniques are needed in modern educational practice.

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Essential Now

Many sources highlight the changing demographics of modern classrooms in the United States (Brown, 2007; Ferguson, 2007; King, Artiles & Kozleski, 2009; Kozleski, 2010; MN Department of Education, 2014). While the population of U.S. teachers remains largely white and middle-class, the students present in American classrooms increasingly identify as non white. They come from a range of cultures, family dynamics, ethnic identities and socio-economic backgrounds, all of which impact their knowledge, social and academic skills, and readiness to learn in a school setting. Primarily students of color, they are poorly served by many of our educational practices and policies (Hollie, 2012).

Historical perspectives. Examining the sociohistorical and sociopolitical contexts of these students' experiences, there is consistent evidence that students of color have been profoundly affected by the consequences of involuntary immigration (slavery), legal segregation and institutional racism. Forced to try to assimilate into mainstream

culture, these ethnic groups lacked "access to the tools that would have enabled them to become part" of that society (Hollie, 2012, p. 26). As students came of age to attend schools, they were purposefully separated from their own languages and cultures (many forcibly, through public education academies or boarding schools), in favor of adopting the (alleged) superior culture and language of the Europeans (Hollie, 2012). These experiences speak to the institutional neglect of students of color and the perception that they arrive at school with cultural and linguistic deficits to be "remedied" by traditional (white, Euro-American) public school education. Historically, this meant the systematic denial of students' indigenous cultures and languages as a means to the eventual elimination of their heritage (Hollie, 2012).

Modern challenges. Fast forward to the present, where inequities and injustices persist in American public schooling. Achievement gaps, or differences in performance on student outcomes, exist between various groups of students throughout the nation. These gaps in academic performance often become evident if student data is segregated according to race, ethnicity, gender, disability or socioeconomic status. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, white students outperformed students of color in both reading and math on state comprehensive exams (2014). Minnesota's data also highlighted gaps in learning when the exam results were grouped according to socioeconomic status (students receiving free and reduced-price lunch), status as an English learner, or disability (MN Department of Education, 2014).

While it can be helpful to examine this kind of achievement gap data, Kozleski counseled against using it as a sole measure of student achievement (2010). Kozleski

suggested that the gaps that are noted often prize certain types of knowledge over others, and that the path to college is based on a student's ability to bank certain types of information and use it to demonstrate competence (Kozleski, 2010). It is important to note that many practical and indigenous ways of knowing (unmeasured by local, state or national standardized testing) offer insight, as well as ecological and social significance (Kozleski, 2010).

Summary. When we consider historical and modern information about the achievement of students of color, we must conclude that the educational system is not serving them well. As Gay indicated, "the consequences of these disproportionally [*sic*] high levels of low achievement are long-term and wide reaching, personal and civic, individual and collective" (Gay, 2010). Action must be taken by those in the educational community to empower students of color to achieve in ways that are engaging and honor their heritage and cultures. Culturally responsive teaching provides such a framework, where educators serve to build bridges between students' ways of knowing and communicating, the school community and the curriculum. As Kozleski suggested, CRT "offers the possibility for transformational knowledge that leads to socially responsible action" (2010, p. 3). In the next section, we explore the key features of CRT that educators must adopt to bring about equity in educating all students.

Key Features of CRT

As previously discussed, all CRT models vary slightly in what their creators choose to emphasize. For the purposes of this section, we will explore the features and educator actions that are common to most models. Here it should be noted that CRT does

not include traditional classroom management models that are colorblind. In assuming that students share similar upbringing and cultural modeling, these approaches neglect to honor the variety of ways that students and their families approach rules of conduct (Kozleski, 2010). Even if educators instruct students in the rules, the rigidity of certain behavior management systems (especially those with consequences for noncompliance) can cause resistance and avoidance. Further, instructional or classroom management models that focus on catching students "doing good" or token economies that reward positive student behavior can be confusing to culturally/linguistically diverse students (Kozleski, 2010). For students who are used to understanding a code of behavior through example, modeling or story, these models can cause confusion and cognitive dissonance. Instead, CRT focuses on building community and educating by bridging students' culture, the curriculum and the school community. Table 2.1 highlights the key features and educator actions most commonly associated with successful CRT models.

Table 2.1

Features and Educator Actions in CRT Models

Key Feature:	**Educator action:**
Communicate high expectations	● Mindful acknowledgement of each student ● Share the belief that all students are capable of success ● Communicate expectation of performance at a high level ● Emphasize shared student-teacher responsibility for engagement ● Understand that students may not always participate at optimal levels at all times ● Leave race and ethnicity out of the equation - these actions hold true for all students
Create an engaging curriculum	● Investigate students' backgrounds and interests ● Connect student knowledge and skill to curriculum

	● Use authentic texts from multiple perspectives ● Incorporate real-life examples and hands-on learning experiences ● Display authentic images (in the classroom and curricular materials) that reflect students' cultures
Demonstrate culturally responsive caring (Gay, 2010)	● Engage in genuine dialogue with students ● Listen! ● Make time to know students, what is important to them and what goes on in their lives ● Demonstrate patience in interactions with students ● Persist in engaging students in the life of the classroom ● Validate students' feelings, values, cultures and experiences ● Empower students by providing continual support and belief in their ability to succeed ● See the world as students see it; help them develop thoughtful responses to it
Account for linguistic differences in the classroom	● Acknowledge the variety of ways that different cultures communicate ● Encourage communication in students' first language ● Connect students' languages to skills in critical thinking, writing and analysis ● Invite students to interact as information is presented ● Account for cultural differences in the roles of the speaker and listener ● Create a social context for tasks, to allow work in small groups ● Acknowledge the variety of ways students might organize their thoughts based on cultural influences
Build academic confidence through scaffolding	● Begin with what students already know about a topic ● Weave in their personal experiences, viewpoints and questions ● Create early opportunities for success ● Gradually build new skills with support ● Increase complexity; shift control from the teacher to the learner
Reflect!	● Set aside time to write or think about the intersection of actions and personal motivations, in order to better understand behavior ● Engage in small group reflection with a professional learning community or colleagues undertaking similar CRT work

Develop personal cultural competence	● Expand library of cultural knowledge by seeking books and articles on the subjects of CRT, educational equity and social justice ● Explore personal views on prejudice, privilege and bias ● Consciously seek opportunities to engage with others of a different race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or sexual orientation ● Conduct a personal inventory on cultural competence, or participate in a course/training that includes one
Connect with the community	● Visit students in the community or at home ● Attend community events ● Connect with parents, engage them as partners in the school community ● Observe students in the community for insight about their behaviors and attitudes ● Invite families to come to school and be experts in the classroom
Expand professional connections	● Use technology (blogs, educational websites, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, etc.) to connect with other educators engaged in CRT work ● Join professional groups dedicated to CRT work ● Seek opportunities for additional training/education through seminars or workshops ● Visit teachers who engage in CRT work to observe
Become an advocate for equitable and just school reform	● Question traditional policies ● Examine initiatives to determine their impact on diverse learners ● Consider “who’s not at the table” in discussions: whose perspectives are not represented? Why? How can we get them involved? ● Work with professional development team or administration (building or district level) to coordinate CRT training or programming for staff ● Develop a network of in-district educators committed to CRT techniques ● Provide professional development for others as you grow in expertise

The information in Table 2.1 was compiled from the work of Gay (2010), Hollie (2012), Ladson-Billings (2001), Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995). In addition to the features mentioned above, it is important to consider the longevity of CRT work. This is not an initiative to be undertaken lightly or without careful thought; nor is it a program that can be addressed with minimal direction or support for educators. For truly affirming, transformational CRT work to take place, districts must have a plan in place that coordinates the CRT effort, keeps student and community needs at the forefront of its planning, provides ongoing support to staff, and frequently evaluates and modifies the work of staff with students. In that respect, districts may require various types of support in the execution of CRT work. The next section will examine ways in which schools can support and nurture the work of culturally responsive educators.

School Actions that Support CRT

Districts that are committed to successfully incorporating CRT will find a wealth of supports available, especially as the need for culturally competent educators becomes more prevalent. Indeed, it is in the best interests of districts to employ culturally competent educators, so they have a vested interest in ensuring that teachers have the support they need to carry out this work. Three of the most common ways that districts can support the work of culturally responsive teaching are professional learning communities, personal inquiry, and school-university partnerships.

PLCs. The creation of professional learning communities can engage teachers in the work of evaluating the effectiveness of a curriculum or program. This work

acknowledges that culturally responsive teachers will grow in skill over time, and that their work is ongoing (King, Artiles & Kozleski, 2009). Dedicated time must be scheduled for PLC work; it cannot simply be added to teachers' lists of things to accomplish. The PLC's decisions should be driven by reliable data, and special attention must be paid to data that indicates unsuccessful efforts, as it will guide the group's next steps. King et al. (2009) suggested that educators engage in the type of CRT work themselves that mirrors how they would want students to work, effectively testing these strategies before implementing them with students. PLCs on culturally responsive teaching should strive to create culturally relevant, activity-based opportunities to dialogue and work together. In sharing their curricular modifications and examining their effects on student knowledge, PLC members build a resource toolkit for greater cultural responsiveness in their own work with students (King et al., 2009). In addition, the shared work of examining common assessments for cultural bias can ensure equitable access for all students, regardless of their instructor (Micheaux, 2016). Sustained changes in teacher action can profoundly impact improvement in student outcomes.

Personal inquiry. A second option is personal inquiry, where teachers conduct action research to determine the impact of teaching techniques (King et al., 2009). Again, dedicated time must be allocated for this work, if it is to be mindfully undertaken. Teachers develop a research question, then conduct an inquiry to determine how their question impacts student performance on specific outcomes. They meet in small groups, which are led/facilitated by experienced researchers. Teachers then reflect on their work and discuss their findings, especially the student performance data. This work can lead to

higher expectations and greater student ownership in the classroom, and has the added benefit of being learner-centric (King et al., 2009). Despite those positives, personal inquiry lacks the support of a fully developed CRT program, as it does not insist on specifically focusing on a CRT-related research question. In personal inquiry, teachers may only skim the surface of culturally responsive techniques: they may come to embrace similar techniques without understanding the nuances of CRT (King et al., 2009).

School-university partnerships. Finally, schools with the capability to connect with a university may embrace a partnership to help their educators develop in their ability to be culturally responsive. In this collaborative partnership, a school and university pair to support each other; guiding pre-service teachers to practice CRT in a school setting, and providing in-service teachers the opportunity to learn more about CRT (King et al., 2009). Much time may have passed since current teachers completed coursework at the university level, and they may be unaware of the trends that necessitate competence in culturally responsive teaching. The benefits of such a partnership include better-prepared teacher candidates who have pre-service experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse populations of students (King et al., 2009). In addition, current teachers would be able to strengthen their CRT skills and would benefit from the continuing education, research and perspectives that a university could provide. This model, while it has great potential, is not without risk. The time required to enact such a partnership might be a burdensome extra for in-service teachers, if not properly managed.

Teachers' time and resources would need to be considered and adjusted for the partnership to reap its full benefits (King et al., 2009).

Summary. Schools wishing to enhance their educators' capacity for cultural responsiveness will find that they must support their staff with the resources of time and money. They must also evaluate teacher responsibilities and remove barriers to successful CRT work where they exist (King et al., 2009). Faculty must be held accountable for the implementation of CRT techniques, and CRT work (public discussion, collaboration) must become the norm. It is most helpful for the change to grow authentically from teacher interest and student needs, rather than a program that is imposed on educators from a district or building administrator. Finally, no matter what route a school chooses, a public commitment to CRT must be declared, and the support of the community engaged (King et al., 2009).

Resources for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Table 2.2 offers summaries of several resources that might be of use to the work of a learning community on culturally responsive teaching. These works could be used independently or separately, as the needs of the group and school community dictate. The books provided might be used in a book study capacity, where educators would read and discuss the work, then apply their learning to their school goals for improving cultural responsiveness. Schools at the beginning stages of work with CRT might choose a book, while schools who are further along the continuum of CRT work might choose articles. Articles could more easily be shared with staff, to be discussed at professional development sessions or staff meetings. For each entry, the type of source is noted, along

with its author(s), publishing date, and a brief summary of the work are shared. Table 2.2 is available in Appendix 1.

Summary

Culturally responsive teaching engages educators in the work of building bridges between their students' experiences, values, perspectives, cultures; the school community, and their content. The work of CRT helps educators to see beyond the colorblind instructional methods of the past, and move towards educational equity for all of the colors present in modern classrooms. The process of becoming a culturally responsive educator is not an easy journey, nor does it happen overnight. Districts must carefully guide educators' work in this area by creating with them a purposeful, collaborative dialogue around the ideas of teaching in culturally responsive ways. Purposeful exploration of the key features of CRT, as well as opportunities for reflection and the development of one's cultural competence play significant roles in the development of culturally competent educators.

It is this opportunity to look inward that the following section on reflection and awareness is presented. While CRT asks educators to grow in their ability to connect and create for diverse students, it also requires a thorough examination of self. Without a solid understanding of one's own bias (conscious and unconscious), prejudices and privilege; one cannot effectively demonstrate cultural competence in work with students. The next section will explore how reflection and awareness aid in the development of culturally competent educators, especially for white educators.

Awareness and Self-Reflection

An awareness of self, as well as an understanding of one's personal beliefs, opinions and attitudes is critical to developing as a culturally responsive educator. Without a thorough examination of privilege, personal bias and cultural competence, it is difficult to move forward in the development of one's cultural responsiveness. Self-reflection helps teachers uncover truths about their practices that might otherwise be "ignored, misunderstood, misrepresented, misinterpreted or unsettled" (Milner, 2003, p. 173). The purposeful allocation of time and space for reflection can assist teachers in the exploration of their personal practices. Journaling, guided discussion and book study all offer educators the opportunity to read and reflect. In doing so, they make connections and realize important truths about the state of their educational practice. The opportunity for such critical thinking and dialogue is essential to the development of a culturally responsive teacher.

In this section, I present information on reflective practice for educators, as well as its benefits and challenges. This is followed by an exploration of resources related to self-awareness, with a particular emphasis on white educators, privilege, and cultural competence. Finally, an analysis of several sources with the potential to be included in PLC work on culturally responsive teaching will be presented at the end of the section.

Reflective Practice

Reflection occurs when we consider, think and wonder. It can happen as we begin the day, at the end of our time at work, at night before sleep, or in any quiet moment. Reflection allows us to puzzle through an event, make connections and organize our thoughts. It also provides an opportunity to question our actions and determine what we

could have done differently. At times, reflection can also act as a catalyst, encouraging us to turn the results of our pondering into action. As such, reflection can provide clarity and bring about much-needed change. In education, whether reflection happens independently or among colleagues, it has the power to impact instruction and effect positive change for students.

Individual reflection. All professionals reflect to an extent: evaluating their choices, looking for inefficiencies, weighing the impact of a decision, or deciding how to approach a situation. Still, reflection is often a mental pursuit, and rarely do educators make the time to reflect through writing. It is precisely this idea of reflective writing that Hole and McEntee propose in their Guided Reflection Protocol (1999). In the first step of this protocol, the authors suggest simply writing out the story. By explaining what happened during an ordinary event, educators can look for patterns, structures or underlying motives (Hole & McEntee, 1999). It is important at this stage that educators not try impose judgment on the events, but only narrate what happened. This prepares them to ask "Why did it happen?" in step two. After reviewing their written description of the event, educators begin to explore its context for explanations (Hole & McEntee, 1999). A thorough investigation can reveal that an event is one in a series of such happenings, or that an underlying structure may be causing an issue. In step two, they may also examine deeply held values that may impact how they approach the event.

Such discoveries in step two can be an end point for reflection, but Hole and McEntee suggested going two steps further: determining what the event means, and evaluating the implications of that meaning on educational practice (1999). Reflection

offers the opportunity to purposefully explore mundane events to uncover their meaning. In the rush of the school day, educators are pressed to make quick decisions. Those hasty choices (good or bad) impact the student and teacher actions that follow. Reflection slows the process; forcing us to examine those decisions and actions in the hopes that we will discover better methods (Hole & McEntee, 1999). Considering how those discoveries can change educational practice is the final step in the protocol. This step encourages educators to think critically about how their practice might change based on the findings of their reflection (Hole & McEntee, 1999).

Group reflection. Solo reflection can be meaningful for educators, especially if they are willing to adhere to a protocol that guides their thinking towards meaningful improvement for students. However, group reflection can be an effective way for educators to receive additional feedback about their practice, especially if the group follows a protocol such as the one proposed by Hole and McEntee (1999). Their Critical Incident Protocol is similar to Guided Reflection, but with the following modifications for groups of colleagues. First, each member brings to the meeting a "critical incident" (Hole & McEntee, 1999). All complete a written description of the incident, and the group agrees on one incident to use as the focus of the discussion. The group member presents the incident, and other colleagues actively listen. They may ask clarifying questions, and they explore the meaning of the incident with regard to their colleague's professional practice (Hole & McEntee, 1999). The presenter listens as the others discuss, and takes notes. All colleagues then discuss the implications of such an incident for their own professional practice. The discussion concludes with an opportunity to assess the

session's process and if modifications need to be made for future sessions (Hole & McEntee, 1999).

Habits of reflection. Either shared or independent reflections are effective ways for educators to reflect on specific incidents or how their general practices impact student achievement. Given the amount of time that quality reflection takes, how are educators to accomplish it? Costa and Kallick (2000) suggested a number of approaches to making reflection a habit. An educational organization must first value reflection, and prioritize it as a critical component of professional work. Time and space must be created for educators to reflect, separate from the normal events of the school day. To encourage a school-wide culture of reflection, staff should model reflective practices for students; including collaborative dialogue, metacognition (thinking about one's thinking) and the development of a portfolio of work (Costa & Kallick, 2000). Technology can also be harnessed for meetings, discussions, scheduling or independent journaling, facilitating the process of reflection.

Summary. Developing reflective habits has the power to help teachers understand their practice, as well as the impact their actions have on students. Reflection provides the opportunity to think critically, to process an event and to determine if different actions might lead to improved results. Educators who wish to improve their cultural responsiveness will especially rely on reflection to make sense of their feelings, attitudes, values and reactions. The journey to culturally responsive teaching is one that challenges even the best of educators to carefully evaluate the effectiveness of their

practices for all students. This evaluation is undertaken simultaneously with an exploration of self: awareness.

Self-awareness

As schools become increasingly more diverse, white educators have particular work to accomplish with regard to reflection. Bireda and Chait's work (2011) suggested that as much as 40% of the nation's schools have no teachers of color in their classrooms, which reflects the continued segregation in American communities (in Howard, 2016). Many white educators have not had significant interactions with those who differ from them; nor have they often interacted with people of color at school, or lived in neighborhoods with people of color (Milner, 2003). They have become accustomed to a colorblind view of the world, where race seemingly does not matter and shared humanity is perceived to be stronger than the differences between people. Though it is painful for white educators to acknowledge, those differences are ignored out of ignorance and privilege. This perspective, though generally not maliciously intended, leads educators to act and teach in ways that perpetuate injustice. Their students primarily learn about events from a white, Euro-American perspective, despite the rich amount of material available about the perspectives of diverse people in every content area. They often do not understand the anger of oppressed groups in society. Because white educators feel like they have not personally committed injustices against oppressed groups, they may also feel that they have no role to play in solving the issue. Privilege, as a member of cultural/racial majority communities, can blind. In short, as Freire suggested, white educators may project ignorance onto others and never perceive their own (Freire, 2014).

An awareness of the interplay between white educators and students of color is critical to the development of culturally responsive teachers. As Howard pointed out, the diversity in our schools is not a choice, but the way we choose to respond to it *is* our choice (2016). As previously discussed in the CRT section, our responses to student diversity have clearly been inadequate. White educators have great responsibility to "look deeply and critically at the necessary growth and change...we must achieve if we are to work effectively with the real issues of race, equity, and social justice" (Howard, 2016, loc. 551, Kindle edition). We cannot completely engage in meaningful dialogue about the differences in race and culture without first attending to the work of personal transformation (Howard, 2016).

This transformation comes, over time, through the study of personal history, heritage, views, attitudes, beliefs, bias and prejudice. It is important to begin with an understanding of self, and to recognize how one's own culture plays a role in the ability to respond positively to others. Here, it is especially critical to address and understand the privilege associated with membership in a majority culture. White educators may not realize the social and academic advantages they have as a result of systemic and historical injustice. McIntosh observed a series of these nearly invisible privileges afforded to whites in everyday life (1988). Developing greater awareness of these often unnoticed social and educational privileges can help white educators to fit racial injustices into a larger systemic context.

As white educators explore these components of transformation, they often experience feelings of confusion, guilt, shame and sadness. While these feelings are a

normal part of becoming more culturally competent, it does not do to dwell on them. To best serve all students, educators must move beyond personal feelings to seeing and understanding racial issues in a systemic context (Howard, 2016). Here, we understand "systemic" to mean the educational and social systems or structures that perpetuate racial inequities and injustices. This, Howard stated, is where the heart of white educators' work lies: in the examination and transformation of the self, as well as the social conditions of injustice (2016). Self-awareness, then, lies in the white educator's ability to reflect and then develop in consciousness and compassion for racial healing and positive social change (Howard, 2016).

As white educators begin to realize the need for greater personal awareness and cultural competence, they require sound guidance and support. The movement for culturally responsive teaching has produced numerous resources that aim to help white educators in particular determine how to navigate the ideas of race, privilege and injustice. A selection of these resources has been collected in Table 2.3, which is available in Appendix 2.

Chapter Summary

In addressing the question, *What kind of materials would be most effective for a professional learning community on culturally responsive teaching?*, this chapter first highlighted a series of best practices for delivering professional development to adult learners. Culturally responsive teaching was defined, the need for such an instructional style explained, and its key features highlighted. School actions that support CRT were discussed, with an emphasis on personal inquiry, professional learning communities and

school-university partnerships. CRT resources were highlighted for use as a starting point for districts just beginning the work of culturally responsive teaching. Finally, reflection as a tool for growth was examined. Several approaches to reflection were presented, including protocol for independent and small group reflection and discussion. The importance of self-awareness in becoming a culturally responsive teacher was also discussed, with special attention paid to the work necessary for white educators to become more culturally competent. Personal transformation, privilege and cultural competence were the focus of the exploration of self-awareness.

It is clear, given the available literature on culturally responsive teaching, that it has an increasingly large role to play in the development of teachers who can help culturally and linguistically diverse learners find success in the classroom. The changing demographics of American schools, as well as the systemic injustices encountered by students of color in education, mean that thoughtful, timely action is necessary. Personal exploration and transformation may not be easy for educators, but they are imperative to the success of students of all colors. By undertaking reflection, cultivating awareness, working in collaborative groups, and learning what makes a culturally competent educator, teachers will be well on their way to effecting change not only for students in their school or district, but in addressing inequities and injustices in education.

How will that happen? Chapter three will provide an outline of this work, a project to create five professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching for a high school in a midwestern suburb. As always, the question, *What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive*

teaching? guides the creation of the materials. Goals/objectives of the work will be established, and membership/recruitment in the initial group will be addressed. The project timeline will be shared, as well as an outline of actions to be taken by the organizers of such a group. Resources for each meeting will be discussed, and a sample meeting schedule provided. The chapter will also include suggestions for further action, and counsel for working with administrators to effect long term change by bringing these sessions to all staff members. In chapter three, we begin to see how a school might take action to become more culturally responsive educators.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Outline

"Come on and raise your voice, above the raging seas:

we can't hold our breath forever, when our brothers cannot breathe." -Delta Rae

Introduction

With a personal mission identified, and strong support for the work of developing culturally responsive teachers established in literature; how do I begin the process of creating materials for my district? I return to the question, *What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching?* Clearly, this is work to be undertaken carefully, and with respect. Our evolution into culturally responsive teachers must not be a one-time exercise, but it must become a regular part of our professional development work. Advocacy for the importance of this work will be critical, as will the presentation of a thoughtfully created plan to district/building administrators and staff. My materials must seek to accomplish the following: to engage the voices and perspectives of students and staff of color in my district, to determine the professional development needs of my district, to engage a group of staff in thoughtful discussion and reflection, to connect with local experts in the creation of CRT programs, and to create a community of like-minded educators who will support this work as its scope expands.

In this chapter, I first present information on the audience for this project within my district. This is accompanied by a presentation of demographic data, to better understand the need for this work at this time. I then explore the human resources

available to support this work within and beyond my district. These educators and administrators provided expertise, encouragement and vital resources (such as time and financial support) to the work. An explanation of the project itself is provided, to better understand the scope of the work before us and the nature of the tasks we must undertake. In its final version, this project and its materials will be used by a small learning community over the course of five months.

Who Were the Decision Makers?

I begin this chapter with an exploration of the project's audience: first, the group who must approve the creation of the group, and second, the group members themselves. In preparing any plan, it is essential to keep in mind those decision makers who hold the power to approve or reject the adoption of the work. Without their approval, the work goes no further, so it was essential to understand both the audience and the strongest way to convince them that work on culturally responsive teaching was necessary. It was this group I needed to sell on the importance of helping our staff to become more culturally responsive teachers. Who, then, were these decision makers?

In my district, the group responsible for creating professional development activities for staff was a committee of educators. It included several representatives from each building in the district, who were paid a stipend for their extra work in coordinating professional development days for teachers. Additional members of the committee included union representatives, who ensured that the professional development fell within the bounds of the teacher contract. Building administrators were also represented on the committee. Their role involved guiding the creation of activities to fit within the time

constraints allotted within the school calendar, as well as ensuring that activities for staff/teachers connected to the district strategic plan. A senior district administrator was part of the committee as well, to guide the group in aligning professional development to the district's goals. During the school year, this committee met monthly at a central district location to discuss the planning and implementation of professional development activities. Several full work days were also set aside for the committee to coordinate long-range plans for the entire district.

While professional development activities were often coordinated by this committee for all staff members,the committee emphasized the communal nature of our work in education. The committee often solicited ideas for professional development activities from the teachers themselves. The committee generally sent out surveys prior to professional development days to determine areas of need. Activities and sessions were then created with in-house experts: teachers who had success using particular technologies or instructional techniques, or those who could capably lead discussions about improvement within the school. A schedule of these activities was published to teachers, and they selected the sessions most appealing to them, or most necessary in supporting their practice.

In appealing to the staff development committee, I highlighted the benefits of the work. First, a time frame for meeting (a weekly collaboration hour created from a late start to our school day) was already in place. The group would not require time out of the classroom to meet, nor would it require compensation or the acquisition of a substitute instructor. Teachers could attend the monthly meeting without missing opportunities to

collaborate with other staff, as this could be done during the other three collaboration hours during the month. Second, the time spent in this group could count towards teachers' required continuing education hours. Up to ten hours each year could be credited for work in small learning communities, and the materials would support the documentation of our work together. Finally, I emphasized the need for teachers to focus on equity work, based on the changing demographics of our district.

Who Was in the Project Audience?

In addition to consulting with the staff development committee, I turned to colleagues in a newly formed leadership team for equity. This team was created in the summer of 2017 with the intent of coordinating a district-wide approach to equity. Its members included secondary and elementary teachers, district administrators, school counselors and support staff. The team attended a two-day summer workshop with Dr. Carole Gupton, a local expert in cultural competence, urban issues and educational leadership. During the fall, the team scheduled additional sessions with Dr. Gupton to begin work on a district-wide equity initiative. Because the district was in the early stages of equity work, Dr. Gupton proposed several activities to educate the team's members and develop an equity framework. Among others, these actions included the administration of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI - a measure of cultural competence for individuals and groups). The IDI provided a group profile for the team, and follow-up interviews with each member outlined an action plan for developing greater personal cultural competence.

The IDI results also proved to be a springboard, launching its members deep into the work of becoming culturally responsive teachers. It was evident, from conversations with team members and the district administrator leading the work, that greater support for the team would be needed. Many of its participants were newer to equity work and lacked deep knowledge of the issues, research and key information surrounding inequity and injustice. At that point, I suggested using my capstone project materials at monthly team meetings. Doing so would serve two purposes: to address gaps in team members' knowledge, and to test the quality and appropriateness of the materials before using them with teachers at the secondary level.

The materials created for this project ultimately served a small learning community at my high school. The group was advertised via e-mail and online through the school's learning management system. While membership was open to any staff member, I also targeted specific staff members who I knew to be interested in, or connected to, issues of equity. I collaborated with the Equity Leadership Team members to determine educators in each of the high school departments who might be supportive of equity work. I approached these individuals personally and invited them to be part of the group. I explained the goals of the group: first, that it serve as a means of increasing awareness of equity issues in our district; second, that it provide a safe space for educators to explore their own culture, as well as the topics of privilege and bias.

I intended, with a targeted invitation, to increase the likelihood of productive conversations around issues of race and equity. I also wanted to grow the equity movement in my school with informed, supportive staff in each department. In choosing

these invited staff members, it was also important to understand their position within their department. Staff members were selected in part because of their leadership potential among colleagues and the respect accorded them by their peers. It was in this way that I planned to garner greater support for district-wide equity initiatives in the future. If we had chosen our members wisely, I reasoned, they would be well-placed to bolster the messages delivered by a larger equity initiative.

This willingness of both the staff development committee and the equity team to provide need-based professional development helped them to embrace the work of culturally responsive teaching. Especially when the plan had been researched and developed by one of their own, both groups were eager to provide an opportunity to use the project materials. Still, this audience wanted to understand why the work of culturally responsive teaching should be undertaken at this time, especially with so many other improvements competing for our attention as educators. It was helpful, then, to provide them with data that supported the decision to embrace culturally responsive teaching as a professional development initiative.

What Were Our Demographics?

This project took place in a district that was located in a third ring suburb of a major Midwestern metropolitan area. It was land-large, and incorporated suburban subdivisions, mobile home parks, a small concentration of homes and apartment buildings in a downtown area; as well as rural areas devoted to farming. The district was comprised of five elementary schools (grades K-5), two middle schools (grades 6-8), one high school (grades 9-12) and a progressive learning academy (grades 5-8). It also

offered early childhood programming for its youngest residents, and community education opportunities for residents of all ages. The population of this community was just over 21,000 residents (US Census Bureau, 2016). Of that number, 89% identified as White, 3% as Hispanic or Latinx, 3% as Asian, 2% as Black or African-American, and less than 1% as American Indian. 1% of the community's residents identified as a race other than those options provided.

In the secondary school where the work took place, the demographics of the student population have shifted slowly, but steadily in the last seven years. Demographic information is presented in the charts below. Figure 3.1, Student enrollment trends from 2010-2017, presents the populations of enrolled students in grades 9-12 each year. These populations are separated by race (Hispanic/Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American and White). Figure 3.2, Annual percentage changes in student enrollment from 2010-2017, presents the percentage change from year to year for each race represented. The categories were established by the school district, and families identified their race when a student is registered in the district.

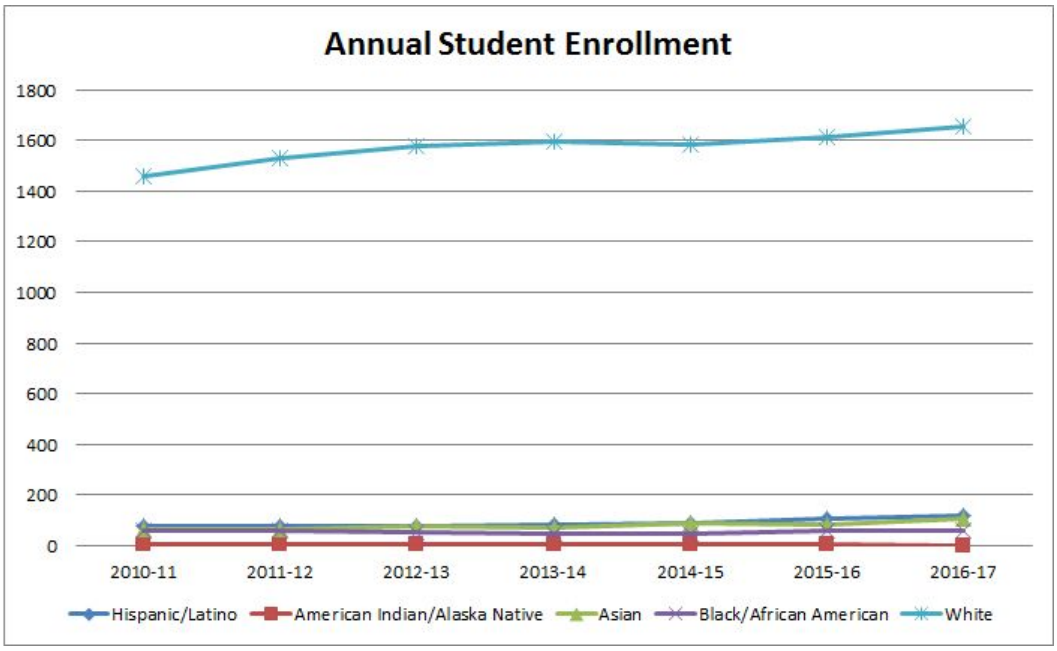

Figure 3.1. Student enrollment trends from 2010-2017

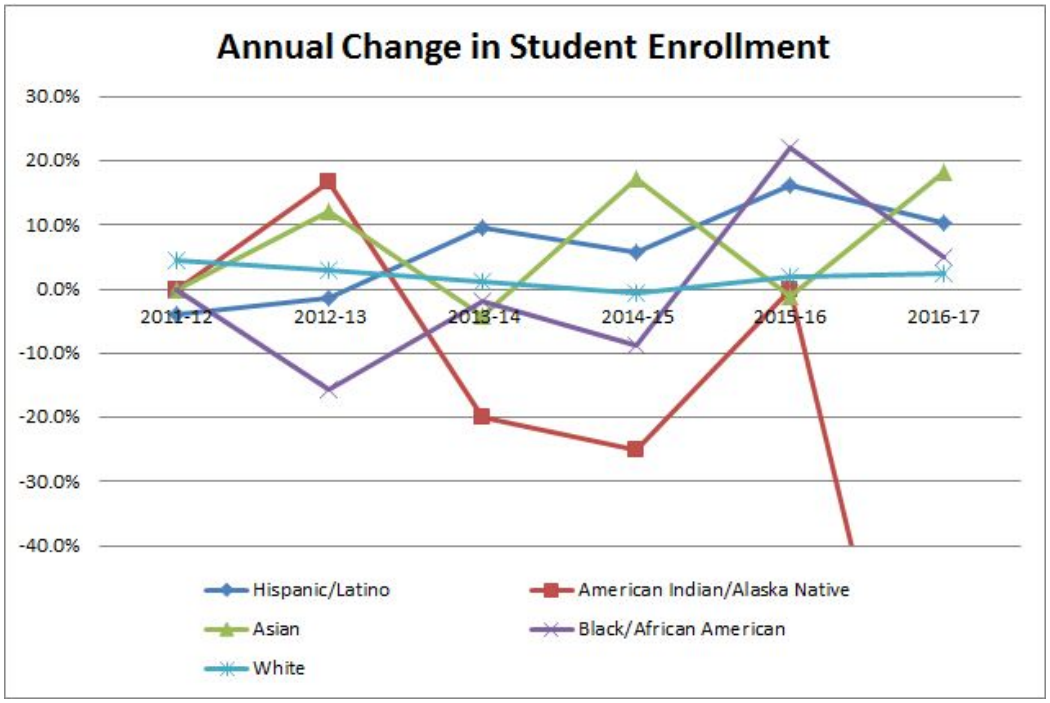

Figure 3.2: Percentage change in student enrollment from 2010-2017

It was clear that the student population closely mirrored the community in that the majority of students in grades 9-12 were White. This was consistent throughout the seven year period for which data was collected. However, within the last four years, the total population of students of color steadily increased; from 12.6% of the total student population in 2013-14 to 16.2% of the total student population in 2016-17. The data indicated an increasing number of students of color, and would support a plan to increase teacher competency in cultural responsiveness. As the number of students of color rose, it became evident that staff would need to adjust their skills to meet the needs of diverse learners. My school needed to take action, and on this journey we also found support and guidance from other educators who were further along the continuum of developing culturally responsive teachers.

Who Could Help?

This project included making several different types of connections with human resources to determine the best types of materials for the project. I leveraged the experiences of others, building my plan upon their successes and lessons learned as they moved towards greater cultural responsiveness. To understand how others' paths might shape my action plan, I sought guidance from two groups of people. First, I frequently met with and questioned the staff in my building who already are actively engaged in working with diverse student populations. Second, I connected with local experts: educators who had already begun their journey to greater cultural responsiveness. Each of the following sections will detail how I carried out this component of the project's creation.

Building staff. Within our building, we had several educators who already did excellent work with diverse student populations. They were adept at navigating cultural and linguistic differences, as well as helping students of color navigate academic and social issues. In particular, our teacher of Spanish for Heritage Speakers was a key player in bringing the project to life. This educator was tasked with supporting students of color in their academics, and served as a sounding board for students experiencing challenges with staff or peers. The Spanish Heritage teacher and our diversity interventionist also led the student Diversity Club, and were well known among students of color for championing equity and social justice. Under the guidance of this teacher and our diversity interventionist, the club became a safe haven for students of color to explore issues of race, tolerance, justice and history. Students felt supported by the teacher and the interventionist, and often came to these educators for advice and guidance. Since both educators worked so closely with students of color, I engaged them in all aspects of creating and presenting the project materials. These educators often worked quietly behind the scenes to support their students, but I intended with this project to make their expertise more visible to the whole staff. I asked them to be part of the team that participated in outreach to other districts and determined the final components of the project materials for cultural responsiveness.

Local experts. My project work included a series of informal interviews with educators and administrators in other local districts who have had experience implementing professional development in the area of culturally responsive teaching. Diversity has made its way to our third-tier suburb, and many districts close to ours have

already begun the work of cultural responsiveness. I met these educators in a variety of places: some at EdCamps with a focus on equity or racial/social injustice, some through courses at Hamline, some in my S.E.E.D. cohort[1], and still others through my personal network.

The personal contact and data collection took place through informal interviews. I created a series of talking points/questions, and initiated contact in person, via e-mail or by phone. The questions addressed the resources these educators had found to be effective in guiding teachers towards cultural responsiveness, as well as the challenges and successes they experienced on their journey. I compiled their responses and organized the information into several categories. Combined with the input from our building staff and members of our district Equity Leadership Team, this information guided the creation of my five sessions and their accompanying materials.

Summary. I discovered that the human resources network available in the area of culturally responsive teaching was a vast one! Harnessing that potential required the careful cultivation of a list of knowledgeable educators, as well as the thoughtful creation of a list of interview questions. Including the expert staff in my building, reaching out to skilled educators in neighboring districts, and exploring partnerships with organizations who champion educational equity; all of these enhanced the choice of materials for the staff in my building and lead us closer to our goal of developing cultural responsiveness.

What's the Project?

The final project is contained in a Google Slides deck. The link to the presentation is available in Appendix 3. This project is slated for use at the secondary level, with

teachers in a district that has yet to create an equity framework or district-wide equity training. The project was created for two primary reasons: to address a gap in equity education among educators in a district that is growing in diversity; and to create a grassroots network of knowledgeable teachers who could support and sustain a district-wide equity initiative.

Speaker notes are provided to assist in the delivery of materials and the leadership of each session. Supplementary materials are available. The five, hour-long sessions address building relationships, changing district demographics, personal culture, "colorblindness," white privilege and windows/mirrors in curriculum and products. In each session, there are opportunities for relationship building among the team members, as well as discussion points and interactive features (video, student photography, mini webquests, gallery walks and school tours). After each session, group members complete an assignment related to the the monthly theme. Time is allotted at the following session to present work and reflect in pairs or as a group.

Each session builds on the extensive work that district teachers have already done with personalized learning. At each meeting, teachers are asked to approach personalization through an equity lens. They learn to see that the cultural experiences, family traits, values and languages our students bring to school are assets to learning. Equity work is personalization: it asks us to know our students, their strengths and challenges. It compels us to see their race and their culture, and to understand how those parts of their identity inform their learning. Equity work asks us to examine our own

perspectives for evidence of privilege and bias. It challenges us to really hear people who are different from us, and to adjust what we do as educators to meet their needs.

This project is heavily influenced by the work of Geneva Gay (2000), Gloria Ladson-Billings (2001) and Sharroky Hollie (2011); experts and pioneers in the culturally responsive teaching movement. Culturally responsive teaching engages educators in the work of building bridges between their students' experiences, values, perspectives, cultures; the school community, and their content. The work of CRT helps educators to see beyond the colorblind instructional methods of the past, and move towards educational equity for all of the colors present in modern classrooms. Purposeful exploration of the key features of CRT, as well as opportunities for reflection and the development of one's cultural understanding play significant roles in this project, and the development of culturally competent educators.

In the initial user group, these professional development sessions will engage educators in the work of advancing their skills and knowledge through study, the exchanges of ideas and expertise, and dialogue. A small group is an appropriate place to begin this work, as it will challenge teachers to move out of their comfort zones. The limited size of the group will facilitate the building of relationships and will foster openness and vulnerability. Such work might be unsuccessful in a large-group setting, where it is harder to make personal connections.The work of enhancing their own skills leads educators to address questions or issues that impact student achievement and school climate (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The result is a stronger school community, one

where the educators on staff continually hone their craft and model lifelong learning for their students.

Reflection and self-awareness are also key components of this project, supported by the work of Hole and McEntee (1999), Costa and Kallick (2000). Reflection occurs when we consider, think and wonder. It allows us to puzzle through an event, make connections and organize our thoughts. It also provides an opportunity to question our actions and determine what we could have done differently. At times, reflection can also act as a catalyst, encouraging us to turn the results of our pondering into action. As such, reflection can provide clarity and bring about much-needed change. In education, whether reflection happens independently or among colleagues, it has the power to impact instruction and effect positive change for students.

The immediate impact of this project will be felt in my district, as the materials and meeting outlines are used to educate staff. I am hopeful that, with the careful crafting of the messages in the materials, staff will take the work to heart. Each session was created not to make teachers feel badly about themselves or their work, but to raise awareness and to encourage people to think differently about personalizing with equity.

Chapter Summary

What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching? My project began to take shape as I defined the participants and the process. It was undertaken respectfully and collaboratively, working with students and staff of color to determine what our community needs. It was understanding who our students are, and how our community is changing. It was outreach

to others who have already begun this work, and requesting support as we began our journey. It was knowing the resources available to us, and making the choice to use the ones that best fit our school's needs. This work was also knowing our audience, and how to craft a final product that was both appealing and effective in achieving our goal of culturally responsive professional development. This work was dialogue, critical listening, and care and honor for all of the colors present in our student body.

With a greater understanding of this project, we now move forward to chapter four. There, the project of developing professional development sessions for cultural responsiveness comes to fruition. The project will be executed over the course of several months, and chapter four will detail this process, as well as reflections, major learnings, a connection to the literature and final conclusions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

"All good people, won't you come around, hold up each other?"- Delta Rae

Introduction

From the beginning, the work of this capstone has been to harness the power of good people who can make a positive difference in the lives of students. Some of the good people who contributed to this project have written books, others are practical experts in culture and race relations. Some are lifelong warriors for social justice and equity, others are just beginning their journeys of self-discovery and cultural competence. These good people meet here, at the intersection of research, education, compassion and humanity. They embrace the diversity of our students and work to improve the ways we connect. I began this process by asking, *What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching?* Now, I draw this process to a close with a completed project: a series of materials for five monthly meetings of a learning community for educational equity.

In this chapter, I reflect on the process of creating this project, sharing what I have learned as a researcher and a writer. I return to the literature, making connections between my research and the outcome of my project. I address the limitations I encountered in creating the project. I examine the project's implications, determining how it might be used in the future, and who might benefit from the materials I have created. I explore their potential to engage more good people in education in the work of becoming culturally responsive. Finally, since my project addresses the very beginning of

developing cultural competence, I also suggest steps to take to continue the conversation after using the materials.

Major Learnings

My capstone project journey took a year to complete. As I reflect on what I have learned in the course of this work, two major points have become clear. First, the work of becoming a culturally responsive teacher (and human) begins not in learning about other cultures, but in knowing one's personal culture. To understand others' perspectives, we must first examine our own cultural influences, experiences, values and beliefs. Each of these components influences how we see the world and how we shape our interactions with others. I came to this realization and understanding of my own culture through much guided reflection, reading, and the exploration of my past. One of the most helpful tools in becoming aware of my personal culture was George Ella Lyon's poem, "Where I'm From" (1993). In this work, Lyon explored the influences of her past and how they had shaped her into the person she is. Undertaking the writing of a similar poem helped me define personal traits and beliefs, and to identify formative experiences in my life. Developing this self-awareness was powerful, and I chose to include the activity of writing a "Where I'm From" poem in my project materials. The work I have done to develop a strong sense of self now allows me the confidence and wisdom to help others on their journeys to better cultural competence.

Second, the work of becoming a more culturally competent educator does not happen in a vacuum! This is work that demands successful cooperation with others. As I completed various parts of my capstone, Freire's mantra of working "with, not for"

others was at the front of my mind (Freire, 2014). I learned to seek the input of others in the process of my capstone work, and to verify that the work was respectful to the experiences of people of color. I learned to ask questions of others; and while they responded, I listened to understand them rather than reply. The perspectives of others, especially the colleagues of color who read my work, had a powerful impact on the direction of the project. We collaborated to identify the gaps in knowledge about CRT/equity work in our district, and I worked with these colleagues to choose activities that would help to close those gaps. I found strength in these collaboration sessions: my colleagues' experiences and advice improved the project, and our relationships grew stronger as a result of the trust that grew between us. As my colleagues saw that I could be an ally in communicating messages of equity, they welcomed me, confided in me, and worked with me to begin effecting change. The work of creating my capstone project has helped me to understand the power in collaboration and the importance of listening. When both of these are done respectfully, the impact is profound.

A Return to Literature

What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching? The project in its completed form has become five, hour-long sessions for a learning community on educational equity. The sessions address building relationships, our changing district demographics, personal culture, "colorblindness," white privilege and windows/mirrors in curriculum and products. Based on best practices in delivering staff development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; O'Leary, 2017), learning is personalized to the needs of our staff, models effective

instructional strategies and engages teachers in learning content. Each session provides opportunities for relationship building among the team members, as well as discussion points and interactive features (video, student photography, mini webquests, gallery walks and school tours). After each session, members reflect and complete an assignment related to the the monthly theme. Time is allotted at the following session to present work and reflect in pairs or as a group (Costa & Kallick, 1999).

Each session builds on the extensive work that district teachers have already done with personalized learning. My district provides 1-1 technology (iPads) for all students, and is committed to personalizing learning through student voice/choice, pacing and learning styles. Personalization is an accessible idea for our district teachers, and they understand what it means to provide learning experiences that are unique to each student. At each of the project's sessions, teachers are asked to approach personalization through an equity lens. They learn to see that the cultural experiences, family traits, values and languages our students bring to school are assets to learning.

This project's goal is to help teachers see that equity work *is* personalization: it asks us to know our students, their strengths and challenges. It compels us to see their race and their culture, and to understand how those parts of their identity inform their learning. Equity work asks us to examine our own perspectives for evidence of privilege and bias. It challenges us to really hear people who are different from us, and to adjust what we do as educators to meet their needs.

This project is heavily influenced by the work of Geneva Gay (2000), Gloria Ladson-Billings (2001) and Sharroky Hollie (2011); experts and pioneers in the culturally

responsive teaching movement. Culturally responsive teaching engages educators in the work of building bridges between their students' experiences, values, perspectives, cultures; the school community, and their content. The work of CRT helps educators to see beyond the colorblind instructional methods of the past, and move towards educational equity for all of the colors present in modern classrooms (Gay, 2000). Districts must carefully guide educators' work in this area by creating with them a purposeful, collaborative dialogue around the ideas of teaching in culturally responsive ways. Purposeful exploration of the key features of CRT, as well as opportunities for reflection and the development of one's cultural competence play significant roles in this project, and the development of culturally competent educators.

This particular group engages educators in the work of advancing their skills and knowledge through study, the exchange of ideas and expertise, and dialogue (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The work of enhancing their own skills leads educators to address questions or issues that impact student achievement and school climate. The result is a stronger school community, one where the educators on staff continually hone their craft and model lifelong learning for their students.

Reflection and self-awareness are also key components of this project, supported by the work of Hole and McEntee (2000), Costa and Kallick (1999). Reflection occurs when we consider, think and wonder. It allows us to puzzle through an event, make connections and organize our thoughts. It also provides an opportunity to question our actions and determine what we could have done differently. At times, reflection can also act as a catalyst, encouraging us to turn the results of our pondering into action. As such,

reflection can provide clarity and bring about much-needed change. In education, whether reflection happens independently or among colleagues, it has the power to impact instruction and effect positive change for students.

Project Limitations

I encountered one limitation in the creation of this project and its materials: a change in action taken at the district level with regard to professional development in equity. Early in the writing of the first chapters of this capstone, my district had no plan for equity work visible on the horizon. I began my capstone work, envisioning my project as an action plan that would research methods of delivering professional development activities in equity and provide guidance for district leaders in the creation of an equity initiative. Five months into the writing of these chapters, the district created an Equity Leadership Team and began the work of equity training. While my capstone could still prove valuable to the work of the district, an action plan was no longer a feasible project. I sought counsel from both my capstone advisor and content expert to redirect my work. We agreed that the most valuable use of my research would be the creation of professional development sessions that could address gaps in understanding about equity issues and cultural competence. The project would also serve to create a grassroots network of knowledgeable educators who could support a district-wide equity initiative.

While this limitation caused extensive edits to already completed work, it also highlighted the importance of communicating early and often with all involved parties. Had I begun a dialogue with my district leadership when I began my capstone work, I would have been aware of their plans to undertake equity training. I could have planned

my research to fit into the district's long-term projects, rather than having to retrofit completed work to the discovery of the district plan. This limitation made clear that engaging participants in an early, open dialogue about my plans would have resulted in greater efficiency, a clearer purpose and a stronger partnership with leaders in my district.

Project Impact

The immediate impact of this project will be felt in my district, as the materials and meeting outlines are used to educate staff. I am hopeful that, with the careful crafting of the messages in the materials, staff will take the work to heart. Each session was created not to make teachers feel badly about themselves or their work, but to raise awareness and to encourage people to think differently about personalizing with equity. My hope is that the sessions will include educators from each department, so they can testify to the transformative power of equity work when they return to their colleagues. If we can already have knowledgeable, supportive staff in place when a district initiative comes out, we have a much better chance of seeing positive change. In creating the PLC and the materials to support it, I want to develop a network of staff who become passionate about addressing equity in our school.

If the materials in this project can help my building staff become strong advocates for equity, I can imagine that the long-term impact might include the use of these materials in other district buildings, as well as changes to policies and/or the strategic plan in our district. The meetings and materials would be an accessible start for educators at the elementary and middle levels who are beginning their equity journey. Though the bulk of the meetings' activities would remain the same, data and demographics could be

tailored to reflect the populations of students at each building for a more personalized experience. A unified start to the exploration of equity issues across the district could provide a common experience and vocabulary for all staff. The materials used in these sessions would then pave the way for formal professional development in the areas of cultural competence and equity.

These materials alone, though, will not be enough to create systemic change in my district. As we continue our equity journey, district leaders must be mindful that the end goal is the development of a formal equity framework and the examination of our district practices and policies. The materials in my project and the accompanying dialogue will be important, but they are not a complete solution. To achieve equity, we must examine our actions, daily practices and procedures, as well as our policies for evidence of equitable treatment. We must use the knowledge we acquire in these beginning steps to advance equity at the highest levels. It will be essential for this work to serve as a springboard for deeper dialogue about how our district policies address equitable practice for students of all races, cultures, creeds, genders and sexual orientations.

I envision this project also being a model for others who need materials for similar groups. Especially as schools in less diverse areas find themselves facing greater numbers of students of color, the materials in this project could provide a starting point for their staff. Project materials will be available through Hamline's Digital Commons archive, or from the author. As the project finds success in my district, I foresee that I may be asked to deliver its content in professional development sessions to educational

groups around the metro area. I might also be able to share expertise in working with other districts to help them create similar materials to educate their own staff.

What's Next?

Above all, the experience of creating this project has made clear to me how much equity work and cultural competence are a journey, and not a destination to be achieved. The activities contained in the project are a good start, but I (and other participants) must continue to educate ourselves and take action for equity in our schools. Our next personal steps should include further education, self-reflection and the examination of policies and practices. In my district, our long-term goals should include the development of an equity framework, the examination of district policies, and the coordination of a district-wide initiative to provide professional development in the areas of cultural responsiveness and educational equity.

Individuals completing the sessions in this project might choose to further their knowledge of the topic through book study or reading the works of respected educators in field of cultural responsiveness. I would suggest reading with a colleague (or small group), in order to be able to discuss the text and its implications. The resources listed in appendices 1 and 2 provide a series of books for further education. Additionally, I discovered three online sources that could provide support for educators who wish to continue their equity journeys.

The first, Teaching Tolerance (www.teachingtolerance.org) houses a vast collection of resources for educators. The site contains articles and professional development activities for individuals or small groups, including an incredible series of

timely webinars. Its website categorizes activities for professional development, use in the classroom, for developing teacher leadership skills and for addressing school climate issues. Teaching Tolerance also provides resources for curriculum planning, and guidance for leading discussions about race/equity/social justice issues with colleagues or students.

Zaretta Hammond (2017), an educator who writes for Teaching Tolerance, provides a wealth of material for educators on my second recommended resource: her blogs, www.ready4rigor.com and www.crtandthebrain.com/blog/. Clearly written, with suggested steps for further action at the classroom, school and district level; Hammond's posts compel educators to delve deeply into the work of equity and cultural responsiveness. Because her posts are short enough to digest quickly, but powerful enough to ensure reflection, Hammond's writings could easily serve as a starting point for periodic discussions among staff.

Finally, I recommend that educators wanting to increase their cultural competence connect themselves to a free network of online resources: Twitter. Though it might seem odd to suggest social media as an educational resource, Twitter can be an incredible tool for connecting with like-minded educators and activists. In coordinating this project, I often found resources by searching the websites of groups I had discovered by using equity and social justice hashtags. Twitter was one of the ways that I could connect to a larger community of equity experts, and to mine their work for activities and resources that would help achieve my project's goals. Twitter would be an especially helpful source of information for educators who lack local resources to develop their cultural

competence. By harnessing the power of social media, educators can connect to experts and colleagues engaged in the same work around the country. A list of Twitter hashtags I found useful to this project is provided in Appendix 5.

Chapter Summary

What kind of materials would be most effective for professional development sessions on culturally responsive teaching? The answer is found in a series of five professional development sessions on equity, created to help educators explore their own personal culture and examine issues of cultural competence. The answer includes materials that challenge teachers to reflect, to build relationships, and to examine their attitudes, beliefs and values. The answer is in materials that honor the work teachers do each day with students, but pushes them to see that work through a lens of equity. The most effective materials are the ones that have been tailored to the user group: coordinated with a knowledge of the people who will use them, the community in which they work, and most importantly, the students they will impact.

I began this project independently, and ended the work surrounded by a community of good people who cared about making our schools and classrooms more equitable, welcoming, respectful places. Creating this project has shown me the importance of seeking experiences with diverse groups of people. Deep relationships have grown through my willingness to reach out to others, listen to and learn from them. Their perspectives allow me to see the world through different eyes, and to work with them to effect change. This work has become a personal passion, and as I move forward,

I will look for additional professional opportunities to be an advocate for educational equity. All good people, won't you come around? Yes. I will.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 2.2

Culturally Responsive Teaching Resources for PLCs

Source:	Author(s):	Year published:	Summary and use:
Educating All Students: Creating Culturally Responsive Teachers, Classrooms and Schools (article)	Brown, Monica	2007	The article gives an overview of CRT and provides information on the preparation of teachers, the teacher actions present in CRT, and suggested classroom activities. A useful starting point for staff discussions.
Culturally Responsive Teaching, Second Edition (book)	Gay, Geneva	2010	Gay's work is frequently cited as one of the most influential texts in culturally responsive teaching. The text outlines the need for CRT, teacher roles and responsibilities, culturally responsive relationship building, culture and communication in the classroom, ethnic and cultural diversity in the curriculum, and cultural congruity in teaching and learning.
Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning (book)	Hollie, Sharroky	2011	Hollie's book serves as a primer on Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching. Provides teachers with strategies and suggestions to support their culturally and linguistically diverse students, in five pedagogical areas: classroom management, use of text, academic vocabulary, and situational appropriateness.
Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters! (article)	Kozaleski, Elizabeth	2010	Key features of CRT are the focus of this article. A definition of CRT is shared, along with

			information on why it should become the norm in U.S. schools. A useful introduction for staff, especially if used to evaluate readiness of staff to adopt CRT techniques.
The Will to Lead, the Skill to Teach: Transforming Schools at Every Level (book)	Muhammad, Anthony and Hollie, Sharroky	2012	An exploration of school improvement through self-examination and honest dialogue about socialization, bias, discrimination, and cultural insensitivity. The authors acknowledge both the structural and sociological issues that contribute to low-performing schools and offer multiple tools and strategies to assess and improve classroom management, increase literacy, establish academic vocabulary, and contribute to a healthier school culture.
To Be Free: Understanding and Eliminating Racism (book)	Peacock, Thomas and Wisuri, Marlene	2010	This work explores the roots and effects or racism in society. Emphasis is placed on understanding the experiences of people of color, and how racism affects their daily lives. The book facilitates discussions on preventing, reducing, and alleviating racism. A curriculum guide is also available.
Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools (book)	Singleton, Glenn E.	2014	Outlines the need for continued open, honest dialogue about race in education. This work aims to help educators understand why achievement inequity persists and how to develop an equitable, high-quality curriculum accessible to students of all colors. Contains guidance on orienting conversations about race within a

			"compass." Provides anecdotes and examples from school systems already engaging in this work, as well as suggested actions plans for school/district leaders.

APPENDIX 2

Table 2.3

Resources for White Educators

Source:	Author:	Year published:	Summary and use:
Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from High School Students (book)	Cushman, Kathleen	2005	Cushman collects anecdotes and practical advice for teachers from students in urban schools. Student contributions address ways to positively engage with diverse learners.
We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools (book)	Howard, Gary	2016	Howard addresses issues of race and social justice in education, with a focus on self-exploration and systemic change. Critical Race Theory, school reform, and culturally responsive teaching are discussed, and a reflection/discussion guide is provided for those using the text in professional development.
A White Teacher Talks about Race (book)	Landsman, Julie	2009	A discussion of race, privilege, poverty and school responsibility from the perspective of a veteran teacher. Landsman shares personal stories from her work with students

			of many cultures, describing and reflecting on a day in the life of her classroom.
White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack (article)	McIntosh, Peggy	1988	McIntosh provides a list of daily effects of white privilege for consideration and discussion.
Teacher Reflection and Race in Cultural Contexts: History, Meanings and Methods in Teaching (article)	Milner, H. Richard	2003	Milner offers insight into the practice of reflection with emphasis on diversity. A list of critical questions provides guidance for journaling or discussion.

APPENDIX 3
Project link

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/e/2PACX-1vQKmiGKvQONDmDFIqNRqoLhDF6N7-ZuZOP6BU2SESHEQ92h6sE-A8VNKVmwYeeDc9IoCcrl3OTY4Vdp/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=3000

APPENDIX 4
Project supplementary materials

PLC Meeting Assignment 1: Where I'm From Poem (template)

Where I'm From

I am from

_____

(a specific item from your childhood home)

from

_____

(two products or objects from your past)

I am from

_____

(a phrase describing your childhood home)

and

_____

(more description of your childhood home)

I am from

_____

(a plant, tree or natural item from your past)

whose

_____

(personify that natural item)

I am from

_____

(two objects from your past)

from _____and _____

(a family name) (another family name)

I am from _____and _____

(a family trait or tendency) (another family trait or tendency)

and from

_____

(another family trait, habit or tendency)

from

_____

(another family trait, habit or tendency)

I am from

_____

(a religious phrase or memory)

I am from _____and _____

(an ancestor) (another ancestor)

from

_____

(two foods from your family history)

from

_____

(a specific event in the life of an ancestor)

and from

_____

(another detail from the life of an ancestor)

from

_____

(a memory or object you had as a child)

I am from those moments

_____

_____

(conclude by finishing this thought or by repeating a line or idea from earlier in the poem)

Template created by Mauri Deer, 2016. Adapted from George Ella Lyon's poem, "Where I'm From," 1993.

PLC Meeting Assignment 2: Student and teacher identity chart

Student	Teacher
Who is in the room? Consider... ● Nationality ● Race ● Gender ● Ethnicity ● Languages spoken ● Countries of origin	What's your own identity? ● Nationality ● Race ● Gender ● Ethnicity ● Languages spoken ● Countries of origin

Template created by Mauri Deer, 2017.

PLC Meeting Assignment 3: Delpit article from Teaching Tolerance

Lessons From Home Issue 14, Fall 1998 September 1, 1998

Lisa D. Delpit was among the first wave of Black students to integrate White high schools in Louisiana -- an experience that influenced her interests in ethnographic research, teaching and learning in multicultural societies, and the dynamics of inequality in public schools. She has studied these issues in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the U.S.

In addition to teaching pre-service and in-service teachers, Delpit has assisted in national school reform efforts and the creation of urban leadership programs for educators. In 1990, she earned a MacArthur Fellowship for her work on school- community relations and cross-cultural communication. In 1993, Delpit received the award for Outstanding Contribution to Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The author of Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom, she currently holds the Benjamin E. Mays Chair of Urban Educational Leadership at Georgia State University in Atlanta, where she is establishing the Center for Urban Educational Excellence.

Teaching Tolerance Associate Director Glenda Valentine interviewed Delpit in Atlanta.

IN YOUR BOOK, OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN, YOU DISCUSS THE "CULTURE OF POWER" THAT IMPLICITLY CATEGORIZES STUDENTS INTO ACADEMIC "HAVES" AND "HAVE-NOTS". WHAT DOES THIS CULTURE LOOK LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM?

Sometimes the power issues have to do with how well what children learn at home matches what is presented to them in the classroom. For example, I taught a 6-year-old who couldn't do worksheets on money. It would have been very easy for this child to be put into a special ed classroom -- and I was almost ready to do that as a new teacher -- because he could not do these worksheets.

It wasn't until I learned about his home situation, visited his home and saw what he was capable of doing -- he had to take care of his younger sister who had cerebral palsy, and he had to do the family laundry -- that I realized this was a child who was extremely competent. He could "do" money because he could get all the change needed to do the laundry, he just couldn't do a worksheet on money. He had advanced skills in critical and creative thinking but didn't have what we call "basic skills."

In reality, what many teachers call "basic skills" are only those skills that middle-class children gain in the first five years of life from their homes. We need to appreciate the skills all kids bring in and give them opportunities to express those skills and teach them the ones that they don't bring in.

Students who are middle-class tend to have an advantage because their home background often matches that of most teachers. Teachers need to spend some time helping these children learn to solve problems that, in many instances, they can't solve because they've been so dependent on their parents. For kids who come from other families, the focus may need to be on so-called basic skills. In any case, problem-solving and skill-building need to be taught by the teacher without the assumption that a child is deficient if he or she doesn't come in with what we consider basic

skills.

LANGUAGE IS AMONG THE BASIC SKILLS YOU REFER TO. HOW CAN TEACHERS BEGIN TO VALUE STUDENTS' HOME LANGUAGE WHILE TEACHING THEM THE VERBAL SKILLS NEEDED TO NEGOTIATE THE LARGER SOCIETY?

Most children of color have a receptive knowledge of "standard English." I usually use the term "edited English." Some people call it "paycheck English." It's just a matter of giving children the opportunity to practice speaking it so that they are accustomed to having a different role from what they have at home.

What some teachers have done is to let students make dictionaries with certain words that they feel adults -- or White people, or whoever -- wouldn't know. The students provide definitions or translations of what the word would mean in "standard English"; for example, to dis, which means "put down, disrespect, ignore," or da bomb, meaning "something great."

For very young kids, there is the opportunity for role-play. The approach should not be "we're going to change your language" in any way, but, using puppets for instance, the teacher can ask the child if he or she can make the puppet talk like a particular superhero on television. Many "superheroes" and other cartoon characters speak almost hyper-correct standard English. For older children, I've seen teachers have kids simulate newscasts where they are to take on the role of one of the local or national newscasters.

BRIDGING BETWEEN STANDARD AND ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ENGLISH IS A COMPLEX TASK. WHAT LESSONS DOES THE EBONICS CONTROVERSY OFFER?

Carrie Secret, a wonderful teacher in Oakland, has a unique approach to Ebonics. She has children listen to the recorded sermons of very dynamic ministers, discuss their meanings, and talk about the complex vocabulary in them. Then the children create performances of the sermons.

One of those sermons is on eagles and chickens. Somehow two eagle eggs are put in a chicken coop. The eggs hatch, and all the chickens tease the eagles, saying they are the ugliest chickens they've ever seen. Although the eagles are capable of flying, they don't fly because -- living among chickens -- they never learn that they can. Finally, an adult eagle flies into the coop and tells the young eagles that they are not chickens, they are eagles and -- the eagles find they can fly!

The story is a metaphor for African Americans being taken out of their homeland and then told that they are poor examples of someone else. The children do an amazing performance of that sermon with each student dramatically reciting a portion of the speech. Carrie never tells students that their language is wrong or incorrect. She says, "That's how it's said in Ebonics. Now can you translate it into English?"

The children watch videotapes of their performances and critique each other. As they keep practicing the performance, they identify and remove elements of Ebonics and perform it in standard English.

Carrie's students, in some ways, were at the center of the Ebonics controversy. Her children, from

poor African-American families in Oakland, performed well on all measures of assessment. When the Oakland Board of Education members were made aware of her "Ebonics/standard English proficiency" activities, they wanted to institutionalize her approach for all Oakland students, and thus the controversy.

ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE POWER ISSUE INVOLVES THE TEACHER'S PERSONAL AUTHORITY IN THE CLASSROOM. HOW CAN WHITE TEACHERS OF DIVERSE STUDENTS ASSERT THE AUTHORITY NECESSARY TO TEACH EFFECTIVELY WITHOUT PERPETUATING THE "CULTURE OF POWER"?

I want to talk about it culturally rather than racially. There are young Black teachers who were brought up in a nontraditional Black culture who are more mainstream in their upbringing and would have problems similar to some White teachers. And there are White teachers so familiar with the culture of the African-American children they teach that they produce excellent results.

In asserting personal authority, the key is not to look to change who you are. Instead, there are certain areas one can focus on to seek solutions when problems arise. For example, turning a directive into a question -- "Would you like to sit down now?" or "Isn't it time to put the scissors away?" -- is a polite form of speech that is a mainstream, particularly female, structure. Many kids will not respond to that structure because commands are not couched as questions in their home culture. Rather than asking questions, some teachers need to learn to say, "Put the scissors away" and "Sit down now" or "Please sit down now."

This issue is complex, but, in brief, many of the difficulties teachers encounter with children who are different in background from themselves are related to culturally different discourse styles and interactional styles.

WHAT SIGNS OF "CULTURAL DISSONANCE" CAN TEACHERS LOOK FOR TO LET THEM KNOW THEY'RE NOT CONNECTING WITH CERTAIN CHILDREN?

Oh, I think teachers know! I don't think they have to look very hard! The students let them know when they're not connected. If they're quiet kids, they don't perform. These kids will just turn off to the setting. Many will silence themselves or feel silenced and retreat intellectually and emotionally from what's going on in the classroom. Others act out or resist the teacher. Even with very quiet children, it's not that hard to connect if a teacher starts with the assumption that "these children are brilliant, and it's my job to bring their brilliance to the fore."

That's why it's very important to try and find out what these children's lives look like outside the classroom. How is their intelligence manifested? I have yet to find a child whose intelligence is not manifested in some setting.

HOW CAN TEACHERS ENLIST THE HELP OF PARENTS IN THIS DISCOVERY PROCESS?

Well, I've found that most schools don't really want parent involvement. They want people to sell brownies and go home and be quiet. And I speak as a parent! Schools need to rethink what their needs are regarding family involvement. Everything that we talk about is how to get the parent to the school. We really do have to start thinking about how to get the school to the parent.

I was working with a school where parents didn't come, and I suggested we have a meeting at the housing project community center. We did and parents came. When it was a small group of parents, one would say, "Well, I know that so-and-so is home," and they would go and get that person. If the meeting was focused on how the school could improve what it was

doing for African-American kids, then parents or grandparents or aunts or uncles were much more likely to come, as opposed to a meeting where we said, "Come to this, and we'll teach you how to be a better parent."

There are so many ways to involve parents, but they start with asking -- with a phone call. A good place to start is by asking, "How do you want to help your child?" Find out if there is someone else who can stand in for a parent, if necessary -- someone you can or should send packets home to. But don't just send printed matter home. If you want to establish a relationship with African-American parents, you make personal contact, either face-to-face or with a phone call. And that's probably the case in a lot of cultures.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS SHOULD PLAY IN PREPARING TEACHERS FOR CULTURAL FACTORS IN THE CLASSROOM?

We tend to focus teacher education on the technical. The "how to teach two-digit addition" is necessary but not sufficient. We need to give teachers opportunities to learn to connect to children's families. Or to figure out how to do community organizing and how to create settings that bring people together.

As far as I know, in teacher ed settings, we never give pre-service teachers any experience in presenting children's performances. That is one of the ways you almost always bring parents out. We usually don't bring community people into university classrooms to say to pre-service teachers, "These are the issues we are dealing with in our community, and these are the goals we have for our children."

I believe some of the field-based student teaching shouldn't be in schools but should be in community centers and other settings in which children function outside the classroom. This way, initiate teachers could get a better sense of who the students are.

I think we need to spend more time exploring how we interact with parents, not just telling parents how their children are doing in school but asking questions and finding out who their children are at home.

PLC Meeting Assignment 4: Teacher reflection on diversity in products

As you work with students this month, examine your products for evidence of diversity and cultural responsiveness.

Some products to consider…

- Do photos in visual presentations reflect the diversity of students in your classroom? (Prezi, PowerPoint, Google Slides, self-made YouTube videos, infographics like Piktochart, games like Kahoot! or Quizlet, etc.) Can a student of color easily see him/herself reflected in the materials?
- Do visuals in your room reflect the diversity of students in your classroom? (Posters, flyers, photos, etc.)
- Is student work highlighted / posted?
- In your curriculum, do you take advantage of opportunities to show videos or present stories/historical information from the perspectives of native people or people of color?
- If families are a topic…do you present material or have photos that represent a variety of families? (Blended families, adopted children, mixed-race families, same-sex parents, single parents, children living with relatives, large extended families, etc.)
- If professions are a topic… do you highlight women and people of color in a variety of professional roles? Do you avoid stereotypical representations?

Reflections:

Template created by Mauri Deer, 2017.

APPENDIX 5
Useful Twitter handles and hashtags

I found the following Twitter handles and hashtags to be useful sources of timely information, as well as links to research and resources for equity work.

@Tolerance_org
@edutopia
@GLSEN
@GLSENResearch
@MixITUpatLunch
@AllOurChildren
@EduColorMVMT
@PFLAG
@HRC
@NAACP
@ACLU

#hateatschool
#safetypin
#selfcare
#Civility2016
#SoJustEdu
#Edequity
#EduColor
#FacingRace