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Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Literature for Primary Grade English Learners

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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM AND LITERATURE FOR PRIMARY
GRADE ENGLISH LEARNERS

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in English as a Second Language

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

December 2019

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DEDICATION

To my generous husband who supported and helped me throughout the process of creating my capstone project. Your encouragement motivated me to do my best. I could not have completed my capstone without you. To my parents and my sister who always reached out and provided extra support. Your encouragement and never ending support helped me through the completion of this paper and project.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

“Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books” (Bishop, 1990 p. 2). As an elementary English Learner (EL) teacher, I understand and value the importance of students’ opportunity to see themselves in the literature they are exposed to daily. ELs should have access to a wide variety of texts that highlight many different aspects of their own culture. With regular use of culturally authentic texts, students have the ability to develop a sense of self-belonging and confidence during school. Currently, culturally authentic literature consists of a small percentage of the total amount of published children’s literature, according to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC, 2019). ELs deserve regular access to appropriate culturally authentic literature and to be taught using culturally responsive pedagogy throughout their elementary school career, as students in the cultural majority have access to appropriate cultural materials. I hope to provide more culturally authentic literature for children and integrate culturally responsive methods into daily pedagogy as I implement my capstone project.

My topic question is: How might culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies and reading culturally authentic texts increase student capacity to identify with and

engage in learning for small groups of kindergarten and first grade ELs? My capstone project addresses this topic by developing a specific curriculum unit that addresses the shortage of literature and culturally responsive pedagogy for ELs. Specifically, I will combine reputable curriculum design and culturally responsive frameworks to foster inclusion for ELs in primary grades during small group EL instruction. I will also incorporate literature and pedagogy centered around the rings of culture to encourage students to recognize and take pride in their cultures and other cultures of the world. The primary grade ELs in the project will explore different aspects of their culture and other cultures in texts they read. Hollie (2018) is a proponent for incorporating rings of culture as a foundation of CLR reading and teaching which will be a basis for the curriculum.

To further explain the reasoning for my curriculum, the rest of this chapter discusses my background of teaching ELs and my interest in validating student cultures. I will reiterate the importance of affirming all cultural backgrounds of students, especially in primary grades. I also explain the reasoning for using culturally responsive literature and methods for teaching ELs. Finally, I will give a brief overview of my curriculum development and the contents of Chapters Two, Three, and Four.

My Personal Background

In high school, I discovered my love of languages and cultures as I traveled on mission trips with my church. While traveling, I was fortunate to spend a week in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The living conditions I encountered changed my life, yet the children were so happy and I loved playing with them. Although this was a small section of Juarez, I know that each person has different outlooks on life. I became enthralled with

learning about different cultures because I learned what makes life meaningful is different to everyone. In my senior year, I still didn't know what I wanted to do for a career, but I knew I loved learning about cultures and working with children. So I volunteered with the EL teacher at my elementary school alma mater. I discovered that teaching elementary ELs was the perfect career for me because I could combine my passion for language and working with children. As I completed my degree to become a licenced EL teacher, I discovered the importance of helping students find academic success and being proud of their culture all the time, in school and at home. Since the beginning of my career, I perceived that many students seemed preferred to speak and write in English only; they didn't want to recognize their culture or language during school. I wished they had the confidence to embrace their culture and language and be proud of who they were. Perhaps they felt this way because they wanted to fit in with their peers, or didn't want to be perceived as different. Now that I am completing my masters in EL, I regularly engage in professional development to advocate for students who don't feel comfortable, or simply don't have opportunities to utilize their own language and culture at school. Studies show that cultural knowledge is an essential resource in academic engagement. ELs who are actively engaged in learning affirm their identity and easily invest in academic success (Cummins, Bismilla & Chow, 2005). Over the years as a teacher, most of my students thought the reason they were in EL was because they were not as smart. I reassured students that unlike most other students, they were learning more than one language, which made them exceptional learners. One reason for this attitude of feeling different was that ELs did not always feel affirmed in

school because of their culture. Students feelings of insecurity about their culture inspired me to learn more about how to empower them to use their culture and help engage them in learning.

At my current district, I had the opportunity to be coached in Dr. Sharroky Hollie's Culturally and Linguistically Teaching and Learning (CLRTL) to promote implementation CLR protocols and cultural awareness. He gave several presentations to our district focusing on understanding personal bias and supporting all students. Hollie emphasized the importance of "VABBing" students, or Validating, Affirming, Building, and Bridging. He also emphasized that students should feel a sense of belonging in school to achieve academic, and eventually, occupational success (Hollie, 2015). I also attended a four-day summer institute about the components of culturally responsive teaching and learning. In addition, the workshop focused on understanding cultural behavior and how to validate, affirm, build, and bridge students to be engaged and successful. Because of this training, I am now creating curriculum designed to promote inclusion and self-belonging for the students who need it most, elementary ELs.

Rationale

The 34 ELs at my school in the 2018-19 school year spoke 17 different languages. It is important to incorporate culturally responsive teaching in everyday pedagogy. There is a need for increased awareness about how to appropriately validate, affirm, build, and bridge each student's culture. Students need to see the mirror of themselves, windows to other cultures, and sliding glass doors to understand how different cultures connect to each other. Due to recent understanding of the importance of CLR teaching and learning,

many multicultural children's books are being written (Hollie, 2015). Various organizations publish culturally authentic book lists as well, such as the CCBC. Many of the current culturally responsive literature lists focus on several, but not all cultures. According to Hollie (2015), culture consists of different rings that represent all aspects of a person. The rings are: ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, orientation, age, and socioeconomic. I believe every student should see "mirrors and windows" of all of their rings of culture in every step of their educational journey in schools, from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. CLRTL should also occur during small group and guided reading groups for ELs. This is the focus of my curriculum.

A disclaimer to my project is needed to clarify cultural teaching. It is an impossible undertaking to address the needs of over 17 languages and cultures. I will narrow the implementation of curriculum to small groups or individual ELs to more successfully incorporate appropriate cultural needs of students. I am aware that cultural background, social norms, and identity are unique to every student's social and academic journey. Furthermore, even when teaching students of the same language, ethnicity, or any other cultural element, I cannot expect that one student's cultural background will be the same as another student's. A large portion of my project addresses getting to know each student individually to provide successful inclusion and academic experiences. I cannot fully fathom the extent of what is culturally appropriate or accepted in one culture might be accepted in another culture or even two of the same cultures. While teaching many different cultures in one group, I understand this dilemma. My goal is to use information I gain by getting to know students to utilize appropriate literature that

addresses many of their individual rings of culture: socioeconomic, religious, nationality, gender, sexuality, or ethnicity.

My Capstone Journey

Every student needs to feel love, belonging, and pride of their culture. I teach students who are not VABBed enough during their school day. The best way I can help students feel validated and affirmed would be to author books for every single student. Creating books that represent over 17 cultures of ELs is an impossible task for any individual. “Culturally responsive teaching is making learning authentic for all groups, for example of Asian American students including Filipino, Chinese, or Korean ancestry and how and why these actions and ideas differ for African Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans, and European Americans” (Gay 2015, p.34). With this understanding, I am not able to successfully create books for students of other cultures. So I questioned myself again how to help these students, especially at the primary level: What can I do to validate and affirm the cultures of each and every individual student? In order to VABB students, I learned to look into my own rings of culture to understand myself. This self-exploration helped me see how my own culture co-exists with my students’ culture. Therefore, I can help students understand their own culture by discussing the rings of culture as well as cultural behavior continuums. I can help them recognize all aspects of their culture at school. I also can get to know them well, care about them, and outrageously love them, as is Hollie’s adage (2015). I can integrate appropriate texts that include their rings of culture and cultural norms and use culturally responsive teaching strategies to validate and affirm cultural behaviors and expectations.

Concurrently, I will be explicit in how students can build and bridge their culture to help them succeed in school and occupational career. One of my of my biggest takeaways from the four-day CLR summer institute I attended was that students need outrageous love. Each student needs to be validated and affirmed. My decision to create curriculum that incorporates culturally authentic texts and CLR strategies and will help students feel the love.

Current Project

My curriculum project addresses the following gaps in EL curriculum: lack of culturally authentic texts, teaching strategies that validate, affirm, build, and bridge primary grade ELs culture, and student metacognition about rings of culture to promote a sense of belonging in school. I will begin my project by searching and obtaining appropriate texts for each student's academic and WIDA levels. Then I will use guidelines outlined in Chapter Two to evaluate each book for cultural authenticity pertaining to individual students, and validate, affirm, build, and bridge students. The literature will be used for read alouds and independent reading, then followed up with appropriate comprehension activities.

One of the biggest challenges to my curriculum will be obtaining literature for primary grade ELs due to availability. Research shows there are a growing number of culturally authentic books targeting all grade levels, albeit slow growing (CBCC, 2018). See Chapter Two for additional information about culturally authentic texts. Also, several culturally authentic text rating systems and multicultural book lists exist to guide teachers in the process. Yet, at the elementary level, most of the culturally authentic texts are

intended for read-alouds or upper elementary grades because they are at a higher reading level. While current research emphasizes the importance of culturally authentic texts, as presented in Chapter Two, there is still a deficit in literature geared toward young ELs in kindergarten and first grade intended for guided and independent reading. Most of the recommended texts are meant for teacher read-alouds and not written at levels students can read independently.

Thus, my curriculum project, which will be described fully in Chapter Three, will incorporate the structure of Backward Design curriculum developed by Wiggins and McTighe (2011). Backward Design is a curriculum development process that requires teachers to build units based learning goals and explicitly plan how students will understand, acquire, and transfer those goals. I will facilitate student identity exploration using the rings of culture and cultural continuums to ensure appropriate Backward Design creation. To foster community support of the cultural discussions, I will obtain support from parents and administration. Furthermore, it is worth noting that I will take into consideration the young age of students during the cultural identity exploration. I will use student-friendly versions of ring of cultures graphics and related projects to commence culturally responsive literature and strategies or “protocols”, termed by Hollie (2015). The protocols will be determined by student cultural and academic needs. After completion of cultural identity activities, I will facilitate instruction of district and WIDA standards using culturally authentic texts and CLR protocols. Overall, I hope to provide a culturally responsive environment for students so they feel loved and a sense of belonging during school. I also want to build a personal library of culturally authentic

books for guided and independent reading that were previously not easily accessible for kindergarten and first students. Again, my ultimate goal is to increase the sense of belonging and engagement for kindergarten and first grade ELs by ensuring access to more culturally authentic books and instruction.

Summary and Preview

This chapter explored my personal background and interest in ELs and culture. I discussed the rationale for my project: a need for culturally and developmentally appropriate texts and instructional methods for primary grade ELs. This connects to my topic question: How might culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies and reading culturally authentic texts increase student capacity to identify with and engage in learning for small groups of kindergarten and first grade ELs? I described my journey in creating a curriculum. I also introduced my project, which implements the Backward Design approach to create a curriculum using culturally authentic texts and protocols. In the unit I will be developing, I will start by helping students learn and recognize their own identity. Then I will incorporate district and WIDA standards by using CLR texts and teaching protocols. My hope is to promote a sense of belonging and engagement for primary ELs.

The following chapters of my capstone detail the research, description, and conclusion of the project that addresses my topic question. In Chapter Two, I will explore the current state of culturally authentic texts, the history of culturally and linguistically responsiveness in education, discuss studies about selecting and critiquing culturally authentic texts. Next, I explore the research about CLR instruction. I analyze and provide

examples of strategies proven effective in instruction. Finally, I discuss the importance of EL engagement and identity in relation to culturally authentic texts and strategies. I conclude Chapter Two by discussing studies that show a need for the use of culturally responsive texts and teaching strategies that mirror individual students' cultures in small group instruction and instructional reading levels. In Chapter Three, I describe my project in detail. I start by rationalizing the need for culturally responsive literature and instruction. Next I discuss the foundations for the curriculum: Backward Design, District Standards, REACH curriculum, CLR protocols, and culturally authentic texts. I describe the specific plan and provide examples of strategies. The project school demographics, setting, and participants are also discussed in this chapter. Lastly, Chapter Four consists of my reflections and conclusions about my project and the capstone writing process. I give an overview of the project in the final form. I reflect on my growth from different lenses. Finally I state how the curriculum will benefit EL teachers and the field in general.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

My topic question is: How might culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies and reading culturally authentic texts increase student capacity to identify with and engage in learning for small groups of kindergarten and first grade ELs? The purpose of this capstone project is to create and implement culturally responsive curriculum for small groups of English Learners (ELs) in primary grades. My personal background, purpose, and overview of the curriculum were presented in Chapter One. This literature review examines the rationale for culturally authentic literature, and culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) teaching strategies. The first section of this review analyzes the current state of ethnicity representation in children's literature, the rationale for implementation into curriculum, and methods of selecting CLR children's literature. Then a discussion of the importance of this type of literature of ELs follows. The section concludes with rubric to evaluate culturally authentic literature and other important considerations for selecting culturally authentic literature. The second section examines the history, foundation, and connection to ELs, and definitions of culturally responsive teaching and learning. It also includes descriptions of strategies shown to promote ELs engagement in reading and literacy. The third section of this review investigates the importance of student engagement and identity in EL curriculum. The last section describes a gap in research and availability of culturally authentic texts. A summary of this chapter and preview of chapter three concludes the literature review.

The goal of the curriculum is to increase student engagement and sense of belonging by implementing culturally authentic literature and CLR strategies. Components of the curriculum include: identity exploration, use of appropriate literature for read-alouds and independent reading, CLR strategies, and a student-friendly rubric to assess the quality of culturally authentic texts and guide conversations with students. The literature review is pertinent to this capstone project because the components of the curriculum: use of culturally authentic literature, CLR methods, and consideration of student engagement and identity are considered in this chapter. Also addressed throughout Chapter Two is the need for CLR literature and teaching methods for primary grade ELs. The curriculum attempts to resolve the current gaps in EL instruction: culturally authentic texts, and teaching strategies that validate, affirm, build and bridge primary grade ELs culture. While recognizing the demand to include culturally appropriate literature and pedagogy, a review of pertinent research explores this need.

Culturally Responsive Literature

“When children do not see themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted or negative they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued their society” (Bishop, 1990, p. 2). Culturally authentic literature is essential for the success and motivation of ELs.

Defining culturally authentic literature. Various definitions of high quality culturally responsive literature exist. Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd define quality culturally authentic literature as containing the following characteristics: well portrayed characters that are the same age as the readers, clear plot structure in which children can understand

and relate, and well crafted, smooth, and vivid language (2001). Hollie defines culturally authentic literature as: fiction or nonfiction texts illuminating the authentic cultural experiences of a particular cultural group representing a ring of culture such as religion, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, or geographic location (2015). Furthermore, Koss & Daniel, recognize the rings of culture as well as primary or secondary character development in the story (2015). In this capstone, culturally authentic literature will be defined as culturally authentic texts that accurately represent any particular cultural group's rings of culture and is written in a relatable, appropriate manner and language with a clear plot structure. With a clear definition of culturally authentic texts, the quality and quantity of literature can be examined.

Current state of culturally authentic literature. Several studies report about the volume of culturally authentic children's literature published in the United States. Koss (2015) analyzed 455 children's books in 2012. She found 75% of the main characters in children's literature depict white children, while 15% are African American, 3% are both Asian and Latino, and zero books have main characters that are multiracial or more than one race. This sends a signal to young readers that being white is preferred and the language and culture of white people are more desired than their own culture, if other than white. An additional study by Koss and Daniel (2018), found few published books in 2015 contained words in another language than English. If a student receives EL services or speaks another language at home, rarely or never encountering books in their home language may denounce the importance of their language and culture. The table below

further describes the absence of published children's literature. It was published in 2018 and reports books received by the CCBC.

Year	Number of Books Received at CCBC	African / African Americans		American Indians / First Nations		Asian Pacifics/ Asian Pacific Americans		Latinx	
		By	About	By	About	By	About	By	About
2018	3,644	202	404	38	54	343	312	197	249
2017	3,700	132	355	38	72	279	312	118	218
2016	3,400	94	287	23	55	217	240	104	169
2015	3,400	108	270	19	42	176	113	60	85
2014	3,500	85	181	20	38	129	112	59	66
2013	3,200	69	94	18	34	90	69	49	58
2012	3,600	69	119	6	22	83	76	58	54
2011	3,400	79	123	12	28	76	91	52	58
2010	3,400	102	156	9	22	60	64	55	66
2009	3,000	83	157	12	33	67	80	60	61
2008	3,000	83	172	9	40	77	98	48	79
2007	3,000	77	150	6	44	56	68	42	59
2006	3,000	87	153	14	41	72	74	42	63
2005	2,800	75	149	4	34	60	64	50	76
2004	2,800	99	143	7	33	61	65	37	61
2003	3,200	79	171	11	95	43	78	41	63
2002	3,150	69	166	6	64	46	91	48	94

Table 1. Children's Books By and About People of Color and First/Native Nations Received by the CCBC 2002-2018 .

According to Table 1, In 2018, only 404 of 3,644 books were published about African Americans, 54 about American Indians, 312 about Asian Pacific Americans, and 249 about Latin Americans. The table shows insignificant increase in the amount of minority ethnicity representation in published children's literature over the years. It is also important to note that only four minority groups are included in the table. The many other minority groups are also underrepresented in children's literature (Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2019). Some researchers recognize the reason for the absence of the minority ethnic representation. "The absence of black images in children's literature was birthed from the social structures that slavery imposed. The inaccurate images of African Americans that appeared in literature from 1830-1900 were nurtured by stereotypes, a publishing industry that was not invested in authentic portrayals of African Americans, and lack of understanding" (MacCann, 1998, as cited in Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd, M. A., 2001, p. 812).

Other minority groups are also sparingly represented in children's literature. For example, the CCBC reported that of 686 books reported mid-year in 2017, characters were more likely to be dinosaurs or animals than American Indian or Asian/Pacific American children. Additionally, there were other misrepresented minority groups such as females and children with disabilities (Horning, Lingren, Schliesman, & Tyner, 2018). These statistics describe the current dilemma of under representation and misrepresentation of all minority groups, especially ELs. To ensure a successful

academic experience for ELs, they need to be fairly and accurately portrayed in all texts students encounter at school.

Importance of culturally authentic literature for ELs. Culturally authentic texts are essential for academic success and engagement of ELs. Ebe (2010) conducted a study about assessment of ELs using culturally authentic versus non-culturally authentic texts. The results of the study indicated that students made more high quality miscues and were able to retell in more detail when assessed using culturally authentic texts. When assessed using non-culturally authentic texts, they made more basic errors and struggled to retell texts they couldn't relate to. The results of her study exemplify the importance of using culturally authentic texts for assessment as well as instruction. Students at the project school are assessed using a district mandated collection of texts. If they don't connect to the texts they read, their progress and reading level might not be accurately documented. Koss and Daniel (2018) report that students should be exposed to many different texts of a particular cultural as well. Additionally, using a variety of culturally authentic texts with ELs helps them learn about their world. Reading about other cultures besides their own can increase their sense of belonging. Including culturally authentic texts in daily instruction is an important factor in validating and affirming students' culture.

Selecting literature. When selecting culturally authentic literature, it can help to use a rubric or guiding questions. Studies agree rubrics that include individual student cultural identity and their interests in the themes or characters are useful to identify culturally authentic texts. The rubric below is advantageous for several reasons. First, it is

student-friendly. It empowers students by allowing them to rate the books they read. It allows for student autonomy; they can have the power to rate and choose what books they want to read. Secondly, it includes student friendly elements of rings of culture. Hollie (2015) states that culturally authentic books must include several rings of culture: religion, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, or geographic location. Because the following rubric includes many elements of culturally authentic texts, it is an appropriate guide for conversations with primary grade ELs about the texts they read.

Are the characters in the story like you and your family?

Just like us Not at all like us

4 3 2 1

Have you ever lived in or visited places like those in the story?

YesNo

4 3 2 1

Could this story take place this year?

YesNo

4 3 2 1

How close do you think the main characters are to you In age?

Very closeNot close at all

4 3 2 1

Does the story have main characters who are boys (for boy readers)?

Girls (for girl readers)?

YesNo

4 3 2 1

Do the characters talk like you and your family?

Yes				No
4	3	2	1	
How often do you read stories like this one?				
Often				Never
4	3	2	1	
Have you ever had an experience like the one described In this story?				
Yes				No
4	3	2	1	

Figure 1. Cultural Relevance Rubric (adapted from Ebe, 2010 & Hollie 2015)

Additionally, some guiding questions to ask when evaluating texts are: Does the book accurately portray culture by being written and illustrated by someone who shares the culture represented in the book? Does the student share cultural markers with the main character, such as race, ethnicity, or religion, is of the same age and gender identity, and talks in a similar way? Has the student lived in or visited places similar to the setting of the book and had experiences similar to those in the book? (Ebe, 2010). Asking these questions is key to identifying appropriate types of culturally authentic texts.

Categories of culturally authentic texts. There are different types of texts to be aware of when searching for culturally authentic literature. In this capstone, the ideal type is referred to as culturally authentic. Other terms that have been used to signify culturally authentic texts are *culturally relevant* and *culturally specific*. It has been widely accepted in the field that students benefit most from culturally authentic texts (Ebe, 2010; Hollie, 2018; Koss and Daniel, 2017). Furthermore, there are three divisions of texts that include different levels of cultural appropriateness: authentic, generic, and neutral. First, culturally authentic texts portray the authentic cultural experiences of a particular group.

The rings of culture for a group are accurately and thoroughly depicted. Again, this is the desired type for student use. The next category is culturally generic texts, which are not ideal for instruction. They feature characters of various racial identities yet the plot, characters, and illustrations include few accurate and/or superficial details. They tend to focus on popular cultural values but substitute in diverse characters. Many culturally generic texts might mistakenly be termed as “multicultural” because of the inclusion one-dimensional characters of a minority ethnicity, but are not truly authentic. Lastly, culturally neutral texts feature characters of ethnic minority but consist of traditional themes, plots, and/or characterizations. Culturally neutral texts should be avoided because they are based on race, which is not a ring of culture. Determining the category of texts for instructional use is important, as is recognizing bias.

Bias. Using the criteria and rankings described above is a first step in determining culturally authentic literature. Another factor to consider is bias in literature.

Derman-Sparks (2013) suggests several measures to ensure children’s literature is free from racial bias. First, we should examine the illustrations for stereotypes, tokenisms, and invisibility from minority cultures like Latino women portrayed as “earth mothers” or poor people being shown as needy. Second, review the storyline for bias in relationships between characters. Protagonists should be well developed and represent many rings of cultural identity. Vocabulary in the text can misrepresent cultures as well. Words like savage and superstitious can be insinuated to whole groups of people in culturally generic and neutral texts. Finally, bias can stem from the year of publication and author’s background or perspective. Literature with a published date after 1970 began to improve

in terms of cultural authenticity (Derman-Sparks, 2013). Another consideration of culturally authentic texts is inclusion of social justice themes. These themes could contain engaging plot to increase student motivation and sense of belonging.

Social justice. Using texts to explore social justice issues can increase student motivation to learn about the world and express their feelings. It can also increase comprehension because students are engaged in texts. Billings (1992) conducted a study and noted that teachers who implement inclusion curriculum featuring issues of race and culture truly motivate students to learn. Providing authentic texts for students to see their identities reflected in books fosters cultural competence and contributes to engagement. Social justice books are also motivating and can be used effectively in the primary grades. Souto-Manning (2009) and Husband (2018) conducted separate studies to encourage students in grades K-2 to examine segregation and discrimination using culturally authentic and multilingual literature. Both authors recognize the importance of using a variety of culturally authentic texts, articles, and CLR teaching strategies to foster success and enthusiasm for reading and learning. Examination of multiple viewpoints is also necessary for racial instruction at the primary level.

Studies indicate other positive aspects of including social justice topics at primary level. Ching (2005) observed the importance of examination of power over characters in multicultural literature. In addition to recognizing social justice topics, other factors need to be taken into consideration, such as understanding background knowledge of power character have in texts. Husband (2018) considered reasons why social justice literature

should be included in primary grade instruction: to recognize implicit bias and stereotypes to develop sensitivity to injustices in student lives and broad society.

Summary of culturally authentic literature. All in all, the culturally authentic literature portion of the this review affirms the significance of using authentic texts with ELs to validate and affirm their self-worth. It also defines culturally authentic texts as accurately representing a ring of culture written in a relatable, appropriate manner and language with a clear plot structure. Using culturally authentic texts to engage and motivate students becomes more effective when paired with culturally responsive teaching.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Discussion so far suggests that use of culturally authentic texts with primary grade ELs is critical to student motivation and success. Moreover, the use of texts must accompany culturally responsive instructional support and protocols. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) has been developed throughout the decades and include reading, comprehension, vocabulary, technology, peer collaboration, and parental involvement, as we will see in the following sections.

Definitions of culturally responsive teaching. Many definitions and variations of culturally responsive teaching/and or pedagogy have been developed in recent decades. Gay defines CLR teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more authentic and effective for them” (2013, p. 31). Hollie defines culturally responsive teaching as teaching in a technical, conceptual, and metaphorical

manner, all centered around validating, affirming, building, and bridging students (2018, p. 27). For the time being, we will simply assume Hollie's definition.

History of culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Several contributors have developed the concept of CRT over time. For instance, Ladson-Billings recognized a need for CRT for African American students in the 1980s. She defined CRT as “empowering students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical references to convey knowledge, impart skills, and change attitudes” (1995, p. 314). Gay (2000) contributed to the field with the addition of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). She concurs using prior knowledge and experiences make learning encounters authentic and effective for students. Additional research by Paris and Alim (2014) offered sustaining pedagogy as “supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers” (2014, p. 86). Furthermore, they question the practice of simply making curriculum relevant does not simply affirm students' backgrounds. They coined Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP), which aligns with other claims from researchers who advocate to utilize pedagogy with social justice issues that are pertainable to students. Hollie contributed to the field by adding culturally and linguistically responsiveness (CLR) as “validating and affirming home culture and language for the purposes of building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academia and mainstream society” (2018, p. 27). He explored the idea of situational appropriateness as transferring cultural behaviors between different social and academic situations. Many

years of researchers exploring different aspects of CRT have led to a strong foundation calling for educators to implement daily CLR instruction to empower students.

Foundation of CLT. CLT is rooted in the concept of understanding individual student cultural behaviors in the classroom and at home as a foundation of teaching and learning. Affirming students' cultural behaviors and norms is necessary to build a foundation of literacy engagement and success (Sharma & Christ, 2012; Hollie, 2015, 2018). Educators must extend their teaching practice to validate and affirm familiar cultural behaviors and incorporate quality authentic literature and pedagogy. According to Hollie (2018), students exhibit many common cultural behaviors in school. They are listed as behaviors of the underserved/ behaviors of school culture: kinesthetic/egocentric, cooperative/competitive, subjective/objective, relational/linear, dynamic attention span/pragmatic attention span, immediacy/distance, spontaneous/prompted. These behaviors fall on a continuum as well. VABBing these behaviors students exhibit during school is culturally responsive teaching. A foundational understanding of how to validate and affirm the underserved behaviors and build and bridge school behaviors sets up students for a successful learning environment in the classroom. In this regard, students need to feel validated and affirmed in all aspects of learning, including instruction, literature, and behavior management. It also means to recognize and support positive concepts and events that historical institutional knowledge, and media, have made negative about non-dominant cultures and languages (Hollie, 2015). Historically, students have been reprimanded or told their behavior is disrespectful and disruptive. In reality, these behaviors are often cultural. For example,

blurting in class could be thought of as disrespectful. In some cultures, the overlap conversation style is socially acceptable. Other cultures use turn-taking during conversation. A student who was raised with an overlap conversation style where blurting or interrupting are accepted at home, could be misunderstood by a teacher who values the turn-taking conversation style. This difference could lead to a breakdown in communication and reprimanding from the teacher. Just as important as validating and affirming cultural behavior is building and bridging. Building and bridging focuses on school culture or traditional behaviors. These behaviors are reinforced with activities that require expected behaviors in traditional academic settings and in mainstream cultural environments. The ultimate goal is to teach students situational appropriateness about when to express cultural behaviors. VABBing students with CLR strategies and literature increases engagement.

CLR strategies for ELs. There are many different CLR strategies for text comprehension, acquiring academic and social vocabulary, responding to literature and read-alouds, and social interaction appropriate for kindergarten and first grade ELs. The following concepts, which were proposed by several researchers working on culturally responsive instruction, can be used to validate, affirm, build, and bridge students.

Knowing students. How to teach ELs in a culturally responsive manner is equally as important as what to teach. Using instructional strategies to validate and affirm student behavior and understanding their identity is a basis for all CLR instruction. Sharma and Christ (2017) note several strategies to get to know students to provide quality instruction. First, conduct interviews one-on-one with each student. Inquire about their

experiences, families, and cultural identities. Second, create personal stories using technology. For example, they can create all-about-me videos of their own cultural stories. Third, students can search the library for books they feel are culturally authentic and create electronic pins of the books. Additionally, Hollie (2015) recommends other techniques to get to know students and their identities, such as the Five Finger Intro where students trace their hand and write about different aspects of themselves on each finger.

Dual-serviced students. Along with knowing students' cultural background and identity, some EL students receive dual services. Some common types of dual serviced students are EL service & special education and EL service & academic intervention services. Students who receive dual service must be thoughtfully monitored to be sure that they are being VABBed in all aspects of their daily instruction, especially when receiving multiple special services.

Home language. ELs benefit from the use of home language in CLR pedagogy. One way to include home language in instruction is to have students create books or write reflections in their native language to share with other students (Cummins, Bismilla & Chow, 2005). Students also can use their home language when responding to and discussing texts. Monolingual teachers can be effective facilitators for incorporating home language use into literature instruction as well. Students can discuss texts and vocabulary with each other in a home language (Iddings, Risko, & Rampulla, 2009). Another way students can use their home language is family involvement. Students can use home language to share their learning with family members or caretakers. They can

read and discuss bilingual texts with parents in their home language too. They can also create journals and shared experiences with family members in their home language. The backpack project exemplifies this strategy. In this project, students read a variety of texts about a topic at school and at home. They discuss the topic and make connections to home language and culture with families (Giroir, Romero Grimaldo, Vaughn & Roberts 2015).

Graphic organizers and sentence frames. There are a myriad of different purposes for incorporating graphic organizers into literature instruction (Roy, 2105; Hollie, 2018). Some ways to use them are: before reading prediction strategies, during reading note taking, after reading comprehension checks, and vocabulary instruction. Some examples of graphic organizers effective for ELs are bubble maps, venn diagrams, flow charts, part to whole maps, and personal thesaurus. Another way to build and bridge to ensure successful academic instruction is the use of sentence stems and/or fill-in-the-blank close reading activities. Providing students with a sentence or paragraph frame to aid in their speaking and writing productive language skills can help them organize their thoughts. Using fill-in-the-blank sentences while reading helps students practice fluency and vocabulary.

Providing choice. Student autonomy and choice constitute another critical aspect of CLR instruction. If students are provided opportunities to read books of their choice and respond in their language of choice, they will improve their literacy skills in English and home language(s). Choice is also connected to identity: once students recognize their identities, they will be able to choose books that interest them that include aspects of

identity. Giving students choice in their selection of literature also promotes engagement. Another important aspect of giving students choice is connecting them with experts such as librarians to help them find books that interest them. Also extending choice in ways to respond to texts, paragraphs to summarize, and topics to study will provide additional motivation for students (Guthrie, 2004; Bang-Jenson, 2010; and Roy, 2015).

Incorporation of the above techniques helps ensure engagement of ELs at the primary level.

Engagement and Identity in CLR Instruction

This section presents the importance of engagement and identity of ELs and the connection to CRT. Researchers agree when students identify with characters and concepts in high-interest and challenging books, they are more likely to be engaged in texts and therefore read more books in general. Students also thrive with opportunities to engage with peers in discussions about the text. As previously mentioned, promoting the use of home language in written and spoken responses to culturally authentic literature allows students to invest in learning and therefore be engaged. (DeLeon, 2002, as cited in Koss and Daniel, 2007; Cho, Xu, & Rhodes, 2010; Cummins, Bismilla, & Chow, 2005). Reading authentic books that show children that they have power and can increase engagement when reading.

Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) also concur when students are immersed in interesting and wonderful books, they can find the support for defining themselves as individuals and as well as begin to explore their developing roles within their families and communities. High-interest literature allows students to be immersed in culture and

connect what they read to their identity and define themselves. Identity is a crucial aspect of CLR instruction. Learning the identity of students and yourself can lead to effective instruction.

Identity. The rings of culture consist of different aspects that make up a cultural identity. The graphic below displays the different rings of culture described in different types of texts: culturally authentic, culturally generic, and culturally neutral. When used



Figure 2: Rings of Culture

appropriately, the rings of in culturally authentic literature promote engagement (Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning, n.d).

According to Hollie (2015, 2018), there are seven separate rings of culture: Ethnic, orientation, national, socioeconomic, religious, gender, and age. Ethnic culture refers to heritage: practices and traditions passed down from generations. It is not to be mistaken for nationality, which is exclusively determined by country. Furthermore, race is not a ring of culture because it is an invented social construct. It is not connected to ethnic or nationality. Socioeconomic refers to class, such as middle class. Recognizing each ring of culture is essential in texts is crucial for cultural authenticity. ELs need to see

their identity in the literature they are exposed to validate and affirm their culture.

Affirming student identity by recognizing their home culture promotes engagement. The next section of the review explores the need for more research in several areas of CLR teaching and learning, including literature written for ELs at the primary level.

Gaps In Literature

As the previous sections have shown, there have been several investigations on the topic of culturally authentic literature and CLR teaching methods. Researchers agree the need for culturally responsive texts and teaching methods is vital for successful academic experiences. Research also indicates lack of available culturally authentic literature, especially for primary grade ELs. Culturally authentic literature in basal and leveled readers are not widely found (Hollie, 2015). More research and studies promoting the development of CLR texts and resources for primary grades would also promote a sense of belonging. Students in kindergarten and first grade deserve the opportunity of “seeing themselves mirrored” in the books they read from the start of reading instruction.

The literature review presented above suggests reading culturally authentic literature and using CLR strategies such as interaction with peers and use of home language helps build a solid foundation to engage young learners in literacy. This is especially important for ELs and gives them a reason to be strong readers to make a difference in the world. Unfortunately, research shows that authentic literature that represents the cultures of many ELs is not easily accessible. My curriculum project provides the opportunity for students to see themselves mirrored in their daily curriculum by using texts they can relate to. I use examples of culturally authentic texts that

addresses several rings of culture in my students. Getting to know my students allowed me to specifically design the curriculum to meet the needs of my small group.

Summary

In this literature review, many aspects of CLRTL were explored. The first section analyzed the ethnicity representation of current children's literature, the rationale and methods of selecting CLR children's literature, and the role of bias and social justice in culturally authentic literature. The second section examined the history, definitions, and examples of culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies to engage ELs. Some of the strategies are: considering student identity while selecting texts and strategies; use of first language; and organizing student output (verbal and written) with graphic organizers and sentence frames. The third section of this review investigated the importance of student engagement and identity in EL curriculum. Finally, the need for more CLR resources and research was presented.

The review provided in this chapter points to a gap in culturally authentic texts available at the primary level. My topic question is: Might culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies and reading culturally authentic texts increase student capacity to identify with and engage in learning for small groups of kindergarten and first grade ELs? My project is to develop engaging and appropriate curriculum for EL small groups in kindergarten and first grade. I will use social justice topics and CLR protocols throughout the curriculum to foster engagement and excitement for reading. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the rationale for my project. A description of the study school and students (including language academic background) will also be provided. I will detail the

structural frameworks of the project and district standards. I will explain the process of getting to know students and VABing as a foundation for all text selection and instructional protocols. I will describe the process of using elements of CLR protocols and use of formative assessments. After all, this literature review has reiterated that reading and learning with culturally authentic texts and pedagogy that act as mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors into student culture will promote student success and engagement.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

Throughout my twelve years as an EL teacher, I have become aware of the critical relationship between cultural identity and education. Too often, English Learners (ELs) may not see their culture and identity in their school environment or daily curriculum. A lack of representation of culture and identity in school could teach students they are not valued and do not belong. In Chapter One, I highlighted my passion for celebrating each student's specific cultural identities. I also discussed the rationale for my project: a lack of culturally and developmentally appropriate texts and instruction for primary grade ELs. I described my journey in creating a curriculum to meet the specific cultural needs of ELs. I also outlined my project, which implements the Backward Design approach to writing curriculum, incorporates culturally authentic texts and protocols, and meets district and WIDA standards.

In Chapter Two, I reviewed the research about the history of culturally authentic texts and Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) teaching. Specifically, I discussed the importance, foundation, and examples of culturally relevant literature. I highlighted the background, principles, and pertinent examples of CLR teaching. I gave examples of effective CLR pedagogy for small-group EL instruction. I found that most research agrees culturally authentic literature exists for read alouds and whole class discussions, creating a gap in research and available literature for primary grade ELs in small group instruction and independent reading. Finally, I noted the lack of authentic

literature and research targeting primary grade ELs. Because of this need, my curriculum will target the specific group of kindergarten and first grade ELs during small group EL instruction.

Chapter Three addresses my topic question: How might culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies and reading culturally authentic texts increase student capacity to identify with and engage in learning for small groups of kindergarten and first grade ELs? My capstone project is to develop a curriculum that will be based on the idea that using culturally relevant literature and pedagogy leads to engagement and feeling of inclusion for ELs. My project goal is to implement culturally responsive literature and pedagogy in small groups of ELs in kindergarten and first grade. Additionally, I will implement the framework of Backward Design, CLR protocols, culturally authentic literature, and the project school's district standards. As I mentioned above, I am creating my curriculum to validate, affirm, build, and bridge the cultural and identity of ELs during small group instruction.

Rationale

As I indicated in Chapter Two, there is a demand for culturally responsive literature and instruction for ELs, especially in the small group setting. Currently, many ELs at the kindergarten and first grade level are serviced using the pullout model. If they are at risk for reading in addition to receiving EL services, they may be pulled for other reading intervention programs such as Reading Corps, Reading Recovery, or Title One reading intervention. During daily reading intervention instruction, students are exposed to a variety of text genres, but many of which may not represent their own culture. Hollie

(2018) provides a list of culturally relevant books for grades K–2; however, the majority of those books are intended for read aloud instruction, and not written at reading levels of the specified young learners.

A similar issue exists at the school where the current project will be implemented (henceforth “project school”). There is simply not enough culturally relevant literature available for students for students to see themselves “mirrored” in. As mentioned in Chapter One, I recognize that I cannot fully understand other cultures. Also, more than one cultural group will be represented in the small groups which means the students will have different needs in terms of cultural representation. I recognize that it is an impossible undertaking to fully represent one single culture in works of literature. My goal is to expose students to numerous forms of culture through books and CLR pedagogy. It is essential that students see mirrors of their own culture and windows into the culture and lives of others. Recognizing this concept, I will utilize multiple books and resources representing various views of any particular culture. When designing the curriculum, I will also take into consideration the current classroom literacy requirements of the project district.

The curriculum framework for the district is balanced literacy, which includes implementation of Reading Workshop, Writer’s Workshop and word studies. The Reader’s Workshop portion of balanced literacy focuses on teaching a skill such as “readers monitor their own reading,” in a short mini-lesson while the rest of the reading block is spent practicing the new skill during independent reading time using classroom libraries. As stated in my literature review, there is a demand for culturally relevant

literature and pedagogy for ELs. Although the CLR researchers and the instructional framework are very effective, there is still a gap of relevant literature for student use in kindergarten and first grade. This is often true in small group EL instruction, interventions, and independent reading time during readers workshop. There is also a need for engaging curriculum to VABB students' cultural behaviors. Thus, I will combine a variety of different curriculum frameworks to implement my project for small groups of ELs.

Framework

The curriculum combines several frameworks to best meet the needs of small group ELs. First, the curriculum uses the Backward Design framework of Wiggins and McTighe (2011). Within the Backward Design framework, I incorporate the academic content of a literacy power standard developed by the project district. I also use components of National Geographic REACH, a researched curriculum designed for elementary ELs. Finally, I use WIDA performance definitions to differentiate content in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The activities and resources included in the curriculum to implement the standards are in alignment with Hollie's definitions and examples of culturally authentic texts and protocols, as detailed in Chapter Two. A description of each component of the framework is described below.

Backward design. The basic design of the curriculum is based off the work of Wiggins and McTighe (2011). The central idea behind their curriculum framework is Backward Design. Backward Design curriculum is rooted in identifying the desired outcomes of a curriculum and evidence to show that learning has occurred. This is

different, or backward from typical curriculum design, where instruction is focused on presenting content to move through curriculum. In Backward Design, student acquisition and application of objectives are developed before content. To successfully implement a Backward Design curriculum, educators must consider what it looks like when students understand the learning targets. Central to the design are the terms transfer, meaning, and acquisition. I use the following definitions when referring to the terms. To transfer means to use a learned concept in one way and apply it to a different context other than its original use. Meaning is an idea acquired from analyzing learning as a result of inferencing information. Acquisition applies to the final stage of Backward Design. It is learning declarative and procedural knowledge (Wiggins and McTighe, 2011).

There are three main stages of Backward Curriculum Design. The first stage is “Desired Results.” In this phase, the educator identifies the goals and objectives of the unit and how students will understand and acquire these objectives. Essential questions are developed in the first stage as well. The next stage is “Evidence.” The evidence stage requires determination of which measures will be used to show how students made meaning of the objectives. Students must also be able to transfer the new knowledge. I use the power standard rubrics developed by the district as evidence to how students make meaning and transfer the desired results. “Learning Plan” is the third and last stage of the curriculum. In this stage, the activities and experiences are sequenced to meet individual needs of students and align with stages one and two. I include activities from Hollie’s recommended list of protocols for vocabulary and literacy for the learning plan stage. The protocols are modified to meet the individual needs of students in a small

group setting to ensure receptive and productive content is comprehensible. I adapt CLR strategies with intentionality. CLR is rooted in addressing the individual cultural needs of students and adapting instruction to those cultures as needed. Student progress is monitored by using the formative assessments from phase two.

In my curriculum, I examine the desired results by incorporating the district's literacy power standards, WIDA performance definitions and can do descriptors for individual student language acquisition levels. The power standards are specially created standards that include additional elements such as learning targets and essential questions.

District power standards. The teachers and staff in the project district created literacy and math power standards in 2017. Power standards are a select number of standards in which students will be assessed in the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs). The goal of the district power standards is to place student learning first with academic content to be developed based on “Big Ideas” and “Essential Questions” which drive the district-created standards. The concepts of “Big Ideas” and “Essential Questions” align with the guidelines of Backward Design because they require educators to identify the concepts, skills, and cognitive processes of each standard. Additionally, the district standard development team created rubrics to measure the degree of the learning required to meet the power standard. These rubrics ensure the curriculum meets the expectations of the standard. Along with using the power standards, I consider the academic level of each EL using the language acquisition levels created by WIDA.

WIDA performance definitions and can do descriptors. WIDA created can-do descriptors for grade levels: kindergarten, first, second & third, and fourth & fifth at the elementary level. Each age group includes a description of student work expected at each language acquisition level, one through six. It also details four language modalities: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. WIDA has designated three different types of expected language for each of the grade and language levels. They are: recount (retelling and discussing fiction); explain (non fiction); and persuasion. In addition, there are receptive (listening and speaking) and expressive (speaking and writing) language definitions for grade level K-12. Each receptive and expressive language descriptors contain descriptions of level one through five. All levels are broken into language area of discourse level, sentence level, and word/phrase level. My curriculum utilizes level four descriptions of recounting information and corresponds with the district power standard of retelling stories and recounting details will be the standard of the curriculum. (WIDA, 2016). Now that the WIDA level and power standard have been determined, I utilize REACH curriculum, culturally authentic literature, and CLR protocols to implement the curriculum.

REACH curriculum. REACH is a research based curriculum created by National Geographic/Cengage. It is designed for elementary ELs, in grades K-6. The goal of the curriculum is to foster language development using culturally authentic literature to promote engagement. Other components of the curriculum include academic oral language, written, and vocabulary development. All units and texts relate to content areas of social studies, science, and literacy.

Culturally authentic pedagogy. I incorporate the works of CLR developer, Dr. Sharroky Hollie, as discussed in Chapters One and Two. The specific protocols used in the curriculum are from the categories: community building, response/discussion, vocabulary, movement, and literacy. For example, the included protocol “Campfire Discussions” is engaging for ELs because it allows student interaction and use of home language when responding to literature (Hollie, 2015). In “Campfire Discussion” students write responses to literature on post-its, place it on a pretend campfire, then choose another student’s post it to share. Now that I have outlined the foundational framework of the curriculum, I will discuss the sequence of the project.

The Project

I commence my project by stating the purpose and background information from the literature review. I describe the components of the curriculum including Backward Design, district power standards, CLR pedagogies, WIDA rubrics and National Geographic REACH curriculum for elementary ELs. Next, I provide a description of learning goals and essential questions in accordance with the curriculum design philosophy. I further explain that the lesson is consistent with CLR pedagogies by promoting engagement and creating a sense of belonging. It aligns with grade one level four performance definitions in receptive and expressive language and can do descriptors. In accordance with the Backward Design framework, I develop the desired results of my unit using the project district rubric and performance definition rubric. I chose Power Standard Two for first grade to be the learning object for my unit: “Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting

details and ideas.” The district-created “essential questions” for this standard are: “1. How do you retell a story? What important information should be included when retelling the story? 2. What are key details? How do we identify and use key details to help retell the story? 3. What is the central message/main idea/lesson of the story? How do key details help me understand the central message/main idea/lesson?” The district also created “Big Ideas” which correspond to goals in stage one of Backward Design. The big ideas for my curriculum unit are: “1. Retelling a story is restating the story in your own words (*could include beginning, middle, and end) 2. Key details are pieces of information that are important to the story that could include characters, setting, plot 3. The central message is the big idea/lesson that the author wanted you to know.” These three big ideas are the foundation of understanding the essential questions. This information is taken from the internal intranet of the study school. I chose this standard because it is included in the first grade standard-based report card as well as addressed in can do descriptors. The WIDA level four can-do descriptors of the curriculum are: students will recount by: Listening: identifying characters, plots, and settings from oral stories; finding details in illustrated narrative or informational text read aloud. Speaking: restating information with some details; summarizing a series of familiar events or routines. Reading: identifying the main topic of texts; ordering illustrations based on series of events based on texts read aloud. Writing: Student will recount by: and producing a series of related sentences from transition word starters ex: first, next, last; describing events first hand or from media (WIDA Can Do Descriptors, 2016).

With the power standards and WIDA can do descriptors established, I include an overview of the essential components of the unit in a chart. The chart includes the culturally authentic read alouds, objectives, protocols, graphic organizers, family connections, and assessments. Next, I include daily instructions and learning plans, including CLR activities to implement the objectives. The curriculum consists of four weeks of 30 minute small group sessions. The sessions are implemented in the EL room during small group instruction. The first week of the unit includes student cultural identity and exploration. The opening ice breaking and cultural identity activity is Five Finger Introduction. In this activity students trace their hand and write aspects about themselves on each finger. The second week continues community building and practicing the objective of plot. Week Three includes application of plot to new books and learnings as well as introducing message. Finally, week four includes formative assessments and writing about plot and message. Each lesson and objective includes the use of CLR protocols, literature, and graphic organizers to guide students through understanding the concept of identity and culture. Some protocols to use with literature I use are: HIT (Hilarious Illustration Time), and partner reading (Hollie, 2018). Another incorporation of CLR curriculum is VABBing cultural behaviors by using literature and strategies that validate and affirm cultural values while building and bridging to set students up for academic success. I will use a social justice theme of “Families are different around the world” related to the power standard of retelling. I read grade level appropriate culturally authentic texts with the students. I will incorporate a variety of culturally authentic texts based on the principles of cultural relevance that I highlighted in

my literature review. The texts included in the curriculum are: Mystery Bottle, by Kristin Balouch; A Different Pond, by Bao Phi; Families in Many Cultures, by Heather Adamson; Drawn Together, by Minh Lee; and various instructional level texts that students choose to read. I analyzed and ranked each text for cultural responsiveness. I used rubrics highlighted in the literature review to guide determination of cultural authenticity. For example, I examined the text for relatability to students. Does it connect to any of their rings of culture? Is it interesting? Does it relate to a social justice issue that matters to students? This sample list of questions from Chapter Two will help me determine authenticity. Finally, I used CLR strategies to implement stage three of backward design. The strategies include community building, responding, movement, vocabulary, and literacy protocols. I included strategies proven effective for engaging EL small group instruction. A successful implementation of my curriculum requires understanding of students and their cultural backgrounds, so the strategies I used may not be the same as another teacher who is implementing the curriculum.

Setting and Participants

This project takes place in an outer ring suburb of St. Paul. There are 658 students in grades K-5 at the project school. 5% of students are ELs. The 2019-20 EL caseload (number of students receiving EL services) is 31. Of those students, 13 different home languages are spoken. The highest number of spoken languages are: Vietnamese (9 students), Hmong (5 students), Spanish (5 students), and Chinese (4 students). Students are screened for EL when another language is indicated on the Minnesota Language Survey upon enrollment. The kindergarteners are assessed using the in-house assessment

called MODEL and grades 1-5 are assessed for EL using the WIDA screener, both tests developed by WIDA. This assessment takes place during the first weeks of the school year or when a new student enrolls. 1.5 FTE licensed EL teachers serviced the student at the project school. Finally, the WIDA overall levels of the first grade students of which the curriculum is dev students are 1: Beginning and 2: Emerging. I chose to use WIDA level 4 as a target because students have made a lot of growth since the last ACCESS test.

Timeline

Planning, research, and writing of Chapter One, Two, and Three took place during the summer of 2019. The EL caseload and service schedule for 2019-20 was determined in mid-September. Stages one and two of Backward Design was created once the caseload was determined. Stage one: Desired Results, stems from the standards of the district. Stage two: Evidence, was created by using rubrics from district power standards, Reach, and WIDA. The culturally authentic read alouds mentioned above were purchased in October and November. I assessed the texts and they meet criteria for being culturally authentic. The final stage of Backward Design Learning Plan, was developed in October and November. The Learning plan includes daily objectives, vocabulary, assessments and/or family connections. Final reflections were written in mid-November. The project was assessed by professors and my content expert in November of 2019 to determine effectiveness and relevance. I also self-assessed my project to meet the needs of individual students. In terms of effectiveness, the project is designed to be modified by the user to meet the needs of individual cultures of students. The final project was completed in late November of 2019.

Integrity/Ethical Considerations

Throughout the project, I preserve student integrity by not using the name of the district or school where the project takes place. Because CLR is based on individual cultures, the students of which this curriculum was based from remain unmentioned and anonymous.

Summary

My topic questions is: How might culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies and reading culturally authentic texts increase student capacity to identify with and engage in learning for small groups of kindergarten and first grade ELs? My project is to develop and implement a CLR-based curricular unit and culturally authentic texts for small groups of English Learners in kindergarten and first grade. The rationale for the project is the need for more culturally responsive material for ELs in small group instruction and independent reading in the classroom. Research shows that students are not engaged and invested in learning when they don't see themselves in the curriculum, which is the basis for including CLR texts and protocols. My project will stem from several curriculum frameworks including Backward Design by Wiggins and McTighe (2011), CLR developer Hollie (2018), the school district power standards, REACH, and WIDA. Students will be assessed using formative assessment based on district standards and WIDA rubrics. The project will be completed during the summer and fall of 2019. Chapter Four includes a conclusion and reflection of the curriculum. I will use formative assessments based on the standard and rubric developed by the district to determine the level of meeting expectations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

Recognizing the need for culturally responsive teaching and learning, I worked to create a curriculum to address my topic question “How might culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies and reading culturally authentic texts increase student capacity to identify with and engage in learning for small groups of kindergarten and first grade ELs?” To start, I conducted a literature review seeking out relevant articles, data, and research in the topic of culturally authentic texts and literature. In my review, I found information confirming the rationale to incorporate CRT in daily instruction. It was confirmed that using CRT and culturally authentic texts increased student engagement and connections to learning. Furthermore, I noted family involvement and use of home language increases connections and parental support. Using this information, I created a curriculum that addresses many facets of instruction ELs should receive in the classroom and EL room. I used the Backward Design curriculum to incorporate district standards, WIDA performance definitions, and REACH curriculum for ELs. The curriculum also included CRT methods, protocols, and culturally authentic texts.

This chapter consists of final products and reflections of writing the curriculum. First of all, I summarize my curriculum and reflect on how this project and course impacted me as a researcher, writer, and teacher. Next, I will revisit the literature review and reflect on the research that had the greatest impact on my project. I will also discuss

the implications of my project including: the importance of CRT, give teachers the tools they need to truly know their students their culture, and provide examples of culturally authentic texts. I will discuss the limitations of my project such as implementation, consideration of target students, and length of curriculum. Then I discuss future studies and address gaps in resources. Finally I present how my project and paper will be shared within the profession and why it is beneficial.

The Final Project

My overall goal of the curriculum was to provide ELs access to culturally appropriate strategies that meet district standards and WIDA performance objectives. Meanwhile, I provide engaging and culturally responsive teaching methods.

My final project consists of several sections: Purpose and Background, Overview, Daily Learning Plan, and Additional Resources. The introduction provides readers with information needed to understand the scope and background needed to make implementation successful. I discuss the background research conducted in the literature review. The next section: Overview, explains the major components of the curriculum, including culturally responsive teaching methods and culturally authentic literature. The daily plan includes all objectives, vocabulary, materials, assessments, and family connections. I provided this format to give users the opportunity to choose appropriate learning activities for their students. Finally, I include directions to all protocols used in the curriculum, organized by type. The document is presented in PDF to Hamline students and staff. It is available to teachers of the project district as a google document, which is the easiest access to the teachers who will use it most.

Personal Learning and Growth

I have grown in many areas during the capstone process. In this section I reflect on my growth, expected learning, and unexpected discoveries. When I first began my capstone project, I wanted to write culturally responsive literature that was meaningful and appropriate for very young readers. As I entered the research stage of the project, I discovered it was a nearly impossible task for me to be relatable to young ELs. One of the most important criteria for culturally authentic literature is that the author is of the same ethnicity, gender, etc. of the characters in the story. I could never write about a culture other than my own, which made my original idea obsolete. I learned from experience and the literature review there is lack of culturally authentic literature written at the instructional reading levels of primary students. I wanted to do this because there is a growing number of high quality read alouds, but during independent reading time students may not have a lot of choices of texts they see mirrors of themselves in.

First, I will discuss my growth from a researcher lens. Research was one of the more difficult aspects of the capstone process. It was easy to become overwhelmed with the amount of research available on the general topic of culturally responsive information. Keeping my topic narrow and dedicated to the specific area using culturally authentic texts took practice and patience. I encountered many articles with information that was related to but not exactly my topic. My topic of teaching culturally responsive instruction and using culturally authentic texts at instructional reading levels is still not well-researched. Because of this, I thought many times of changing my topic or writing about a section of CLT with more research. After many discussions with professors about

how to use and read research articles, I learned how to find relevant parts within larger studies. This was a major revolution in my research: understanding that it is okay not to read an article in its entirety, but instead skim the whole article than scan it for the parts that are most meaningful to my topic. Once I understood that aspect, I completed research more effectively. Another obstacle was synthesising information from multiple articles to find commonalities and differences. I became more proficient at this after reminding myself of my topic question and noting what information was available and what was missing or what areas I still question. With this thought in the forefront of my research and analysis, writing my paper was a manageable task.

I have grown immensely as a writer throughout this process. Looking through a writing lens, I am proud of my accomplishments within my paper. I never considered myself a writer before my capstone journey; I knew writing the paper would be difficult. Application of the writing process and seeking help from professors and classmates helped me through my journey. I also read many examples of capstone papers by very talented writers. These models of superb writing proved to be an invaluable tool. The detailed Capstone Handbook also helped me through the process and taught me what graduate writing looks like. Because of these tools, I received many compliments, suggestions and encouraging comments during my journey. Some of my best advice from a professor was: Don't say in ten words what you can say in five: Academic writing is clear, concise and to the point. This advice helped me reflect while drafting and editing. I also can apply this advice to my professional life. When I am discussing or explaining

information to students, colleagues, and parents, it is best to be simple and to the point so no information is misinterpreted or misunderstood.

Writing this capstone and curriculum project has positively impacted my teaching career. Conducting research has helped me grow and become a more knowledgeable educator. From a teacher lens, I learned that continually reading research and multiple perspectives about a topic makes me more well rounded. Writing a curriculum has taught me the importance of understanding all aspects of content. EL teachers have many obligations to fulfill. For example, they are responsible for connecting instruction to district standards, classroom content, WIDA performance definitions, and incorporating all modalities of language into lessons. They also have a broader role: EL teachers are the connection between home and school. I didn't fully understand the importance of the home-school connection until I read articles about it and included it in my weekly curriculum. In my career, I recently experienced family members relying on me, the EL teacher, to ask actual questions and seek out help to support students in academic and non-academic ways. I feel more equipped to bridge communication with families because of my curriculum and the background research I conducted for my literature review. Because of this knowledge, I hope to model home-school connections based in my curriculum to other teachers. I hope they can make a positive connection with EL families as well.

Literature Review

The literature review was a significant contribution to my project. I knew that some sources and articles would be more prominently featured in my project than others.

There were several cornerstone sources that had the most impact on my curriculum. First, this quote from Bishop (1990 p. 2) drove my curriculum, “Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.” Everything I created was because I want students to see themselves in everything they are involved with in school. I want them relate to what they read and easily connect with it. If this doesn’t happen, they may not be as engaged or make as much growth as possible. Furthermore, I want students to see windows to other cultures and how they fit in a world with many cultures. To do this, I learned what quality texts looked like. I found several sources about culturally authentic texts. Information from the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) was meaningful in my search for culturally authentic literature. They annually release data about the types of children’s literature published. During the creation of my curriculum, I referred to a chart that stated the percentages of literature by ethnicity. (Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2019). The chart was supported by other sources as well, stating that more literature was published about animals than minority or handicap cultures (Horning, Lingren, Schliesman, & Tyner, 2018). With this data in mind, I set out to find high quality literature to include in my curriculum. Dr. Sharroky Hollie was another major influencer in the creation of my curriculum. I have attended several of his trainings and workshops. His work encompasses many aspects of culturally responsive teaching and learning, including understanding culture, using culturally authentic texts, and the

importance of VABBing students to help them succeed. He defines “VABB” as: “Validating and affirming home culture and language for the purposes of building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academia and mainstream society” (Hollie 2018, p. 27). I included many of his protocols, or teaching strategies, in my curriculum with the goal of guiding teachers to know their students and how they learn.

Throughout my literature review I encountered some unexpected new learnings. First, I thought Sharroky Hollie was the founder of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning (CLRTL). It actual dates back to the 1980s with many researchers contributing and building on each other’s knowledge. Ladson-Billings recognized CRT in the 1980s. She defined CRT as “empowering students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical references to convey knowledge, impart skills, and change attitudes” (1995, p. 314). I also learned that there are other factors that contribute to culturally authentic texts besides being a window or mirror to students’ culture. For example social justice topics are critical to increase engagement in students. Souto-Manning (2009) and Husband (2018) conducted separate studies in primary grades and noted students were more engaged when they read about topics such as discrimination. There are also questions I have that remained unanswered, such as resources of culturally responsive texts at the instructional reading level of students. I will discuss my plans to contribute this section of the EL field below.

Implications and Limitations

This curriculum has several implications. It is designed for EL teachers who teach small groups of primary grade students. It connects to district curriculum, so teachers

know they are meeting standards while teaching the unit. Another implication is it gives teachers the tools to get to know their students by providing community building protocols. Additionally, it highlights the importance of using culturally authentic texts. When teachers read and engage in my curriculum they will understand the importance of knowing students and using that information to VABB cultural behaviors as well as provide culturally authentic texts. Finally, this curriculum is meant to be assessed by the individual user for practicality and connections to their school.

However, there are also limitations to the curriculum. Unfortunately, I did not implement the curriculum. Therefore, the timing may have to be adjusted to meet the needs and schedule of any teacher implementing the curriculum. Also, this curriculum was also designed for one specific small group and their cultures. Modification will have to occur to meet individual needs of students' culture. The curriculum give the tools and foundation to be adapted for other groups by supplementing other culturally authentic texts and appropriate protocols. A final limitation is the duration of the curriculum. It is four weeks long to provide students with adequate introduction, practice, and application of objectives. This is longer than a typical unit. The curriculum can be broken up by week to provide for other objectives or spiraling curriculums.

Future Steps

Thinking back to my original goal of writing books for students, I still will find ways to make a difference for students and contribute to the EL field. Throughout my journey, I have discussed my dilemma of writing culturally appropriate and relatable books with family and colleagues. Some have suggested I write books from my

perspective, an EL teacher. I could write about what I have learned about the cultures and families of my students. Other suggestions have been to have students write books about themselves to share with others. These are great suggestions and I will consider continuing my quest to provide culturally authentic literature at the instructional level of my students.

I plan to share my project with other elementary EL teachers in my district in google drive. My project will also be available on the Hamline commons as a PDF for students to reference and use if they choose. My projects benefits the EL profession as it is a curriculum which combines all of the aspects of EL teaching: incorporating district standards, WIDA performance definitions, REACH EL curriculum, CLR strategies, engaging lessons, and culturally authentic texts. Users of this curriculum will benefit from the simplification of all the aspects into easy and manageable lessons.

Conclusion

Chapter Four contained reflections and insights to my topic question: “How might culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies and reading culturally authentic texts increase student capacity to identify with and engage in learning for small groups of kindergarten and first grade ELs?” Writing this capstone has been life-changing in many aspects. I have learned how to be a better teacher, researcher, and colleague. The reasons I chose to join the EL profession have been revived by completing this process. The research and connections I made while writing the paper and curriculum also remind me of the reasons I became an EL teacher: to help families and children navigate life in the U.S. I now have learned more reasons to help me continue my goals. Creating this project

reinforced the importance of connecting with families, knowing students and their culture, and providing them with tools and resources so they see a mirror of themselves and a window into other cultures.

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