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## Utilizing Culturally Relevant, Multimodal Text Sets In Older Adolescent And Adult Learner Classrooms

Tamara Twiggs

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UTILIZING CULTURALLY RELEVANT, MULTIMODAL TEXT SETS IN OLDER  
ADOLESCENT AND ADULT LEARNER CLASSROOMS

by

Tamara Twiggs

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

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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## DEDICATIONS

To Pam, Ruth, and DJ -

Thank you for inspiring me to be the best teacher I can possibly be, and for demonstrating what it means to truly serve some of the most challenging learners with compassion, integrity, and dedication.

To all of my colleagues at the Hubbs Center -

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To my father, Cris -

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To my sons, Caleb and Jacob -

Thank you for teaching me more than I ever could have taught you. It has been my pleasure to watch you navigate your lives and develop into such strong, young men.

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None of this would have been possible without your total belief in me, your commitment and support so I could do this work, and your unconditional love throughout this entire process. This achievement is yours as much as it is mine.

To my adult learners -

Thank you for letting me teach you. You are why I do this work.

“The paradox of education is precisely this - that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.” James Baldwin

“We want a world where life is preserved, and the quality of life is enriched for everybody, not only for the privileged.” Isabel Allende

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Statistics for adult literacy in the United States are rather grim. According to the report from the organization, ProLiteracy, “Fourteen percent of adults in the United States struggle with low reading, writing, and basic math skills” (as cited in Morgan, Waite, & Diecuch, 2017, p. 3). In a country of more than 328 million people, that is more than 45 million people, which is indicative of an epidemic. Because literacy skills have a direct correlation with poverty rates, incarceration, and high school dropout rates, it is imperative that adult literacy rates increase (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013). Probably the most significant result is the negative impact that adult illiteracy has on children:

Many of these adults experienced such frustration as children that they deliberately avoid literacy-related activities in later life. When they have children of their own, they tend to communicate (often non-verbally) their negative feelings towards literacy and schooling to their children, and thus perpetuate an intergenerational cycle of illiteracy. (Hanemann, 2015, p. 8)

As a teacher of adults, my purpose in this paper is to address the challenges of adult illiteracy and offer positive solutions. In spite of the statistics, there is solid research to support the idea that education for adults not only reduces poverty and incarceration rates, but it also reduces healthcare costs and unemployment rates, which directly affect taxpayers (OECD, 2013; Rasu, Bawa, Suminski, Snella, & Warady, 2015). As an educator, how can I meet the complex needs of my adult learners and prepare them for post-secondary education and living wage employment? How can I instill in them the

knowledge essential for helping their children navigate the educational system successfully? In this Capstone Project, I want to investigate the most effective classroom curricular approaches to increasing the retention of older adolescents and adults in an Adult Basic Education urban classroom. My research question is, *How can utilizing culturally relevant, multimodal text sets increase critical literacy and result in learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms?*

In Chapter 1, I will narrate my roundabout journey to Adult Basic Education, outline the challenges facing the urban adult learner in the 21st century, explain my rationale for why this topic is so relevant and important, and synthesize my worldviews that influence my teaching andragogy. Finally, I will address my research question as it pertains to my Capstone Project.

### **Early Reading Experiences**

Since my earliest memories include images of myself reading or of my parents reading to me, I have always understood the value of literacy. As a child, I remember the sensation of cuddling with my father in an armchair while he read out loud to me. I was probably only four years old at the time. More than likely it was an adult-themed book that he read, and I barely understood what he was reading, but the sensation of safety and security is still a feeling I can recall to this day. I remember thinking that I really wanted to be able to read, too. As a child in elementary school, I recall fondly my mother taking me to the neighborhood library every week to check out books. Our local Hamline-Midway library was not large, nor did it have an extensive collection, but for me it was nothing short of magical. Going to the library and checking out each book in Scott Corbett's series starting with *The Lemonade Trick*, where the key protagonist, Kerby

Maxwell, used chemistry to conjure up all sorts of interesting mischief; falling in love with Mrs. Piggie Wiggle, the eccentric, cool adult who actually understood the antics of kids; or working my way through the Laura Ingalls Wilder series were always mystical journeys (Corbett, 1960; MacDonald & Knight, 1957; Wilder & Williams, 1971).

Reading for me was akin to breathing oxygen, utterly essential and deeply satisfying.

My fourth grade Language Arts teacher, Mrs. Hawkinson, was clever enough to recognize my love for literature and to channel my boundless energy into something constructive. Often I would finish whatever story was assigned for silent reading much more quickly than my classmates. I remember clearly the day Mrs. Hawkinson called me up to her desk and handed me a notebook. “This is just for you,” she whispered conspiratorially, and when I opened the notebook cover, it was filled with 30 or more creative writing story prompts. As I read through the story starters, I was completely transfixed, and my imagination took over. I started constructing story lines in my imagination, playing around with plots and characters in my mind. The notebook seemed almost holy to me, and I carried it around reverently, as if it were an expensive gift, not just a cheap notebook. I discovered that not only could I read to transport myself to other times and places, but I could write and experience the same sense of wonder and joy.

Looking back on all of the Literacy mentors who crossed my path, I realize how grateful I am for their nurturing my love of the written word. I followed in their footsteps, the only way that I could honor them, by becoming a teacher and a mentor, inspiring others to develop a love for literacy. I continue their mission, prodding a little here, nudging a little there, instilling in my adult learners a true love and respect for literacy. It

is my only way to really thank these “Literacy mentors” for the wonderful gift they bequeathed to me.

### **Challenges of the Urban Adult Learner**

Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan once said, “Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty...” (Annan, 1997, para. 2). Teaching for me was a natural fit because of my early connection to the importance and value of literacy. When I began my teaching career, my goal was to become a high school English teacher. After earning my B.A. in English Education and getting certified to teach English/Language Arts in 7-12, I taught for one year in an Area Learning Center. By the end of the school year, I seriously reconsidered my chosen career path, so I decided to go abroad and teach English as a Foreign Language in Japan. While there, I fell in love with teaching adults, so I came back to the United States eager to pursue my Adult Basic Education teaching license.

As I consider my current classroom setting, teaching Language Arts to adult learners to help them earn their General Education Diploma (G.E.D.) or Minnesota State Adult Diploma, I realize that I have a unique context. Many of my learners dropped out of high school because they struggled with literacy, or they experienced myriad life obstacles, such as teen pregnancy, addiction, undiagnosed learning and/or mental health disabilities, and family dysfunction that disrupted their learning. The causal factors for high school dropouts are clearly documented: “Risk factors have generally been described in two groups: status risk factors (i.e., parental education and employment, age, gender, SES, native language, mobility, family structure, and ability or disability) and alterable risk factors (i.e., academic failure, retention, attendance, misbehavior, early

aggression)” (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015, p. 206). Other students in my class are English Language Learners (ELL), some who come to school with an intact educational background in their primary language, and others who fall under the new World-class Instructional Design and Assessment, or W.I.D.A. descriptor SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education). These English Language learners come from refugee camps, war-torn countries, and countries experiencing severe economic depression. Often SLIFE students are looking for better opportunities and a safer environment to pursue their educational and career goals. DeCapua’s (2016) study determined:

SLIFE are at even greater risk of dropping out because they not only face the challenges confronting all ELLs but they also face unique challenges. Because of their limited, interrupted, and, in some cases, no prior education, they have low to no literacy skills and large gaps in or non-existent school content knowledge and are unfamiliar with academic ways of thinking. (pp. 225-226)

I chose to teach adult learners, not because it was an easier pathway, but because the stakes are so high. The ripple effect, not just on the adult learner, but on his or her entire family, is significant.

### **Rationale**

Compounding the issues of literacy gaps and language acquisition is the fact that adult learners are sporadic attenders in school. They have responsibilities that compete with their educational goals, such as the necessity to work multiple, minimum-wage jobs to support their families. Other students must satisfy legal mandates for felons on probation to meet weekly with court-appointed liaisons. Often learners juggle therapy

appointments for Addictions counseling or Mental Health. Patterson stated that there are three types of deterrents to adults completing their education: “situational...[such as] health conditions or disabilities;” “institutional,” which include public policies related to funding and access to adult education, and “dispositional,” or the negative, fixed mindsets adults bring with them into an educational environment (Patterson, 2018, p. 43).

In spite of the numerous challenges inherent in Adult Education, I feel compelled to do this important work because adult literacy and a high school credential impact adult learners and their families. “Research clearly demonstrates that adult illiteracy is an enormously pervasive issue in the United States, and adults who aren’t literate lack adequate access to basic resources and social supports” (Ramdeholl, 2011, p. vii). An inability to read and write has far-reaching ramifications, not just on the adult learner, but on his or her children as well. Based on an analysis of 3,000 families, a study in 2010 delineated the negative consequences for children who have a parent with a low literacy level:

Researchers funded by the National Institutes of Health concluded that programs to boost the academic achievement of children from low income neighborhoods might be more successful if they also provided adult literacy education to parents. The researchers based this conclusion on their finding that a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children’s future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income. (National Institutes of Health, 2010, para. 1-2)

The work that I do impacts not only the adult learners in my classroom, but also their children and other family members for whom they are responsible. My Capstone

Project has evolved from my work with adult learners over the past 24 years. My goal remains the same, to help my learners achieve a high school credential so that they can earn a living wage job, advocate for themselves and their families, and challenge a societal system that has not always been equitable to them.

I think of my student, Carmela (not her real name), who came to the United States undocumented, but whose children are American citizens. Every day as she comes to work and school, she lives in fear that she will have to make the hard decision either to separate from her children or take them to Mexico, a country that they do not know. Another student, Alex (not his real name), who suffers from extreme anxiety and Panic Disorder, has to talk himself into getting onto the public bus every day just to come to school. Alex is brilliant and could easily navigate a four-year university with all of its rigorous work, but he cannot manage to leave his house most days. My thoughts turn to Alice (not her real name), a woman with a heart of gold but with very low self-esteem. Her husband is slowly dying of cancer at home, and Alice takes care of him. She comes to school, her only real break in the day when the Hospice nurse comes to her home, and thanks me daily for allowing her to learn. Finally, I think of Kelly (not her real name), an African-American single mother who escaped an abusive husband in Chicago to come to Minnesota to help her kids and herself get an education. My students share their stories with me over time, as I build a rapport with them, help them to feel welcome, and help build their confidence as a valued member in our shared classroom.

There are specific learning theories that underpin my work with adults, and they are essential to my teaching. They are educational theories that I have adapted to fit the needs of my adult learners, and stem from an understanding that teaching theories for

children (pedagogy) is slightly different from teaching theories for adults (andragogy). The Oxford English online dictionary defines andragogy as “the method and practice of teaching adult learners” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018). Within the literature for older adolescents, there is a plethora of educational theories that are applicable to adult learners.

### **Worldviews that Influence My Teaching Andragogy**

I am a proponent of the principles of Critical Literacy theory. According to McLaughlin and DeVogd (2013), in a Critical Literacy classroom framework, 1) the reader has power to reflect on and critique the author’s perspective; 2) the reader should investigate the complexity of the issues in a text from all possible perspectives; 3) the reader should learn to challenge the text by continually questioning it with a critical eye; and, 4) the reader should investigate which points of view might be missing in the text and do research to find the missing perspectives (pp. 13-18). Building on the work of Freire and Macedo (1987), Critical Literacy advocates challenged the power structure of early education, with its model of teacher as acting authority and student as passive receptacle of information for the purpose of building a functionally literate workforce. Instead, Critical Literacy is a model in which the reader is an active, full participant who interacts with the text and makes meaning based on individual background experience and knowledge. “The prime role of critical pedagogy is to lead students to recognize various tensions [in the world] and enable them to deal effectively with them” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 49). Critical literacy leads to informed action and increased social justice.

Critical literacy speaks to the very heart and mission of Adult Education, which is to give students the tools and resources they need to make educated, informed decisions



and to teach these important values to their children. Many of my adult learners have been underrepresented in a system that does not favor them nor was set up to serve them. Teaching my learners with a Critical Literacy framework, to question authority, to detect bias and determine when and how to advocate for themselves in an uneven power structure, is an essential part of Adult Education in my classroom. As my students develop these critical literacy skills, they experience empowerment. They begin to value their own voice and unique opinion, and they begin to challenge both me and one another in their quest for understanding how to better their lives. I believe that if I teach a parent, I empower an entire family.

### **Summary**

For my Capstone Project, I want to research how Critical Literacy theory intersects with the use of culturally relevant texts in the classroom. What are the effects on learner engagement and motivation? How can I challenge my students to become active participants in the most current, controversial topics of the day that affect them directly, and then teach them how to advocate for change? In what way will Critical Literacy theory and reading culturally diverse texts impact my adult learners and help them to better navigate the complexity of their lives? For my Capstone Project, I developed four multimodal text sets consisting of culturally relevant texts grouped thematically along a specific line of inquiry. My Capstone Project culminated in a website to house the curriculum, making it easily accessible to other educators in a shared, open educational repository. My research question is: *How can utilizing culturally relevant, multimodal text sets increase critical literacy and result in learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms?*

## **Chapter Overviews**

In Chapter 2, I will explore the research related to my Capstone focus. I will delve deeply into Critical Literacy theory, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy theory, Multiliteracies theory, the changing needs of the 21st-century learner, and the impact that utilizing these theories in the classroom has on learner engagement and motivation. Specifically, I will investigate the importance of using multimodal text sets in the classroom based on recent developments in the research about culturally responsive literature. Even though much of the research centers on culturally diverse teaching pedagogy, there is an obvious connection between curriculum relevant to older adolescents and adult learners. Because there is a lack of research regarding culturally relevant texts for adult learners, I hope to contribute to the discourse the value of incorporating a culturally relevant andragogy and inquiry learning curriculum in an older adolescent and adult learner classroom. Finally, I will delineate how learner engagement and motivation increase when incorporating culturally relevant, multimodal, thematic text sets into the classroom curriculum.

In Chapter 3, I will describe my research design framework and how a website is the most effective way to disseminate my research findings to the field of Adult Education. I will include adult literacy theories, as well as statistical data to support the relevancy of a curriculum website grounded in culturally relevant teaching and texts.

In Chapter 4, I will summarize my research findings and synthesize the process of building a curriculum website. I will include both potential implications for how my website and research findings can benefit the field of Adult Basic Education, and how I plan to disseminate my research. Furthermore, I will include the limitations of my Capstone Project and potential areas for increased curriculum sharing amongst educators

in the future. Finally, I hope to emphasize how curriculum sharing websites can address the problem of adult illiteracy in the United States and bring the issue to the attention of important policy makers who make critical funding decisions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

There is one key underlying theory that addresses the needs of older adolescent and adult learners in the 21st-century classroom, and it is the basis for the research question, *How can utilizing culturally relevant, multimodal text sets increase critical literacy and result in learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms?* In a global society, where technology and human migration influence the demographics of any community, especially in urban centers, the need to teach students how to think with a critical literacy lens is essential. Social and news media bombard people with a deluge of information, and it becomes challenging to determine what is reliable and accurate as opposed to what is biased and skewed. It behooves educators today to implement a Critical Literacy framework within their classrooms so that students develop the thinking tools so vital to determine the accuracy of information that they encounter on a daily basis.

Chapter 2 will address Paulo Freire's Critical Literacy theory, including its origins, its roots in Freire's work with teaching adults, and the terminology associated with Critical Literacy theory. Furthermore, Critical Literacy's importance to the field of education, and its application as an important classroom framework, is an integral component in this chapter. Another key theory in Chapter 2 is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy theory as it relates to culturally relevant texts and the need for culturally responsive teaching in the older adolescent and adult learner classroom. A third important theory that relates to the curriculum framework necessary to do this work is

Multiliteracies theory, or New Literacies theory. By implementing multimodal literacy in the creation of thematic text sets, educators can increase learner engagement and motivation in the older adolescent or adult learner classroom. Finally, in terms of the 21st century learner, there is a need for a new paradigm framework for learning.

### **Critical Literacy Theory**

Critical Literacy theory finds its basis in the works of Paulo Freire, and in his work teaching adults to read, he insisted that “Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 35). Freire believed that real education stems from one’s own beliefs and ideas, beginning in childhood, and continues as a person attempts to make meaning of the increasing complexity in the world. Part of this ongoing literacy process would include “a certain form of *writing* it or *rewriting* it...transforming it by means of conscious, practical work,” or a continual process of meaning-making that takes place not only in the classroom, but as an exchange between the experiences in the classroom and experiences in the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 35). Inherent within all students are “funds of knowledge” or “funds of identity” that include all of the knowledge from their home and family, culture, and community; it is essential that educators tap these “funds of identity” as an inclusive, collaborative model of meaning-making in the classroom (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 33).

In their model of Critical Literacy, Freire and Macedo (1987) advocated that the purpose of education is to challenge the existing power structures in society, with its model of teacher as the ultimate authority and student as a simple receiver of information that the teacher wishes to impart. Instead, with the tools of Critical Literacy, the student is

an active, full participant in the classroom who interacts with the text and makes meaning based on individual background experience and knowledge. Freire (2014) is credited with coining the term “pedagogy of the oppressed,” in his efforts to establish the value of implementing a Critical Literacy Framework in the classroom.

**“Pedagogy of the Oppressed”.** In his analysis of the problem of the human condition, Freire (2014) described a world that consists of the oppressor, or those who “exploit, and rape by virtue of their power,” and the oppressed, or those who “cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves” (p. 44). In focusing on the oppressed, Freire determined that the only way to challenge and change this inequitable system of dehumanization would be in educating the oppressed to take action. Freire developed a theory and wrote a book about his concept entitled, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He also created a model describing the transformation of the oppressed in two stages:

In the first stage, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all men in the process of permanent liberation. (Freire, 2014, as cited in Lee, 2011, p. 96)

In using the term pedagogy, Freire was speaking broadly in terms of educating those without power or a voice, specifically those who lack political or monetary currency. Although he used the term pedagogy, Freire was educating adults, so the concept was widely applied to education universally. By educating those without power, Freire armed

them with appropriate tools to challenge their oppression and gave them a pathway to free themselves. At its core, that is what Critical Literacy seeks to accomplish.

The concepts of oppressor and oppressed has deep roots, not only in American History, but also in World History. In education, the adoption of a Critical Literacy framework is a response to Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed," and it is based on a model of,

...a caring community [which] requires that we see the individuals in our classroom, both adult and youth, for their individual strengths and struggles and we tie that knowledge back to the larger community and the goals of the larger community. (Cridland-Hughes, 2015, p. 130)

The purpose of Freire's work was to educate adults to systematically challenge the political and economic structures that held them in a position of oppression. Freire saw education as the tool to accomplish this work, which forms the basis of Critical Literacy theory, and led others to adapt his work to incorporate a social justice component.

**Social justice.** Critical literacy leads to informed action, increased social justice, and the inclusion of counternarratives "to counter a variety of the majoritarian stories in education" (Dixon & Rousseau Anderson, 2017, p. 37). In a classroom setting, giving students multiple perspectives of the same event to read enables them "to use literacy criticism and social science analysis to deconstruct texts (reading from a resistant perspective)" (Behrman, 2006, p. 496). Students create a new paradigm to challenge the inequitable historical and sociopolitical metanarratives inherent in our educational and governmental systems, not just in the United States, but throughout the world. Using a Critical Literacy framework with full knowledge of those who oppress and those who are

oppressed, students begin to construct their own understanding of historical events by reading multiple, diverse perspectives of the same event.

One framework for reading multiple perspectives in the classroom is Jones's work in Critical Literacy application. His framework encompasses three parts: "*deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action,*" which consist of pulling back the multiple layers of a text or event to see all of the perspectives, especially the missing voices; creating a new understanding of the marginalized people or groups; and through the new awareness, acting to facilitate change in an authentic, meaningful way (Jones, 2006, as cited in Clarke & Whitney, 2009, p. 532). Addressing the inequities they experience personally and view on the daily news is critical for adult learners because they inherently, albeit sometimes unknowingly, possess the inner resources necessary to enact change. That is exactly why incorporating a Critical Literacy lens in an older adolescent or adult learner classroom is important because "adult literacy instruction involves linking course learning outcomes to broader academic outcomes and the real world" (Kazembe, 2017, p. 210). What if Critical Literacy sets the spark to motivate older adolescent and adult learners to engage in activism and the political process to challenge systemic racism and advocate for change?

Older adolescent and adult learners are positioned in society in such a way that they have the potential to enact powerful change. "Transformative social justice learning as a social, political, and pedagogical practice takes place when people reach a deeper, richer, more textured and nuanced understanding of themselves and their world" (Mayo & Torres, 2013, p. 77). They can participate in the political process, influencing public policy via their voting rights and public activism. Often, just aiding them in finding their



voice and teaching them how to advocate for change is all that is needed to shift the balance of power and address systemic inequities existing in the world.

In Critical Literacy theory, there is also the inclusion of the missing narratives perspective. As students read through a Critical Literacy lens, they begin to question and detect bias. They actively look for which group or whose voice might be missing from the historical narrative. “Critical literacy includes becoming aware of various ways that a situation might be viewed and actively interrogating whose voices are missing” (Luke & Freebody, 1997; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008, as cited in Riley, 2015, p. 418). In the current political climate, with President Donald Trump’s insistence on building a wall with Mexico in spite of numerous immigrants heading to the United States en masse from dangerous countries in Central America, it is incumbent upon educators to help students understand what they see, hear about, and read in the news for all of the perspectives, especially the missing ones (Correal & Specia, 2018, para. 4). Now more than ever, it is essential for educators to teach their students how to “read both the word and the world critically” (Janks, 2014, p. 349). It is no longer ethically or morally acceptable to ignore those who are being oppressed, and as educators, we are ideally situated to address this important need. By incorporating “multiple perspectives texts...[teachers] deliberately foreground different viewpoints” in the classroom” (Clarke & Whitney, 2009, p. 530). Students have an opportunity to read and deconstruct text, think critically about multiple perspectives, create new literacies in discussing and writing about their interpretation of events, and pursue the social change that they would like to see in the world. “The prime role of critical pedagogy is to lead students to recognize various tensions [in the world] and enable them to deal effectively with them” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 49). Critical

Literacy theory emphasizes the importance of addressing real-world problems in the classroom and encourages learners to participate in finding solutions. It is a tool for personal empowerment.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Theory**

According to Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), who established the term “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,” students need to read literature in the classroom that contains diverse cultural viewpoints that reflect their own identity. Ladson-Billings emphasized two key components in her theory: the acknowledgement of an individual learner’s identity and value to the classroom community and the development of a “critical perspective that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (p. 469). Setting the tone for future work in culturally responsive classrooms and building on the work of Ladson-Billings, Paris and Alim (2014) sought to further define the need to see “culture as dynamic, shifting, and encompassing both past-oriented heritage dimensions and present-oriented community dimensions” to prevent the mistaken assumption that cultural relevance can be defined or sustained with only one practice, so they contributed the term “heritage practices” to the discourse (p. 90). Their concept reflects the idea that culture is not static but transforms with each generation, combining traditional cultural practices and identities with new iterations. It would be a mistake to assume that attending one staff development training on a culturally responsive classroom or reading one book about equity will help educators to remain informed and develop a culturally responsive teaching practice. Classroom curriculum and teaching practices need to continually evolve to reflect the changing cultures of the students from

year to year. Ladson-Billings, in her description of cultural competence in the classroom, said:

that a culturally competent teacher recognizes the diversity manifested in the student body as a strength and succeeds in creating an inclusive classroom environment that simultaneously fosters both positive cross-cultural relationships among students *and* students' sense of sociopolitical consciousness. (Ladson-Billings, as cited in Kumar, Zusho, & Bondie, 2018, pp. 84-85)

For educators, the work of cultural relevance and the implementation of heritage practices in the classroom should be an ongoing process of learning and improvement.

**Critical Race Theory.** Akin to Critical Literacy Theory, but with an added component of race, Critical Race Theory is characterized by four principles: exposing racism in America, placing value on the narratives of people of color, challenging existing social structures, and arguing that civil rights has benefited whites, not people of color (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Inherent in this theory is the absolute challenge and “questioning of white, male ways of knowing and power” (Handsfield, 2016, as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2017, p. 175). Critical Race Theory is especially important in education because America’s history is rife with slavery, serfdom, indentured servitude, and genocide for people of color. Critical Race Theory is a vehicle to substantiate the inclusion of culturally relevant texts in the older adolescent and adult learner classroom curriculum.

***Culturally relevant texts.*** To incorporate cultural relevance and heritage practices in the classroom, educators need to continually modify their curriculum to address the needs of their learners. In 1996, Emily Style created the concept of “Curriculum as

Window and Mirror” when she said, “education needs to enable the student to look through window frames in order to see the realities of others and into mirrors in order to see her/his own reality reflected” (Style, 1996, p. 1). Style was envisioning a classroom where students would see themselves in the classroom literature (mirror) with all of the cultural and heritage components, as well as, read stories about people from diverse cultures (window).

In order for students to see themselves represented in the literature they read in the classroom, educators must carefully select and utilize literature representing various language, race, and ethnic groups, as well as fiction containing characters from differing family structures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and gender identity groups (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015, p. 379). The shift to intentionally including culturally diverse literature in classroom instruction has widespread ramifications. The stories students read in class help to inform them about the world and who or what is valuable in it. Access to characters, themes, and settings that reflect the diversity in the real world engages students and prepares them to participate in a culturally diverse world. Furthermore, when students cannot see themselves represented in some way in the literature they read (whether it be via language, national identity, religious ideation, tribal culture, or gender identity), they receive subtle yet powerful messages that they are inferior to others. This lack of identity connection in an educational setting can affect the student’s view of herself or himself in a negative way. For example, in her TED Talk, author Chimamanda Adichie describes her first experiences with reading while growing up in a middle-class family in Nigeria. As Adichie first began to write, her characters reflected the White characters in the British and American novels that she read. As a young girl,

she had incorporated the subtle message that only Caucasian characters were worthy of being central characters in a story (not the Nigerian characters she was so familiar with but did not see reflected in the literature). “Stories have been used to dispossess and malign, but stories can also be used to empower” (Adichie, 2009, 17:46). Therefore, it is paramount that educators today make culturally diverse literature a part of the curriculum and an integral component of any classroom library.

Equally important is the need to not just see one’s own group within literature, but to access a variety of content-rich fiction because “our interest in diverse forms of storytelling and content can be thought of as an essential component of creating a sense of global citizenship” (Yokota, 2015, p. 20). Exposure to other cultural narratives not only enriches students’ understanding but enables them to develop the cultural competence necessary to interact with others different from themselves. Furthermore, focusing on only one cultural group or ethnicity in literature is equally dangerous and can promote assumptions and stereotypes instead of building a shared sense of humanity, according to Boyd, Causey, and Gaulda (2015, p. 378). It can lead to what Chimamanda Adichie referred to as “The Danger of a Single Story” (Adichie, 2009). Hence, the need to incorporate culturally relevant texts into the classroom curriculum.

Critics may argue that students need to read a body of well-known literature, referred to as the literary canon, to prepare them for post-secondary education. Literary “classics,” such as “*Romeo and Juliet*, by William Shakespeare, *A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens, *Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee, [and] *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald” are book titles that have topped the required reading list for most high school courses in the United States (Bintz, 2018, p. 2).

Traditionally, the literary canon has been the litmus test for inclusion into some of the elite colleges and universities in the United States, as evidenced by its placement on the SAT and ACT exams and its addition to Advanced Placement English high school courses. However, including culturally relevant texts into the classroom curriculum does not diminish the literary canon. “Extending the canon does not dilute its quality; it actually enhances it” (Perry & Stallworth, 2013, p. 16). To suggest that the traditional canon is no longer worthy of inclusion is a misunderstanding of the argument; rather, expanding the canon to be more inclusive of the needs of 21st-century learners is an essential part of a culturally responsive teaching practice.

***Culturally responsive teaching.*** Because “culture” is a human construct, defining it can be problematic. In a recent study from Northwestern University’s Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy (CSDD), with data collected from 3,000 adults, researchers defined “race as a construct that human beings use to organize themselves and others into groups” (Rockett, 2018, para. 8). Despite the fact that the Human Genome Project has determined that all humans are 99.9% identical, a majority of participants in the CSDD study reported the belief that race and culture are best identified by the pigment of one’s skin (Rockett, 2018; *Whole genome association studies*, 2011). Because these inaccurate assumptions and erroneously held beliefs permeate society, it is urgent that educators address these misconceptions as part of a culturally responsive classroom teaching practice.

On the Responsive Reads website, Hollie distinguished culture from a specific focus on race by his illustration of “The rings of culture,” which comprise each human’s identity. Since educators often equate “culture” with “race,” Hollie created a graphic

image to demonstrate how culture encompasses so much more than just one's race (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1:* Rings of Culture (adapted by Sharroky Hollie; designed and illustrated by Carleen Matts, 2018)

Gay (2010) described culturally responsive teaching as “using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (as cited in Toppel, 2015, p. 553). Applying this concept of teaching to her culturally responsive classroom, Toppel utilized her students’ “funds of knowledge” to practice “culturally responsive reading instruction,” by choosing texts that were culturally appropriate, utilizing the voices of the students as part of the curriculum, and including students’ “funds of knowledge” in the curriculum. Several key components in culturally responsive teaching include building authentic relationships with learners, learning about their cultures, their likes and dislikes, and other “below the line information” (Toppel, 2015, p. 554). Using

students' narrative writing pieces, allowing them to speak in their primary language, and providing opportunities for meaningful conversation are all essential components of culturally responsive teaching.

By utilizing culturally relevant teaching practices, in the form of counternarratives, all students gain the tools to challenge existing power structures and alleviate the inequities for students of color in the educational system (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 81). Kirkland stated that through literature,

...the oppressed gain access to the forces concealed in a word and in a social order constructed to maintain oppression. Being fully aware, the oppressed could ultimately rewrite history and, in the process, challenge existing oppressions to free themselves and others from the bondage of inequity. (Kirkland, 2013, p. 43)

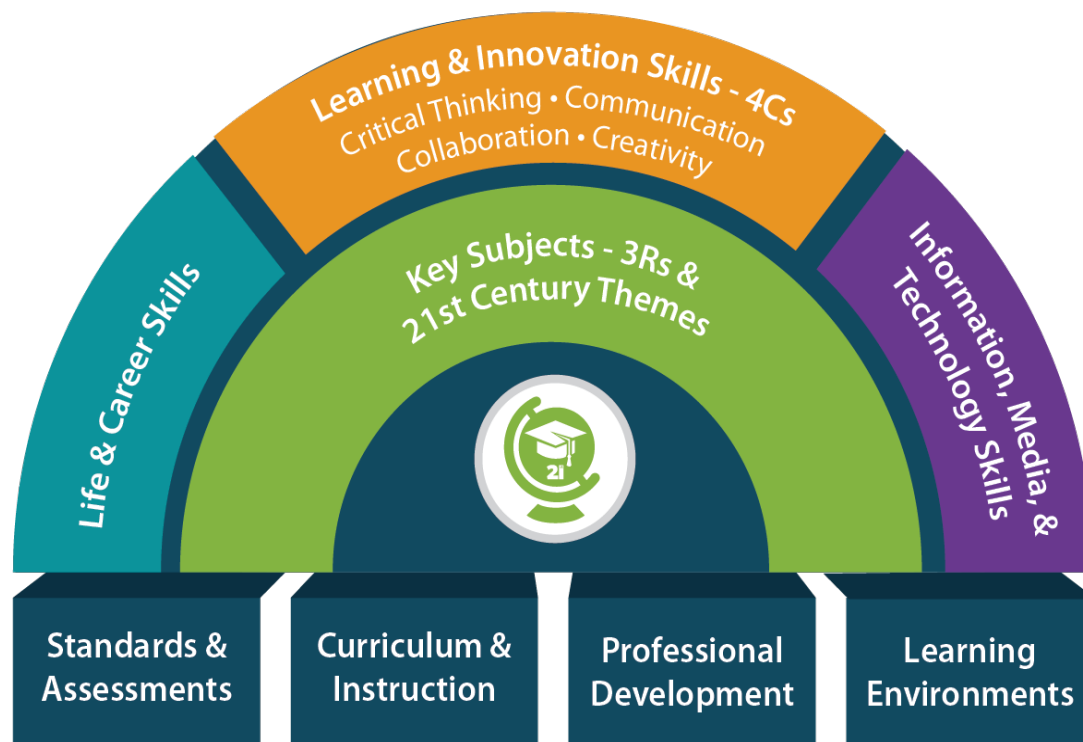
By building a classroom curriculum of multimodal, culturally relevant text sets, students can begin the critical work of challenging institutional racism and other forms of discrimination within systems. Building in the practices of a culturally responsive classroom and combining it with culturally relevant literature allows students to not only see themselves in the stories they read, but they also learn about missing perspectives that have traditionally been excluded from the literary canon. "Reading literature that simply reflects a mono-ethnic view of history...does not allow students the opportunity to think about other cultures and critically engage in discourse about history, current events, and future events" (Perry & Stallworth, 2013, p. 16). Culturally relevant teaching is a powerful framework that when utilized effectively in the classroom, empowers students to navigate a diverse world. It is incumbent upon teachers to develop a culturally



responsive teaching practice so that they can meet the needs of their increasingly diverse learners.

### **21st-Century Global Learning**

Classroom demographics are changing rapidly, especially in urban areas. In two decades, the racial demographics “are projected to be upwards of sixty-five percent students of color” in public school classrooms (Paris, 2017, p. 2). Are educators prepared for this change? Since the onus is on the classroom teacher to develop culturally responsive practices, are teachers adapting their classroom framework to one of inclusion and eliminating what Paris termed, “systems and spaces that perpetuate the curricularization of racism” (Paris, 2017, p. 3)? In an effort to prepare for this essential shift, meet the needs of the 21st-century global learner, and increase engagement and motivation in the older adolescent and adult learner classroom, it is imperative to think differently about classroom curriculum. By incorporating Critical Literacy Theory, Critical Race Theory, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and a Multiliteracies Theory into the classroom framework, educators will have the greatest impact on 21st-century learners. Finally, adjusting to P21’s Framework for 21st Century Learning, a paradigm shift in what 21st-century students need to learn and how they need to learn, is a critical component. The P21 Framework aligns well with Adult Learning theory. In fact, the two theories complement each other well, and both can be a framework in an older adolescent or adult learner classroom (see Figures 2 and 5).



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*Figure 2:* Framework for 21st Century Learning (adapted from P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019)

### **Multiliteracies Theory**

Multiliteracies Theory, or New Literacies, is a two-pronged approach in education to address the wide variety of digital and multimodal texts learners need to navigate in the 21st century while simultaneously meeting the Common Core State Standards for K-12 or the College and Career Readiness Standards for adults (Kist, 2013, p. 39). “The New London Group (2000) has defined multiliteracies as a set of open-ended and flexible multiple literacies required to function in diverse social contexts and communities” (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2017, p. 6). New Literacies are “participatory” by nature because they are multimodal, taking the form of various types of digital text, so they are

“less ‘author-centric’ and more collaborative, requiring students to interact in new ways to read, communicate, and author texts collectively (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014, p. 98).

Building on the work of the New London Group, Boyd and Brock developed a Multiliteracies framework by marrying the concepts of “Social Justice” and “Multimodality” within the “lens of teaching and learning” (Boyd & Brock, 2015, p. 5). Because multimodal text can take numerous forms depending on the device or the software application in use, there are limitless modes of communication, increasing the importance in education of not only understanding these multimodal new literacies, but teaching them to our students to motivate and engage their interest and to prepare them as 21st-century readers and writers.

As such, paradigm cases of new literacies include...fan fiction, blogging and microblogging, remixing cultural artifacts, photo curating and sharing, video gaming,... online social networking,...building apps, creating animations, and participating in interest-driven, online forums. (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014, p. 98)

Consequently, as educators develop curriculum for the 21st-century classroom, utilizing multimodal, culturally diverse texts is an essential component in this work.

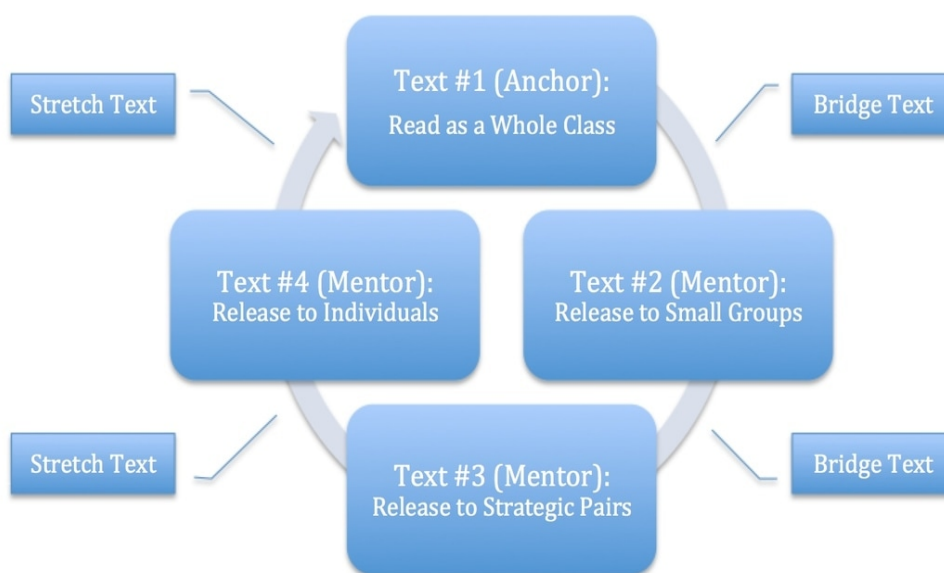
**Multimodal literacy.** With multimodal literacy, students become engaged as the authors of texts, as mentors during collaboration, and as directors of their own learning. With all of the new digital literacies, there are new “skills, knowledge, and tools in use within social practices” that educators and students must develop (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014, p. 97). Since digital literacy applications are changing constantly, teachers will need to keep abreast of new digital literacies to help their learners access all types of text, both print and multimodal. By providing students with the opportunity to engage with

multimodal, culturally diverse texts, especially from underrepresented groups, and by creating an environment where they can freely discuss the inequities that they see in literature and in the world, educators are preparing students to challenge those inequities. Inclusion of multimodality as part of the classroom curriculum leads to a new way of using and creating texts, shifting the power structure in the classroom toward students and away from those in “positions of power, (including teachers, principals, professors, district-level administrators),...[as they begin to] openly question and challenge their own perceptions about race, ethnicity, language, sexual, and gendered identities” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012, p. 5). An effective way to incorporate culturally responsive teaching and utilize multimodal texts in the classroom is through the creation of thematic text sets.

*Thematic text sets.* Text sets are a collection of multimodal, high-interest texts, with wide lexile ranges, organized around a specific theme or line of inquiry. “What they have in common is their focus on providing students the chance to look across texts and build both general and disciplinary knowledge” (Lupo, Strong, Lewis, Walpole, & McKenna, 2017, p. 434). They can consist of print-based text, images, graphics, maps, charts, both literary and informational based text, primary and secondary source artifacts, and audio or visual mediums. The key to building a quality text set is to use high-interest, substantive texts, or “high-quality, award-winning texts,” and teach them as a unit so that students can make relevant connections between texts (Batchelor, 2018, p. 7). “By having students think generatively and reflectively among multiple text structures,” teachers can guide learners to develop a Critical Literacy lens, expose them to culturally diverse, multimodal text, and increase their awareness of the existence of missing voices and perspectives of which they have been unaware (Batchelor, 2018, p. 2).

Based on current research about building text sets for older adolescent and adult learners, there are several frameworks to consider. In one framework developed by Lewis and Walpole (2016), the authors suggested utilizing “Quad Text Sets,” in which the first text is a digital image or other graphic to build “background knowledge”; the second text consists of one or more informational texts that also aid in building “background knowledge”; the third text is the “target” text, and it would be the most challenging both quantitatively in terms of lexile and qualitatively in terms of text features; and the final text would be selected based on its criteria to help learners “synthesize” all of their learning about the thematic topic in the text set (p. 35). Although not limited to the English/Language Arts classroom, much of the research about text sets centers on this content area. Another framework for building text sets derives from the work of Pytash, Batchelor, Kist, and Srsen (2014). In their article on “*Linked Text Sets in the English Classroom*,” the authors stated that text sets should include a range of no less than 5 but no more than 15 texts around a specific theme or line of inquiry. Their purpose for creating these multimodal, thematic text sets is so that learners can “interpret how several authors across several media interpret the same theme or topic” while simultaneously engaging in “powerful reading experiences and insight about multiple perspectives and experiences...[to] become critical readers” (Pytash, Batchelor, Kist, & Srsen, 2014, pp. 54, 52). Regardless of which framework an educator utilizes, be it the quad text set or a multiple source text set, the goal is the same: increase background knowledge, encourage deep reading of relevant issues, and increase learner engagement and motivation. A final framework for building text sets is Gangi’s “Balanced Literacy Model.”

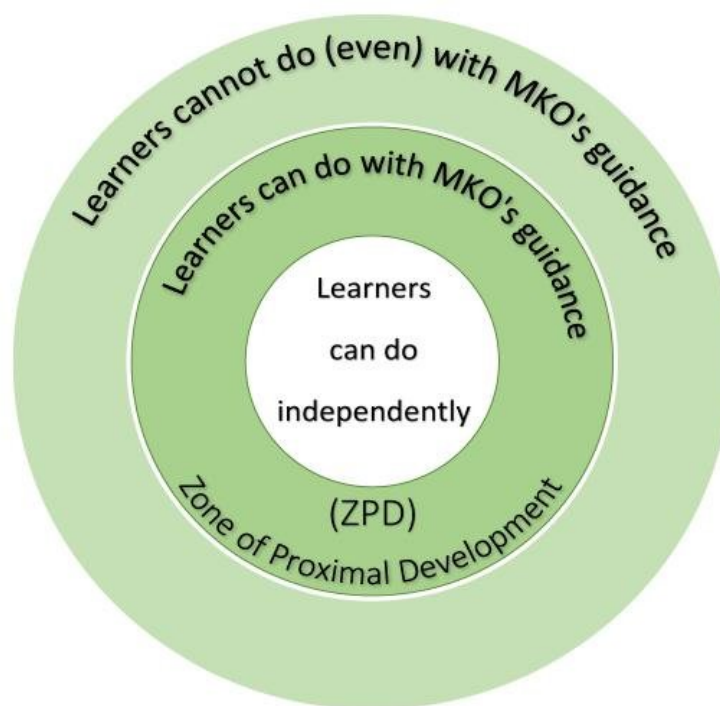
**Balanced literacy model 2.0.** Based on Balanced Literacy 2.0 and the concept of Literature Circles, Gangi’s framework for building a text set incorporates multiple texts around a specific line of inquiry. Every text in the text set consists of several carefully curated, multimodal, thematic texts at various lexile levels and different levels of complexity, ensuring that every student in the classroom can engage with text at his or her own independent reading level (see Figure 3). By utilizing Literature Circles, the teacher can facilitate whole-group, small-group, pairs, and independent reading of the text sets.



*Figure 3:* Balanced Literacy 2.0 (adapted from Gangi, 2017)

The first text is the Anchor text, a complex text with a high lexile level that the teacher uses to introduce the thematic topic or line of inquiry, based on an essential question. Since the Anchor text should be at a high lexile, the entire class reads the text as a whole-group lesson. The students will return to this complex text once again at the end of the text set. Moreover, the text set includes at least 3 Mentor texts, at independent reading lexiles, giving students an opportunity to grapple with complex text within their

“zone of proximal development,” defined by Lev Vygotsky as the exact correct text complexity level at which a learner can access text independently without scaffolding and teacher support (see Figure 4) (as cited in Sideeg, 2016, p. 175). The Mentor texts provide support for students to work first in a small group with the first Mentor text; for the second Mentor text, students read it with a partner; and the third Mentor text is read individually.



*Figure 4. Zone of Proximal Development (Sideeg, 2016, adapted from Lev Vygotsky)*

This system is part of a “gradual release of responsibility” model, developed by Frey and Fisher (2009), to lend support as needed, and then slowly remove support so that learners can become self-sufficient readers. “The thinking behind the gradual release of responsibility is that teachers must plan to move from providing extensive support to peer support to no support” (Frey & Fisher, 2009, p. 18). Using thematic text sets are an

excellent way for teachers to move students from the need for high support, to minimal support, to very little support in reading complex texts.

To differentiate instruction for readers who struggle and English Language Learners, the text set incorporates Bridge texts at a lower lexile level, giving students practice reading, building content knowledge, and developing confidence. Finally, to differentiate for higher-level readers, there is an inclusion of Stretch texts, which are at a higher lexile level and give more complex, independent reading practice. Many text sets benefit from the addition of a disruptive text. In an interview Ferlazzo had with Beers and Probst, they identified a disruptive text as one that challenges students' initial assumptions and stereotypes about people, places, and historical events, requiring them to consider another perspective (Disrupting thinking, 2017). The thematic text set culminates with the Anchor text. As learners have read multiple texts on the same thematic topic over a period of time, increasing their background knowledge and improving their reading skills, they are ready to tackle the harder Anchor text once again and answer the essential question in a more substantive response. Rereading is especially important for older adolescent and adult learners because "rereading provides students with the chance to revisit text in a variety of ways" (Fernandez, 2000, p. 742).

Regardless of which text set framework an educator chooses to implement in the classroom, he or she can be confident that utilizing text sets as part of the classroom curriculum has many benefits, including increasing learner engagement and motivation in the older adolescent or adult learner classroom. One effective way to achieve this is through the utilization of text sets. Another effective strategy is to ensure that the text sets are based on an inquiry, problem-solving, constructivist approach.



### **Increased Learner Engagement and Motivation with Text Sets**

There are numerous benefits to using multimodal, thematic text sets in the classroom: they provide opportunities for students to read increasingly complex text; they help students build multidisciplinary background knowledge; there is a boost in learner motivation; and there is a sheer hike in volume of student reading as well (Lupo, Strong, Lewis, Walpole, & Mckenna, 2017, p. 434). Furthermore, thematic text sets can lead to several positive outcomes:

- Ability to synthesize learning across multiple texts
- Awareness of diverse and/or missing perspectives in the literary canon
- Development of a critical literacy lens to identify bias, challenge an author’s perspective, and consider counternarratives
- Increased empathy for “marginalized groups” and avoidance of the belief in a single story. (Tracy, Menickelli, & Scales, 2016, p. 528)

**Inquiry-based learning: A constructivist approach to increase learner engagement and motivation.** Inquiry-based learning, or IBL, is a Constructivist approach to learning based on the work of Dewey, and an IBL unit begins with an essential question, or “authentic inquiry,” learning that students initiate and in which they serve as guides for one another in a collaborative model, utilizing teacher facilitation, and which culminates with a student-created product (Buchanan, Harlan, Bruce, & Edwards, 2016, p. 27). As students delve deeply into topics that are highly engaging, reading culturally relevant, multimodal texts at various lexile levels, they develop perseverance and a growth mindset as they persist through a problem or find the solution or answer to the essential question. Students take ownership of their learning and become highly

motivated and engaged in the learning process, meeting both the goals of the Common Core State Standards and the demand of society to educate its citizens (Tracey & Morrow, 2017).

The creation of text sets and IBL align beautifully because they support deep, critical thinking about a substantive topic that is meaningful to students, and one in which they have a deep desire to research and better understand. In classes where teachers have included an IBL model, “Zafra-Gomez, Roman-Martinez & Gomez-Miranda (2014) found a positive relationship between academic achievement and IBL and concluded that IBL heightens student engagement leading to deeper learning and increased knowledge” (as cited in Buchanan et al., 2016, p. 27). In this way, text sets and IBL increase both learner engagement in the essential question and potential answer while simultaneously motivating students to dig deeper and learn more about possible solutions to the essential question.

In the article “Seven Rules of Engagement,” Gambrell (2011) stated that teachers have a powerful impact on a learner’s motivation and engagement to read when they incorporate several essential elements into their teaching practice: include texts that are important and relative to students’ personal lives; integrate a diverse body of multimodal, multi-genre texts into the classroom curriculum; utilize a daily reading practice and provide numerous opportunities to read; ensure opportunities to collaborate with other students during the reading process in authentic learning tasks; and especially “when they have opportunities to be successful with challenging texts” (Gambrell, 2011, pp. 172-176), all of which are components of teaching with multimodal, thematic text sets in an IBL classroom. By combining culturally relevant, multimodal texts with inquiry-based

learning, teachers are using best practices to engage their 21st-century students, attending to their need to investigate current events and practice mastery of complex texts. By utilizing the gradual release of responsibility model with Gangi's Balanced Literacy 2.0, teachers can assist their students in becoming independent readers of complex text. Most importantly, students remain engaged and motivated to learn in the classroom setting.

### **Summary**

Thematic text sets support the constructivist approach to learning, first espoused by John Dewey, because students “sort through complex issues and problems from multiple perspectives, and draw conclusions in order to construct knowledge for themselves” (Buchanan, Harlan, Bruce, & Edwards, 2016, p. 27). Text sets incorporate Inquiry-based learning, which aligns well with Critical Literacy Theory, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Andragogy Theory, and Multiliteracies Theory. Because text sets incorporate multiple texts around an essential question or a line of inquiry, they lend themselves well to IBL. All of these theories align well with the 21st Century Global Learning Framework.

### **Chapter 3 Overview**

The research clearly supports utilizing culturally relevant, multimodal text sets to increase critical literacy and learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms. Developing a curriculum framework for creating the text sets, selecting an online repository to house them, making the text sets accessible to other interested educators, and designing a website that is user-friendly for educators are key elements of this Capstone Project. Gangi's Balanced Literacy 2.0 (2017) curriculum text set framework best suits the needs of high school or adult education teachers. Although

there is a plethora of free, available websites to house curriculum in an open-access model, Google Sites is one that allows for easy access, is very user-friendly, and best suits the needs of the busy 21st-century educator.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Project Description

#### Introduction

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the process for developing shared curriculum text sets for teachers of older adolescents and adult learners in answer to the research question, *How can utilizing culturally relevant, multimodal text sets increase critical literacy and result in learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms?* Furthermore, Chapter 3 delves into and defines Andragogy Learning Theory and the Constructivist Theory, both as a framework for the text sets and as a rationale for building a curriculum website for educators. In addition, Chapter 3 provides a specific technology framework for the website development process and the use of Google Sites to house the curriculum. Finally, Chapter 3 describes the Capstone Project process and addresses the setting and audience, specifically the educational context in which to use the text sets. Chapter 3 culminates with a timeline summarizing the completion of the four multimodal, culturally relevant text sets and the Google Sites website.

#### Overview of the Project and Rationale

Curriculum sharing is an integral part of education, and educators are extremely generous when it comes to sharing resources with colleagues. It is undoubtedly even more pronounced in adult education due to the budget constraints and lack of curriculum resources for teachers. Statewide in Minnesota, for fiscal year 2017-2018, the annual per pupil revenue was \$1,258.68 per adult learner, which is significantly lower than the funding stream for a K-12 learner in Saint Paul, which is \$6,312.00 per pupil for fiscal

year 2018-2019 (*Minnesota ABE FY 2017-18 Revenue By Consortium, 2016-2017*; S. (n.d.). FAQs / Finance Facts). Due to the vast discrepancy in the funding formula between adult learners and students under the age of 18, teachers of Adult Basic Education regularly practice collegial resource and curriculum sharing. To meet the great need for curriculum resources for educators, the goal for this Capstone Project was to build a website to house multimodal, culturally relevant text sets and to answer the question, *How can utilizing culturally relevant text sets increase critical literacy and result in learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms?*

Using the Balanced Literacy 2.0 Text Set Curriculum Model Framework developed by Gangi (2017) and described in Chapter 2, each text set in this Capstone includes an anchor text, bridge texts, mentor texts, and stretch texts. An additional integral component not included in Gangi's framework but emphasized in the literature is the inclusion of a disruptive text for each text set. According to Beers and Probst (2017) in an interview in Education Week, a disruptive text is an essential part of a curriculum unit because it requires students to think beyond the obvious answers, address prevalent stereotypes, and identify misguided assumptions about people, events, and ideas. A disruptive text causes readers to "be open to the possibility that a text may give them the opportunity to change" their way of thinking (Disruptive thinking, 2017). Disruptive texts align well with Critical Literacy Theory, Critical Race Theory, and the use of multimodal, culturally relevant text sets. For students to see the world from multiple perspectives, it is mandatory that the teacher facilitates a disruption of their current thinking process, and disruptive texts are ideal for this purpose.

The next step in the Capstone Project process was to design a website repository to house the text sets using the Google Sites website builder. Creating the website, learning to navigate the software, and revising it for maximum usability took time because there was a learning curve to operate the features on Google Sites. Furthermore, I worked with my Content Reviewer to discover the best culturally relevant texts to incorporate in the text sets. Finally, after building the Google Sites website, I checked it for formatting, visual appeal, usability, active hyperlinks, accessibility, relevance, and efficacy for an older adolescent and adult learner Language Arts classroom.

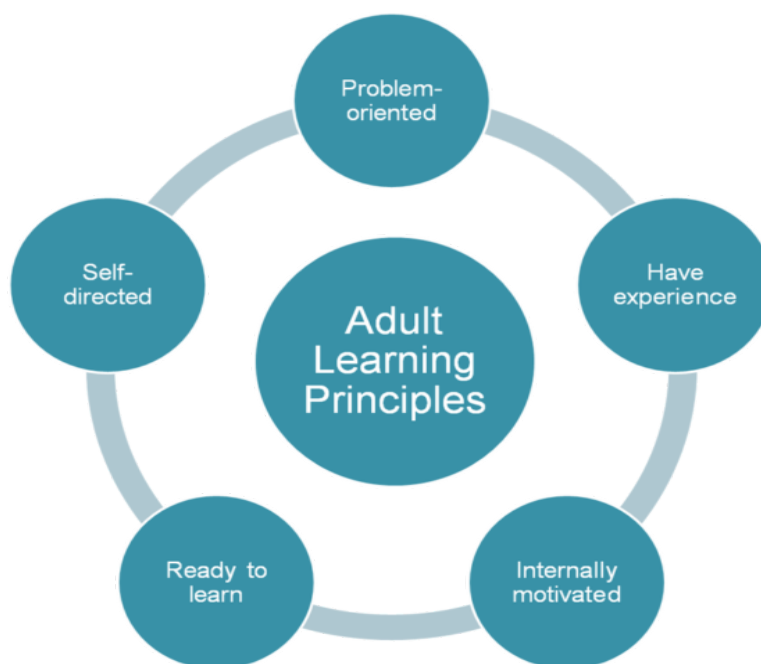
### **Andragogical Learning Theory Research Paradigm**

Adult learning theory, or Andragogy theory, is based on the work of Malcolm Knowles (see Figure 5). In their seminal work, *The Adult Learner* (2005), Knowles, Holton, and Swanson postulated that adult learners: 1) have an innate desire to know what they are learning and why; 2) are independent learners and can teach themselves if there is strong support and facilitation; 3) possess a wealth of knowledge that they bring to any learning environment; 4) are in a state of “readiness to learn;” 5) have an “orientation to learning” since they are not new to being students; and 6) have an intrinsic motivation to learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, pp. 62-63). These components factor into older adolescent and adult learner classrooms.

Andragogy theory is essential to the work of building text sets for older adolescent and adult learners, so the research paradigm will be based on an andragogical framework instead of a pedagogical framework. This is not to suggest that children cannot benefit from an andragogical framework. After Knowles published his work on Adult learning theory in 1970,

...a number of teachers in elementary and secondary schools and in colleges reported that they were experimenting with applying the andragogical model, and that children and youths seemed to learn better in many circumstances when some features of the andragogical model were applied. (Knowles, 1970, as cited in Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 69)

Since Knowles Adult Learning Principles are applicable for both older adolescent and adult learners, Andragogy Theory will provide the learning framework for the text sets.



*Figure 5: Adult Learning Principles (What is adult learning theory, 2017, adapted from Knowles).*

**Andragogy theory for older adolescent and adult learners.** Andragogy theory, or Adult learning theory, first began with the work of Lindeman (1926) in his book, *The Meaning of Adult Education*. Based on the work of John Dewey, who was the father of problem-based learning, or what is referred to in modern education as inquiry-based learning, Dewey's approach was that students learn best in the structure of a collaborative



model where they work together to solve problems and take ownership of their own learning, becoming “self-directed learners with lifelong learning skills” (Tracey & Morrow, 2017, p. 78). This concept is not new in Adult Education, but is an essential pillar. Students do not stop learning when they complete their K-12 education or even at the culmination of post-secondary learning. In Adult learning theory, people continue learning for the remainder of their lives. The goal of Adult educators is to support adults and their learning at every age and juncture of their life.

***Constructivist theory.*** Dewey’s and later Knowles’ work on Adult Learning Principles (see Figure 5) took a constructivist approach to learning, in which older adolescent and adult students had an opportunity to learn about topics that appealed to them, engaged in cooperative learning to solve problems and answer essential questions, and where the “student’s experience counts for as much as the teacher’s knowledge” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 39). Therefore, Andragogy Theory is a “conceptual framework of adult learning,” and using Andragogy theory is instrumental in developing culturally relevant text sets because older adolescent and adult learners have a broader knowledge base and the critical thinking skills required to engage in inquiry-based learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 71). By developing and utilizing text sets in an older adolescent and adult learner classroom, cross-content learning occurs in an andragogical, inquiry-based learning framework.

**Andragogy theory for educators.** Furthermore, Andragogy theory was pivotal to building a curriculum website that both high school teachers and adult educators would utilize in their classrooms. Teachers are truly adult learners, especially when it comes to learning new content and teaching strategies to increase their teaching skills and build

their repertoire of strategies. In the modern classroom, that includes multimodal, culturally relevant texts and teaching with digital tools. Educators are continuous, lifelong learners who work hard to keep abreast of the latest research in best practices for teaching and learning. Knowles' Adult Learning Principles (see Figure 5) apply to teachers because as adults, they are continuously learning innovative ways to improve their practice with the limited time that they possess. Because a teacher's time is limited, this Capstone Project is an attempt to share curriculum resources through an easily accessible means, a Google Sites website.

### **Choice of Method: Web 2.0 Technology Paradigm for Online Learning**

There are numerous benefits to sharing curriculum via a website, especially one as popular and highly used as a Google website. In their report on Open Educational Resources (O.E.R.), Voss and Achieve (2015) stated that there are three important outcomes to 21st-century curriculum sharing via a website:

- Teachers maintain “local control” and autonomy to access resources and modify them for the needs of the learners in their classrooms.
- Through the process of sharing, teachers gain access to more curriculum with fewer associated costs, benefitting the school by decreasing the budget necessary for purchasing more curriculum materials.
- There is an increase in collaboration when sharing “high quality” resources in an easily accessible format to aid teachers in developing the best possible resources for their students (p. 2).

With the emergence of Web 2.0, also referred to as the “collaborative Web,” educators can access and share information via “learning networks, online education, and virtual

communities,” with highly innovative, technological forms of “social interaction, community and collaboration and content construction” (Harasim, 2012, p. 26). Building culturally relevant, multimodal text sets and housing them on a Google Sites website, with open access for educators, will benefit both the field of Language Arts and provide useful, essential curriculum for high school and adult education teachers.

**Rationale for Google Sites.** Due to their challenging schedules, educators need the flexibility of asynchronous learning, which means they can access the website and curriculum at a time that is convenient for them. Google Sites website creation tools are available to anyone with a Google account, and for those who do not have one, it is extremely easy to create. Others can access the completed curriculum on the Google Sites website if the website developer designates it as open access, not requiring a special password to access. Google utilizes best practices for web design basics in their Google Sites application. Google Sites enables a web designer to create a Homepage that is easy to access and incorporates the criteria for good web design, including a “Home” page, a “Table of Contents,” various themes and layouts, and the whole suite of Google applications, such as Docs, Slides, Forms, Sheets, Charts, and YouTube. According to Gades and Burke (2017), “The new Google Sites was created to make it even easier to create and share websites. You can pick from a number of themes where colors, fonts, and images have already been optimized for you” (slide 10). Google Sites includes:

- A simple, open layout for the Homepage
- Color, font, and text size to draw attention to important elements
- Symbols, icons, and bullets to organize and filter information
- Graphic elements to lend visual appeal

- Tools for inserting links to other texts and websites,
- Capability to insert videos, podcasts, and other audio media

Because best practices for web design place a “focus...on simplicity, clarity, and openness” to facilitate good communication, Google Sites is an ideal website application for sharing curriculum with educators (Vai & Sosulski, 2011, p. 65). Since many educators are already using Google applications, there is familiarity with the features in Google Sites, so the operational aspects of navigating on a Google Sites website are a relatively simple process.

### **Project Description**

Utilizing Gangi’s Balanced Literacy 2.0 (2017) Text Set Curriculum Framework, this Capstone Project consists of four separate text sets that incorporate multiple texts around a specific line of inquiry. Each text set includes multimodal texts at various qualitative and quantitative complexity levels. There is an essential focus question that unifies all the texts in the set and helps learners build content and background knowledge to answer the essential question in a substantive manner at the culmination of the text set. Educators can utilize reading strategies to engage learners in each text in the text set to increase engagement and motivation. “The connections with the text that readers thus create can assist them in accessing the themes and messages of narrative texts and the main ideas of expository texts, which in turn can increase their engagement with these texts” (Verlaan, 2017, p. 453).

Using a website like Google Sites to share curriculum is beneficial to the field of Adult Education and to Language Arts teachers as well. The curriculum is free and can be designated open-access, so users can utilize the website, choose the text set that they want

to use in the classroom, and then either download the texts or get the link to the texts. The finished product, a Google Sites website with four culturally relevant, multimodal text sets, is ready to share with other interested educators, especially in the fields of high school English/Language Arts and Adult Basic Education.

### **Adult Basic Education Setting**

Adult Education in Minnesota serves “60,000 Minnesota adults,” 46% of whom are ELLs, 60% who do not have a high school diploma, 29% unemployed, and 12% who receive some form of public assistance (*Adult basic education in Minnesota: An overview, 2018*). Adult Basic Education provides a plethora of services including the following courses: General Educational Development tests or G.E.D., Minnesota State Adult Diploma, English Language learning, college preparation, occupational preparation, family literacy, Citizenship Test prep, and Digital Literacy. The setting for this Capstone Project is an adult basic education classroom, where students are a minimum of 18-years-old, and there is no maximum age. Students are working to increase their reading and writing skills in preparation for the G.E.D., the Minnesota State Adult Diploma, or college preparation. The classes consist of both American-born students and English Language learners, all of whom must qualify for services and make assessment gains under the National Reporting System (NRS). A result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or W.I.O.A, students must make annual level gains in one of three assessment areas: reading, math, or language, all of which are reported to the federal government on an annual basis. Other ways of making federal gains are by securing employment or by enrolling in a post-secondary institution. Yearly annual progress is measured by either the Test of Adult Basic Education (T.A.B.E) assessment

or the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (C.A.S.A.S.) assessment (*Supporting accountability in adult education: The national reporting system support project annual report October 2016–March 2018*). In addition, students in this setting have tested within a 6.0 to 8.5 grade level equivalent, or G.L.E, as assessed by the T.A.B.E Reading test, so they need significant literacy instruction to meet their academic, career, and post-secondary goals.

**Audience.** While written primarily for teachers of older adolescent and adult learners, Language Arts teachers in both K-12 settings and Adult Basic Education teachers would benefit from using the culturally relevant, multimodal text sets in this Capstone Project. Housing the text sets on a Google Sites website and providing open access makes the curriculum available to teachers throughout Minnesota, teachers in other states, and even interested teachers from other countries who are looking for culturally relevant, multimodal text sets curriculum. As previously mentioned, due to funding shortages, lack of time for planning, and access to quality curriculum, teachers relish free resources and curriculum that is relevant, current, and readily usable. There is a dire need for free curriculum resources within the field of education for both high school Language Arts teachers and Adult Basic Education teachers. This Capstone Project is an attempt to fill that need.

### **Timeline**

The timeline for this Capstone Project included completing the final drafts for Chapters 1, 2, and 3 by February 2019. The next step was to create four culturally relevant, multimodal text sets, and they were completed by March 2019. Simultaneously, a Google Sites website was developed to house the text sets and make it possible to share

them with other interested educators.. All four text sets were completed and uploaded to the Google Sites website by the end of March 2019. As the text sets were completed and while the website was under construction, a Content Reviewer, two peer editors, and a Hamline professor provided constructive feedback. After the website was completed, the previously mentioned people gave feedback on the website's usability, accessibility, relevance, and efficacy for older adolescent and adult learner classrooms. The final step was to write Chapter 4, including a description of the entire process of building the text sets and creating a website, the implications of curriculum sharing via a website for the field of education, and any potential opportunities for further research, as well as challenges in doing this work. As the texts sets and website were created, there was continuous revision of the Capstone Chapters 1-4 for a polished final draft of the entire paper. The Capstone Project text sets, Google Sites website, and accompanying paper, as well as the Capstone Project paper, were completed by May 2019.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 formed the basis for the entire Capstone Project, which is the completion of the four text sets and the culminating website in answer to the research question, *How can utilizing culturally relevant, multimodal text sets increase critical literacy and result in learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms?* The learning theories of Andragogy and Constructivist Theory formed the paradigm framework for building culturally relevant text sets for high school and Adult Education Language Arts classrooms. The rationale for this Capstone Project, a need to share resources and curriculum with colleagues in the field of education, has been amply demonstrated due to teacher time and financial constraints, the need to access

quality resources for building a classroom curriculum, and the freedom that learning in an asynchronous environment provides. Using the vehicle of a website to share curriculum provides access, not only to colleagues locally, but to teachers in other states and globally. Culturally relevant, multimodal text sets, housed on a Google Sites website utilizing a Web 2.0 technological framework, is a 21st-century, asynchronous, curriculum-sharing model that is relevant and essential for educators today.

#### **Overview of Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 will conclude this Capstone Project, including important ideas learned throughout the process. Moreover, Chapter 4 will explain the potential implications of how the creation of a website to share curriculum in a widespread manner with other educators will impact the field of education. In addition, disseminating the findings in this Capstone Project with the field of Adult Education will be critical next steps, and determining the best means for doing so will be discussed in Chapter 4. How will utilizing Google Sites to share curriculum with other educators contribute to the field of education? What additional inquiry-based, thematic, multimodal text sets will be relevant and efficacious for an older adolescent and adult learner classroom based on Knowles Principles of Adult Learning (2017)? These and many other essential questions will be addressed in Chapter 4.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Project Conclusions

#### Introduction

Looking back on the three-year journey that began with my first course in the Master's in Literacy Education program and has culminated in this Capstone Project, I am filled with a myriad of feelings: joy, satisfaction, and determination. I imagined this moment often during my graduate school journey, but tried to stay focused in the moment, taking a course or two at a time and immersing myself in the learning environment. I feel deep joy and satisfaction because of the sheer amount of reading and research that I accomplished, leading to the new learning that I now possess, which has forever altered me as an educator. I am truly elated about the completion of the four culturally relevant, multimodal text sets that I have created and the Google Sites website to house the curriculum and make it accessible to other educators. I am humbled and pleased at the positive feedback that I have received about how critical this work is to the field of education, and knowing that I have contributed in a substantial way to the work of Equity through the lens of Critical Literacy makes me feel determined to continue this work of developing culturally relevant curriculum for the classroom.

Initially, my primary goal for creating this Capstone curriculum project and website was to draw attention to the field of Adult Basic Education and its impact on families. Since low adult literacy rates impact, not just the adult learner, but their children as well, I felt compelled to bring this important issue to the forefront of education through the discourse in academia. I have contributed by adding my voice to the body of research surrounding older adolescent and adult learners and by focusing my research on the

importance of utilizing multimodal, culturally relevant texts in the classroom. Adult illiteracy is not an issue that many Americans are aware of; in fact, “only 59 percent of Americans are even aware it is a problem” (Morgan, Waite, & Diecuch, 2017, p. 3). To bring the issue of adult illiteracy to a wider audience, I chose to step out of my Adult Basic Education field and enter the world of K-12 education to pursue a degree in Literacy with the hopes that I would learn current, research-based, best practices for teaching reading and writing to my adult learners. In the process, I was able to discuss the issues pertinent to Adult Basic Education in courses with my classmates and professors, helping other educators understand the plight of adult learners.

In my second year of taking courses, I learned about multimodal text sets, and the brainchild for this Capstone Project was born. I immersed myself in the literature of the creation of text sets, learned about culturally relevant texts and the role they play in engaging students and deepening their understanding of cross-content, substantive topics, and learned about the theories that undergird the work of Critical Literacy in the classroom and its relationship to Equity and Social Justice. I knew that I wanted to fill the need for curriculum-sharing within the field of Adult Education, but I wanted my Capstone Project to appeal to an even broader audience, such as my colleagues who teach high school English. I became committed to the process of developing a curriculum and determining the best way to share it with other educators, via a website, and in this process, to answer the question, *How can utilizing culturally relevant, multimodal text sets increase critical literacy and result in learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms?*

In Chapter 4, I will summarize and clarify the key learnings that took place over my three-year journey of my Master's program. I will revisit the Literature Review to encapsulate the most relevant, evidence-based theories that influenced my work. I will discuss the implications for the field of Adult Education, as well as, point out the challenging limitations due to the nature and funding of Adult Education as it relates to public policy about educating adults. Finally, I will indicate my plans for disseminating my findings, sharing my curriculum website with other educators, and continuing the important work of creating multimodal, culturally relevant text sets as part of an on-going curriculum improvement and development plan.

### **Pertinent Learnings**

Due to the very nature of Adult Basic Education and its precarious position in the field of education, I wanted to bring the importance of Adult Education to the world of academia. I realized in the beginning that I would find little research pertaining specifically to adult learners and that I would need to center my research on older adolescents. One very important finding that I discovered came through the work of Malcolm Knowles and his *Adult Learning Principles* (Knowles, 1970). Married to Andragogy theory, which is the theory of teaching adult learners, I realized that the principles for teaching adults are highly applicable to teaching older adolescents, and vice versa. As students mature emotionally and chronologically, they become more internally motivated, independent learners with deeper knowledge and a “readiness to learn” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, pp. 62-63). Upon discovering the connection between older adolescent and adult learners, I realized that much of the research regarding older adolescents and adults was relevant to both groups.

Another obstacle that I faced was locating culturally relevant texts that would appeal to both older adolescents and adult learners. While there is a huge market for Young Adult (YA) literature, there is a dearth of literature written at lower lexiles specifically geared to adult learners. In order to meet the Reading Standards in both the Common Core and the College and Career Readiness standards in Adult Education to read substantive, complex texts, I needed to curate a variety of multimodal, culturally relevant, lexile-diverse texts to build the text sets (Kist, 2013, p. 39). What I discovered is that adult learners are equally motivated by YA literature if the main protagonist is relatable, the subject matter is relevant, and the writing is rich. My adult learners eagerly consumed the YA books that I brought into the classroom and fervently asked for more.

A final, powerful realization that occurred as I was working on my research is that building curriculum onto a shareable platform, such as Google Sites, and making it available to educators is in high demand. Before I even finished my Capstone, I had received requests from the field of Adult Education to give presentations on how to build multimodal, culturally relevant text sets and to share the curriculum that I have built. I suspected that educators would welcome curriculum, but I totally underestimated the great need for it, especially in Adult Education. Due to the funding formula in A.B.E., which in Minnesota for 2017-2018 was \$1,258.68 per adult learner, lack of funding for Adult Education is a public policy issue that needs to be addressed (*Minnesota ABE FY 2017-18 Revenue By Consortium, 2016-2017*). In what way could I contribute to the field of Adult Education, with the urgent need to increase literacy for adult learners, yet operate within a fiscally precarious budget? The obvious response was to build curriculum that other educators would use in their classrooms. In doing so, I am helping

to alleviate the monetary and time constraints prevalent amongst Adult educators. By presenting at regional and statewide conferences to my colleagues in the field of Adult Education, I will be able to share what I have learned about the value of building multimodal, culturally relevant text sets to increase learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms.

### **Revisiting the Literature and Its Vital Impact on Equity Work**

Throughout the process of researching topics for my Literature Review, three key components emerged, leading to a deeper understanding of the relevance of using a culturally responsive, multimodal curriculum. First, Freire's (2014) seminal work in the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" and Ladson-Billings' (1995) "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," both of whom determined that through education, students would be prepared to not only challenge systems of inequality in the United States but to overthrow them. Their work led to a social justice lens of Critical Literacy as an equalizer in education, or what Paris and Alim (2014) later identified as the need to create a model of inclusivity based on "heritage practices" (p. 90), ensuring that all students receive an education within a culturally responsive teaching environment.

Second, the significance of utilizing Multiliteracies theory in a 21st-century, global learning environment, was another key component in my research. Students today are asked to read much more than print text, and their ability (or inability) to do so is an affects them both personally and professionally, so teaching strategies for reading multimodal text is an integral part of the 21st century classroom.. Utilizing multimodal texts within the classroom setting, exposing students to a plethora of modalities and strategies for comprehending what they read, are intrinsic to preparing students to

navigate in our current digital world. Creating and utilizing multimodal, culturally relevant text sets, geared to meet the needs of the learners in the modern classroom, are ways that “students can make relevant connections between texts” (Batchelor, 2018, p. 7). In doing so, learners hone a Critical Literacy lens, increase their awareness of the existence of missing voices and perspectives of which they have been unaware (Batchelor, 2018, p. 2), and develop the cross-content reading of complex texts that will prepare them for becoming active participants in their homes, communities, and the political process.

Finally, I discovered that incorporating Dewey’s Constructivist approach to Inquiry-based learning aligned perfectly with the process of reading multimodal, culturally relevant texts sets on a substantive topic, with various lexiles, around an important essential question. Through this process, students can work collectively, serving as collaborators in a shared learning model (Buchanan, Harlan, Bruce, & Edwards, 2016, p. 27). They can focus on authentic, current world problems, read and research about them, and collectively develop potential solutions. Preparing students to read via a Critical Literacy lens, utilizing multimodal, culturally relevant texts as part of the classroom curriculum, and integrating an Inquiry-based learning model formed the key elements of this Capstone Project paper.

### **Implications for the Field of Adult Education**

In order to disseminate the value and importance of Adult Education to other educators, academia, policymakers, and the voting public at large, it is incumbent on me to argue how vital it is for the United States to have a literate, educated citizenry by increasing funding for Adult Education. Despite the clear advantages, such as access to

safe housing, living-wage employment, nutritious food, and other resources, lawmakers still fail to pass legislation that will provide for adequate Adult Education programs in all areas of Minnesota:

Due to a lack of funding, traditional adult education programs are only serving a fraction of the adults who need assistance. The 2016 survey of 1,000 ProLiteracy member programs shows that two-thirds of programs have waiting lists that average three months to admit new students. (Morgan, Waite, & Diecuch, 2017, p. 12).

The implications are clear. Adults who lack access to education will have fewer resources available for both themselves and their families. My greatest hope would be for all children to stay in school, get their high school diploma, and move on to postsecondary or living-wage employment. However, that is not the reality. Currently, the graduation rates in the United States are at an all-time high, according to Education Week: “New figures released by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics show that 84.6 percent of the students in the class of 2016-17 earned diplomas in four years” (Data, 2019, January 29). However, that leaves 15.4% of students with no high school credential; hence the need for Adult Education.

Since adult learners have competing interests with getting their education, their attendance can be sporadic, and the amount of time they can devote to their education is limited. Even when adults do graduate high school with a credential, in some cases their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills are so low that it impacts their ability to sustain living-wage employment.

Across the total U.S. working age population, ages 16-65, the new data confirm that there is a significant portion of employed adults with low measured skills.

Fourteen percent of the employed population have low literacy skills; 23 percent have low numeracy skills, and 62 percent have low digital problem solving skills.

*(Adult workers with low measured skills: A 2016 update (Rep.). (2016, April 25).*

Adults need access to education throughout their lifetimes. For those who are able, they can pursue post-secondary training to further their education and increase their socioeconomic level. However, for adults with low literacy skills, Adult Basic Education is the opportunity to improve their chances for success in the world, both for themselves and their families.

### **Limitations of Funding and Public Policy**

There has been important legislation passed to support the work of educating adults in the United States. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or W.I.O.A, provides ongoing research and professional development for adult educators. Some of this work involves standards-based curriculum development, career pathways, and best practices for technology and learning. Under this legislation, federal grants are provided to states to deliver instruction in basic skills, high school equivalency, and English language instruction (*Adult Education and Literacy Homepage*, 2019, January 10). However, in an effort to be accountable to taxpayers, the funds allotted are based on annual student level gains as measured by either the Test of Adult Basic Education (T.A.B.E) assessment or the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (C.A.S.A.S.) assessment, which measure academic reading, language, and math



improvement (*Supporting accountability in adult education: The national reporting system support project annual report October 2016–March 2018*). Failure to make progress on these federally-mandated assessments leads to a reduction in federal grant funds to the A.B.E. consortium in the next fiscal year, creating a more problematic budget challenge in a field that is perpetually underfunded.

One obvious solution to this budget rollercoaster would be to fund Adult Basic Education using a more consistent, reliable measure or funding formula. Alleviating the ups and downs of the budget would stabilize a consortium's funding stream, enabling each program to remain fully funded and staffed to provide programming when and where adults need it the most. Establishing a permanent solution to the funding formula would stabilize Adult Basic Education in the United States, eliminate waiting lists in high-population regions, and decrease the low-literacy levels of the working class population.

As of this writing, there is currently a bill that has been introduced into the Minnesota State Legislature that would stabilize the funding formula for Adult Education. The bill, HF 2325, would connect increases in A.B.E. funding to the increases in K-12 funding (H.F. 2325, 2019). There would be a threefold benefit if HF 2325 becomes law: it would eliminate the inconsistency of the budget from year to year, stabilizing the funding stream; it would keep pace with inflation to fully fund staff salaries and benefits, eliminating the need to cut educational staff; and, it would keep programming available to those who need it most, adults with low literacy skills, even in years when attendance hours decrease. Such a positive move in the state legislature would have far-reaching, positive ramifications on adult illiteracy in Minnesota.

### **Benefits to the Profession**

There are multiple benefits to my Capstone Project. The first is filling the curriculum gap for busy educators by providing easily accessible, research-based, culturally responsive curriculum. Utilizing Google Sites, with its familiar applications, to house a multimodal, culturally relevant text set curriculum benefits both high school English teachers and Adult educators, who may have limited time and resources to develop curriculum.

An additional benefit of this work is to bring sorely needed attention to the plight of Adult Basic Education in the United States. By focusing my Capstone research on older adolescent and adult learners, making a research-based connection between the two groups, and developing a project that will contribute to the discourse in the area of text set curriculum development, it will benefit both high school English teachers and Adult educators.

### **Future Extension of the Curriculum Work**

My goal for the future is to present my research findings within the field of Education. I will have ample opportunities to do this via regional and statewide committees and conferences. In addition, sharing my website link with educators via social media, such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, will make it more widely available to educators. Although I have completed four multimodal, culturally relevant text sets and housed them on a Google Sites website for sharing with others, I want to continue to create more text sets and add them to the website. My ultimate goal is to add enough text sets to the Google Sites website to create a year-long curriculum that I will utilize with my adult learners.

Furthermore, I hope to continue to advocate for Adult Education within the larger field of education by sharing my Capstone paper in the Digital Commons, making the research available to other educators. Finally, as I move to the culmination of this work and the completion of my Master's degree, I plan to assist other educators in how to build multimodal, culturally relevant text sets curriculum for their classrooms. I will share my Google Sites website with other educators to give them an exemplar of how to do this work.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 4 I narrated the path that led to this Capstone Project paper and my rationale for my topic, *How can utilizing culturally relevant, multimodal text sets increase critical literacy and result in learner engagement and motivation in older adolescent and adult learner classrooms?* I shared the significance of what I learned about the connection between older adolescent and adult learners, and how multimodal, culturally relevant text sets are highly applicable in both high school and adult education classroom settings. I also included the driving force behind my my Capstone Project work, the need to share curriculum with other educators in both high school and adult education settings. Finally, I provided a rationale for why this work is so essential by introducing my colleagues in academia to the immense needs that are prevalent today in adult education in the United States.

In terms of the research, I emphasized the work of Freire, Ladson-Billings, Paris, and Alim in building a culturally relevant curriculum in order to engage and motivate learners. I emphasized how Multiliteracies theory contributed to how educators should align their curriculum to provide reading instruction in multiple modalities, ensuring that

their students can read all forms of communication in the 21st century. Finally, using Dewey's Constructivist approach to problem-solving, I connected the use of text sets as a collaborative model of meaning-making in the classroom that engages learners to tackle modern problems and think about solutions for them, which is a highly engaging way to learn and motivate older adolescent and adult learners to persist in their education.

Chapter 4 demonstrated the implications of this research work and how it will benefit the field of adult education. Due to the lack of funding, I included a persuasive appeal to educators and policy makers to stabilize the funding formula for adult education, which will provide greater access to adults at any stage in life to increase their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. In doing so, adult learners increase the likelihood that they and their families will have access to living wage employment and the essential resources necessary for inclusion in a higher socioeconomic level.

Finally, Chapter 4 described how vital this work is to the profession of adult education in terms of curriculum sharing, professional development, and research-based exemplars of multimodal, culturally relevant text sets. Because this work is so vital to education, I made the commitment to continue advocating for adult learners, to share my research findings with my colleagues in the field of adult education, and my pledge to continue building curriculum that is culturally relevant to 21st-century learners.

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