THE FORGOTTEN "URBAN" SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This research examines teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity training in a suburban school district. While there is an impressive amount of research on how large urban school districts deal with culture and equity in their schools, there is room for more research on how the smaller suburban school districts handle it. This study will add to the research on how these smaller suburban school districts, many of which share characteristics with large urban school districts, handle diverse student populations in training their staff. This study aimed to determine the factors teachers attributed to the success of diverse student learners. Analyzing the teacher responses and the reaction of the principals defined success for diverse learners and uncovered factors that positively influenced their achievement through professional development. The recurring themes uncovered serve to inform educators and organizations that support diverse learners. This study found that teachers seemed to think that their inclinations and upbringing are the internal factors impacting their ability to teach diverse students. The external factors that teachers felt had the greatest impact seemed to be school leadership, the quality of the professional development offered, and the school's climate.

I first want to dedicate this dissertation to the love of my life and the man who changed my life forever. My husband Jerome exemplifies a husband who loves his wife, supports, and takes care of his wife, and encourages and pushes his wife when no one else will. This degree would have never been possible without your love, support, and presence, and I am ever so grateful for you. I love you and am so honored to continue writing the best chapters of them all with you until death does us part.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As confident as we are that education is the key to success, statistics show many disparities in learning that become roadblocks for certain groups of people (Milner, 2012; Harris, 2011. Although the factors attributed to the disparity have changed over time, the disparity has remained. Harris (2011) argues that "The racial achievement gap is the most well-known problem facing schools within the United States. Black and white youth are excelling at drastically different rates in schools" (p.4). Kuhfeld et al. (2021) state that "Asian and White students produce higher test scores than Black, Hispanic, and Native American students" (p.225). They also state that the "Black-White math gap is 30% larger at the end of eighth grade than at the beginning of kindergarten while the reading gap is 39% larger" (p.235). Harris (2011) states that "By age 17, the average black student is four years behind the average white student, and black twelfth graders score lower than white eighth graders in reading, math, history, and geography (p.1).

Disparities in learning mean we cannot guarantee academic success for all students. Garcia (2020) states that "The persistent performance gaps between white and black children that challenge the education and career prospects of black children from early on demonstrate that school segregation continues to cast a very long shadow—from well before Brown v. Board of Education to today, and into the future" (p.4). No matter the date, there has always been some form of disparity present amongst diverse groups of learners in education.

One problem attributed to the disparity is access to quality education. Flores (2007) stated that "data show that African American, Latino, and low-income students are less likely to have access to experienced and qualified teachers, more likely to face

low expectations, and less likely to receive equitable per-student funding" (p.29). Diverse student populations seem to have experiences of teachers who are not prepared to serve their needs. Peske and Haycock (2006) state that "Research has shown that when it comes to the distribution of the best teachers, poor and minority students do not get their fair share" (p.1). Many children, especially minority children, are entering classrooms without the knowledge and skills they need to be academically successful, and the deficit worsens. One reason for this disparity is that "Students in high poverty and high-minority schools are disproportionately assigned to teachers new to the profession" (p.2). Peske and Haycock (2006) found that "Classes in high-poverty and high minority secondary schools are more likely to be taught by "out-of-field teachers" – those without a major or minor in the subject they teach" (p.3). Due to this growing disparity, school districts are seeking methods and strategies to help meet the needs of these diverse student populations in hopes of lessening the gap between them.

The word forgotten in the title "The Forgotten Urban School Districts" alludes to those suburban schools that are demographically changing to almost resemble what we consider "urban. There is much research on how urban schools have responded to diverse student populations, but there is a lack of research to show how suburban schools handle some of the same issues. We can no longer attribute diversity only to urban areas, for research shows that diverse populations exist in our country. This study attempts to contribute to what is missing by studying a suburban school district that has begun initiatives to address its growing population of diverse students.

The History of Diversity

Before the 1950s, legal separation of cultural and racial groups in the United States was common. In the southern states, due to slavery and Jim Crow Laws, which ended up defining racial groups, the separation of racial groups in public places was mandated. According to Lindsey et al. (2018), "An understated reality in U.S. history is the widespread segregation throughout the Northern states. Even without the force of law behind it, separation of the races was as evident in the North as in the South" (p.10).

With the civil rights activism of the 1960s, the shift from desegregation to integration throughout the United States grew. There was a period of activism for social justice, with a push for civil rights that began to include women and other cultural groups. To integrate, there was a push for voluntary and mandatory desegregation of schools and the expansion of entitlement programs. However, Lindsey et al. (2018) described the consequences of these programs, saying, "Certain labels became permanently associated with certain ethnicities, and students in desegregated schools continued to receive substandard educations" (p.11).

As educators began engaging with more diverse student populations, there was a growing need for tools, resources, and strategies to meet diverse learners' needs. The 1970s birthed an emphasis on multiculturalism.

During the 1980s, there seemed to be a shift in companies addressing diversity-related issues. Lindsey et al. (2018) state that "many companies began offering diversity training for managers and other employees, and others began developing distinctive marketing strategies to target various sectors of society" (p.12). The shift in diversity

issues led to an emphasis on cultural competence and diversity in the 1990s and 21st century.

What Diversity Looks Like Across the States

Research shows that America's suburbs are becoming more diverse. Lichter, Thiede, and Brooks (2023) found that "the share of the U.S. metro population living in suburban counties increased from 45.2 to 55.4 percent between 1970 and 2010" (p.28). The authors also found that "The suburban population share increased by 6.9 percentage points between 1990 and 2020, from 59.1 to 66.0 percent" (p.34). Racial and ethnic change in the suburbs of the United States explains the rising numbers of diverse student populations in schools. Tefera et al. (2011) found that "By 2050, the number of Latinos and Asians is expected to triple, and the number of African Americans is projected to grow nearly two percent. Conversely, the number of whites is the only racial group expected to decline, from 66 percent to 46 percent" (p.3).

Vespa et al. (2018) predict that "The non-Hispanic White population is projected to shrink over coming decades, from 199 million in 2020 to 179 million people in 2060" (p.3). They further expect that "the population of people who are Two or More Races is projected to be the fastest growing racial or ethnic group over the next several decades, followed by Asians and Hispanics" (p.3). As the country becomes more diverse, schools will also see growing numbers of diverse student populations. The growth of diverse student populations produces a need for curriculum and teaching methods designed to meet their diverse needs in the classroom.

Diverse Student Populations Extend Beyond Big Cities

As indicated earlier, diversity issues extend beyond the large city schools and occur in the suburban and rural areas. According to Welsh and Swain (2020), six criteria are commonly used to define urban education. They are "(a) population/location/geography, (b) enrollment, (c) demographic composition of students, (d) resources in schools, (e) disparities and educational inequality, and (f) social and economic context are most used to define "urbaness" (p.90).

Phrases such as "urbaness," diversity, and cultural proficiency are commonly used in educational settings when referring to big city schools. However, diversity in student populations extends beyond those big city schools and suburban areas. Diamond and Posey Maddox (2020) state that "Suburban school districts in the United States (U.S.) have experienced major demographic shifts in recent decades and vary substantially in their student populations. More than half of Asian, Black, and Latinx students in large metropolitan areas attend suburban schools, and the suburbs are commonly the first destination for new U.S. immigrants" (p.7). Statistics show a shift in the composition of our schools, and school leaders are now looking for practices and methods to address the shift. With the shift comes a demand for instruction to be diversified and adapted to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

Diamond and Posey-Maddox (2020), in their analysis of suburban school districts, found that "The top five American Educational Research Association journals between 2000 and 2018 published 164 articles focused explicitly on urban schools compared to only 24 on suburban schools, and only 17 on rural schools. Our scholarly focus on large city school districts has led us to miss the spaces where most demographic and

educational change occurs." (p.7). There is a gap in research that focuses on the schools that extend beyond big city schools, which are evolving in their appearance to resemble some of the characteristics of those city schools, and how to service growing diverse populations. Urban education issues are not limited to big-city schools and are becoming more of a presence in suburban and rural areas.

Thus, a typical urban school in a city has a large environment, a diverse and economically disadvantaged population, limited resources, and a significant achievement gap among the students. In this study, "urban" will focus on student diversity, whether economic, racial, or achievement.

What Diversity Looks Like Across the Suburbs

With increasing diversity comes increasing diversity in areas once uniform. Orfield and Luce (2013) describe suburban areas as "prosperous white enclaves" that are "at the cutting edge of racial, ethnic, and even political change in America" (p.395). The authors found that "Diverse suburban neighborhoods now outnumber those in their central cities by more than two to one" (p.395). Further, they found that there has been a shift in the racial composition of suburban areas, not just in the United States but in other countries as well. Phelan and Schneider (1996), in a study of suburban areas in countries such as the United States, Switzerland, and Canada, found that they all experienced racial changes within the suburban areas. According to Phelan and Schneider (1996), "The early waves of suburbanites were almost all white, but in recent decades, increasing numbers of Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians have joined the suburban flow" (p.659). Putnam (2007) attributes the increase in diversity to the increase of immigrants. He states, "Ethnic diversity is increasing in most advanced countries, driven mostly by sharp

increases in immigration" (p.137). Putnam states that "Ethnic diversity will increase substantially in virtually all modern societies over the next several decades, in part because of immigration" (p.138).

Culture and Equity in Schools

Research studies have shown significant gaps in achievement among racial groups. Statistics show that many of the diverse student population groups tend to live in poverty, where some of the worst schools exist. Blanchett et al. (2009) state that According to the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2005), 70% of African American students, 71% of Hispanic students, and only 23% of White students live in poverty. These numbers are even more disparaging for students concentrated in urban environments" (p.390).

To reduce the disparity, many districts have begun investing in culture and equity work within their schools to ensure teachers teach and use culturally relevant strategies for their students. Lindsey et al. (2018) argue that schools should engage in cultural proficiency work to "enhance students' ability to learn, teachers' ability to teach, and all educators recognizing their roles in supporting classroom teaching. They argue that this work "prepares students to find their places in the global community they will enter when they leave their school communities, promotes positive community relations, and fosters effective leadership" (p.14). As far back as 1989, Lomotey (1989) argued that "the widescale failure of African Americans in the educational system is due to a poor fit between the curriculum and the culture of the learner. That is, culturally speaking curriculum is irrelevant; the students cannot see themselves in it; they cannot connect their schoolwork with their life outside school" (p.82). Some of the work the districts

have been investing in to create lessons and use curriculum that is more meaningful to diverse student populations is professional development. Professional development will instruct educators on strategies and teaching methods to use that are culturally relevant. The hope is that teachers trained in strategies and techniques to meet the needs of diverse student populations better will begin to deliver lessons that result in improved achievement amongst these groups of students.

Diverse Student Populations Concerning Achievement

Statistics show that public schools are becoming more diverse, resulting in a greater need for teachers to be better prepared to teach students of diverse backgrounds. As long ago as 1985, Lezotte and Bancroft **(**1985) noted that "Consistently, throughout this nation, across states and within local school units, constituencies expect their children to experience a quality education; in addition, the public believes that all school children will have an equal educational opportunity" (p.303). If this is true, then there is a level of expectation for teachers to have the ability to adapt their instruction to accommodate *all* students so that *all* students can succeed.

The achievement gap is a persistent problem nationwide in classrooms, schools, and school districts. Berlak (2005) states, "Large numbers of the Nation's children leave school with and without high school diplomas, barely able to read, write, and do simple math. However, the failures of the schools are not evenly distributed. They fall disproportionately on students of color" (p.223). As this problem persists, classrooms are continually becoming more diverse, and educational leaders are starting to consider if classrooms are prepared. According to the National Center for Education Statistics,

> In fall 2019,[6] , about 32 percent of all public school students attended schools where students of color[7] made up at least 75 percent of total enrollment. This

> represents an increase from the 27 percent of all public-school students who attended such schools in the fall 2009. Specifically, more than half of Hispanic (60 percent), Black (59 percent), and Pacific Islander (54 percent) students attended public schools in which the combined enrollment of students of color was at least 75 percent of total enrollment. In addition, 40 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 40 percent of Asian students, and 21 percent of students of Two or more races attended schools in which the combined enrollment of students of color was at least 75 percent of total enrollment. In contrast, 6 percent of White students attended such schools (p.3). (NCES https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cge/racial-ethnic-enrollment pg.3).

Conclusion

Blanchett et al. (2009) state that **"**An overwhelming majority of children of color throughout the United States attend schools that are largely made up of students of color, and the quality of their schooling experience seems to be affected by the intersection of issues of race, culture, language, and disability" (p.389). Achievement in education is lacking, and one factor attributed to the decline is the inability to address the needs of diverse student populations. Researchers have studied the student populations and educational leaders to find solutions to the disparities. Still, there is a lack of research on how teachers feel about diversity and how they handle those student populations in their classrooms.

Analyzing the teacher responses and the principals' reactions will define success for diverse learners and uncover factors that positively influence their achievement through professional development. The recurring themes uncovered will inform educators and organizations that support diverse learners.

While there is research on how large suburban school districts deal with culture and equity in their schools (Ahram et al., 2011; Mannes, 2023), there needs to be more research on how the smaller suburban school districts handle it. This study will add to the research on how these smaller suburban school districts, many of which share

characteristics with large urban school districts, handle diverse student populations in training their staff. In this research, we will refer to those suburban districts that share characteristics with the urban school districts as forgotten urban school districts.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS KNOWN

Introduction

When studying cultural diversity in schools, it is essential to attempt to understand those in direct contact with those diverse student populations, which are the teachers. Glenn Singleton (2021) found that “few classrooms, fewer whole schools, and far fewer entire school districts can offer educators who are truly willing and prepared to address the racial achievement disparity head-on" (p.14). Researching the disparity between students of color in education and the carrier of that instruction is necessary. Teachers are the carriers of instruction and share the impact of reaching diverse students in the classroom. Lacks (2016) found that “teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy typically have an easier time producing cognitive growth in their students and motivating them. Teachers who exhibit such characteristics recover quickly from setbacks and have an optimistic approach to trying new concepts or techniques” (p.78). Teacher self-efficacy directly impacts teacher practice but is also influenced by teacher beliefs.

Wilkins (2008) found that “481 American elementary teachers’ beliefs about the effectiveness of inquiry were the strongest direct predictors of inquiry instructional practices”. He found that “knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes were all found to influence instructional practice. Teachers’ attitude toward mathematics and mathematics teaching was found to affect teachers’ use of inquiry-based instructional practices positively” (p.156). He found that a teacher’s belief in their practices and what they were teaching influenced how they delivered instruction. If what and how a teacher believes affects the instruction delivered to students, then it is necessary to investigate how a teacher’s belief

in an idea such as “color blindness” can result in how the teacher instructs diverse student populations within their classroom.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Color Blindness

According to Apfelbaum et al. (2012), “Color blindness is rooted in the belief that racial group membership and race-based differences should not be taken into account when decisions are made, impressions are formed, and behaviors are enacted” (p.205). Some researchers have found that many teachers of color have experienced academic environments where they meet colleagues who believe all students should be treated equally. This belief has sometimes turned some teachers of color away from the profession. Kohli (2018) found that “the hostile racial climate of urban schools affects the professional experiences and retention of racial justice-oriented teachers of color” (p.314). Kohli (2018) found that many teachers who “worked at a racially integrated school with great disparities in academic success between White students and students of Color were often frustrated because their school took no action to resolve this problem” (p.315). This problem, also known as the achievement gap, is commonly argued to be greater than achievement due to the lack of opportunities for certain groups of people, known as the opportunity gap (Flores, 2007; Noguera & Akom, 2000). Kohli (2018) found through research of teachers in urban schools that “With glaring differences in academic success between White and students of Color at Selina’s school, the staff believed that treating all students the same—a color-blind stance—could simply resolve academic disparities” (p.315). However, what is often found is that “treating everyone the same” results in certain groups of students being at a disadvantage from others.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism, most directly linked to George Herbert Mead, is a framework that explains how a society is created and preserved through repeated interactions between people. The process of interpretation that occurs through repeated interactions shapes societal meanings. Individuals then act upon the shared meaning within their social context. Symbolic Interactionism explains the social control over individual behavior, which can sometimes manifest as self-criticism. Mead (2012) says that "self-criticism is essentially social criticism, and behavior controlled socially" (p.19). Mead believed that internalization takes place through learning. According to Mead, "People neither have selves nor are genuine members of the community until they can respond to themselves as the larger community does" (p.24).

Carter and Fuller (2015), building on Mead, define Symbolic Interactionism as "(a) individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them; (b) interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects (persons), as well as situations, must be defined or categorized based on individual meanings; (c) meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society; and (d) meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interaction with others" (p.2). Symbolic Interactionism is a framework that explains an individual's thinking and actions according to what society first defines them as. It is the belief that societal norms influence one's thinking. Denzin (2004) explains it as "Every individual is a practical social agent, but human agents are constrained by structural rules, by material resources, and by the structural processes connected to class, gender, race, ethnicity, nation and community" (p.82). It is the belief that the meaning of

things is birthed out of the process of social interaction. Individuals then act toward things based on those meanings.

When studying the beliefs and perceptions of teachers, it is beneficial to consider how their actions are influenced by societal meanings that have evolved from the social interactions of others. It is advantageous to contemplate if some teacher's beliefs of theories such as color blindness are influenced by the societal norms they have encountered.

School Districts – What Has Been Found to Work in District Initiatives

Some school districts have adopted plans to achieve racial diversity in their schools. Tefera et al. (2011) found that "The Seattle and Louisville school districts, along with school districts, voluntarily adopted modest measures to achieve racial diversity in their schools. Both the Seattle and Louisville districts sought to preserve educational choices for parents and students. They considered race a factor in student assignment only when schools were racially isolated or predominantly one race" (p.13). Many districts have sought policies that increase diversity in their suburban schools, such as policies on transportation, open enrollment, transfer programs, and school choice programs. Tefera et al. (2011) state that "Patterns of increasing racial separation in the suburbs, even while diversity grows overall, highlight the need for free transportation in suburban school districts" (p.17).

According to Shields et al. (2002), during the last half of the 20th century, multiculturalism was introduced into schools and classrooms to solve cultural and educational challenges due to the increase of diverse student populations. The authors stated, "Some argued that multicultural programs and policies could improve harmony,

understanding, and cooperation" (p.116). However, this study's authors found that schools with a homogeneous student population seemed to think that cultural diversity was not a topic that needed to be discussed. Schools with diverse programs that discussed culture and equity were assumed to be free from problems surrounding race, culture, and diversity. Shields et al. (2002) found that schools "learned to create psychological spaces for genuine exploration of differences that initiated conversations where problems and challenges may be identified and discussed. It created a climate where staff and students felt safe clarifying their assumptions to deal with cultural dissonance" (p.130).

Some school districts have found that they must learn to build trust to address the needs of the growing diverse student populations they serve. Howard (2007) found that "school leaders in the Apple Valley Unified School District in Southern California, where racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity is rapidly increasing, have invested considerable time and resources in creating a climate of openness and trust (p.2). This district spent intensive days building trust between the school leaders, staff, parents, and community members, such as members of the local NAACP, to work together to meet the growing student population's needs better.

The Roseville Area School District, outside the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, was amid a rapid demographic change in its student population. Howard (2007) found in working with the school and school leaders that "As a result of the increased consciousness about issues of dominance and social justice, several schools have formed Equity Teams of teachers and students, and an Equity Parent Group has begun to meet" (p.4). Howard (2007) states that "Any approach to school reform that does not honestly engage issues of power, privilege, and social dominance is naïve, ungrounded in history,

and unlikely to yield the deep changes needed to make schools more inclusive and equitable" (p.8).

DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

Urban Schools and Diversity

Some studies have shown that there are urban schools that house teachers who do not meet the criteria for high-quality teaching. This becomes problematic because some urban schools service students in the poorest regions where there is a great need for help, support, and quality instruction. Warren (2002) found in his study of teachers in urban and suburban areas that "Many teachers whom schools must accept, particularly in poor urban neighborhoods, do not meet the criteria of high quality, especially in terms of their beliefs about the students they will teach" (p.111). The author found that many teachers attributed student differences as barriers to learning. Because the urban schools studied were so diverse in needs, teachers often struggled to meet the diverse needs of their classrooms. Warren (2002) discovered that "Lowered expectations and efficacy for many of the educators in this study were, however, expressed in the way in which teachers (a) described differences as deficits and maintained that it was not the teachers' responsibility to help students overcome the deficits; (b) perceived students' families and cultures as deficits rather than strengths; (c) described their own lowered expectations; (d) lacked confidence in themselves to help students overcome barriers or differences; or (e) lacked determination to work to teach these students" (p.111). Many of the teachers from urban schools seemed to have a different understanding of diversity and their role in serving diverse student populations.

Suburban Schools and Diversity

Suburban schools are becoming more diverse socioeconomically, racially, and ethnically. As a result, some suburban districts have been challenged to find strategies and methods to meet the needs of diverse populations growing rapidly. Tyler (2016) studied how educators in increasingly more diverse suburban schools conceptualize diversity. He found that some of the teachers in the suburban district studied often were silent, avoided conversation, or felt discomfort when discussing diversity. Tyler discovered that many teachers felt unprepared to discuss diversity or serve students of diverse backgrounds. One teacher who was interviewed stated that "He observed that the (approximately95% white) faculty "want to be culturally competent. ... I just don't know that they necessarily have the tools." Notably, even these teachers that specifically requested more open conversations did not name race, but instead pointed to "culture" as the relevant factor" (p.296). Tyler also discovered that many teachers had a "deficit thinking about diversity" (p.297), and their feelings about the student population becoming more diverse over time were negative. Tyler found that "When teachers and administrators did note shortfalls in students' prior experiences, language, and literacy exposure, or general school readiness, they frequently attributed this to characteristics of the family or home environment" (p.298).

Tyler et al. (2016) studied the responses of suburban schools to demographic transition and the adoption of new policies to address perceived problems due to the increase in diverse student populations. Their analysis concluded, "Two important influences on the reforms and processes are accountability policies and teacher and administrator expectations and goals. Studies reveal some conflicts between teachers' and

administrators' beliefs, but the studies also expose conflicts between educators 'goals and the current accountability levers" (p.287).

Diem et al. (2016) analyzed how the policy context frames discourses surrounding race and demographic change in three racially changing suburban school districts. The authors found that "while there was a strong recognition that race mattered, it appeared to matter only primarily vis-à-vis state and federal accountability targets. We saw little recognition that race affected students 'experiences within the district regarding deeper systemic issues like inequality or cultural differences" (p.757).

Rural Schools and Diversity

Tutors (2015), in a study conducted on rural teachers and their conceptualization of diversity, found a problem with how diversity is defined. He found that "participant conceptions of their students clearly articulated two groups of students where students were either categorized as dominant or normalized versus the 'other.' Students who fell into the dominant or normalized category were viewed more preferentially than those who were others and were treated as such. This idea of what was dominant and preferred appeared to be entrenched in the perceptions participants held of the students, and their expectations, values, and beliefs regarding students" (p.692). Further, it was found that the rural teachers' perceptions of students directly resulted in how they taught those students. Their perceptions often were shaped by who was believed to be different (diverse) and who was not.

Some rural schools use standards from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to measure their effectiveness in addressing diverse student populations. A study conducted by Miretzky and Stevens (2012) studied how

effective rural schools are at meeting the standard according to NCATE. They found that many rural schools experience challenges in meeting the diversity standards NCATE sets. They further found that "SES is the most prominent diversity type in rural areas, cuts across and impacts other aspects of diversity, and has the greatest impact on achievement" (p.13). However, the authors also found it challenging for rural schools to meet the diversity standard because they are not as racially diverse as schools in other areas, such as the suburbs or urban communities. They found that many rural schools reported through surveys that the challenges they face when it comes to diversity are "limited diversity among faculty and teacher candidates, the inability to provide an appropriate setting for student teaching, and geographic location" (p.14).

Principals: Attitudes and Behaviors

As schools drastically change the composition of their student body because of the increase of diverse students, schools face a change within their challenges. One challenge that schools are now facing is being able to provide high-quality education to diverse students. Before analyzing how the attitudes and behaviors of principals impact the success of diverse student learners, it is beneficial to examine how principals are prepared to meet the needs of these populations of students. It would be unfair to analyze how effective principals are at meeting the needs of diverse students without considering how their training has or has not equipped them to do so. Futrell, Gomez, and Bedden (2003) found that "The ability of schools of education to produce high-quality teachers, counselors, administrators, and other graduates has a direct impact on the ability of school districts to provide high-quality education to the children in our elementary and secondary schools" (p.385). The authors found that schools of education are not changing

their programs to prepare educators to serve diverse student populations and are the cause of why educators are not delivering high-quality education for these student populations. These programs are not committing to the change needed to ensure diverse students succeed. Futrell et al. (2003) state, “Unfortunately, to date, on the vast majority of the nation’s 1,500 university campuses where schools of education exist, that commitment is yet to be made” (p.385).

The lack of preparation from colleges and universities explains the lack of preparedness among school principals. Grissom et al. (2021) found through The Wallace Foundation study on principals and how they affect students and schools that “Effective principals have large effects. Replacing a below-average principal (at the 25th percentile) with an above-average one (at the 75th percentile) would increase the typical student’s learning by nearly three months in both math and reading annually (p.91). The authors also found that “White principals can also create equitable schooling experiences for students from marginalized communities through antiracist work” (p.66). These findings alone reveal the importance of principals' impact on student success.

As schools become more diverse and programs are inconsistently preparing educators to handle diverse student populations within the classroom, administrators feel the pressures of developing, revising, and implementing diversity plans to address diverse student learners.

Principal Attitudes

A study conducted by Gómez-Hurtado et al. (2018) studied principals and their perceptions of cultural diversity and management. The authors found that most principals they studied revealed a negative concept of cultural diversity. They discovered that “In all

cases, the principals acknowledged that they have never considered their role as leaders in terms of diversity management, for several different reasons: absence of conflict in their educational community; having their attention focused on preventing absenteeism and school failure among native Spanish pupils; considering immigrant pupils as just another student in the school, without reflecting on the organizational needs their presence involves; their intervention being unnecessary due to the low number of foreign immigrants pupils being schooled" (p. 450). The recurring theme throughout the study was that principals often did not notice or see value in their role as managers of cultural diversity because they were focused on so many other responsibilities assigned to them.

Another study conducted on principals and their perceptions of a cultural diversity plan for their school found that most principals struggled to buy into a diversity plan because there was a lack of clear vision for the plan itself. Many principals were left to make their meaning and vision of what a diversity plan should entail and produce. Young et al. (2010) found that "Most principals assumed they were to use the plan to acknowledge students' culture and plan social events" (p.146). After summarizing their interviews, they found that "principals lacked an understanding of the district philosophy of "embracing our diversity." Some principals saw the plan as just one more initiative to deal with. Principals made no efforts to get clarification or understand what "embracing" diversity meant at the district level" (p.147).

Young et al. (2010) studied administrators' perceptions of their ability to implement a diversity plan within their schools. They found that the principal's perceptions of their ability to implement the plan surrounded four common themes. The themes were "(a) confusion over the definition of "diversity," (b) organizational

implications, (c) the complexities of defining "diversity" for teachers, and (d) strategic integration of diversity" (p.146). Many administrators were unsure of the definition of diversity that all should assume. They had what the authors called a "narrow view" of diversity, where they were to acknowledge the diverse students within their schools and plan events around it. Many principals felt the plan lacked an enforcement component and were confused about who was responsible for enforcing the plan. Many also felt uncomfortable with what and how to explain the plan to teachers and get their buy-in.

Another study by Pollock and Briscoe (2019) studied school principals' understanding of student differences and diversity and how these understandings influence their work. They found that of the principals studied, the four themes that emerged were "perceiving everyone as the same, or homogeneous; perceiving visible differences associated with particular religions, race, and cultures; perceiving invisible or less visible differences, such as academic differences, socioeconomic status, mental health issues, gender identity, and sexual orientation; and perceiving both visible and less visible differences through an inclusive lens" (p.518). One compelling finding was that how principals influenced their work depended on how they defined diversity within their schools. Principals who defined diversity just as racial makeup had little to no differences in their work. Principals who defined diversity beyond race had the greatest influence within their work and practice as educational leaders.

Parent Involvement

In his study of Latino parents, Zarate (2007) found that when asked to define parental involvement, they often mentioned life involvement more than academic involvement (p.8). He found that "Academic involvement was understood to encompass

activities associated with homework, educational enrichment, and academic performance; life participation characterized ways parents provided life education and were holistically integrated into their children's lives in school, as well as away from it" (p.8). To increase parental involvement, schools and districts must intentionally define what involvement looks like and what is suggested or expected of parents. When leaders understand the parents they serve, they are better equipped to meet the needs of their learners and their families.

School Climate

One study on school climate perceptions of ethnically diverse students found that both student school diversity and ethnicity were associated with perceptions of school climate (Parris Lasalle, 2018). The study found that self-identifying minority students generally report lower perceptions of school climate than students who identify as white. Further, they found that "on average, students identifying as White reported higher perceptions of school climate than students identifying as African American/Black or Other" (p.637). The authors found that as schools experience more diverse student populations, they also should consider ways to foster climates that allow all students to feel a sense of belonging. Formulating and maintaining a sense of belonging seems to fall into the hands of principals. Principals set the tone for the building, staff, and the teachers. In creating the tone, principals are challenged to find ways to create a climate of belonging for students of diverse backgrounds.

Another study conducted on the relation of social skills and school climate of diversity to children's life satisfaction by Kim and Carney (2019) found that "the more children perceive their school climate as accepting of diversity, the more likely they will

have high levels of life satisfaction" (p.1030). The authors found that school connectedness impacts students' satisfaction levels with their future lives. Kim and Carney (2019) found that "children are likely to feel more connected to their schools, and in turn, more satisfied with their lives overall when they can develop better social skills and perceive that their schools as embracing diversity among students to a high degree" (p.1030). Principals directly affect the school's climate and how it embraces diversity.

As diversity increases throughout public schools, so does the need for more training and development among teachers. Szelei et al. (2020) studied teachers' perceptions of professional development concerning culture and equity. They found that many teachers desired more professional development that informed teachers of the specific cultures and customs of the students they served. The authors found that "One of the areas that many teachers wished for was specific information on cultures and languages. They realized the importance of getting acquainted with where students come from, their languages and cultures, life histories, former educational systems, and experiences" (p.785).

Teachers

According to Knight and Wiseman (2005), "Despite the increase in classroom diversity, the demographics of the teachers in our nation's classrooms have changed little over the past decades, creating a mismatch between students and teachers" (p.389). A mismatch between teachers and students requires teachers to create lessons embedded with tools and strategies to meet diverse learners' varied needs.

Teacher Attitudes

Tyrone Howard (2023) found that "While students of color currently comprise approximately one-third of the U.S. school population, the U.S. Department of Commerce (1996) projects that by the year 2050, African American, Asian American, and Latino students will constitute close to 57% of all U.S. students" (p.195). This major transformation of what a student body used to resemble causes teachers to shift in their preparation and creation of lessons if they truly want to create lessons that meet the needs of *all* learners. Howard (2023) proposes that "U.S. schools will continue to become learning spaces where an increasingly homogeneous teaching population (mostly White, female, and middle class) will encounter an increasingly heterogeneous student population (primarily students of color, and from low- income backgrounds). Thus, educators must reconceptualize how new teachers are prepared and provide the skills and knowledge best suited for effectively educating today's diverse student population" (p.195). Teachers are a major bridge that can hurt or hinder the outcome of a student's future. A teacher's attitude can affect how and what a teacher produces in instruction. Howard challenges teacher educators to begin developing the attitude of teachers before they enter the classroom to ensure they are instructed with culturally relevant pedagogy.

One challenge for teachers due to increased diverse student populations is the shift from teacher-centered curriculum to learner-centered classrooms. Learner-centered classrooms are being encouraged to be used to meet the varied needs of diverse students. According to Brown (2003), "In learner center classrooms, students can be observed working individually, or in pairs and small groups on distinct tasks and projects" (p.50). Learner-centered classrooms allow culturally or linguistically different children to learn

at their own pace and in their learning style. Brown (2003) found that “Differences in students are significant enough to make a major impact on what students need to learn, the pace at which they need to learn it, and the support they need from teachers and others to learn it” (p. 52). This impact results from the differences in students demanding instruction that resembles learner-centered classrooms, where instruction can be diversified and less teacher-driven.

Studies have shown that teachers often face many barriers when trying to modify curriculum to meet the needs of diverse student populations. A study conducted by Tomlinson et al. (1998) found that “often teachers pointed to external barriers to differentiation of instruction (vs. those related to self), while principals tended to point to issues of teacher skill and will as barriers” (p.7). Many of the teachers in the study felt that if barriers existed regarding differentiating instruction for diverse learners, it was because of external influences and not issues within themselves.

The researchers also found that “A sizable group of teachers showed what appears to be a limited understanding of what it means to differentiate instruction and frustration with trying to address varied learner needs” (p.10). Many teachers seemed to believe that most students grasped the concepts the way they were teaching and that modifications were unnecessary. The study reported that A third group of teachers indicated they had no intent to differentiate or modify instruction for academically diverse students. One teacher said, "My expectations of all students are the same." Another said, "It's difficult to adapt instruction because everyone is required to take the same chapter test at the end of the chapter" (p.9).

The study found that most teachers had limited knowledge of differentiating for diverse learners or did not see the need to differentiate. A small percentage of teachers who were differentiating, or at least believed it was necessary, believed there were barriers because of a lack of support.

With limited knowledge of differentiation, schools have used professional development to strengthen their skill of differentiating in hopes of strengthening their beliefs in the need to differentiate for diverse populations. Professional development bridges teachers and students, providing a means to reach academic success. Knight and Wiseman (2005) studied professional development for teachers of diverse students. The authors found that there were instances where teachers saw positive results from implementing cultural strategies from professional development but still believed it was irrelevant. They found that "professional development designed to improve teacher quality can make a difference for the diverse students these teachers teach" (p.399).

Teacher Behavior

When studying diversity in schools, studies have found that teachers' behaviors towards diversity directly reflect their beliefs about the differences between them and their students. A study by Gay (2013) found that "since teachers and students are often not from the same ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds, these cultural differences can create serious challenges to effective teaching and learning (p.67). The study found that teachers felt it more challenging to teach effectively when teaching students from different cultural and social backgrounds. The study showed that most teachers felt a lack of support in teaching diverse students effectively and did not feel equipped to take on such a task.

Some studies have found that teachers' beliefs affect how they teach and interact with students. A study conducted on teachers by Wesiman and Garza (2002) found that there was a low level of agreement "for items stating that poor minority parents place a great value on education and that a major reason for the low achievement for minority youth is the structure and values of the school system, rather than the home" (p.31).

Some studies have examined the specific beliefs of educators and how those beliefs ultimately shape and mold their approaches to teaching students and diverse student populations. A study conducted on racial diversity and urban teachers by Rogers et al. (2013) found that "racial biases, based on how educators define the knowledge, conceive of evaluation processes, and limited exposure to and valuing of culturally responsive approaches, shape operational definitions and measurements of effective or quality teaching" (p.460). Ultimately, teachers' beliefs and the exposure they experience to different cultures and approaches to being more culturally responsive directly impact the success of diverse student populations. Singleton (2021) suggests that "passion, practice, and persistence are three critical factors that are necessary for school systems to eliminate racial achievement disparities" (p.18). He believes that if schools, and ultimately the teachers, do not embrace and continuously nurture these factors, they "quickly disengage from an intentional desire to change how students are taught and supported in their learning" (p.18). However, the ability to determine these factors requires an examination of the system's beliefs and the teachers who keep it going.

A study conducted on school counselors and multicultural behaviors by Merlin-Knoblich and Chen (2018) found that "When participants indicated that they chose not to enact some multicultural education behaviors because "they were not needed," these

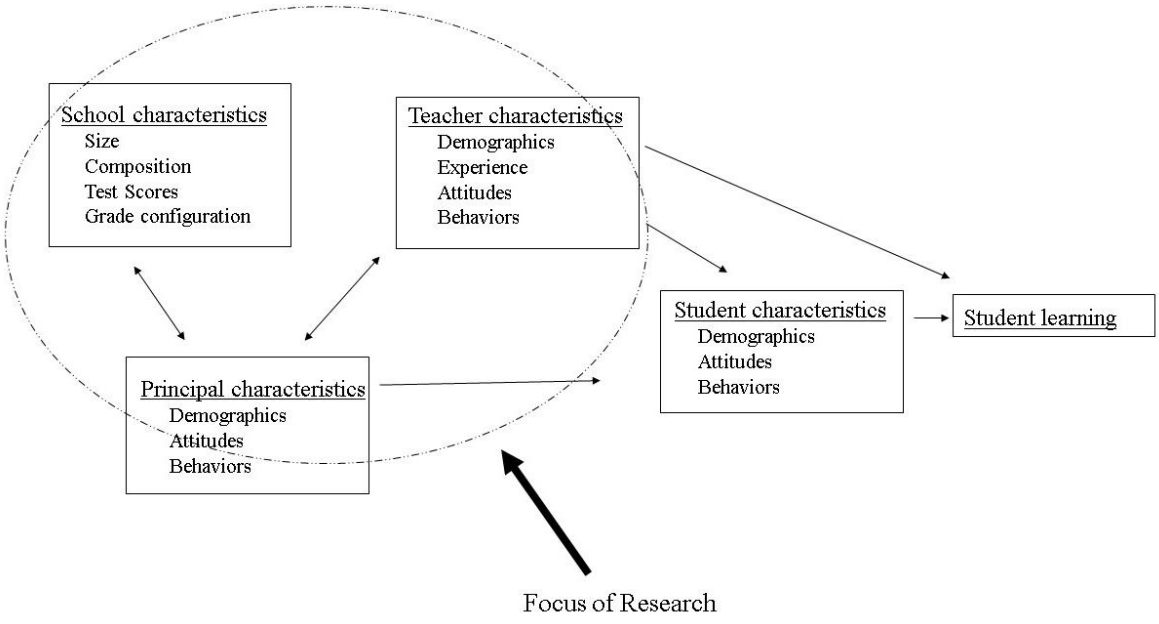
participants may have been indicating a belief that these behaviors were not needed in their school or that these behaviors were not needed with their students" (p.19). The authors found, "Some school counselors in homogenous contexts may believe multicultural education is unnecessary because students encounter diversity infrequently" (p.19).

Summary and Research Questions

In any educational research project, the ultimate dependent variable should be student learning, as depicted in Figure 1. However, limiting the focus to a particular restricted domain allows for more intensive consideration. This is the case in this proposed research project.

Figure 2.1

Model of the Educational Process and Research Focus



The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do school characteristics and conditions affect a teacher's attitude and behavior?
2. What factors do teachers feel support them in teaching diverse learners?
3. What school factors do teachers feel have affected their ability to teach diverse learners?
4. What personal or professional experiences (PD, education, etc.) have affected the ability to teach diverse learners?

Conclusion

While there are research findings on culture and diversity in schools, more should be done in suburban school districts. As shown earlier in the research, many suburban schools are experiencing a shift in the racial makeup of their student body, which resembles the student body of many "urban" schools. More research needs to be done to examine how the suburban districts, referred to in this paper as "the forgotten urban schools," handle culture and diversity among their teachers to serve diverse student populations. That is the focus of this proposed research.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study examined teacher's perceptions of cultural diversity training in a suburban school district. The district consists of seventeen schools whose staff all participate in monthly training courses on culture, diversity, and equity. The study intends to add to the research on how smaller suburban school districts, many of which share characteristics with large urban school districts, handle diverse student populations in training their staff. The research questions to guide this work were:

1. How do school characteristics and conditions affect a teacher's attitudes and behavior?
2. What factors do teachers feel support them in teaching diverse learners?
3. What school factors do teachers feel have affected their ability to teach diverse learners?
4. What personal or professional experiences (PD, education, etc.) have affected the ability to teach diverse learners?

Data Collection Procedures

Using an explanatory mixed methods approach, surveys and interviews captured the breadth and depth of teachers' perceptions, motives, and actions regarding classroom cultural proficiency. This approach allowed for the respondents' voices to be heard and the findings to be grounded in their experiences. Surveys were sent to teachers in all seventeen schools within the district. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to volunteer to be interviewed. The study focused on whether teachers changed their

attitudes and behaviors relating to cultural diversity due to the professional development programming they experienced.

The study focused on teacher attitudes and behaviors relating to professional development training centered around cultural proficiency and equity in a K12 grade mid-Atlantic state school district. The study assessed the teachers, the cultural diversity program, and how those factors changed the teachers. The training was expected to directly affect the teachers' knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and satisfaction. The confounding variables to be addressed are gender, number of years in their teaching career, number of years teaching in that specific district, and race. Principal characteristics and controls were collected.

School Characteristics

This school district has 13 elementary schools, three (3) middle schools, and one (1) high school. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data *(NCES*), the district has 932 teachers and 12,603 students. The district serves a community with a population of 101,581 persons and 39,717 total households with a median household income of $87,280. In all, 72% of the community identifies as White, 6% as Black, 3% as Hispanic, 16% as Asian, and 2% as two or more races. Further, 74% of the households are led by married individuals, and 6% cohabitating couples. Also, 16% of the population lives in female-headed households, and 4% live in male-headed households.

Although district leaders may not currently see drastic numbers of minority students enrolling in all their schools, they are noticing a change in the makeup of their student population overall and want to be prepared to meet the growing need. The district

itself serves "approximately 41% diverse students. Overall, 6% of district students are categorized as English Learners (ELs), with individual schools as high as 23.6% ELs. Approximately 33.2% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, with individual schools approaching 60% qualifying" (https:// https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/).

The district created a three-year cultural proficiency plan to address the needs of a growing, diverse student population. The plan has four goals designed to support the implementation of culturally relevant instruction and support the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. The four major goals outlined in the plan include:

1. Increase all staff's knowledge, skills, and practices related to cultural proficiency/responsiveness, reducing the achievement gap.
2. Reduce the number of Black, Hispanic, and Multiracial students who are disproportionately represented in special education programs and disproportionately suspended from school so that the risk ratio for these subgroups is no greater than 1.5 times more likely.
3. Implement practices that promote an increased pool of diverse applicants for positions across all employee groups.
4. Increase student, staff, and family engagement in cultural proficiency efforts.

The plan also includes proficiency and equity training for all staff in buildings with K-12 students. The training aligns with the four goals outlined in the program. The district plans to "Implement a framework for culturally responsive instruction, provide professional development to staff, embed cultural proficiency work within school goal plans and other district professional development initiatives, select a tool for evaluating culturally responsive teaching practices, and examine curriculum frameworks and make

recommendations to connect cultural proficiency into content and materials" The district has also instituted cadres, known as cultural proficiency and equity task forces, in each building. The task forces comprise teachers, staff, the principal, and parents. These cadres are responsible for planning activities throughout the year, sharing information and resources to help staff become more culturally aware, and increasing instruction that demonstrates cultural awareness of the community their building serves. This group meets monthly for planning and to discuss the progress of their equity and cultural proficiency efforts.

The district established a parent group centered around culture and equity work within the district called Parents in Equity. This group works alongside the equity task force to facilitate and exchange ideas for each building. This group meets once a month as well. The district also established a cultural proficiency director who oversees the task forces, parent group, and the cultural proficiency and equity district plan and ensures that the district is progressing toward the plan's goals.

DATA COLLECTION

For this study, data was collected from fifty teachers employed in a K-12 suburban school district in a Mid-Atlantic state. Participants were recruited through an email sent out by a school district leader. In the survey, respondents were offered the opportunity to be interviewed. There were eleven interviews conducted. Each interviewee volunteered to be interviewed through the survey.

All interviews were conducted in the participants' location or on Zoom. The interview format encompasses a set of standard questions, with the opportunity to flow

freely through the conversation. This allowed for more meaningful information to be revealed through interaction with participants.

Surveys

The initial data collection instrument was a survey that took approximately twenty minutes to complete. The survey was designed to collect data on the teachers' demographics and educational backgrounds. The data from the survey contributed context and supplemented the data collected from the interviews. Teachers were asked within the survey distribution to select whether they were interested in being interviewed for the study. See the appendix for the complete survey.

Participants were recruited through an email communication sent out to the principals and teachers in the district via the listserv. The researcher allowed participants to complete the survey two weeks after sending the initial email. The researcher followed up by email once a week for up to three weeks to elicit as many responses to the survey as possible. The researcher's goal was to obtain at least 20% of the surveys completed by the end of the five-week survey window.

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they were willing to discuss the topic further. Anyone responding in the affirmative was directed via a link to a survey where they could enter their contact information. Thus, all survey responses were kept confidential. The researcher selected all willing participants from the introductory survey to conduct the follow-up in-depth interview.

Interviews

The second data collection method was semi-structured interviews with survey participants who volunteered. The interviews during the fall of 2023 were held in person.

In addition to interviews, data was collected from other sources, such as notes taken during the interviews. Research started in August of 2023 and lasted through November 2023.

The interviews with the participants included open-ended questions to let them reference the subject matter they viewed as relevant. The length of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. The questions focused on factors that influenced teacher success to learn more about the components the participants deem integral to their achievement. The interviews also aimed to identify teachers' definitions and perceptions of culture. See the appendix for the interview protocol.

A phenomenological approach was used for the interviews to gain the most insight into teacher and principal perceptions of cultural proficiency; additionally, this approach gathered information about what enables them to be most successful. Phenomenological research "seeks the individual's perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience and calls upon the researcher to suspend theories, explanations, hypotheses, and conceptualizations to be able to understand the phenomenon" (Mertens, 2020). These interviews examined the concept of cultural proficiency from the teacher's perspective and the factors that have most positively impacted their journey. "The key characteristic of phenomenology is the study of how members of a group or community interpret the world and life around them" (Mertens, 2020). A phenomenological approach was used to understand the factors that lead teachers toward successful implementation of culturally relevant teaching from their own experiences. Sample interview questions are listed below. See Appendix J for the full set of interview questions.

1. Do you think embedding culturally relevant instruction is important? If so, why? If not, why? Under all circumstances?
2. What factors have influenced your ability to implement culturally relevant instruction in your classroom? Directly? Indirectly?
3. What factors have influenced your ability to teach diverse learners? Directly? Indirectly?

The research was guided by four research questions that produced qualitative and quantitative data. Univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistics were used to analyze quantitative data, while the qualitative data was transcribed and coded to discover themes and patterns. The model of research questions and methodology is organized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Model of Research Questions & Methodology

Research Question	**Data Source**	**Type of Data**	**Proposed Analyses**
What effect do conditions have on a teacher's attitudes and behavior?	Survey	Quantitative	Univariate statistics (Means, Standard deviations, proportions) of the whole survey response to set the context Bivariate statistics (Crosstabs, correlation, and ANOVA) to compare those

			who did or did not agree to be interviewed
	Interview	Qualitative	Selected Interview to focus on in-depth material
What factors do teachers feel support them in teaching diverse learners?	Survey	Quantitative	Univariate statistics (Means, Standard deviations, proportions) of the whole survey response to set the context Bivariate statistics (Crosstabs, correlation, and ANOVA) to compare those who did or did not agree to be interviewed
	Interview	Qualitative	Selected Interview to focus on in-depth material
What school factors do teachers feel have affected their ability to teach diverse learners?	Survey	Quantitative	Univariate statistics (Means, Standard deviations, proportions) of the whole survey response to set the context Bivariate statistics (Crosstabs, correlation, and

			ANOVA) to compare those who did or did not agree to be interviewed
	Interview	Qualitative	Selected Interview to focus on in-depth material

Table 3.1

Model of Research Questions & Methodology (continued)

Research Question	Data Source	Type of Data	Proposed Analyses
What professional experiences (PD, education, etc.) have affected the ability to teach diverse learners?	Survey	Quantitative	Univariate statistics (Means, Standard deviations, proportions) of the whole survey response to set the context Bivariate statistics (Crosstabs, correlation, and ANOVA) to compare those who did or did not agree to be interviewed
	Interview	Qualitative	Selected Interview to focus on in-depth material

Recruitment

The first step in the recruitment process was to gain permission from the school district to conduct this study. An email was sent to a district leader who permitted the study to be conducted (See Appendix G). From the email, a Google form (See Appendix I) that encompassed the details of the study was requested to be submitted. After completing the form, temporary approval was granted, and IRB awaited formal approval. Once IRB approved the research, that form was submitted to the same district leader, and formal approval was granted (See Appendix F).

Participants were then recruited through an email communication (See Appendix E) sent out to the principals and teachers in the district via the listserv. After the initial email was sent out, participants were allotted two weeks to complete the survey. The email was sent out once a week for up to three weeks to elicit as many responses to the survey as possible. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they were willing to chat about the topic further (See Appendix B). Anyone responding in the affirmative was directed via a link to a survey (See Appendix B) where they could enter their contact information. All survey responses were kept confidential. All participants from the introductory survey were used for the follow-up in-depth interview.

Email was used to communicate and schedule all interview participants (See Appendix J). Some participants required more than one email to find a time that works best. Interviews were conducted in the participant's location or on Zoom. Copious notes were taken since the interviews were not recorded. The interviews started using open-ended questions to let participants reference subject matter they viewed as relevant. The interviews varied from thirty minutes to sixty minutes. The questions focused on factors

influencing diverse students' success to learn more about the components the participants deem integral to their achievement. The interviews also aimed to identify teachers' definitions and perceptions of success**.**

A phenomenological approach was used for the interviews to gain the most insight into teacher and principal perceptions of cultural proficiency; additionally, this approach allowed for information about what enables them to be most successful to be gathered.

Scale Construction

Five summative scales were constructed from grouped items in the survey. The characteristics of each scale are shown in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2

Characteristics of Scales Constructed

	Number of Items	Cronbach's ά
Cultural Diversity Self-Concept	16	0.850
Teacher Personal Satisfaction	5	0.723
Good Leader	8	0.767
Teacher Satisfaction	7	0.760
Good School	10	0.680

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis occurred throughout the study. The survey results were analyzed using SPSS, and the descriptive (univariate and bivariate measures of central tendency and variability) and inferential statistics (bivariate and multivariate) were calculated. A research log was kept detailing all activities related to the study, such as correspondence,

interactions, meetings, and interviews. The interviews, any notes on the artifacts, and interview notes were transcribed and saved. The researcher created clusters for the highlighted data and began to group them.

Open coding, which involves naming and creating categories to organize the highlighted data clusters, was used in the secondary data review to find reoccurring themes. Based on the categories and subcategories found, themes were identified from the data. The transcription was coded to uncover common themes. Common overlying concepts that existed among different participants' responses were looked for throughout the data. Among the significant themes uncovered, email was used to contact the participants for further clarification or explanation when necessary. No third-party transcription service was used.

The interview data were transcribed and then organized by each research question. All data was coded by color and then put into an Excel sheet for organization. A pseudonym was used for each interviewee and input into the Excel sheet. The Excel sheet was organized by pseudonym, which corresponded to the survey questions, and then what information from that interview answered each research question.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

There were 50 respondents to the survey. While not statistically significant, on a percentage basis, there were more female respondents (39, 79.6%) than there were male respondents (10, 20.4%). Further, most respondents were white (40, 81.6%). See Table 3.3 for further details.

Table 3.3

Crosstabulation of Gender by Race/Ethnicity

	African American or Black	Asian or Pacific Islander	White	Other	Total
Male	3 (30.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (70.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (100%)
Female	3 (7.9%)	1 (2.6%)	33 (86.8%)	1 (2.6%)	38 (100%)
Total	6 (12.5%)	1 (2.1%)	40 (83.3%)	1 (2.1%)	48 (100%)
	$\chi 2$= 3.891, p =ns				

The respondent's gender was unrelated to the school type they taught in ($\chi 2$= 2.380, p =ns). However, on a percentage basis, female respondents tended to be in elementary schools (females: 30, 78.9%, males: 54.5%). See Table 3.4 for further details.

Table 3.4

Crosstabulation of Gender by School Type

	Middle/High	Elem	Total
Male	5 (45.5%)	6 (54.5%)	11 (100%)
Female	8 (21.1%)	30 (78.9%)	38 (100%)
Total	13 (26.5%)	36 (73.5%)	49 (100%)
	$\chi 2$= 2.380, p =ns		

The respondent's race/ethnicity was not related to the type of school they taught in ($\chi 2$= .262, p =ns). However, on a percentage basis, White respondents tended to be in elementary schools (White: 30, 75%, Minority: 6. 66.7%). See Table 3.5 for further details.

Table 3.5

Crosstabulation of Race by School Type

	Middle/High	Elem	Total
White	10 (25.0%)	30 (75.0%)	40 (100%)
Minority	3 (33.3%)	6 (66.7%)	9 (100%)
Total	13 (26.5%)	36 (73.5%)	49 (100%)

$\chi 2$= .262, p =ns

The respondent's gender was not related to the type of degree they acquired ($\chi 2$= 2/380, p =ns). However, on a percentage basis, female respondents tended to have a master's degree (female: 34, 89.5%, male: 9. 81.8%). See Table 3.6 for further details.

Table 3.6

Crosstabulation of Gender by Degree

Gender	Associate	Bachelor	Masters	Doctorate	Total
Male	0 (0%)	2 (18.2%)	9 (81.8%)	0 (0%)	11 (100%)
Female	1 (2.6%)	2 (5.3%)	34 (89.5%)	1 (2.6%)	38 (100%)
Total	1 (2.0%)	4 (8.2%)	43 (87.8%)	1 (2.0%)	49 (100%)

$\chi 2$= 2.380, p =ns

Characteristics of the Interviewees

Out of the fifty respondents to the survey, eleven indicated that they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview and provided their email address. All interviews were conducted in person. Also, three of the eleven interviewees (3, 27%) assumed a leadership role as a principal or assistant principal. Eight out of the eleven interviewees (8, 73%) were teachers within the district. See Table 3.7 below.

Table 3.7

Interview Participants Characteristics

Interviewee	Role	Gender	Race	School Type
A	Math Teacher	Male	White	Elementary
B	Teacher	Female	White	Elementary
C	ELA Teacher	Female	White	Elementary
D	Teacher	Female	White	Elementary
E	Teacher	Female	White	Elementary
F	Math Teacher	Female	Black	Middle School
G	Counselor	Female	White	Elementary
H	Principal	Male	White	Elementary
I	Assistant Principal	Male	Black	High School
J	Teacher	Female	Hispanic	Elementary
K	Principal	Female	White	Elementary

Conclusion

This study provided valuable information to inform decisions for educational leaders seeking to develop instructional plans to help meet the needs of diverse student populations. It allowed teachers and principals to share their perceptions on diversity and equity training and ways to improve it for the advancement of minority students. It also

provided insight into the perceptions of teachers, who are the carriers of instruction, and how to meet their needs better and support them with culture and equity work.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The primary focus of this study was to understand the perceptions of teachers in suburban school districts who are undergoing training in culture and equity as a response to a growing diverse population of students. The study also focused on understanding if any underlying factors, personal experiences, or school factors contribute to their perceptions of diversity training. The mixed methods research design is outlined in Chapter 3 and the research model in the appendix.

Four research questions underly the approach. Each will be addressed in turn. Among the types of variables are Control variables (e.g., gender, highest degree, race/ethnicity … etc.), contextual variables (e.g., School type, …, etc.), and explanatory variables (e.g., school leadership, etc.). The sample was limited in race/ethnicity, so it collapsed into a white/non-white variable. Educational attainment was dropped from the analysis because nearly all respondents had a master's degree. See Table 3.5 above for further details.

Tests of significance were conducted on the five scales that were constructed and discussed in Chapter 3, as well as the three analytic variables of gender (Table 4.1), race/ethnicity (Table 4.2), and school type (Table 4.3). Elements of these tables will be considered in the discussion of the specific research questions.

Table 4.1

Analysis of Variance Results by Gender

Scale	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	F	p Value
Cultural Diversity Self-Concept	Male	59.18	9.73	46	77	3.73	0.06
	Female	64.33	7.07	49	76		
Teacher Personal Satisfaction	Male	15.2	6.75	8	28	4.06	0.05
	Female	19.68	6.1	9	34		
Good Leader	Male	24.27	3.61	19	28	0.26	0.61
	Female	23.45	4.95	8	37		
Teacher Satisfaction	Male	19.64	2.8	15	24	0.76	0.39
	Female	20.57	3.2	12	26		
Good School	Male	39.2	6.83	27	47	0.15	0.7
	Female	40	5.54	21	50		

Table 4.2

Analysis of Variance Results by Race/Ethnicity

Scale	Minority Status	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	F	p Value
Cultural Diversity Self-Concept	White	61.97	7.38	46	76	4.48	0.040
	Minority	68.00	8.93	47	77		
Teacher Personal Satisfaction	White	19.50	6.27	9	34	3.01	0.090
	Minority	15.44	6.44	8	26		

Good Leader	White	23.55	4.78	8	37	0.07	0.800
	Minority	2.00	4.33	19	32		
Teacher School Satisfaction	White	19.97	3.20	12	26	3.25	0.080
	Minority	22.00	2.12	18	24		
Good School	White	40.14	6.06	21	50	0.54	0.470

Table 4.3

Analysis of Variance Results by School Type

Scale	School Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	F	p Value
Cultural Diversity Self-Concept	Elementary	63.64	7.61	47	77	3.42	0.028
	Middle & High	60.00	9.66	46	73		
Teacher Personal Satisfaction	Elementary	45.61	3.83	38	55	8.508	0.006
	Middle & High	49.30	5.64	39	55		
Good Leader	Elementary	26.41	3.37	12	30	0.419	0.741
	Middle & High	27.70	2.79	23	30		
Teacher Satisfaction	Elementary	18.11	5.88	9	15	3.135	0.035
	Middle & High	21.78	7.55	0	8		
Good School	Elementary	19.50	2.59	13	25	0.162	0.921

Middle & High	17.03	4.79	12	25

RQ1: HOW DO SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS AND CONDITIONS AFFECT A TEACHER'S ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR?

Introduction

While factors within and outside the school affect teachers' attitudes, the former are considered here. It was expected that "satisfied" teachers would be more productive, and their students would benefit.

Results

Survey Data

The Null Hypothesis of no relationship between school type and how often a teacher addresses school climate was rejected ($\chi 2 = 11.682$; $\rho = .009$). However, on a percentage basis, middle and high school teachers address school climate more often than elementary school teachers (M 7 H: 7, 70%; E: 6, 16.7%). See Table 4.4 for further details.

Table 4.4

Crosstabulation of School Type by How Often a Teacher Address School Climate Issues

	Elementary School	Middle or High School	Total
Never	4 (11.1%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (8.7%)
Sometimes	16 (44.4%)	1 (10.0%)	17 (37.0)
On occasion	10 (27.8%)	2 (20.0%)	12 (26.1%)
All of the time	6 (16.7%)	7 (70.0%)	13 (28.3%)

Total	36 (100%)	10 (100%)	46 (100%)

$\chi 2 = 11.682$; $p = .009$

In an analysis of variation, differences by gender, race/ethnicity, or school type were not related to the respondents' rating of a "good school or "good leadership." Further, on average, the middle and high school teachers ($\bar{x} = 21.78$) were more satisfied being teachers than were elementary school teachers ($\bar{x} = 18.11$), a statistically significant difference ($F=3.135$, $p = .035$). However, on average, women were more personally satisfied ($\bar{x} = 19.68$) than were men ($\bar{x} = 13.2$), a statistically significant difference ($F = 4.06$, $p =.030$). Middle and high school teachers were, on average, more personally satisfied ($\bar{x} = 49.30$) than elementary school teachers ($\bar{x} = 45.61$), a statistically significant difference ($F= 8.509$, $p = .006$). See Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 for further details.

Interview Data

One reoccurring theme amongst the interview data relating to a teacher's attitude and belief is the institution. Policies, state testing, and curricular materials create stress and pressure for teachers, sometimes hindering their ability to step outside the "norm" to do something different.

During the interviews, many thought about a shift in their responsibility to meet a different group of unfamiliar students. What stood out was that respondents felt that different types of standardized pressures impacted their attitudes and beliefs. One interviewee (Interviewee A) stated, "The new ELA program prohibits me from going beyond the curriculum to celebrate diversity within my classroom." This interviewee expressed frustration with the pressures of keeping up with the curriculum and staying on

track to the point that there was not enough time to implement anything else within their classroom. The respondents felt that the school administrators pressed the teachers to stick to the script to ensure fidelity with the curriculum, resulting in better learners who produced better results. The same interviewee (Interviewee A) stated, "My grade is hard because there is so much pressure on PSSAs scores. That's all they care about." Some interviewees expressed that the pressure of test scores and curriculum affected their attitudes and beliefs about school, such as culture, making it hard for them to want to put more effort into things outside of their pressured responsibilities.

Another interesting belief found in the data is that a teacher's effort and work to be culturally responsive in their classroom directly reflects that teacher's attitude and behavior about culture. Interviewee F stated

> A teacher needs to have strong interpersonal skills. Teachers who have poor interpersonal skills do a terrible job even understanding why they need to know about their students. They don't like their students and have trouble differentiating for students. I often find these teachers adopt the one-way teaching approach. Humility is also needed. I do not know everything, and I need to be vulnerable enough to learn who they are and be responsive to their needs. They have to be okay with knowing they do not know everything.

This interviewee, who had the experience of observing teachers within their classrooms, discussed how they often found that the most culturally proficient teachers were the ones whose attitudes and behaviors resembled humility and a willingness to learn more. They stated

> A culturally proficient teacher understands you must have Maslow before Bloom. You must be aware of the student's social-emotional needs and cultural background before teaching and instructing that student. You must do this to get a student to even care about what they are learning. A teacher focused on social-emotional learning, empathetic, and open-minded uses their knowledge of the students and lets that guide how they deliver instruction and manage the classroom. They communicate with their students and families.

When asked what they believe contributes to this belief and attitude in a teacher, the interviewee stated their experiences and upbringing have a big part in it. This interviewee stated, "Unfortunately, some teachers often say it doesn't help them in the real world, but that's because their view of the real world is flawed. Those are the teachers who embrace deficit thinking and let that undermine the importance of culturally responsive instruction". This interviewee believed that personal beliefs and opinions impact a teacher's attitudes and beliefs, impacting the effort shown for culture and equity work in the classroom.

Conclusion

Both data sets showed reoccurring themes of teachers who thought that the conditions of the school and a teacher's code of ethics impact their attitudes and beliefs about their job. The data showed that many teachers believed that conditions of the school, such as the climate of the school, the camaraderie between staff, the relationships between staff, students, and the parents, and the sometimes-overwhelming requirements of the job had an impact on their attitudes and beliefs about the work they were doing within their classrooms. It was often expressed that it was difficult for some to put forth great effort with culturally responsive teaching and instruction when they were bombarded with many other responsibilities and expectations.

Teachers also expressed how a teacher's ethical stance, which defines a person's principles and values, can impact their attitudes and beliefs about their work. Many teachers indicated that those who opposed equity work within classrooms seemed to be those whose ethics involved a monolithic view. Teachers who embraced the work and

took on the challenge tended to be the ones whose ethics were more embracing of differences and inclusion minded.

RQ2: WHAT FACTORS DO TEACHERS FEEL SUPPORT THEM IN TEACHING DIVERSE LEARNERS?

INTRODUCTION

It was expected that teachers who felt supported were the ones who felt the most competent in teaching diverse learners. After analyzing the data, common themes supported teachers in culturally relevant instruction. Teachers thought that these factors supported them most when faced with designing lessons and instructions that meet the needs of a diverse student population.

Results

Interview Data

When searching for factors teachers thought supported them the most when teaching diverse students, one reoccurring factor put the responsibility on the school or leadership of the school. It was often stated that teachers thought the school or district could better support them in cultural work if they took on more work in that area. For example, Interviewee D stated that they "want clearer guidance in how far we can push these courageous conversations with kids. The LBGTQIA we need way more guidance with that community, and that is hushed". Some interviewees stated that the information the district does provide teachers about culture is good but that they could use a lot more. Interviewee H stated, "I need easier resources. Some book ideas and some appropriate video ideas". Interviewee A stated that culturally relevant instruction is important but that it should go beyond the monthly cultures the district shares with staff. This interviewee

stated, “We really should be doing it all year round and not only focus on the specific month that holiday is celebrated in.” Statements like the ones stated display an expectation of some teachers that resulted in the level of work demonstrated in culturally responsive practices within the classroom. It seems that teachers feel more supported when they are provided with more resources and examples of teaching that are culturally relevant.

Another reoccurring factor amongst the data seemed to be an emphasis on the belief of the teacher and their willingness to learn more. It was often stated that many teachers believed that teachers who are open-minded and willing are the ones who can do the work of culture and equity. Many thought this mindset or stance best supported them for the work. Interviewee D stated, “The willingness to learn, understand, ask questions, and be wrong” when asked what they feel best supports a teacher in this type of work. Interviewee C stated, “I would say one who is open to knowledge. You may not know, but being willing to be open and learn makes you culturally proficient. Using it in your lessons and the things that you do.” Interviewee E stated, “Somebody who understands and appreciates the different cultures in front of them. One who understands the different traditions and cultures and is respectful of the different cultures. Someone who sees the students for who they are as a person and not as their skin color.” Each interviewee mentioned in some way that an open mind is a factor that best helps support teachers in working in equity in culture within their classrooms.

Conclusion

Many themes were found amongst both data sets that were attributed to the factors teachers felt best supported them in teaching diverse learners. Teachers felt the

school and leadership were factors that could best support them in designing and implementing culturally relevant instruction. They felt with guidance, aid, and support from these entities, they would best be supported and be able to deliver this type of instruction.

Teachers also felt that internal factors could be the best support. Internal factors include a teacher who is open and willing to learn new things and take on new tasks and teachers who have intentionally or unintentionally exposed themselves to other races and cultures. They believed these internal factors were the best supporters for equipping them to create, design, and implement culturally relevant instruction.

RQ3 WHAT SCHOOL FACTORS DO TEACHERS FEEL HAVE AFFECTED THEIR ABILITY TO TEACH DIVERSE LEARNERS?

Introduction

It was expected that teachers would be more satisfied with their school and its factors and would feel greater confidence in teaching diverse students. The survey results and the interview results supported this hypothesis.

Results

Survey Data

Statistically significant results were found in all three variable domains: gender, race/ethnicity, and school type. On average, women had a higher cultural diversity self-concept ($x = 64.33$) than men ($x = 59.18$). This difference allowed for the rejection of the Null Hypothesis of no relationship ($F = 3.73$, $p = .06$). A possible reason for this distinction is that since female teachers are more represented, they tend to have a greater sense of self and confidence to go beyond what is taught or given to them. Cultural

diversity is not originally embedded in all curricula and certainly not to the extent of the main subjects of education. Culture and equity work would require comfort and confidence to go beyond the curriculum and intentionally discover ways to be inclusive and mindful of all the differences within one's classroom. Male teachers may feel a slight sense of intimidation and hesitation due to being in the minority amongst teachers to step outside of the curriculum provided. This would then produce a self-concept of diversity that is less than what the teachers in the majority, females, produce.

Minority respondents rated themselves more highly ($x = 68.00$) than did white respondents (61.97), a difference that again was statistically significant ($F=4.48$, $p = .040$). Lastly, elementary school teachers, on average, rated themselves more highly ($x = 63.64$) than did the middle and high school teachers (60.00), again a statistically significant difference ($F = 3.42$, $p = .028$).

Interview Data

One recurring theme that seemed consistent amongst the data gathered from the interviews is teachers identifying the change of culture of the school they currently work in. Teachers often stated that their school's climate seemed to change when the population of students began to change, which seemed to impact how and what they taught inside their classrooms. Many interviewees often thought that one school factor that has greatly impacted their ability to teach diverse learners is the district's investment in preparing the teachers to meet the needs of a growing diverse student population. Interviewee B stated

> The dynamics of the district have changed so much. It was predominantly white, and now we have so many races and cultures... those children need to see themselves not just in the curriculum but celebrated and represented inside the school. Because of my race being a minority myself and wanting my students to

> see themselves through me... it made me go harder with making instruction culturally relevant. I wanted to see myself represented as a teacher so I know kids can only feel the same.

When asked about the climate and culture of the district before the change that so many teachers acknowledged in their interview, one interviewee discussed how culture and race were never really mentioned to teachers. This interviewee expressed that when the school was predominately White, it seemed like they didn't hear as much about culturally relevant instruction in professional development or just in conversations. Interviewee H stated

> Before, it was never even talked about…like before, everyone was white in my class, and everyone celebrated Christmas, and we still didn't talk about holidays, politics, or religion. Over time, it started to really be discussed. In the beginning, I did not feel like culture was ever discussed. The only culture I felt was talked about what SES…, like the differences in what families had. When I came to my school it was told to me it was the "country club school." I felt like it was not really addressed or talked about. My school was diverse, and it wasn't talked about. At the beginning of my career, there was no diversity at all. I had maybe one or two different nationalities.

Interviewee I discussed their career as a teacher in this district and how they observed the demographic change of the student body over time. The interviewee stated that at the beginning of their career, they saw very little evidence of culture or equity training for staff, but they always had conversations about diversity. Interviewee I stated

> Back then we had training here or there. Now, I see a lot of resources and training in equity and diversity. This district always talked about diversity, and it seemed like they were ahead of a lot of other districts. They always talked about teaching methods and resources but now it just seems to be a lot more.

One interviewee stated that the demographic change they observed even influenced the conditions of the parents, which could have presented challenges for them

inside their classroom. The interviewee (Interviewee H) discussed how earlier in their career, when diversity was not readily discussed in schools, it seemed like there was less pushback from parents about what they discussed regarding diversity and culture within the classroom. With diversity becoming what the interviewee called a "hot topic," parents now seem more opinionated about what they want their children to learn and not learn about cultures. Interviewee G stated

> Parents make it harder because some parents do not want their students to learn certain things, and they want them separated from it. Like the people who say they don't want their children in for Halloween because they believe it is bad, where in some cultures, they look at it as celebrating those that passed, and those families might be more willing. I think schools have made it easier because they are using programs that are more culturally enriched. We are not searching for books as much, and resources are easier to find. I just don't know what will upset people. I don't want to upset the parents. I feel like we are almost in an awakening and trying to find our way and find a balance. We are trying to marry what we have done and what we are doing now to work for everyone.

Quite a few interviewees felt that the school's climate, which is ultimately influenced by those who work at the school, those who attend the school, and even those who send their children to school, greatly impacts their ability to teach diverse learners effectively. Some interviewees felt that the school climate impacted by the students affects their ability to teach diverse learners more. In contrast, others felt that the climate affected by the parents had more of an impact. The need for cultural intelligence seemed to be shared amongst the interviewees, but the vehicle that intelligence traveled by seemed to differ.

Another reoccurring theme amongst the interview data that addressed a school factor that contributes to one's ability to teach diverse learners is professional development within this district. Many interviewees discussed how the professional development offered to the district within the past five years has aided their ability to

meet the needs of diverse student learners. Some interviewees discussed how, at the beginning of their careers, there was a lack of support regarding training. Still, the district has done a better job providing training that gives teachers resources, ideas, methods, and other tools to address diverse learners within the classroom. Interviewee C stated that

> PDs help me, and I try to dig in and really learn from them. Our parents are also very involved, informing us where they are, what they believe, and their ethnicities. Having a relationship with my parents helps keep me informed. I definitely have my blindness to certain things. I have taken out different children's books from the library to represent different ethnicities, went into classrooms and read books they could relate to, and sat in conversations with different staff members to open up different ideas and values, especially with our ESL teacher. I participated in a multicultural night.

This interviewee credited professional development for many learning and ideas they could implement into the classroom to support diverse learners directly. Another interviewee (Interviewee E) stated that they were part of a culture and equity committee within their building, and they stated, "It helped me learn more norms and learn how to implement things in my classroom properly." Another interviewee (Interviewee A) stated, "My team has gotten some ideas from the workshops and slides and has implemented some things." However, some felt that the professional development offered did not provide enough support and seemed repetitive. One interviewee (Interviewee C) stated, "I wish it were more personalized for individual schools with in-person presenters." Another one (Interviewee G) said, "I think there are too many. I feel like they are telling us the same things over and over and not giving us practical advice on how to apply it to everyday teaching". Another stated (Interviewee H), "I feel like the district just talks about it but doesn't give us more explanation and ideas of how to implement it into the classroom." Many expressed dissatisfactions with how professional development on culture is taught to teachers with hopes of them implementing this type

of instruction in their classrooms. Many thought the training did not adequately prepare or give them enough tangible examples of what they should do and how it should look. Interviewee D stated in a frustrated manner that.

> I want more clear guidance on how far we can push these courageous conversations with kids. The LBGTQIA we needs way more guidance with that community, and that is hushed. No one talks about it, and we are supposed to be inclusive.

Overall, it seemed that most of the interviewees, when implementing culturally responsive instruction, desire professional development that informs teachers of diversity and provides resources and tangible examples of what to implement and do in the classroom to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Conclusion

After examination of both the qualitative and quantitative data, many themes were found around the limitations of professional development offered, how the climate affects their ability to teach diverse learners, and how the school leader can affect their ability to teach diverse student populations. Many teachers agreed that these school factors contributed most to their ability to teach culturally relevant instruction. Teachers seemed to agree that if professional development provided more tangible examples of this type of instruction, if the climate of the school allowed for the embracement of culture and culturally relevant instruction to take place daily, and if the leaders of the school were supportive, then it would best support this type of work within their classrooms.

RQ4 WHAT PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES (PD, EDUCATION, ETC.) HAVE AFFECTED THE ABILITY TO TEACH DIVERSE LEARNERS?

Introduction

It was expected that teachers with more personal experiences with race and culture and/or professional experiences with race and culture would feel a greater ability to teach diverse learners.

Results

Survey Data

Male/Female status was related to the cultural diversity self-concept scale (F= .364, p=.006). On average, the female teachers had more of a self-concept of cultural diversity (64.33) than the male teachers (59.18). One alternative reason for this could be that the female teachers may have had more personal experiences with race and culture than the male teachers. Throughout the data, personal or professional experiences with race and culture seemed congruent with educators who felt more confident and comfortable addressing race and culture within the classrooms. See Table 4.1 above for further details.

Minority /non-minority status was related to the teacher cultural diversity self-concept scale (F= .364, p=.006). On average, the minority teachers were more student-oriented (68.00) than the non-minority teachers (61.97). Throughout the data, minority teachers reported more experiences with race and culture, which they used to explain a greater sense of ability to teach and care for diverse students. Many reported they felt more of a concern for minority students because they could identify what it felt like to be

in the minority. Because they could identify with this feeling when teaching diverse students, they often reported being more aware and conscious of ways to make them feel more included and a part of the bigger community of learners. See Table 4.3 for further details.

Interview Data

The personal experiences of the interviewees seemed to play an integral role in each interviewee's ability or belief in the ability to teach diverse learners. It was often found that interviewees who had experiences with culture and race before their educational career were the ones who seemed most invested in providing culturally relevant instruction to students. Some interviewees discussed their experiences of feeling left out or not included due to their cultural differences in the schools they attended growing up. Interviewee A stated, "As a Jewish kid, I grew up in Virginia and was never off. I would miss dances because the dances were on days I had Hebrew school." This interviewee explained that these instances prepare and motivate them to teach diverse students. It gives them context and the ability to relate to wanting their differences to be seen and acknowledged in the educational setting.

Interviewee B discussed their upbringing and how, as a child in grade school, they were bussed to a school to desegregate that school. This interviewee discussed how the feeling of being a minority and always standing out but never really being understood made them feel inferior. As this interviewee went on in life and became a teacher, that same feeling seemed to follow them working in an area where, again, they were the minority. When asked why they felt it was easy for them to implement culturally relevant instruction within their classroom, the interviewee stated

> It was easy to implement in my teaching because that's how I grew up. Because of my race and wanting my students to see themselves through me, it made me go harder with making instruction culturally relevant. I wanted to see myself represented as a teacher so I know kids can only feel the same.

This perspective seemed to reoccur throughout the data with interviewees who had experience before teaching about culture and race. Interviewee D talked passionately about their upbringing and how much of an impact it's had on their ability and willingness to do the work to make minority students more included within the classroom. Interviewee D stated

> I was raised by a fairly racist white middle-class mom and dad. I heard racial words and racial slurs. Prejudices were taught. My husband and I moved to LA when we first got married. I did some job shadowing in an urban school district, and my exposure to diversity and poverty broke my heart and opened my eyes. My sister married a black man, and it was rough with my parents. My one brother-in-law is very open and will communicate anything about being a black man in America, and he has helped me grow as well. It kills me that my girls and my nephews have to grow up like this just because of the color of their skin. It's a conversation that must continue, and it's hard to walk the line between keeping my job and creating conversation. Personally, I have 4 bi-racial nephews, and I know the world they are about to enter. And if I can do anything to influence any group of people to be more inclusive or more aware, why not?

Another interviewee discussed their upbringing and first experiences with people who looked different. This interviewee first discussed their approach with all kids. This interviewee described using an approach where they first want to know the student's story and background to build a relationship and learn more about that student and their differences. They went on to explain why they think they use this approach, stating,

> I think I take that approach because the family I came from was a Christian caring family. I remember being in church one time, and missionaries would come in (I lived 50 miles outside of Erie). There wasn't even one Black kid anywhere near the county. I remember my parents would have people over, and they were always caring and nice. Because of being all White, I never got to be prejudiced towards anyone else. I never had a story where someone treated me wrong or picked on me, but that never happened to me, so how can I form a bias towards someone when no one was ever around me to treat me like that?

What was interesting is that this interviewee attributed prejudice to minorities. Without prompting or questioning, they seemed to connect the feeling of prejudice or bias to an encounter with someone who is of a different race or culture. This connection seemed to be attributed to their reasoning for using the approach they had earlier stated when encountering students. When asked when their first encounter with someone of color was, they responded saying

> My first time being exposed to someone of color was on TV. I watched Different Strokes and George Jefferson and that's how I really learned of people of color. We learned about humanity from TV shows. The first time I had a Black Friend was my grade partner in the district I'm in now, and she became a principal. She was the first African American that I got to talk to or get to know.

Interestingly, many interviewees who expressed interest or responsibility in delivering culturally relevant instruction to students reported being the most affected by race or culture in their childhood or stages of life that preceded their teaching careers.

Conclusion

After analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, there was a reoccurring theme of a relationship between teachers with experiences of race and culture before teaching and their level of confidence and self-concept of diversity. It seemed as if the teachers who were fostered in environments that experienced diversity tended to be the most confident, most determined, and felt most prepared to teach students of diverse backgrounds.

In conclusion, the results of this study could be categorized by teacher beliefs, male and female teachers, elementary teachers and non-elementary teachers, and minority teachers and non-minority teachers. In terms of teacher beliefs, the results indicated that the majority of teachers believed that conditions of the school, such as the climate of the

school, the camaraderie between staff, the relationships between staff, students, and the parents, and the sometimes-overwhelming requirements of the job had the greatest impact on their attitudes and beliefs. They thought the school climate and leadership were the most significant external factors supporting them in developing culturally relevant instruction. The most significant internal factors were teachers who were open and willing to learn new things and take on new tasks and teachers who had intentionally or unintentionally exposed themselves to other races and cultures. Most of the teachers agreed that the limitations of professional development offered, the climate of the school in response to diverse student populations, and the school leader have the greatest impact on their ability to teach diverse student populations. Regarding male and female teachers, the study showed that female teachers had more of a self-concept of cultural diversity and were more satisfied with their school and the leader of their school than male teachers.

The results indicated that elementary and non-elementary teachers were more satisfied with their schools than non-elementary teachers. Elementary teachers were also more satisfied with their leaders than non-elementary teachers and had a higher percentage of agreeance than non-elementary teachers. It would benefit educational leaders to dive deeper into why there is such variation among teachers who teach in elementary school and teachers who do not.

Regarding minority and non-minority teachers, the data showed that minority teachers were more student-oriented and felt a greater sense of preparedness and interconnectedness with minority students.

CHAPTER 5: LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND EXTENSIONS

Introduction

Diamond and Posey-Maddox (2020) found, "While suburbs are often imagined as affluent white spaces, these communities and their schools have experienced major demographic shifts in recent decades and vary substantially in their racial, ethnic, and social class compositions" (p.7). This demographic shift produces a pressing need for educational leaders to examine the merging of race, ethnicity, and class to understand suburban schools and the communities they serve sincerely. Evidence of the shift has been seen in this school district, and the leaders are looking for resources and solutions to help meet the growing needs of a diverse student population.

Summary of the Study

During the 2019-2020 school year, this district implemented a comprehensive plan for district-wide cultural proficiency and equity. This plan has four major goals for the district over the next four school years. Each building in the district also has a cultural proficiency and equity task force comprising administrators, teachers, and parents. To support each goal, professional development is given to all staff of all buildings once a month throughout the school year. This study examined teacher's perceptions of cultural diversity training in a suburban school district. The district consists of seventeen schools whose staff all participate in monthly training courses on culture, diversity, and equity. The study intends to add to the research on how smaller suburban school districts, many of which share characteristics with large urban school districts, handle diverse student populations in training their staff.

This research examined teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity training in a suburban school district. While there is an impressive amount of research on how large urban school districts deal with culture and equity in their schools, there is room for more research on how the smaller suburban school districts handle it. This study adds how these smaller suburban school districts, many of which share characteristics with large urban school districts, handle diverse student populations in terms of training their staff to research.

This study aimed to determine the factors teachers attribute to the success of diverse student learners. Analyzing the teacher responses and the reaction of the principals defined success for diverse learners and uncovered factors that positively influenced their achievement through professional development. The recurring themes uncovered inform educators and organizations that support diverse learners.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Teacher Perspectives

In summary, the teachers' perceptions seemed to align with the fact that internal and external factors contribute greatly to their ability to teach diverse students in the classroom. From the data, teachers seemed to think that the internal factors with the greatest impact are the teacher's inclination and upbringing. They expressed that the inclination of a teacher can positively or negatively affect how effectively their culturally relevant instruction is delivered. It can hinder or improve instruction. A teacher must be open-minded, aware of everyone’s differences, and willing to learn new things and reflect continually.

The teachers also seemed to believe that a teacher's upbringing, or how they were raised and what they experienced before teaching, also had a great impact. It was often found that teachers who had experiences with different races and cultures before teaching were the ones who thought most confident in delivering this type of instruction and even discussing and acknowledging the need for this type of instruction. Those teachers raised in homogeneous environments often felt less capable of relating and delivering culturally relevant instruction to diverse student populations.

The external factors that teachers felt had the greatest impact seemed to be school leadership, the quality of the professional development offered, and the school's climate. The teachers expressed the significance of school leadership in their ability to teach diverse students within their classrooms. Teachers reported that school leaders who demonstrated inclusive thinking and practices demonstrated community within the school and provided opportunities for teachers to learn how to develop and implement culturally relevant instruction were the best supporters for them in becoming culturally responsive.

The teachers also conveyed that the quality of professional development they experienced also impacted their ability to implement culturally relevant instruction. They expressed dissatisfaction with the training offered and the lack of preparedness they felt to accomplish what was expected of them. Often, it was suggested that the professional development sessions address clearer guidance on what can and cannot be done in terms of culture and give tangible examples of how to implement culturally responsive lessons.

Lastly, the teachers indicated that their school's climate also impacted their ability to teach diverse learners. The climate was expressed as what was felt individually when working at the school, but what was considered a norm amongst the staff, students,

leadership, community, and parents. Some teachers expressed how the parents' perspectives and attitudes affected the school's climate, affecting what they felt comfortable teaching and not teaching. Some teachers expressed how the school's climate regarding what seemed socially accepted amongst staff impacted how comfortable they were with teaching about different races and cultures. In all, the climate was a reoccurring theme that seemed to have a major impact on a teacher's ability and comfortability with implementing culturally relevant instruction within their classroom.

Principals Perspectives

Intriguingly, the principal's perspectives aligned with the teacher's perspectives throughout the data. The principals agreed that external and internal factors support and hinder a teacher's ability to provide culturally relevant instruction. The only differences in perspectives seemed to occur when asked about their personal beliefs about the equity work the district was already doing. The data showed that the principals who had experiences impacted by race and culture before teaching believed that the district needed to do more and could do better. The principals, limited to no lived experiences with race before teaching, felt that what the district was doing was adequate.

Limitations

This study was limited to one school district better to understand teachers' perceptions and cultural diversity training. This research can be extended to include teacher perceptions of culture and equity training in numerous school districts in various locations. This study could expand to include schools in rural areas, which are starting to see a population of diverse students.

Data collection was completed during the beginning of the school year. Teachers and principals were experiencing stress and working through the challenges of multi-tasking all the responsibilities of starting a new school year. The bustle of the beginning of the year, along with all of the demands and floods of emails educators receive, most likely impacted the number of survey responses and volunteers for the interviews. Because there was no control over who did and did not fill out the survey, self-selection bias was also present in this study.

Implications

According to Barakat et. Al. (2019), "By 2020, minority students will constitute the majority of the public-school student population nationwide" (p.1). This shift in the racial makeup of public-school students produces a major responsibility for educational leaders to produce other educational leaders who are culturally competent to meet the needs of diverse student populations. This shift makes cultural competence necessary for school leaders to be effective for all students. The underlying motivation that drives teachers to do the work necessary to ensure that marginalized students' educational experiences and education are fair and equitable should be of major concern and priority.

According to Poekert et al. (2020), educational leaders are influenced to "employ particular approaches in the ongoing support of educators that lead to more equitable outcomes for students" (p.1). This aligns directly with the results of this study in research questions one and two, which show teachers often reported that their attitudes and behaviors, their comfortability in teaching diverse students, and their ability to connect with diverse student populations are impacted by their school leader. If we know that leaders can impact a teacher's attitude, belief, and ultimately what teachers produce

inside of their classrooms, then we must also understand there is a responsibility on educational leaders to use their influence to guide teachers through the work of culture and equity, to ensures success for our diverse student populations. The responsibility of ensuring the success of all students cannot be dependent upon one person. However, it seems that analyzing how successful minority students are in our classrooms is solely measured by the teacher's effort. However, how can one evaluate the success of a teacher who has not been properly prepared? We must do a better job at meeting the needs of this population of students, and we must first start by ensuring our teachers are trained and equipped to meet all needs within their classrooms.

There is also a major need for educational leaders to be culturally competent and begin implementing ways to ensure that teachers are competent and prepared to meet the needs of diverse student learners. Research questions three and four revealed that many teachers felt they lacked direction and guidance from their leaders when embedding culturally relevant instruction into their lessons. It also showed that many teachers felt a lack of preparedness due to the shortcomings of professional development. This created a barrier for many teachers, prohibiting them from feeling comfortable or willing to implement culturally relevant instruction. This is why it is so pertinent to expect teachers to be culturally competent and have an even greater expectation of educational leaders to be culturally competent first. It seems a little irrational to expect teachers to be competent in things that their leaders lack themselves. A leader who leads in ignorance creates followers who are unprepared.

There is also a dire need for educational leaders who are courageous and bold enough to make a difference by doing things differently than what everyone is used to.

Cornell West challenges leaders by stating, “We need leaders—neither saints nor sparkling television personalities—who can situate themselves within a larger historical narrative of this country and our world, who can grasp the complex dynamics of our peoplehood and imagine a future grounded in the best of our past, yet who are attuned to the frightening obstacles that now perplex us” (p.50). He means that we need leaders who are not superheroes but bold enough to learn and implement our past successes while also making decisions that imbued strategies and solutions that address our new complex challenges. We cannot continue to do things as usual, and every strategy, routine, and system is no longer adequate to meet our students' needs, especially not our diverse student population. This aligns with the data found in research questions three and four, where the data shows that teachers with little to no experience with race and culture before teaching tended to be the most reluctant to incorporate culturally relevant instruction within the classroom. Those teachers tended to be the ones who were not open or willing to learn new things or wanted to continue to do things as usual because that was what they were most comfortable doing. As educational leaders, it is their duty to ensure that they are leaders who consistently challenge, encourage, support, and guide these types of teachers to learn to be adaptive and flexible within the classroom to meet the needs of *all* students. We can no longer allow teachers to do what they are used to doing for the sake of their comfort. It is a disservice to the students who sit in front of us, and it does not promote or support a climate of unity and inclusion for all students. Our students deserve educational leaders who are bold enough to make decisions that face the challenges we see with our minority students and not hide from them for comfort.

Cornell West's views also align with this study in its discovery of how a school's climate, first set by the educational leaders of the school and district, also impacts how a teacher can manage and influence diverse students in their classroom. There is also a need for educational leaders who are bold enough to go beyond their job description and do something to make a difference in our schools. This study showed how much of an impact climate has on teachers. If the climate affects the teachers, then it ultimately affects the students. We need leaders who care enough to find whatever tool or resource necessary to ensure our schools create, cultivate, and maintain climates that support camaraderie, inclusion, and respect for everyone, not just as a whole but as individuals. Individualism is just as important and valuable as collectivism.

Educational leaders must commit to challenging teachers to go beyond the curriculum and find instructional methods that address race's impact on learning. They must make every effort to teach, instruct, encourage, and aid teachers in implementing culturally relevant instruction to meet the needs of our diverse students, even when teachers push back. They must take a stand to be committed to the work even when teachers think they have talked about it or done it enough. Singleton (2014) states, "Thus collectively, we as educators have also not become very skillful at talking about race, and therefore, we have failed to develop the requisite capacity to examine and address the impact of race on learning" (p.4). He goes on to state that "Many Black, Brown, Southeast Asian, and Indigenous children who will continue to attend US public schools deserve qualified and skilled teachers who love them instead of fearing them. These students deserve competent instructors who understand value and affirm their colorful African American, Latino, Indigenous, Asian, and other cultures" (p.1). The only way to

ensure public schools have and maintain these competent teachers is to have educational leaders who are just as and even more competent themselves. Within the commitment to challenge teachers to do this work, educational leaders must commit to doing twice the work to keep themselves informed and help inform and aid others.

Professional development is also needed for new and experienced teachers, which challenges them to consistently reflect critically on their culturally relevant pedagogy. Howard (2003) states that "critical reflection is the type of processing that is crucial to the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy" (p.197). In other words, Dewey, who stressed the value of reflection in education early on, also saw that if an educator can learn to reflect consistently, then reflective action will be a more useful tool that can be used to address social and emotional issues, especially about race and culture. Howard (2023) challenges teachers in developing culturally relevant teaching practices to acknowledge, recognize, be mindful, and go beyond. He challenges them to acknowledge how "deficit-based notions of diverse students continue to permeate traditional school thinking, practices, and placement, and critique their thoughts and practices to ensure they do not reinforce prejudiced behavior" (p.198). He challenges them to recognize the concise connection between culture and learning and learn to see student's cultural capital as an asset. Finally, he challenges teachers to be "mindful of how traditional teaching practices reflect middle-class, European American cultural values" and challenges them to seek to "incorporate a wider range of dynamic and fluid teaching practices" (p.198). Reflection requires self-seeking and examining how one's views and beliefs can shape a student's conception of themselves. In this study, specifically in research question four, much of the data displayed teachers who lacked reflection. The

study showed that many teachers who were either hesitant or chose not to implement culturally relevant instruction at all were the teachers who seemed to lack the discipline to self-reflect consistently. Self-reflection in the educational realm requires a level of care for others to determine if one's effort and actions within the classroom are effective for those sitting in front of them. However, as seen in the research of this study, this skill can be difficult for teachers who have never taught themselves how to care for and appreciate others who don't necessarily look like them. It then leads one to question, well then, whose responsibility is it to teach them? It is the responsibility of the educational leaders to teach and equip these teachers with the skills they need to develop this skill to meet the needs of the students better. If education is truly for all, educational leaders must do a better job of creating professional development for all staff that challenges educators to reflect critically and consistently.

Through surveys and interviews, it was commonly expressed that teachers desired specific pedagogical resources and tools to help meet the needs of diverse student learners within their classroom. Many think that if they had more concrete examples that could be implemented in their classroom, they could be more culturally relevant to their students. It was often stated that professional development always seemed to tell teachers what they needed to do but rarely demonstrated what it possibly looked like in the classroom. Educational leaders must pass along information and provide time, opportunity, and resources for teachers to develop tangible examples of culturally relevant instruction, ensuring implementation is possible. It cannot be assumed that every teacher understands or knows how to implement this instruction. Professional

development should be designed to provide practice for teachers before being instructed to deliver to students.

Further Research

There is a dire need for more research on how educators meet the needs of diverse student populations outside of just the urban schools to which we always attribute diversity. The reality is that all schools are becoming much more diverse than they have ever looked at, and educators must be prepared to meet the needs of a growing population and community. Diamond et al. (2020) stated that "The changing face of the suburbs also means that historical patterns of exclusion and whiteness are being troubled" (p.8). With a shift in the racial demographic of suburban communities, Diamond and Posey-Maddox (2020) believe that "more work is needed that helps us understand the experience of these groups in suburban schools and communities" (p.9). Educational leaders cannot afford to be reactive to a population that needs culturally and socially relevant instruction.

The reality is that professional development is often planned with the intent to change a group of people, who are rarely asked what tools are best needed to support the change. Educational leaders must better consider and include the voices of the teachers, who are the actual carriers of instruction. We cannot plan to meet the needs of students without first meeting the needs of those who directly influence those students every day. It is the job of educational leaders to provide, support, and aid teachers in meeting all students' needs. This study showed that there is even a difference of feeling between male and female teachers, not just between minority and non-minority teachers. Still, there is even a difference between elementary, middle, and high school teachers. There is work to

be done, and there is a need for more research in these areas to find solutions to help teachers better meet the needs of diverse student populations in all areas.

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APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. Do you think embedding culturally relevant instruction is important? If so, why? If not, why? Under all circumstances?
2. What factors have influenced your ability to implement culturally relevant instruction in your classroom? Directly? Indirectly?
3. What factors have influenced your ability to teach diverse learners? Directly? Indirectly?
4. What personal characteristics have guided your success?
5. What external influences have driven you to implement culturally relevant instruction?
6. How do you define a culturally proficient teacher?
7. Do you consider yourself to be one? Please explain.
8. How have the mandated professional development sessions impacted your ability to implement culturally relevant instruction?
9. Is there anything you want to add?

APPENDIX B:

SURVEY

Cultural PD

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 What is your gender?

- o Male.
- o Female.
- o Other. Please specify.

_____

Q2 In what year were you born?

_____

Q3 With what Race/ Ethnicity do you identify?

- o African American or Black.
- o Asian or Pacific Islander.
- o Latinx/ Hispanic.
- o White.
- o Other. Please specify.

_____

Q4 Please indicate the degrees you have earned.

	Yes	No
Associate degree.	o	o
Bachelor degree.	o	o
Master degree.	o	o
Doctoral degree (e.g., Ph.D., EdD., MD, JD)	o	o
Other. Please specify.	o	o

Q5 How many years of full-time teaching experience do you have?

	0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50

Click to write Choice 1	

Q6 What is the name of the school where you are currently a teacher?

_____

Q7 Please indicate the lowest grade in your school and the highest grade.

	Lowest grade in the school 1	Highest grade in the school
pK and K	o	o
1st grade	o	o
2nd grade	o	o
3rd grade	o	o
4th grade	o	o
5th grade	o	o
6th grade	o	o
7th grade	o	o

8th grade	o	o
9th grade	o	o
10th grade	o	o
11th grade	o	o
12th grade	o	o

Q8 As a teacher, what grades have you taught? Check all that apply.

1. Kindergarten
2. 1st
3. 2nd
4. 3rd
5. 4th
6. 5th
7. 6th
8. 7th
9. 8th
10. 9th
11. 10th
12. 11th
13. 12th
14. Other _____

Q9 To what extent do you agree with the following statements with respect to your current school?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.	o	o	o	o	o
I am satisfied with my teaching salary.	o	o	o	o	o
The level of student misbehavior in this school	o	o	o	o	o

(such as noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria, or student lounge) interferes with my teaching.					
I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.	o	o	o	o	o
Necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed by the staff.	o	o	o	o	o
Routine duties and paperwork	o	o	o	o	o

interfere with my job of teaching.					
My principal or school head enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.	o	o	o	o	o
Rules for student behavior are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even for students who are not in their classes.	o	o	o	o	o
Most of my colleagues	o	o	o	o	o

share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.					
The principal or school head knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff.	o	o	o	o	o
There is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members.	o	o	o	o	o

Q10 Since the mandated CP & E professional development training what changes have you made in your teaching styles?

	Every day	Weekly	Monthly	Every few months	No change needed
Classroom management.	o	o	o	o	o
Homework assignments	o	o	o	o	o
Added class materials	o	o	o	o	o
Other. Please specify	o	o	o	o	o

Q11 In your current teaching, how often do you...

	Never	Seldom (1-2 times a semester)	Occasionally (1 - 3 times a month)	Sometimes (Once or twice a month)	Regularly (Once a week or more)
Work with other students where the whole group gets one grade.	o	o	o	o	o
Participate in whole-class discussions during which you talk less than the students.	o	o	o	o	o
Write descriptions	o	o	o	o	o

of their reasoning.					
Work on problems or issues related to the real world or practical issues.	o	o	o	o	o
Perform investigative activities that include data collection and analysis.	o	o	o	o	o
Make connections to other classes.	o	o	o	o	o
Complete assignments	o	o	o	o	o

that involve complex solutions.					
Complete assignments that include papers of 5 typed pages or longer.	o	o	o	o	o

Q12 What types of professional development have you experienced? Please check all that apply.

15. Short courses.
16. Workshops.
17. Conferences
18. Monthly district required program
19. Special topic such as the Equity Summit
20. Other. Please specify.

_____

Q13 In your opinion, to what extent how often do the following problems occur in your school?

	Almost every day	Moderately often	Somewhat often	Regularly
Student tardiness.	o	o	o	o
Student absenteeism.	o	o	o	o
Teacher absenteeism.	o	o	o	o
Student apathy.	o	o	o	o
Lack of parental involvement.	o	o	o	o
Poverty.	o	o	o	o
Poor student health.	o	o	o	o

Q14 Please indicate how effectively you think you are doing each of the following:

	Extremely effective	Very effective	Moderately effective	Slightly effective	Not effective at all

Communicating respect for, and value of teachers.	o	o	o	o	o
Encouraging teachers to change pedagogy if students are not doing well.	o	o	o	o	o
Working with staff and teachers to meet curriculum standards.	o	o	o	o	o
Encouraging professional collaboration among teachers.	o	o	o	o	o
Working with teachers to	o	o	o	o	o

solve school or department problems.					
Working with teachers on the school's mission.	o	o	o	o	o
Encouraging professional development.	o	o	o	o	o

Q15 All too often people feel that it is not possible to do as much as is being asked of them in their job. Please indicate how often you feel this happens.

	Never	Sometimes	On Occasion	All of the time
Lack of training	o	o	o	o
Overriding school climate	o	o	o	o
Not really part of the job	o	o	o	o

Not enough time	o	o	o	o
Not needed	o	o	o	o
Other things are more important	o	o	o	o
Unclear administrative directives	o	o	o	o
Other. Please specify	o	o	o	o

Q16 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at	o	o	o	o	o

this school aren't really worth it.					
The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group.	o	o	o	o	o
I like the way things are run at this school.	o	o	o	o	o
If I could get a higher paying job, I'd leave teaching as soon as possible	o	o	o	o	o

I think about transferring to another school.	o	o	o	o	o
I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching.	o	o	o	o	o
I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go.	o	o	o	o	o

Q17 It appears that there are more discussions about differences among people. With this in mind, please tell us what you think.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
If families choose to come to the United States, they should conform to our cultural norms.	o	o	o	o	o
Students would learn more effectively if schools were not as diverse,	o	o	o	o	o
All instruction should be in English.	o	o	o	o	o

School is not the place for students to express individual cultural traditions.	o	o	o	o	o
learning about other cultures detracts from learning about what is needed to succeed in the US.	o	o	o	o	o
Conversations with students about race should be avoided, as they only lead to conflict.	o	o	o	o	o

I like "zero tolerance" policies, because they treat all students equally,	o	o	o	o	o
I don't see race in my students-I simply see students.	o	o	o	o	o
I don't know very much about other cultures.	o	o	o	o	o
I don't talk to my students about their backgrounds as I fear I will say	o	o	o	o	o

something stupid.					
I can usually see and acknowledge my bias, and potential privilege, in most situations.	o	o	o	o	o
I have trouble relating to students from backgrounds other than my own.	o	o	o	o	o
Differences in upbringing and experience	o	o	o	o	o

should be valued.					
Cultural differences affect life experience.	o	o	o	o	o
Diversity is an asset.	o	o	o	o	o
The more cultural variety in my classroom, the better the learning environment.	o	o	o	o	o

Q18 In terms of meeting the needs of your students, how important are the following?

	Not very important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Covering the course content.	o	o	o	o

Ensuring the students have work readiness skills.	o	o	o	o
Helping students to work with others.	o	o	o	o
Work attitude.	o	o	o	o

Q19 We would like to ask about your experiences teaching in the school where you are now. Please indicate how important each of the following are:

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Satisfaction with my job description or assignment (e.g., responsibilitie	o	o	o	o	o

s, grade level, or subject area).					
Classroom autonomy.	o	o	o	o	o
Satisfaction with workplace conditions (e.g., facilities, classroom resources, technology, within school safety).	o	o	o	o	o
Satisfaction with the school administration.	o	o	o	o	o

Opportunities for leadership roles or professional advancement.	o	o	o	o	o

Q20 Please indicate your satisfaction with the following

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not satisfied
How helpful was the support you received in preparing your students for their assessments?	o	o	o
How fair the formal evaluation was for you?	o	o	o
How useful was the feedback from the formal evaluation?	o	o	o

Q21 Please rate the following issues as they relate to your teaching experience conditions.

	Very important	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant
Classroom behavior.	o	o	o	o	o
Student work attitudes.	o	o	o	o	o
Student academic achievement.	o	o	o	o	o
Family involvement and communication.	o	o	o	o	o
Salary.	o	o	o	o	o
Required special	o	o	o	o	o

education paperwork (IEPs, etc.).					
Grading requirements.	o	o	o	o	o
Potential for job advancement.	o	o	o	o	o
Retirement plan offered.	o	o	o	o	o
Progress monitoring plan.	o	o	o	o	o
Current administration.	o	o	o	o	o
Other.	o	o	o	o	o

Q22 Please rate the student outcomes listed below in terms of importance.

	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Very important
Willingness to assume responsibility.	o	o	o	o	o
Mastery of course/class content.	o	o	o	o	o
Good attitude toward work.	o	o	o	o	o
Ability to work with others.	o	o	o	o	o
Willingness to take initiative.	o	o	o	o	o

Willingness to participate in class activities.	o	o	o	o	o

Q23 Please respond to the following questions as they relate to your teaching students in your school.

	Nothing	Very little	Some	Quite a lot	A great deal
I provide students with examples and materials which reflect different cultures other than their own.	o	o	o	o	o
I use a variety of teaching styles to meet	o	o	o	o	o

the needs of all students.					
Ty pedagogy help students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives.	o	o	o	o	o
I have a system to help students develop more positive racial attitudes and values.	o	o	o	o	o

I support restructuring the culture and organization of my school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups will experience equality.	o	o	o	o	o

Q24 To what extent do you use the following pedagogies?

	All of the time	Frequently	Sometimes	On occasion	Never
Whole class presentation	o	o	o	o	o

Group discussion	o	o	o	o	o
Small groups	o	o	o	o	o
Individual workbook assignments	o	o	o	o	o
Other. Please explain.	o	o	o	o	o

Q25 Is there anything you would like to add?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q26 Would you be willing to be interviewed?

- o Sorry, no not at this time.
- o Yes, Please copy the link below, click the blue arrow (bottom right), and then paste the link into another browser.

  https://educationtemple.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ejb06yu8DPeanJK

End of Block: Default Question Block

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1) Abstract of the study

This research examines teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity training in a suburban school district. While there is an impressive amount of research on how large urban school districts deal with culture and equity in their schools, there is room for more research on how the smaller suburban school districts handle it. This study will add to the research on how these smaller suburban school districts, many of which share characteristics with large urban school districts, handle diverse student populations in terms of training their staff.

One problem that has been present for quite some time in classrooms, schools, and school districts across the nation is the achievement gap. Berlak (2005) states that "Large numbers of the Nation's children leave school with and without high school diplomas, barely able to read, write, and do simple math. But the failures of the schools are not evenly distributed. They fall disproportionately on students of color" (p.223). As this problem persists, classrooms are continually becoming more diverse, and most educational leaders are starting to investigate if classrooms are prepared.

Diamond and Posey-Maddox (2020), in their analysis of suburban school districts, found that "... the top five American Educational Research Association journals< between 2000 and 2018>, published 164 articles focused explicitly on urban schools compared to only 24 on suburban schools, and only 17 on rural schools. It appears that our scholarly focus on large city school districts has led us to miss the spaces where most of the demographic and educational change is occurring." (p.7). There is a gap in

research that focuses on the schools that extend beyond big city schools, which are evolving in their appearance to resemble some of the characteristics of those city schools, and how to service growing diverse populations. Urban education issues are not limited to big-city schools and are becoming more of a presence in suburban and rural areas.

Protocol Title

The Forgotten "Urban" School Districts and Cultural Diversity

2) Investigator

Principal Investigator: Dr. Judith Stull, College of Education and Human Development

Student Investigator: Monet Barmore, College of Education and Human Development

3) **Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that teachers attribute to the success of diverse student learners. The analysis of the teacher responses and the reaction of the principals will provide a definition of success for diverse learners and uncover factors that positively influence their achievement through professional development. The recurring themes that are uncovered will serve to inform educators and organizations that support diverse learners.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What factors do teachers feel support them in teaching diverse learners?
2. What societal influences (factors external to school environment) do teachers think have impacted their ability to teach diverse learners?
3. What personal and/or professional development trainings or influences have best supported you toward consistent achievement?

4. What has guided their academic journey that distinguishes teachers with consistent academic achievement amongst diverse learners compared to teachers that are not as academically successful?

Background

Much of the available literature examines barriers of diversity in education from the lens of administrators and students but rarely from the lens of teachers. Research also tends to attribute diversity issues to big urban schools, neglecting those suburban and rural schools serving diverse student populations. Diamond and Possey Maddox (2020) state that "Suburban school districts in the United States (U.S.) have experienced major demographic shifts in recent decades and vary substantially in their student populations. More than half of Asian, black, and Latinx students in large metropolitan areas attend suburban schools, and the suburbs are commonly the first destination for new U.S. immigrants" (p.7). Statistics show a shift in the makeup of our schools, and school leaders are now looking for practices and methods to address the shift. With the shift comes a demand for instruction to be diversified and adapted to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

When studying diversity in schools, studies have found that teachers' behaviors towards diversity directly reflect their beliefs about the differences between them and their students. A study by Gay (2013) found that "since teachers and students are often not from the same ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds, these cultural differences can create serious challenges to effective teaching and learning (p.67). The study found that teachers felt that it was more challenging to teach effectively when teaching students from different cultural and social backgrounds. The study showed that most of the

teachers felt that there was a lack of support in teaching diverse students effectively and did not feel equipped to take on such a task.

4) Setting of the Human Research

Data will be collected from teachers and principals employed in a K-12 Suburban school district in Pennsylvania. Participants for this study will include up to 100 K-12th grade teachers employed at a suburban public school in Montgomery County, PA.

5) Resources Available to Conduct the Human Research

The survey will be sent out to all principals and teachers in the North Penn School District (2,000) with a target response rate of 20%. In the survey, respondents will be offered the opportunity to be interviewed. The target interview group is 20. All interviews will be conducted by Zoom. They will be selected based on their response.

6) Prior Approvals

See approval from Mr. Peter Nicholson, Administrator for Secondary Education and Renovation (Nicholson,pdf).

8) Study Design

a. Recruitment Methods

Participants will be recruited through an email communication sent out to the principals and teachers in the district via the listserv. The researcher will allow two weeks for participants to complete the survey after the initial email is sent out. The researcher will follow up by email once a week for up to three weeks to elicit as many responses to the survey as possible. The researcher's goal is to obtain at least 20% of the surveys completed by the end of the five-week survey window. The information collected from

the survey will be used. The survey consent form will be available at the beginning of the survey.

At the end of the survey, respondents will be asked if they are willing to discuss the topic further. Anyone responding in the affirmative will be directed via a link to a survey where they can enter their contact information. Thus, all survey responses will be kept confidential.

The researcher will select at least 10 percent of the willing participants from the introductory survey to conduct the follow-up in-depth interview. The interview consent form will be included with the email scheduling the interview. The interview will be attached to the email confirming the interview day/time. Respondents will be asked if the interview, which will be conducted via Zoom, can be recorded. If the respondent does not want the interview to be recorded, the researcher will take copious notes.

The recruitment strategy for this study:

1) The investigator will share information about the study and the link for the online survey with principals in the district. Principals will be asked to share the information with teachers in the district. The email below will be sent to the principals.

Dear School Leaders,

I am a doctoral student in the K-12 Educational Leadership program at Temple University. I am writing to request that you share information about a survey that I am conducting for my dissertation with your teachers. The survey will be used to determine the factors that teachers attribute to the success of diverse student learners. The analysis of the teacher responses will provide a definition of success for diverse learners as well as

uncover factors that positively influence their achievement through professional development. The results of the study will serve to inform educators and organizations that support diverse learners. Teachers' participation is completely voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete.

Please click the link below to go to the survey (or copy and paste the link into your Internet browser). There will be no negative consequences if you desire not to participate. The survey consent form will be included with the recruitment email. By completing the survey, you agree to be part of the study.

Survey link: https://educationtemple.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ePTeadojyEbMS4S

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at tuc42156@temple.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Monet Barmore

b. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Bilingual: N/A

c. **Local Number of Subjects**

The survey will be sent out to all principals and teachers in the North Penn School District (2,000) with a target response rate of 20%. In the survey, respondents will be offered the opportunity to be interviewed. The target interview group is 20. They will be selected based on their response.

d. **Study-Wide Number of Subjects:** See Above

e. **Study Timelines:** Data for this study will be collected in summer and fall of 2023. These data will then be analyzed during the Fall 2023 semester.

f. **Study Endpoints:** May 2024 is the target degree completion date**.**

g. Procedures Involved in the Human Research

The initial data collection instrument will be a survey that will take 20 minutes to complete. The survey is designed to collect data on the teachers' and principals' demographics and educational backgrounds. The data from the survey will contribute context and supplement the data collected from interviews. Teachers and principals will be asked within the survey distribution to select whether they are interested in being interviewed for the study. In all, 100% of the teachers and principals who meet the criteria and volunteer for the study will be interviewed. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom.

The secondary data collection method will be semi-structured Zoom interviews with survey participants. In addition to interviews, data may be collected from other sources, such as field notes taken during the interviews or materials brought by the participants. These interviews will be recorded with the participants' signed consent. A comprehensive transcript will be completed for each interview. The interviews during the summer and fall of 2023 will be held through Zoom online video sessions. Research is expected to begin in August 2023 and last through October 2023. Zoom will be used. The researcher will initiate the interviews with the participants by using open-ended questions to let participants reference the subject matter they view as relevant. All of the interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The length of the interviews is expected to vary from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. The questions will primarily focus on factors that

influence student success to learn more about the components the participants deem integral to their achievement. The interviews also aim to identify teachers' definitions and perceptions of success**.**

The student investigator will utilize a phenomenological approach for the interviews to gain the most insight into teacher and principal perceptions of cultural proficiency; additionally, this approach will allow the student investigator to gather information about what enables them to be most successful. Phenomenological research "seeks the individual's perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience and calls upon the researcher to suspend theories, explanations, hypotheses, and conceptualizations to be able to understand the phenomenon" (Mertens, 2020). The student investigator will not bring preconceived notions of what constitutes academic success and intends to remain unbiased. Through these interviews, the researcher will examine the concept of cultural proficiency from the perspective of the teacher and principal, as well as determine the factors that have most positively impacted their journey. "The key characteristic of phenomenology is the study of how members of a group or community interpret the world and life around them" (Mertens, 2020). Using a phenomenological approach, the student investigator seeks to understand the factors that lead teachers to implement culturally relevant teaching from their own experiences successfully.

The student investigator will code the transcription following the interview to uncover common themes. The researcher will seek common overlying concepts that exist among different participants' responses. Among the significant themes uncovered, the student investigator reserves the right to contact the participants for further clarification or explanation if necessary. No 3rd party transcription service will be used. Access to an

analysis of the interviews will be done by the researchers only. Interviews will be recorded only with the consent of the respondents.

This research examines teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity training in a suburban school district. While there is an impressive amount of research on how large urban school districts deal with culture and equity in their schools, there is room for more research on how the smaller suburban school districts handle it. This study will add to the research on how these smaller suburban school districts, many of which share characteristics with large urban school districts, handle diverse student populations in terms of training their staff.

h. **Data and Specimen Banking:** N/A

i. Data Management and Analysis

Data collected will be stored on a password-protected device belonging to the primary investigator. A mixed-methods approach will be employed for data collection and analysis for this dissertation. Quantitative analysis will be used to analyze surveys, while qualitative research will be used to conduct interviews. No individually identifiable information will be disseminated. At the end of the survey, respondents will be directed, through a link, to another survey to collect the names and email addresses of those volunteering to be interviewed. Tus survey responses will not be linked to any individual's name or email.

j. Withdrawal of Subjects

There will be no negative consequences for the participants who decide to leave this study. Their choice to participate or to withdraw from the study will remain confidential and will not be shared with other participants.

9) **Risks to Subjects:** There are no foreseeable risks.

10) **Potential Benefits to Subjects:** Teachers and principals may gain insight into the successes of cultural proficiency training.

11) Privacy and Confidentiality

All participants will have to give their consent. Due to the nature of the topic being studied, all information and sources will be kept confidential. Data will be stored in a locked office on a password-protected computer. In addition, code keys will be used to protect the identity of participants where necessary. I will endeavor to ensure that my personal biases and views about leadership practices and responses to crises do not influence the data collection and analysis process.

12) **Economic Burden to Subjects:** No economic burden is expected.

13) **Subject Compensation:** There is no subject compensation.

14) **Consent Process: C**onsent will be sought from all participants. Please see the file Consent.doc.

This study will use the Minimal Risk Consent protocol. The student investigator will explain the nature of the study and obtain consent before conducting interviews.

a. Non-English-Speaking Subjects: N/A

b. Waiver or Alteration of the Consent Process: N/A

c. Subjects who are not yet adults (infants, children, teenagers): N/A

d. Cognitively Impaired Adults: N/A

e. Adults Unable to Consent: N/A

15) **Multi-Site Human Research: N/A**

16) **Sharing of Results or Incidental Findings with Subjects:** Results of this study will be compiled without naming specific participants. The researcher will offer participants to receive a summary of the research project upon its conclusion.

17) **Research Conducted in a Foreign Country: N/A**

18) **Community-Based Participatory Research: N/A**

APPENDIX D:

TEACHER RECRUITMENT

Introduction Letter

Dear School Leaders,

I am currently a doctoral student in the K-12 Educational Leadership program at Temple University. I am writing to request that you share information about a survey that I am conducting for my dissertation with your teachers. The survey will be used to determine the factors that teachers attribute to the success of diverse student learners. Analyzing the teacher responses will provide a definition of success for diverse learners and uncover factors that positively influence their achievement through professional development. The results of the study will serve to inform educators and organizations that support diverse learners. Teachers' participation is completely voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete.

Please click the link below to go to the survey (or copy and paste the link into your Internet browser). There will be no negative consequences if you desire not to participate. The survey consent form will be included with the recruitment email. By completing the survey, you agree to be part of the study.

Survey link: https://educationtemple.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ePTeadojyEbMS4S

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at monet.constant@temple.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Monet Barmore

APPENDIX E:

SURVEY EMAIL

Good morning,

I wanted to first take the time to thank you for taking my survey for my dissertation and agreeing to be interviewed for my research. I am reaching out to see what day and time works best to do an interview through Zoom. It should not take longer than 20 minutes to complete. Please let me know your availability so we can schedule.

Thanks Again,

Monet Barmore

APPENDIX F:

DISTRICT PERMISSION TO CONDUCT SURVEY

Pete Nicholson III <nicholap@npenn.org> Mon, Aug 7, 2023, 4:01 PM

to me

Thank you, Monet. I can officially approve your research!

When you have the chance, please send me an introductory email that can be sent to our folks and I will get that out. Best of luck!

Thanks,

Pete Nicholson

Administrator of Secondary Education and Renovations

North Penn School District

APPENDIX G:

EMAIL TO ASK PERMISSION FOR STUDY

Monet Constant <barmorma@npenn.org> Tue, Feb 14, 2023, 12:53 PM

to nicholap

Good Afternoon,

My name is Monet Barmore, and I am a kindergarten teacher at Bridle Path Elementary. I am a doctoral student at Temple University and am currently at the stage to begin my dissertation. I am doing a study on teacher's perceptions of cultural proficiency. I would like to conduct my study in the district. Nina Feminister referred me to you to ask what is the process to get permission to gather data for the study. If you could inform me of the process that would be great.

Thanks,

Monet Barmore

Bridle Path Elementary

Sent from my iPhone

APPENDIX H:

DIRECTIONS TO BE GRANTED PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

Pete Nicholson III <nicholap@npenn.org> Tue, Feb 14, 2023, 1:18 PM

Monet,

Thanks for reaching out, and congratulations on getting to this stage in your doctoral journey!

For North Penn purposes, the process would start with the completion of this Google Form. Once you have completed that step, I will review your submission and be in contact with any further questions or concerns I have with your proposed study.

I am wondering if you have IRB approval to conduct research within your own district. I'm not sure if Temple would have a concern with that as part of the IRB approval process. Just wanted to throw that out there.

Let me know if you have any questions, and best of luck with your dissertation!

Thanks,

Pete Nicholson

Administrator of Secondary Education and Renovation

North Penn School District

APPENDIX I:

GOOGLE FORM REQUIRED BY DISTRICT TO CONDUCT STUDY

Request to Conduct Research in NPSD

Please complete the form below in order for your research proposal to be considered. Know that completion of this form DOES NOT indicate that you are able to conduct your study. Once your proposal is reviewed, Dr. Todd Bauer will get back to you.

* Required

1. Explain the topic of your research study

2. Provide a brief explanation of the college/university, program, and course for which this project is a requirement

3. Who will be participants in your study? (example: students, staff, principals)

4. Describe the efforts that you will take to maintain the confidentiality of your participants

5. When would you like to conduct this study?

6. Please upload your IRB approval, informed consent documents, research proposal, and any other pertinent documents here.

Thank you for completing this form.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please email nicholap@npenn.org. We will get back to you within a week with an answer regarding your proposal.

APPENDIX J:

EMAIL SENT TO INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS FOR SCHEDULING OF INTERVIEW

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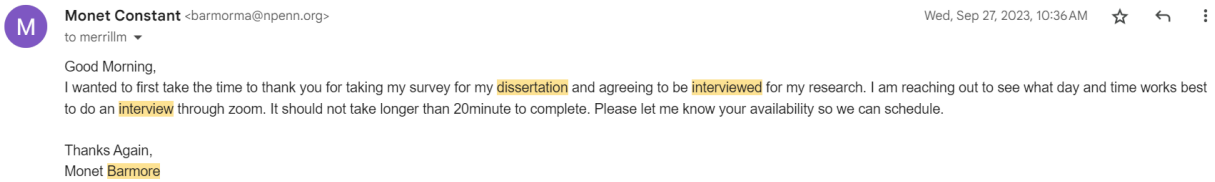

Monet Constant <barmorma@npenn.org> Wed, Sep 27, 2023, 10:36 AM

to merrillm

Good Morning,
I wanted to first take the time to thank you for taking my survey for my dissertation and agreeing to be interviewed for my research. I am reaching out to see what day and time works best to do an interview through zoom. It should not take longer than 20minute to complete. Please let me know your availability so we can schedule.

Thanks Again,
Monet Barmore

APPENDIX K:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview Questions

1. Do you think embedding culturally relevant instruction is important? If so, why? If not, why? Under all circumstances?
2. What factors have influenced your ability to implement culturally relevant instruction in your classroom? Directly? Indirectly?
3. What factors have influenced your ability to teach diverse learners? Directly? Indirectly?
4. What personal characteristics have guided your success?
5. What external influences have driven you to implement culturally relevant instruction?
6. How do you define a culturally proficient teacher?
7. Do you consider yourself to be one? Please explain.
8. How have the mandated professional development sessions impacted your ability to implement culturally relevant instruction?
9. Is there anything you want to add?