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Using a culturally relevant text effectively to support diversity, racial equity, and school community building

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USING A CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEXT EFFECTIVELY TO SUPPORT
DIVERSITY, RACIAL EQUITY, AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY BUILDING

By
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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in Literacy Education

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Rau kuv txiv Daj Xeeb Yaj, tus tsis txwv nws tus txhais txoj kev kawm ntawv siab.

Rau kuv niam Choo Lauj, tus uas siab ntev thiab muaj ib lub siab loj.

Kuv hlub nes heev.

(To my dad, Da Seng Yang, the one that did not permit his daughter's higher education.

To my mom, Shong Lor, the one who is patient and has a big heart.

I love you both very much.)

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction and Background

As our district changes its vision this year to focusing on equity, initiatives are sought out to decrease the Racial Achievement Gap. I started out in my district as an interventionist but accepting my current position as an Equity Specialist now allows me to focus and go in depth in looking at some issues many schools face. The district I work in is one of many in Minnesota that needs to respond and find a resolution to the Racial Achievement Gap. Many may refer to this as what the Minnesota Department of Education recognizes (2015) as the Achievement Gap. Minnesota's Department of Education refers to it as the differences between groups of students' academic success (2015). When using the perspective of a racial lens, results display the actual disparity between students of color and white students' academic success. This is the perspective that the Department of Equity and Integration in my district acknowledges, practices, and emphasizes. In particular, this gap includes the literacy achievement between both students of color and white students as it shows test scores of white students being significantly higher than students of color.

With this existence, I think about what changes are needed and why. Are there conscious, subconscious, and unconscious actions that have contributed to this tragic

reality? I narrow down my thinking and wonder if literacy is being negatively reinforced, impacting this existence. I also think about what ways literacy has been utilized to decrease this disparity. I question how much of diversity is reflected or implemented in our curriculum and instruction, representing the make up in our classrooms. In addition, I wonder how many educators question and allow students to question the content that is already in place within our current curriculum. Is there a bias towards a group of people that we are not aware of? How has society impacted our ways of perceiving certain students? These are all questions I consider and focus more closely on as my department works towards providing equitable education for all.

Throughout this chapter, I will share my experiences in my current role as well as my experiences as a child. As I discuss my childhood life and personal literacy experiences within this chapter, I not only reflect on my past experiences but on the current experiences of many students, those in my district and in this country. What I mean by this is to say that students may very well share some similar experiences I have faced, but this is not to say that all students who are Asians, Hmong, from low-income, or had parents who were formerly refugees must have had share the same life and education experiences that I have had.

Often times when I reflect and or compare my life to others as well as look at my school's data, I often find myself thinking about the response given at a panel distinguishing the difference between equality and equity. Dr. Stanly Brown (2014) voluntarily put it in a form that was easily comprehended: "Equality means everyone gets a pair of shoes, but equity means everyone gets a pair of shoes that fits." Automatically

applying this to literacy, I took this response and substituted “shoes” for “books.” Every student gets the opportunity to read books or have books read to them, but does every student get the opportunity to read or work with books that suit him or her? If we do provide some books representative of some of our students of color, how are we going about them? This thought lead me to wonder about our current literacy-related practices and if they are suitable for our current students.

By now we seem to have achieved some sense of equality because the students at my school look different from one another and come from different places, but I wonder if our practices are somehow negatively reinforcing inequity thus hindering some students’ learning. Specifically, I wonder about such things as how much representation reflects students of color. Do we have materials that consist of students of color? Do we acknowledge multiple perspectives? Are our instructions guiding us to be culturally responsive?

At my former school, still in the same district, a reading program called “One School, On Book” was in place. One of the key notions of this program is to provide all staff and every student a book to keep. This allows students to engage in activities and discussions at school which they can bring to their homes, thus providing opportunities to connect with families. The notion of using literacy to make connections outside of school is a great idea, yet I have noticed that the past three books chosen in the last three years all contained white characters: *Humphrey* by Betty G. Birney, *Charlotte’s Web* by E. B. White, and *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo. None of the questions for students to think about mentions how the storyline would be affected had the characters been of

different races or had come from different communities. Actions such as this makes me question our curriculum and instruction; is our curriculum and instruction actually supportive of our current classroom make up?

As I reflect on experiences our students of color go through in school, I cannot avoid reflecting on my own experiences with literacy. As a professional, I wonder how opportunities we provide can be adjusted to promote literacy achievement for the marginalized students. If students can relate to what they read and see themselves going through the experiences and ideas presented in texts that they encounter at some point during the half day spent at school, maybe their literacy performance can positively be impacted. If discussions surround the topics of privileges, stereotypes, and what's considered the "norm," I wonder what impact school and literacy would make upon our learners. Maybe students can make connections that encourages positive self-esteem, literacy activities, builds motivation for learning, and generates ideas for positive outlook. With many thoughts about the impact of texts upon students, I have set my inquiry around this capstone question: "*How can a culturally relevant text be used effectively to support diversity, racial equity, and school community building?.*" As much as literacy surrounds us, there are barriers that hinders the discovery of interest in literacy. I, for one, have had the experience.

My Early Years

As I begin to share my past experiences, I will start off with my early years, years that have influenced my life, learning, and perspective. I find it vital to share my personal experiences because I am a student of color. I am Asian, specifically Hmong. I am a

minority as far as presence of my kind compared to other races. I was the first and only American born child. My family did not have much coming to this foreign country. We received charity which the concept I was unknown to as a child. In addition, I grew up speaking two languages but my parents primarily spoke Hmong to me and my siblings. It's sad and interesting how some would say that I possess such barriers to obtaining a sufficient academic education. I will share my experiences and in the following sections. My purpose of this is to present real scenarios I have lived through and, from them, how this topic affects me personally and my work.

My elementary school ran from K-7th grade. All my teachers were white and many were females. We had one female black principal, Mrs. Floyd, but she left a few years after I started school. As far as student population, there was not one race that overly dominated another. At least it was not apparent to me. I enjoyed my early education years, and the school had its impact on both me and my siblings. Even until this day, you can still hear my oldest brother say to his wife or to his own sixth grader, "No Put Downs, Pass It Around." That was our school's motto, and none of us seemed to have ever forgotten it. My primary school made me feel accepted and welcomed.

These were positive moments that I have left of my elementary years along with some tangible objects. People have yearbooks that they store, but with a family of five kids to two young and responsible immigrants who worked to get paid at a minimum wage, I personally did not own any. I still do have what was free to me though: one uniform shirt and literacy awards. Among many, I had an award for being an outstanding ESL student. I find this interesting because the acknowledgment of being an outstanding

ESL student was not one of my highlighted memories.

On this topic of ESL, I recall the time when I went to my cousin's school to receive this award. I asked her if she was going to get awarded, and she said something along the lines of how the event was only for those who had ESL. This gave me a negative feeling. I probably was set back by what my cousin said and likely did not recall the award because I had only taken one ESL class back in the first grade and did not consider myself as an ESL student afterwards. I had never struggled speaking English nor had others provided the same impression or shown that they were unable to understand me during those years. Besides this, I was brought up using both languages at a very young age. I claimed to be a native English speaker, and I claimed to be a native Hmong speaker. You see, being labeled as ESL provided a negative connotation. We embrace learning a second language in school, but having ESL classes is not embraced in the same way. It meant being different and not included. It meant that because I grew up knowing and speaking another language, it did not support my learning in school. Such notions are relative to microaggressions, subtle insults that can be verbal, nonverbal, and or even visual that are usually targeting people of color (Soloranzo, 2001). I'll even admit that within my siblings we make fun of each other taking ESL, but why?

My parents did not grow up learning the English language and attempted ESL evening classes at their own will. They worked an eight hour shift on weekdays and depended on my older sister to keep us in check. She ensured my parents that we got fed before school and were finished with our homework before dinner. She checked our homework as it was in English and when my dad had time, he provided me math

practices.

Living in Syracuse, New York, I was among other ethnicities and races and felt indifferent to my surroundings. Italians were our next door neighbors. Vietnamese families lived across the street. White families lived upstairs to us. Black families lived on the same block, and we shared the same slides and after school community center. Although we were aware of our differences, we all walked on the same sidewalks. So in school, I seemed to not be conscious of which ethnicity or race was “dominant” among the students, and I wonder if it is because the minorities represented the majority.

Walking into the two schools in my district, I observe that the majority of the teachers do not reflect the students as far as physical appearances just like my childhood experience. The increase in students of color continues and we see our once suburban area now being populated with students of color. To add on, we also see that dropout rates continue and represent majority of students of color. In addition, yearly reports come back stating that these students are below their reading grade level. Our MCA 2013 data reports the disparity is evidently visible between students of color and white students and several teachers say one change has been the demographics. Others say it is the background and families that these students come from. I wonder if my primary teachers had the same thought. Yet, neither my siblings nor I dropped out of high school. And even as my father was unable to read all the notes sent home or knew how the school system functioned, we made it through.

Literacy Experience

Moving specifically into my literacy experiences, I'll start off by revealing one

similar experience I have with many students in general: the thoughts on reading. Within my school leveled years, I have a few specific memories that will remain with me. I always knew at an early age that reading was something that I did not prefer. I mostly read when I had to: during and for school. Interestingly, I would go to my public library often as I was introduced to this routine by my oldest sister. Yet when there, I most often read books that I was already familiar with, or I went there to borrow movies.

Although I lacked interest in reading, I have to admit that I did enjoy reading my own writing. I liked to write poems and read them over and over. In addition, there was this one nursery rhyme book that I did not get bored of. Despite not having reading as a personal and priority preference, I actually enjoyed reading out loud. I was in control when I read, and how I used my voice was up to me as long as I sounded like what was in print and as long as I was aligned with the appropriate expression. The ability to formulate the sentences in any tone and matching it with its punctuation was fun for me. I knew the role play: pause at a comma, stop at a period, use emphasis with an exclamation point, and use expression with quotation marks. Referring to the last thing on that list concerning expression, I knew that with enough information I could pair up a nice, appropriate tone and expression to whatever kind of dialogue was presented in the text. As I'm on this note of education and reading, I recall three specific instances that has impacted my life and perspective.

In high school as I was seated in my tenth grade English class, I confidently raised my hand to read out loud. There were rarely any volunteers. With a smile, I was denied the opportunity by my teacher. I would have been fine not being the one chosen to read,

but it was the fact that she said, "because I like the way he reads." Although I was aware that this same student seemed to be honored the privilege of reading out loud quite often, the fact of the matter was that this educator stated her preference for whom she implied read better or sounded better. All I wanted to do was exercise my voice and practice the reading aloud. Little did I know that I would be reflecting on this moment several years later.

Then there was the time when an African American boy questioned if I was mixed because I "spoke very good English, not like those other Asians." This was the moment that, I hated to admit, scarred me. I knew my appearance meant I was different, but wasn't this world already mixed up with a little bit of everything by now, the 2000s? Even if I now lived in the South, was there a real recognition for an Asian minority who could speak the "Standard American English" or a real recognition that this Asian could not? Maybe it was after these two experiences that made my distinctively third experience a never forgotten one.

After graduating from high school and community college, I was located at the university. In one of my courses, I asked a question or rather expressed a confusion that the instructor could not figure out. It wasn't the fact that he could not understand what I was trying to say, but rather it was the fact that he had an ugly impression on his face while simply flat out telling me he could not understand me. Without further questions to help me reformulate my uncertainties, I was dumbfounded and could not utter much. Then a boy diagonally in back of me rephrased what I said and the instructor understood him, giving a warm smile back to that kind young man. I could not make sense of what

had happened except with the rationale that this other student understood me, and the instructor understood this other student but not me. I knew that I felt really uncomfortable and, to some extent, unliked because I actually felt feeling strange and left out rather than being helped or feeling relieved.

With several flashbacks and reflections on my past, I tend to implement things I have acquired through trainings and discussion since being an Equity Specialist. One particular tool I use often is the Courageous Conversation Protocol (Singleton & Linton, 2005). Using Glen Singleton's (2005) "Six Conditions," to having a Courageous Conversation, I follow the practice by "isolating race." Now going back to my high school English class, all I can honestly realize from that moment is that this white teacher chose this white student to perform the task of "orally" reading, discriminating against me because I did not reflect how she looked like or did not speak with the same dialect as she spoke (although it was confirmed by another student, a student of color, that I spoke "very good English"). Going back to my college course, the white instructor could not understand me but understood the white student who had no problem understanding the words I had spoken. These experiences may explain why I feel more at ease when speaking to my own peers, and this is what we as educators may find evident in our classrooms. Students are more willing to work with peers or speak in small groups and those that volunteer to read may be those who speak the "correct" way –those who do not second think the way they speak because maybe they have never had anyone singled them out. Or maybe those who are willing to speak have not experienced the feeling of being discriminated against or have not been acknowledge that they were different,

different to the extent that they are not part of the norm or were not originally included as being part of the norm. I will refer back to that one high school student who was surprised by the way I spoke English. If one of Glenn Singleton's (2015) implications was that within *Courageous Conversations* we understand differences and how things are perceived by others and its derivation, maybe the use of this could have helped not just adults but students understand each other, society, and what society is teaching us.

Despite my discouraging moments, I still love to read out loud from time to time and write creatively. Creative Writing in high school was the best course I had taken during those years; although, I hated the corrections and the deducted points on my assignments. I felt the grade should have reflected the content, not the grammar or language usage. It was this unfair and unjustified feeling that made me realize that although I was able to speak and use the mainstream English, I wanted to also speak and use the non-mainstream English. I felt this other English was just as acceptable as the required one. This other language was what I was also comfortable with and could relate to. This other language encouraged me to read more, pause, smile, and think of the text. This is why I had interest in certain types of text and certain novels, which I later discovered on my own.

I remembered distinctively just two novels that I personally enjoyed in secondary school. Whether I was aware or not, these two novels had minority characters. Quite interestingly, one setting was in the city and the other was in a foreign country. Honestly, as I initially wrote the first draft to this chapter I realized a connection I have never thought of before. I felt that I lived in a city just like Bobby lived in a city in Angela

Johnson's *The First Part Last*. I also had heard and seen in movies of the many experiences and things in a foreign country such as the one that my parents are from. Koly's life in Gloria Whelan's *Homeless Bird* takes place in a foreign country and her experiences are experiences that I can possibly believe even as they are un-American. These young adult novels reflected the multiple cultures I was used to, those that reflected my world. It was sad that I had to find these novels on my own or that I unintentionally came across them during my high school years. I could have been reading more books and enjoying the read-alouds especially to the voices such as Bobby. Angela Johnson included the non-mainstream language in the dialogues of her book, and I enjoyed that because it made me feel good.

Motives and Actions

As a human being, I am quite surprised at how much race and differences have impacted our society and school systems. As an educator and learner, I am sad. I sit during the Equity meetings at my school and observe what's being said and what's going on. We talk about how to connect with families or how to do it more and then I see another book being chosen for everyone in the school that has a main white character. The current conversations that follows our initial motives to support our district's vision surround how this is just "another thing to do". The notion of how the demographics are changing and affecting test scores, disrupts my mindset because of my experience.

With my role, I see the importance of having educators being truthfully able to practice being learners just as we expect of our students. This will allow us to move through this equity journey that will cause us to examine this country's social construct

that impacts race and our education system. Examining how our society functions, our own selves, and how it affects our students of color will contribute to our work in closing the racial achievement gap.

So as I focus on literacy, I think about what texts we have available. The truth is in general we lack books with African American/Black representation, and so we lack experiences and perspectives that are usual for many of our students. With this action research project, I want to present how powerful one single text can be. With great considerations of my district's achievement disparity, I will emphasize on African Americans; therefore the texts I mention will be of African American Children's literature. Because I work in an elementary school, I will stick to applying my action research to the elementary level.

As Gloria Ladson-Billings (2014) shared at the MN-NAME conference her belief of how everyone should be proficient in another culture, but she also pointed out that it does not mean that once one is proficient, he or she is now a person of the culture. Now I believe her point was that learning about it means to know more, not know it all. So, let's start with learning something; let's start by learning from discussions that arise from using just one text, one that is reflective of our students of color: Blacks/African Americans. My purpose for narrowing down my selection to just African American literature is to maintain focus and again to be more relevant to my current work, yet the concept and usage of a culturally relevant text can be applied to other cultures, ethnicities, or races. It is also important to mention that even if a school or classroom does not contain majority of students of color, it only does better to examine literature

with different meanings and perspectives. Through this project, I look forward to presenting ideas that will be beneficial for a school community: both the students and educators.

Summary

As I wonder about the many things students are exposed to and the things they experience as they don't reflect majority of their educators, I wonder if the books chosen to read to our students reflect only white people or the white culture. Or, perhaps educators do already read books that have characters that reflect our African American or Black students. How many teachers feel comfortable exploring these texts in depth: discussing the lifestyle differences, perspectives, and or the language. The things we do and choose to use can greatly impact and influence our learners. So as I ponder about the Racial Achievement gap, the students grouped together for intervention, the different perspectives (educator and student), and how two students from different schools question and wonder about the way I speak, I have committed to exploring my capstone topic: *"How can a culturally relevant text be used effectively to support diversity, racial equity, and school community building?"*

In the next chapter, I cover the literature review and touch base on the influences of our school systems, African Americans' perspectives of their education system, African American children's literature and its benefits, and suggestions to support meaningful discussions. These areas are covered within three sections: Critical Race Theory and the Impact on Students. Culturally Responsive Literature in the Classroom. Guidance for Text Discussions. In the chapters that follow the literature review, I provide

my method of collecting data: support for in depth discussion and comprehension as well as the appropriate texts to use. Also included are the ways I personally plan to integrate some of the texts into my work setting.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

Working towards supporting our district's vision and mission for this school year, our goals include, but are not limited to, culturally relevant teaching, and amplifying student voice. As I take these initial starters into consideration, I look forward to opportunities that will support staff. I've come to realize an important factor just the past several months working in this new position. I am constantly reminded of how we as humans do not know what we don't know and that several difficulties because of that. I therefore question if we know that inequity exists in our school systems and or in what ways? How are we going about it? Are we able to or how much are we trying to work towards being equitable? In taking steps to present how our school system has limitations for certain students and how our practices can break these disadvantages, I will present in this chapter the research literature that focuses on our educational system, the importance of culturally relevant texts, and the impact of using culturally relevant texts in the classroom.

In the first section, I review Critical Race Theory and provide information applicable to our education system. I address the school structure and go over what the

literature suggests we lack because of our norms. In the second section, I go over what it means to be culturally responsive and the rationale as well as its positive impacts. I go on to mention how our school culture can influence literature that impacts our marginalized groups, specifically African American/Black students. In addition, I mention how being culturally responsive is key to discussions, learning, and building relationships in our classrooms. In the third section, I provide suggestions, activities, and guidance for discussions within the classroom that support culturally responsive instruction and strategies.

As I think about “*How can a culturally relevant text be used effectively to support diversity, racial equity, and school community building?*,” my journey grants me an opportunity to understand more about what inequities exist in our schools and what steps to take in making changes that are supportive to student learning and building a school community.

Critical Race Theory and the Impact on Students

In the previous chapter, I provided the difference between equality and equity. As a reminder for this action research project, I specifically refer to equity in the racial lens. It is important to know that the Racial Achievement Gap reveals disparities between racial groups; therefore, I speak of racial equity/inequity when using the term “equity” or “inequity”. In understanding what racial inequities might exist and how it impact students, I go cover Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory, according to Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2012), is a perspective or an ideology that supports the understanding of non-white views. This

theory was first coined by Dr. Derrick Bell, deriving from legal studies and feminism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). With the understanding of how one view point can explain and expand the reasoning of things, of how things are what they are or have become to be, this provides an outlet to understand how complex Critical Race Theory is and its relevance in education. Of course the examination of race and its impact on humans is a primary focus.

The basic tenets that are included in this theory further explains this and what it looks like. One important tenet is that “Racism is normal.” The theory holds that racism is so ordinary that it is part of our society and is definitely part of what many people of this country experience. As it is imbedded in our country, it is difficult to address and make changes (Delgado & Stefancic, p. 7). Considering this tenant in our education system, I reflect on things we have in place that is the school norm set to be abide by many students such as what they are to learn, the curriculum, and instruction for teaching. I also think about how these same things are also hindrances or are providing the sense of feeling uncomfortable for many as well.

School system reflects dominant culture. It is not new information that, for the majority, our teachers do not represent their students of color in the classrooms. Research according to Lewis (2006) and the U.S. Department of Education (2004), “reports that almost 87% of the United States elementary and secondary teachers are White” (as cited in Douglas et al., 2008, p. 48). For many, staff does not mirror our student population. The diversity seen with students is not equal to the diversity with staff. There may even be a difference in positions held by staff as far as race. My school alone has only five

full-time staff members of color: one teacher, one custodian, one support staff, and two education assistants.

Besides the fact that our staff does not mirror the students we educate, our school systems are built based on the dominant culture (Douglas et al., 2008). This, for an example, describes the things we are required to read and are exposed to in schools, including the school structure itself. With the increase of students of color (Douglas et al., 2008), and the existence of marginalizing non-white cultures, our school system is displaying values that discriminates against those who are not of the dominate culture. This can be applied to the school program I had mentioned earlier about everyone in the building receiving a book to bring home and how the books chosen by the committee had always been representing white characters and focusing on their experiences. This trend implies that these experiences are worth noting and that what is to be experienced in life is displayed through school and via white people. If students do not see that their very real experiences are being depicted, maybe it is hinted to them that their lives are not worth acknowledging and others recognizing, knowing, and understanding (Bishop, 1990).

Douglas et al. (2008) analysis states, “according to Martin and Baxter (2001), the Black-White achievement gap will continue to persist because of the poor quality of teacher-student relationships in the classroom” (p. 50). This explains the push to have our teacher candidates be understandable about cross-culture and be trained in working with students of color. As Talbert-Johnson (2004) discusses urban school structural inequities, she states, “[white preservice candidates] tend to lack knowledge about diverse student

population because of their limited cross-cultural experiences” (p. 27). Quite interestingly, working in a suburban school district with an increase of students of color, several white teachers have also express the same feeling.

This is a great reason for having Singleton’s (2005) protocol for Courageous Conversations. Although this protocol is adopted into our school system for the use of staff members, if taken seriously and practiced with validity, having conversations with our own students will help with understanding the differences we have in our rooms. It will also allow us to make personal connections that many students need prior to learning. Very importantly, this dismisses the thought that many students feel, such as in my school, that there are many racist educators in a white dominant school system.

I was reminded of this topic a several months ago. I attended a conference held by MN-NAME (2014). At one of the workshops I attended, the focus was getting inputs from professionals who were already working in schools. In particular, Misty et al. (2014) were from the University of Minnesota and wanted inputs for creating “dispositions” for teacher candidates. After the group activity, the large papers that displayed each group’s dispositions were posted around the room. Quite a few were similar such as “being open-minded,” “being coachable,” and “understanding other cultures.” It is clear that at this workshop many felt it necessary to be understandable and mindful of others who do not represent the white culture. Proceeding the reviewing of some of these dispositions, the topic of how to reach other educators with the same message, those who have been teaching for years, found its way in. This was a good point to discuss. How do we provide the same message to those who are in the field? How do

we assist those who are working with the students we speak of and remind them to be “coachable” and “open-minded.” Maybe a question to think about is, “How do we address this to all educators?” An important essence to Critical Race theory is that its purpose is to not just comprehend “our social situation but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies but to transform it for the better” (Delgado & Stefancic, p. 7).

Deficit perspective and lack of respect. Seeing that our country’s educators do not reflect their student body, it should not be hard to comprehend that not being of the dominate culture likely leads to students feeling rejected by the school as they do not fit in the norm (Annamma, Boele, Moore, & Klingner, 2013). Literature mentions this segregated feeling and addresses the experience of students of color in their schools. One source calls it not being “normal” (Annamma, Boele, Moore, & Klingner, 2013), another calls the experience “disidentification” (Talbert-Johnson, 2004). Both terms suggests that there is eventually going to be people that will not have the qualifications of being what is acceptable. Annamma et al. (2013) provides that “in US schools, concepts of normal create boundaries in which some students fit and others are marginalised based solely on issues of race, language, and perceived ability (Prichard et al., 2010, as cited in Annama et al., 2013, p. 1278). There can be harmful consequences to this - not just for students but for educators too. If educators are unaware of this dominance in their education setting because they make up that dominance, they usually subscribe to it (Annamma et al., 2013). By subscribing to this, many educators contribute to “educational inequalities that are based on race, cultural practices, language, and perceived ability” (Annamma et

al., 2013, p. 1279).

Unfortunately, students are aware of this notion and “far too often, African American youth report feelings of alienation within the school community and fail to see education as rewarding” (Talbert-Johnson, 2004, p. 24). Students appear to be familiar with the school system as they recognize that their different cultural background, beliefs, and values do not line up with what is desired: the ruling of the majority. This leads to the awareness of being mistreated (Douglas et al., 2008). It has come to the extent where students believe that the only respect they are getting is fabricated. In Douglas et al.’s study, they report “most of these students felt that their teachers only respected them because of their profession” (2008, p. 54). So, is it surprising that a response to the lack of respect is to demand it? This tension and notion did not seem unlikely to students though as they felt respect was lacked just because of their skin tone (Douglas et al., 2008, p. 53). Disrespect can be done intentionally or unintentionally and can actually be verbal and or non-verbal. Specifically, these are called microaggressions and are often directed towards people of color and done automatically or unconsciously (Solorzano, 2001).

The power used against students because of their appearance is what several scholars say is deficit thinking as reported by Douglas et al. (2008). This deficit thinking impacts teaching and learning. Because deficit thinking leads to low expectations of students of color, we jeopardize these students’ success in life. There is a notion that not only teachers but administrators also who believe that “African American students and many other children of color should not be held to the same academic standards”

(Thompson, 2004, as cited in Douglas et al., 2008). If we are not holding the same expectations or high expectations for students, do we care to provide opportunities for students to learn effectively? If we sympathize certain students, are we saying it is okay for so and so to not do this assignment because he or she will not get it fully done, even if it will dramatically affect the student's grade or learning for next year?

Even if deficit thinking is not the issue, consider other factors that can contribute to students' performance that deals with race. I attended one of Tim Wise's (2014) workshop this school year where he stressed the impact of stereotype threat. Stereotype threat is basically the impact of stereotypes that affects one's performance. Wise shared studies that were conducted surrounding this threat and how students' performances differed based on the stereotypes with which students were presented. Those who were presented with a stereotype that targeted them did badly on an assessment versus the opposite outcome without the stereotype. If we are making it known to a student that his or her home setting is not supportive to his or her learning, then are we saying it is acceptable for the student to think that he or she can't learn or does not need to finish tasks at home? Is it acceptable or right for him or her to say "I'm stupid?"

Lack of inclusion and the sense of belonging. Talbert-Johnson (2004) points out what Finn and Cox (1992) discusses, "Studies show that students who identify with the academic culture of school are more motivated to achieve and experience higher educational gains than students espousing an ideology of disidentification" (as cited in Talbert-Johnson, 2004, p. 24). Including materials that reflect our students can be a step in eliminating this notion of "disidentification" or not being part of the "norm". In Wood

and Jocius's (2013) study of a group of young black children and their literacy experience, they strongly have a belief that it is the responsibility of teachers or educators to provide and include a diverse selection of literature that is both fiction and non-fiction, possessing cultural and linguistic aspects and information that represents students.

As previously mentioned about the structure of the school system and its influences, it is likely that there is only a minimum to what students can actually relate to. Since "black male students are often deprived of opportunities to see themselves, their families and their experiences reflected in texts" (Wood & Jocius, p.663), it is important to fulfill this necessity. Through this journey of fulfillment, teachers may find a connection with their students, displaying a sense of respect. "[T]eachers and student must work collaboratively to create learning environments in which young black male students feel free to share triumphs and struggles without fear of judgment from their teachers or their peers" (Wood & Jocius, p. 667). This also applies for female black students. If we discuss an issue, it becomes an open topic. If we create a safe environment where the whole classroom is learning from each other, there will be more support to speak up and share, providing lacking perspectives for and both students and teacher.

Because of the lack in understanding our students and where they come from, Talbert-Johnson (2004) recommends that there needs to be a transformation. This chance must occur in which a teacher needs to be culturally responsive and possess such pedagogical skills that acknowledges all students. Willis and Lewis (1998) includes in their research, what Gloria Ladson-Billings stresses, the need for teachers to have culturally relevant pedagogy. This means that teachers are aware of cultural differences

and are responsible for acknowledging, respecting, including, and responding to the cultural differences. Teacher and student connection plays a crucial role in the academic achievement of these students. Our student population is changing as we enter classrooms from all over the country. As Linda Darling-Hammond states, “Multicultural education is consequently as important for middle-class White suburban students as it is for students of color who live in the inner city” (p. xi). Using culturally relevant literature supports equity and diversity in our classrooms. With culturally relevant literature, we as educators can become culturally responsive and demonstrate being learners as we actually learn from the students and the power of student voice.

Culturally Responsive Literature in the Classroom

When culturally responsive teaching is evident in our classrooms, we are able to see students practicing the utilization of their voice, using their background knowledge, and feeling they can contribute to the type of learning at school. In doing this, culturally responsive teaching requires the allowance of cultural knowledge, prior knowledge that students’ have and bring with them, as well as the different styles of learning and different styles of performances that make the classroom learning experience meaningful and relevant (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Culturally responsiveness acknowledges the differences racial and ethnic groups may have and by teaching in this way, the behavior of the educator is also different. The educator includes the value and beliefs of racially and ethnically different students in their teaching and see cultural differences and benefits to learning such as influencing the curriculum or even challenging racial and cultural stereotypes (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

The value of having literature reflect our African American students and being responsive to them are steps to helping us support equity and diversity in our classrooms. Instead of having “literary canons tend to include a preponderance of books that reflect the experiences, values, perspectives, knowledge, and interpretations of Whites, particularly Anglo-Saxons” (Harris, 1990, p. 540), we can use culturally relevant text to support learning and gain literacy achievement through generated meaningful discussions and activities. From the theoretical perspective of the third space theory, two influences create this third space. This means that having students use their prior knowledge and their background knowledge to support their learning will provide students a third space that positively consists of their life and school life. This also implies that the school curricula is strong enough to support student’s ongoing positive learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 135). There is a need to give students the opportunity to see themselves represented, as it encourages their learning, and to affirm that their cultures deserve to be represented in the things they read in school because these things are valuable and we want our schools to reflect high value (Harris, 1990).

Culturally responsive instruction increases motivation and learning. In regards to the fondness of cognitive aspects in learning, studies believed that this aspect was to impact “motivating” students (Gambrell, 1996, p.15). Purnell, Ali, Begum, & Carter (2007) recognize that in order for a culturally responsive curriculum to exist, it must be designed to satisfy the wide range of cultural differences present in a classroom. Once students receive culturally responsive instructions and materials, they are engaged and motivated. Purnell et al. (2007) also include that:

When teachers incorporate culturally relevant reading materials in their literacy lessons, they can achieve two important goals at once: they engage the learner in the concepts being taught on a more meaningful and personal level; and they create an inclusive learning environment. (p. 421)

This inclusive learning environment displays a notion of acceptance. By providing more and more effective culturally learning literature we create this motivational vibe.

Motivated students will be more likely to be ready for literacy learning because children are more emotionally secure seeing materials that positively reflects not just them but also those that they care about (Purnell et al., 2007).

By understanding how curriculum promotes motivation and how within having a broad topic, such as African American Children's literature, there are opportunities for educators to tailor subcategories into specific learning targets and instructional goals (Brooks, 2006, p. 390). Using this literature to teach certain areas helps students as they are able to relate to their own life experiences to school curriculum. Using a non-traditional text to examine the different viewpoints, presented and excluded, is an example of initial steps to having relative material for students. Providing student a voice to be heard is being culturally responsive. Being able to have students speak their truth and or for the whole class to speak about a truth allows meaningful discussions to arise.

When I refer to meaningful discussions, I mean dialogue that provides multiple perspectives that can be generated from different experiences. As much as there is value in meaningful conversations about race, there is also great essence in multiple perspectives. For example, have students question why there is only one perspective and

if an opposing perspective was present, how would it look like? Specifically, what would the story line or consequences look like had the character been a different race or come from different family values? What would society think? What would we in the class think? What if all the different thoughts and inferences are not right or wrong?

“Culturally relevant stories and activities help young children connect academic lessons to their own life experiences, making the content more meaningful thus promoting student voice. Opportunities to share different life experiences also help to create a sense of community among diverse learners” (Purnell et al., 2007, p. 421). We see that theories and learning perspectives support culturally relevant integration because an individual’s school community and home community strongly shape his or her learning. Literature suggests that motivation is a key component to helping students be engaged. When students are engaged, this is an opportunity to implement other learning goals achieving higher learning and further thinking about our world.

As Tatum (2000) discusses how to break down barriers that deprive African American students who are on the lower level of reading, specifically one requisite focuses on how such culturally relevant texts can provide learning opportunities. Including students’ culture can be a useful tool. It is not merely just relating to a scenario or feelings of a character but the learning that can take place because of that. Tatum (2000) stresses how using culturally relevant text is vital when it comes to taking an approach to being culturally relevant.

By integrating such texts, African American students can discuss and “understand changes in history, substantiate their existence, and critically examine the present as a

mechanism for political, social, and cultural understandings that may arise in the future” (Tatum, 2000, p. 60). Such a text can be part of an instructional framework that helps student understand themselves and their identity. Being engaged and being able to apply personal experiences nurtures the students, helping them to deeply process. With deep processing, students can use the information they’ve learned and transfer or apply it to other areas or aspects such as their lives. (Tatum, 2000). With this, not only are students engaged learners who can be strategic, but students can now be motivated enough to read for other purposes (Gambrell, 1996).

In reference to cognitive learning, Tatum points out the importance of having student challenged as they are provided support and are given reading materials appropriate to their grade level. By doing this, the challenges and successes contribute to their cognitive development (Tatum, 2000). By achieving this learning, we will see less of “Educational inequalities, cultural alienation, and economic deprivation play[ing] out in very subtle and pernicious ways in U.S. classrooms” (Tatum, 2000, p. 53). Students are able to feel some kind of respect in their school community. By intentionally and regularly including high quality culturally relevant materials, thus acknowledging and working on content integration, teachers are showing that they truly accept differences (Purnell et al., 2007). These are steps that move toward creating an equitable and diverse classroom. In response to how motivation is a main component to culturally relevant material and how this affects the effectiveness of being culturally responsive, it is only fair to see what counts as quality literature. Our next step is to review what the best culturally relevant literature should be like or represent.

Culturally conscious. We will start reviewing what our literature says by covering some themes and characteristics of a culturally conscious literature. I will briefly start with the importance of pictures. In general, illustrations portray characters in different ways and aspects. Williams (2006) states out:

A picture book integrates text and illustrations into an artistic whole; the pictures are as important as text. Thus, the picture book illustrator plays a vital role in the creation of the images of African Americans that are offered to children through their books. (p. 558)

Although this emphasis is stressed in picture books, this should be applied to any culturally relevant text that includes images for the purpose of accurately depicting the characters. Johnson (1990) also supports this in her studies, valuing both illustration and text as equally important. I know we say “don’t judge a book by its cover”, but knowing many books do not represent my experiences or cultures, I can start my investigation by first seeing if I or people similar to me are physically represented and how they are represented via illustrations. It is also crucial to take into consideration those who are unable to read just yet. Physical representations are big statements and messages. If someone regardless of their background is unable to read words or read words just yet, the likely and appropriate step is to take a look at other parts of the book: illustrations (Johnson, 1990).

Besides the physical images on a text, we should equally pay attention to other features. During the seventies, African American children literature authors focused on the following aspects: According to Bishop (1990):

(1) the importance of warm and loving human relationships, especially within the family; (2) a sense of community among African Americans; (3) African American history, heritage, and culture, (4.) a sense of continuity; and (5) the ability to survive, both physically and psychologically, in the face of overwhelming odds. (Bishop, 1990, p. 560)

For family and community to be a focus in literature is not surprising. Family and community heavily influences our lives in general. Earlier in this chapter I mentioned the theoretical foundation of learning which included aspects of family and community. For younger children, the main focus is on the family and the warm, positive relationships. This especially includes grandparents (Bishop, 1990, p. 560). In addition to capturing the family relationship, Brooks mentions what Harris (1992) assures also importantly relevant is distinctly including the essence of “culture, everyday ethnic group practices, including family activities, community events, and religious ceremonies (as cited in Brooks, 2006, p. 375). Doing this defines being culturally conscious, especially when concerning African Americans. Even in one of the earliest African American children’s periodical, *The Brownie’s Book*, one of the goals sought by DuBois and Fauset was to “instill pride in home and family” (Harris, 1990, p. 546).

As mentioned before, students need representations of themselves and what they know. Beyond illustrations, we cannot deny that as a reader we want to relate to the character(s) and content of a text. It is important for students to apply learning to their own experiences which includes their community: home and family. Having texts that include the aspect of one’s own people thus leads to the next feature detected in African

American children's literature: Socialization.

As important as it is to include familiar interactions a person of color has within his or her community, it is also important "to provide [children] with a model for interacting with Whites" (Harris, 1990, p. 546). As much similarities as we all share, there are many differences that we experience in our own lives. In particular, having meaningful dialogue can allow students of color to voice their understanding of society and the world. If you are a white educator, how can this information help you learn from your students? "When we consider the origin, expansion and influence of 'Urban American,' we realize that its inhabitants are molded and shaped by history, experience and social-context" (Prier & Beachum, 2009, p. 524). It is only rational that historical influences have made its impact in literature, therefore it is useful to use literature as a tool to help students. Bishop (1990) defines literate in the same sense as he believes that literature is like a socializing agent because it displays what society and the culture acknowledges and care for. I further explain this in the next paragraph.

So, if African Americans are presented positively in literature, students should likely feel the same way. If their values are also valued in our classrooms, students should also be able to positively interact and contribute in their classrooms, with whom they are likely to have white teachers and white peers. Culturally conscious literature are "books that reflect, with varying degrees of success, the social and cultural traditions associated with growing up Black in the United States" (Sims, p. 49, as cited in Harris, 1990, p. 550). Thus, it is inevitable to also include in our culturally relevant literature the history of African Americans. Culturally conscious authors provide works that are true

and genuine historically and culturally. (Harris, 1990, p. 551) These authors capture the negatives in our history as long as the information is accurate, therefore including these types of work means including negative or horrifying experiences in this country as Harris (1990) notes. As true as this is, it is very important for all students to know and understand. Therefore, it is highly recommended that our culturally relevant literatures included historical and social content.

In addition to content that contributes to a culturally conscious literature, different genres should also be included in this representation. In Brooks's (2006) study, she points out the importance of avoiding just one image of a particular group and incorporating literature that captured different time periods, settings, genres, and even family types. As culturally conscious includes content and genres of one's culture, it does not exclude linguistic aspects. Also included in Harris's (1990) article is dialect implication. How do we view dialect variations and different languages in our school systems or classrooms? This thought generates in me as I am taken back to two years ago when a teacher yelled out to a class to not use "street language" in the school. What did that mean or what did that imply about street language? In that same school was where I had that one particular third grader who would notice and point out the way I spoke every so often.

Characteristics in high quality literature. Moving towards "*How can a culturally relevant text be used effectively to support equity, diversity, and school community?*", there is some background information that we should keep note of. It is important to note that although there is evidence showing African American children's literature being present as early as the late 1890s (Harris, 1990), we still face a shortage of children's

literature representing characters of color in modern day according to data from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (CCBC, 2014). Specifically, “Less than 2 percent of the 2,500 to 3,500 children’s books published each year feature Blacks as major characters or focus on information about Blacks and Black life” (Bishop, 1990, p. 556). The Cooperative Children’s Book Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison documents children’s books each year, specifically children’s books that represent people of color. They have a system of what gets counted and how they count. Not surprisingly, an article came out this summer presenting the low number of books published and received at CCBC displaying the group the books were written by or about (CCBC, 2014). Even if there are publications of books representing people of color, it is still difficult to find such books (Bishop, 556).

The shortage in this can be affiliated with our history: white supremacy, slavery and its effects, inequality, etc. “Broadly defined, African American children’s literature is written both by and about African Americans” (Brooks, 2006, p. 375). There are works that are done by people of color and that people of color who do try to get published. Knowing that there are authors of color, it is important to know that there are also White authors who have written African American literature. It is important to know that not all African American children’s literature was accurately depicting their life and culture. This was said about both African American and White authors of African American children’s literature (Bishop, 1990).

Within the themes of African American literature mentioned by Vaughan-Roberson & Hill (1989) such as “surviving racism, spreading African American heritage

and history, living in the city, and developing racial pride” (as cited in Brooks, 2006, p. 375) it is also important to include other things that can identify a person’s community. Brooks (2006) mentions the importance of language and the significance of it to one’s community. She points out the differences in linguistic patterns particularly in the African American Vernacular English language. I go back to MN-NAME conference and think about what Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2014) emphasized in part of her speech. The use of code-switching helps students not lose their language, but recognizing and acknowledging the language defeats minimalizing the students’ home language.

In Williams’s article (2006), ““You Gotta Reach ‘Em’: An African American Teacher’s Multiple Literacies Approach”, she refers to this dialectal language as “African American Language”, pointing out how this way of speaking is not accepted. If this is not accepted, how likely are we seeing or using this language in our schools? Williams (2006) provides information on how this language that is used by 80 to 90 percent of African Americans is not acknowledged by both the dominant society and even by some African Americans as a valid form of communication. How does this influences the values of other cultures? I mention this because linguistic features are very important not just because it represents a group of people, but it is also important to know how it perceived in our society. Again, discussing what our society values helps students learn about different perspectives thus leading to social change.

By being culturally relevant and culturally responsive, not only is including linguistic features in materials beneficial to student learning, actually having students speak their home language in school is also beneficial. Williams’s (2006) article covers

how an African American teacher allows and utilizes the language carefully through a multiple literacies approach. With a multiple literacies approach to instruction, students are able to feel positive as they are able to use both home and school language as resources with literacy practices (Williams, 2006). This creates a connection between home and school, affecting students' learning and acknowledging diversity. This is a quality that is valuable as it promotes culture differences and should be recognized in the texts that students are to learn from. In addition to this, this allows students to be able to relate or feel familiar with materials which leads to encouraging interest in literacy. I refer back to the introduction where I shared how more engaged I was when I was reading the non-traditional texts that included dialogue that was not "standard English." In order to embrace differences and allow students to be themselves safely, there is a need to show it in our classrooms.

There are books that are written in the Standard English form but only use dialect in the dialogues. This not only allows students to realize that the context of the literature is relatable but personal connections with the language draw even more of a closer connection. In addition, the standardized form of writing is also included. Throughout time, our standards have made changes. According to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), they and the International Reading Association (IRA) have established standards that are compliant to linguistic diversity. In their ninth standard, it states "Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles" (2014). Utilizing and acknowledging this standard means bringing opportunities into your

classroom for everyone to learn from each other.

Incorporating texts that include illustrations that accurately depict our African American students, social and historical contexts reflecting African Americans' experiences, and linguistic variations do not repress students rather encourages and submits to their interest, knowledge, learning, and lifestyles. All of these things help us as educators change our usual norms and include those who are not or do not feel part of the norm, thus being culturally relevant and responsive to provide the service our students need in education. As I close this section on what counts as valuable culturally relevant literature, I move into an approach that supports student learning with application to current day. In this topic, discovering how to choose high quality literature, we will review the literature and discuss the similar ideas and information presented about African American children's literature.

A contemporary approach to support learning. In supporting characteristics in high quality literature, I want to recognize the approach to hip hop. Provided is the overall review of hip hop's experience and influences. Understanding this allows creative and meaningful ways to engage, motivate, and acknowledge our diversity. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1997) provides the three main factors to culturally relevant pedagogy: "that people focus on academic achievement, that they want kids to be comfortable being who they are, that they value what the kids bring with them and help develop and maintain it" (as cited in Willis & Lewis, 1998, p. 66), modeling the significance of supporting students' background knowledge and maintaining high expectations. With this being said, how many of your students are in tuned with today's music?

A great way to make a connection with students and to utilize what they know can be studying hip hop and integrating it into our curriculum and or practices. Prier and Beachum “are advocating for the venue of hip-hop as a means to gain understanding to the way that many students make meaning of their lives and the world around them” (2009, p. 532). Focusing on hip-hop’s history and its motives can actually be meaningful and relevant to literacy and our students. Not only is this a different genre and a different form of text that can be implemented in a classroom, hip hop can capture other cultural aspects such as language and life experiences that students can relate to and or learn from.

Prier & Beachum (2009) informs us that the origins of rap started with Blacks and Latinos, but especially black folk throughout the diaspora” (Dyson, 2007, as cited in Prier & Beachum, 2009, p. 521). These scholars also mention how hip hop was created in the Bronx, yet started from the Caribbean from the creator, DJ Kool Herc. From there on, African American and Latino youth made it their culture, including not just rapping, but “break dancing, dj-ing and graffiti to including dialects, attitudes, expression, mannerisms and fashion (as cited in Prier & Beachum, 2009, p. 522). We can see hip hop’s spectrum as it started with music and from then many ideas and creative forms sprouted from it. Digging deep into hip hop, it is important to know what hip hop has stood for. It is a cultural form that tries to help individuals think and reflect on the marginalized experiences that include brutality, disadvantages, and even oppression. This is particularly imperative to African American history and the community’s identity (Rose, 2004, as cited in Prier & Beachum, 2009). With this said, hip hop was a form of

literacy that among many captured experiences and was a tool that negotiated the experiences that one faced. Such work in the form of hip hop is valuable and holds much quality as it displays social and personal experiences and provides another form of writing for multiple purposes.

The importance of providing a sense of belonging, acknowledging different forms of work, and utilizing different materials that are culturally relevant, Pier and Beachum also advocate for the integration of hip-hop into school curriculum or instruction because this is the linkage to connecting with urban youths and “understanding their worldview” (2009, p. 527). There are African American students who are engaged in hip-hop for a valid reason and educators should be aware of that if they’d like to contribute and help students with their education. As we have reviewed how literacy impacts a person and his or her place in society, likewise is hip-hop’s effect. It only seems reasonable to deliberate hip-hop into our culturally relevant text-set. By taking a different toll and using a contemporary type of text, this not only supports and recognizes the diversity in a classroom, but it allows students to reflect further about their life and utilize a way to contribute to society.

Guidance for Text Discussions

In this section I want to provide some tools that will help us generate conversations and process them. I would like to start off with Singleton (2005) who I had mentioned a few times previously. In order to be able to have dialogue, to have an individual voice his or her own thoughts and to have others do the same, there needs to be agreements. Agreements have to be established to make sure that all are on the same page

and are committed to going through with whatever work we are talking about. With this being said, I introduce the Courageous Conversation (Singleton & Linton, 2005) protocol.

Courageous conversations. The Courageous Conversation (Singleton & Linton, C., 2005) protocol does not literally need to be explained to the students in our classroom. It is more so for the facilitator. Please see Figure 1 for the Courageous Conversation protocol. The understanding of the protocol for the adult will help facilitate conversations for students as well as help understand the sole purpose of having them. Courageous conversations (Hudson, 2014) are intended to center on race which many people are uncomfortable talking about and can easily feel defensive or offended. Singleton and Linton (2005) recognizes that with challenging racism in our everyday life such as in any scenario that consists of interaction and professional interactions, there needs to be an understanding. The challenge for educators is understanding which requires the advancing of one's moral position (Singleton & Linton, 2005). With the perspectives that students bring, they may be unable to verbalize the impacts of racism as it is such a normal thing but may still feel some way because of being impacted by it. To allow students to voice their thoughts, perspectives, and experiences allows students to use their voice and allow some critical thinking to begin.

At a Beyond Diversity I (Hudson, 2014) training, the center focus was on Singleton's work. Tony Hudson (2014) facilitated and lead the protocol. The Four Agreements to Courageous Conversations (Singleton & Linton, 2005) are: Stay Engaged, Speak Your Truth, Experience Discomfort, Expect/Accept Non-closure. These

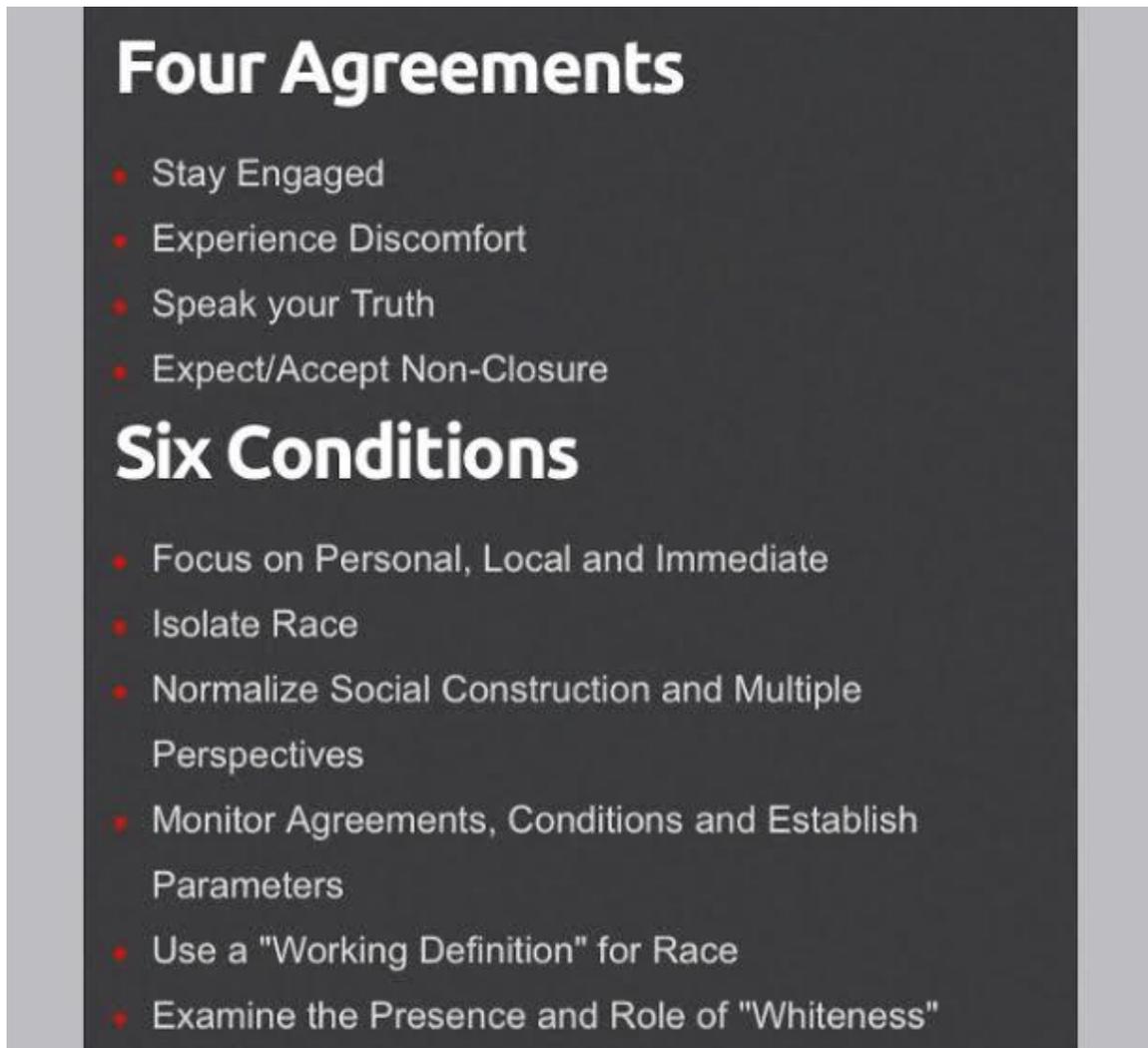


Figure 1. Courageous Conversation Protocol (Hudson, 2014)

agreements are crucial when allowing people to speak up and share about their experiences. Not everyone holds the same lifestyle and not all rules to life apply to everyone. Each person can have different experiences and this is where equity differs from equality. The understanding of how these agreements will help individuals see different perspectives will benefit personal growth and support the social-emotional learner. These things were among the many that I learned and experienced from the

Beyond Diversity I (Hudson, 2014) training.

The Six Conditions necessary to have meaningful conversations are: 1. Focus on personal, local, and immediate 2. Isolate Race 3. Normalize social construction and multiple perspectives 4. Monitor agreements, conditions and establish parameters 5. Use a “working definition” for race 6. Examine the presence and role of “Whiteness”.

Creating a safe and supportive environment that allows people to speak their truth can be educational for everyone. These conditions are additional support to understanding Critical Race Theory or vice versa. At the training, Hudson (2014) guided participants in seeing and understanding that the conditions provide a guidance to understanding varying views but also reminds the facilitator to monitor the participants and have them learn to monitor themselves in order to achieve such valuable, silenced or anticipated discussions.

Although the Four Agreements and Six Conditions may be seen as difficult for school-age students to handle, it can definitely be useful for the educator or the facilitator. They can be used as a tool for the adult to help guide students as they speak, share, feel safe, and understand each other better. These conversations can directly provide avenues for student voice. Teaching students that it is okay to not always be right or think exactly like others can actually help students. Knowing our experiences are different and our knowledge of things vary from one another, *Courageous Conversations* (Singleton & Linton, 2005) help students really see and understand the diversity in our school community.

Classroom strategies that support discussion. It is known that discussions are a means of having to interact with others. Doug Buehl’s (2014) *Classroom Strategies for*

Interactive Learning provides several activities that are useful to have students be engaged in each other's perspectives. In addition, they assist in helping readers process their reading and thoughts. Buehl (2014) understands how much comprehension plays in literacy and how much of it consists of what the reader has to bring.

Buehl (2014) selectively chooses activities that all emphasize on particular strategies within either an instructional focus, text frame, or comprehension processes. These activities allow a place for students to share their thoughts but to also consider others' perspectives as well. The gathered activities are not just simply a sheet that students have to complete but rather tasks that are set up for readers to do some reflecting. These reflections are great to share in class discussions as well as in small groups.

Other useful activities that aim for the same concept were included in Harvey Daniels and Steven Zemelman's *Subjects Matter* (2004). Daniels and Zemelman stress how important literacy is in any subject. The activities that they include focuses on content within the text. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, using culturally relevant texts can provide options to content learning in other areas. Given these tools and activities, African American children's literature can be more useful and even more apparent in our classrooms. Chances of connecting nonfictional and fictional texts provides opportunities for increase in literacy practices.

In this section, I wanted to touch base on how certain activities help provide outlets to discussions within our classroom. Just as it is important for our students of color to get a chance to connect their home world to their school world, as a whole we

should respect each other's thoughts and analyze what each of our says can influence or has influenced the our whole understanding of things. Again, our focus is equity and building a true school community.

Summary

As we explored *How can a culturally relevant text be used effectively to support diversity, racial equity, and school community building?*, we have examined the importance of culturally relevant texts because students have been denied literature that they can relate to and learn from. We have reviewed the rationale for being culturally responsive and providing culturally relevant literature as it shows that just like any other student, our African American students also need to be motivated and engaged to potentially use the cognitive and social skills that they possess for learning. We have also discovered what makes a culturally relevant text sufficient by recognizing culturally conscious practices, such as respectfully using and exposing students to different English dialects and languages as well as non-traditional texts. In addition, we reviewed how a contemporary approach contributes to being culturally relevant and satisfies the motive of being an effective educator. Throughout all of this, we are reminded of how powerful it is to allow students to voice their own knowledge. This is a major component that takes both student and teacher effort. We cannot assume that all Black or African American students are fond of hip-hop, yet we can learn from our students as we provide them opportunities to voice their ideas and thoughts. We cannot assume that all Black or African American students can sense how racism is normalized in our society, yet we can learn how this has come to be for them and even for our other students. Certainly, we can

have meaningful conversations such as why would some things be important to some and not others and how that has impacted us today. With passion and truth, we should be able to reveal that we are unsure of what the discussions will lead to because we may finally be unable to control something we've not experience. We should reveal and display that we are learners of our students.

Studying what the literature has provided should help us as we move forward, yet it is only natural to feel fully unsure because of the differences we are unfamiliar with. "When books are available, some teachers are hesitant to use them because they believe that the books depict only bleak ghetto situations, that they might embarrass African American children, or that White children are not interested or may be ill at ease with the books" (Harris, 1990, p. 552). Being able to facilitate a classroom that encourages thoughts and provides a safe place to be real can provide understandings and misunderstandings that we are all unsure about. In reality, a relevant text can actually not only be helpful for our some students, but to the students' peers and teachers as well because we are learning from each other and the world we all live in. All of our literature in this chapter has pointed to that. We are social beings.

In Chapter Three, I look forward to explaining my method of action such as who is the action research intended for or to whom can this be of support. In this Chapter, I provide information about the district I work in and share more about how this is a curriculum base action research, not requiring human subjects. I retouch on the importance and purpose of this action research project as well as go over my goals. In Chapter Four, I go in depth with this curriculum development process and evaluate my

findings. Reflecting on my findings, I provide my results and experiences in this research project in Chapter Five. I mention my future steps and how I intend to utilize this project.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Introduction

Before getting into my purpose and goals, it is important to review Chapters One and Two. In Chapter One, I shared my personal experiences that has influenced my passion for this project. I provided information on my current position and how it comes into play with what I am researching. In all, my life experiences has motivated me to explore this journey that touches on experiences that many students can relate to. In Chapter Two, I provided the literature that supports the importance of equity within our schools and classrooms revealing studies that cover the impact to a student's learning and community climate relative to our school structure, classroom instruction, and classroom texts. I researched what scholars have to say and explored their research that closely relates to inequities in education. All information thus so far supports the need for understanding how literacy can support racial diversity, racial equity, and school climate.

In this chapter, I provide some information about my goals for this project, school setting, and my methods of collecting data. I provide my finding of the three appropriate African American children's texts. In addition, I also provide my ideas of how I intend to share this action research project.

Goals of Capstone Project

The intent of this action research project is to support African American/Black students in a school and promote their literacy achievement. Equally important is the intent that this project will also help build school community as it acknowledges and includes the differences that make up our classrooms. This project is a curriculum implementation project; therefore, I am not changing any curriculum. I am rather providing instructions and ideas that further support the curriculum that is already in place. My intent is to find texts that satisfies the curriculum and standards already in place at the school I work in as well. My intention goes further in connecting the importance of culturally relevant texts to literacy and school climate. Equally important is finding the right texts that will help everyone in the school to understand the importance of recognizing different people and different perspectives.

In following through with my intentions, I have two goals. One goal is to find texts that are supportive for in-class discussions where both students and educators learn from each other. This goal also provides students the idea that literature can represent them and their lives, thus enhancing and promoting interest in literacy (Gambrell, 1996). The second goal is to be able to implement the Courageous Conversation (Singleton & Linton, 2005) protocol in teaching skills and best practices. These goals work together in a way where relationships can build and the school community acknowledges the importance of differences.

By understanding that the majority of our educators are white (as cited in Douglas et al., 2008), providing African American students a place in their school

community is highly valuable. As the dominant culture not only reflects our educators but also influences our school structure (Douglas et al., 2008), I stress again the fact that I want to have students feel a sense of comfort and understand the world and society they live in.

Setting/Participants

The school I currently work in has a new principal, a white female, and no assistant principal. We have one instructional coach and one behavior coach who are also white females. In addition, the school has predominantly white female teachers with seven white male teachers. Out of the whole school, there is only one teacher of color who is a male and is African American. Less than 10 percent of the faculty staff is not white. Over half of the faculty staff has been working at the school between five to ten years under the same principal, who has been in the district for over ten years.

The school I work in is located in the suburbs that is within ten miles of an urban city. The school district serves seven primary cities/communities. The district serves students in suburban areas as well as students who are in the inner city, under certain restrictions, as our district has a program that makes this opportunity possible. Students at the school consist of predominantly White and Black (both Africans and African Americans) students. There is a rough percentage of about 46 % African American and 49% White students making up the school population. A small population of the student body, less than 20 percent, consists of Native Americans, Hispanics, and Asians. We also have a population that is mixed with two or more races in which their school profile can state just one race. The school is a Title I school and over half of the student population

receives free or reduced lunch.

My position as an Equity Specialist at the school requires me to work with both staff and students. I have a group of students that I intentionally work with on a weekly basis, and I provide an Equity professional development (PD) on a monthly basis to all staff. I also touch base with parents and try to promote more representation of parents of color in our schools. In doing this, I have to provide different perspectives that questions the school climate and culture. Part of this is included in my PDs. Part of this takes place in meetings that I am involved with such as Child Study, Response to Intervention, Data Dive, etc. I discuss things such as suspension and academic data with my principal and Instructional Coach as well. This provides an opportunity to have a different outlook at things, and the plan would be to take steps to acting on them.

I will not be providing any studies of my school in this research project because my focus is not studying the students or staff rather than finding supportive materials to integrate in our curriculum and school district goals. There are no participants in this action research project as my project's findings will be tools and materials to support primary schools. The texts I present will be suitable for different grade levels in an elementary school. Again, no specific grade level, class, or particular students are being observed or studied.

As I am not studying a particular group, I am actually designing a curriculum that will be of support in an elementary school. In searching for the right texts I will have to see what the literature suggests as appropriate. This means deciding what would be beneficial, motivational, and impactful. Part of having such literature be successful is

being able to provide opportunities for discussion. This is where facilitation practices will be useful. Allowing the space and time for students to share things that are true to them, even if it makes others or even the educator uncomfortable, enables students to open up, use what they know, and assist the educator in understanding what would be needed for learning.

Curriculum Development Process

Focusing on “*How can a culturally relevant text be used effectively to support diversity, racial equity, and school community building?*,” I refer back to Chapter Two to help me find the appropriate texts. The literature provides several themes that I have to consider: family, socializing, and African American presence/representation (Bishop, 1990). I have to remind myself to select texts that does not give me the traditional and common experiences that our literary canons consists of (Harris, 1990). I have to consider the importance of incorporating not just standardized American English as well (Brooks, 2006 & Williams, 2006). The content of the texts had to be elementary school age appropriate and be relevant to students in some way. In addition to all of this, it was important for the texts to be non-traditional. This allows students to understand that literature includes many different things and acknowledges differences.

Having the texts is great, but it is just one part of the equation. To be able to understand that student sharing is also inspiring and educational is another essence to this curriculum design. In order to make the texts meaningful, discussions are needed. With discussions being necessary, it is important to include a protocol that will support the facilitator. The protocol does not have to directly be used by students; rather, it is a tool

that the facilitator will need to assist students in being able to share, listen, and understand the point of multiple perspectives. The protocol rubric is adapted from Glenn Singleton's (2005) Four Agreements and Six Conditions. Please refer to Appendix A to see the adapted rubric for this protocol.

The curriculum goals, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, are to find suitable African American Children literature and to be able to provide a safe learning environment from meaningful conversations. My vision of this is to have an example of culturally responsive lessons and to have what is necessary in making this happen. In doing this, I am providing a portfolio that consists of four mini-lessons from three selected texts. Please see Appendix C for the portfolio. The portfolio provides instructions on when to use the text and what the user can expect out of it. Specific guiding questions are included and prompts for facilitation are integrated in each lesson. I envision this portfolio to be an assistance for any educator working with students in the sense of understanding the differences that we all have. Most importantly, I envision this portfolio to be a guide for bringing out what students know, respecting it, and using this to help them learn.

Evaluating My Texts

The adapted Courageous Conversation protocol (Singleton & Lintel, 2005), please see Figure 2, assists me in seeing what contents in a text can generate dialogue. It helps me understand what perspectives are captured in a text that can be discussed, learned from, and be relative to students. Courageous Conversations concern race and the multiple perspectives that come from this (Hudson, 2014). With this said, this rubric

provides look-for's in a text that is essential to enabling conversations dealing with students' cultural and racial experiences. Because this rubric is a protocol, it is a tool that supports an educator or teacher in facilitation skills as well as assists an individual in understanding the essential points in a text for learning.

Facilitation Protocol Rubric as adapted from Courageous Conversations by Glenn Singleton
Please use the following protocol to help with facilitation and promoting conversations. Start by checking off each while observing your students. After the lesson, reflect on the specific moments that applied to each.
<p>*The Agreements should be used with everyone in the process. Both educators/facilitator and students need to become familiar with this.</p> <p>Four Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Stay ENGAGE <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Experience DISCOMFORT <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Speak your TRUTH <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Expect/Accept NON-CLOSURE <p>*The Conditions do not have to be directly understood by students, but rather it becomes a skill that students gradually can grasp with the help of the educator/facilitator. Therefore, it is important that the educator/facilitator is the one who needs to constantly be familiar and considerate of these conditions in addition to utilizing the 4 Agreements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Focus on PERSONAL, local, and immediate <input type="checkbox"/> 2. ISOLATE race <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Normalize SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION & multiple perspectives <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Monitor agreements, conditions, and ESTABLISH PARAMETERS <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Use a "WORKING DEFINITION" for race <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Examine the presence and role of "WHITENESS"

Figure 2. Facilitation Protocol as Adapted from Courageous Conversations ((Singleton & Lintel, 2005)

Another rubric required for this curriculum is the rubric for the text requirements (please refer to Figure 3). Appendix B is the rubric that supports me in finding the appropriate texts. It notes the themes and look-for's that are crucial to making the text

culturally relevant to African American/Black students as mentioned by Bishop (1990). This rubric partially accounts for being culturally conscious, acknowledging Williams's (2006) and Johnson's (1990) point of appropriate representation of illustrations. Another culturally conscious factor in this rubric is acknowledging the variations of on particular group (Brook, 2006). Utilizing this tool narrows down what text is appropriate and beneficial for using in a classroom.

Text Rubric

Themes, Characteristics, Features, etc.	Name of Text #1	Name of Text #2	Name of Text #3
1. Illustration of person/people of color			
2. Inclusion of Family			
3. Inclusion of Guardian(s) other than parent			
4. Positive relationships with family members			
5. Positive portrayal of people of color (strength, progressive, etc.)			
6. Inclusion of African American English, dialogue, or other linguistic feature other than Standard American English, etc.			
7. Opportunities to discuss conflicting views (societal perspectives, stereotypes, etc.)			
8. Representatives of African American/ Black males			
9. History of African Americans/Black			
10. Socialization (interaction with Whites)			

Figure 3. Text Rubric

The intent of these rubrics is to support teachers or educators in understanding appropriate texts and curriculum. It serves as a guidance to selecting texts and discussions that will support student engagement and learning. Equally important is the use of these

rubrics to helping me evaluate my texts. They served as a purpose for me to decide what would be best in selecting materials and content for African American/Black students.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter provided the detailed purpose I have in this action research project and the considerations I have taken to compiling this action research curriculum project. I provided the reasons of what makes this a curriculum project, not using studying human subjects. Throughout this chapter, I also shared my goals and the development process of compiling this curriculum. In Chapter Four I share my results and evaluation. I will provide more information about my curriculum, speaking more about the texts and strategies. Following this, in Chapter Five, I share my conclusion as I speak about my findings, disappointments, and take-aways.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Reflection

Introduction

Reflecting back on Chapter I, I shared my personal experiences with education that dealt with literacy, and I touched based on my line of work. Being an Equity Specialist, I find it imperative to work with the school to try and meet student needs. I am an asset in making sure students are receiving appropriate learning and find my concerns focusing on “*How can a culturally relevant text be used effectively to support diversity, racial equity, and school community building?*”

There are many studies and scholars sharing concerns about African American/Black students’ learning as discussed all in Chapter Two. I had shared the literature that supports the understanding of how literacy can impact the learning for these students. The literature supports the need for acknowledgment of cultural differences in the classroom and provides strategies and solutions to enriching learning and engagement.

In Chapter Three, I take what the literature suggests and shares as I discuss my method to creating my research curriculum. In this chapter, I reflect on the content of my curriculum and results. There are two main sections to this chapter, one talking in depth

about the different texts I had selected and the strategies needed to making the best of culturally responsive teaching and student learning, and the other section evaluating the curriculum I have developed.

Culturally Relevant texts

For this action research curriculum project, my intentions were to find supportive culturally relevant texts for elementary students. The texts that I have are *Hungry Money* by Sharon Flake, *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson, and *All of the Above* by Shelley Pearsall. Appendix C includes the mini-lessons that provides a brief description for each of the texts.

The texts that I have chosen were all non-traditional texts. All of the characters had a Black or African American main character, the protagonists were also Black/African American, the language was not exclusively only Standard American English, and the experiences were different as they portrayed a life style that differed from the normal character that we usually read about or are introduced to in our education settings (Harris, 1990). For example, Sharice is one of the several characters in *All of the Above* and lives with an adult who she refers to as a “non-foster parent.” Sharice does not have a stable home, life, and ends up being adopted by her peer’s aunt. She opens up to her peer, allowing help and revealing her lifestyle that is different from her classmates.

I have chosen the texts in my portfolio because each included some characteristics or themes from the rubric I have compiled based off of information from Chapter Two. In addition to this guide or chart, there was an essence in these texts that easily supported

courageous and meaningful conversations. The experiences that the characters shared in these texts not only were asking for discussions but the mere ideas or thoughts alone that come to our minds while we read were still enough to make one person relate, disagree, feel comfortable/uncomfortable, and or ponder. One can say that this can easily be applied to any texts, but again, the factors to consider are the characters of color, the content that includes cultural differences, and the variation in language that the texts chooses to encompass. An example of this would be Mai from *Money Hungry*. Mai is a character who is mixed with Korean and Black. She struggles with her identity as her make up encompasses two different cultures. In addition to these two different cultures, Mai is in a setting that impacts her desire of wanting to be more of one culture versus the other. The text includes the stereotypical Asian accent and the African American English language in dialogues.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, noted by Brook (2006), it is important to not classify or make judgements that all African Americans/Blacks live the same exact experiences and lives. Therefore the texts selected are not to portray that all of the African American/Black students are going through or should understand the experiences just because the main character is of color. Making this a vital point while reading these texts can generate opportunities that are educational and can even make not just our other students but even our Black/African American students second think how some of the commonly things are actually just stereotypes.

In Flake's *Money Hungry* it is already stated from the beginning, and is a constant reminder throughout the book, that we are in the projects, what is portrayed as "ghetto",

“dirty”, and “home to low-income”. The conversation that can derive from the simple term “projects” or “ghetto” opens a pathway to understanding different perspectives and influences that shapes our notion of things. This can surely lead into talking about stereotypes and generating critical thinking as we develop the ability to question why not all places that fit the same description as the “ghetto” or “projects” are called or coined the same term(s).

Woodson’s *Locomotion* represents the many and even random thoughts that we experience as human beings and demonstrates how these thoughts can collectively be put on paper in many forms that help the individual process. When thinking about thinking maps, creative freestyle note-taking, or even just the initial steps to a rough draft, I think about Lonnie in this book. This book is saying that it is okay to write in anyway and it is okay to start with thoughts. Motivation is splattered all over the pages of this Woodson’s piece.

In my third text, the importance of relationship building with peers and even adults that may not look like us is a concept that everyone needs. The text gradually reveals this concept as Pearsall lets readers zone in on each character bit by bit. *All of the Above* lets readers relate to at least one of the many characters, but the text also provides the opportunity for students to question the purpose of this concept. The great thing is this is just one thing the book possesses.

Review and evaluating my texts, I believe all three books are supportive for African American/Black students. Each holds several discussion starters and possesses narratives that students can add to. All has at least one Black or African American

character and each has a different text format. Having such texts that are not included in the canon nor about the dominant white culture, provides opportunities and encourages students and educators to share and learn from each other. In implementing and utilizing such texts that directly connects to our Black and African American students, racial equity is being practiced. With this said, these three texts do support my capstone question.

Mini-Lessons and Supportive strategies

Since my research project is curriculum-base, I combined four mini-lessons in a portfolio. Please refer to Appendix C. In each lesson, I include at least one strategy that supports interactive learning. Many of these strategies are ideas that derived from Buehl (2014). Emphasizing on interaction and peer sharing, all the mini-lessons are conversation based.

Although a strategy such as Concept or definition can be applied to all, I included it directly in Mini-lesson Example Two. The strategy of Evaluating of first impressions was used for *Locomotion* as an opening lesson in Mini-Lesson Three. Evaluating first impressions as well as practicing metaphorical thinking was included in Mini-Lesson One. The strategy of using character analysis can be used for all texts as well, yet with the given specific moments in *All of the Above*, students may find it fun to discuss the proof they have on which character is considered a protagonist. In Mini-Lesson Four, I use this strategy so students can deeply reflect on a character.

All the texts have different story lines but connections can be made when thoughts are heard and processed thus transferring knowledge and learning. Taking the

strategies and making it the discussion piece can be transformative. Students can use their own experiences in addition to the text as evidence and or apply understanding from multiple perspectives to their own lives. Now that I have shared a bit more about the texts and strategies, I proceed with my evaluation of my project.

In addition to academic strategies, the strategies that are needed to facilitate conversations are also a large component to this curriculum. Although the Facilitation Rubric (See Appendix A) is referred to as a guide for conversations, it also serves purpose as being strategies. In order to welcome differences in perspectives and experiences, the Six Conditions are asking participants to be mindful or considerate of other differences. This also implies that participants are learning to be open-minded and view things in different perspectives. The Agreements encourages multiple views to be heard and shared and suggests to participants that there will be conflict in content and discussions.

Rubrics. Included in the Mini-Lessons Portfolio, refer to Appendix C, are two rubrics. As mentioned in Chapter Three, these rubrics help me evaluate my texts as well as serve a purpose to assist facilitation in classrooms. The first rubric is in Appendix A. This is the Courageous Conversation protocol rubric. The second rubric is the Text Rubric, located in Appendix B.

The conversation rubric encourages dialogue in the lesson. The second agreement encourages participants to speak about what they know. Students are welcomed and encouraged to share their experiences. This agreement supports the first agreement that asks for participants to be engaged. Given that all participants are able to share and that

what they share is valuable, the third agreement cautions participants that there may be different perspectives and views shared. Having a diverse class means that differences will appear and should, therefore, there will be many moments where individuals will not see eye to eye and or that there will not be a “right” or “wrong”. This is what the fourth agreement means in assisting with facilitation and with building climate.

The Six Conditions not only help with facilitation but it assists in selecting purposeful and meaningful learning points in texts. The Conditions work together to assist the facilitator to consistently acknowledge different perspectives and remember that there may be a narrative other than the white or dominant narrative. When thinking about appropriate texts, it is important to include other narratives and perspectives.

The second rubric, the Text Rubric, is located in Appendix B. This rubric is combined by the several themes and ideas the literature recommends and points out as being useful for culturally relevant material. All three texts are listed in this rubric in Appendix C, displaying what each book contains.

Evaluation of Curriculum

When we present opportunities for students to critically think and evaluate texts that in some way represents our students, it means more for learning. There is deep processing that is evident if students have to apply it to their own lives (Tatum, 2000). Equally important is the learning that takes place as we observe and take in information from each other in a classroom. Not only does it make us culturally diverse educators but providing students the chance to relate and involve their life experiences with literacy contributes to community building. Providing these texts is like providing an avenue for

students to understand and share, mirroring a community of diverse learners as Purnell (2007) points.

In the previous section I mentioned several points and information about my chosen texts. Appendix D provides the results for the text rubric mentioned in Chapter Three. Although the three texts I have selected does fulfill majority of the requirement that the rubric above suggests, all three do lack what number nine has listed. The texts did not hold historical information in them. Although one text mentioned an African American father being a Vietnam veteran, this is not enough information to classify this text as holding true or enough historical context. *Money Hungry* has several moments set in a school setting, yet there is nothing specifically noting our main character interacting with a white person. There were a few encounters that the main character and or the mom had with the principal, but the text does not state whether or not the principal is white.

In evaluating the text rubric (see Appendix D), I understand that there can be some discretion. Some questions may be as such: To what degree are we counting the inclusion of family? What are we defining family as? What does positive portrayals or positive relationships look like? How do we decide what are the opportunities for discussing conflicting moments? Do we want just the presence of a Black/African American male or a positive one? After going through this rubric and thinking about what things in each text earns the satisfaction of each theme, characteristic, or feature, I realize that I need to be more detailed and should provide specific examples.

The literature I presented in Chapter Two that supported the rubric derived from works from several scholars such as Wood and Jocius (2013) as they note the lack of

having much representation of black males, their families and experiences (p. 663). This directly is relative to numbers 2, 3, 4, and 8 in the rubric. Bishop (1990) also provides a list that I had incorporated in my rubric describing the importance of sense of continuity and survival. In evaluating my rubric, I feel that without understanding the importance of conversations that go into depth about racial and cultural differences, it would be hard to choose appropriate texts and, most importantly, hold engaging classroom discussions. So in all is the rubric I composed helpful? I believe it does, given the support and background information the literature has provided. The other question is is the rubric alone enough to selecting useful culturally relevant texts. This is where I would have to answer no.

As far as evaluating the facilitation protocol that Singleton believes will help with courageous conversations, I think it fits with the teaching. I think that with the mini-lessons I have developed, the protocol can easily assist the facilitator. It is important to for the educator to go back to the protocol. The protocol has to be of use and even practiced by the facilitator before it can be effective in the classroom. The mini-lessons provide some guidance as it starts with focusing on certain things and circling the conversation on certain topics. The key components to having these lessons and providing sufficient facilitation skills are allowing multiple perspectives, knowing that there will be uncomfortable moments, being aware of non-closure, needing engagement, and respecting and acknowledging that the truth must be heard (Singleton, 2014). I believe that integrating the protocol to teaching skills does make the mini-lessons successful.

All of the mini-lessons invite everyone in the classroom to reflect and think about others. In addition to this, the mini-lessons acknowledge the different lifestyles, knowledge, and experiences that each students have. Having such texts included in the way each mini-lesson is structured, provides students the opportunity to see diversity and make connects to the texts and their classroom community. With the support these mini-lessons are giving in order to understand and acknowledge the differences that a classroom consists of, these mini-lessons do satisfy and support my capstone question.

Summary

I have read several children's books and have gone to several different kinds of locations to see if I could find anything new or old that would be of interest to the students I work with, knowing what I know about them. The truth is that we do not have much books that represents students of color, let alone our African American/Black boys. An important thing that I wanted to capture in texts was the inclusion of present day experiences. I want to have students engaged in order to get them started. Before I can give them something that they may not be able to relate to, I wanted them to get used to seeing themselves and applying their thought processing, then making this transferable to other texts. With this said, my selections are bias.

So with the three texts that I found appropriate, I believe that after being able to have meaningful dialogue and sharing moments that trigger learning of new information, a different kind of respect (Douglas et al., 2008) would appear for students and their community. New perspectives would be gained and a drive for learning for everyone in the classroom would appear. Once this is established, comparing the texts that we

currently find fit with the texts that aren't of so much of interesting would be not just another strategy but something enlightening as we take a bigger step to thinking about our society.

Reviewing this chapter, I focused on the texts, strategies, and having conversations. My reflection supports my evaluation of my rubric and the evaluation of the texts I have chosen. In the next chapter, I share my personal thoughts on my journal throughout this action research project and specifically include my next steps and future ideas deriving from this experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Introduction

The start of this capstone began with my personal experiences and concerns for equity and literacy as discussed in Chapter One. The literature that supports my methods and the materials in my curriculum project is cover in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, my methods in how I am compiling and creating my curriculum is presented. In Chapter Four, I shared my findings, my reflection, and evaluation of my research curriculum project. In this chapter, I discuss my major learnings, implications, limitations of any kind, and my future steps.

Reflecting on this journey in researching and creating this curriculum, I found the support for the need in culturally relevant materials to support student learning does exist. In addition to this, the acknowledgement of cultural differences and its impact in classrooms was stressed and supported by several scholars such as Ladson-Billings (MN-NAME, 2014), Gay (2010), Gambrell (1996), and several others mentioned previously in this capstone. Understanding how the culture of the school can affect an African American or Black student is just as important (Annamma, Boele, Moore, & Klinger, 2013). These factors are a huge components to the school climate, racial equity, and

literacy success.

Journey and Thoughts

I enjoy young adult literature and to find a good children's book that includes a culture that is not your usual white dominant one, it's personally interesting to me. I get to relate to some things off the top and find more after reflection and analysis. Yet, the journey I took to finding good and interesting texts was depressing and there were several moments where I had gotten upset. I recall being in one of the Barnes and Nobles and realizing that there are African American children's book with historical content, but there were no texts that provided a setting or a culture that my students are currently experiencing. With so many books in that one store alone, I could not believe that their children's selection lacked what so many were desperately seeking. Then I had started roaming off to the clearance books on the rolling shelves and prior to that I noticed some plastic colorful weaved baskets that the store was selling. Sure they were pretty but they made me sad. I recall my childhood years of having the same basket, yet instead larger with the colors green and black. Yet, I felt sort of out of place whenever my family and I hauled our clothes in this basket to the laundromat and back. No one carried the same basket as this one and rather it making me feel unique, I felt out of place. Although history repeats itself and fashion gets recycled, why is it that things come circling around? Who decides what is acceptable and or what is now the current trend?

I provide the previous thoughts above for a reason. I want to point out that I am not dismissing history and that I do think it is important for our students and children to read about our past. Yet, after reading the literature and thinking about my current

position I can't help but wonder who selects what gets written. I even question the format the book has to be written in order to get recognition or yet even published. As a seeker or as a researcher, I was constantly reminded of how what I know is also biased and influenced by things that I am unable to point out or recognize. As I deal with this on my own, I am constantly reminded of the children I work with. They deserve things and more of it.

Limitation in Project

Although there was information concerning culturally relevant ways of reaching students as discussed in Chapter two, in particular as mentioned by Gloria Ladson-Billings (MN-NAME, 2014), the limitation I had with this project was finding texts. I think it is important to bring up the fact that many texts I have purchased were texts that were in the clearance section. In particular, *Locomotion* was a text that I locked into on the floor of the store. Quite interestingly, I found it in the used and clearance section in the back of this cool book store I had looked up on the internet. I wondered how such a great book could not stand or be placed in a section, or its own section, out with the rest. I found myself also thinking about how I was going to find myself owning this copy, the recycled one.

Another limitation I had was finding the usage of African American English Language in the children's text. Several children's books were written in the Standard English language and more of it was used in the children's picture books I had seen. Majority of the texts that consisted of some historical component did not capture dialogue in the African American English language as well. I actually found more contemporary

and new texts including more dialogue.

With finding the texts being difficult, my journey in creating the lessons were actually the more enjoyable part. I avoided worksheets because I wanted the work to be done by students and done by constantly getting input through conversing. I also felt it important for the educator to be a part of this work by getting a chance to get feedback, input, and information from students while being the facilitator. The mental notes that come with the lessons in addition to the guidance of the facilitation rubric really should help the educator as it provides a different way of doing things.

Major Learnings and Take-Aways

Although my experience of searching for texts was sad, I am glad I had gone through this experience. From libraries to stores, chained bookstores and independent, I feel that I can understand partial of what educators are going through but most of all what students of color are still experiencing. I am very proud of being able to use the knowledge I have gained from my fairly new position and apply it to something that is along the same work. In helping staff and students understand that there are things that need to be addressed and that by shying away from them or ignoring them, we are creating even more of a gap in academic achievement and in our relationships with each other.

Not demanding for more or not having texts that represents our students in need is still an issue (Horning, 2014). If our schools do not demand or acknowledge the necessity for these, we are only perceiving the dominate and traditional culture as important. With this message, we are remaining inequitable and presenting educators as not respecting our

students of color (Douglas et. Al, 2008). The many different aspects that culturally relevant texts provides is healthy as it supports our students of color. The more we show that we see and care for these students, the more students will no longer think that education is not rewarding as mentioned by Talbert-Johnson (2004). Legitimately, the relationships that can bloom from learning from one another is devastatingly important (Douglas et. al, 2008).

I have truly learned that teaching means understanding and trying to understand students. The literature points out how isolation exists in schools and for me to walk into my school and be one of the few staff of color, not easily find good quality of African American children's literature, and hear students constantly feel they are in a racist school is horrible. I have learned that the school culture means acknowledging African American or Black students in several ways such as in materials, curriculum, and in conversations.

Implications

I believe a school environment should be safe and constantly thinking of ways to progress for the sake of students. This includes what students learn, how they learn, and how the school executes this. The districts are also a major impact to how individual schools run and their alignment plans and goals should all support equity.

If a district is acknowledging racial equity, it needs to support staff in consistently and constantly utilizing culturally relevant strategies and teaching. This leads to having supportive materials and conversations which should be at the forefront and never pulled out when needed. Intentional invitations of having students use what they know and are

familiar with is a necessity which may alter what the school system already has in place as far as teaching practices and curriculum. In addition to this, teachers have to be willing to do this. The pedagogy needs alterations and more explanation to support the understanding of racial equity and culturally responsive teaching.

Steps to supporting this may be evaluating teaching prep programs, school curriculum, values, beliefs, practices, and policies, and supporting more texts that represents people of color. An evaluation in our mind-sets as educators and authors is also crucial. If our demographics are changing, our culture is changing too. If there are changes, there needs to be meaningful conversations to support future steps.

Future Research Plans

This learning experience has impacted me in several ways. I feel the need to work on writing my own texts that represents individuals who share my same experiences. I feel the need to write texts that address issues that sometimes an individual is unable to understand just yet but feels these things every so often.

In addition to this, I'd like to do more research on students feeling in the school setting. I'd like to go deeper in understanding the isolation and alienation feelings that students experience and see if there is a trend with specific areas. To focus on this and write books that emphasizes on such situations can encourage students to discuss this openly or subconsciously share such feelings. The more specific the scenarios are in the school setting, the more meaning to it.

The interest in becoming an author emphasizing on this specific concern will lead into another area of research interest which is publication. If there is a lack in children's

book that represents people of color, I'd like to know more about it. I wonder what the qualifications are because there is a demand for these books, and I wonder why not much people of color represents authors of children's book (Horning, 2014).

Sharing Research Project

Yet for the time being, I would like to share my current findings with my department of Equity and Integration. I'd like to implement the Courageous Conversation into my 4th and 5th grade groups, but specifically suggest it to my colleagues and supervisor for it to be a required tool for the curriculum we use to teach these groups. In addition, I will create and suggest an assessment for these groups. The assessment will evaluate how much student voice and acknowledgement of different cultures is being welcomed and recognized in these groups.

In addition to this, I will create a male book club since I already have a female book club. I will keep track of participants' academic progress and touch base with teachers to see if any information, experience, connection, or skills get transitioned into the classroom. I will definitely reflect on my facilitation skills as well. In addition, I am going to actually use the mini-lessons I have compiled in these book clubs. In supporting these book clubs, I will continue searching for texts that depicts the lives of my students of color.

Conclusion

Although there were limitations and knowing there will always be some kind of limitation, I look forward to doing what I can do and inspiring students to think critically and take action. My work with both student and staff is not easy, but this project has

assisted me in adjusting and evaluating my own skills. I truly believe that inequity exists and that within our own rooms, we can make equitable changes that will not only help lives but give them insight that maybe they've been longing for or are in need of.

Taking a moment to think again about the importance of "*How can a culturally relevant text be used effectively to support diversity, racial equity, and school community building?*," I understand that this is a complex issue. We all have needs, both educator and students, in order to successfully do our work. The equity part that comes into play with this is that we are all not the same and so our understanding of Equity and how it applies to our work can vary from one individual to another. With personal thoughts, I look forward to not having Equity be an over-used and misinterpreted term. In addition, I look forward to believing that what we are given and what we do have, literacy and diverse children, we can move forward.

Appendix A:
Conversation Protocol Rubric

**Facilitation Protocol Rubric as adapted from
Courageous Conversations by Glenn Singleton**

Please use the following protocol to help with facilitation and promoting conversations. Start by checking off each while observing your students. After the lesson, reflect on the specific moments that applied to each.

*The Agreements should be used with everyone in the process. Both educators/facilitator and students need to become familiar with this.

Four Agreements:

- 1. Stay ENGAGE
- 2. Experience DISCOMFORT
- 3. Speak your TRUTH
- 4. Expect/Accept NON-CLOSURE

*The Conditions do not have to be directly understood by students, but rather it becomes a skill that students gradually can grasp with the help of the educator/facilitator. Therefore, it is important that the educator/facilitator is the one who needs to constantly be familiar and considerate of these conditions in addition to utilizing the 4 Agreements.

- 1. Focus on PERSONAL, local, and immediate
- 2. ISOLATE race
- 3. Normalize SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION & multiple perspectives
- 4. Monitor agreements, conditions, and ESTABLISH PARAMETERS
- 5. Use a “WORKING DEFINITION” for race
- 6. Examine the presence and role of “WHITENESS”

Appendix B:
Text Rubric

Text Rubric

Themes, Characteristics, Features, etc.	Name of Text #1	Name of Text #2	Name of Text #3
1. Illustration of person/people of color			
2. Inclusion of Family			
3. Inclusion of Guardian(s) other than parent			
4. Positive relationships with family members			
5. Positive portrayal of people of color (strength, progressive, etc.)			
6. Inclusion of African American English, dialogue, or other linguistic feature other than Standard American English, etc.			
7. Opportunities to discuss conflicting views (societal perspectives, stereotypes, etc.)			
8. Representatives of African American/Black males			
9. History of African Americans/Black			
10. Socialization (interaction with Whites)			

Appendix C:
Mini-Lesson Portfolio

Mini-Lesson Portfolio

The contents in this portfolio are:

- I. Book Pre-views
- II. Introduction
- III. Facilitation Protocol
- IV. Four Mini-Lesson Examples
- V. Pre/Post-assessment

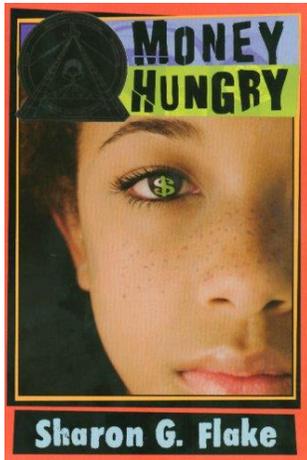
In the Book-Preview, there is a brief description for each of the three books selected. Following the Book Preview, the Introduction provides the purpose and goal of these lessons and reminders to making these lessons culturally responsive and meaningful. Lastly, Four Mini-Lessons are presented in which each is provided with directions and details.

PLEASE NOTE:

1. The number of books you need for you and your class is not included.
2. Although all lessons are suggesting to be mini-lessons, please use your discretion with time and detail in making the most impact for your students (whole or small group)
3. Lessons are not in order, although they provide a general guidance to when you can use them. This is important because each classroom varies in what conversations have already been established and to what level the educator and his or her own students have already established in relationship building. In addition to this, the lessons also mean that the concept, mission, and focus can be used at different points of the book. This allows students to be familiar with and apply what they are discussing to other sections and even other texts, leading up to transferable strategies, applications, learning, etc.
5. There is no specific grade-level these mini-lessons are targeted for. Your decision can depend on if you want to be the reader or have your students be able to read the texts. Feel free to use another source to help with this as they can provide suggestions to grade level and or ages for the texts. In addition to all of this, please keep in mind that it is important to recognize that students come from different experiences, have different exposures and influences, and possess different maturity levels. This all suggests that there can definitely be some room for discretion or arguments on determining what grade level these lessons and texts can be most beneficial for.

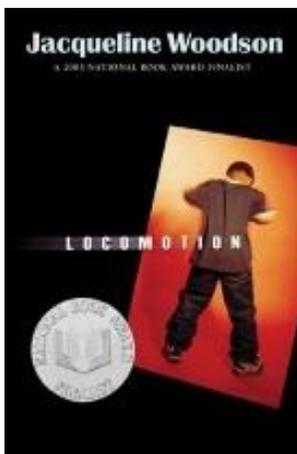
I. Book Previews:

1. *Money Hungry* By Sharon G. Flake



In *Money Hungry*, our main character is a young female named Raspberry for specific reasons. Raspberry tries the best she can to earn money for a better future. As she is saving every cent she makes, she also faces her everyday life issues which involves the relationship with her mother, peers, and the love for money. Through trials and errors of making money, our strong female character overcomes an even larger issue that even her savings could not have saved. This book includes African American English dialogue, dealing with being bi-racial, stereotypes, and other things that many people in America face and experience.

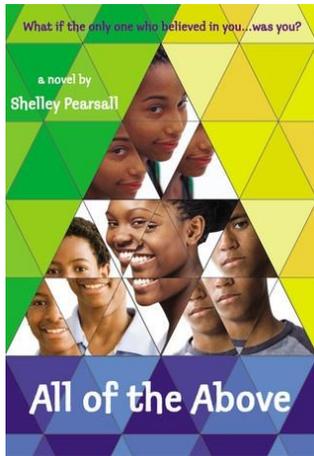
2. *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson



Locomotion provides us an experience of a young male named Lonnie who dislikes schools but has an undiscovered talent of writing which one of his teachers try to promote. Lonnie lets us get into his mind by sharing his experiences, thoughts, and

deep feelings and emotions. All of these touching things are revealed through his experiences which are displayed in different forms of writing. As we get to know Lonnie more, we discover his hardships and his different writing styles. This book includes many things such as African American English, poetry, free-writing, academic struggles, dealing with racial differences.

3. *All of the Above* by Shelley Pearsall



Each chapter is a name of a character telling us what he or she is experiencing, thinking, and expressing. *All of the Above* provides us with several characters with different ways of thinking, experiencing different struggles, but all not so much in tuned in math class. To just name a few, you have a white male teacher, a veteran father, and also a foster child who does not claim her foster parent. As our teacher shifts his gears to doing what's in the interest of some of his students, relationships are building, support from our students' community emerges, and personal effort evolves. This book includes a strong African American/Black father and son bond, a white teacher who works with majority of students of color, expressive images along some texts, and interesting personalities that can be likely in our diverse population today.

II. Introduction:

The following are four Mini-Lessons Examples provided based off of the texts that I have chosen. Please recall the importance of meaningful conversations and how several factors such as race, stereotypes, ethnicity, culture, assimilation/acclulturation, influences, etc. will come into play. It is important to acknowledge these things and discover how differently and how different students react to these factors and discussions. It is also important to know that prior conversations to these factors are beneficial. I recommend reviewing the Courageous Conversation Protocol by Glen Singleton to assist in facilitation and guidance for all participants. This means that these Mini-Lessons are designed to help everyone, both educator and student, as a main focus is allowing and permitting sharing what each comes with and recognizing differences.

Each mini-lesson includes a Material(s), Mission, Objective, Focus, Directions, and Possible Accomplishments section. All are present in each lesson to add meaning and or understanding to how each lesson helps build relationships as it provides opportunities to discuss and acknowledge differences. The following is a brief description to each of the section:

- *Material(s)- the tangible things needed to complete the mini-lesson
- *Mission- the general goal we are targeting
- *Objective- the purposeful action educator(s) are trying to achieve
- *Focus- the vision and essence to ensuring students are truly being part of learning
- *Directions- instructions or guidance to completing the mini-lesson
- *Possible Accomplishments: (affirmation) things that educator(s) may be able to and should try to identify in order to reflect back on the successfulness of the Mission, Objective, and Focus. It can be utilized as a self-assessment tool.

Following the mini-lessons is a pre/post-assessment. This pre/post-assessment can be used with any of the lessons provided; therefore it is applicable for any of the texts. It does not need to be used daily. The purpose of the pre/post-assessment is to provide a tool that will help educators monitor their progress in working towards being culturally responsive and to reflect on students' perspectives. Students' responses can suggest how they are interpreting what they and others share and how they are interpreting the usefulness of sharing. The assessment serves as a means to not pinpoint anything done right or wrong, but rather serves as a means to generate next steps to supporting student learning

III. Facilitation Protocol:

***Facilitator/Educator must become familiar with this protocol and refer to it during lessons to monitor discussions. It is important for the facilitator to be familiarized with the both parts, focusing on how the Six Conditions can assist with providing different perspectives and allowing room for sharing.**

Facilitation Protocol as adapted from Courageous Conversations by Glenn Singleton

Please use the following protocol to help with facilitation and promoting conversations. Start by checking off each while observing your students. After the lesson, reflect on the specific moments that applied to each.

*The Agreements should be used with everyone in the process. Both educators/facilitator and students need to become familiar with this.

Four Agreements:

- 1. Stay ENGAGE
- 2. Experience DISCOMFORT
- 3. Speak your TRUTH
- 4. Expect/Accept NON-CLOSURE

*The Conditions do not have to be directly understood by students, but rather it becomes a skill that students gradually can grasp with the help of the educator/facilitator. Therefore, it is important that the educator/facilitator is the one who needs to constantly be familiar and considerate of these conditions in addition to utilizing the 4 Agreements.

- 1. Focus on PERSONAL, local, and immediate
- 2. ISOLATE race
- 3. Normalize SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION & multiple perspectives
- 4. Monitor agreements, conditions, and ESTABLISH PARAMETERS
- 5. Use a "WORKING DEFINITION" for race
- 6. Examine the presence and role of "WHITENESS"

IV. Mini-Lessons

Mini-Lesson Example 1

Material(s): Money Hungry by Sharon G. Flake

Mission:

Providing an opportunity for Student Voice by having students share their thoughts as well as allowing them to hear different/opposing perspectives or views.

Objective:

To use a text in a culturally responsive manner by acknowledging student knowledge and ways, empowering student discussions, and providing students an opportunity to learn from each other.

Focus:

Understanding and recognizing the benefits to “Being real” (honest, safe, open, and considerate/open-minded)

Directions:

1. Have students sit in a circle. Have students share what honest, safe, open, and considerate means. Then ask students how “being real” relates to and or is similar to being honest, safe, open, and considerate/open-minded. Please discuss the pros (“Speaking Truth”) and cons (“Experiencing Discomfort”) about “being real”, then discuss how it is needed in a classroom full of different people with different experiences.
2. Have everyone take a silent moment to look at and think about the cover of Money Hungry. Provide the class with the instructions to the next activity: One student will share what he or she notices or observes from the cover, then another student provides a suggestion for that notice and observation. Please remind students that not everyone thinks alike and how this can actually help everyone learn from each other and learn something different. What one person thinks can definitely be not what another person thinks, but it is interesting to see what similarities and differences we have in a classroom. Emphasize that we can practice “being real”.

Possible accomplishments:

Start to recognizing or acknowledging different perspectives, metaphorical thinking, providing and welcoming no right or wrong responses, conversation starters on race, etc.

Mini-Lesson Example 2

Material(s): Money Hungry by Sharon G. Flake

Mission:

Providing an opportunity for Student Voice by having students share information/knowledge from their own experiences

Objective:

To use a text in a culturally responsive manner by acknowledging student knowledge and ways, empowering student discussions, and providing students an opportunity to learn from each other.

Focus:

Getting to know students

Directions:

After discussing what the title of this text might suggest, read the first couple of chapters. Review what Raspberry does at school and the relationship between her actions and the title. Discuss the term “hungry”, its usages and the seriousness to it. Refer back to how serious is Raspberry’s hunger for money and ask students if they ever felt a moment in life when they were so seriously hungry for something, anything and have they explain their answer just as Raspberry has shared. Ensure that students define what hunger means to them, what their example is, and how it feels like. Point out the different interpretations and examples to enforce “Engagement”.

Possible accomplishments:

Metaphorical thinking, getting to know students by hearing students’ different interpretations and or relations to character, using background knowledge to support text, conversation starters about stereotypes, etc.

Mini-Lesson Example 3

Material(s): Locomotion by Jacqueline Woodson, paper/journal, and pencil

Mission:

Providing an opportunity for Student Voice by having students share information/knowledge from their own experiences/influences.

Objective:

To use a text in a culturally responsive manner by acknowledging student knowledge and ways, empowering student discussions, and providing students an opportunity to learn from each other.

Focus:

Is there and why is there a “right” or “wrong” way?

Directions:

1. Discuss the cover of this book and ask students what they notice without explanation. Then take a vote on whether the character is dressing “right” or “wrong”. Split the class based on the sides. Have a student from each side provide an explanation for their thought. Then pose the following questions without having students answer but to just think about: Was there someone who decided that there was a “right” or “wrong” way of dressing? Who said dressing one way is “right” and another way is “wrong” and why? After a moment, give students a brief moment to write down their answer to “who” or what person made this decision. Students may experience “Discomfort” as they are doing the talking because you are not confirming whether something is right or wrong. In doing this, there will be some “Non-closure”. Some students will experience “Discomfort” as they may find themselves dressing similar to our character. This is where it is crucial to point out how setting up right or wrong ways of doing things can be conflicting and troublesome. Ensure students do not “Disengage” but encourage them to “Speak their Truth” while acknowledging that there are just differences.

2. Read just a couple entries and ask students if anything comes to their mind or what they notice about this text. Zone in on a particular phrase or term(s) and ask students how comfortable they are with this phrase or term(s). Then ask them if this is the Standard English way of writing? Take a vote and have the class split again. Then pose the questions: Was there someone who decided that there was a “right” or “wrong” way of speaking? Who said speaking one way is “right” and another way is “wrong” and why?

3. Ask students to take a silent moment to think about what emotions and feelings they would feel if someone told them that the way they speak and or even dress is “wrong”.

Take a brief moment to allow students to then record their emotions and feelings. Then discuss as a whole the scenarios when we people living in this country have to change the way we dress or speak.

Possible Accomplishments:

Providing opportunities for students to free write and acknowledge different languages (within English), to hear different interpretations and explanations, to use background knowledge to relate to character, conversations on stereotypes and its impact to society and people's views, etc.

Mini-Lesson Example 4

Material(s): All of the Above by Shelley Pearsall, paper, writing utensil

Mission:

Providing an opportunity for Student Voice by having students share information/knowledge from their own experiences/influences.

Objective:

To use a text in a culturally responsive manner by acknowledging student knowledge and ways, empowering student discussions, and providing students an opportunity to learn from each other.

Focus:

Obstacles to overcome for achievement

Directions:

1. After already reading several chapters from All of the Above, have students review each character. Please have one person name a character, two students provide one description different from the other, and then go back to the initial person who names the character and asked if she/he recalls something different or something that was not already name. Emphasize how different things stick to or are more memorable to different people for different reasons.
2. Have students recall the introduction of the book and how the school was at the dead end and how things seem to be going that way as well. While directing this, draw a horizontal line with school at the end of it. Discuss what this symbolizes. Discuss what each student is going through that interferes with a good education (or whatever your class came up with). Allow students to “Speak Their Truth”. Have students copy the same line and some kind of school image onto their own paper. Then have students draw (encourage any type of drawing) the things that represents what some of the characters are going through along the top of the line up to the school image. Below that line draw a line and a goal of your own, naming the obstacles that you faced. Have students choose a moment they recall or are going through, naming (drawing) the obstacles below the line. Have students share at the end what different and similar experiences they have in achieving or reaching something.

Possible Accomplishment(s):

Students are utilizing a different way to take notes (recap), everyone is getting a chance to learn from each other, students are getting an opportunity to think about and practice imagery, symbols/symbolic things, and metaphors, etc.

V. Pre and Post Assessment

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Please read each statement and circle the number that best represents how you feel and what you know. This is not a test but serves as a purpose to helping me understand how I am teaching and how you are learning.

1. How much are you learning from your classmates?

1	2	3	4	5
Not much		I'm learning from a couple of students		I'm learning from students all the time.

2. How often do you get to share what you know?

1	2	3	4	5
Not often everyday		A couple times a week		Almost

3. How often do you get to share your life experiences or examples during class discussions?

1	2	3	4	5
Not often everyday		A few times a week		Almost

4. How much do you hear your classmates share about their life experiences or examples?

1	2	3	4	5
Not much everyday		A few times a week		Almost

5. What thing or things that someone else in your class shared had stuck to your mind the most? What did someone else in the class say that you can remember or think about often?

6. Was there something that you shared with the class that you were happy or proud about? Yes or No? If Yes, explain what it was.

Appendix D:
Text Rubric Results

Appendix D:
Text Rubric Results

Themes, Characteristics, Features, etc.	Money Hungry #1	Loco- motion #2	All of the Above #3
1. Illustration of person/people of color	X	X	X
2. Inclusion of Family	X	X	X
3. Inclusion of Guardian(s) other than parent	X	X	X
4. Positive relationships with family members	X	X	X
5. Positive portrayal of people of color (strength, progressive, etc.)	X	X	X
6. Inclusion of African American English, dialogue, or other linguistic feature other than Standard American English, etc.	X	X	X
7. Opportunities to discuss conflicting views (societal perspectives, stereotypes, etc.)	X	X	X
8. Representatives of African American/Black males	X	X	X
9. History of African Americans/Black			
10. Socialization (interaction with Whites)		X	X

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