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The Importance of Multicultural Literature in a K-2 Elementary Classroom

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THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE IN A K-2
ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

By

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Teaching.

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

August 2020

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ABSTRACT

Butler, E. (2020) The importance of multicultural literature in a K-2 classroom.

The goal of this project is to answer the question of how can a professional development be created for K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom by using multicultural literature? The project is designed to explain the benefits of having a culturally competent classroom while also giving K-2 teachers tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate and asset-minded literature. K-2 teachers will leave the professional development understanding the importance of creating culturally competent classrooms, being able to distinguish between culturally authentic and culturally stereotypical literature, and knowing how to promote critical classroom discussions. The research focuses on relaying the positive benefits of having a culturally responsive classroom through the use of multicultural literature. It discusses the specifics of culturally responsive teaching, in addition to the overall importance of literature in the classroom. Lastly, it explains what to look for when choosing culturally responsive literature.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

How do I develop a professional development for elementary K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom through the use of multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature? I am studying multicultural children's literature and the positive impact it can have on elementary K-2 students, with the hope of creating children's literature resources for K-2 elementary teachers.

First, I will be looking at the research behind having a culturally competent classroom and the positive impact it can have on students. A great first step to making your classroom more culturally competent, while still being impactful, is through the introduction of multicultural literature. This is why I will be looking at the importance of children's literature in general and then specifically the importance of multicultural literature. Lastly, I will be looking at what makes multicultural literature authentic, appropriate, and asset minded. Research is readily available on the positive impacts of having a culturally competent classroom. However, there is not a lot of research combining the positive impacts of culturally competent classrooms with multicultural literature and the research also is not easily accessible for the average teacher looking to make changes in their own classroom.

In the following chapter, I will elaborate on my reasons behind choosing this topic. It is my hope that through this capstone project I will be able to answer my question of *how do I develop a professional development for elementary K-2 teachers that explains the positive*

impact of creating a culturally competent classroom through the use of multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature? My goal is to create a simple, yet effective professional development opportunity for K-2 teachers that explains the benefits of having a culturally competent classroom with rich multicultural literature. Similarly, this professional development will also give them the tools they need to analyze literature effectively in their own classrooms.

Student Teaching

My student teaching experience was highly influential when choosing my research topic. I taught in a kindergarten classroom at a Title 1 school in North Saint Paul, Minnesota. The great racial and economic diversity in my classroom caused me to examine my role as a teacher. Fortunately, I was able to observe how the school created culturally competent classrooms for their children and celebrated their differences. For example, once a month the school put aside two hours to have the students participate in a *peace class*.

During these two-hours students were put into random groups and then had a *peace class* facilitated by a teacher and the groups would have students from all different grade levels participating. The class usually had a theme to it, for example, there was one class that focused on families and another had the focus of friendship. The class would start with a read-aloud, then a discussion of the book followed, and finally the class would end with a craft. The goal was for students to acknowledge each other's differences and be accepting of one another's differences. Similarly, students would be able to bond with others who had cultures similar to their own and they were able to form friendships with students they would not normally have interactions with as well.

I was blown away by how much effort was put into creating a school culture where differences were acknowledged and celebrated. To this day, I still have not taught at a school that put as much effort in creating a culturally competent school as the one I student-taught in. This experience made me realize how important it is to be a culturally aware teacher and to make sure my classroom was not reflective of a singular culture.

Diversity and Education

I attended Hamline University from 2012-2016 and graduated with degrees in elementary education and communications. While at Hamline, the course that shaped my educational practices and ideologies the most was my Diversity and Education class. Its purpose was to teach us that our students come from many different backgrounds and cultures, and they bring these differences with them when they come to class. Similarly, teachers incorporate their own personal beliefs and values into their teaching styles as well. What we do not realize is that many of our views and beliefs are formed based on the experiences we have in school.

Personal experience. My own school experience is a prime example. When I was in school, I rarely had any diversity with regards to the ethnic diversity of the students in my class and the curriculum that was taught mirrored that lack of diversity. I would equate my experience to being taught a one-sided view of the world. There was only one way to solve math problems, and there was only one perspective of the American Revolution. This is starkly different from how I currently run my own classroom. I want my students to understand that there are many ways to approach a math problem and every story and historical event has multiple perspectives.

A culturally competent classroom is where a teacher is aware of the many different cultures and backgrounds in their class. They create a positive and accepting environment where all differences are acknowledged and celebrated. Teachers teach the whole student and do not let

their personal biases impact their teaching style. Through this environment, students build lasting social skills and work on their empathy towards others. As a teacher it is important to model these accepting behaviors for your students because you want your students to be accepting of everyone and their differences.

In the Diversity and Education class we also studied multicultural children's literature. When selecting literature for our classrooms, we were taught to examine characteristics that marked a book as either authentic or stereotypical. Authentic meaning the literature gives an accurate representation of the culture it is about and stereotypical meaning the literature promotes stereotypes of the culture. I will further address authentic and stereotypical literature later in my paper in both chapters two and three. I found examining literature to be extremely interesting, as I had never thought to look at books in this way before. When determining a book's authenticity, we studied the illustrations, dialogue, and overall theme of the book. With these guidelines we discussed whether or not the book was culturally competent. We also discussed the importance of using literature in our classrooms that was representative of a wide range of cultures. If the books in your classroom are all similar, then it is most likely only representative of the dominant culture. The goal of a culturally competent classroom is for all students to feel represented and to be educated about cultures other than their own. A great first step to making a classroom culturally competent is through the literature used in your classroom.

The Gap

I am currently teaching first grade at a charter school in Scottsdale, Arizona. My current position has made it clear that there is a need for a professional development in which teachers are educated on the positive impacts of having a culturally competent classroom. Every teacher has had a different experience when it came to their education classes. There are some teachers

who were in education programs that addressed the importance of having a culturally competent classroom with a class like Hamline, and there are others where cultural competency was only briefly mentioned. In the state of Arizona, you do not need a college degree in education to teach at a charter school. Charter schools are doing their best to educate their teachers on how to manage classrooms and teach curriculum, but there can be a lack of emphasis when it comes to having a culturally competent classroom. This is why having a professional development centered around multicultural literature and an ongoing conversation about cultural competency is so important.

The question driving my project is *how do I develop a professional development for elementary K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom through the use of multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature?* Therefore, I am going to research best practices in developing a professional development on creating a culturally competent classroom through the use of multicultural literature.

Summary

Oftentimes the curriculum that is taught in schools is still a one-sided view. The world has changed so much from when we were in elementary school and it is no longer acceptable to teach one-sided views. Students need to feel represented and accepted in their classroom. We live in a culturally diverse world and it is important that it is acknowledged in our classrooms.

How do I develop a professional development for elementary K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom through the use of multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature? There needs to be a professional development created that explains the

importance of having culturally competent classrooms through the use of multicultural literature. The professional development I created will address what cultural competency looks like in the classroom, as well as what it looks like as a teacher. It will also discuss the benefits of using multicultural literature in the classroom and guidelines to use when choosing the literature. My hope is that teachers will leave the professional development ready to make a change in their classroom. They will be able to use what they learned to take the first step and make a more culturally competent classroom through the use of multicultural literature.

In the second chapter, there will be a review of literature on several key topics. The key topics are cultural competency in the classroom, the importance of literature in the classroom, and the differences between culturally authentic books, and culturally stereotypical books. In the third chapter, I will discuss the methods I used to design my project and give an overview of the professional development that will be created. In the fourth chapter, there will be a reflection of the whole process.

CHAPTER TWO

A Review of Literature

Introduction

The question driving my research is, *how can a professional development be created for K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom by using multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature.*

In the first section, I am studying the benefits of cultural competency in the classroom, and how it promotes learning. The next section describes the importance of multicultural literature by looking at the impact of literature in the classroom. In the last section, I am detailing the guidelines that make literature culturally authentic. This is all in an effort to create a professional development for K-2 teachers that teaches them how to make their classroom culturally competent through the use of multicultural literature.

There is a gap when it comes to readily accessible guidelines for multicultural children's literature. The goal of this project is to create a simple, yet effective, professional development for K-2 teachers that explains the benefits of a culturally competent classroom and how it can be achieved through the use of well-chosen multicultural literature.

Cultural Competency in the Classroom

Cultural competency means having the ability to interact and communicate with people of diverse cultural backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Additionally, the term *diverse* does not just refer to students who are immigrants, speak another language, or who are students of color (Addy, 2015). Ladson-Billings (2014) says we need to "...help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture" (p.

75). A classroom can be considered diverse based on the different backgrounds and cultures of the students; therefore, diversity is not always obvious (Addy, 2015).

Curriculum. There has been a history of teachers teaching a curriculum that is one sided and does not account for the cultural differences among their students. However, with the addition of multicultural education courses, teachers “...learn about static images of cultural histories, customs, and traditional ways of being” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75). Although it should also be noted that culture is fluid and ever changing (Ladson-Billings, 2014). The world is very diverse, and it is important to be aware of that as a teacher. As Wells, Fox, and Cordova-Cobo (2016) have found, “...the benefits of school diversity run in all directions” (p. 18). Simply put, “...diversity makes us smarter” (Wells et al., 2016, p. 18).

Anchor. There are many different ways to foster cultural competency in a K-2 classroom. According to Nenonene, Gallagher, Kelly, and Collopy (2019), there are seven anchor competencies that make up a culturally competent classroom. They are: “(a) build trusting relationships, (b) foster self-reflection, (c) foster growth mindset, (d) cultivate perseverance, (e) create classroom community, (f) practice cooperative learning skills, and (g) respond constructively to conflict across differences” (p. 94). It is important to create an environment where everyone is welcomed and accepting of one another.

Role Model. As a teacher, you can be a model for your students and help foster positive interactions among your students. Besides a positive classroom environment, you can also foster cultural competency through the use of literature. Providing students with diverse selections of literature can foster an interest in other cultures as well as an understanding that the world is made up of so much more than what they see on a daily basis.

Culturally Competent Teaching

Teachers will often, unintentionally, bring misconceptions and misunderstandings with them to their job. These hidden biases will often come to light in classroom management, as teachers will generally manage their classrooms using knowledge from their own cultural background (Myles, 2019). To prevent unknown prejudice from taking root, teachers need to develop intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is being able to effectively communicate with people who are different both culturally and linguistically (Myles, 2019). As a teacher, this skill must be developed in regards to both parents and students. Some of the attributes needed for intercultural competence are an appreciation and respect of other cultures, an understanding of different cultural customs and ways of thinking, an openness to different ways of thinking, and an awareness of one's own biases (Myles, 2019).

According to Desai, Dodor, and Carroll (2020), there are three major steps when it comes to developing cultural competency. First, one must be aware of their own beliefs, morals, and personal biases. Second, they must be able to understand and appreciate the cultures of others. Third, they must be able to bridge the gap and find common ground between different cultures. In order to establish cultural competency in the classroom, teachers must first self-reflect on their own teaching style and interactions with students. According to Myles (2019) teachers can self-reflect by asking the following questions:

- Do I come to class with preconceived notions about my students?
- How do I react when I do not understand the reasons for their actions?
- Am I aware of the different backgrounds and cultures of my students?
- Am I aware of my own personal beliefs and morals that influence my teaching?
- Do I really listen to my students?

- Am I able to respond to my students in a culturally appropriate way (p. 20)?

When self-reflecting teachers must answer honestly and make any necessary changes; this allows them to be the most effective teacher possible.

Teachers must never stop learning and growing because should they reach a point of self-assuredness their ability to reach each and every student will suffer (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Their lack of growth creates “...functionaries of a system that has no intent on preparing students...” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 77). As a result, students check out and become a part of a vicious cycle of academic failure, dropout, suspension, and expulsion (Ladson-Billings, 2014). When being an effective teacher, it is vital to work not only educating students’ minds, but also on students’ social-emotional development as well.

Banks Model. There has been a model suggested for incorporating multicultural literature into curriculum in elementary schools at a more in-depth level (Alexander & Morton, 2007). The Banks’ Model is a four-level model that dictates the best way to introduce multicultural literature into current curriculum. Alexander and Morton (2017) describe the four levels as,

- *Level one: Content Integration*
- *Level two: Knowledge Construction*
- *Level three: Prejudice Reduction*
- *Level four: Equity Pedagogy (p. 33)*

Level one, content integration, first has schools introducing different cultures through the use of crafts, customs, and holidays. With level one, the goal is to use these mediums to note key aspects of cultures. Level two, knowledge construction, builds on level one by adding more multicultural content into various parts of the curriculum; however, it is not added into all areas.

Level three, prejudice reduction, is when multicultural literature is further added into curricular areas with the goal that students are able to use various points of view to further their understanding of a particular topic. Students will study both fiction and nonfiction literature as a part of their class assignments. Lastly level four, equity pedagogy, has students learning to identify problems in cultures. They will then use critical thinking skills to analyze the problems being faced by different cultures and try to come up with solutions to resolve the problems (Alexander & Morton, 2007, p. 33).

There is sufficient research that shows the importance of having a culturally competent classroom. Students are far more likely to be successful later in life if they are introduced to diversity early in life. Part of having a culturally competent classroom is making students aware of the world around them and having discussions with them to further their understanding. A very simple way to increase their awareness is through literature and more specifically multicultural literature. Furthermore, multicultural literature can be a great tool when teaching students empathy and acceptance towards differences.

Social and Emotional Development

One crucial aspect of having a culturally competent classroom is guiding students in their relationships with their peers. According to Hunter (2008), a vital skill for all students to learn is empathy. Teachers can help teach empathy by helping students to properly identify the emotions they are feeling. They can then identify those emotions in peers, which in turn helps them to develop empathy. When they are able to identify emotions in others, they are able to relate and form a connection (Hunter, 2008). Additionally, conflict resolution plays a big role in a culturally competent classroom. Teachers act as mediators and help students to solve issues by guiding them through the process of conflict resolution. This an essential skill for students to

develop and carry with them throughout life (Hunter, 2008). Students become more productive members of society when these social skills are introduced and practiced from a young age (Field & Castro, 2010).

Transformative Citizenship. When teachers are trying to educate their students to be productive members of society, they are working on making their students transformative citizens. Transformative citizenship means that teachers help students grow into people who challenge the views of the world and try to promote change (Field & Castro, 2010). A significant way of promoting transformative citizenship is through challenging students to look at the multiple perspectives of issues (Field & Castro, 2010).

As mentioned, there is never just one perspective of an event or issue even though only one perspective may be taught. It can also be said that a majority of current school curriculum is learned through the lenses of European-Americans (Medin & Bang, 2014). Teachers can also encourage students to be active in their communities, which helps them work on being more socially aware. If students can first be aware of their community, then they can work towards being globally aware (Field & Castro, 2010). When students are exposed to students who are different from them, it challenges their way of thinking. As a result, their critical thinking and problem-solving skills also improve (Wells et al., 2016).

When students are introduced to diversity at such a young age, they are better able to navigate the world's diverse society as adults (Wells et al., 2016). Teachers should encourage their students' curiosity towards other cultures and groups (Field & Castro, 2010). My conclusion is that diverse learning environments better prepares students to interact in society. However, a diverse learning environment may not be readily available to everyone. If students

are not able to be in a diverse learning environment, then it is still important for the teacher to introduce diversity.

Teaching Diversity Through Literature

Children acquire their reading skills in a multitude of environments and bring their world knowledge with them when they read (Orellana et al., 2019). One way that was found to engage students in literature was looking critically into the lives of the characters (Jewett & Smith, 2003). Teachers attended *Literature-Based Reading Programs in the Elementary School* where they learned how to choose books that encouraged critical conversations in their classroom (Jewett & Smith, 2003).

Professional Development. Teachers who attended *Literature-Based Reading Programs in the Elementary School*, discussed critical analysis with regards to children's literature. Teachers who attended the professional development found that they were able to connect better to the texts that they could relate to with their personal life experiences. Teachers were also able to make connections with past events and present-day concerns. The professional development was able to give them a greater understanding of the many issues that are addressed in children's literature. (Jewett & Smith, 2003). Schools can promote a respect for diversity, by having their students read and discuss multicultural books. If schools were able to integrate multicultural literature into their curriculum, it would make their curriculum much more meaningful to students (Alexander & Morton, 2007).

Multicultural literature can also help students develop empathy and a more open-minded way of thinking. As a teacher it is important to be a role model for your students. When reading multicultural literature, teachers can model positive and accepting attitudes towards all cultures. Similarly, teachers should model avoiding phrases such as "they always," or "they never" as this

promotes the us versus them viewpoint (Kruse, 2001). This allows students to see that while everyone is different, everyone is still treated the same (Iwai, 2015).

As a teacher, preparation is key when teaching multicultural literature. Some questions that can be asked to promote critical thinking and discussion are: “How would you react if you were a character in the story? Why? How would you compare the character’s life to yours? Is it different or similar?” (Iwai, 2015, p. 84).

The Importance of Literature in the Classroom

Literature is an essential component in any K-2 curriculum. First, I have concluded that it can be a standalone subject or enhance subjects such as science and history. It can also be a huge physical part of a classroom as a library for students to use on a daily basis. It is important, as a teacher, to foster a love of literature among students. Additionally, for younger students it would be appropriate to teach cultural awareness through read-alouds.

I have also come to the conclusion that when choosing books for curriculum or a classroom library, teachers must make culturally responsive choices. These choices should be representative of many different cultures and walks of life in the world. Literature is known for reaching readers through their hearts and minds. Multicultural literature allows readers to increase their knowledge of the world around them and the unique daily lives of people (Alexander & Morton, 2007).

Read-Alouds

Read-alouds have consistently been a recommended practice to teachers as a way to promote students' understanding of texts and as a way to motivate students to read in general (Worthy et al., 2012). Daily read-alouds are essential to fostering a love of reading and critical classroom discussions. Students are able to make personal connections with the literature they

are reading and also with their peers in the classroom (Worthy et al., 2012). It is so much more than just reading a book and can be used to impart a better knowledge of the world around them (Worthy et al., 2012).

Class Discussion

In order to have a meaningful classroom discussion, it is important to not have a set agenda and rather just have an open-ended discussion with the students (Worthy et al., 2012). This allows students to share their own connections they made with the text, rather than give a prompted answer. They are able to form more connections with their own lives, the world around them, and the other students in the class. Additionally, when students are made to speak one at a time by raising their hand, it allows them to get their thoughts in order and truly think through what they are going to say (Worthy et al., 2012).

However, sometimes students can be so deep in their own thoughts that they miss what is being said by their peers and it is the teacher's job to help facilitate the discussion. They can do this by repeating what students said and guiding the direction of the discussion. When students listen to their peers, they often come away from the class discussion with perspective on more complex social issues (Worthy et al., 2012).

Some phrases that can be used to foster classroom discussion are: "say more about that, what are you thinking, and why do you say that" (Worthy et al., 2012, p. 313). These are all phrases that prompt students to think in-depth about what they are trying to say and even analyze the thoughts of others.

It is also good to point out social and historical issues that can be found in books. For example, a teacher pointed out that there was offensive language in the book which led to a class discussion about censorship. Additionally, teachers can point out the racist or even sexist

comments and explain why those are culturally inappropriate. Teachers can also tie it into a class discussion about the current issues in society with racism and sexism. These types of discussions can exist in an elementary school classroom, but they need to exist in a way that is developmentally appropriate for students (Worthy et al., 2012).

To conclude, if teachers provide a positive and accepting classroom environment, then students are more likely to participate and share ideas. Similarly, students will be able to form lasting and meaningful connections. The more variety of literature, the better the classroom discussions. In these discussions, teachers are able to help students make connections between the literature and real-life issues in the world today. Teachers can start developing analytical skills with their students at a very young age and also start fostering discussion skills.

Multicultural Literature

Students are often unaware of the world around them, which in turn can cause them to have misguided and inaccurate views on other cultures. Often children will have the view that any country outside of the United States is completely different, and this will unintentionally create an us versus them view of the world (Monobe & Son, 2014).

To combat this us versus them viewpoint, teachers must be intentional about educating students on the world around them. One way we can do this is through incorporating multicultural literature in the classroom, as well as in lessons (Monobe & Son, 2014). One benefit, albeit obvious, is that students are able to learn about other people and cultures different from their own. When teachers use multicultural literature, students of varied cultures are able to feel represented in the classroom. Comparatively, if teachers only use literature from the majority cultures, students of minority cultures may not feel as though they belong in the classroom.

Multicultural literature shows students that every group of people has something to offer in the world, as well as teach others. It also helps mitigate students' prejudices towards other people, as those prejudices are often built on an initial lack of understanding (Alexander & Morton, 2007).

Teachers can also choose multicultural literature that reflects a common theme, besides a specific group of people. They can then find a variety of literature that supports the common theme and expose their students to a variety of cultures in the process. Similarly, teachers can choose the same story but from different cultures to look at the similarities and differences between them all. They can then have a class discussion about the comparisons or even use graphic organizers to make it a writing activity (Iwai, 2015).

Literature can be a very powerful tool when teaching students about diversity. With younger students it is important to help them make a connection with the literature they are listening to through class discussion. These connections can help them to learn to be accepting of differences, and again, help them to make connections between themselves and others. While there is an abundance of multicultural literature to choose from, it should be noted that not all can be considered authentic.

It also needs to be taken into account that there are some limitations with global literature. First, a majority of the published literature cannot be considered culturally authentic and as a result does not present a well-rounded view. Similarly, a majority of the literature also has a primary focus on events that would not be considered contemporary or present-day minded. Lastly, it can be difficult for teachers and students to make a connection to the literature that they may view as "exotic." (Monobe & Son, 2014).

What Makes a Book Culturally Authentic?

In current times, teachers must value the quality of multicultural literature over quantity. There are differences between books written by members of the culture and books written by *outsiders*. Additionally, when choosing literature, characteristics such as dialogue, illustrations, and point of view. Some questions that can be asked when choosing literature are: Is the dialogue authentic of the characters? Are the illustrations accurate, or are they grotesque? Whose point of view is the story? Is the view being represented that of the majority culture, or the minority culture?

Selection of Themes

When choosing multicultural literature for the classroom, teachers should select books that represent a wide variety of themes. Students should be exposed to all types of literature like fairy tales, folktales, poetry, realistic fiction, historical fiction, and nonfiction (Iwai, 2015). Additionally, all of the characters should be portrayed as individuals versus as a part of the majority or minority group. There should be a wide variety of characters from different backgrounds; the main characters should not always be white. Females and minority groups should not consistently be portraying subservient roles either (Iwai, 2015).

According to Wan (2006), these themes should be common in the lives of everyone such as holidays, folktales, celebrations, ways of life, familial tales, and emotions that people experience. Once a teacher has narrowed down the theme, he or she can select corresponding books from different cultures. For example, if a teacher was looking at books about different cultural holidays, they could choose books relating to the Chinese New Year, Christmas, Hanukkah, Ramadan, Deepavali, etc. They can then share the books with their class and center discussion around the different holidays and ways of celebration (Wan, 2006).

It is argued that folktales are considered to be the best theme for teachers to choose when studying different cultures (Wan, 2006). Folktales typically originate from the roots of cultures and can therefore be considered authentic. Similarly, there are often different versions of folktales common throughout many cultures (Wan, 2006). For example, there are over 100 different versions of both *Cinderella* and *Snow White* (Wan, 2006, p. 144).

Guidelines for Choosing Literature. When choosing multicultural literature, teachers should choose books that have illustrations that accurately depict the people, traditions, and events of other cultures (Wan, 2006). Students often do not have prior knowledge of other cultures, and it is important to expose them to accurate information and illustrations (Wan, 2006). Students should read books that contain enough cultural knowledge for them to gain an accurate idea of the culture they are reading about, and it should allow students to accept cultures other than their own (Wan, 2006).

Illustrations. Furthermore, illustrations in authentic texts avoid generalizing characters. For example, Mexicans should not always wear sombreros, and Japanese should not always wear kimonos. Boys should not always be the brave leaders, and girls do not always need to be rescued (Iwai, 2015). Additionally, the illustrations should not exaggerate any physical features (Wan, 2006). Accurate illustrations should allow students to get an idea how people in different cultures go about their normal way of life. They should see where people of other cultures live in addition to how they dress, interact with each other, celebrate holidays, and the emotions they feel towards different situations (Iwai, 2015).

Authentic dialogue. Authentic dialogue is also an important aspect to look for when selecting multicultural literature. Is there a legitimate reason for the character to be speaking like that, or is the author just trying to represent a character? If the author is just trying to represent a

character, then there is the chance the character is being stereotyped for the sake of well flowing dialogue (Iwai, 2015). For example, when reading books about the African American culture, authors will make their dialogue difficult to process. There will often be words spelled phonetically and sentences will not be grammatically correct. However, the majority culture's dialogue will often be easy to read and even come across with a higher level of intelligence. Authors can also use dialogue to emphasize the differences between the majority and minority cultures. These are just some of many examples where the majority culture is portrayed in a more favorable light than the minority culture.

Author Controversy. The Civil Rights movement created a bigger demand for multicultural literature. While about 4500 multicultural books were published in 1997, it should be noted that only 88 featured African American authors or illustrators (Kruse, 2001). Similarly, there were 88 published with Hispanic authors or themes, 66 with Asian authors or themes, and 64 with Native American authors or themes (Kruse, 2001).

Multicultural literature has often been portrayed as the literature of the minority groups, because it puts an emphasis on the culture of groups who are not mainstream. According to the Bista (2012), there is some debate regarding the authenticity of multicultural books; specifically, does a text need to be written by a member of the culture in order to be considered authentic (p. 318)? Can an author who is a member of a majority group, write an authentic book that accurately portrays another minority culture? The answer is complex, although some argue that majority group members can if they have sufficient knowledge of the culture in question and reflect the realities of daily life (Bista, 2012).

As previously mentioned, multicultural literature is an extremely vital tool when teaching students about diversity. Multicultural literature in a classroom setting is often the first

experience they will have learning about cultures other than their own. That being said, teachers must ensure that the literature they are presenting is an authentic representation of the culture students are learning about. If it is inauthentic, then teachers are promoting stereotypes.

The Gap

The question driving my research is, *how can a professional development be created for K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom by using multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature?* While there is a substantial amount of research to back up the benefits of multicultural literature in the classroom, there is a gap when it comes to readily accessible guidelines for multicultural children's literature.

The goal of this project is to create a simple, yet effective, professional development for teachers that explains the benefits of multicultural literature and also gives them the tools they need to make the changes in their own classrooms.

Conclusion

In the first section, I discussed what it meant to be a culturally competent teacher and how to help students develop open and accepting attitudes towards diversity. Then I looked at teaching diversity through literature, specifically noting the Banks' Model. The Banks' Model is a four-level model that dictates the best way to introduce multicultural literature into current curriculum (Alexander & Morton, 2017). Lastly, I discussed what it meant to be a transformative citizen. Following the section on culturally competent teaching, I looked at why it was important to include multicultural literature in the classroom. On this thread, I also mentioned the limitations that come with multicultural literature. While there is a substantial amount of research

to back up the benefits of multicultural literature in the classroom, it is not readily accessible to the average teacher looking to make changes in their own classroom.

The next chapter will describe the framework for the professional development. Included will be a general outline of the professional development, learning goals, participants, setting, materials, summative assessment, and presentation description.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Research Question

How can a professional development be created for K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom by using multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature?

Introduction

While there is a substantial amount of research to back up the benefits of multicultural literature in the classroom, it is not readily accessible to the average teacher looking to make changes in their own classroom. There is a gap when it comes to readily accessible guidelines for multicultural children's literature. The goal of this project is to create a simple, yet effective, professional development for teachers that explains the benefits of multicultural literature and also gives them the tools they need to make the changes in their own classrooms. In this chapter there will be a general outline of the professional development. This outline will include a description of the professional development design, learning goals, participants, settings, materials, assessment, and presentation description.

Professional Development Design

Below is the table I used when designing my professional development. I used the Understanding by Design (UbD) methods for curriculum development when designing my professional development, because I essentially created a one-day curriculum that details the importance of making a K-2 elementary classroom culturally competent through the use of multicultural literature (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). When developing my professional

development using UbD, I first started with the desired results of my professional development, in other words, what I wanted teachers to take away from the professional development time. Then I figured out what assessment I would use to determine if I achieved my desired results. The assessment can be found below in the assessment section (Figure 2). Lastly, I used both the desired results and assessment to create my overall learning plan. The learning plan is presented in the figure below (Figure 1).

Figure 1*Learning Plan*

Desired Results
<p>Long-term: Teachers will make their classroom more culturally competent. They will do this through the addition of multicultural literature and through class discussion.</p> <p>Short-term: 1. Teachers will use the given guidelines to go through their current classroom literature. They will then decide if it is culturally authentic or if it promotes a cultural stereotype. 2. Teachers will use the given guidelines and book wish list when buying multicultural literature for their classrooms. 3. Teachers will use the suggested questions to foster class discussion around multicultural literature.</p>
Evidence
<p>1. Teachers will be able to accurately answer the questions presented at the end of the professional development.</p> <p>2. Teachers will be able to distinguish between books that are culturally authentic and books that promote cultural stereotypes.</p>
Learning Plan
<p>Below is the general outline of the professional development.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to Professional Development 2. Cultural competency- What is it? Why is it important? 3. Is my current classroom culturally competent? - Reflect on their current

classroom and share the teaching strategies currently used.

4. Multicultural Literature

- a. Culturally authentic
- b. Culturally stereotypical
- c. Class Discussion

5. Group Activity & Discussion- Discuss reasons why books are culturally stereotypical and not authentic

6. Book List- Pass out list of culturally authentic literature

7. Closing Survey & Questions

Learning Goals

The main learning goals of the professional development are (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011):

- 1) Know the importance of having a culturally responsive classroom and that a great first step towards making a culturally responsive classroom is through the use of multicultural literature and class discussion. **K**
- 2) Use the *Culturally Authentic Books Checklist* to distinguish culturally authentic literature versus culturally stereotypical literature. **S**
- 3) Explain how to promote effective class discussions surrounding multicultural literature. **M**
- 4) Apply the information presented in the professional development to make more culturally competent classrooms. **T**

Participants

The target audience of this professional development is K-2 elementary school teachers. This professional development is recommended for anyone who is interested in learning more about culturally competent classrooms and multicultural literature. All K-2 teachers, as well as school administration are invited to participate in this professional development. There will be teachers who come with prior knowledge of culturally competent classrooms or multicultural literature. Similarly, there will also be teachers who come with no prior knowledge of cultural competency or multicultural literature.

The goal is for everyone to come away with useful information, regardless of their knowledge level. Similarly, the professional development will give teachers easy strategies to create culturally competent classrooms and guidelines when choosing multicultural literature for their classrooms as well.

Setting

This professional development can be held in any space in an elementary school. The space needs to have the ability to support a PowerPoint presentation and have the ability to facilitate both whole group and small group discussions. For the first half of the presentation teachers can be seated around the room and participate in whole group discussions from their seats. Then, for the second half of the presentation, teachers will be asked to get into small groups. They will need to spread out around the room and talk within their group before then sharing their thoughts with the whole group. The space should be large enough to support small groups spaced evenly around the room.

Materials

The materials that are needed for this professional development are the ability to project a PowerPoint, and paper packets for every teacher attending. The PowerPoint will be used throughout the professional development and each slide has an overview of the topics being covered. The slides also contain photos of book covers and all of these books can be considered culturally authentic literature. The titles of the books can also be found on the book wish list in the paper packet.

In the paper packets there is a book wish list where teachers can find a curated list of culturally authentic books in a variety of topics. There is also a section of questions that teachers can ask themselves when deciding whether or not a book is culturally authentic. Lastly, in the paper packet, there is a survey for teachers to take at the end of the professional development. A copy of the survey can be found in the assessment below (Figure 2).

Assessment

There is one assessment during the professional development, and it was in the form of a survey. The survey came at the end of the professional development and was an assessment over the topics covered. There were three short answer questions and five questions using a Likert scale. There were also a few questions about how they would rate the professional development in terms of helpfulness. A sample of the survey has been provided below.

Figure 2*Exit Survey*

Name _____

Cultural Competency & Multicultural Literature- Exit Survey

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being that you do not agree at all, 5 being that you absolutely agree, and 3 being that you somewhat agree, how much do you feel like you know about the following topics:

1. Cultural Competency
 - a. I understand what cultural competency is.
1 2 3 4 5
 - b. I have some ideas on how to make my classroom more culturally competent.
1 2 3 4 5
 - c. After participating in this professional development, what does a culturally competent classroom mean to you? Please write a short answer in the space provided below.

2. Multicultural literature
 - a. I understand what makes a book culturally authentic.
1 2 3 4 5
 - b. I understand what makes a book culturally stereotypical.
1 2 3 4 5
 - c. I feel that I can use multicultural literature in class discussions.
1 2 3 4 5
 - d. Please explain below what makes a book culturally authentic and culturally stereotypical.

 - e. Did any of your answers change after participating in this professional development? If so, explain in a few sentences below.

 - f. Overall, what did you like about this professional development? Was there anything that could have been done better? Please explain below in a few sentences.

Presentation Description

The professional development is designed to be held for two hours on one day. My goal was to create a simple, yet effective, professional development for teachers that explained the benefits of having a culturally competent classroom through the use of multicultural literature and also gave them the tools they needed to discern if literature was authentic or stereotypical.

For my professional development, I used a PowerPoint to aid in my presentation. Below I will break down my presentation and describe the slides used for introductions and goals, cultural competency in the classroom, multicultural literature, culturally stereotypical literature, and closing thoughts.

Introductions & Goals

First and foremost, we start the presentation with group introductions and with the three goals for the professional development. The three goals are that teachers will leave the professional development understanding the importance of having culturally competent classrooms, able to distinguish culturally authentic literature from culturally stereotypical literature, and having learned the best ways to promote class discussions.

Cultural Competency

We started discussing cultural competency by posing the following question to the group for discussion: *what is cultural competency?* The other two questions *why is it important?* and *is my classroom culturally competent?*, should be kept in mind throughout the presentation, however, they will be answered at the end. Teachers were asked to take a moment to reflect and come up with a definition for cultural competency. As a whole group, they then shared their answers and the main points of cultural competency were shared with the group.

Cultural Competency in the Classroom. Next, the professional development explains what cultural competency looks like in both the classroom, as well as what it looks like as a teacher. When discussing what cultural competency looks like in the classroom the professional development focused on describing the type of classroom environment that should be created.

Similarly, when describing what it looked like as a teacher, the professional development discussed how to be a role model for your students, as well as how to self-reflect on your own

teaching style. The professional development then continued on to discuss multicultural literature and how it is a great first step in creating a more culturally competent classroom.

Multicultural Literature

When first talking about multicultural literature, the professional development starts off by listing the positive impacts that happen when introducing your students to multicultural literature. The phrase *multicultural literature* was unpacked, and it was said that it does not necessarily just refer to the different ways of life that different ethnicities have. In fact, multicultural literature refers to both the different ethnicities and cultures found in the world. We want students to understand that while there are many different cultures in the world, we can still find similarities between them all. Teachers were told that they can incorporate literature into their curriculum and also have it readily accessible in their classroom library. It was emphasized that the more options of multicultural literature the better because students are then able to be exposed to a variety of world issues and cultures without having to leave their classroom.

It was further explained that students should be exposed to as many cultures as possible through literature, so they are able to have some idea of the world around them and do not spend a majority of their elementary career living in a bubble.

Questions to Ask When Choosing Literature. Continuing on the multicultural literature thread, the professional development then covered the questions teachers should ask themselves when choosing literature. The questions are as follows:

- Are any of the characters' physical features exaggerated?
- Are the illustrations being used to emphasize differences in a negative way?
- Is there a legitimate reason for the character to be speaking as they are presented by the author?

- Is the dialogue being used to emphasize differences in a negative way?
- Is the author a member of the culture they are writing about?
- Is the book promoting any stereotypes?
- Whose point of view is the story being told through?

Multicultural Literature Themes. There are many themes that can be covered in multicultural literature. These themes noted in the professional development include, but are not limited to, fairy tales & folktales, women in history, racism, slavery, family dynamics, empathy & diversity, civil rights movement, etc. Following a list of the themes were pictures of books about the themes mentioned and it should also be noted that these are just a few of the many examples of themes covered in multicultural literature.

Cultures. Just like there are many themes that can be covered with multicultural literature there are also many cultures. The cultures noted in the professional development are American Indian, Asian Pacific American, African American/Black, Latin American, etc. Following a list of the cultures were pictures of books about the cultures mentioned and it should also be noted that these are just a few of the many examples of cultures covered in multicultural literature. The professional development also listed three thoughts to keep in mind for literature about world cultures. The three thoughts are cultures are humongous, it is impossible to capture an entire culture's beliefs in one book, and be careful to avoid generalizations.

Author Controversy. The professional development then transitioned into another whole group discussion regarding author controversy. Teachers were asked the following question, can an author who is a member of the dominant culture write an authentic book that accurately portrays another minority culture? This is a highly debated question with valid arguments on

both sides. Teachers were given a moment to reflect on the question before being asked to share their thoughts.

Culturally Stereotypical Literature

Teachers were asked to get into small groups with about three to four people per group. The professional development then reviewed the questions teachers should ask themselves when choosing multicultural literature. Teachers also received a copy of the questions in their professional development packet. A book cover was shown to teachers and a synopsis of the book was also read. Teachers were then asked to discuss in their small groups why the book should be considered culturally stereotypical versus culturally authentic. Once five minutes passed, it was brought back to the whole group. Each group of teachers then gave their reasons as to why the book on the screen should not be considered culturally authentic.

After we discussed the findings, the teachers were shown culturally authentic books with the same theme as the books that were culturally stereotypical; these books can be found in the book wish list section of their packet. It should be noted that this process was repeated a total of three times for the three books that were used.

Effective & Non-Effective Class Discussions

Lastly, the professional development covered how to extend learning from a read aloud to an engaging classroom discussion. Students can think critically about the book they read and share any connections they made with their own lives. Students can form relationships with each other and can practice showing empathy towards others. Similarly, students can ask any questions about what they read, and teachers can help clarify any misconceptions. Some phrases that can be used to foster classroom discussion are (Worthy et al., 2012):

- Say more about that.

- What are you thinking?
- Why do you say that?

Concluding Thoughts

The professional development ended with about ten to fifteen minutes for questions. The three questions that were first asked at the beginning of the presentation were asked again. The questions were what is cultural competency?, why is it important? and is my classroom culturally competent? There was then a whole group discussion surrounding the questions. Teachers were then asked to take an exit survey; the survey can be found above under the assessment subsection (Figure 2).

Conclusion

Chapter three described the professional development design, learning goals, participants, settings, materials, assessment, and instructional strategies. In chapter four, I will reflect on the design process of the professional development. Additionally, in a separate project PDF, the PowerPoint slides used in the presentation will be included as well as the handouts that are to be passed out to the teachers.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to answer the question: *how can a professional development be created for K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom by using multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature?* The first three chapters consisted of an introduction to the project, a review of literature, and a description of the project. Chapter four will consist of a summary of the literature review, a description of the finished project, the implications of the project, the potential future research, the limitations, my personal learnings, and concluding thoughts.

I created this project because there is a need at my current school. As I have mentioned, I am currently teaching at a charter school in Arizona and charter schools do not require teachers to have teaching degrees. While charter schools try their best to educate teachers in classroom management and teaching in general, there is not an emphasis on cultural competency. Additionally, the curriculum that we teach is from the perspective of the dominant culture. I feel that we could make our curriculum much more valuable by incorporating multicultural literature.

I have always felt passionate about multicultural literature and culturally competent classrooms, which stemmed from taking *Diversity and Education* at Hamline University. I have always felt that my teacher education courses were extremely informative and really made me aware of the type of classroom environment I should strive for. I feel that cultural competency is an extremely vital aspect of teaching, as students need to be exposed to the many cultures of the world around them. They need to be able to recognize diversity and accept those who are

different from them. Similarly, all students deserve to feel represented in their classroom. While it can be a big ask to change established curriculum at elementary schools, I believe that a way to make a change towards a more culturally competent classroom is through the use of multicultural literature. The goal is to not fully overhaul the current curriculum, rather make it more representative of students using multicultural literature. That being said, if teachers are unaware of what to look for when choosing multicultural literature, then there is the potential for doing more harm than good.

I wanted to create a professional development that imparted the importance of having culturally competent classrooms through the use of multicultural literature.

I know that schools are always looking for continuing education programs for their teachers and I chose this product type because I believe that my material is better communicated in-person versus through a website. The in-person professional development allows for group discussion and for teachers to ask questions as they come up. I also feel that discussion is extremely valuable when teachers are evaluating books because everyone may pick up on something different. There are so many subtle and defining characteristics with both responsive and stereotypical literature and in-person discussion really ensures the ability to pick up on all of them. With my professional development, there are four goals that I want to accomplish, and they are as follows:

- 1) Teachers will know the importance of having a culturally responsive classroom and that a great first step towards making a culturally responsive classroom is through the use of multicultural literature and class discussion.
- 2) Teachers will be able to use the *Culturally Authentic Books Checklist* to distinguish culturally authentic literature versus culturally stereotypical literature.

- 3) Teachers will be able to explain how to promote effective class discussions surrounding multicultural literature.
- 4) Teachers will be able to apply the information presented in the professional development to make more culturally competent classrooms.

By taking the information learned from my professional development back to their own classrooms, my hope is for teachers to start making their classrooms and curriculum more culturally competent through the use of multicultural literature. The next section summarizes the literature I reviewed when doing my research.

Summary of Literature Review

When creating my project, I reviewed literature to find research regarding multicultural literature and its role in creating cultural competency in the classroom. There is an abundance of research out there about the benefits of culturally competent classrooms, as well as multicultural literature. When reviewing literature, I focused on three core themes: cultural competency in the classroom, the importance of literature in the classroom, and multicultural literature.

When researching cultural competency in the classroom there were several key aspects that were worth noting. First, and foremost, Ladson-Billings (2014) said that teachers need to “...help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture” (p. 75). Additionally, it is important to point out that a classroom can be considered diverse based on the different backgrounds and cultures of the students; therefore, diversity is not always obvious (Addy, 2015).

As a teacher, you can be a model for your students and help foster positive interactions among your students. When students are introduced to diversity at such a young age, they are better able to navigate the world’s diverse society as adults (Wells et al., 2016). Diverse learning

environments better prepare students to interact in society. Schools can promote a respect for diversity, by having their students read and discuss multicultural books. The inclusion of multicultural literature allows students to develop an open-minded view towards diversity (Alexander & Morton, 2007). Multicultural literature shows students that every group of people has something to offer in the world, as well as teach others. It also helps mitigate students' prejudices towards other people, as those prejudices are often built on an initial lack of understanding (Alexander & Morton, 2007).

Multicultural literature can also help students develop empathy and a more open-minded way of thinking. Students are often unaware of the world around them, which in turn can cause them to have misguided and inaccurate views on other cultures. Often children will have the view that any country outside of the United States is completely different, and this will unintentionally create an us versus them view of the world (Monobe & Son, 2014). As a teacher it is important to be a role model for your students. When reading multicultural literature, teachers can model positive and accepting attitudes towards all cultures. Similarly, teachers should model avoiding phrases such as "they always," or "they never" as this promotes the us versus them viewpoint (Kruse, 2001).

When choosing multicultural literature for the classroom, teachers should select books that represent a wide variety of themes. Students should be exposed to all types of literature like fairy tales, folktales, poetry, realistic fiction, historical fiction, and nonfiction (Iwai, 2015). Additionally, all of the characters should be portrayed as individuals versus as a part of the majority or minority group. There should be a wide variety of characters from different backgrounds; the main characters should not always be white. Females and minority groups should not consistently be portraying subservient roles either (Iwai, 2015).

Teachers should make sure to choose books that have illustrations that accurately depict the people, traditions, and events of other cultures (Wan, 2006). Students often do not have prior knowledge of other cultures, and it is important to expose them to accurate information and illustrations (Wan, 2006). Authentic dialogue is also an important aspect to look for when selecting multicultural literature. Is there a legitimate reason for the character to be speaking like that, or is the author just trying to represent a character? If the author is just trying to represent a character, then there is the chance the character is being stereotyped for the sake of well flowing dialogue (Iwai, 2015).

There is a significant amount of research regarding the positive benefits of culturally competent classrooms, literature in classrooms, and multicultural literature. In the next section, I will discuss the potential implications that can come of my project.

Project Implications

The question driving my research was *how can a professional development be created for K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom by using multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature?* The research question was answered through the professional development I created. I chose a professional development because it allows for in-person group discussion which I feel is crucial when learning about cultural competency and multicultural literature.

One implication of my professional development is that educators will now be able to critically look at their current curriculum and judge if there are areas that could be potentially enhanced with multicultural literature. As I have mentioned, it can be daunting to overhaul an

entire curriculum, but there are many ways curriculum can be enhanced with multicultural literature.

Another implication of my professional development is that teachers are able to take the guiding questions provided and use them to review their current classroom literature. They can use the questions that were discussed during the professional development to determine if their current books are culturally responsive. Similarly, they can also see if their classroom literature is lacking in a certain area and use the book wish list to guide their purchases.

A final implication of my professional development is that teachers will understand how impactful multicultural literature can be in their students' lives. It is so important that students are exposed to the world around them and appreciate the many different cultures of the world. Teachers should want to help shape their students' attitudes towards diversity and be a part of creating students who understand that everyone is different, and everyone should be celebrated for those differences. Multicultural literature is a wonderful tool for teachers to use when modeling attitudes towards diversity and for exposing students to cultures different from their own. The following section will describe the potential future research that could come from my own research on multicultural literature.

Potential Future Research

Multicultural literature is a very broad topic that can allow for much more research. I limited my research to literature for K-2 classrooms, specifically picture books, but it can easily be expanded to higher grade levels where they read more complex literature. Researchers could focus on multicultural literature and culturally competent classrooms and the impact they have on students in middle or high school. There could also be research done on whether or not consistent exposure to multicultural literature has an impact on K-2 students' social interactions.

Lastly, there could be research done about whether or not multicultural literature is able to limit bullying among students.

While I have only mentioned a few potential research ideas, I feel that multicultural literature is a very broad topic and that there are many potential research topics that could come from this capstone project. The following section will discuss the limitations that I came across while creating my project.

Limitations

My project had several limitations that I had to overcome. First, I was not able to physically look through books at my local library due to Covid-19 statewide closures. With my book wish list that I include in my handouts, I had originally planned on going to my local library and researching books there. I wanted to be able to flip through pages and base my recommendations on books that I had seen myself. Since that was not possible, I had to rely solely on online book reviews. While this was not my first choice, I do feel confident in the books I selected based on the written reviews of others. I ended up using the website *Goodreads* to research books and made sure to include books that had a rating of 4 or higher.

Another limitation I experienced was deciding between a professional development or a website for my product. Both have the potential of being beneficial platforms, but in the end, I went with the professional development because I felt that the group discussion component was extremely important when discussing multicultural literature. While a website would be able to present my information to a vast amount of people, I didn't believe my message would be as powerful if people were just reading about it online. The next section will discuss my own personal learning that happened while I was completing my project.

Personal Learning

I have been told by many other elementary educators how relevant my project is and how there is a need for a professional development like the one I have created. Representation in the classroom is important and teachers want to make changes in their classroom. Instead of making a professional development solely about cultural competency, I tried to focus on one key step that any teacher could take to make a change in their classroom. I landed on multicultural literature, as literature can be such a powerful tool when teaching students about the world around them especially if students aren't exposed to ethnic diversity in their classroom or diversity in the curriculum being taught.

Multicultural literature can teach students to be aware of differences in others and still be accepting regardless of those differences. It can also teach students that while there are differences among cultures, there can also be similarities and common ground. I feel that if we expose students to different cultures at a young age and model the correct attitudes towards those different cultures then we can better prepare students to interact in society as they get older. The final section will discuss my concluding thoughts on my project and summarize each chapter of my paper.

Concluding Thoughts

The question guiding my project was, *how can a professional development be created for K-2 teachers that explains the positive impact of creating a culturally competent classroom by using multicultural literature, while also giving them tools to recognize culturally authentic, appropriate, and asset-minded literature?* Chapters one through three, in addition to my project, work to answer this question. Chapter one was an introduction and discussed my background, as well as my reasons for creating this project. Chapter two was a review of literature. The three

core themes I focused on in my literature review were cultural competency in the classroom, the importance of literature in the classroom, and multicultural literature. Each theme was an integral part of my research and helped to shape my professional development. Chapter three gave a description of my project. Within chapter three I discussed my professional development design, learning goals, participants, setting, materials needed, assessment, and professional development description. Lastly, chapter four details the purpose of the project, a summary of the literature review, a description of the finished project, the implications of the project, the potential future research, the limitations, and my personal learning throughout the whole process.

Creating this project has taught me so much about the research process from start to finish. I am very proud of the fact that I came up with my topic and was able to create a quality professional development based on research I completed. I am hopeful that my professional development will help teachers create more culturally competent classrooms and will also create a love for multicultural literature.

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