Southeast Asian American Community: Improving Students Literacy Performance Through The Involvement Of The After School Literacy Enrichment Program

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SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY:
IMPROVING STUDENTS LITERACY PERFORMANCE THROUGH THE
INVolVEMENT OF THE AFTER SCHOOL LITERACY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

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

Hamline University
Saint Paul, Minnesota
May 2017

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DEDICATION

To my father, Chue Xeng Lee. My loving father who strongly supported my education.
To my mother, May Yia Lee. My wonderful hardworking mother with a big heart.
To my husband, Lee Xiong whom I love dearly and believe in me every step of the way.
To my family, I love you all.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I cannot express enough thanks to my committee for their continued support. I offer my most sincere appreciation for the learning opportunities. The completion of this project could not have been possible without your support.

To my wonderful professors Dr. Emily Schultz, Dr. Kyoko Kishimoto, and Dr. Angela Wong for your continuous support. The wisdom you have shown and taught me, empowered my life.
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Abstract

This research was influenced by the Author’s personal experience with literacy practices and education. The question addressed in this capstone is, how to improve third grade literacy performance through the involvement of the After-School Literacy Enrichment Program? The capstone explores a sense of encouraging positive behavior, self-esteem, and motivation with our culturally diverse students as well as connecting with our students on a genuine level. The capstone cover the history of the two Southeast Asian groups; Hmong and Karen/Karenni leading onto the disparities and challenges in the United States. By providing a culturally responsive classroom as well as becoming a culturally responsive educator, creates a positive learning environment for the students.

This research involves a group of third grade students for the after-school literacy enrichment program. The tools used for this research were observation, student survey, pre and post assessment, and informal student journaling. During the five-week program the result from the student’s engagement and literacy improves through a sense of belongingness in the classroom. With this exploration, educators must continue to create a safe and learning environment where students have the flexibility to share culture and language.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Education defines After School Program:

An opportunity for children and youth continue to learn when school is not in session – before and after school, on weekends, and during vacation period... Therefore, it is not more of the same teaching and learning that occurs during the day, but a different approach to engage students with the teacher, school and community. The purpose is to develop the skills needed to be successful in the regular school program (MDE, 2016).

With the after-school program being an extension from our regular school hours this gives more time for students to revisit the lessons from their regular school day as well as enrichment classes for students to engage in social, physical, and intellectual abilities through participation in activities. Enrichment Programs help stimulate students’ capabilities and involves the engagement of teachers and peers. This is a great benefit in which I find it as a fulfilling opportunity for our students, however the enrichment options that are provided in the school seldom encourage students to think critically and develop new ideas into their work. As our school shift its goal this year to focus on improving students’ literacy performance this allowed my research to consider some challenges that our students are currently facing in school with its enrichment programs.

With my position as an Education Enhancement Assistant, coordinating the After-School Program, I find that the After-School Program play a critical role with the new shift. I
believe that creating enrichment programs that focus on critical thinking, service learning, and leadership development will improve students’ literacy performance.

With my personal and professional experiences, I have encountered a pattern with students engaging in enrichment activities improve their literacy performance. I often reflect and compare my life to some of my colleagues and wonder if I was privileged to be a part of several after school programs and activities? And wonder if our school can adjust some of the enrichment programs to promote literacy achievement for our students? How do we encourage positive behavior, self-esteem, and motivation for learning that generates a positive outlook for our student population?

In this chapter, I will share my literacy experiences as a child and how I came about to come across the research of the After-School Enrichment Programs. In doing so, I do not intend to say that all Southeast Asian, specifically Hmong and Karenni, or refugees in general, encountered the same experiences as I have but to share the story in which many may similar experiences. I will not only reflect on my past experiences but to share the purpose of my research

Childhood Literacy Experience:

We are one of the many thousands of Hmong families who fled Laos to escape the genocide after the Vietnam War and took refuge in the Ban Vinai Refugee Camp. My family immigrated to the United States in 1981. I am the youngest out of eight children and was born and raised in the Project Homes of Saint Paul, Minnesota. My family and I lived in the McDonough homes for the first three years after I was born and later moved to Mount Airy, where we lived for nine years. During those nine years, I remembered the sound of the typewriter my father would type from morning to night. He cannot speak,
read, or write in English therefore all his work is in Hmong. My father once expressed that typing is a way for him to relieve the traumatic experiences in Laos and it a way to keep track of our family history. It was therapeutic. My father types about our family history, the war, living etiquette, our culture and religious practices. He has been typing ever since the day I was born, and he is still typing until this day.

As a young child, I would observe the way my father types and listen to him teach me about his works. One day I asked my father to let me use a typewriter, he gave me a long stare wondering if he should let this little four-year-old, who does not know how to even write her name, use a typewriter. After careful consideration, he decided to dig through his closet and found an old typewriter and gave it to me. Although I remember typing a lot of nonsense, little did I know it helped me recognize the shapes and letters, this was the beginning my first experience being exposed to literacy. Because of this experience, I have kept a journal at a very young age, four years old, drawing pictures of my daily activities and writing very basic words.

Although my father did not speak English, he provided the tools to support my learning. My father would spend his Saturdays searching for garage sales to purchase children books. Once he found an interesting book, he would check the pages make sure there are no marks or missing pages. Since my father could not read English, he would expect us to learn on our own. I remember turning the pages and using my imagination to tell the stories. Quickly I realized, the more I begin to familiarize myself with the pictures and words the easier it is to read.
Determination to Learn:

As I reflect on the experiences of students who struggled to learn how to read and write, I cannot avoid reflecting on my own experiences with literacy. I often wonder if other students are feeling the same struggle as I have? Feeling isolated, confused, and self-doubt. These emotions and inner questioning brings me to my childhood story, which I struggled to face. I was a student who was placed in the English Second Language Program (ESL) and speech class for five years of my Elementary Experience. I remember during the first two years of Elementary School I was constantly being dismissed out of the classroom couple of times a day to either meet with the Speech Pathologist or ESL. I was a student who felt embarrassed being escort out of the classroom by a teacher and was called to leave the classroom for speech. Being the only student leaving the classroom has made me felt embarrassed and isolated from the rest of the students. I missed the cool science activities, classroom events, math games, and especially having the connection with my peers. As time went on, I began to believe that I am not normal, or maybe I am a “student with a mental disability”, or there was something wrong with me.

It finally came a time where I felt the need to say something. It was a regular day in third grade and once again was asked to be escorted out of the classroom. The teacher announced, “Kalia, it is time for you to go to speech.” I remember the students turning my direction waiting for me to leave the classroom. I shook my head and said, “No.” My teacher, the Teacher Assistant, and my speech teacher surrounded me trying to convince me to go. I refused to leave my chair. Finally, the Speech Teacher asked, “Kalia why don’t you want to go with me?” I remember feeling excited being able to express how I
feel about the whole situation, but I was stuck with my words. My mind was filled with so many explanations, but I did not know how to come about expressing myself. I stuttered my word and eventually gave up. From that point on, I came to accept that maybe I do need help. Internally, I told myself to work harder and learn quickly so I can be in a “normal” classroom; it was quite a goal for a young child at the time.

In speech class, I learned to stretch my vowels, pronounce letters, describe books, and reflect on stories with my speech pathologist. Although I have vivid memories of all the books we covered in speech, there was only one book that I felt a connection with and remember until this day. It was called, *Blueberries for Sal* (1948) by Robert McClosky. With a brief overview of the book, it was about a little girl name Sal who went blueberry picking with her mother. Sal picks the berries and eats the berries enjoying its wonderful taste. Eventually Sal ran into a Baby Bear who was also eating blueberries like her, this image created such an explicit imagination that makes the book more thought-provoking, wondering what will happen to Sal and Baby Bear. The book entails similar experiences with my mother and I when we usually go raspberry picking at the farm every summertime. The details as Sal picks the berries and drop it into the tin can, I too, picked berries and drop it into the can. When Sal eats the berries, I too, ate berries. When Sal’s mother became worried about Sal, my mother too, was worried about my safety. I felt a strong connection with the story because of the similar experiences both Sal and I share.

**Reading Literature**

In Middle School, I became an author. I loved writing in my journal about my life. Journaling is like writing your own story without being critiqued or judged. It was a way to release any internal feelings in a locked book and no one else but yourself would see,
very therapeutic. I also became a major bookworm and the books that I read are mostly foreign history related, my top favorite books are Tangled Threads (2003) by Pegi Dietz Shea, When the Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down (1997) by Anne Fadiman, Empress Orchid (2004) by Anchee Min, and Little Cricket (2004) by Jackie Brown. All thanks to my speech teacher and ESL teacher who encouraged continue to read. I used books to learn about different cultures around the world and I love learning about history of several cultures. The importance of embracing diversity is a way to understand the marginalized population in the world.

Despite the discouraging moments of my literacy experience, it was the determination to learn and understanding the value of literacy. Literacy not only teaches students how to speak, read, and write; it is how student approach the materials, build a connection, and accelerate from what they have already learn. If students cannot make a connection with their book, how will they become motivated to read? How can students continue to think critically if they have not been exposed to a variety of real-life settings and scenarios that was presented in the learning materials?

I came to realize that being able to form a variety of subjects applying with literacy materials I must first expose myself to new activities, hobbies, and environment. I was determined to engage in more learning activities in which will strengthen my knowledge. After School Enrichment Experience:

My first experience with an after-school activity was the Reading Program that was created for youth who are living in the Project Housing or Section 8 housing. The program provided homework help, reading literacy, as well as service learning and leadership building activities. It was my first involvement at a young age that made me
realize that “things like this” do exist. My parents are handworkers as they farm and work non-traditional hours, so my siblings and I had to find our own ways to engage with after school activities. The program introduced me to a wide variety of activities like softball, snow tubing, valley fair, singing, political science, health, and many more.

Shortly after the Reading Program, I followed my siblings to join Boy Scouts of America Venture Crew Six at the age of 14. Venture Crew Six challenged my skills to the next level. They introduced me to outdoor activities, fundraising, leadership building, teamwork, and service work. One of the most eye-opening event for our service work is tutoring students at elementary schools, the students we worked with were Hmong immigrants and they speak very minimal English. We tutored the students in English and translate the materials into Hmong to connect students to the reading materials. Some of the words I found could not be translated in Hmong, so we had to use different terms that helped the students understand their materials. It was one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences I have encountered as a teenager.

Being involved with the Reading Program and Venture Crew Six greatly opened my eyes for new opportunity in college. I found that my experiences through high school supported the lessons that were taught in college. It was easier to write my undergraduate papers, speak about the social justice in the community and becoming a voice for underrepresented by taking a leadership role as the Vice President in the organization called, Asian Students in Action during my sophomore year in college.
Background:

I graduated from Saint Cloud State University with a Bachelors of Arts in Cultural Anthropology and double minor in Asian Pacific American and Ethnic Studies. I earned a position as a Service Learning and Leadership Program Coordinator where I have the opportunity to educate Southeast Asian Youth on Agricultural Biodiversity, Financial Literacy, and Computer Literacy. Within a year and a half of observing the Hmong and Karen/Karenni Youth that I instruct daily, I am amazed by the Youth. Who would have known that the youths from two different cultures and two different backgrounds were once strangers, now blossomed into a strong team of leaders that will continue to make a difference in their community? They have become more outspoken, their grades in school quickly rise rapidly, and they can interact comfortably with their teachers and administrators.

Today, I am the Education Enhancement Assistant working at an International Baccalaureate World School. I have also encountered students who struggle to understand the concept of their assignments and outside projects. With students spending six to seven hours in a traditional classroom learning basic math, language arts, social studies, gym and science classes, is hardly enough time for students to apply their learning into the world in which they live in. For example, I have come across a class of middle school students who were assigned to write a Community Service Learning Paper but they questioned, “How do we begin?”; “Where do we find the resources?”; “And who do we talk to?” Where do they receive the support when the teachers are not available? Students need undertaking activity that will help them engage, interact, discuss, and practice their learning in several different fields.
For the reason, from the boundless result, I want to continue to change the lives of the students through encouraging positive behavior, promote self-esteem and to reach out to the students who once felt marginalized by educating them with literacy enrichment. Because of this drive I have continued to pursue a profession in the Master in Literacy Education at Hamline University.

Take Action Steps

I find myself reflecting on my childhood experiences and the events in which I have encountered. I continue to find a strong purpose to be in the position in where I stand today. With my current position as the Education Enhancement Assistant coordinating the After School Academic and Enrichment Program for the school, this is an opportunity in which I can focus on the literacy challenges that the student face daily. From the experiences of implementing literacy into the different enrichment subjects, I find that literacy involves not only reading, writing, and speaking for itself but a balance of interactive activities.

The population of our student body at our school is mainly of Southeast Asian Background. In reference to the Minnesota Report Card, it is the population that makes up 99.4% of our student bodies at the school (MDE, 2016). The students consist of first, 1.5, second, and third generation of Hmong and Karen/Karenni students, and I am very fortunate to be a part of this learning community. My research will focus on students who are currently in the transition of adapting to life in America. The students come from a practice where their families had taught them to be obedient and listen to their elders. Because of this continuous practice, students were brought up to stay quiet and not to question their teachers. Teachers have expressed their concerns about their students are
not asking for help and they do not know how else to help. They continue to believe that the students understand the materials because they are smart. I believe it is important to understand the cultural awareness as well as how this type of assumption leads to the Model Minority Myth (Guofang Li and Lihshing Wang 2008) and how it affects the standards that are put amongst Asian Students, specifically Southeast Asian, in which I will discuss later in the second chapter.

Balancing the life with the social and ideological culture of Asian students along with the school goals to advance students’ literacy performance is a pressure amongst the school district and the students. In school districts in general, the perpetuation of the hegemonic culture that is currently battling the social and ideological beliefs of Asian students that needs to be discussed along with this research (Lull, 2003). The research cannot be complete without bringing the social justice awareness about our students and its repeated history of the Myth. To counteract these stereotypes and ideologies one must be fully aware of the population they are working with and to make sure cultural practices do not hold back our student voices and to provide a strong support system that will encourage their skills and growth with literacy performances. I have set my inquiry in this capstone focus: How to improve third grade literacy performance through the involvement of the After-School Literacy Enrichment Program.

Summary:

The After-School Enrichment Program provides a variety of activities in which helps students build engage in their learning materials. Students may begin to pinpoint what they have learned in the enrichment programs and bring those ideas into the classrooms. As an Activities Assistant working in the fields of education, one has
tried all possible strategies coordinating classes that will engage the student learning and encourage students to use their skills to their fullest potential. I feel the need to engage myself with the students at our school and begin to identify their challenges in a classroom. I believe that the best learning experience comes from engaging students in interactive enrichment activities that focus on literacy, service learning, and leadership activities which will help enrich their skills often these experiences are over stepped and pushed aside without realizing the significant power behind it. I plan to develop a focus group to examine students’ literacy performance in order to excel their reading performances in school by creating a literacy curriculum that will focus on reading comprehension that engages in active participation of enrichment activities.

In the next chapter, I will share a brief history of the two Southeast Asian populations and their cultural influence in the school setting. Next, I will describe the Model Minority Myth that burdens in our education system and how it affects our students today. In the literature review, I will cover the focus of critical literacy through reading comprehension and implementing a culturally responsive classroom. In the chapters that follow, I will provide my method of collecting qualitative data: support for in depth classroom, and creating a curriculum that will support both literacy enrichments. I personally plan to incorporate some activities into my work setting.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In Chapter One, I highlighted my personal journey growing up with literacy and how I was exposed to literacy growing up. My literacy teachers, instructors, and speech pathologist have taught me to analyzing, evaluating, and questioning a text. Critical literacy has improved my personal growth in reading comprehension, and I believe that by using the critical literacy approach instruction will help me meet my instructional goals. To begin the literature review, a brief history of the two ethnic groups of students I work with, the Hmong and Karen/Karenni students. The group of students make up of 99% (MDE, Report Card 2016) of the student population at the school. By researching on the two groups acknowledges their presence in our community and introduce or “reintroduce” our students. Often times the two ethnic groups may be overlooked and may be very rarely talked about the types of pressure they face in our education system. The students challenged me to dig deeper into the meaning of literacy enrichment programs.

My goal is to create a group of third graders that will participate in the After-School Enrichment Program. These students will have the opportunity to engage with reading materials and can examine readings in different ways. As the students engage in the texts they will participate in activities that will help excel their understanding of the reading materials.

In the second chapter that follows the History of the Hmong and Karen/Karenni, the literature review examines the poverty levels that affect students learning, and leading
to the pressure of the Model Minority Myth that creates an “invisible standard” for students to achieve. Leading onto the importance of being culturally responsive in a classroom, and the significance of the critical literacy strategies that may be used in comprehending reading literacy into the classrooms along with improving positive behavior. The literature review will provide guidance, support, and clarity to my research topic.

Hmong History to the United States

As briefly discussed in chapter one, the Vietnam War caused many families to flee to the United States. During the Vietnam war 1955-1975, the Hmong people were recruited by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to collaborate and fight the Vietnam War alongside with the United States (Barr, 2004, p. 13). After the Southern Vietnam Capital, Saigon falls into the forces of North Vietnamese leading the war to end in 1975. In result of this, the Pathet Lao communist conquered Laos and the Hmong were targeted reprisals because of their association with the United States (Dentince, 2016).

To escape the risk of severe retaliation from the Lao Government, Hmong and other Laotian people escaped to eastern Thailand where they were placed in the refugee camps.

In an interview with Chue Xeng Lee and his experience coming to the United States he stated,

“During our journey we hid in the jungles, I have witness some friends and families being executed while in hiding. Almost every night, I would hear guns, shootings, and screams. It was a very scary experience. We cross the Mekong River and your mother and I would hold onto your sisters tightly as we swim cross… Once we arrived at the refugee camp,
life was even harder trying to feed the family. Rice was only given once a couple bowls a week. Life didn’t get any easier once we arrive to the United States. We had to quickly learn English and adapt to society. I cannot learn English because it was too much to bear…” (C. Lee, personal communication. April 10, 2016).

Through the traumatic experiences and carrying on with life in the United States, it was not an easy route. Many Hmong families may relate to the similar experiences as my family went through. Chue Xeng was unable to learn English because of the traumatic experiences in which he experienced coming to the United States. With very minimal English, he could not find a job to support the family, therefore, had to rely on farming to support the family. For many generations and even today, Hmong farmers continue to sell vegetables within the Twin Cities.

Karen/Karenni History to the United States

Karen (Kah-ren) or Karenni (Kah-ren-nee) families have identified their ethnicity through language and geographical locations in Burma and Myanmar.

Geographically, the Karen/Karenni is indigenous to the Thailand-Burma border region in Southeast Asia and are identified as one of the many ethnic groups in Burma (Neiman, Soh, Sutan, 2008). The History with the Karen/Karenni community is, “rather be known for its diverse ethnic history and rich natural resources, Burma is distinct as the setting of the longest running civil wars in the world” (Ward, 2002). Because of the little known history about the Karen/Karenni population, research is still needed to be done. According to the Karen Cultural Profile by Neiman, Soh, and Sutan (2008), “During the World War II, with Japanese invasion of Burma, many were committed against the Karen
by the Burman. While British were negotiating independence after WWII, the Karen advocated for independence from Burma and for their own land... (2008). Unfortunately, their request was unacknowledged in 1948 (Neiman, Soh, Sutan, 2008). With the Karen/Karenni history is known as one of the longest civil war in the world, there is a continuous battle for freedom and independence. The Karen/Karenni villages were attacked by military forces, rice field were burned down, the woman raped, and military regime enact genocide policies in the ethnic areas.

Karen/Karenni families began to flee Burma and took refuge in the refugee camps along the West of Thailand. Through the support of religious programs and family sponsorship Karen/Karenni population began immigrating to the United States since 2004. According to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (2009), Immigration and Resettlement to the United States, the first group is approximately 1,400 arriving in June 2004...the top three states from Burmese immigrant resettlement were Texas, New York, and Indiana” (p. 15). Since 2004, there are approximately 2,000 Karen/Karenni people have settled in the United States and the waves of Karen/Karenni families still currently resettling in the United States (Neiman, Soh, Sutan, 2008).

Life in USA: Poverty Levels Affecting School Readiness

According to the U.S Census (2010), “Asian Americans have higher poverty rates with Hmong having the highest percentage of poverty at 32.1% living in poverty and other Asian Ancestry standing at 18.7 %” (U.S Census, 2010, p. 26). The Hmong and Karen/Karenni immigrants were poorly educated and unskilled workers, most had been farmers in their home country. Some have received education in their home country but because of resettlement, their educational records were left behind. Families settled in
public housing with parents working odd hours and graveyard shifts. The U.S Census (2010) stated, “Child Poverty has negative impact outcomes such as school readiness… Hmong and Lao communities have the highest proportion of children living in poverty with its population making up 38.6%” (p. 27). With economic hardship it diminishes parents’ ability to interact with their children that will be beneficial to the child’s education such as homework help, reading time, or participate with their child’s daily activities.

Model Minority Myth affecting Southeast Asian Students


What does it mean to be “modeled”? Asians may often be seen as obedient, calm, not cause problems; Asian Americans are thought to be good at math, successful, persistent, hardworking, and are excel in education. It is a racial controlled power that perpetuates Asian Americans as “modeled” citizens. As Asian American students are balancing equality within the myth, not all perpetuated the stereotype and its hegemonic culture, Southeast Asian American students. As Li ad Wang (2008) stated, “Underneath the surface glory, however, the model minority stereotype imposed on Asian American
students has resulted in silence voices, neglected needs among this racially diverse group (Lee, 1994; Lee & Kumashiro, 2005; as cited in Li & Wang, 2008, p.5). Because the myth has over glorifying Asian Americans in general, it began to overlook the variation needs for educational resources ranging from underachieving refugees from Southeast Asia (Walker-Moffat, 1995; Yang, 2004; as cited in Li & Wang, 2008, p.5). Southeast Asian Americans experienced difficult in education and socioeconomic quality (Chang & Le, 2005; as cited in Li & Wang, 2008, p. 118). Li and Wang have affirmed, “Because of the “model minority” stereotype, many schools are reported to have not monitored or recorded the dropout rates among Asian Americans” (Li & Wang, 2008, p. 218).

By reflecting and reviewing the types of pressures Asian American students have faced through history, the Model Minority Myth is something that we should not need to come across especially in the education system. It is the invisible standard that is often overlooked and should be emphasized if ever come across a table. Education must be specifically designed to perpetuate and enrich the culture of people and equip them with tools to become functional participants in society (Gay, 2013). By understanding the students’ cultural roots, histories, and the types of learning environment they once exposed to, are all factors that shaped their understanding of the world today. Conversely, to better help these students there should be a strong support, a genuine approach, and a safe learning environment for our student. That is to be Culturally Responsive in a Classroom.

Culturally Responsive in a Classroom

Culturally Responsive or also known as Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Richard, Brown, & Forde, 2006) provides a framework in working with a diverse group
of students. In order to better understand the meaning of being culturally responsive in a classroom, first and foremost, important to understand the significant influence it serves in the classroom.

**Defining Culturally Responsiveness.** There are a number of ways to approach the meaning of being culturally responsive. Geneva Gay, Professor of Education at the University of Washington-Seattle researched and wrote about being Culturally Responsive in several of her articles in which I have referenced in this piece. Geneva Gay defines culturally responsive teaching as, “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2010; as cited in Gay, 2015 p.49). As Gay continues with the meaning, it is a means for improving achievement by teaching diverse students through their own culture filters (Gay, 2015, p. 50).

Students learn differently depending on the settings in the classroom and where they originally practice their understanding of the world. Culturally responsive education can strengthen student connectedness with schools (Bazron, Osher, Fleischman, 2005).

Culturally responsive teaching in the classroom encourages a sense of acceptance, interpersonal relationship, and communication that supports the academic achievement of all students. Culturally responsive pedagogy facilitates and supports the achievement of all students (Richard, Brown, & Forde, 2006, p.4). In a culturally supported classroom, effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement (Richard, Brown, & Forde, 2006, p.4). Culture Filters, in
which will later discuss in this chapter is a unique method to identify how students attempt connect the learning materials to what they have already known.

**Culture Filter**


“Filters make sense out of the ordinary things…Culture filter sends out instructional message to kids coming from the school reference. When kids from ethnic backgrounds are trying to learn, they are trying to receive what we send from school through another set of culture filter. And if they don’t match then nothing is happening. So culturally responsive teaching is then said, rather than always assisting that the students adapt to the culture of the school, the school need to adapt and modify some of its sending messages” (Gay, 2010, p. 48).

Students, who cannot relate to the materials, are more likely to perform poorly in academia. Referencing to Gay’s comment, instead of having the students learn the culture in the school, the school needs to change its system to work for the student body. It means for improving achievements by teaching diverse students through their own culture filters (Gay, 2013).

In a classroom where an Instructional Coordinator instructing Southeast Asian Immigrant Youth on basic computer literacy, is required to use already established curriculum, it may be requiring that restructuring that curriculum and changing the wordings so students can relate to the learning materials, is necessary. For example, an
activity in the lesson plan, “Name That Tune”, the lists of tune were songs like Happy Birthday, Joy to the World, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, and A-B-C…etc. Moments later as we began the game, the students stood silent. To some of us, it is a very easy recognizable song however it was not easy for students to understand. It is something they are unfamiliar with and the terms used in the song they do not understand; Gay says, “…since all Americans do not have the same set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, values, and norms, a single system of education seems impossible to serve everyone… Educators must accept the existence of cultural pluralism in this country” (Gay, 2010; as cited in Gay, 2013, p.50). Educators must not fail to overlook the existence of the diversity and modify its learning materials to fit the needs of students.

Teacher must create classroom culture where all students regardless of their cultural and linguistic background are welcomed and supported, and provided with the best opportunity to learn (Richards, Brown, & Ford, 2006, p.4). This emphasis stressed on culturally responsive teaching that recognizes the importance of student’s culture and referencing in all aspects of enriching classroom experiences.

Culture filter recognizes the disconnection between the classroom lesson and the students and bringing that emphasis to culturally responsiveness classroom. The curriculum in which will built amongst those learning experiences.

**Becoming a Culturally Responsive Educator**

Designing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a diverse population can be challenging in many ways; searching for appropriate reading materials, finding activities for a specific age level, and reflecting on how to become more Culturally Responsive in the classroom. To build a curriculum that can meet the needs of the students, one must
recognize their ways of cultural responsiveness: *How to become a culturally responsive educator?*

In the article *Creating Culturally Responsive School* (2005) by Bazron, Osher, and Fleischmann pinpoint six approaches to guide educators to become culturally responsive in their research. These approaches as a learning tool to create curriculum and examine areas are:

1. Match the classroom instructions to cultural norm for social interactions to enhance students’ social skills development and problem-solving ability (Bazron, Osher, Fleischman, 2005, p.84).

2. When asking questions, or giving directions, adjust wait time for students from different cultures to enhance classroom participation and the development of critical thinking skills (Tharp, 1989; as cited in Bazron, Osher, Fleischman, 2005, p.84).

3. Be sensitive to the cultural shifts that immigrant students or other students with minority family and community cultures must make as they move between school and home. Transition maybe most difficult at the beginning of the school week (Bazron, Osher, Fleischman, 2005, p.84).

4. Help parents gain cultural capital-skills to negotiate the education system and knowledge of the norms of behavior that governs the school.

5. Use culturally responsive and respectful approaches in character education, social skill instruction, and discipline (Bazron, Osher, Fleischman, 2005, p.84).
6. Educator takes notes. Embracing the strengths and addressing the diverse needs of or increasingly multicultural, multilingual student population requires major transformation of our current school practices (Bazron, Osher, Fleischman, 2005, p.84).

With educators exposed to culturally responsiveness, direct instructions may not be needed and eventually the approaches will come naturally to the educator.

The importance of being culturally aware is stressed among all educators; Gay quoted, “Education must be specifically designed to perpetuate and enrich the culture of a people and equip them with tools to become functional participants in society if so they choose” (Gay, 1972; as cited in Gay, 2013, p.42). Whether it is through training, attending cultural events, asking questions, or giving the chance for students become the teacher and let them about their cultural heritage for a day. There are several ways as educators to continue to learn more about culture.

To enrich the students learning one must acknowledge their values and by using this approach to improve the performance of underachieving ethnically and racially diverse students. As Gay concluded, “A key mandate of culturally responsive teaching is accessing this internal strength of ethnically diverse students and communities, and using it to improve their personal agency and educational achievement” (p.68). To be able to respond to culture in a diverse classroom, specifically speaking Southeast Asian Students, this is encouraging positive behavior, self-esteem, and motivation for learning through cultural learning and engagement. They can adapt to the learning material, engage in the activities, and challenge the topics.
Critical Literacy

To better understand the purpose of using critical literacy in a diverse classroom, it is important to understand the meaning of Critical Literacy and how it can better serve our students. Referring to the research focus: *How to improve third grade literacy performance through the involvement of the After-School Enrichment Program*, which involves in the logistics on how to build a curriculum that will improve their literacy performances. Especially working with Southeast Asian third graders, Critical Literacy build structure in the classroom-it functions to enhance understanding of the literacy materials. The goal for Critical Literacy is to create a group of third graders that will be able to analyze a text during the extension of the After-School Program by using critical literacy as the main framework.

**Defining Critical literacy.** There are numbers of ways to define Critical Literacy and definitions in which has been crystalized to fit certain subjects in areas of literacy. McLaughlin and DeVoogd, *authors of Critical Literacy, Enhancing Students Comprehension of the Text*; (2004), defined Critical Literacy and its purpose: “Critical literacy helps us read texts in deeper, more meaningful ways. It encourages readers of all ages to become actively engaged and use their power to construct understanding and not be used by the text to fulfill the intentions of the author” (2004, p.7). It encourages students to think outside of the box and ask questions rather than taking the information for what it is presented. McLaughlin and DeVoogd defines Critical Literacy (2004), “Critical Literacy views readers as active participants in the reading process and invites them to move beyond passively accepting the text’s message to question, examine, or dispute the power relationships
that exist between readers and authors. It focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation and action” (Freire, 1970; as cited in McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004, p.14).

Critical literacy thus “challenges the status quo in an effort to discover alternative paths for self and social development” (1997, p.1). It can extend traditional definitions of comprehension to understand the author’s message beyond what appears on the printed page-to comprehend from a critical stance (2004, p.7). Critical literacy skills can help students identify, reflect on and analyze underlying power relationships which are seldom apparent and are rarely explored in the texts or in the media (Roberge, 2013). By engaging students through what it is beyond a typical text generates a sense of learning motivation, enhancing learnings, and branching from what the students have already know.

Critical Literacy as a Framework

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) explain the two instructional frameworks in which they have found helpful in their work. The first is used to teach the critical literacy strategies and the second is used to teach critical literacy lessons in which students apply the strategies after they have learned what they are and how to use them (p.37). The literacy lessons as mentioned apply knowledge into the students’ fieldwork. McLaughlin and Allen provided a Guided Comprehension Direct Instruction Framework to adapt into teaching critical literacy strategies, the strategies are (McLaughlin & Allen, 2002a, p.7):

1. **Explain** what the critical literacy strategy is and how it works

2. **Demonstrate** the strategy using a think-aloud, a read aloud, and an overhead projector or chalkboard.
3. **Guide** the students to work in small groups or with partners to create responses.

4. **Practice** by having students work with partners or independently to apply the critical literacy strategy.

5. **Reflect** on how the strategy helps students read from a critical stance.

The framework helps readers think about texts from a critical perspective and engage in critical analysis.

**Critical Literacy in Action**

Critical literacy framework covers the educational piece in the After-School Literacy Enrichment Program. To go more into the branching details of the framework, critical literacy in action covers the groundwork of challenging the text (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 38). Challenging the reader to access critical understanding and developing problem posing questions that examines the issues in the book. Challenging the reader will be the key issues in which is encouraged for students to develop critical thinking questions. When challenging the text, it may be portrayed as from a social justice standpoint as in approaching language and communication from a questioning and analytic standpoint (Roberge, 2013). Although working with a younger group of students may have experience minimal life situation, it is important to raise questions that revolve around their knowledge, problem posing question.

Problem Posing provokes critical understanding of the text, thus it is not necessary to list and answer each question (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). The intention to rise question to what is beyond the text using problem posing to challenge the text which is used to examine issues such as what the author wants to believe (p. 64):
Using Problem Posing to Challenge Text:

- Who or what is the focus in the text and whose viewpoint is expressed?
- Whose voices are missing, silenced, or discontinued?
- What does the author want readers to believe?
- How might alternative perspectives be represented?

Critical Literacy in Action is the main area focus to engage students in classroom lessons and activity extending their learning opportunities. It encourages students to ask question and speak about their thoughts and points, and not only support higher order thinking skills but also helps to lay a foundation for integrating positive and inclusive behaviors—both school and beyond (Roberge, 2013). Students can learn the communication skills at a young age and learning how to improve those communications as they continue with literacy learnings. This engages their desire for thinking or problem solving that will motivate the students to dig deeper into their work and to strengthen their understanding.

Conclusion

Chapter two focused on the importance of bringing cultural responsiveness into the classroom, specifically gearing towards Southeast Asian Students. This chapter began with a brief history of the Southeast Asian Community. Educators need to respond to the needs of the students by seeing from a cultural lens and learning from the culture filters in which the students encountered in the classrooms. This not only develop the effectiveness of lesson planning but also improving student’s comprehension of the learning materials by becoming an effective culturally responsive educator.
The literature review examined the poverty levels in the Southeast Asian Community in Minnesota, as the Southeast Asian community is one of the highest percentages living in poverty; an issue leading towards affecting the achievement gap of students. This is a concern that is preventing the students from further enhancing their literacy performances and with the understanding of the economic hardship, as educators, to learn how to support or students from a shifting teaching approach. With parents trying to make ends meet, leading to the lack of the educational support from parent to child. With economic hardship it reduces parents’ ability to interact with their children that will be beneficial to the child’s education such as homework help, reading time, or participate with their child’s daily activities. The After School Literacy Program is provided to meet the needs of students who are underperforming in their literacy practices.

In response to my capstone how to improve student literacy performance through the involvement of the After School Enrichment Program, the researched articles and texts examined on how to best engage Southeast Asian Students enhancing their literacy performance through the framework of critical literacy. As the literature review on McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) literacy lesson framework that is implemented into the after school literacy program, this research piece will be reviewed as a timeline in which leads up to a curriculum that engages with culture and literacy. Finally, the literature review examined the different types of ways in how we can engage striving and motivating young student learners in literacy through taking critical literacy into action in which, in hopes, to strengthen students’ literacy performance with their motivation with problem solving.
In chapter three, I will discuss the setting and the participants that will be a part of the developing process of the After School Literacy Enrichment Program. I will describe the methods in creating a general schedule, lesson plans, and interactive activities involving short reading pieces in the classroom. Along with pre and post survey to determine the effectiveness of the literacy program, I will also discuss the research paradigm along with the types of data collection in which will be effective in this research. In chapter four I will share the results of the findings and evaluate the pre and post assessment. Finally, in Chapter five I will reflect on the capstone process and explain ideas for potential future studies.
CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Introduction

In chapter two, I shared research findings related to how to improve student literacy performance through the involvement of the After School Literacy Enrichment Program. I explained the groups of students in which I will be working with; third graders specifically Hmong and Karen/Karenni students. Furthermore, I explored the types of challenges students face and how poverty levels and being newly arrival immigrants are affecting students’ literacy performances. After reviewing the types of challenges I discuss about creating a curriculum and implementing it into my classroom. The curriculum is created through the framework of critical literacy along with cultural responsiveness activities and reading materials. In chapter three, I will explain the methods of this study which will include the setting of the research and data collection, description of the participants, and the curriculum that will be used in the action research.

Goals

The intent of this action research project is to support Southeast Asian Students in a school and to enrich their literacy performances through the participation of the After School Literacy Enrichment Program. This is to promote the effectiveness of a culturally responsive classroom and enriching student skill sets through engaging activities. This project is a curriculum implementation project therefore; I will provide instructions while using modeled curriculum that is already in place. As equally important as it is, the intent of this action research is to find literacy texts and activities that will help educators
recognized the significant role in being culturally responsive in their teaching materials through a cultural lens.

**Research Paradigm**

The research for this study is qualitative. Mills (2014) defined qualitative research as “uses narrative, descriptive approaches to data collection to understand the way things are and what the research means from the perspectives of the participants in the study” (p. 6). Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This process involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis… and the researcher making interpretation of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014).

A participant observer is defined as a genuine participant in the activity being studied” (McMillan, 1996, p.245 as cited in Mills, 2014, p.84) and to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of a situation and engage in activities that are appropriate to a given situation that provides useful information (Mills, 2014). Although I used some quantitative data to identify students and to measure the effectiveness of their literacy performance, I will focus on observing behavior and how students respond to the learning materials.

I believe qualitative research is the most effective approach in action research because working directly with the participants as well as taking empirical notes signifies an effort to first-hand knowledge. This involves engaging with student activities, observing student behavior, and asking critical questions. The types of research tools that will be used in this action research are self-assessment, survey, and data. The collected
data itself will use as a guide to explore the effectiveness of the After School Literacy Enrichment Program.

Setting & Participants

The action research took place at an IB World Charter School in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Regular school hours are from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. The charter school consists of 99% Southeast Asian Population and 1% white (MDE Report card 2016). The school is located in the urban setting with all students receive free and reduce lunch. Instructed in an after school literacy enrichment program for one month, twice a week at 1.5 hours per class. A total of 10 hours. The specific weekdays depended on parent’s availability to pick up their child after school. One month was given to test out the effectiveness of the program and to consider whether it should be continued or discontinued.

The participants in this action research were a group of eight, third graders, primarily Hmong and Karenni in which the third grade teachers had identified as “average standard” or “below” literacy standard performance. The students were identified as needing extra help, thus were selected to be in the program by their teachers. Parents signed an agreement to have their child to take part of this after school literacy program. This literacy program was a first come first serve, which meant that the first eight students to return their permission slips were enrolled in the program.

Curriculum Development

With this program being fairly new to the school, each week I developed a lesson plan based off of the information from the previous week. The curriculum development informed by of the Stages of Reading from Daniels and Zemelman (2004). Daniels and
Zemelman provided numerous examples of reading activities along with definite explanations on how it can affect students reading. The reading materials in class were applied to several of the activities included in the classroom. I want to make sure that the reading pieces found through research were applied to real life experiences giving students the opportunity to think and question critically and keep in mind that this is an opportunity to enrich the student skill sets through variety of readings. The table below show the structure that was used.

Table I: Curriculum Development, Stages of Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Reading</th>
<th>Tools for Thinking</th>
<th>Purposeful Quotes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Reading experts often refer to cognitive strategies that readers use to understand what they are reading. But they also talk about instructional strategies that teachers use in the classroom to help students learn those mental strategies” (<strong>2004, p. 87</strong>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set purpose for reading</td>
<td>Think Aloud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activate prior knowledge</td>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop questions</td>
<td>Frontloading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make predictions</td>
<td>Images</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During Reading</strong></td>
<td>Pre-reading Quiz</td>
<td>“These activities involve discussion, writing, drawing, and even having kids get up and move around the room-activities that help students engage with, understand, and apply the reading they do in the process, learn to use their minds more effectively as they read. And of course these classroom activities take place, they activate a number of mental strategies good readers use to understand a text (<strong>2004, p. 88</strong>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample text</td>
<td>Dramatic Role-Play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualize</td>
<td>Vocabulary predictions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesize</td>
<td>Partner Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm/alter predictions</td>
<td>Post-it Response Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor Comprehension</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After Reading</strong></td>
<td>Annotating Text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall/retell</td>
<td>Coding Text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Multicolumn Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Sketching My Way Through the Text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reread</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tools for Thinking: Across the Curriculum

Students follow this schedule weekly. The detailed activities are provided in the appendices.
This curriculum sought to improve literacy enrichment for third and fourth grade readers as they learned to read and question the reading pieces and applying it to the world. With critical literacy as a framework-explain, demonstrate, guide, practice, reflect (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004), this curriculum seeks to foster a cultural awareness with educators through culture lens.

**Data Collection**

There were a variety of tools used to measure and collect data. Throughout the course of research, the tools qualitatively measured student’s growth within a month period. Although there are many ways to collect data, I narrowed to the three main qualitative tools used to measure their progress.

**Observation.** Observing and taking field notes is one of the most effective ways to record my research findings. Similar to a journal, observation analyzed student’s behavior and performance within the one-month period (Appendix B).

**Student survey.** The student survey is given to students at the beginning of the program. The survey gathers information about the individual and their interest in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Class Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:30-4:45</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:45-5:00</td>
<td>Read Short Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00-5:30</td>
<td>Tools for Thinking Strategies: Close Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30-5:45</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45-6:00</td>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
participating in literacy programs similar to this research program in the future. The survey determines the existence of the program in the future and it was used to create the classroom lesson plans (Appendix C).

Pre & Post Assessment: Writing Measurements. The Pre-and Post Assessment tool is used to measure the progress my students in regarding their attitudes towards the literacy performance, specifically towards writing. It is use to see where the student stands in their writing progress as well as their awareness to detailed writing.

Journals. The students kept a journal to record daily activities and how they feel about certain topics. The journal is kept as a personal journey for students to record their personal experiences and for my end, to be able to help students reflect on their learning. The journals were very informal and they were completed at the last fifteen minutes of the day and it is focused on student selected topics.

Ethics

Through this research I understand the ethics in which is required in order to begin the research. I followed the policy and procedures of the Hamline School of Education Human Subjects Committee by submitting my proposal to the Hamline University Institutional Review Board and followed by the capstone proposal meeting. In this research, I understand that a letter of consent must be approved by the parent or guardian of the student. There is little to no risk for the participants in the study. All results were kept confidential and anonymous. I did not record information about individuals, such as names, or reported identifying characteristics in this research. Participation is voluntary and participants were told that they could, at any time, leave the research. Consent was obtained through the permission letter (Appendix A).
Summary

In chapter three methods discuss the approaches taken in this research. The detailed information in the Action Research and the types of data collection in order for the research to be successful were shared. The chapter explains the setting and the participants involved in this study, which is geared towards Southeast Asian third graders. Curriculum was developed utilizing Daniels and Zemelman’s Subject Matters (2004) along with the Critical Literacy (2004) framework from McLaughlin and DeVoogd. Furthermore, explaining the qualitative methods and data collection in order to evaluate participant’s behavior and progress in the After-School Literacy Enrichment Program. As follow the code of conducts in the Human Subjects Committee following policy, procedures, and protocols was discussed.

In chapter four, I will present the results after the research discussing the qualitative data I have found in which I have learned from working with the students. Chapter four will discuss the effectiveness of the program and analyze the results and progress of the students.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

The school I currently work with located in the urban setting of Saint Paul, Minnesota, all students receive free and reduced lunch. Ninety-nine percent of the students are Asian Americans students with English Second Language. Based on the Academic Achievement 52.8% of the students did not meet the reading achievement level (MN report card 2015). Being a staff working with children’s and families and actively participate in after school activities, I have come across cases where parents expressed concerns that because they cannot speak English they are unable to help their child with homework, or due to their odd work hours they cannot provide the academic needs for their child. Because of these challenges families face daily, student tends to fall behind on their academic work. I have parents who suggested having more after school opportunities, tutoring, or reading support for their child.

As I enfold around several quality definitions for culturally responsive teaching, I came up with a definition for culturally responsiveness. I define it as a way for students and teachers to find an interconnectedness relationship with the activities or materials being taught along with information that is culturally and linguistically understood, identifiable, or familiar to the child. After an overview of defining culturally responsiveness I focused on “how to implement culturally responsive reading activities in a diverse third and fourth grade environment.” Culturally responsive teaching is described as the behavioral expression of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning (Gay 2010; as cited in Gay
To recognize the race and culture, I believe that the most important factor in which the six approaches identified is for educators to take notes. This will help educators identify their strengths and weakness; given to reflect and review their instructional materials, and shifting to recreate a new plan. This allowed me to navigate deeper into my research and search through a core area that will encourage positive behavior, self-esteem, and motivation for third and fourth grade students. It also allows me to explore with curriculum and lesson planning to identify best practices in curriculum development. Returning to Geneva Gay’s (2013) definition of culture filter, I want to examine Geneva Gay’s argument on how culture filter leads to culturally responsive teaching while implementing a course that will met the needs of my diverse students.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the types of tools in my action research. The research was twice a week for 1.5 hours, a total of ten hours. The tools included are the student survey, journaling, and observation. These tools lay a foundation of the lesson plans for the students. In this chapter, I present the result of this study centered around the student’s personal growth and observations.

Table III: First day lesson plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Class Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:30-4:45</td>
<td>Introduction: How did you get your name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:45-5:00</td>
<td>Pre-Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00-5:30</td>
<td>Draw a picture that best represents you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30-5:45</td>
<td>Writing Activity: Two Minute Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45-6:00</td>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first day of class is an introductory session where students were given the opportunity to talk about themselves. The students share how they get their name and it was quite a wonderful story. Some students expressed that they have never thought about how they got their name and was very excited to go home and ask their parents the same question. As I observed the first day of class, the students were very concentrated on their work and speak very little.

I continue to encourage students to ask questions and speak their mind if they needed too. It took quite a bit of work to get the students to begin voicing their opinion. It was until I finally asked a question, “Why are students afraid to talk? Or not willing to talk?” The students shared answers, “Because they are afraid of being wrong”; “Because the teacher doesn’t seem listen.” The students seemed to be expressing the lack of acknowledgement in a classroom. From my students’ feedback, I continue to acknowledge their answers and provide words of encouragement.

**Student Survey**

During the first day of class the students took a pre-survey about themselves (Appendix C). The survey reflects on the interest of the students and then the lesson plan is created based on the student’s interest. After the students take the survey, I look for similar patterns in their survey and create the lesson plans based on the students’ interest. For example, the student circle “yes” under the question, “I like to write stories.” It is shown that majority of the students responded “yes” therefore an activity related to writing is included in the lesson plan.
Classroom Discussions

The students begin to raise their hand more, express their thoughts and feelings, and ask questions. In order to build trust, motivation, and relationships with the students I begin the class with a discussion questions. Every beginning of the class period, the students would have discussion revolving on personal development. The questions are simple yet given students the opportunity to talk more. The discussions questions are:

Discussion Questions:

- How did your parents name you?
- What makes you happy?
- When you are upset, how do you deal with your feelings?
- Have you ever come across a time when you want to say something but you didn’t? Why are students afraid to talk?
- What is your story for today?’

The students share ideas, ask questions, and the students were detailed with their stories. Class discussions offer the opportunity to engage, provide feedback, develop communication skills in their classroom. A teacher has expressed to me that ever since one of her students participated in the literacy program, the student is more active in their classroom discussions and facilitate classroom discussions. This is a great improvement in which I have yet seen so far in the short term literacy program.

Pre and post assessment: Measurements of Writing

Writing Activity: Two-minute description. The students have continuous conversations and discussion on personal development. A tool to measure the students’ literacy progress is one of the student’s most favorite activity call the two-minute description. This activity was done three times during the program; first day, middle, and last day of the literacy program. In this activity, the students are given one picture on the
board, their goal is to describe the picture in writing within two minutes. I used three student examples on their progress with writing; The student’s name will remain anonymous. The picture is order starting from the results on the left (first day of class), middle picture (middle of program), and last picture on the right are the results on the last day of the literacy program.

Figure 1.1

**Student A:**

[Image of handwriting]

**Student B:**

[Image of handwriting]
Student C:

As demonstrated by the artifacts above, in the beginning of the program, the students wrote very minimal within two-minute period. It is an improvement in comparison from the beginning of the program to the end, students have written 10 or 20 more words than before. When the student first begins to write they only describe what they see, but towards the end the students not only written about what they see but also how they feel about the picture.

Journal

At the end of the class period students were given 15 minutes to write in their journals. On certain days, topics are assigned but most of the period students are encouraged to write anything that is on their mind. The students will keep their journals as a classroom reflection. I find that once the students begin to write, they are active writers than active readers. In their writing, majority of the students shared with me about how they prefer to write their own stories rather than reading from another book. During journal time a student comment, “It’s hard to read another people’s story because it sounds weird.” I brought this comment to discuss and asked the students to go more into detail about author story being “weird”. I asked, “How come you feel that reading other
IMPROVING STUDENTS LITERACY PERFORMANCE

people’s story is challenging? and the student responded, “I don’t know how to be a part of the story because I don’t know what they are talking about.” I have asked the student to write their thoughts into the journal and keep it so in the future they can reflect. The journal piece is kept confidential as it is only for the students to reflect on. At the end of the After School Literacy Program the students went through their journal and read about their readings. The students giggled and make comments on how they felt that day. One student said, “I wrote about the birthday party and I wish I could have write more. I had so much fun that day.” Another student reflect on her journal and she said, “I wrote so little and I wrote some words wrong, I’m going to correct it. Can I correct it Ms. Kalia?” I answered the student, “Yes, you may. It is your journal and your writing. You can do anything you want with your journal.” The purpose of the journal is for the students to track their daily activities and encourage self-reflection when writing. To know that the students could read through their journal it strengthens the students writing and also it keeps as a permanent record of their progress.

Through Journaling I find that Journaling requires the students to think and reflect. It serves as an inspiration and healing as one writes. When a student commits to writing daily they recognize their own progress and feels motivated to continue writing.

Post Survey

The purpose of the post survey was for students to share their experiences in the literacy program. The post survey consisted of five simple questions on the literacy program where the students talked about their interest in writing and what they have learned in the program.
I have noticed that I was missing one question in the survey, the question asked “Should we have more literacy program like this one?” and the students circled yes or no. The results from this survey, all the students circled, “yes”.

The result of the post surveys indicated that students have asked to do more art activities in the survey and the students provided verbal suggestion in making the literacy program better.

**Reflection Summary**

The purpose of the After-School Literacy Program is to engage the students with hands-on classroom activities. It is an open environment where the students can self-teach with the teacher’s guidance. In the earlier chapters, a question that I have brought to the attention is how do we encourage positive behavior, self-esteem, and motivation for learning that generates a positive outlook for our students? And how do we engage the
students in the classroom culturally? Through the ten-hour literacy program, I have find that students come into the classroom full with diverse cultural practices, once a student is engaged in conversation they speak with confidence and self-esteem, this is only visible when the student feels appreciated and acknowledged.

Dr. Maria Montessori an educator on philosophy of education and author of the *Absorbent Mind* (1967) stated, “We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being” (p.36). To be able to influence a positive behavior and to have the students become engaged in their literacy skill is to connect with the students on a personal level, get to know the students, and listen to what the student must say. As Dr. Maria Montessori (1967) stated, “Respect all the reasonable forms of activity in which the child engages and try to understand them.” (1967, p. 34). Whether it is through a culturally or linguistically activity that would support the student in their learning progress. With active and engaging comes with smoother learning.

When a student writes, they share from their own personal experience and own voice. If a student learns to read, they are reading from someone else’s writing other than their own. *How to improve third grade literacy performance through the involvement of the After-School Literacy Enrichment Program*. With the branching question of how do we encourage positive behavior, self-esteem, and motivation for learning that generates a positive outlook for our students? And how do we engage the students in the classroom culturally? To improve student’s literacy performance is to begin by building a relationship with the students and to connect with the students on the genuine level. By connecting with the students both culturally and linguistically students build self-
confidence and find their potential to speak in the classroom. There must be a willingness
to let students define their own identities in the classroom and given a space for the
students to be themselves. By developing a caring student-teacher relationship supports
learning will continue creating and supporting a brighter future for our students.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Introduction

In the beginning of this capstone I have shared my personal experiences with literacy and improving confidence and self-esteem as discussed in chapter one. The literature reviews in chapter two discussed the information in which supports my methods and curriculum projects. It motivates my intention in starting a literacy enrichment program for young students in which I have committed my research to. In chapter three, I discussed the types of methods used in my research and introduced a structure in which will be discussed. With the support of the resources from Geneva Gay (2013) lecture on cultural filters, McLaughlin, M. & DeVoogd, G.L. (2004), the historical articles on Model Minority Myth from Li & Wang (2008), and the introduction to being culturally competent in the classroom Irvine and Geneva Gay (2013). These resources have encouraged a trained and open mind to starting my own after school literacy enrichment program. In chapter four I have shared my results from the research.

My research consists of observations, pre and post survey, and student journals. By analyzing the data notes I have collected, I look at the effectiveness of the literacy enrichment program that was designed based on student interest. My research question is How to improve third grade literacy performance through the involvement of the After-School Literacy Enrichment Program. With the branching question of how do we encourage positive behavior, self-esteem, and motivation for learning that generates a positive outlook for our students? Based on research findings and observation I find that to bring strengths to school is by connecting with the students both culturally and
linguistically. To improve student’s literacy performance, one must begin with building a relationship with the students at the level of genuine care. Through the journey I have find some limitations as well as personal growth and future projects for myself.

The goal of my capstone and action research was to discover the effect on positive learning behavior through an after-school literacy experience. The result of this goal was a positive one and it has brought me to an empowering journey.

Limitations

My research consists much of discussion and conversations, I have spoken with my students and they have shared personal thoughts on school, their education, and life. It was a very empowering experience for me. One thing I have encouraged is for students to speak their own language as well as English, they are free to speak their language. I find that students are more active and clear with their discussions when they are fully accepted and acknowledged in their culture.

Before this research, I have discussed with parents and they fully support their child taking part of research however they have expressed not to disclosed any personal information that their child has expressed in the classroom. Although it is not limited to my research but the information is confidential, therefore not a lot of information can be shared through this research. With the limited amount of time I have spent with the students, I feel that there is more to the research than just having an after-school literacy program but to engage the students in field trips and service learning projects. Although it is not something successful now, it is something that will be considered for future projects.
Another limitation is that my research took me to a whole new direction. My students were more focused on writing than reading. To be able to support and encourage the students, I changed my lesson plans in order to cater towards their interest. It is quite a challenge finding texts that my students can relate to. The closest text that I find are geared more towards middle school students. It is only on rare occasions that we find culturally relevant books that are geared towards third and fourth graders, specifically on Southeast Asian. Throughout this action research I have find myself creating my own stories and sharing it with the students. It was quite a wonderful experience and the students had the opportunity to facilitate discussions along with the stories. The students asked problem posing questions, draw pictures, and write in their journals about their experiences. Though I am not a licensed teacher, I am very proud to say I could connect with the students and provide leadership opportunities to the students through their literacy experience.

Professional Learning Experience

Throughout my journey with this capstone I have invited some colleagues to discuss about the importance of an after-school literacy enrichment program. I have gained insights from my colleague and advisor on the experience. The after-school literacy enrichment program is an opportunity to further engage students after school hours. It supports students both academically and socially. After school hours are often seen as a time for students to catch up on their work or given time to become academically successful, however I see after school a time for students to engage in deeper meanings of learning; Give students a chance to speak, do some hands-on activities, and build a community of student leadership.
Expanding Future Projects

As I look towards expanding future projects on encouraging after school literacy enrichment programs, I see several areas that I would like to continue to explore. As my main focus will continue on with Southeast Asian Students and recent arrival immigrants and refugees, I want to continue to provide support in my community. I am interested in giving students the opportunity promoting positive behavior in school as well as building self-esteem and leadership opportunities. In addition, I would like to implement an after-school program where students can develop their literacy skills through hands on learning and focus on the cultural pieces. I believe by training students at a younger age and build a strong mindset of leadership skills they can make positive decisions in the world.

Conclusion

My research on improving student’s literacy performance through the involvement of the after-school literacy program was quite a challenging project. Most importantly, I find that when curriculum and instructions are tied with cultural experience and values of the students, school becomes meaningful as well as building positive self-esteem that would encourage successful learning of the students. Students must find a connection with the curriculum in order to engage in the classroom. Educators must provide a safe and supportive environment that would give the students the flexibility to practice their communication skills and enhancing their literacy performance. Passionate and motivated learners are taught by given with care, challenging, and educational experience that will continue to enhance their skills and focus on their strengths rather than their weakness. If a student has a strength in art, continue to encourage the student with art or give assignments with options in the field of art. If a student strength is
writing, read through their narratives and listen to their students. Constant corrections with writing and expecting students to meet a certain standard will only trouble their strengths. As Educators, we must continue to educate ourselves and continue to learn from our students both culturally and linguistically.

Whether it is their understanding of literacy, cultural practices, using their native language daily, or bringing the skills they have learned from home into the classroom are all powerful tools to carry on the benefits of the literacy enrichment programs. With the limitations that was discussed earlier, time play a huge role on my research. Despite the limitations, however, I collected strong empowering stories from my students that will support my future projects.

The result from the action research is a positive one. Teachers have provided positive feedback on their student’s positive improvement in the classroom and have expressed their student’s confidence in their work. In the survey, all the student that participated in this research requested to have a literacy enrichment program like this one, in which I will pursue in my future projects. Culture and language always and will play a huge role in my life and my career. Wherever I go and whatever I do, I will always return to my cultural roots and my identity.
APPENDIX A

CONSENT LETTER
To Parents/Guardians Requesting Permission for Minors to Take Part in Research

November 2016
Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Kalia Lee and I am currently working on an advanced degree in education at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota. As part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research on curriculum development with a group of students in the After School Enrichment Literacy Program from June-July of 2016. The purpose of this letter is to ask your permission for your child to take part in my research. This research is public scholarship the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline’s Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository and that it may be published or used in other ways.

The topic of my master’s capstone is developing a curriculum that focuses on cultural responsiveness through literacy enrichment. This program is specifically geared towards third grade students. With your child’s participation, your child will be able to enrich their literacy performance through reading short pieces that relates to the world while engaging in classroom activities. I plan conduct observations in classroom progress and evaluate the curriculum and make changes as suggested. I will be summarizing the findings within my capstone and may share results with other teachers, administrators, and professionals. Third grade students will benefit from enriching their skillsets through critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and creativity throughout the duration of the After School Literacy Enrichment Program.

There is little to no risk for your child to participate. All results will be confidential and anonymous. I will not record information about individual students, such as their names, nor report identifying information or characteristics in the capstone. Participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time and without negative consequences that information about your child will not be included in the capstone.

The capstone will be catalogued in Hamline’s Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository. My results might also be included in an article for publication in a professional journal or in a report at a professional conference. In all cases, your child’s identity and participation in this study will be confidential.

If you agree that your child may participate, keep this page. Fill out the duplicate agreement to participate on page two and return to me by mail or copy the form in an email me no later than June 1, 2016. If you have any questions, please email or call me at school.

Sincerely,

Kalia Lee
Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Interview
Keep this full page for your records.

I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be observing students’ behavior in groups. I understand there is little to no risk involved for my child, that his/her confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw or my child may withdraw from the project at any time.

___________________  __________________  __________________
Parent/Guardian Signature    Date

Participant copy
## Observation Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
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**Highlight:**

**Questions:**
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<th></th>
<th>WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I like to take pictures</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I like to plant seeds and grow plants</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I like to draw</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I like to write stories</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I like to talk about ideas</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I like to count</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I like to dance</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I like to solve puzzles</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I like to sing</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I like to move around a lot</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I like to color</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I like to make things</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I like to be by myself sometimes</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I like to have a lot of friends</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I like to read</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I like patterns</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I like to take care of animals</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I like to exercise</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I like to work with people</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I like to teach other students</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I like to build things</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I like to talk to people</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I like to work alone</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>I like to race with others</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>I like to listen to stories</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

STUDENT POST SURVEY
Reflection
Post-Survey

1. What did you learn from the Literacy Program?

2. What did you like MOST?

3. What did you like LEAST?

4. What do you wish to see in the literacy program?

5. Do you wish to see a program like this in school? (circle one) Yes  No

Draw a picture of your favorite activity:
References


Ward, J. (2002). If Not Now, When? Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee,

