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Culturally Responsive Teaching And Social Emotional Learning: A Self-Assessment Tool For Educators

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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: A SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR EDUCATORS

by

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To my mother; a life-long learner and my eternal motivator. Without your guidance, support and understanding I know I would not be who I am today. Thank you for leading by example and encouraging me to always finish what I've started.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For the past seven years my work has been focused on education programming for all ages. I was involved in many different education organizations. Working as an AmeriCorps Volunteer In Service to America (VISTA), I ran a tutoring program for children in grades K-5. Oftentimes English Language Learner (ELL or EL) students were those receiving the pull-out tutoring. During my year as a VISTA, I began to volunteer to teach English to adults and (General Education (GED) classes at a local community center. It was a transformative experience; I loved providing adult students with useful knowledge and appropriate lessons for their lives. I continued work with K-5 youth during the daytime, and taught ESL to adults in the evenings for the next three years. After my work as a VISTA, I spent a year as a tutoring coordinator at a local family homeless shelter, providing services to youth ages 5-17. The students I served in this environment were all experiencing homelessness and often had a number of other emotional or cognitive processing delays. I then became a Facilitator for a local youth development nonprofit, and I am currently in my fifth year.

The central question that this project addresses is: *How can a culturally responsive framework be used to modify a SEL curriculum so that it is linguistically and culturally relevant for middle school ELs?* In order to answer this question, I overview several frameworks and consider the needs of an ELL middle school student. This project stems from my personal experience working both with a social emotional curriculum and middle school ELLs.

Personal Experience

In the past, I have been a part of youth development programs that require sign-ups and qualifications in order to participate. With this local nonprofit, all students who attend the partner school are automatically enrolled and eligible for our programming. When I started my first year working for this youth development non-profit, I was excited to be a part of an organization that embraced the idea of serving all students in a school, rather than just focusing on small sections of a grade or group. This local non-profit partners with the English department of each school to provide monthly workshops during regularly scheduled English class periods. I was interested and eager to be able to reach a wide range of students, especially students who would not receive personalized attention otherwise.

The curriculum provided to students through this nonprofit is unique to students and focuses heavily on social emotional learning. Working with over 13,000 students every year in a large city in the Midwest, the curriculum encourages students to think big about their future. All students in the 19 partner schools participate in the program in grades 6-12, and each year the curriculum builds on the skills they learned previously within the program. Themes and skills such as learning individual values, decision-making, identity, and personal goals are the cornerstones for the curriculum in the classroom. In addition to monthly class workshops for students, the nonprofit provides other experiential learning opportunities such as college tours, camping trips and, theater experiences. These opportunities are intended to allow students to gain different perspectives and encourage new experiences while continuing to work on the skills they learn during in-class workshops.

As I continued with my first year in the program, I was consistently surprised by the access to the students we were given. Giving up class time is often a disputed practice in school districts. With this unique opportunity to use teachers' coveted class time to focus on the curriculum, it was important that I provide quality experiences to the students I work with. Students were always excited when our staff was in their classroom for the day. I heard from alumni of the program that they always had fun when the nonprofit came to the classroom, but as months went by I started to wonder if students were getting more than just "fun" out of workshops. Many of our activities are highly interactive, but always include a discussion and reflective portion to help students make connections to the "fun" we just had, the classroom curriculum and the bigger themes we have been practicing.

I worked within two partner schools and taught classrooms of sixth and seventh grade. I also taught mixed grade (sixth - eighth grade) English Language Learning (ELL or EL) classes. As I split my time between these mainstream classrooms and the special programs, I started to realize how much I needed to adapt each lesson plan to better suit the needs of the students in these non-mainstream classrooms. As facilitators, we are given the ability to adapt the lesson plan however, the objective must stay the same. As I worked to adapt the lesson plans, I still couldn't shake the feeling of concern in my EL classes as many lessons were falling flat and not connecting with students if I did not modify them greatly in some way.

I could see that many students were not getting the full experience. These workshops are often fast-paced, high-energy and can also include a larger discussion component. Facilitators are at their own discretion as to how they choose to modify or adjust a curriculum, without an official modification guide.

During a particular workshop in which we share and discuss dreams for our futures, students had difficulty brainstorming ideas of what a dream could be. A dream, as presented through this curriculum, is not just a career but can include other activities and experiences. Students commonly said, “soccer player” or “doctor”. I found it difficult to explain but it became apparent that their frame of reference, and even the question, “What is your dream?” was a foreign concept; students may not have been asked this question before, or they had not had the opportunity to explore the complexities of what a dream could mean in their lives.

In this particular school, I worked within a sheltered EL program, there are approximately 15 students who are identified as having limited English proficiency. Proficiency is determined through the English Learner Identification Criteria and Procedures of the district. All students enrolled in this school district answer the Home Language Questionnaire to determine if there is evidence of another language. If so, they will be referred to an EL teacher for further evaluation. At this point, the student will be evaluated on through the WIDA (World-class Instructional Design & Assessment) Access Placement Test, evidence of past participation in EL programs, Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment data or classroom performance. If a student meets the entrance requirements, parents have the option of accepting or refusing ESL services.

Equal Playing Field

Adjusting the curriculum was necessary in order for the curriculum objectives to be effective and for the students to feel successful. Facilitators are provided the standard curriculum, but no modification guidelines that would help ensure quality. It felt as though we were not making the curriculum accessible to the students through these changes; rather, we

were making the lessons easier with lower expectations, and ultimately we were putting them at a disadvantage.

I worked with three levels of students: beginner, intermediate and high with a majority of the students from Eastern Africa, Somalia, specifically. Many were fairly new to the country, most commonly coming to America as refugees of the Somali Civil War. Beyond their low proficiency in English, there were other issues in the classroom that made it difficult for them to participate fully or be engaged in the programming. Learning to be a part of a classroom environment was one major hurdle, in addition to learning about community building, managing emotions (anger, laughter) and issues of home culture clashing with western culture, such as having boys and girls work together.

The first workshop of the year encourages students to dream big; the class practices talking about goals for their futures. How can we as facilitators expect students, new to the country, to participate and be able to define a goal for their future without background knowledge of what is available to them? Not only can they not articulate their dream, or possibly come up with a dream, they also frequently have trouble treating others, who do share their dream out loud, with respect. Laughing at each other, interrupting, talking over each other and fighting were quite common. These issues may have resulted because a majority of the students had not received formal schooling in their home country; they may have found adapting to Western education expectations and English pragmatics confusing. In addition, there was the underlying trauma associated with the life of a refugee that affected their interactions.

A major pillar of this nonprofit is to use the arts as a resource and tool in helping students learn more about themselves and the world around them. Inherently, a major focus of the work

this nonprofit does is linked with the idea of social emotional learning (SEL), as they focus on assisting students not only in reaching a dream, but all the skills it may take to get them there. According to Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) a leader in the SEL field, SEL is defined as:

"the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." (2015 CASEL guide)

The structure of this nonprofit encourages SEL in all activities, but how can we make the activities more accessible and appropriate for middle school, new to country, EL's? The activities include acting, drawing, group work, writing and discussions. I feel that supporting EL students and teaching them SEL skills can only add to their English learning capacity. Starting a SEL plan in middle school has the potential to affect students in the 11 to 14 age group in a positive way, but for many EL's they are missing the opportunity to learn these important skills because their classroom time is solely, or primarily, focused on language acquisition. It is noted by many educators that another way to enrich a classroom and create higher achievement to a diverse group of students is by creating a culturally responsive classroom this framework makes education more relevant to the student by integrating their culture into the education.

Research Motives

My role in creating this tool is to assist educators, youth workers and anyone who instructs young people in the creation of their lessons. For them to use as a this information will help in the creation of EL specific curriculum, something that the nonprofit does not currently

have. This research is important to me professionally because it will add to the effectiveness of the nonprofit's curriculum, making it more applicable and accessible to non-English speakers allowing them to gain the linguistic and cultural knowledge necessary to build proficiency. The modification of this curriculum will assist me in coming years as I continue to work with this population.

I began my project with certain assumptions and biases. I believe that the current curriculum when used with ELs is not as effective as it could be. I also feel that all facilitators at the local nonprofit welcome the opportunity to work in non-mainstream classrooms working with EL's. I assume that the work this local nonprofit does is beneficial to students and that classroom teachers are happy to have the program support the regular curriculum in their classrooms.

Guiding question

This project is aimed at answering the following question:

1. How can a culturally responsive framework be used to modify a SEL curriculum so that it is linguistically and culturally relevant for middle school ELs?

Summary

In this project, I will create a resource tool to assist educators, youth workers, and teachers to effectively integrate culturally responsive teaching into their social emotional curriculum. The tool will use the CRT-SEL anchor competencies, to be discussed in the next chapter, as a guide and will indicate suggested methods instructors can use to achieve those competences. Instructors can utilize this checklist as they plan, deliver, and reflect on their lessons.

Chapter Overviews

In this chapter I presented my guiding question and it's significance in social emotional education. My role in this project, including my background and biases were also discussed. In Chapter Two, I will provide a literature review relevant to social emotional and culturally responsive teaching frameworks, Somali youth and modifying curriculum for ELs. In Chapter Three, I will describe the methodology that will be used to create a resource tool. Chapter Four will present my learnings and reflections on this project.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The purpose of this project is to create a resource to be utilized by educators delivering a social emotional curriculum to middle school EL's. How can social emotional curriculum be delivered culturally responsively? In this chapter I will discuss the concept, process and benefits of both culturally responsive teaching and social emotional learning. In addition to discussing these frameworks, I will also provide a background on Somali youth and current methods used to modify a curriculum to better serve an ELL population.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

The theory of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) was first introduced by Dr. Gloria Billings in the early 1990s (Gay, 2010). CRT is seen as a framework that strives to empower students by allowing them to maintain cultural integrity, while allowing them to succeed academically. It is thought by-researchers that making education culturally relevant, will in turn improve academic achievement (Curwin & Lynda, 2003). The basic premise of CRT is that teachers take the time to learn about, understand and integrate students' cultural backgrounds into the content they are teaching. This process demonstrates that the teacher respects the given culture they are integrating, and ultimately, it empowers the student to feel pride in their heritage. Every child needs to know that his or her personal culture is valued (Hudiburg, Mascher, Sagehor, Stidham, 2015). Giving students a link to their culture is one possible way to keep them in school. Incorporating culture into curriculum can give students a sense of pride in their education. Taking time to build culture into the curriculum sends a message that who they are and where they come from is important (Hudiburg et al., 2015).

A major pillar in CRT is the belief that students should be viewed as culturally different rather than culturally deficient. The foundation of CRT as laid out by Gay (2000) has five components; cultural competence, culturally relevant curriculum, supportive learning community, cultural congruity and effective instruction. These five tenets complement each other to provide a more enhanced, thoughtful and effective program for ELLs.

Overall, cultural competency is difficult to obtain, and requires great commitment from the teacher. There is a surface level of cultural information we may be able to gather, but the majority of culture is hidden from view (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). By continually working on their competency and adding to their knowledge base, teachers can begin to create an effective culturally competent curriculum. Ideally a culturally relevant curriculum would go beyond "heroes and holidays", meaning it would infuse cultural elements in an inclusive way that has meaning for students. While adding biographies of notable people from another culture or ethnicity, as well as highlighting certain cultural events can help add to cultural competency, it is not enough for getting to deep cultural understanding and making connections with students.

Many teachers do not realize their level of cultural dissonance when working with EL students (De Capua & Marshall, 2015). Cultural dissonance is the term commonly used to describe a sense of discomfort, discord or disharmony arising from cultural differences or inconsistencies which are unexpected or unexplained and therefore difficult for individuals to negotiate. Creating positive and supportive learning environments for SLIFE is crucial in supporting them in academic success. If teachers have a high level of cultural dissonance, they may misinterpret student behaviors and unintentionally create a further divide from their student and the supportive learning community (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015)

The final two tenets of CRT, cultural congruity and effective instruction, are necessities in creating and delivering content that is accessible to students. Through cultural congruity, teachers should not only understand but also promote different ways of teaching and learning. SLIFE learn in a different manner than their peers and the teacher must acknowledge this difference and provide opportunities for the content to be available in the format that is most effective for that student. These adaptations do not mean that the expectations are lowered for SLIFE. To be truly effective, teachers must present and practice literacy, content and school-ways of thinking (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). SLIFE are not simply relearning information, they are engaging in formal classroom learning, many for the first time.

Culturally responsive teaching is grounded in the principle that culture influences the way students learn. This framework acknowledges and affirms students' cultures as assets in curriculum development and classroom instruction (Gay, 2010). As of spring 2014, almost 4000 Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) students were born outside the United States in one of 114 different countries around the world. Approximately 3% of all English Learners in MPS as of 2014 are recent newcomers from another country (Minneapolis Public Schools, 2015) As the cultural landscape of American classrooms change, educators have a responsibility to meet the needs of all students by embracing culturally aware teaching models.

The expectation placed on many teachers is that they be open and accepting of students from different backgrounds. However, being open does not necessarily guarantee cultural competency. With that in mind, how can teachers be taught the cultural competency needed to help students achieve? Teachers must evaluate themselves, or be given the tools to evaluate each other, to determine where they may fall on the spectrum of cultural competency, as introduced by

the Purnell's Model of Cultural Competence (Purnell 2002). The spectrum starts at one end, unconsciously incompetent, identified as those who do not realize that they lack the skills needed to be effectively competent in cultural settings. Next, there are consciously competent people and this category can go in two directions. In both directions the individual is aware of cultural differences, but one side does not choose to act on the knowledge, while the other side makes a conscious choice to act on their knowledge. At the other end of the spectrum is unconsciously competent; individuals who are so deeply embedded in cultural awareness that their actions of inclusion become automatic (Hudiburg et al., 2015).

The process to move from one end of the spectrum to another can vary based on the individual, however appropriate training can expedite the process. In Purnell's model, the focus of transition to unconsciously competent educators relies on instructors transforming the regular curriculum from neutral to culturally enriched (Hudiburg et al., 2015). This process is supported through identifying the competencies expected of the educators. For example, "one culture is not better than another culture; they are just different." and encouraging them to incorporate as much of the cultural backgrounds of their students as possible by choosing books with main characters from similar backgrounds.

While teacher-training programs may incorporate a class or two dedicated to multicultural issues, it still leaves many teachers struggling to relate to their diverse student population (Hudiburg et al., 2015) This deficit leads many current educators and administrators to focus on the modification of both teacher training tactics and modifications of curricula to become more culturally responsive.

Researchers have found a number of effective modifications that can be used to create a more culturally competent learning and teaching experience in both EL and mainstream classrooms. Curriculum transformation is the method of CRT that weaves culture throughout the curriculum, making content culturally meaningful at all levels (Banks, 2014). Other stand-alone methods include narrative inquiry, incorporating multiple versions of texts (audio, visual, and different versions, i.e. abridged and unabridged), and allowing opportunities for student choice (DelliCarpini, 2008).

The goal for curriculum modifications for EL classrooms is to create more culturally competent classrooms in order to support students in becoming more successful. By providing opportunities for students to make important connections between the text and their own cultural backgrounds, allowing them the ability to see their background culture within a global context, and giving space for students to share knowledge with their peers, students will experience more independence and higher academic achievement (DellaCarpini, 2008).

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

A part of the EL subpopulation of SLIFE are Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education. ELs who are considered SLIFE (1) have not had the opportunity to participate in formal education previously or have experienced significant time periods where they were unable to attend school, (2) are at least two grade levels below their peers in subject area knowledge, (3) have low or no literacy and numeracy skills, and (4) are commonly with members of collectivist cultures.

ELs who enter the US school system from rural areas, refugee camps, or even urban areas with poor educational infrastructures have had limited educational opportunities (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Most commonly, these students have only been exposed to informal ways of learning, usually the practices of their communities (farming, trading, etc.). In this method of education, what is being learned is implemented immediately; it serves a practical purpose (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). To this population of students, learning has been more of a direct survival tactic than a process of analytical, reasoning and logic, which is most common in the Western educational system.

This informal style of education is in no way any less valid; however it presents SLIFE (along with their teachers and peers) many challenges when entering the Western classroom. They have been trained to look at the world in a very different way. When SLIFE enter the Western education system, they are asked to not only learn a new language, and master the same content as their classmates, but they are asked to do so in an environment unnatural to them, a scholastic culture full of unfamiliar assumptions and expectations that can often become overwhelming and disorienting (Bennett 2015).

There are a number of barriers to SLIFE success: the credibility of future reward, classroom discourse routines that emphasize individual participation and the focus on standardized testing. The promise of a future reward through education is a notion touted throughout the US education system; however for members of groups who have been historically marginalized (racially, ethnically or socio-economically), it becomes an empty promise and can create lower motivation to succeed (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015).

Historically, Western education has focused on problem solving, scientific reasoning, logic and text-based learning. Students develop "academic" or "scientific" ways of understanding the world. Systems of classification, process analysis, compare and contrast and other such abstract reasoning are integral in the learning process (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). SLIFE are used to more pragmatic methods of learning; in Western classrooms there is often little relevance in the content to life outside school that could be immediately applicable. SLIFE bring to the classroom "funds of knowledge" (Moll & Greenberg, 1990): insight and expertise based on daily life experiences.

Another challenge facing SLIFE is adapting to the individualistic orientation of Western classrooms. SLIFE are most commonly members of collectivist cultures, meaning that each member of their group has responsibilities and obligations (Triandis, 1995). The group is fully reliant on each other; the action of each individual member has consequences and influences on the other members of the group. In an individualist orientation such as the US, even when group work is encouraged, each student must still display evidence of individual work and demonstrate individual mastery (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015).

SLIFE and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Many schools work to provide assistance to their EL students via EL instruction, bilingual assistance, newcomer or sheltered programs, counseling and other accommodations. There is evidence to support the idea that the CRT approach is effective in creating more comprehensive and holistic support for these students. The CRT approach aims to create a learning environment that will enable students to expand and develop intellectually with the freedom to gradually transition and adjust into their new school settings (DeCapua &

Marshall, 2015). Creating a supportive learning community in which all students are valued, respected, and expected and encouraged to achieve academically, is essential (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose 2008).

By identifying and acknowledging SLIFE experiences in the classroom, teachers can assist students in the transition to help reduce the risk or statistic of SLIFE students dropping out. By gaining a deeper appreciation for who SLIFE are and what they bring along with them to their new educational setting- rather than focusing on what they lack- educators provide them with a pathway to school success.

Social Emotional Learning

Some researchers argue that Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the foundation upon which all other learning benefits (Lindsay, 2013). In simple terms, SEL is described as "the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others" (Lindsay, 2013) The importance of SEL in classrooms is apparent to anyone who has attempted to teach to a student who is depressed, preoccupied or stressed. Not only does it enhance the overall learning process and set the student up for success, it is essential for the learning process.

SEL emotional skills such as focus, listening attentively, following directions, managing emotions, dealing with conflicts and working cooperatively with others, allow students the power to get more out of their own learning. Students who are strong in these skills are less likely to be disruptive and more involved in classroom instructions (Jones, Bailey & Jacob, 2014).

In English language instruction, the traditional focus is on developing the language skills and content knowledge for students. For SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal

Education), however, it is equally important that they have opportunities to acquire and practice new ways of thinking so that they can engage in the new academic tasks (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Incorporating SEL curriculum alongside language content can empower and support academic success.

The skills taught through a social emotional curriculum can help students improve their resilience because they can identify their internal reactions, and therefore decrease their problem behaviors and handle stressful situations with more ease (Castro-Olivo, 2014). The application and practice of SEL is crucial to the mental and emotional well-being of all students, but can be particularly beneficial for students whose background may include trauma, such as refugees.

There is a distinction between immigrants and refugees. An immigrant is a new arrival to the country, was born to foreign-born parents or is currently undocumented within the country. Refugees have come to the US to escape warfare or persecution in their own country. This distinction is important to note, because how a student self identifies can often be a reason that certain groups of students do not participate in out-of-school programming. Their culture or family values often do not circulate around extra-curricular activities, and importance is not placed on being involved in school related activities. The perception of students who are first or second generation immigrants can drastically affect their experience within school (Kao, Tienda, 1995). Many first generation immigrant students report negative schooling experiences such as feeling unsafe, ridiculed and discriminated against (Peguero 2011).

New research is identifying the intersection between social-emotional learning an culturally responsive teaching. Organizations such as the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child (CRTWC) bring together the understanding of SEL and CRT and work to explicitly

identifying where these two frameworks overlap and complement each other. Many educators are beginning to recognize that you cannot have one without the other; SEL and CRT go hand in hand (SITE). The Anchor Competencies Schema (SITE) demonstrates how these two frameworks support each other and highlights its goals as "provide a safe physical, social-emotional and intellectual learning environment, build resilience and sense of optimism, build intellectual capacity, and develop empathy for self and others." (SITE)

The Competencies Schema outlines three ways in which these goals can be accomplished; through the whole person, through a SEL/CRT lens and through identifying teacher moves. When considering the whole person, CRTWC identifies four contexts for which to look within; individual, community, cultural and socio-political. The next ring of this schema highlights the SEL/CRT competencies; explore assumptions, model, provide practice and reflect.

The anchor competencies that drive this framework follow the whole person and SEL/CRT lens. They anchor competencies are identified as; build trusting relationships, foster self reflection, foster growth mindset, cultivate perseverance, create classroom community, and practice cooperative learning skills. SITE

MALP

The Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP) is an instruction model based on the five tenets of culturally responsive teaching (Marshall & DeCapua, 2011). This model focuses on assisting SLIFE in school-based ways of thinking and learning, and it addresses the cultural dissonance that exists in both the teacher and student. MALP aims to include elements from the SLIFE learning paradigm (relevant and pragmatic topics) as well as from the US formal educational learning paradigm (academic language analysis) and therefore, requires both the

student and the teacher to adapt. There are three components to MALP: conditions, processes, and activities.

Conditions refer to the elements that must be present in the classroom before learning can even take place (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). One of those conditions is relevance. SLIFE are accustomed to immediately incorporating the knowledge they are learning. New knowledge is most commonly acquired at the time it can be applied.

The conditions that are necessary for SLIFE in the school environment are interconnectedness and immediate relevance (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Students need to feel connected to each other and to their teachers in order to feel a part of the classroom learning community. Creating an environment that is supportive psychologically and emotionally to students is a necessity for positive academic development. Immediate relevance in the context of SLIFE entails curriculum that is explicitly related to the prior knowledge and experiences of students in the classroom (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015).

As they learn, SLIFE observe, practice and obtain immediate feedback, as they learn the skills of everyday life, including agricultural practices, household duties, child care, carpentry artisanal pursuits. SLIFE need to see the direct connection between what they are learning and the practical realities of their lives (DeCapua & Marshall 2009). This method differs from the typical Western style that is focused on learning foundations for future learning. Another important condition is that of relationship. The cornerstone of learning is the unity of people and knowledge. Learning is most successful when it is interpersonal, learning directly from another person, usually one with whom one has an established relationship. Alternately, many US

learning systems tend to distance the learner from the teacher by incorporating and encouraging independent learning and solo studying as the learning experience.

Processes are ways students choose to interact with new material they are learning and how they feel most comfortable accessing and sharing information. Learning is accomplished through sharing among SLIFE. The group functions as a whole without individual accountability. Through jointly constructing knowledge, SLIFE internalize the content, trusting the others to complement their own understanding. In addition to group responsibility, learning is an oral process for SLIFE. Oral transmission of knowledge depends a great deal on memorization, requiring redundancy and repetition to assist in the retention in information. Conversely, Western cultures rely on reading and comprehending text for this information. It can be a difficult transition for SLIFE to rely solely on text rather than a visual or verbal description (DeCapua & Marshall, 2009).

Literacy and individual accountability are essential for achieving academic success in U.S. schools; yet, both are often unfamiliar to SLIFE. In the MALP model, educators can identify the preferred method of learning of their student and use that method to help transition them into these new learning paradigms. Incorporating this extra level of support and understanding can lead to greater success for SLIFE.

The third and final component of MALP is the focus on activities, which includes types of tasks teachers expect students to engage in to both develop and demonstrate knowledge of a specific subject matter (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Many of the expectations for students are based on academic ways of thinking that SLIFE have not had the opportunity to learn. Therefore, the activities that are provided to them should promote the learning process of these academic

skills so they have the opportunity to practice new ways of thinking. Once those types of tasks become familiar, teachers can then begin to introduce the new language and content. If the academic task is the focus, then language and content should not be new.

Activities are the ways of thinking and responding associated with schooling and are reflected in the types of tasks required of students to demonstrate mastery of a topic. Learning is experiential for SLIFE. SLIFE are accustomed to learning based on demonstrations, imitations and practice. By contrast, US educational systems require analytical task such as categorizing, defining and classifying. These skills are not universal or necessary for learning, but they are the way people in Western cultures are expected to learn and to assess learning (Bloom, 1956; Paul & Elder, 2001).

Somali - Americans in Minnesota

The first arrival of Somali refugees to Minnesota was in 1992. Research indicates that a main factor in refugees making their way to Minnesota was their quest for greater employment opportunities, education and the accepting environment for refugees. (Farah 2015). Nearly 25 years later, refugees continue to settle in Minnesota. In 2014, there were over 22,000 foreign born Somalis in Minnesota, with an additional 17,392 Somali children born in the US to at least one foreign-born parent (Groups at a Glance, 2016). These numbers continue to increase as refugees join family members who have already settled. Although the family members they are joining may have been in the US for many years, they are still not well versed in the systems set in place. Somali immigrants suffer more due to the lack of college-educated role models who could provide first hand tips about navigating through the system and career counseling for their children (Nancy & Lisa last names, 2013).

In Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), 27% of all students call a language other than English their home language. Of that group, 20% speak Somali. The high school graduation rate for Somali students enrolled in MPS in 2014 was 52.5%. That number has increased by one and a half percent since 2013, yet it is still strikingly low compared to the graduation rates of their white counterparts who graduate at a rate of 77.3% (Minneapolis Public Schools, 2015).

Some cultural backgrounds may contribute to this disparity. While Minnesotans may view Somali immigrants a single group, Somali society is made up of multiple groups, affiliated by language, culture, geography, or other commonalities. In addition to learning a new language, a new culture, and otherwise wrestling with the ordinary challenges of life in a new country, they must confront the physical and emotional effects of their experiences in Somalia and refugee camps (Groups at a Glance, 2016).

What is important to note is that although there is large representation of Somali students in EL classes, there are also many Somali students who reside full time in mainstream classes. Their English proficiency may be high, but their cultural background still influences they way the interact, learn and interpret different lessons. 75% of Minneapolis Public Schools classrooms have at least one EL at any given moment and 100% of Minneapolis Public Schools teachers will have an EL in their classroom over the course of their careers. So even for teachers who are not teaching a sheltered EL population, they are in fact interacting with a number of students who consider English to be a second, or third language.

The Gap

Information and research exist on modifying academic programming to fit the needs of ELs and information to help modify programming to be more SEL focused. In addition, there is a

wide variety of CRT focused research that discusses classroom modifications for content classes. However, there is not information or research about SEL curriculum specifically for EL students.

Many language teachers would say that language acquisition is supported with cultural learning. There is a fundamental connection between language and culture . Research shows that a SEL curriculum can enhance language acquisition while providing cultural context for first and second generation ELs, as well as newcomer ELs. It can help them be successful in their new settings in school, out of school and in their future. By integrating a CRT curriculum into existing SEL programming, student achievement could be further supported and enhanced.

Summary

As discussed in this chapter, CRT is an important asset to the learning process. By utilizing SEL techniques, students are better equipped in both their academic and personal lives. The benefits of a CRT curriculum have been proven to create more inclusion, ownership and independence in student learning and success. Providing EL students the same experiences as their mainstream peers can enhance not only their linguistic acquisition, but the probability they will become further involved in out-of-school programming which can lead to improved academic success and classroom behavior.

In Chapter Three, I will describe the intended audience of the tool that I will create and the framework I will use to guide the creation. I will use the CRT and MALP to guide the tool creation of a guide to help educators modify social-emotional curriculum to be culturally responsive. I will create a resource tool for instructors, youth workers and educators of all kinds to utilize as they plan, prepare and deliver their lessons.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

How can a culturally responsive framework be used to modify a SEL curriculum so that it is linguistically and culturally relevant for middle school ELs? This chapter will overview the introductory details of the project including the background, setting and selected framework

Chapter Three contains the information regarding the intended audience of the tool that I will create and the framework I will use to guide the creation. I will use the CRT and MALP to guide the tool creation of a guide to help educators modify social-emotional curriculum to be culturally responsive. The rationale is that there is currently no curriculum specific to SLIFE or EL students in the catalog. I will create a resource tool for instructors, youth workers and educators of all kinds to utilize as they plan, prepare and deliver their lessons, This tool will identity competency areas highlighted through the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child as well as methods for reaching these competencies, and reflection questions for the educators. The methods suggested will use the CRT and MALP frameworks as a guide for effectively integrating social-emotional curriculum and cultural competency.

Project Background

Using the CRT and MALP models as my lens, I created a tool that educators can utilize to guide them in modifying SEL lessons or curriculum. I chose to focus on social-emotional learning because I believe these topics are often the most difficult to grasp for students with low English proficiency or limited formal education. Not only are the topics of dreams and goals very

abstract, but student experiences with the Western approach of goals and dreams may be limited. Students are frequently unaware of what they need to do specifically to reach goals, and what is realistic given their education experiences. For example, many of my students say they want to be doctors. This is a completely achievable dream. However, depending on the instructors understanding of the students cultural influences or past experiences that might deter or hold a student back, the student may not be appropriately supported by their teacher.

Project Setting

My intended audience was educators teaching a social-emotional curriculum in middle schools. It has been my experience that EL students have more difficulty than their peers connecting to a social-emotional curriculum. I have also experienced that the non-academic, often abstract, objectives and ideas discussed in SEL focused curriculum may present challenges for EL students. It is my belief that EL students will benefit both academically and emotionally by integrating higher cultural competency and relevance into any SEL curriculum they receive.

The setting for this project was in a large Midwestern city. This was an urban area of the state and is often a hub for many immigrants and refugees. In this district, 23% of students in grades K-12 were English learners, 3% were considered newcomers from another country. Of the 23%, 93% of them qualified for free and reduced lunch, which is an indicator of financial status (MN Office of Higher Education).

Frameworks Used

This project was designed to assist educators of all levels; youth workers, teachers and instructors to gain the language, awareness and planning skills needed to incorporate CRT in their SEL curriculums. Specifically, I wanted to know how educators can better integrate a SEL curriculum into EL classrooms, within a culturally responsive framework. I created a tool using CRT and MALP frameworks that will assist educators to better integrate cultural competency within a SEL lesson.

The tool will be presented as a reference resource for educators, youth workers, instructors and any person looking to enhance their social emotional curriculum through culturally responsive teaching. The tool uses the anchor competencies outline by the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child, which incorporates Culturally Responsive Teaching and Social Emotional Learning. These anchor competencies, in addition to the CASEL wheel of competencies guided the creation of the Instructor Tool. The tool includes checklists that can be utilized by instructors before, during and after lesson they deliver their lessons. In addition, there are suggested methods provided to assist educators in identifying the various competency areas and what it may actually look like during a lesson.

I used both CRT and MALP instruction models as a guide to determine the actions included on the checklist. This includes asking educators to evaluate their own biases, determining the conditions, processes and activities provided and incorporating of resources based on the needs of the students. The intention is that this tool will help educators examine their cultural dissonance while supporting students in a more effective way. The tool can be used as an educator self-reflection, or as a tool to help prepare and plan lessons.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the goals for creating a resource tool for educators to integrate CRT into their SEL curriculum, and the rationale for those goals. I explained the process in which the revision will occur, I identified the setting and participants and discussed the materials developed. In Chapter Four I will conclude this project capstone. It will revisit the literature review, state possible implications, evaluate possible limitations and consider future projects.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

This paper examined the question of how can a culturally responsive framework be used to modify a SEL curriculum so that it is linguistically and culturally relevant for middle school ELs. A brief revisit of the literature review will identify influential works that guided the project's research. This chapter will also consider project implications and limitations. Finally, the evolution of the project, including future projects will conclude this chapter.

Reflection on the Capstone Learning Process

I started this paper focused on students as the intended audience, but as I continued to research my focus began to turn to instructors and educators. Through my own experiences I began to recognize not only what students were missing from the instruction they received, but what many educators were unaware they were missing. In the future, I would like to reframe the question and approach this topic more concretely from the perspective of an educator, particularly an educator who may work directly with youth but does not hold a licensure or degree in education. Through this process I began realizing the gaps in training and professional opportunities of this nature for youth workers.

Literature Review Revisited

The literature review provided a basis for research on various frameworks and student populations within the ELL community. The analysis of Culturally Responsive Teaching CRT and Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm frameworks provided an important lens on theory and practice. Most notably, the anchor competency wheels presented by both Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child heavily influenced the final project.

Implications and Limitations

The implications of this project positively impacted the ELL students receiving social emotional programming. Although this project is not without its limitations and the results have yet to be fully evaluated, the newly available tool serves as a resource for many instructors and particularly youth workers who may receive less guidance in their programming.

Some limitations of this project would be if someone were to use this tool, and only this tool, as their resource for understanding culturally responsive teaching within a social emotional curriculum, they may have a limited perspective. This tool does not cover all facets of CRT, nor does it provide any absolute answers; it is meant to be a guide and a self-check for educators. This project did not include evaluation of the tool and is intended to be used as an informal guide.

Future Projects

A future project using the information gained from this capstone project would include a curriculum modification or new curriculum development using these frameworks as a guide. Evaluating current social emotional curriculum and working to incorporate and explicitly identify areas for modification using MALP or CRT. A project such as this could enhance the experience for student learners as well as instructors, allowing instructors to feel more confident and informed about the curriculum they are presenting.

I plan to utilize my findings, resources and project tool to share with fellow educators, specifically youth workers and educators who do not have a teaching license. I anticipate that a tool such as this could assist any educator to evaluate their participation in programming, as well as the programming they provide. As I have started to manage and train staff within the youth development non-profit I work at, I have recognized a lack of familiarity that many young employees often have with topics such as culturally responsive teaching and identifying social

emotional learning within their activities. They may understand the concepts of it, but are not always able to articulate the connections. I plan to share this tool and my findings with coworkers during an informal staff training.

Final Conclusions

Overall, the creation of this Instructor Tool was beneficial to understanding how to connect many moving parts of instruction. This capstone project represents a gradual process of understanding the need to develop relevant, usable and reliable tools that all educators can utilize, not solely educators in EL classrooms. While I do believe this tool good be developed more deeply and thoroughly, I think it can help reinforce for many educators the benefits to being aware of the small actions they can take that can have a large impact on student learning and engagement.

I believe this project is a benefit to the profession because continued learning and self-assessment is essential to being a productive educator. This tool allows educators to reflect and evaluate the needs of their students, while creating space for continued personal growth among all students.

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