ABSTRACT

Diane Lau-Yee, LEAP FOR JOY: AMPLIFYING JOYFUL LEARNING FOR CHINESE ELL STUDENTS (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Militello). Department of Educational Leadership, December, 2023.

In this qualitative study using participatory action research (PAR), educators explored how to understand and implement culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) and joyful learning strategies to support Chinese ELLs. In PAR project and study over 18 months, we focused on building teacher capacity in working with Chinese ELLs in math instruction to elevate joyful learning. As we engaged in professional learning, I worked with a Co-Practitioner researcher (CPR) group, conducted PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) cycles of inquiry, and supported teachers to select and implement CLRP joyful learning teacher practices for Chinese ELLs. I collected and analyzed data from the field notes, observations, post-observation conversations, and reflective memos. We co-developed an evidence-based observation tool for joyful learning practices. As a result of the study, we gained more insight for educators on how to improve equitable joyful learning experiences and better support Chinese ELLs. First, creating a sense of belonging and gracious space through coaching and peer relationships was a critical step in our ability to cultivate teacher capacity. Teachers transferred their sense of belonging and learning in a gracious space to cultivating relational trust with and among students in a safe and welcoming classroom environment. Secondly, joyful learning strategies and CLRP practices included more opportunities for peer dialogue and choice; teachers promoted student agency for independent learning. As a result, teachers and leaders in schools and districts can benefit from our tools and study findings. The processes we used for professional learning are transferable to multiple contexts.

LEAP FOR JOY: AMPLIFYING JOYFUL LEARNING FOR CHINESE ELL STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

for Leona, Remington, Terilyn, Gordon, Garrett, and Grant.

Always take the leap: learn, lead, and live with joy! May you have the courage and determination

to show those who have felt "unseen," they are seen, known, and valued.

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CHAPTER 1: NAMING AND FRAMING THE FOCUS OF PRACTICE

It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.
--Albert Einstein

As a young girl, I remember the thrill of going to school, seeing my friends, eating in the cafeteria, and feeling the authentic enthusiasm I had for daily discoveries. I loved being a student; I loved going to school. It was a safe and joyful place and, even as a young child, I had an unspoken expectation and confidence that I *could and would* learn something every day. The love of learning, instilled in me from my first foundational years in school, stuck with me, propelled me, and kept me motivated. However, as academic content became more challenging, teachers appeared disinterested; and that and other pressures started to chip away at the joyful learning experiences I deeply treasured as a young learner. As an educator for over 25 years, I have observed that some students embrace learning and enjoy school while others are withdrawn and disengaged. Why is it that some students exhibit joyful learning characteristics and some dread or dislike school? What is the role of the teacher in either situation?

As described by the Joyful Learning Network, joyful learning is "engaging, empowering, and playful learning of meaningful content in a loving and supportive community. Through the joyful learning process, a student is always improving knowledge of self and the world" (http://www.joyfullearningnetwork.com/what-is-joyful-learning.html, 2021). With this definition in mind, educators in every school should commit to amplifying joyful learning experiences for students as a way to empower and offer a safe place to learn and discover.

During a meeting at my school in which we analyzed school data, we realized that although we had high academic test scores, our social-emotional learning (SEL) indicators fell below the district average. Students rated themselves low on their annual SEL student survey in growth mindset, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging. Additionally, teachers rated students low

in social-emotional categories on the report cards, particularly in the area of "approaches challenges as learning opportunities." This data prompted me to investigate this discrepancy between high academic achievement and low SEL scores. Our demographic, mostly Asian students (77.5%), with 76% of the total ELL population being Chinese English Language Learner (ELL) students, strove to achieve academically but rated much lower on social and emotional indicators. Were we promoting academic success without considering the importance of creating safe and joyful learning environments in which to thrive? Nachmanovitch (1990) warns, "schools can nurture creativity in children, but they can also destroy it, and all too often do" (p. 116). Achieving perfect or high academic scores leaves little room for making or learning from mistakes if the emphasis is on the final product. Were students pushed to achieve high test scores and good grades instead of the motivation of joyful learning experiences? Joyful discovery during the learning process must be allowed and encouraged so that students can continue to find motivation and fulfillment.

The Focus of Practice (FoP) of this study centered on building teacher capacity in implementing culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for English Language Learners in math classes. In this particular context, the demographic of English Language Learners was specific to Chinese English Language Learners. In this section, I discuss the rationale for the Participatory Action Research (PAR) and the FoP, the assets and challenges from micro, meso, and macro lenses, the significance of the project and study to practice, policy, and research, and the PAR emphasis on implementing equitable practices to reach ELLs.

Rationale

I chose the FoP for the PAR project and study because I observed a disparity in equitable access to joyful learning experiences between Chinese English Language Learners (ELLs) and

their native English-speaking peers. ELLs must adjust to a new country while navigating a new culture, language, and community. Being new to any context takes energy and effort to acclimate. During weekly Coordinated Care Team meetings, we discussed focal students; we often discussed students who withdrew, struggled to engage in class, and had attendance problems, many of whom were ELLs. It was our responsibility as educators and the receiving community to foster culturally responsive joyful learning so that students could connect with adults, peers, and school, finding motivation to learn and persist in school.

We observed an increase in "internalizers", students who do not display their emotions and behaviors, and we witnessed an increase in selective mutism (Di Maria, 2020; Toppelberg et al., 2005). Some ELL students experience trauma from being forced to speak in front of a whole class, with all attention directed at them as they navigate a new language. All of the selective mutes at the school were Chinese students, and they were identified under the Special Education category of Emotional Disorder for anxiety which is often accompanied by withdrawal. We recognized that schools were over-identifying language learners for special education (Artiles, 2018). Instead of identifying more of our ELL students as students with special needs, we needed to examine the teaching practices we used to engage ELL students.

Too often, teachers had little or no expectations that ELL students could learn rigorous content and produce work requiring higher-level thinking. As the poet Ocean Vuong (2016), a Vietnamese immigrant ELL, commented: "Normally, my poor writing abilities would excuse me from such assignments, and I would instead spend the class mindlessly copying out passages from books I'd retrieved from a blue plastic bin at the back of the room" (https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/06/06/ocean-vuong-immigrating-into-english). I observed teachers struggling to provide ELLs with rigorous content instruction; instead giving

them basic worksheets to complete while their peers engaged in more interesting work. This response can lead to humiliating experiences that rob students of joyful learning and deter them from school altogether. Schools should ensure that ELLs have equal opportunities to experience joy and rigorous expectations in classrooms. Next, I discuss the assets and challenges at the micro level, the meso level, and the macro level.

Focus of Practice: Assets and Challenges

The purpose of this PAR project was to build teacher capacity in understanding and articulating culturally and linguistically joyful learning for Chinese ELLs. Once we built teacher capacity, we then had the ability to select and implement salient CLRP joyful learning strategies that amplified joyful learning experiences for ELL students in math. I conducted the research study at Sunrise Elementary School (name changed for anonymity) in the San Francisco Unified School District. The PAR project's participants included a group of elementary school teachers and the principal in a Co-Practitioner research (CPR) group. Additional project participants included other staff members invited to Community Learning Exchanges (CLEs) during the project. Leaders and teachers in the CPR identified and co-created the needed staff professional development, strategies, and tools for culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) and joyful learning mindsets in order to amplify CLRP joyful learning experiences for ELLs. In analyzing the assets and challenges of the FoP, we became more aware of the assets we had and the challenges we faced.

To determine the assets and challenges, I held a meeting with new teachers and a mentorship support team. The purpose of the team was to help support new teachers and develop their instructional and professional practices. The team consisted of six first- and second-year teachers, two tenured teacher mentors, and two administrators. At the meeting, we discussed the

school's assets and challenges in creating meaningful and joyful learning experiences for ELL students. Some assets included 30 minutes per day for leveled English Language Development (ELD) and a continued commitment to meeting the needs of focal groups. Some challenges were lack of teacher cultural and linguistic parity with the student population, the discrepancy in achievement and SEL scores, and the need for more teacher professional development in culturally linguistically responsive teaching and implementation of ELL strategies.

Micro Assets and Challenges

One asset of the school was that we diligently taught designated English Language Development (ELD) for 30 minutes per day. In addition, teachers obtained proper ELD certification. We had a large ELL population, specifically Chinese ELLs, so students had peers they could relate to, and they were less inclined to feel isolated. In addition to designated ELD instruction, there were bilingual peers in their homeroom classes that could assist ELL students throughout the day in their native languages when the need arose.

As previously stated, although the school scored above the district average for ELLs on academic standardized tests, the SEL indicators for the school were significantly lower than the district average. Specifically, the SEL indicators revealed that ELL students lacked (a) a strong sense of belonging (sense of acceptance, value, inclusion, and welcome by teacher and peers in all school settings); (b) growth mindset (effort as necessary for success, embrace challenges, learn from criticism, and persist in the face of setbacks); (c) self-efficacy (achieving a goal/confidence in their own ability to control or manage their motivation, behavior, and environment; and (d) social awareness (the ability to empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social norms for behavior, and to recognize resources and supports) (Panorama Education 360^0 Survey, n.d.).

In addition, teachers did not always realize who the ELL students were because the ELL students phenotypically looked like their peers. Another challenge was that the teaching staff did not have parity with our 77.5% Asian/Chinese students; 68% of our teaching staff was White. The teachers did not know the dominant culture and language of the students and families; lack of knowledge and use of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) exacerbated the challenges of working with diverse populations. In addition to CLRP professional development, teachers needed ongoing professional development (PD) in language acquisition, academic discourse, and ELL strategies.

The PAR project and study proved crucial because of the need for meaningful PD and curriculum implementation for ELLs. From my experience teaching ELLs and observations of the teachers at the school, teachers needed adequate support in English Language Development (ELD) instruction, materials, curriculum, and on-going professional development in order to be equipped and successful with ELL children and their families. I tried to provide needed support for the staff in the years I served as principal, but the process was difficult because of the number of educational initiatives vying for our energy and resources. Using the PAR process, the collaborative work of a small research group focused on selecting and implementing strategies so that our Chinese ELL students could access the math curriculum in a joyful learning environment. Joyful learning experiences serve as motivation for students to continue learning and not disengage in middle or high school when the content gets more challenging.

Meso Assets and Challenges

The SFUSD represented the meso level in the study. One major asset of the district was its commitment to equity and access. District officials purchased an ELD curriculum, and they performed site walk-throughs aligned to ELL practices to observe compliance. Our district

invested in technology programs for ELLs, and it promoted family engagement through English Language Advisory Councils (ELACs) at school sites and within the district (DELAC).

One major challenge was that the district stopped funding on-going district-wide professional development (PD) for ELD instruction. The district provided optional PD as a *teacher of teachers* model of PD for ELD, but there was a lack of rigorous PD for teachers in ELD instruction. A district ELD curriculum existed, but teachers did not receive training to help them comprehend the curriculum deeply and meaningfully. Teachers were expected to read through the curriculum and make sense of it on their own, but the documents were often overwhelming and complex.

Macro Assets and Challenges

The macro level in the study was represented by the policies and programs of the state and federal government. The 1974 Lau vs. Nichols Supreme Court case ruled that ELL students deserved a meaningful education with meaningful support. This opened the door for bilingual education, EL support, and prohibited the *sink or swim* approach to learning English and language acquisition. Safeguards were put in place to ensure ELL students had equitable access, teachers were required to have ELD credentials or certification, and state and federal funds were allocated to sites for ELL support. The Lau Plan was the vehicle for accountability for many years and ensured that every school site provided resources and instruction for ELLs.

However, with the district's release from the Lau Consent Decree on June 30, 2019, the district no longer fell under this federal oversight. The district needed to establish new and effective accountability measures without state and federal monitoring to ensure that equitable access and outcomes were provided for ELL students at all sites. Without the accountability of

the Lau Plan in place, schools and district could overlook the needs of ELL students unless intentional and strategic plans for ELL students were not crafted and followed with fidelity.

For these reasons, this FoP was significant in continuing the equity work for Chinese ELLs as an identified focal group in the school and district and promoting the implementation of effective CLRP joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELLs in math (see Figure 1 for the assets and challenges for supporting Chinese ELL students at the micro, meso, and macro levels).

<center>**Significance**</center>

Through this FoP, I aimed to amplify culturally linguistically responsive joyful learning for Chinese ELLs in my school community. This proved significant to the context and had significance to policy, practice, and research at the school and district level. The analysis of the FoP assets and challenges guided the PAR study.

Context

The PAR project was crucial because 33% of students and their families were English Language Learners. Although ELLs at the school scored above the district average academically, an achievement gap between ELL student data and their native peers still existed; as Valdés (2020) indicates, this gap creates a border that constitutes mis-education of language learners by focusing on assessment and classification instead of strategies that might honor their languages at the same time they learn English. While achievement data were useful, what was more important was co-creating the conditions for learning. The school scored significantly lower than the district average on SEL data, which included sense of belonging, growth mindset, self-efficacy, and social awareness. These SEL measurements were tied to students' feeling acceptance, self-confidence, ability to achieve one's goals with effort, and empathy needed for persistence in school. SEL scores improved when we started to focus on schoolwide SEL

	Micro: School Level	Meso: District Level (SFUSD)	Macro: State and Federal Level (California)
Assets	- Bilingual peers serve as strategic partners in classrooms - Daily ELD instruction - Small ELD classes - ELL students and families are our largest focal group. - School is focused on meeting the needs of focal group for years	- Wonders Curriculum provided for all ELL students - Digital platforms and programs provided by the district for ELD - District provides interpretation and translation services to families - District English Learners Advisory committee (DELAC) - Data provided by Research Planning Assessment Dept. - Principal participates in PD for equitable math practices - District has a commitment to equity and building an Anti-Racist Framework	- All CA teachers obtain a Cross Cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) certificate with their teacher credential. - Lau Plan was in place for 45 years to ensure services for ELL - Additional state funds allocated to schools for EL students
Challenges	- Teacher racial groups do not match student racial demographics. - PD in language acquisition and integrated ELD strategies - Time for integrated and designated ELD PD and calibrating ELD lessons - Opportunities for student conversation during the school day - Relationships between staff and students	- Limited PD provided by Multilingual Pathways Dept - No coach available to support teachers - Not adequate curriculum available to support ELL students at all levels - Curriculum implementation needs to go beyond sentence frames - Parent engagement	- No active monitoring by CDE DOJ - State/Fed assessments do **not accurately capture** ELL potential and understanding of content because it relies heavily on English proficiency in reading and writing

Figure 1. Assets and challenges for focus of practice on joyful learning for Chinese ELL students.

instruction; however, our ELL students still scored lower than their native English-speaking peers in both academic and SEL scores. The teaching staff was 68% White; however, the student body was 78% Asian. SEL faced the risk of becoming "white supremacy with a hug" if we did not apply an anti-oppressive, antiracist lens (Madda, 2019; Simmons, 2019). The SEL curriculum and skills taught were written from a White dominant cultural lens and have not incorporated culturally linguistically responsive pedagogy.

Practice, Policy, and Research

The PAR was significant to practice in two ways—teacher instructional practices and principal leadership practices. Teacher instructional practices—how teachers instruct and relate to students—influence student experiences in the classroom. Building relational trust, creating joyful and inclusive classrooms, and selecting and implementing teaching strategies all fall under the category of teacher practice, and there has to be time and guidance for teachers to continually build and refine their practices. Principal leadership practices include how principals develop professional learning opportunities, set up collaboration structures, and work with teachers to teach effectively. These practices can directly affect staff capacity to amplify joyful engagement in the math classroom for English Language Learners. The research closely examined existing leadership decisions, teaching strategies, and professional development that directly affect ELLs.

The PAR study was significant to school, district, and state policy. For the past 45 years, the mandates imposed by the Lau Plan informed district and state policy on English Language Learner instruction and student engagement. On June 30, 2019, SFUSD was released from the Lau Consent Decree. However, SFUSD was still responsible for providing equitable learning opportunities for nearly 16,000 ELL students, roughly 28% of all students in SFUSD. As a district, SFUSD continued to improve upon its comprehensive system of support and effective

practices for English Learners, and as the district moved from compliance to commitment, this specific PAR project aimed to inform new district policies and provide tools for teachers and leaders districtwide.

Connection to Equity

The FoP was rooted in equity as it related to three frames: psychological, sociological, and political. Culturally and linguistically diverse students learn and acquire language differently from their American born counterparts. Differentiated teaching strategies, cultural understanding, relationship building, and growth mindset all contribute to amplifying joyful learning experiences for ELLs. The following segments discuss the three different frameworks—psychological, sociological, and political-economic—and how they play a part in influencing the focus of practice and creating urgent work as it relates to equity for ELLs.

Psychological Frame of the Focus of Practice

Due to the historical and political inequalities in supporting Asian students, the lack of proper ELL support has been detrimental to ELL students psychologically. Asian ELL students experience identity contingencies (Steele, 2010) because of their identity as immigrants. Some teachers have a lack of understanding of their students' true capacity and make assumptions that new immigrants cannot tackle rigorous academic content. Teachers often give ELL students worksheets while their peers attempt a more rigorous and engaging curriculum. Barton and Tan (2020) cite a student expressing that they can feel that some classrooms "don't want you there" and how students perceive that the English Language Learners are not seen or acknowledged for their ideas and thinking "because my friends don't speak English, they don't count. I see it everywhere…" (p. 433) This is debilitating to students when treated as sub-par classroom citizens.

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Many students who are learning a new language may choose not to speak at first because they are in the receptive stage of language acquisition. This does not determine intellectual capacity or cognitive understanding. According to Hammond (2015),

> For culturally and linguistically diverse students, their opportunities to develop habits of mind and cognitive capacities are limited or non-existent because of educational inequity. The result is their cognitive growth is stunted, leaving them dependent learners, unable to work to their full potential. (p. 13)

Many teachers use ELL engagement strategies that emphasize talking as a priority; however, we needed to examine and implement other engagement strategies that would still give ELL students the opportunity to participate in classroom activities while building confidence and a growth mindset. In order to identify effective teaching strategies, we needed to provide training for our teachers in culturally and linguistically responsive approaches because "Being listened to and having our thoughts valued is important at all ages. Moreover, the skill of valuing other people's thoughts is highly beneficial in life" (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011, p. 23). Teachers needed to have a solid understanding of how students acquire a new language, how students learn, and how to approach learning with a culturally and linguistically responsive approach.

Sociological Frame of the Focus of Practice

In many Asian cultures, assimilation to the American culture has been embraced as a way to seek a sense of belonging. However, Kendi (2019) describes a "dueling consciousness" when one "looks at oneself through the eyes of another racial group" and believes "to be American is to be White" (p. 29). As some students lose their sense of cultural identity and their ability to maintain their primary language, their ability to communicate with parents and grandparents can be impaired, resulting in a loss of intergenerational relationships. Therefore, it is important for

the schools to encourage students to embrace their cultural identities and cultural heritage with pride by creating gracious spaces in the classrooms for authentic student engagement. It is crucial for educators to understand culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy in order to amplify joyful learning in the ELL classrooms. When students feel confidence and pride in their identity, they find a sense of belonging that allows them to embrace joyful learning as their authentic selves, without fear of ridicule, reprimand, rejection.

In *Caste*, Wilkerson (2020) describes a "hostile and alien territory" for those not in the dominant society or caste, "where they would have to learn to subjugate their upright bearing and submit to the humiliations of the social order, knowing that any slip up could cost them their lives" (p. 245). She indicates that "their lives depended upon obeying the rules they had come to study and proving themselves loyal to the caste in which they were ascribed" (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 248). As a school team, we worked closely with ELL and newcomer populations. ELL and newcomer students experienced entering foreign, alien, and at times, hostile territory where opportunities were not made as readily available to them as to students of the dominant language and culture. Some of the students were undergoing the trauma of culture shock as a result of needing to learn a new language, environment, and often a new social status in this country. Some teachers made comments such as "Asian students are too quiet" and "They need to talk more." This was a value judgement, an assumption that student engagement and even intelligence is based on the amount of talking students produce. Our work in the FoP examined authentic engagement that brought joyful learning to ELL students and allowed for a safe environment for ELL students to bring their thoughts and ideas to the class, using multiple modalities for participation.

Relationships are the first point of contact in the learning process, and storytelling and conversation are the mediating tools. If the climate, spirit, and interaction between participants, facilitator, and/or their environment are not inviting and safe, it is difficult for sustainable and public learning to take place (Guajardo et al., 2016). I identified and introduced relevant socio-cultural frames into our community that supported teachers in understanding the relationship of the immigrant experience and learning. We fostered deeper relational trust between students and staff in order to promote joyful learning and classroom engagement.

Political-Economic Frame of the Focus of Practice

Chinese immigrants came to America with expectations and aspirations of a better life; however, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Acts and other anti-Chinese sentiments had a negative impact onto Chinese communities, their sense of belonging, and their opportunities for a safe and joyful learning experience (Tian, 2010). In 1885, Mamie Tape was denied access to Spring Valley Elementary School, one of only seven public schools in San Francisco, due to the existing school-board policy against admitting Chinese children. Her family fought the ruling, and, in the case of Tape vs. Hurley, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Mamie Tape to attend public school and to allow desegregation. However, San Francisco opened a "separate but equal" school for the children of Chinese and Mongolian descent named the Chinese Primary School (Hinnershitz, 2020). The name was later changed to the Oriental School, which is currently the site of Gordon J. Lau Elementary School. Gutiérrez (2013) asserts that "political *conocimiento* involves understanding how oppression in schooling operates not only at the individual level but also the systemic level" (p. 10). In order for Mamie Tape to attend school with White classmates, teachers and administrators would have needed to stand against the status quo and challenge the deficit thinking that Chinese children were less deserving than their White peers in accessing the

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current school systems and resources that existed. Instead, she was forced to go to an isolated school for "Oriental" children.

Only 60 years ago, Chinese students were not allowed to attend desegregated public schools in San Francisco due to red-lining neighborhoods and segregated communities. Chinatown was the only space allowed for Chinese people to have business and community hubs. In the 1970s, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) introduced busing students across neighborhoods in order for students of different racial backgrounds to integrate schools. In 1971, the Supreme Court case of Lee v. Johnson integrated 2,856 Chinese students into SFUSD public schools; however, only approximately 1,000 of those students were provided supplemental English instruction. The others were either placed in Special Education classes or were retained, having potentially lasting negative effects on the students' confidence, self-esteem, and academic access. This is the deficit thinking and systemic school oppression that Gutiérrez warns against and fights to upturn. The 1974 Lau vs. Nichols Supreme Court case determined that ELL students warranted a meaningful education with meaningful support such as bilingual education, ELL support, and other appropriate scaffolds for language acquisition. This ruling acknowledged cultural and linguistic differences and required educators to consider those difference when educating diverse students by using meaningful and relevant support. The one-size-fits-all approach to learning English was dismantled, replaced by bilingual and ELD strategies as viable supports for ELL students in the classrooms. This allowed for culturally and linguistically responsive learning strategies in classrooms.

Unfortunately, Prop 227 passed in 1998, changing how the English language was to be taught in public schools. This Proposition nearly decimated bilingual education and required English Only in the classrooms, requiring a parent waiver if students required bilingual

instruction. English language learner supports, such as Newcomer pathways or special ESL classes, were limited to one year. Prop 227 prioritized assimilation over multiculturalism and was met with controversy around issues of race, immigration, and socio-economic status. Immigrants would need to assimilate to language (and culture) in an accelerated fashion.

Moreover, severe budget cuts contributed to challenges concerning ELD instruction and teacher PD. The staffing for the elementary ELD and multilingual department in SFUSD dwindled to one supervisor and eight teachers on special assignment, only two being Chinese bilingual teachers. Although a large sum of money was spent on a new ELD curriculum adoption in 2018, the district devoted limited PD or training related to its implementation. Therefore, we urgently needed sustained commitment to building teacher capacity around best practices for ELL instruction. At the time of this project, there was only one newcomer school for Chinese students, and it was located in Chinatown, disregarding the fact that a large concentration of our Chinese immigrant population lives in the Sunset District, across town from SF Chinatown. The inapt location resulted in low enrollment, and the district even considered closing this newcomer school. There was a huge need for ELL support, specifically for Chinese ELLs in our school, neighboring areas, and entire district, yet we remained at limited capacity to move student progress and close the achievement gaps between ELLs and their native English-speaking peers.

In summary, looking at SFUSD as a microcosm of the larger educational system, historical inequities persisted in the perception and treatment of Asian immigrant students from the 1880s Tape vs. Hurley, 1970s Lau vs. Nichols, 1998 passing of Prop 227, to current inequities in the 2020s. Leaders needed to be explicit in framing expectations, decisions, and short-term and long-term work with an equity framework and lens. Positive changes in leading for equity invoked equity language and engaged the teachers, students, and families in positive

changes. The FoP and PAR project discussed in the next section addresses the need to amplify joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELLs in math.

Participatory Action Research Design

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a form of qualitative research that supports the lead researcher as an active participant with other participants close to an issue, "insiders in an organization or community... Action research is oriented to an action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 24). In this section, I discuss the purpose of the PAR project, the overarching and research sub-questions, the theory of action, and focus of practice (FOP). This section includes the timeline for three PAR cycles and the overview of the research.

Purpose Statement, Research Questions, and Theory of Action

The purpose of this PAR project was to co-create ELL strategies that would amplify joyful learning experiences in math. The overarching question of this focus of practice was: *How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs?* In the PAR, I conducted a study to respond to these sub-questions:

1. To what extent do teachers articulate the characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?

2. What factors of joyful learning do teachers use to co-design an observation tool for joyful learning of Chinese ELL students?

3. To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?

4. How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth?

As lead researcher, I worked with a small group of teachers to seek answers to these guiding questions as we conducted the PAR, and these questions formed the basis for our theory of action (ToA).

The theory of action for the PAR project and study was: *If teachers build capacity in articulating joyful learning for Chinese ELLs, then they can implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students in math classes.* Ultimately, these strategies and pedagogical practices extended to school-wide expectations and professional development.

Project Activities

The PAR project and study occurred over a series of three iterative inquiry cycles termed Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles. In preparation for the PAR, in the winter of 2021, I officially invited members to join the CPR group. I devised the CPR structure, selected the readings, and scheduled all proposed meeting dates.

The CPR group read seminal pieces of literature and excerpts from books during the winter 2021 PAR Pre-Cycle to ground our work. Selected pieces included excerpts from Hammond (2015), Boaler (2016), Kendi (2019), Freire (1970), and Nachmanovitch (1990). The CPR group identified and discussed pedagogies that aligned with culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning and engagement for Chinese ELL students and created a sense of belonging and community. In addition, the CPR group co-created an observation tool to collect data on teachers' implementation of culturally linguistically responsive joyful learning ELL strategies in the classroom. We used CLE pedagogies in our CPR group. The data from these meetings and reflective memos guided next steps for the CPR group in selecting and implementing strategies that amplified joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELL students.

During the Fall 2022 PAR Cycle One, the CPR group implemented teaching strategies that amplified ELL joyful learning experiences. I analyzed data from this first PDSA cycle to share with the CPR teachers, and together we made decisions about next steps. This assessment determined the design or redesign of strategies to implement during the Spring 2023 PAR Cycle Two. During PAR Cycle Two, teachers continued to implement strategies, and I continued to collect and analyze data through evidence-based observations. We shared our learning with a CPR team from another school at the conclusion of PAR Cycle Two in a Community Learning Exchange (CLE).

Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

I was approved by the ECU Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A) and completed Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification in January 2021 in order to adhere to the ethical regulations pertaining to human research (see Appendix B). I made a formal request to conduct the study with my school district's Research Department and received a district letter (see Appendix C).

Before the project's inception, each prospective CPR member received a personal invitation to voluntarily join the CPR group. I met with each member individually to listen and collect their thoughts on participation in this PAR project. Each member received a consent form to sign and agree to participation. From my perception, I had trust with each member and worked with most of them in the context of instructional, cultural, social-emotional, and other leadership teams. The CPR members used reflective memos to gather their thoughts, reactions, and ideas. Being aware of, disclosing, and sharing our biases with the group served as an additional safeguard against biased outcomes.

We took great responsibility for the serious obligation of securing our data collection and for maintaining the confidentiality of the participants. We maintained confidentiality through the following measures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018):

1. Securing important and personal papers and other data in locked cabinets.
2. Using password protection for all electronic forms of data collection.
3. Requiring signed confidentiality form agreements from each CPR member regarding data used for reflection, planning, and action steps.

I stored the data in a secure location, and I will destroy the data after three years. Whenever appropriate, I used pseudonyms or initials instead of full names to protect confidentiality. In compliance with the IRB process, participants (n=3) signed consent forms for their voluntary participation in the project (see Appendix D). I obtained an approval from my supervisor and an approval letter from our district before the inception of the project. Finally, the completion of the CITI certification ensured that we understood the precautions needed to protect the vulnerability of human subjects. In Chapter 3, I further discuss other study limitations, including validity and limitations.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I introduced the FOP and PAR project. The PAR utilized the Project I^4 Framework (Tredway et al., 2019), emphasizing culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy to elevate the teaching practices of our CPR group as we selected and implemented rigorous, responsive, and effective math strategies that promoted joyful learning for Chinese ELLs. The concepts of CLRP (Hammond, 2015), joyful learning (Nachmanovitch, 1990), and growth mindset in the math classroom (Boaler, 2016) supported the work of the FoP and PAR.

Furthermore, as I connected the PAR to equity, I considered psychological, sociological, and political-economic frames that affected the project. Gutiérrez (2013) states "political

conocimiento assumes clarity and a stance on teaching that maintains solidarity with and commitment to one's students" (p. 10); thus, deep knowledge of the subject assumes that we then use our collective power to address inequities. It is this commitment to students and families that required us to examine and embed rigor in all categories. Creating structures that built opportunities for rigorous experiences and engagement mitigated the deficit stereotypes that Gutiérrez warns against and provided motivation for joyful learning to take place.

We urgently needed to create joyful learning opportunities for ELLs in the math classroom. They deserved to experience lessons and classrooms that promoted student engagement and equitable access. They deserved teachers well-prepared in culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy and invested in building relationships to understand possible cultural pressures and influences that encouraged or hindered joyful learning. They deserved teachers who continued to foster a growth mindset, inquiry, and discovery in the math classroom to develop lifelong joyful learners. Lastly, they deserved teachers that upheld high levels of academic rigor and believed all students could learn by using asset thinking instead of deficit thinking towards students and families.

As I worked with a team of teachers to understand pedagogy, culture, mindset, and students' academic and social-emotional emotional skills, we implemented strategies and professional learning to help teachers provide joyful learning experiences for ELLs in the math classroom. Ultimately, these strategies and pedagogical practices extended to school-wide expectations and professional development, and we plan to share these with other schools and our district as they may be of use to others.

In Chapter 2, I review relevant literature related to the study, using a range of readings to collect and analyze theoretical, normative, and empirical works as they pertained to the PAR. In

Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology, the research design, and the proposed activities in more detail. In Chapter 4, I share how I collected, coded, and systematically analyzed contextual qualitative evidence during the Pre-Cycle. In PAR Cycle One, I analyzed evidence to determine emergent themes for Chapter 5, and in PAR Cycle Two, I used the analysis to determine findings that I present in Chapter 6. I discuss the completion of the PAR project and the findings in Chapter 7, the final chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Participatory Action Research (PAR) project and study, I explored how a group of teachers collaborated to implement ELL strategies in math classes that amplify culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning. In this chapter, I define joyful learning and review studies on social emotional learning, sense of belonging, growth mindset, and motivation. Next, I examine the research on culture and Chinese ELL identity, how Chinese ELLs learn, and what culturally and linguistically responsive theory and practice is. Finally, I define communities of practice and analyze the importance of systems and structures that improve teacher practice through professional learning and collaboration.

Joyful Learning

What does joyful learning truly look like? Does it include spontaneous laughter erupting from classrooms, active dialogue and problem-solving among students, or silent concentration where students are taking risks to find innovative answers to familiar and new problems? It can include all of the above, depending on how the adults in the building structure learning, classroom environments, and student expectations for the classroom community. In this section, I discuss the meaning of joyful learning, how neuroscience contributes to our understanding of enhancing learning, and the connection between joyful learning and social emotional learning.

Definition of Joyful Learning

The Joyful Learning Network (2021) defines joyful learning as: "Engaging, empowering, and playful learning of meaningful content in a loving and supportive community. Through the joyful learning process, a student is always improving knowledge of self and the world…. joy is experienced individually and… context matters a great deal" (http://www.joyfullearningnetwork.com/what-is-joyful-learning.html, 2021). Joyful learning is

promoted though play, social interaction, experiential learning, discovery, risk-taking, and problem solving in order to overcome student barriers to learning (Anggoro et al., 2017; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Sandseter, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Joyful learning is the result of creating the optimal learning experience so that students can feel a sense of flow. In a flow experience, they are intrinsically motivated, abandon self-consciousness, and are fully engaged in a task that pushes them to think and act (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). He identified key elements that help to establish and maintain an experience of flow: (1) identify clear goals at every step; (2) give immediate feedback; (3) be clear about connection between action and awareness; (4) exclude distractions; (5) eliminate fear of failure (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) As a result, students should then abandon self-consciousness about experimenting and making errors, a sense of time disappears because they are totally engaged; and the activity takes on a life of its own, leading to a sense of confidence in achievement. Similarly, Heywood (2005) defines joyful learning not as an epiphany or exciting experience, but the joy that comes from persistence and personal achievement. She indicates that joy is difficult to measure in classrooms, but the nature of productive struggle, particularly in mathematics, is an element of joyful learning. That implies that teachers must be able to successfully assess the zone of proximal development and arrange the learning activities so that productive struggle is present, but not overwhelming (Pasquale, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978).

Characteristics of joyful learning include high engagement, curiosity, interest, excitement, having a sense purpose, and allowing for playful discovery (Conklin, 2014; Udvari-Solner, 2012). As Dewey (1938) indicates, however, teachers must structure experiences for maximum learning carefully so that the degree of freedom, choice, and flow can emerge. Joyful learning may occur spontaneously in classrooms but can be engineered through the use of

specific active and collaborative instructional strategies" (Udvari-Solner, 2012, p. 223). Thus, teachers need to create experiences for students that engender these qualities in students; they have a responsibility to design lessons that promote curiosity and interest.

All children have the potential to think and *be* creative (Land & Jarman, 1993). Many young children enter school with curiosity and creativity with a penchant for discovery. However, after years of schooling, "peer pressure drives conformity, [and] education focuses on the regurgitation of facts rather than on gathering new experiences" (Vint, 2005, p. 21). Starting in 1968, Land and Jarman designed a longitudinal study to understand how children over time (ages 5-15) begin to conform to schooling expectations. Their results indicate that children tended to diminish their sense of curiosity and creativity; they concluded that non-creative behavior is learned (Land & Jarman, 1993). Instead of joyful discovery, children become experts at finding and espousing the *right* answers. However, educators have the power to encourage the exhilaration of joyful learning and discovery, or they have the ability to stunt or destroy curiosity (Land & Jarman, 1993; Nachmanovitch, 1990). In a meta study of creativity for adults, Power et al. (2004) found that several elements intersect to make creative learning possible. While their research focuses on adults, the intersection is relevant for educators who want to enhance the learning process for students — educators must nurture and encourage playful wonder and discovery. Encouraging children to use humor or engage in a playful state of mind creates a better mindset for learning (Conklin, 2014; Gray, 2013). In this project and study, our intention was to reinstate joyfulness and play as an intrinsic practice in math classrooms to examine how we could better engage language learners (see Figure 2).

3 Components of Creativity

Expertise
Knowledge:
Technical,
procedural &
intellectual

Creative-thinking
Skills
Degree of flexibility,
imagination

Creativity

Motivation

Intrinsic;
influenced by work
environments

Extrinsic;
tangible rewards

Source: T.M. Amabile,
Harvard Business Review Oct. 98

Note. https://hbr.org/1998/09/how-to-kill-creativity.
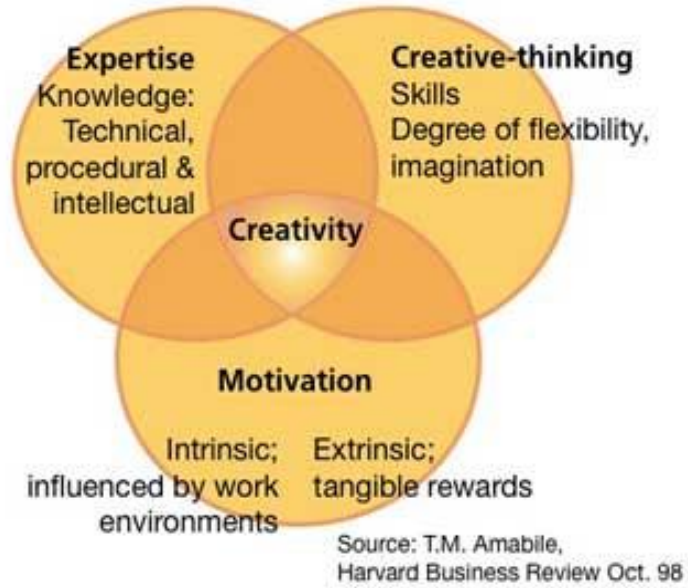
Figure 2. Teachers can create experiences that include these components of creativity.

Neuroscience

The explosion of our knowledge about how the brain works helps us understand how the limbic system is directly connected to joyful learning and classroom environments that can contribute to effective information processing and long-term memory storage (Hammond, 2015; Willis, 2007). The limbic system of the brain is directly connected to processing information; however, emotional responses can interrupt the cognitive function of the processing and decrease the learner's ability to be attentive or to process (Hammond, 2015). The amygdala is the emotional control center of the brain and impulses can cause neural pathways to send emotional regulation or distress signals. The thalamus produces a chemical response of norepinephrine, which supports alertness. Any anxiety, particularly related to a student's identity issues can compromise learning as the student is unable to fully attend (Steele, 2010).

Secondly, in ELL classrooms, the brain functions to access and learn language, and the brain stores the language learning in the same area as the native language. Particularly in language learning, the hippocampus in the limbic system is an essential connection as that is the area of the brain where language is processed. Any interaction with stress signals from the amygdala has an effect on the hippocampus and thus language acquisition (see Figures 3 and 4 for graphic representation of limbic system location in the brain and limbic functions). When classrooms allow for discussion and free exploration, the affective stress filter in the amygdala lowers, and students can achieve higher levels of cognition, make connections, and experience the euphoria of joyful learning and discovery (Willis, 2007). Neuroimaging reveals that *learning happens* when attached to strong positive emotion, and conversely, when stressful conditions are present, learning is blocked from entering the brain's long-term cognition and storage functions. Learning can be increased when the tasks involve rigor. According to neuroscience, the brain is

27
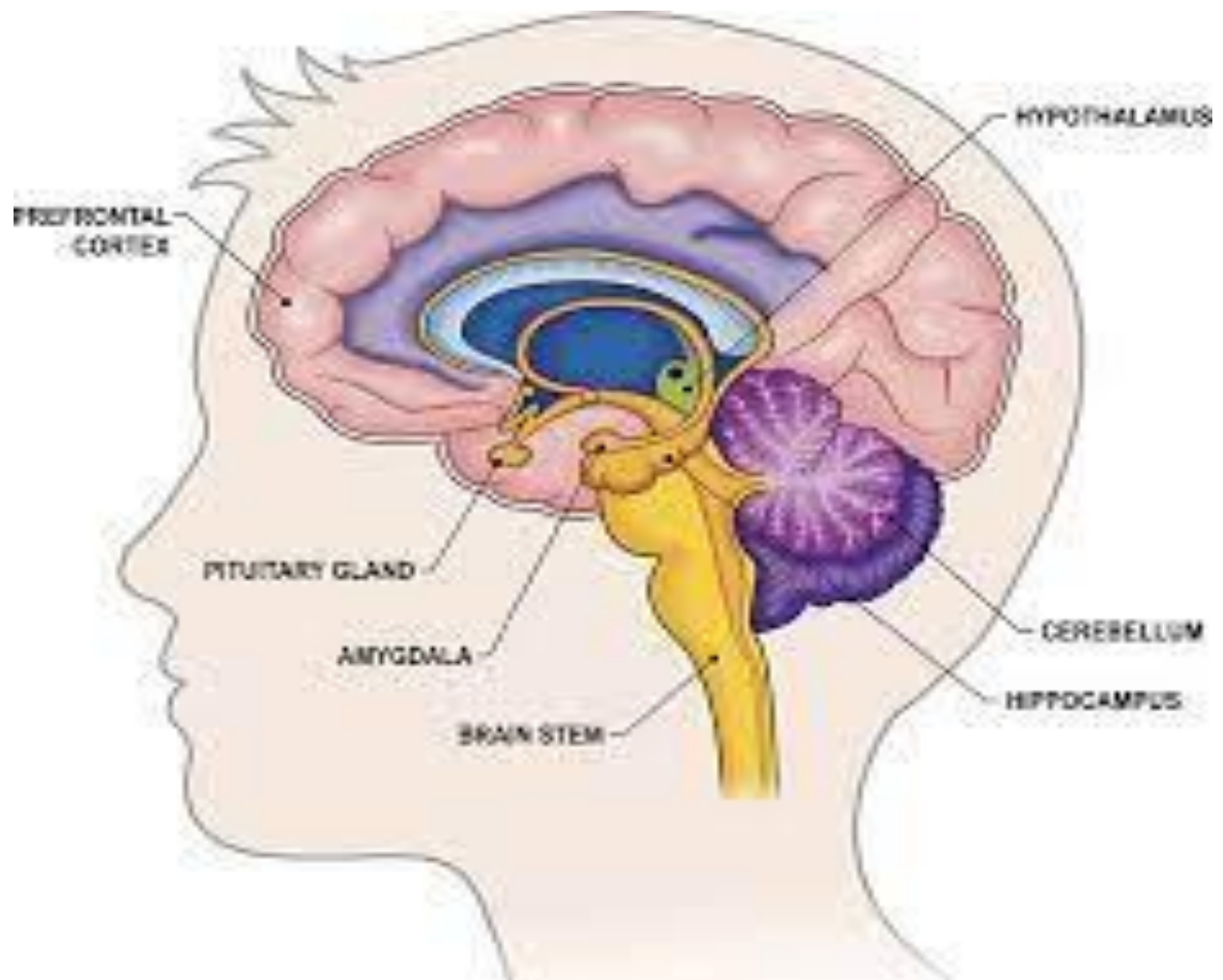
Note. Queensland Brain Institute.

Figure 3. The limbic system controls emotional responses and supports or interrupts learning.

Broca's area

Broca's area is an important part of language formulation — even if someone has the motor ability to form the sounds necessary for words, Broca's area is necessary to form and express **language**.

Angular gyrus

The **angular gyrus** assembles information to help us understand words and concepts.

Insular cortex

Buried underneath the outer lobes of the cerebral cortex, the **insular cortex** is important for many functions, including motor control, emotion and self-awareness, but is also important in the processing of language.

Wernicke's area

Wernicke's area works with the **angular gyrus, insular cortex** and **basal ganglia** to process words and word sequences to determine context and meaning.

Note. https://theconversation.com/what-brain-regions-control-our-language-and-how-do-we-know-this-63318.

Figure 4. Parts of the brain are directly connected to language learning.

hard-wired to allow rigorous tasks to pass through the reticular activating system (RAS) in the brain more readily than dull and tedious tasks (Khon, 2004; Tekkumru-Kisa 2020; Willis, 2007). In the past, I saw teachers give ELL students work with a lowered academic expectation and low rigor, sometimes relegating them to the back of the class with a worksheet while the other students engaged in more interesting rigorous tasks and learning. Equitable access opportunities must be created to have high expectations for *all students*. High expectations come in the form of rigorous tasks. Gorski (2013) states, "The inalienable right to equitable educational opportunity includes the right to high expectations, higher-order pedagogies, and engaging curricula" (p. 25). The Heywood (2005, p. 39) quadrant was useful for re-examining how we approached learning; obviously we wanted high challenge and high support classrooms (see Figure 5).

Thus, the importance of creating safe and joyful environments and learning opportunities for students cannot be overestimated (Hammond, 2015). The limbic layer of the brain or "emotional brain" decides what circumstances to engage in and what potential threats to shun. Neuroscience research confirms that creating a safe and pleasant learning environment directly affects information processing, memory system, and the brain's ability to receive or shut down information (fight or flight) (Hammond, 2015). Understanding how to create safe and stimulating learning environments is key. It is not enough to provide non-threatening classrooms; if the environment is unwelcoming or not engaging and relevant to learners, the brain will not create enough oxytocin, and this can produce anxiety (Hammond, 2015, p. 45). Additionally, teachers need to understand how the brain, neurons, and dendrites worked together. Continuous practice and opportunities to repeat and embed learning cause neurons to continually "fire," creating more dendrites and connections, physically changing the make-up of the brain. Without carefully crafted lessons that incorporate strategic learning opportunities and rigor, dendrites will not be

HIGH CHALLENGE

Toxic Environment Promotes defensiveness and constriction leading to withdrawal	**Exciting Environment** Promotes interest and achievement leading to vital engagement

LOW SUPPORT   **HIGH SUPPORT**

Alienating Environment Promotes isolation leading to despair	**Boring Environment** Promotes devitalization leading to disassociation.

LOW CHALLENGE

Note. (Heywood, 2005).

Figure 5. The Heywood Quadrant describes the ways of supporting rigor in the classrooms.

reinforced and soon disappear without practice (Hammond, 2015). Therefore, creating joyful learning environments and engaging activities are critical for the human brain to process.

Social-emotional Learning (SEL)

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social-emotional learning (SEL) as the "process through which children acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, formulate and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/, 2021). SEL curriculum and initiatives equip students with social-emotional skills to navigate the world in the 21st century, and students who possess these skills experience a greater sense of joyfulness in learning. Focusing on SEL competencies can be a useful means to lower anxiety filters, create a sense of belonging, and foster a growth mindset for optimal learning to happen if implemented with *all* students in mind and what they need. In 2020, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) revised their working definition of SEL to incorporate an equity frame: "SEL advances educational equity…to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation..." (CASEL, 2020).

However, Simmons (2019) asserts that social-emotional learning (SEL) by itself is insufficient. Educators must be culturally and linguistically responsive in order to challenge bias, discrimination, and oppression. Teachers must acknowledge and address the stress and anxiety stemming from racism or inequity in order to teach *how* to alleviate that same stress and anxiety. Simmons promotes what she calls an antiracist approach to SEL. If not, we are in danger of SEL in schools becoming "white supremacy with a hug." Understanding and acknowledging some of

the emotions that face ELL students is crucial in understanding what SEL may look like for ELLs. Producing oral language in front of the class or expressing emotions will differ culturally and linguistically for different demographics of students. Finding out what might trigger anxiety or other emotions for ELLs in school will help in addressing them with appropriate scaffolds. Being unaware may cause teachers to inappropriately address issues with strategies that may be insensitive or disrespectful, causing a sense of unacceptance or alienation. For example, insisting that an ELL speak up in class and engage in talking with a partner may produce anxiety and contribute to other existing challenges.

ELLs in San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) consistently fell below the district average for all students in positive SEL data and positive Culture and Climate data for 4th and 5th grade students. This data implied that ELL students district-wide did not feel as safe and accepted as their dominant culture counterparts. Two major categories in SEL, sense of belonging and growth mindset, are areas that affect ELLs and their experiences in a dominant mainstream culture classroom. Understanding these categories and how they affect ELLs helped address and disrupt inequities in creating safe and joyful learning spaces and experiences for *all* students.

Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging refers to a sense of acceptance, value, inclusion, support, and welcome by the teacher and peers in all school settings (Panorama Education, 2021). A sense of belonging can combat feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; O'Keeffe, 2013). By lowering feelings of anxiety, our brain systems are ready for learning and will not automatically react with fight or flight responses (Hammond, 2015).

Sense of belonging is an integral human need (Maslow, 1943), and sense of belonging for students is in *the school context* because that is where students spend most of their time (Goodenow, 1993). Students who feel acceptance and a sense of belonging in their school contexts are prone to achieve better academic, social, and psychological results. Positive relationships influence and determine a sense of belonging (Lambert et al., 2013). Fostering positive interpersonal relationships between students and teachers contributes to a healthy sense of belonging in school. When students "feel known" by their teachers, they feel a sense of acceptance and positive motivation (Bouchard & Berg, 2017). This undergirds the importance of teachers needing to know individual students but also the importance of teachers' knowledge of cultures and ways of thinking.

Growth Mindset

Another critical factor in creating a joyful learning environment is teaching and promoting a growth mindset in the classroom culture. Growth mindset is defined as *effort* necessary for success, embracing *challenges*, learning from criticism, and *persisting* in the face of setbacks (Dweck, 2019). It is based on the idea that intelligence can be developed over time through effort, sound strategies, and collaboration, and support from others (Dweck, 2019). This mindset is not fostered by merely encouraging students to "try hard;" teachers must strategically and thoughtfully change instructional classroom practices to encourage and guide persistence and allow students time and opportunity for productive struggle while teaching strategies for problem-solving. Effort coupled with guidance, good strategies, and sound classroom practices is the recipe for fostering a growth mindset. "Understanding how to foster human potential" (Dweck, 2019, p. 24) and successful nurturing of a growth mindset contributes to creating joyful classroom environments where problem-solving and persistence lead to mastery and proficiency.

With a growth mindset, making mistakes is embraced as a part of the process. Mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning and actual conditions in which the brain physically develops, changes, and grows. "When we make mistakes, our brains spark and grow" (Boaler, 2016, p. 12). Individuals with a growth mindset are alert to mistakes as a form of learning, and form habits to self-correct. This is significant because it removes any shame or expectation that students must perform or answer questions *the right way*. It reduces pressure and allows for joyful discovery to take place when the anxiety from making mistakes is removed and instead, mistakes are viewed as valuable components to learning.

Sense of belonging and a growth mindset contribute to joyful learning environments and encourage student motivation. When students believe that their teachers feel positively about them and their abilities, they are motivated to improve and attain higher levels. Encouraging students to take risks without fear of failure puts a value on effort and productive struggle, which, in turn, motivates students to find solutions and persist, even if they initially experience failure (Boaler, 2016). Incorporating culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy can contribute to a sense of belonging and provide motivation for students.

Chinese English Language Learners

In this section, I examine the research on Chinese English Language Learners, their cultural identity, the barriers that Chinese ELLs may face, including the stereotypes that they encounter, and value of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) as a means of teaching. One-third of our school community is comprised of English Language Learners (ELLs), over 70% of our student population is Asian, predominantly Chinese immigrants and/or Chinese American-born students, and most of the teaching staff is not of Chinese cultural

background. Understanding Chinese culture and ways of thinking can help teachers connect with their students.

Chinese Culture: Ways of Thinking

Understanding the differences between collective and individualistic societies can influence and change teaching practices to address the needs of Chinese ELL students. As discussed in the previous section regarding sense of belonging, a student's identity and desire to fit in can affect student performance and achievement. Chinese immigrant students and families may have ways of thinking very different than Western ways of thinking (de Oliveira & Nisbett, 2017; Li, 2012; Pan et al., 2013; Rošker, 2020).

> Because of the different philosophical context, culture background, and sociopolitical environments between West and East, there are many differences between Chinese and Western systems of thinking, concepts, and approaches. These differences also exist in their problem-solving process when they apply systems thinking. (Pan et al., 2013, p. 1,028)

The Eastern way of thinking may include valuing the group and engaging in holistic approaches (collectivism) instead of the Western/American value of independence and self-inflation (individualism). Confucius' teaching emphasizes relationships "obligations...between emperor and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and between friend and friend" (Nisbett, 2004, p. 6). By contrast, "the dominant way of thinking in many Western cultures can be described as analytic...East Asians [pay] ...strong attention to context and to relationships...each section is connected to the rest" (de Oliveira & Nisbett, 2017, p. 783). The United States' dominant culture promotes the Western ideals of individualism, self-agency, and personal freedoms whereas Chinese culture embraces collectivist values of harmony and

relationships (de Oliveira & Nisbett, 2017; Hammond, 2015). These ideas are embedded in the Chinese culture and affect students' ways of thinking and problem-solving.

Chinese cultural values, such as self-improvement and adaptability, passed down from parents to children, may affect school achievement (Chen & Uttal, 1988). Academics and scholastic achievement are linked with future opportunities and access. The growth mindset exists in China in this way: "According to the Chinese perspective, innate ability may determine the rate at which one acquires new knowledge, but the ultimate level of achievement is attained through effort" (Chen & Uttal, 1988, p. 354). Diligence, persistence, the potential for change, and motivation for self-improvement are instilled through Confucian values. The belief that anyone can self-improve and achieve through consistent effort versus innate ability serves as motivation for individuals to better themselves. Furthermore, the Chinese collective mindset attributes academic responsibility and achievement to the entire family or community.

Parents may pass down their attitudes and values to their children (Chen & Uttal, 1988). Parents attitudes toward joyful learning may influence how students approach learning. Chen and Uttal's (1988) study revealed that Chinese mothers and their satisfaction with school did not have much correlation with if their children enjoyed school. However, American mothers' satisfaction with school was directly related to whether their children enjoyed school or not. This begs the question of how Chinese ELL students view motivation and joyful learning, and how their parents' involvement and opinion weigh heavily on the importance of academic achievement. However, their research revealed that most Chinese parents reported their children as genuinely enjoying school, not relying on the extrinsic motivation of good grades or high praise but instead relying on the intrinsic motivation of self-improvement and the rewards of their efforts. This counters the stereotype that Chinese students are extrinsically motivated by

fear of bad grades and consequently parent disappointment but rather by intrinsic motivation and drive of self-improvement.

Loh (2017) states the importance of cultural influences on students' learning styles cannot be underestimated. Loh notes that many scholars presume that Chinese and/or Asian students are passive learners in class, rarely participating in whole group discussions. However, Loh (2017) recognizes different learning styles due to culture. Despite not speaking up in class, Chinese students are still mentally alert and attentive, actively listening, and rehearsing and processing new information. They may be more comfortable engaging in smaller group discussions or office hours/individual sessions with the teacher. The student-teacher relationship is valued, highlighting the need for teachers to reach out to students and build trust. Instead of labeling Chinese ELLs as passive learners, they should be regarded as *reflective learners*, reflecting on what the teacher says and asking clarifying questions to make meaning of the material (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Loh, 2017). Understanding Chinese identity, culture and ways of thinking help educators to adjust their teaching practices to align with student learning needs.

Chinese Culture: Ways of Learning

Understanding how people learn and constructivist learning theory are key in understanding the Chinese learning process. According to Thakkar (2011), instead of believing the stereotype that Chinese students are quiet, passive, and memorize and regurgitate rote facts, the Chinese way of learning embraces constructivist learning, making meaning of the lectures and textbooks after carefully but actively listening and digesting information from the teacher and books. Chinese students are actively taking part in their learning. By listening to the teacher instruct and by taking notes from textbooks or the board, students are rehearsing and building schemata (Hammond, 2015). Drills and rote memorization are used to create meaning and

encode information; they help construct knowledge but are not an end to the means. Drills and memorization are just a "pathway to more critical thinking" (Thakkar, 2011, p. 53).

Furthermore, Huang (2005) reports 66.8% of Chinese ELL students accredit stress and anxiety to overuse of questions and discussion. Without understanding the constructivist learning theory and the cultural nuances that affect Chinese students, "this can lead to mismatched pedagogy, teaching styles, and evaluative beliefs of White educators in American schools who are attempting to educate Chinese students" (Thakkar, 2011, p. 52). In other words, without full teacher understanding of how Chinese students learn, teachers cannot design effective learning environments or use appropriate teaching strategies for their Chinese ELL students.

Boaler (2016) reported the characteristics of Chinese math instruction to be the opposite of math instruction in the United States. Instead of focusing on "speed and drill...The [Chinese] teachers taught ideas...through an inquiry orientation" (Boaler, 2016, p. 190). In fact, the math teachers in the United States were the ones that focused on procedural questions and accepted single possible answers. In China, the teacher did not ask "fill-in-the-blank" questions but facilitated and pushed student learning and understanding through questions that caused the students to make connections, see relationships between concepts, and apply problem-solving strategies.

ELL Barriers

Chinese English language learners (ELLs) may face additional barriers or challenges to success in American classrooms. These barriers may include feeling unwelcome, having inexperienced teachers in proper English Language Development (ELD) professional development or understanding of the culture, and navigating learning a new language (Bostad et al., 2015). Additionally, parents may feel unvalued by the school's lack of inclusivity or

outreach, and parents' lack of familiarity with the new language, culture, and US school system. Parents highly value their children's education but may find it difficult to enter into the school environment and systems. Copeland (2007) indicated that "barriers that may prevent involvement of parents of ELLs have been identified as language, cultural differences, work schedules, and lack of transportation" (p. 18) and "parental involvement in school...is not a universal expectation" (p. 67). This explains a possible ELL parent perspective of teaching as solely the teacher's job, and interference or communication would be disrespectful of the teacher's role (Copeland, 2007; Vera et al., 2012). Chen and Uttal's (1988) study supports this belief, stating "66% of Chinese mothers believed that the teacher was more important than the parents" (p. 356), an attitude that prevails in current circumstances.

Thakkar (2011) contributes to the research on cultural contexts of Chinese learners and suggests strategies for American educators working with Chinese ELL students:

> Several common themes that emerge from current literature about the context of education in the Chinese culture suggest that Chinese learners emphasize the Confucian value of effort over ability, that they thrive under an authoritarian parenting style, and that they follow a constructivist learning style. (p. 51)

Therefore, strategies that highlight effort and constructivist learning may serve as guidelines to help American educators create relevant and appropriate learning environments for their Chinese ELL students. Hard work prevails over the innate ability to find success (Gay, 2000; Huang & Rinaldo, 2007; Wu, 2008).

Wu (2008) conducted a cross-cultural study of 20,000 Chinese American elementary students and discovered two reasons that most of the students worked hard: the Confucian value of effort and parental expectations. Chinese parenting, while characteristically authoritarian,

produces a positive outcome on their children, leading to independent learning, and is seen as "loving and concerned" in traditional Chinese culture, contrary to the American view that authoritarian parenting is too controlling and negative. Chinese parents encourage effort and hard work versus ability since innate ability is not something parents can control (Thakkar, 2011).

However, one significant barrier that Chinese ELLs face is the binary stereotype threat of model minority myth versus perpetual foreigner. I explain what a stereotype threat is and investigate these two threats that often sidetrack Chinese learners.

Stereotype Threat

The definition of a "stereotype threat" is the confirmation, reminder, or perpetuation of negative stereotypes that pertain to a race, gender, or culture threat. According to Steele (2016), when a student faces stereotype threat, the anxiety created by the negative stereotype causes cognitive stress and consequently impairs academic performance. When students start to believe or conform to negative stereotypes, their true ability is blocked and performance falters as they waste mental energy on the stereotypical boxes that they are placed in. If students believe a negative stereotype about one's own group (Steele & Aronson, 1995), it may cause an inability to replace old habits when new strategies are introduced that conflict with the negative stereotypes. For example, if Chinese English Language Learners are led to believe that they are not capable of engaging in rigorous, engaging tasks or if they are led to believe that they are only *good in math*, they will not strive to reach their full potential or perform well in other subject areas.

Believing in negative stereotypes about oneself is harmful to individuals and to the larger community that continues to perpetuate these stereotypes and misunderstandings. Systemic

injustices in classroom practices and mindsets dehumanize English Language Learners, prolong ELL invisibility and erasure, and they stunt or even prohibit their sense of belonging.

Understanding Chinese ELL student identity is complex and unsettling; it has become increasingly difficult to feel safe in one's Chinese identity in the wake of anti-Chinese and national AAPI hate crimes. Within a three-week period of the outbreak of COVID19 in the US from March 8, 2021-March 31, 2021, terms like "the China Virus" and other stigmatizing terminology in the media had effects on anti-Asian sentiment and AAPI hate crimes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Asians find themselves in the middle of two binary identities: The Model Minority or The Perpetual Foreigner.

The Model Minority

With the Confucian value of hard work, effort, self-improvement, learning style, and parental expectation, Asian students statistically outperform other ethnic groups in math and science. Subsequently, Asian students are pegged as the "model minority." However, the pressure of living up to the model minority reputation can cause stress, anxiety, and depression in students (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Kim & Omizo, 2005; Lee et al., 2000; Panelo, 2010). Lack of culturally responsive understanding, tools, and strategies, coupled with negative attitudes towards ELL children contribute to the "reasons for these students' lower academic achievement and referral to special education" (Chen, 2005, p. 26). When educators do not know how to respond to culturally diverse students, students get mismatched with inappropriate services such as long-term ELL classes and SPED classes. Chinese students are at risk for a diagnosis of emotional behavioral disorders or educational failure (Chen, 2005). The model minority myth treats all Asian students as a monolithic group instead of recognizing that, within the Asian

population, different subgroups encounter different experiences, challenges, and factors that affect joyful learning.

If students are facing socio-cultural pressures to acculturate and assimilate to American Western culture in order to find a sense of belonging, often these Western values come into conflict with their traditional cultural values and beliefs (Chang, 1996; Kim & Omizo, 2005; Panelo, 2010). This can cause family strife when students acculturate to American values faster than their immigrant parents, causing a great divide called the *acculturation gap* (Panelo, 2010), further causing conflict and isolation, completely opposite to the Chinese values of harmony and collective support. Acculturation can create dissonance within a student's self-identity, while feeling uncomfortable in one's own skin, trying to be something that is not at the core of one's values and beliefs. It can affect the physical and mental well-being of students trying to embrace their true identities, not knowing if they can stand up and be proud of who they are for fear of not fitting in, or worse, fear of being rejected. Kendi (2019) describes this "dueling consciousness" where one "looks at oneself through the eyes of another racial group" and believes that "to be American is to be White" (p. 29).

Additional pressures come from Chinese ELL students experiencing parental enthusiasm and involvement, which can cause stress and pressure for students to live up to high expectations of their parents *and* of the model minority myth (Chen, 2005; Panelo, 2010). The model minority myth of academically successful students does not leave room for asking for help or accessing resources, leaving students to struggle and suffer in isolation instead of receiving a community of support. They are forced to embrace Western values of "individualism, autonomy, and competition (Kim & Omizo). "Family pressure can be a factor leading to mental health concerns in Asian American students" (Panelo, 2010, p. 150). Therefore, student support staff need to be

keenly aware of the potential home pressures and expectations, which could directly affect academic, social, and mental well-being. Additionally, traditional Chinese culture does not emphasize talking about one's own struggles and feelings, further causing students to bottle up emotions and perhaps feel depression versus experiencing joyful learning outcomes at school. Lastly, the stressors of being a new immigrant (new language, new community support, and navigating new systems) can deter ELL students from experiencing joyful learning as they need to focus on other factors or circumstances other than their learning at school. The success of the *model minority* does not take into consideration these hardships and challenges to joyful learning. When stressed, the brain shuts down. However, if educators are aware of these stressors, they can thoughtfully select and implement strategies to meet Chinese ELL students where they are in order to create joyful learning experiences.

The Perpetual Foreigner

Chinese ELL students may face anti-Chinese implicit bias due to the unflattering stereotype of the perpetual foreigner. This negative stereotype is contrary to the model minority myth that argues that Asian Americans are fully assimilated and accepted into the dominant culture. The perpetual foreigner stereotype infers that no matter how long one has been in America, a person can never be accepted as a true American. I remember when I worked at the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco, a tourist asked, "Where are you from? What is your name?" and when I answered, "San Francisco, my name is Diane," the question evolved into "No, where are you *really* from? What is your *real* name?" Other comments included, "You speak English so well," unaware that English is my first and native language. Seemingly harmless comments such as these are examples of microaggressions that threaten to chip away at a sense of belonging to American society and culture, hence a perpetual foreigner in one's own

country. There are limits to the model minority, such as always being the competent worker but rarely the visionary leader (Chin, 2016; Lee & Zhou, 2020). This directly affects students' sense of belonging as well as their self-confidence in their own identity. This marginalization and othering of students can have lasting traumatic effects counter to joyful learning.

Sentiments of Asians as perpetual foreigners do not foster a general sense of welcome or belonging. Ethnic minorities often combat the feeling of being an outsider, or other, and the lack of sense of belonging can negatively affect their psychological well-being (Huynh et al., 2011). If energy is constantly exerted to try and belong, or worse, if a student feels the need to erase their culture in order to fit in, effort spent on rewriting identity is lost on effort that could be spent on joyful learning.

Culturally Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy (CLRP)

Next, I examine the research on culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP). I look at the definition of CLRP, the development of CLRP in history, its use in schools, and the barriers to implementing CLRP.

Definition of CLRP

Ladson-Billings (1994) defined culturally responsive pedagogy as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge, to impart skills, and to change attitudes" (p. 13). Additionally, Gay (2000) added to the term's definition "the use of cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to, and effective for, them" (p. 31). Hollie (2012) added the word *linguistically* to create the term culturally and *linguistically* responsive pedagogy (CLRP) and describes its significance, emphasizing the language component of culture. Hollie (2012)

recognizes that culture is often equated with *race*; however, culture encompasses much more than race, including language. It is important when working with Chinese ELLs to acknowledge there are specific grammatical and phonemic patterns in the Chinese language as well as what happens when students in general acquire a new language. Merely looking at race (biological phenotype) dismisses all the nuances connected to culture (Hollie, 2012).

Hollie (2012) defines culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) as "the validation and affirmation of the home (indigenous) culture and home language for the purposes of building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academia and mainstream society" (p. 23). He asserts that CLRP is particularly beneficial to marginalized or *underserved students*, students who are "not successful academically, socially, and/or behaviorally in school because the school as an institution is not being responsive to that student's needs" (Hollie, 2012, p. 24). These underserved students are often students of color or non-White. Hollie examines sociohistorical, sociopolitical, and sociolinguistic contexts in their relation to underserved populations. Throughout history, due to conquests, colonization, enslavement, and other involuntary immigration, underserved populations were forced to assimilate to mainstream culture, losing their native cultures and languages in order to succeed in the mainstream (Ogbu, 1978). The terms *deculturalization* (Spring, 1994) and *subtractive schooling* (Valenzuela, 1999) refer to the elimination and destruction of a people's home culture, replacing it with a new culture, without allowing or providing equal access to the mainstream culture. Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Pacific Islanders, and East Asian immigrants are some of the peoples who have experienced this inequity. Therefore, the need for CLRP exists in schools to serve marginalized students, embracing their cultures and languages as assets and not deficits.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018) claim, "School is designed to provide young people with the experiences necessary to adapt to the demands of modern society by providing a broad array of cultural knowledge of specific topics" (p. 23). Socially constructed contexts, such as schools, shape learning. Historical context, social interactions, and cultural practices "structure and shape the way children think, remember, and solve problems" (NASEM, 2018, p. 26). Culture provides the social context and experiences that enable learners to learn. Since culture plays such an important role in learning, educators must seek to understand culturally responsive pedagogy and how to implement culturally responsive teaching for the betterment of their students.

Development of CLRP

Historically, key researchers contributed to the development of CLRP. Ladson-Billings (1995) conducted a study with eight exemplary teachers of African American students that shaped the definition of culturally relevant pedagogy. She noted previous studies in which teachers used effective strategies to elevate the learning and achievement of indigenous students while using cultural and linguistic tools and patterns students could recognize and access. Au and Jordan (1981) and Mohatt and Erickson (1981) found success with Native Hawaiian and Native American children, respectively, through accessing familiar linguistic routines and patterns, using the native home culture as an asset for learning. Mohatt and Erickson (1982) use the term *culturally responsive teaching* to represent bridging the gap between home and school cultures.

Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), (Gay, 2000) seek to accelerate learning and close achievement gaps for students of color by utilizing their students' cultural learning tools in instruction. Culturally relevant pedagogy and CRP regard the cultures and languages of non-White students as assets. Ladson-Billings (1995)

describes culturally relevant pedagogy as "a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469). Additionally, both culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogies incorporate an understanding of sociological, political, and historical knowledge in order to challenge systemic oppression for marginalized communities (Mensah, 2021).

Using CLRP in Schools

Tredway et al. (2019) created a framework of classroom learning and practice as an equity-driven tool to implement school change and support teachers in understanding how to implement CLRP practices. The framework consists of four key areas for changing teacher practice and school culture. One of the key areas is CLRP. The tool serves as a rubric and helps to diagnose how teachers and schools are implementing CLRP and which characteristics or practices to aim for in reaching a fully inclusive, CLRP school community and classrooms. Some key rubric components focus on building deep and authentic relationships, validating cultures, languages, and personal identities of students, using prior knowledge and background as assets, creating an environment for multiple perspectives, building knowledge and understanding of cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts of ELL students, and protecting and promoting rigor for all students. While these are normative guidelines that comport with an active and engaged classroom culture, we used these guidelines as a part of this research to understand how they could be implemented effectively for Chinese ELL students.

The state of California Department of Education promotes the use of CLRP and the work of Hollie (2012). "Teachers are the drivers of culturally responsive practices in schools and classrooms. But without the appropriate training and support, even the most well-meaning

teachers can unwittingly provide instruction that is irrelevant, ineffective, and even antagonistic

to today's diverse learners" (Muñiz, 2019, p. 7). Muñiz (2019) argues for the need to prepare all

teachers in CLRP and describes eight competencies used to investigate CLRP integration in the

teaching standards of our 50 states. The analysis concluded that all 50 states embed *some* form of

the eight competencies in their teaching standards, although some more than others.

The eight competencies for culturally responsive teaching are:

1. Reflect on one's cultural lens.

2. Recognize and redress bias in the system.

3. Draw on students' culture to share curriculum and instruction.

4. Bring real-world issues into the classroom.

5. Model high expectations for all students.

6. Promote respect for students' differences.

7. Collaborate with families and the local community.

8. Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways.

Barriers to CLRP

Despite the need for CLRP in the schools with rising populations of students of color,

the lack of CRLP implementation in schools may be due to a myriad of barriers or resistance:

lack of skill, conscious unwillingness, or an issue of colorblindness (Neri et al., 2019). Neri et al.

(2019) state that "teachers often hold problematic and unrealistic ideas about race and culture"

(p. 206). Bonilla-Silva (2006) describes four frames of colorblindness that contribute to deficit

thinking and the resistance of culturally relevant teaching implementation. The first frame of

naturalization asserts that segregation occurs because people gravitate towards their own

demographics, hence statements of why teachers "have to" teach non-English speakers support

the notion that newcomers should attend school in their own community while they learn English. Jayakumar and Adamian (2017) describe a fifth framework of colorblindness that is disguised when self-proclaimed social justice warriors "believe they are racially progressive and committed to eradicating structural inequities while maintaining, if not bolstering, their white privilege" (p. 931). Relying on gross stereotypes for understanding feeds into the second frame of *cultural racism*. There is an attitude among some teachers that they need to educate "these students and families," to correct their "racist" attitudes towards people outside of their culture. Yet these same teachers have no solid understanding of the culture or beliefs of their students. The third frame, *minimization of racism,* supposes that teachers downplay racism, and this shows up when teachers fail to recognize that ELLs are people of color even though they may be the largest focal group at a school. The fourth frame of equality and meritocracy is not something for which teachers advocate while speaking about students; however, they do advocate for teacher privileges and what they deem as "fair." Resistance may manifest due to lack of true reflection and understanding of teacher power and privilege.

Paris (2012) asserts that educators need to move beyond culturally relevant pedagogy and into the intentional mindset of culturally sustaining pedagogy instead. Only then will the educational system offer equitable opportunities for all students and work towards humanizing the learning experiences of historically marginalized populations. Paris asserts the term *culturally sustaining* requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to culture; students maintain their heritage while simultaneously accessing learning and opportunities through dominant cultural competence. Multilingualism and multiculturalism are an end goal (Paris, 2012). We cannot stop at being "responsive" to marginalized cultures or

cultures different from the dominant mainstream if we want to uplift *all* cultures and promote

true pluralism and multiculturalism. Historically, success in America equaled loss of heritage and

community as a means to access or transition to the dominant culture.

Muhammad (2018) and Paris (2012) claim that the *end goal* of teaching and learning is

not merely accessing dominant culture but *maintaining and rooting oneself* in identity, native

culture, values, beliefs, and the sustaining of one's native culture and identity to form and guide

future knowledge. Historically, teaching pedagogies "viewed the languages, literacies, and

cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be

overcome" (Paris, 2012, p. 93).

In an empirical study, Back et al. (2020) followed the learning experiences and patterns

of two elementary-aged ELL students and two multilingual adult volunteers. The study found the

use of ELL students' home language and culture reduced anxiety and lent behavioral, emotional,

and academic support. The students were encouraged to use and sustain home language and

culture. Without an understanding of culture or embracing of ELL's native culture, students

could feel alienation, rejection, and low self-esteem. Researchers find that emotions have a direct

link to learning and cognitive development (Hammond, 2015; Lazarus, 1982; Paris, 2012;

Pessoa, 2008).

Understanding and promoting culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy helped

the PAR participants reach the proposed goal of amplifying culturally and linguistically

responsive joyful learning for Chinese ELL students. In the next section, I detail the context of

how, when and where PAR participants engaged in professional learning that supported them in

changing practices.

Professional Learning for Adults

Schools must establish meaningful professional learning for adults in order to build teacher capacity in understanding and articulating CLRP joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELLs. School settings may have a variety of learning opportunities to choose from such as professional learning communities, networked communities, and professional development during staff meetings; however, the PAR study incorporated a community of practice framework in which teachers and a principal discussed, examined, reflected, and adjusted teaching practices to amplify joyful learning at school. In this section, I discuss the characteristics of communities of practice, how adults learn, and improvement science.

Communities of Practice

Wenger and Wenger-Traynor (2015) describe Communities of Practice (CoP) as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (p. 1). CoPs have three important characteristics: (1) A domain of shared interest and commitment; (2) a community in which practitioners learn with and from one another in the context of relationships; and (3) a shared collection of resources and practice. The term, community of practice, emerged from the concept that "the community...acts as a living curriculum for the apprentice" (Wenger & Wenger-Traynor, 2015, p. 4). CoPs allow practitioners to engage in practice and collaborative learning with and from each other as they share existing knowledge, innovate, and solve problems.

CoPs connect what we *know* through research and what we *do* in practice (Buysse et al., 2003). Historically, transforming research findings into policy and practice proved challenging because a disconnect existed between *researchers* and *practitioners*. However, implementing a CoP framework invites both researchers and practitioners to collaborate together to transform

current practices. "Knowledge is generated and shared within a social and cultural context" (Buysse et al., 2003, p. 266). CoPs incorporate negotiation, collaboration, reflection, and problem-solving with others. The CoP shifts reliance on experts from the outside to looking within the CoP for solutions to problems (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

As the CoP group created opportunities for participants to learn from and with each other, understanding adult learning theory contributed to creating a conducive learning environment for the participants. I discuss the *ways of knowing and filters for making meaning*, (Drago-Severson, 2012) and how this knowledge helped me, as a leader, grow teacher capacity and shape learning environments for the community of practice.

Adult Learning Theory

The community of practice is a structure in which teachers may learn and improve. Applying knowledge about adult learning theory helped me as a leader and facilitator leverage and lead the group to its full potential. According to Knowles (1980), andragogy, or adult education, assumes at least four things about adult learners. These assumptions are that adult learners move along a continuum from being dependent to self-directed; accumulate experiences that become a resource for learning; align learning readiness with the tasks of their social roles; and apply knowledge to immediate application. Taking adult learning into consideration was important as we structured a community of practice for the study.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018) note that "different situations, contexts, and pedagogical strategies promote different types of learning" (p. 67). Many different types of learning exist, including observational learning, implicit pattern learning, perceptual motor learning, sensory learning, inferential learning, to name a few. Constructivist learning, based on the works of Dewey (1929), Bruner (1961), Vygotsky (1978),

and Piaget (1936), posits that learners construct their own learning and make meaning of their learning through their individual and shared experiences. "Constructivism is a view of learning that considers the learner as a responsible, active agent in his/her knowledge acquisition process" (Loyens, 2008, p. 352). Vygotsky (1978) defines learning as a social process, taking place through social interaction, and promotes the theory of *social constructivist learning*. Bruner (1961) describes learning as a process of *discovery*. In the CoP group, discovery and learning took place with participants in a social context, not in isolation.

Kegan's (1980) research birthed his constructive-developmental theory. His theory employs both constructivism, constructing meaning of one's life, and developmentalism, the idea that humans experience continual growth throughout their lives. A third foundational idea exists in this theory called the subject-object relationship. Things we have no control over or perspective on, we are "subject to" and things we have control over and can manage we hold as "object;" we continually differentiate and negotiate between self and others (Kegan, 1980, p. 30). The constructive-developmental theory describes how humans make meaning. Adults make meaning in a variety of ways; as leaders support learning and growth, they must adjust to their leadership to acknowledge these different ways of knowing or meaning making. Drago-Severson (2012) further describes these ways of knowing through the lens of developmental diversity. Similar to Piaget's theory of children's cognitive development, Kegan's theory refers to human development across the lifespan. This infers that humans continue to learn and grow throughout their lives and well into and throughout adulthood, not just through childhood. The theory examines "cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal experiences" (Kegan, 1980, p. 20) to understand ourselves and others.

"The best leaders know how to help teachers grow...They know how to offer feedback so that teachers can improve practice and grow themselves in order to helps students succeed" (Drago-Severson & Blum-Stefano, 2016, p. 1). They discuss four different developmental systems, or ways of knowing: the instrumental, socializing, self-authoring, or self-transforming. These four ways of knowing are the filters or lenses through which most adults interpret or make meaning of words, interactions, feedback for improvement. Understanding these four ways of knowing can influence leadership and how one delivers and receive feedback for improvement. Instrumental knowers appreciate clear feedback for improvement and need concrete and explicit examples and rules: "Tell me what I need to do." Social knowers need to feel affirmed, have a greater capacity for abstract thinking and concepts, and value relationships: "Make me feel valued." Self-authoring knowers have an internal benchmark that forms their own opinions and goals and sometimes find it difficult: "Let me demonstrate competency." Last, Self-transforming knowers are open to others' ideas, collaborate well, and have a growth mindset: "We can figure this out together." Keeping this developmental perspective in mind helps leaders and colleagues foster growth and learning through meaningful observation and feedback. Being aware of these four ways of knowing helps leaders differentiate their approach for leadership and offering support, according to individual learning needs of teachers. Through observation and discussion, leaders may learn to discover which staff needs further support or professional development in order to build teacher capacity. Leaders may consider teacher responses and reflections from memos and surveys to determine what type of knowing different people prefer. In sum, the constructive-developmental theory helps us understand how to better create learning environments conducive to growth and development.

One of the earliest definitions of adult education was a broad one by Lindeman (1926), describing adult education as a *life-long process* without ending. In a seminal study regarding adult education, Houle (1961), claims that adult education is linked to the process of *improvement*. Knowles (1980) asserts, "Our climate must be characterized by a willingness to take risks, to experiment, to learn from our mistakes, and to construct theories that we know will have to be modified" (p. 14). The pace of learning in the 21st century is exponentially accelerating in comparison to the 20th century as knowledge becomes outdated and obsolete within a decade (Knowles, 1980). Therefore, education cannot be described as the "process of transmitting what is known; it must now be defined as a 1ifelong process of continuing inquiry. And so, the most important learning of all...is learning how to learn, the skills of self-directed inquiry" (Knowles, 1980, p. 41).

The learning process for adults assumes life-long learning where each learner is on a continuum from dependence to self-directed learning, and adult learners apply knowledge to immediate application (Knowles, 1980). Adults learn through different styles and benefit from the constructivist model of social interaction. The PAR project created an opportunity for participants to collaborate in learning about CLRP joyful learning strategies for ELLs and their immediate application while using improvement science and iterative cycles in the project. I discuss improvement science in depth in Chapter 3.

Summary

I sought to amplify culturally and linguistically joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs in this PAR. I studied past research regarding joyful learning, sense of belonging, mindset, Chinese culture, English Language Learners, stereotype threats of the model minority and perpetual foreigner, and ways to support and encourage learning for

adults. In the context of a Community of Practice (CoP), educators came to understand the definition of joyful learning, characteristics of and rationale for culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, Chinese culture and values, and historical and political impact on Chinese ELLs in the United States. Through the process of meeting, discussing, and planning next steps in a CoP, study participants utilized improvement science principles and cycles of inquiry (PDSA cycles) to learn how to best implement teaching strategies to amplify culturally and linguistically joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed relevant literature related to the study, using a range of readings to collect and analyze theoretical, normative, and empirical works as they pertained to the PAR. The literature influenced the project's main research question: How does a group of teachers amplify culturally and linguistically joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs? The studies of joyful learning, Chinese culture, and CLRP practices bolstered teacher practice and built teacher capacity to amplify joyful learning for Chinese ELLs. Selected readings and robust discussion in the research group helped inform the selection and implementation of ELL strategies to elicit joyful learning for Chinese ELLs. Understanding how adults learn through social interaction, building relationships, collaboration, and creating opportunities for immediate application of new learning shaped my leadership as I designed agendas and facilitated the group. The literature I reviewed in this chapter supported me to collaborate with teacher participants in this research study (see Figure 6).

Joyful Learning	Chinese English Language Learners	Professional Learning For Adults
- Definition and Characteristics of Joyful Learning - Social Emotional Learning for ELLs - Growth Mindset	- Identity of Chinese Students, Chinese Culture, and Ways of Thinking - English Language Learners - Stereotypes - CLRP	- Communities of Practice (CoP) - Adult Learning Theory - Improvement Science

Figure 6. Summary of literature review topics and sub-topics.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

I have witnessed joyful playfulness and curiosity in young children, and I have seen it wane as children grow older. At the school site, a public elementary school in San Francisco, Chinese English Language Learners (ELLs) consistently scored lower than the district average in social-emotional indicators that were directly related to joyful learning. In this Participatory Action Research (PAR), I examined how teachers amplified joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for ELLs whose first language is Chinese. In this dissertation, I refer to the students as Chinese ELLs. The Theory of Action (ToA) was: *If teachers build capacity in articulating joyful learning for Chinese ELLs, then they can implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students in math classes.*

The context of the research was a public elementary school with 500 students; 50% of these students received free or reduced lunch, 33% of them were English Language Learners, and 14% of the students had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The school had an uneven parity between the student body, which was 73% Asian, and the teaching staff, which was 68% White. For this PAR project, I identified Chinese ELLs as a focal group although our district also included Latinx, Vietnamese, Korean, Filipino, Russian, Arabic, and other immigrant groups in the ELL category. The Chinese ELL population made up 76% of our total ELL population.

The PAR project involved three cycles of inquiry using the improvement science plan-do-study-act and community learning exchanges processes; I incorporated activist research methods to guide the study (Hale, 2017; Herr & Anderson, 2014; hunter et al., 2013). Action research relies on the knowledge and experience of local participants to solve their problems rather than outside experts. PAR is a specific form of action research in which members from within the community and the lead researcher work together in participating in the project and

the research. Activist action research focuses on working in the PAR process to address an issue of equity.

In this chapter, I discuss the qualitative PAR design: the methodological approach, a description of the action research cycles, the research objective and questions, data collection and analysis, and potential considerations for the study, which include limitations, validity, and confidentiality and ethical considerations. Next, I describe the characteristics of qualitative research study and how its social constructivist lens supports the research design needed for the project.

Research Design: Participatory Action Research

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe the qualitative research process as developing open-ended questions to capture complex perspectives of the participants in the study, data collection in the participant's community, data analysis, and researcher interpretation. In using a social constructivist worldview, the authors describe this type of research as "... exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 3). However, I refer to the phenomenon as a focus of practice, not a problem, because I wanted to encourage us to focus on the assets of teachers and students and not view this from a deficit or needs analysis lens. "Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of reporting the complexity of a situation" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 3). Rooted in history, sociology, ethnography, and anthropology, qualitative research closely examines interactions between individuals and human behavior.

In addition to its focus on social relationships, qualitative research has some basic characteristics. As the lead researcher, I collected data at the site, gathered data from multiple data sources, worked inductively to build themes, derived meaning from participants, used an

emergent research process and considered multiple perspectives and factors that contributed to the issue under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As lead researcher, I incorporated these characteristics into the research design, keeping the big picture in mind, relying on open-ended questions, and paying close attention to participants' perspectives and experiences as the group delved deeper into the focus of practice. Participatory action research is a form of qualitative research that supports the lead researcher to remain close to the issue as an active participant with other participants.

Participatory Action Research and Activist PAR

Herr and Anderson (2014) describe one form of action research as working with an oppressed community to identify generative themes or issues that the community identifies as the highest priority. "There has been a tendency for action researchers to be insiders to their professional settings, making them at once both researcher and practitioner" (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 18). In this way, action research is seen as challenging traditional methods of change. Instead of importing outside experts to solve local problems, PAR relies on the expertise of the locals to provide solutions.

Thus, PAR is a form of action research stressing participation and action by members within the community most impacted by the research. The lead researcher encourages community members closest to the work to participate and take an active part in co-leading the research. PAR uses empirical methodology—collecting and analyzing evidence using selected methods—and a coding process to uncover generative themes. Data analysis helps inform future actions for change and improvement (Saldaña, 2015). As lead researcher, I participated collaboratively with teachers throughout the project by facilitating professional development on

cultural competency and joyful learning strategies, co-creating an observation tool to identify characteristics of joyful learning, and engaging in cycles of inquiry to guide future actions.

In addition, I relied on a specific form of PAR in the study—participatory *activist* research (PA[1]R). hunter et al. (2013) state that participatory activist research (PA[1]R) is participatory and emancipatory precisely because the people closest to the practice context are reliable sources of information. Fals-Borda (1995) states in his guidelines: "Do not trust elitist versions of history and science which respond to dominant interest but be receptive to counter-narratives and try to recapture them. Do not rely solely on your own culture but recover local values, traits and beliefs…" (Fals-Borda, 1995, p. 22). hunter et al. (2013) claim that this activist research inspires epistemological curiosity. Secondly, activist research makes Freire's (1970) concept of *conscientizaçao*, or the raising of awareness that generates action and reflection, actionable. The groups who are normally silenced and ignored gain voice and power. As insiders to the issue, the members of the research group, which I refer to as the Co-Practitioner researcher (CPR) group, engaged in regular dialogue to listen and learn from each other to decide on next steps. As lead researcher, I engaged in participatory *activist* research because my focus of practice contains an equity issue: amplifying culturally and linguistically relevant joyful learning experiences for Chinese English Language Learners in math. In the PAR project, I applied improvement science and community learning exchange processes to achieve changes in teacher practices.

Improvement Science and PDSA Cycles

Improvement science is an applied science that focuses on continuous inquiry and learning through short iterative cycles called Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles. The short cycles result in useful information and feedback to shape system improvements. PDSA cycles

help researchers learn how the changes work on a smaller scale before implementing system changes on a larger scale (Lewis, 2015; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2017). Improvement science considers variations in implementation and setting as important sources of information and uses this information to redesign and adjust action steps in each cycle. It relies on building teachers' understanding of the focus of practice, developing improvement ideas, and expeditiously testing of proposed ideas through PDSA cycles (Lewis, 2015). Three questions drive improvement work (see Figure 7):

1. What are we trying to accomplish?
2. How will we know that a change is an improvement?
3. What change can we make that will result in improvement?

According to Bryk et al. (2015), six core principles guide the improvement science approach:

1. Make the work problem-specific and user-centered.
2. Variation in performance is the core problem to address.
3. See the system that produces the current outcomes.
4. We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure.
5. Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry.
6. Accelerate improvements through networked communities.

I used these six principles to guide the research, paying attention to the site setting and measuring improvement. The sixth principle highlights the importance of networked communities. A community of practice, such as a CPR, operates similarly to a networked improvement community because it "unites the conceptual and analytical discipline of improvement science with the power of networked communities to innovate and learn together.
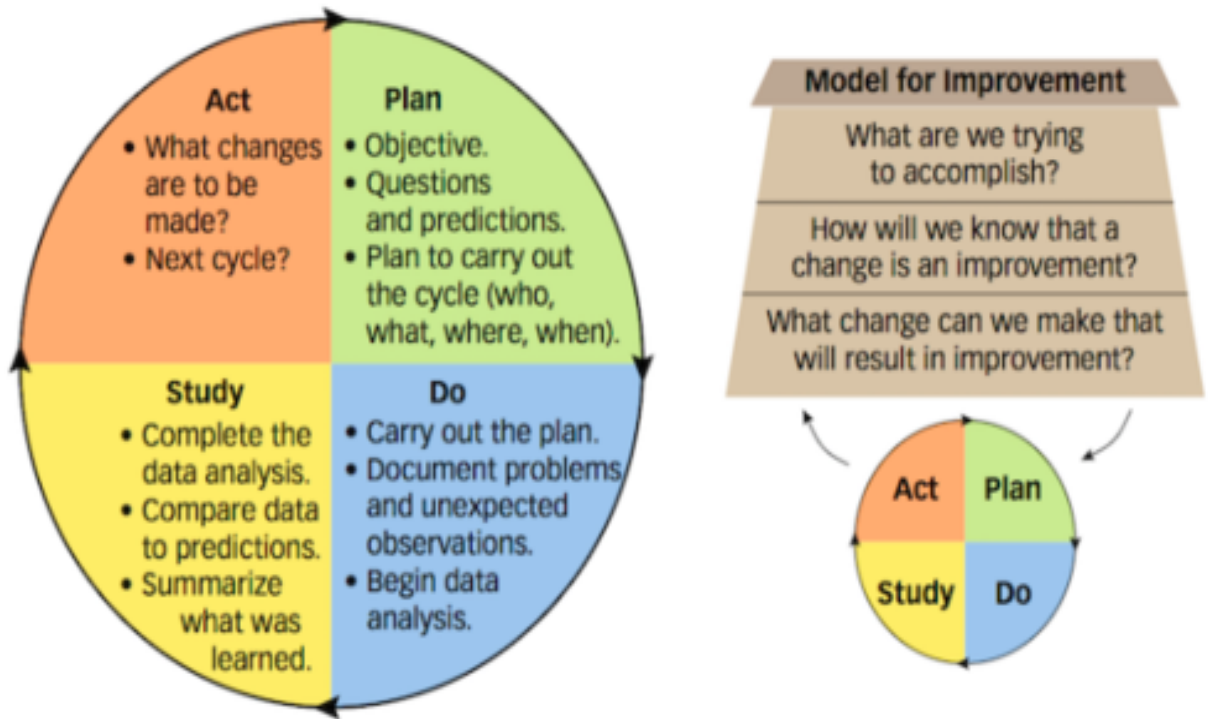
Note. (Jones, 2018).

Figure 7. Illustrates the PDSA cycle and three driving questions.

In embracing improvement science, educators are able to draw upon a well-established set of tools and deep practical experiences" (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 7). The CPR offered the opportunity to tackle a shared problem or focus of practice while engaging many different participants in the process, potentially accelerating the improvement process by using collective action to solve complex problems. I invited teachers from the school community to form a collaborative group that learned from and with each other. I hosted a community learning exchange (CLE) to launch the PAR project and engage in active dialogue with participants closest to the work.

Community Learning Exchange

A CLE is a dynamic, collective learning experience that invites participants to bring their "stories, experiences, questions, and passions to the gathering" (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 28). During the CLE, the participants share assets and challenges related to a problem of practice. The process deliberately incorporates dialogue, other forms of engagement such as art and music, meaning making and reflection, and proposed actions that ultimately lead to improvement and liberation (Guajardo et al., 2016). I invited our CPR group to two joint CLE gatherings I held with another school site that conducted similar research in their own school context.

The CLE is rooted in five axioms or values that guided the actual CLE gatherings and the continuous learning that occurred throughout the PAR project. Two of these axioms were deeply embedded in this research: "The people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns" and "crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process" (Guajardo et al., 2016, pp. 25-26). We relied on teachers' refining their practice as well as crossing cultural boundaries in a better attempt to understand which culturally and linguistically joyful learning strategies best elicit joyful experiences for Chinese ELLs.

Role of Praxis

As stated, I actualized the conceptual work of Freire (1970) as we implemented this study. Besides enacting *conscientizaçao*, we used his concept of praxis to guide us: "Reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (Freire, 1970, p. 127). Militello et al. (2009) state that reflection and action are required of leaders in order for real change to happen. However, this reflection is different than the reflective process in some situations because of the nature of listening closely to the participants and the understandings they gain through dialogue. Rooted in praxis, Militello et al. (2009) underscore that

> authentic accountability may begin by asking what the community considers important and what it wants its schools to accomplish. Inquiry-minded, action-oriented principals look inside the school and classrooms where instruction occurs; they question the practices, their origins, and their impact on student learning. (p. 27)

In addition, I used reflective memos to document my growth and development as a leader during this process, and the teachers who participated reflected on meeting notes and individual memo sessions. As we reflected and acted, we strengthened teacher practice to best elicit joyful outcomes for our Chinese ELL students. As we made sense of the data from the PDSA cycles and reflected on our learning, we adjusted strategies to understand how we developed and implemented lessons that demonstrate joyful learning in the classrooms.

Research Questions

The overarching question of this focus of practice was: How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs? In the PAR project and study, we analyzed data to respond to sub-questions:

1. To what extent do teachers articulate the characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?

2. What factors of joyful learning do teachers use to co-design an observation tool for joyful learning of Chinese ELL students?

3. To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?

4. How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth?

The PAR process was instrumental in answering the research questions.

Action Research Cycles

In the PAR study, we utilized three cycles of inquiry (PDSA cycles) to allow participants to study the focus of practice in quick succession, modify processes, and continue the research process to enact changes in our school. These cycles of inquiry were particularly suited for participatory action research as they encouraged researchers, including the CPR group, to get close to the issue, participate within a familiar context, and build relationships among CPR members. These collaborative relationships were intended to impact teachers' practices in order to amplify joyful outcomes for Chinese ELL students. As we learned from each other and studied data during each cycle, we made plans to elicit joyful learning effectively and equitably for our Chinese ELL students.

I devoted the first cycle of inquiry, the PAR Pre-Cycle, to cultivating relational trust, studying the pedagogical framework of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, and discussing attributes of joyful learning. This included reading parts of the Hammond (2015) book on *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, the Project I[4] CLRP frameworks (Tredway et

al., 2019), and other influential reading and research articles that informed, educated, and safeguarded against researcher bias.

In addition, the team co-created an observation tool to collect data on teachers' implementation of culturally linguistically responsive joyful learning ELL strategies in the classroom. I facilitated a community learning exchange (CLE) to hear personal narratives and experiences related to the topic of study. In the second cycle, Par Cycle One, I worked with the teachers to implement strategies that amplify ELL joyful learning experiences. I collected and analyzed documents, CLE artifacts, and observational data. I triangulated the data with member checks and reflective memos. In the third cycle, Par Cycle Two, I repeated this process. Each cycle incorporated *praxis*: reflection to shape and adjust actions and provide answers for the research questions (see Table 1 for research cycles and activities).

Participants, Data Collection, and Analysis

Next, I discuss the participants, data collection, and data analysis methods. I invited participants from our teaching staff. As the lead researcher, I collected and analyzed different types of data using a coding system. I discovered emergent categories in the Pre-Cycle, emergent themes in PAR Cycle One, and determined findings in PAR Cycle Two. At each stage of the process, we used the collected data and the data analysis to determine next steps.

Participants

In the PAR study, I served as lead researcher, purposefully inviting a group of four teachers with diverse experiences to participate; I invited a fifth new teacher at the end of the Pre-Cycle. Three teachers maintained their participation throughout the study while two dropped out before PAR Cycle One started. I engaged with a small teacher group that acted as a CPR (n=3 teachers). I met with the PAR participants monthly to discuss, plan, and review actions in

Table 1

Research Cycles and Key Activities

Research Cycle	Activities
PAR Pre-Cycle December 2021-April 2022	● Facilitated monthly CPR group meetings using selected community learning exchange (CLE) protocols ● Listened and learned from selected CLRP readings and videos ● Selected ELL strategies and designed observation tools for implementation ● Conducted member checks with CPR group
PAR Cycle One September 2022-November 2022	● Co-facilitated a CLE with another principal and CPR team ● Implemented ELL strategies that amplified ELL joyful learning experiences ● Reflected on and modified ELL strategies ● Collected and analyzed data and artifacts from CLE and observations ● Collaborated with others in the CPR group and colleagues to reflect on ELL strategies and joyfulness through PDSA cycles ● Conducted member checks with CPR group
PAR Cycle Two February 2023-May 2023	● Continued activities from PAR Cycle One ● Analyzed collected data and artifacts ● Articulated findings of the PAR research with the CPR team ● Conducted member checks with CPR group ● Co-facilitated a culminating CLE with another principal and CPR team

order to incorporate and refine joyful learning experiences for ELLs in math classrooms. I used purposeful sampling to actively engage as a participant in the group and lead the data collection and analysis. This occurred at the beginning of PAR Cycle One and the end of PAR Cycle Two. Teachers and assistant principals chose to attend the CLE (n=10). Both sets of participants signed consent forms and the total number was 10 participants from both schools.

Co-Practitioner Researcher (CPR) Group

I used purposeful sampling to select participants for this research project (Patton, 1990). A heterogeneous group of teachers from the staff received invitations to join the CPR group based on their experience serving on previous leadership teams, including one or more of the following: culturally responsive teaching professional learning community, culture and climate team, math PLC, instructional leadership team, and new teacher mentors. This group of teachers acted as a CPR team, and they had a chance to share their stories and expertise. The number started with 4 teachers (n=4) and dropped to 3 (n=3) teachers.

 I included participants with a desire to promote equitable outcomes for students, an inclusive and growth mindset, and an eagerness to work collaboratively in a group. The teachers and I engaged in PDSA inquiry cycles, reflected, collaborated on teacher practices, and examined culturally responsive teaching. This research provided more insight for educators on how to better support Chinese ELLs by providing equitable joyful learning experiences. As I collected and analyzed data, I shared it with the CPR group in member checks, which supported triangulation of the data and its validity process because the members checked the accuracy of the evidence (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018).

Other Participants

As the CPR group delved into the topic of culturally and linguistically joyful learning for

Chinese ELL students, I invited other participants to join the CLEs to offer perspective and knowledge and to learn from the CPR group about what might be more widely applicable in the school. Other participants included the assistant principal and teachers from another school engaged in similar research. All data gathered from the community learning exchanges were anonymous and aggregated, not directly tied to any one individual.

Data Collection

I used a variety of data collection instruments throughout the cycles of inquiry to drive the PAR project and provide answers to the research questions. The data collection instruments included reflective memos, field notes from meetings, CLE artifacts, observational evidence, and post-observation conversations. I used data from community learning exchanges and member checks to triangulate and ensure the accuracy, validity, and credibility of data (see Table 2).

Reflective Memos

The CPR team used PDSA cycles of inquiry to design, implement, study, and refine actions to elevate joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELL students in math classrooms. I wrote reflective memos regularly. The use of CPR group members' reflective memos also captured relevant data throughout the time span of the project. I used my reflective memos to respond to the leadership growth question. These reflections were used to inform and reveal next steps to the CPR team and serve as a method of triangulation.

CLE Artifacts

The CPR team participated in CLEs during the course of the PAR project in order to inform change. The CLE "mediates between old understandings and new conceptions; passivity and engagement; obedience and empowerment; the status quo and a life of action; and,

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Table 2

Research Questions, Data Collection, and Triangulation

Research Question	Data Collection	Triangulated with
1. To what extent do teachers articulate characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?	Documents CLE Artifacts Observation Protocol	Reflective Memos Member Checks
2. What factors of joyful learning do teachers use to co-design an observation tool for joyful learning of Chinese ELL students?	Documents CLE Artifacts Observation Protocol	Reflective Memos Member Checks
3. To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?	Documents CLE Artifacts Observation Protocol Post-Observation Protocol	Reflective Memos Member Checks
4. How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth?	Reflective Memos	Member Checks

ultimately, oppression and liberation" (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 37). The meeting artifacts served as relevant data to guide next steps and actions regarding joyful outcomes for ELL students.

Observations and Post-Observation Conversations

I used an observation tool in PAR Cycle One to collect baseline evidence of classroom practices. Then, the CPR team co-created an observation tool to collect data on teachers' implementation of culturally linguistically responsive joyful learning ELL strategies in the classroom (see Appendix E). The observation tool aligned with the project's research questions regarding ELL strategies that amplify joyful learning experiences in math. After each classroom observation, I conducted post-observation conversations with the teachers to guide next steps in selection and implementation of teaching strategies and practices for Chinese ELLs.

Other Documents

Other documents included field notes, agendas, lesson plans, and monthly CPR notes. Regular monthly notes from the CPR meetings served as data to support the PAR project. As the lead researcher, I triangulated data from CLEs, member checks, reflective memos, and meeting notes to determine categories, and then identify themes and findings from different sources (Saldaña, 2015).

Data Analysis

The PAR study utilized qualitative data as the primary method of data collection and analysis. I analyzed the documents and CLE artifacts by using open coding in successive coding cycles in which I inductively coded these documents. I analyzed the data from the observation protocol and the post-observation conversations using pre-assigned codes, or what Saldaña (2016) terms protocol coding, in which the researcher "applies the list of codes and categories from a different source to the data collection and coding processes" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 296). In

the Pre-Cycle, I learned to code by doing first and second coding and then sorting the codes into categories. In subsequent cycles of inquiry (PAR Cycle One and PAR Cycle Two), I used the data to determine emergent themes, themes, and findings. I made assertions and claims based on the themes revealed by the data, which I discuss in the last chapter. As I made sense of the data from the PDSA cycles and shared the analysis with the CPR group, we adjusted strategies to produce positive outcomes. I illustrate how I analyzed data through collecting data, using open coding systems, discerning sub-codes, identifying categories and then emergent themes/themes, in order to form assertions and claims (see Figure 8).

<div align="center">

Study Considerations: Limitations, Validity, and Confidentiality and Ethics

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In this section, I detail the limitations of this qualitative study (time, researcher's biases, and difficulty in generalizing), the measures I took to ensure the validity of the study, and the careful considerations regarding participant confidentiality and ethical conduct expected throughout the research.

Limitations

I developed and facilitated the entire process with the CPR team and the CLEs and analyzed the data. However, I needed to consider positionality; my role in the group may not have been perceived as an equal member, but one of authority as an administrator. I considered this power dynamic and remained keenly aware of each participants' freedom to accept the invitation to join the study without pressure or judgment. I obtained the signed consent of each participant and clearly communicated that participation was voluntary and could cease upon request at any time without recourse or repercussion.

Another limitation of the study was researcher personal bias regarding ethnicity, culture, and language as additional factors that affected the project and posed potential challenges. I am a

REAL ——————————————→ ABSTRACT

DATA → CODE

CODE → Category

CODE

CODE → Category

CODE → SUBCODE / SUBCODE

CODE

CODE → Category

CODE

CODE → Subcategory / Subcategory

THEMES/ CONCEPTS → ASSERTIONS/ THEORY

PARTICULAR ——————————————→ GENERAL
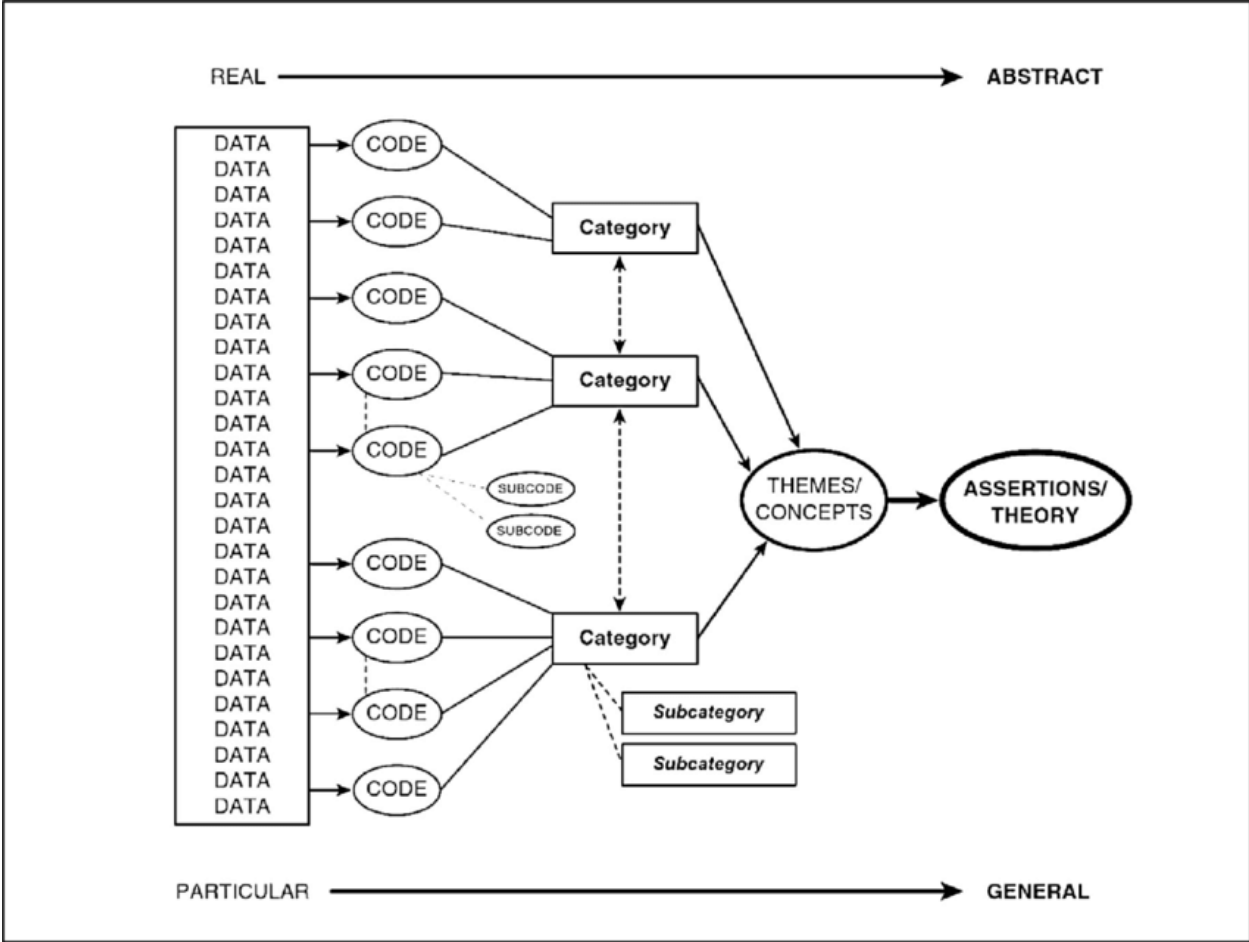
Note. (Saldaña, 2016).

Figure 8. Qualitative data coding process is iterative over three cycles of inquiry.

Chinese American who attended school with, taught, and currently work with a large number of Chinese ELLs; this has influenced my life and learning. One way we addressed or countered researcher personal bias was through the readings and discussions on CLRP during the Pre-Cycle as well as focusing on personal stories from the CLE and CPR meetings to penetrate bias and thinking. Disclosing personal biases through these discussions, memos, and member checking addressed my personal bias.

Lastly, the limitation of time posed a challenge to members' already full schedules. Due to the teacher contract, there were limited hours in which I could call meetings within the paid workday. However, every participant willingly chose to participate in the project, and I was able to structure the meetings to fall within the teachers' contractual workday.

Validity

The study incorporated elements of catalytic validity and *conscientizaçao* (Freire, 1970; Lather, 1986), focusing the PAR project on knowing our reality and context to transform and liberate. The participants and I interacted with and learned from each other regularly in our CPR meetings to plan, reflect, analyze, and revise our actions throughout the project. As the lead researcher, I reflected on the observation data and the values of the group to guide our next steps. In our monthly CPR meetings, we closely examined and evaluated the findings through an equity lens and discussed how we could adjust our actions for equitable outcomes for our ELL students.

Although I served as the lead researcher and principal, the purpose of the CPR was for all members to learn from each other. Therefore, we relied on democratic validity and listening to the people closest to the work, even if we had differing perspectives and thoughts (Herr & Anderson, 2014). The different perspectives lent themselves to rich discussions and allowed for

triangulation from different voices, as modeled in our CLE gatherings, CPR meetings, and throughout the PAR project.

Throughout the PAR process, the CPR group engaged in conversations, observations, reflections, debriefs, and took actionable steps for change. From those sources, I triangulated findings. The triangulation offered a process for ensuring validity. In a qualitative study, the repetition and importance of codes and categories that reveal themes is the key to making claims about the research. Consistent and long-term engagement, diligent observation, triangulation, member checks, and reflection helped establish the study's validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The CPR group's participation and feedback proved crucial factors in the study's validity. The validity in this PAR project depended on the precision and iterations of data collection, coding, analyzing, and triangulating to produce enough evidence to make claims and assertions.

Internal Validity

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recognized the importance of establishing validity and trustworthiness for inquiry studies. They identified four criteria to judge the trustworthiness of a study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To address these four criteria, the team used these different methods:

1. Credibility: We engaged in long-term, prolonged observation at our site. Participants engaged in all phases of the research from conceptualization to data analysis to data collection. Additionally, we utilized peer debriefing by asking colleagues to comment on findings, triangulation of data, and constant member checks.

2. Transferability: We used purposeful sampling and detailed contextual description to provide a range of information to the extent that other contexts may attempt similar inquiry studies in order to produce actionable changes for other communities.

3. Dependability: We paid attention to process by following methodical steps outlined in the planning of the project as well as examining data over multiple cycles.

4. Confirmability: We used triangulation in order to substantiate the analysis with multiple sources. We used consistent reflective memos and journal writing regarding personal implicit biases, worldviews, and epistemological beliefs to recognize potential factors that influence the data analysis.

Gerdes and Conn (2001) stress the importance of trustworthiness of evidence, ". . . the techniques used to establish the credibility of the research and maintain academic and scholarly rigor are collectively assimilated to establish trustworthiness; in other words, do the findings represent 'truth' as it occurred for the participants and in their context?" (p. 186). Through active, prolonged, and consistent engagement with the CPR and the site setting, triangulation across different sources, reflective memos and member checking for clarification, we maintained trustworthiness of evidence during this PAR project.

External Validity

I conducted the study within San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) public schools. All of the SFUSD sites had previously been under consent decree to teach a mandated thirty minutes of English Language Development (ELD) instruction. With the lifting of the Consent Decree on June 30, 2019, schools were left to devise and develop an ELD plan, follow state English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) testing guidelines, and establish and strengthen English Language Advisory Councils (ELACs). The PAR project utilized the voices of the ELAC, the teachers, data from the CLEs and ELPAC, and used all components to inform the site ELD plans. These may generalize to other SFUSD school contexts with similar demographics; however, the outcomes of plan implementation will look different

according to teacher, student, parent, and leadership contexts. The use of CLEs, PDSAs, CPRs, and reflective memos may be generalized across settings.

Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

I made a formal request to conduct the study with my school district's Research Department and received a district letter (see Appendix C). I completed Institutional Review Board Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification in January 2021 in order to adhere to the ethical regulations pertaining to human research (see Appendix B).

Before the study began, each prospective CPR member received a personal invitation to voluntarily join the CPR group. I met with each member individually to listen and collect their thoughts on participation in this PAR project and study. Each member received a consent form to sign and agreed to participation. I had developed relational trust with each potential member and worked with most of them in the context of instructional, cultural, social-emotional, and other leadership teams. The CPR members used reflective memos to gather their thoughts, reactions, and ideas. Being aware of, disclosing, and sharing our biases with the group served as an additional safeguard against biased outcomes.

We stewarded the securing of our data collection and maintained the confidentiality of the participants. Confidentiality was maintained through the following measures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018):

1. Securing important and personal papers and other data in locked cabinets.

2. Using password protection for all electronic forms for data collection.

3. Requiring signed confidentiality form agreements from each CPR member regarding data used for reflection, planning, and action steps.

I remain mindful to store the data in a secured location for three years, and will destroy the data after that time.

Whenever appropriate, pseudonyms or initials were used instead of full names to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the school's name. In compliance with the IRB process, participants (total n=4) signed consent forms for their voluntary participation in the project. I obtained approval from my supervisor and an approval letter from our district before the inception of the project. Finally, the completion of the CITI certification ensured that we understood the precautions needed to protect the vulnerability of human subjects.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the research design and methodology for the PAR project to address the overarching question: *How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs?* During the project, the CPR engaged in a qualitative study, incorporating elements of improvement science: rich dialogue and sharing of personal stories and perspectives with those closest to the problem in CLEs, collaborative work and learning through the CPR group, rapid cycles of inquiry through PDSAs, and recognizing themes and patterns for data coding to guide further actions. Data collection occurred using a variety of methods: documents, CLE and CPR artifacts, observation protocol, post-observation conversation protocol, and reflective memos. I considered the limitations to the study such as validity, trustworthiness, and positionality, and attended to these limitations during the study. I took the utmost care and gave attention to confidentiality and ethical issues in preparation for and throughout the study. In the next chapter, I discuss the details of the specific context, the CPR members, and the action research Pre-Cycle.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PRE-CYCLE

The goal of the participatory action research (PAR) project and study was to build teacher capacity in understanding and articulating culturally and linguistically joyful learning for students who are Chinese English language learners. Once we started to build teacher capacity, we selected and implemented salient CLRP learning strategies that amplified joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELL students. I conducted the research study at Sunrise Elementary School in the San Francisco Unified School District. I served as the lead researcher and chose a group of elementary school teachers to form a Co-Practitioner researcher (CPR) group. Additional project participants included other staff members and people invited to Community Learning Exchanges (CLEs) during the project. Leaders and teachers in the CPR group identified and co-created the tools for culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) and joyful learning mindsets in order to amplify CLRP joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELLs during the entire project.

Participatory Action Research Context

In this section, I detail the history of the place, people, and the political moves that shaped the school context where the research took place. Sunrise School opened in the spring of 1953 in the area of San Francisco known as the Sunset District, sometimes known as the Outside Lands. Two decades before the school opening, several blocks around the school, especially westward toward the beach, were undeveloped. Countless blocks of sand dunes covered the area (see Figure 9). However, the city installed trolley lines, roads, and other infrastructures in anticipation of an explosion of development. Shortly following the end of World War II, San Francisco (and many nearby communities) experienced rapid growth.

Figure 9. A picture of the Sunset District circa 1936.

The development of houses flourished in the area during the early-mid 1960s. However, the practice of redlining existed, an illegal discriminatory practice in which banks denied mortgage loans to certain areas of a community based on racial characteristics (Britannica, 2014). As a result of these practices, Chinese families did not have access to the west side of town, including the Sunset. Traditionally known as an Irish and Italian enclave in San Francisco, the Sunset did not experience an influx of Chinese families until after the Civil Rights Movement and the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, ending racial quotas that had previously prevented Chinese immigrants from entering the US. Even still, schools remained segregated by neighborhoods until busing was introduced in the 1970s; busing afforded Chinese students an opportunity to attend schools outside of Chinatown. In 2020, the Sunset neighborhood was more than 50% Asian, a stark contrast to the neighborhood demographics in the 1950s and 1960s.

Context: Place

Located in the heart of the Sunset District, Sunrise Elementary School serves close to 500 TK-5 students from the neighborhood, as well as San Francisco at large. A National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence and California Distinguished School, Sunrise maintains a long-standing tradition of academic excellence. Sunrise Elementary spans a full city block, a considerable amount of real estate in San Francisco. Planning and construction occurred from the late 1940s to early 1950s (see Figure 10). Underneath the main building is an extensive basement area, which served as a bomb shelter during the Cold War.

Thirty-three percent (33%) of students and their families are English Language Learners (ELLs). Although ELLs at the school scored above the district average academically, there was a

Figure 10. A photo of the back of the school in the 1960s.

an achievement gap between ELL student data and their native peers, creating a border that constituted mis-education of language learners by focusing on assessment and classification instead of strategies that might honor their languages at the same time they learn English (Valdés, 2020).

While achievement data are useful, what is more important is co-creating the conditions for learning. The school scored significantly *lower* than the district average on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) data, which included sense of belonging, growth mindset, self-efficacy, and social awareness. These SEL measurements are tied to students' feelings of acceptance, self-confidence, ability to achieve one's goals with effort, and empathy needed for persistence in school. SEL scores improved when we started to focus on schoolwide SEL instruction; however, ELL students still scored lower than their native English-speaking peers in both academic and SEL scores. The teaching staff was 79% White; however, the student body was 67% Asian. SEL requires an antiracist lens (Madda, 2019; Simmons, 2019), however, the SEL curriculum and skills taught were written from a White dominant cultural lens and had not incorporated culturally linguistically responsive pedagogy.

Our demographic was 67% Asian students, which included ELL and native-born students. One-third of the school identified as ELL, but that number did not include students who were reclassified ELLs or students whose parents did not wish to identify as ELL. Three-fourths of the total ELL population was Chinese English Language Learner (ELL) students who strived to achieve academically but rated much lower on social and emotional indicators, suggesting that we may have been promoting academic success without considering the importance of creating safe and joyful learning environments in which to thrive. Nachmanovitch (1990) warns, "schools can nurture creativity in children, but they can also destroy it, and all too often do" (p. 116).

Achieving perfect or high academic scores leaves little room for making or learning from mistakes if the emphasis is on the final product. Are students motivated by achieving high test scores and good grades instead of by joyful learning experiences? Joyful discovery during the learning process must be allowed and encouraged so that students can continue to find motivation and fulfillment.

Context: The People

Forming the Co-Practitioner researcher (CPR) group involved intentional selection of a diverse group—known as purposeful sampling (Patton, 2018). I selected teachers with diverse teaching and life experiences and cultural backgrounds. They had attended a Community Learning Exchange (CLE) that I conducted as I started the study, and I had existing relationships with each of the five members. I finalized the group after 18 months of teaching through the COVID pandemic. The teachers were physically tired and overwhelmed; therefore, focusing on the group while strengthening relationships was crucial (see Table 3 for an overview of the CPR group members).

Leona Sawyer has a good understanding of CLRP, having participated in a PLC with me on Hammond's (2015) book, *Culturally Relevant Teaching and the Brain*. This teacher was committed to school-wide change as a co-chair of the Culture and Climate leadership team which was grappling with issues of race, inclusion, and school-wide engagement. In addition, Leona had previously taught in the heart of Chinatown as a White female teacher and learned how to engage ELL students and their families. I had mentored and worked closely with this teacher for almost nine years.

Table 3

Co-Practitioner Researcher (CPR) Group

Teacher Names	Years of Service	Grade	Ethnicity	Gender	Expertise and Site-Based Leadership roles
Leona Sawyer	9	2nd grade	White	F	ELD – Gen Ed, Culture and Climate Leadership Team Co-Chair, School Arts Coordinator
Von Strauss	17	2nd grade	White	M	ELD – Gen Ed, Operational Team Member, Math Lead
Emma Chang	3	3rd grade	Chinese	F	ELD – Gen Ed, School Digital Learning Facilitator (DLeaf)
Terilyn Lee	26	3rd grade	Chinese	F	ELD – Gen Ed, PTA Staff Liaison
Remington Fong	6	5th grade	Chinese	M	ELD – Gen Ed, School Digital Learning Facilitator (DLeaf)

Von Strauss is a White male teacher who wanted to promote equity and culturally relevant teaching and wanted to learn more about how to implement strategies that supported CLRP. On his initiative, Von took extra coursework at City College to immerse himself in learning new strategies and how to approach things with a new lens, and beginning Mandarin classes to learn more about the language many of our students speak. He was consistently open to learning about other cultures and fighting anti-racism at the school. He was a willing participant in implementing CRLP joyful learning strategies.

Emma Chang was a young, new Chinese American teacher, who embraced innovation and social justice. She sought collaboration and learning with others. She was once a Digital Learning Facilitator team leader. She went above and beyond in connecting with families and students and had already demonstrated skill in developing relationships needed for CRLP.

Terilyn Lee was a Chinese American female teacher who grew up in our city and was a former student of our district. She intimately knew the culture and to some extent the language of our largest focal group, Chinese ELL students. She was highly involved in doing things to better the entire school operations, and, if convinced that CRLP joyful learning strategies would help students and families, she would try strategies to improve her teaching practice. She had served as our Operations Co-Chair and our PTA staff liaison. Her plate was full, but when I framed CRLP joyful learning strategies as a necessity, she joined. She has been triggered and affected by the intense rise in anti-Asian hate since March 8, 2020, and the negative media attention and mislabeling of the "China Flu." This created an awareness about the added fear and pressure that many Asian students face as immigrants and, to help mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic, Terilyn wanted to participate in creating safety and refuge and a sense of belonging

within the school community. She wanted to make positive changes to ensure the safety of our students while maintaining rigorous academics.

Remington Fong was a new teacher to our school and new to teaching 5th grade. I invited him to join the CPR group in April 2022. He taught in two different Chinatown schools for four years before moving to our school this year. He joined the CPR after personal conversations about his experience growing up as a Chinese ELL student in our district. He had insight as a Chinese American teacher and was concerned about AAPI Hate at the start of the pandemic. He had experienced a lack of enthusiasm or solidarity when he brought up AAPI Hate until after the Atlanta shootings brought nationwide attention in March 2021. Like Terilyn, he understood the need for a sense of belonging and that Asians were the targets of hate and outcast.

My role as the lead researcher was to learn with the other participants and not dictate or devise solutions in isolation. The collaboration of the group members was key. Although the CPR participation was voluntary, the work of the group followed the larger vision of the school to engage Chinese ELL students and to amplify their joyful learning experiences (see Table 3 for a list of the CPR team).

PAR Pre-Cycle Process

In this section, I detail the process of the PAR Pre-Cycle, including the activities that took place, many of which centered on relationship building. Next, I discuss the artifacts I collected and used for data and how I coded the data.

Activities

The PAR Pre-Cycle occurred from December 2021–April 2022 and included a CLE meeting with other principals in my district and several CPR meetings throughout the semester. I

launched the first CPR meeting with four teachers on December 3, 2021. There, we established the goals of the project, our voluntary participation, and a brief description of what a CPR group does and how it functions. We started with an opening circle and poem, which was the prompt for an activity of writing an emulation poem to build trust and deepen relationships. We talked about the PAR project and questions, concepts, and issues that would be explored in the research. We discussed how the research impacted our focal students and us as researchers and ended the first meeting with a CPR Team Survey. The second time we met, I designed a photo scavenger hunt in which members took pictures of examples of what they thought represented joyful learning, and we discussed what characteristics of joyful learning were present in the photos.

During the third CPR meeting, we each shared an endowed object; members brought an object that represented a joyful learning experience, and we told stories about the objects. We used quotes about CLRP from Hammond (2015). Then, we read the CLRP Framework (Tredway et al., 2019) and highlighted sections in which we identified our practices in the continuum and discussed how we might use the framework as a tool with the rest of the staff and grade levels in the future. Following that meeting, I conducted a Community Learning Exchange (CLE) with 16 administrators from San Francisco Unified School District. The administrators viewed and expanded on concepts that characterized joyful learning.

In the fourth CPR meeting, we started with a community circle in which each person played one minute of a favorite joyful song of their choice on their phone or computer for the group. After I set the mood and tone, the group read the Resilience Manifesto (Aguilar, 2018) together and used it to ground and center us. Then we examined the PAR research questions. Last, we discussed what the principals captured in the district learning walk as indicators of CLRP joyful learning.

In the fifth meeting, members engaged in an activity called the joyful learning journey line and recalled what made their learning as a student joyful (or not). In recalling elements of their joyful learning, teachers became aware of different factors that contributed to creating joyful learning environments, including ways teachers and mentors set up conditions for learning. In the final CPR meeting for the Pre-Cycle, I went over the objective of the project and showed the group a tool that other principals had used in their observations of several classrooms at Sunrise to see if they could observe CLRP joyful learning. We discussed how we might change or use the tool in the next research cycle.

To summarize, I collected data during the six CPR group meetings and one principal meeting using selected community learning exchange (CLE) protocols These data were:

- Personal narratives, including emulation poems, journey lines, and endowed objects to understand the characteristics of joyful learning and culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy from personal experience and align to the research definition of joyful learning.

- Photo scavenger hunt of joyful learning represented at school

- ECU Project I[4] CLRP Framework

- Characteristics of joyful learning for ELLs and design observation tools for implementation

- Member checks with CPR group

- CLE meeting with other principals in the same district

- Data and artifacts from CLE and CPR meetings

Coding

During the six CPR meetings, I collected data from these sources: emulation poems about teacher values and experiences, teacher selected photographs to represent joyful learning, teacher

responses to a Pre-Cycle survey, teachers' endowed objects that represented joyful learning, joyful learning journey lines, and teacher reflective memos (see Table 4).

Emergent Categories

To code the data, I gathered all the artifacts and sorted by sources and used a combination of open and *in vivo* coding to select direct quotes and words. I highlighted common words and phrases for a second round of coding. As I noticed patterns and repetitions, I determined possible categories and assigned them to the data. I was cognizant of the fact that codes were smaller units of detail; as I examined the data inductively for patterns, I created broader units or possible categories. The process yielded multiple categories. I organized the categories into a data spreadsheet with headings of category, code, sample, description, frequency, and data set and tallied each piece of data to determine frequency of a category. The two emergent categories were learning in a social context and freedom of expression.

Learning in a Social Context

Learning in a social context involves cultivating relationships through collaboration. The social context involved creating a gracious space for learners to experience a sense of belonging. (http://www.ethicalleadership.org/gracious-space-toolkit.html). The data indicate 57 instances or 59% of the Pre-Cycle data. I discuss the three codes that support the category: cultivating relationships, collaboration, and sense of belonging.

Cultivating Relationships

The CPR members recalled important moments in their lives as students and educators when cultivating relationships engendered powerful learning experiences. When a person experiences caring nurturing relationships, the person feels safe, and a gracious space for long-lasting learning can occur (Bryk et al., 2010; Grubb & Tredway, 2015; Guajardo et al., 2016).

Table 4

Emergent Categories with Codes

Categories	Codes
Learning in a social context (n=57 or 59%)	Cultivating relationships (n=24) Collaboration (n=19) Sense of belonging (n=14)
Freedom of expression (n=40 or 41%)	Importance of play (n=13) Including student choice (n=10) Kinesthetic (n=10) Experiential learning (n=5) Curiosity (n=2)

Through several activities, teachers experienced a learning space similar to the space we want to create for students. Thus, cultivating relationships represented 24 instances or 25% of the data.

In an activity called joyful learning journey lines, teachers described personal joyful learning experiences throughout different points in their lives. References to the importance of relationships surfaced multiple times. In one example, Emma Chang remembered cultivating relationships as she learned to work with children in a summer camp: "I continued to volunteer there for the next four years and made so many joyful memories with the kids and staff" (EC, CLE Artifact, April 4, 2022). She then voiced her value of relationships when she shared her endowed object, a Nintendo Switch game, stating that it is "something you do with friends," and she saw her students encourage and help each other while playing the game.

Leona Sawyer spoke of the importance of cultivating relationships when describing her endowed object, a finger piano, because it reminded her of how allowing students to each take a turn with the playful, random object made them refocus, connect with the teacher and group, and feel special. She similarly described joyful learning using a photo of her reversible mood-changing octopus plush toy—she could change its expression from joyful to grumpy—, saying that it gave her a "way of connecting with kids when they're having a rough moment… Everything can't be joyful and perfect—you have to have a variety of feelings to experience and appreciate joy" (LS, CLE artifact, March 4, 2022). Leona expressed the importance of cultivating relationships when asked the survey question -- What do you enjoy about teaching? LS replied, "My students—the connections I see them create and build with each other, their growth, the 'small moments' that aren't small at all to them, the energy that we have and that we create together." Collaboration, described as creating and building together, occurred and reoccurred as a significant code as a result of cultivating relationships.

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Collaboration

Working and collaborating with peers surfaced as a code of joyful learning. The frequency of responses from coding multiple artifacts was 11 instances. Teachers recalled learning experiences in which they or their students experienced joyful learning while working, collaborating, and connecting with others. Then, they wanted to re-create that kind of experience to create joyful learning for students. For example, Terilyn Lee remembered working with friends at camp, writing and performing original plays for a radio audience, and making clay animation videos: "Working with my friends… brings me joy!" (TL, CLE artifact, April 4, 2022). In her journey line, she expressed how important working with other colleagues had been during a professional development science institute one summer. In a reflective memo from March 4, 2022, Terilyn stated that looking at the CLRP framework was daunting to look at in its entirety. She suggested breaking up the matrix into smaller bits or sections to look at and discussing only one or two sections at a time with other CPR team members. She expressed how working together to figure out the vocabulary terms in the document, through collaboration, served her better than tackling and assessing on her own. She craved collaboration to make meaning of the resource.

Emma Chang chose joyful learning photos of her students working together on turkey art projects, partner reading during free reading, PE activities with partners, and building a marble run game collaboratively. In each photo description, she captured examples of joy as her students experienced working together, laughing, choosing partners, and coming up with solutions to challenging problems. Collaboration with peers helped to make sense of the content and the new learning. Together, peers collaborated to discuss, rehearse, and encode their thinking and learning of new material.

Sense of Belonging

Individuals who experienced a sense of a belonging engaged in learning more fully than individuals who felt insecure about their physical and emotional safety (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The CPR members reflected on how they experienced feeling a sense of belonging (or not) while being a part of a learning community as students and educators. With a sense of belonging, the CPR members remembered fond memories of joyful learning experiences.

The CPR member Von Strauss (VS) valued building sense of belonging in his learning experiences as he recalled how his writing teacher built meaningful relationships with students. This motivated him to continue to learn: "She helped me start to craft my voice in my writing. I loved her feedback (both written and spoken) and how she paid so much attention to my ideas" (VS, CLE artifact, April 4, 2022). He stated the importance of sense of belonging as he shared his endowed object, a trophy that he and his teammates were awarded. For Von, the trophy represented being celebrated in community with others striving for the same goal. Sense of belonging surfaced again in his emulation poem in which he expressed feeling comfortable and safe to be himself without pain or judgement.

Leona Sawyer (LS) wrote about sense of belonging through shared names; creating a safe space for community building in the classroom through sharing special objects, experiences, and opening circles; one on one conferences; observing and listening; and opportunities for laughter. Her description of her endowed object of a stuffed octopus embodied this sentiment: "A…way of connecting with students that we all experience a range of emotions and it's okay to have a grumpy or frustrating moment. Everything can't be joyful and perfect—got to have a variety of feelings to experience and appreciate joy" (LS, Meeting notes, December 15, 2021).

Terilyn stated in a March 4, 2022 reflective memo that listening to and sharing stories helped to build her sense of community and sense of belonging for self and others. She claimed the sharing times in our CPR meetings were one of her favorite parts because they helped her "feel closer to the group and helps me see them as the person they truly are beyond the colleague I work with…I wish we could do it more at staff meetings…" In a March 18, 2022 reflective memo, she extrapolated more connections to sense of belonging for everyone, including staff members, and how that may affect joyful learning: "How can educators provide joyful learning experiences when they do not feel joyful in the workplace? …do administrators or colleagues ever think about how a certain demographic group of staff members are doing?" She wrote an insightful comment regarding joyful learning as it relates to the teacher's personal mood: "[students] deserve nurturing and compassion all the time, not just when I'm feeling joyful."

Terilyn shared in her journey line about learning Social Emotional Learning (SEL) tools with her high school friends in the 1980s to become peer counselors, called Peacemakers. She explained that "listening to people's stories brings me joy, even if it feels scary and uncomfortable at times. This brings the community closer and bonds us forever." She connected the use of storytelling, listening to one another, to create a sense of belonging. When asked in the survey: "How do you get to know your students?" she replied that she interacts with them on the yard at recess, asks them questions, listens, reads their essays, and observes them. Building SEL skills contributes to a sense of belonging in the community.

In summary, creating a sense of belonging for learners helped to lower the affective filter so that students could concentrate on the learning at hand without worrying about external factors such as whether they would be well-received or welcomed. Creating a sense of belonging

involved nurture, acceptance, listening and learning about others, and the broadening of perspectives.

Freedom of Expression

The second emergent category, freedom of expression, encompassed codes such as importance of play, student choice, kinesthetic hands-on learning, experiential learning, and curiosity. The data indicate that there were 40 instances (41%) to document this emergent category. Allowing learners to explore by creating opportunities for them to choose their preferred activities and modes of learning played an important part in elevating joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELL students.

When teachers provided opportunities for their students to play and discover, joyful learning happened: "kids playing dreidel game…getting along having fun, practicing math skills of figuring out half, double, etc." (LS, CLE artifact, December 21, 2021) demonstrated students experiencing joyful learning through play, teamwork, and the joy of overcoming a challenge. Terilyn directly named her intention of "playing more games, doing less worksheets" (TL, CPR Survey, December 15, 2021) in order to elicit joyful learning amongst her Chinese ELLs. Emma used games such as the Nintendo Switch and witnessed students encouraging one another while playing together and noted that allowing them to play resulted in positive behavior (EC, CLE artifact, March 4, 2022).

Student Choice

Providing opportunities for student choice proved integral to joyful learning. Students could choose which activity, materials, or genre they wanted to use to express themselves. Some examples included were snowflake or puppy art, scooter PE games, and partner reading with choice of partners. The teachers offered free choice time in which students picked the games and

peers to play with (EC, CLE artifact, December 15, 2021). During our March CPR meeting and later in reflective memos, we discussed how students choose different ways to express their joyful learning: students chose to be alone, or they chose to work with peers. Both choices— quiet or internal reactions versus exuberant expressions—can be times in which they express joy. As EC said, "I still feel 'WOW!' when I think about how some kids may express joy through silence or internally. It was something I never thought about before this discussion" (Reflective memo, March 18, 2022).

Kinesthetic Hands-On learning

Kinesthetic learning is tactile and part of how Bruner (1961) defines effective learning— enactive learning using one's body—in other words, physical, body-based learning is useful for most children. Terilyn (TL) remembered a powerful joyful learning experience when she wrote an original play for radio and created claymation figures for a stop-action movie: "writing and performing original plays for a radio audience and making clay animation movies was one of my best memories" (TL, CLE artifact, April 4, 2022). She later recalled more joyful learning experiences during a Science PD she attended with colleagues: "Activity before concept, concept before vocabulary…The experience of figuring out something on my own instead of being told or shown brings me joy" (TL, CLE artifact, April 4, 2022).Emma shared how her students gravitate towards many hands-on, kinesthetic activities such as challenging art projects, scooters for PE, and marble-run games during free choice time (EC, CPR notes, March 4, 2022).

Experiential Learning

Dewey (1938) supports experiential learning that is interactive and reciprocal. In addition to the physical hands-on learning of touching and manipulating materials and equipment, other experiences can lead to learning. When Chinese ELL students are given the opportunity to

experience something, especially something they do not regularly get to see and do, the learning becomes ingrained and remembered. For many students, taking field trips—whether to the beach, the Academy of Sciences, the Exploratorium, or Harding Park for golf lessons—is a new experience. As the teachers provide exposure to these venues and experiences and support student choice as they engage in these new activities, the teachers learn more about their students. They can observe student learning preferences and use that knowledge to provide multiple ways to learn language.

Curiosity

The codes for curiosity were minimal; however, I include them because I believe that joyful learning should activate curiosity. When students follow their curiosity and explore, joyful learning more likely takes place. In collecting photos of joyful learning for sharing on the CPR team, one teacher took a photo of a rainbow and captioned the photo: "Rainbow…(I) saw it with the students. Kids were excited and wanted to find out more about rainbows and the colors. Love when students show curiosity, share their knowledge, get enthusiastic—it's contagious, and that attitude spreads to other students" (LS, CLE artifact, December 15, 2021).

In summary, allowing students freedom of expression by creating opportunities for play, choice, kinesthetic and experiential learning, and fostering curiosity all played an important part in elevating joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELLs. As well, teachers began to rethink their conceptual understanding of joyfulness in learning These real experiences versus disjointed and irrelevant worksheets or textbook excepts brought learning to life and ingrained the experiences along with content into long term memory.

Reflection and Planning

After discussing my reflections on the Pre-Cycle activities and meetings, I have a different understanding of how the processes shaped my leadership and guided my next steps in planning PAR Cycle One activities. As I facilitated the work of the CPR group, I experienced immense joy leading the first two meetings. Since we were studying joyful learning, I tried to infuse joyful learning and CLE components into each meeting. The meetings did not feel like typical faculty meetings; the participants expressed deeper feelings of intimacy, finding joy, and a chance to learn while finding ways to incorporate different joyful learning strategies together. I felt excited to infuse these practices into other faculty meetings and other types of meetings as well. We had a chance to discuss ELLs and culturally and linguistically diverse practices, and this discussion continued throughout the study. We discussed how rigor, productive struggle, and challenge can contribute to joyful learning, as opposed to always knowing the answer or getting it right at the start. Overcoming a challenge or solving a frustration may also lead to joyful learning, and we had robust discussions about that idea. We discussed needing to remember to encourage each other as we learn; that we, too, needed to have a growth mindset for ourselves. We also needed to find joy and renewed passion in our teaching and learning, despite life's deep challenges, as many experienced pain and loss during the pandemic years. One of my fellow principal colleagues said that joy is the other side of pain, and I experienced that to be true through life's challenges during that Pre-Cycle.

As a result of facilitating the CPR group, I exercised my listening skills to hear/see/know my teachers better. I granted myself permission not to overfill the agendas but to emphasize one or two activities that could lead to deeper discussion. The CPR members shared that it proved to

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be a richer experience. I did not feel rushed; if we did not complete an activity, we saved it for the next meeting.

In a reflective memo, I wrote that leadership meant always learning from past actions, words, and circumstances and moving persistently, consistently, in the right direction, even if the pace seemed excruciatingly slow. I felt at times insecure that the pace of the project lagged, but I realized that the pace was what my team and I needed to digest experiences, materials, and discussions so that we could keep on moving productively.

The CPR members led other teams at our school (Operations, Instructional Leadership, and Culture and Climate teams). They decided to use storytelling about joyful learning experiences with their teams on their own initiative, not by my suggestion or prodding, because the activities were meaningful to them during the CPR meetings. I was delighted to hear them bring back stories of how that style of facilitation deepened relationships and highlighted what kind of leadership decisions we needed to make in order to create joyful experiences for our students and community.

I love spending time with people; I am a social creature. Leading a CPR group allowed me to utilize this strength in relationship building with my team. By *setting the table*, everyone had a chance to speak and to contribute. Each of them felt comfortable leading the activities, taking notes, and asking questions of each other. It was very refreshing to witness and experience this co-leadership experience. We learned from and with each other.

In analyzing the data, I found that learning in a social context emerged as a possible category for relevance in amplifying joyful learning. This included relationship building, collaboration, communication, creating a gracious space, and opportunity for strengthening sense of belonging. However, I was concerned that learning in a social context may be too broad to

stand alone as a category because there are subcodes that could fit under relationship building, such as peer relationships, teacher to student relationships, one-to-one relationships, and group relationships. The activities I focused on during the Pre-Cycle strengthened relationships within the CPR team and introduced them to the characteristics of joyful learning. Although we did look at the CLRP framework during one meeting and reviewed it in a subsequent meeting, we needed more time to digest what it meant for our classrooms and possible connections to joyful learning since one of the sub-questions of the focus of practice is: to what extent do teachers select and implement CLRP learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?

In the next cycle, I considered these intersections while selecting and implementing potential best practices and strategies to encourage joyful learning in Chinese ELL students. CPR members and I devised an observation tool to observe teacher capacity in frequency or comfort in using these best practices and strategies. The tool recorded the intentional frequency of using the strategies, and the reflective memos served as a measure of whether or not the selected strategies were effective. The group focused on changed and improved teacher practices.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the context of the project and study by describing the people and place. After a description of the Pre-Cycle activities, coding, and data analysis, I shared the possible emergent categories of joyful learning in a social context as it involves collaboration, communication, and building a sense of belonging in a gracious safe space.

In my reflection, I wrote that building relationships with the team and creating a sense of belonging where the members could learn joyfully alongside each other helped to build the foundation to foster joyful learning within their classrooms. I continued to lead the project while building relationships and creating a safe space for inquiry and discovery, while intimately

getting to know members through their specific cultural and linguistic backgrounds, using a

variety of strategies to honor different learning modalities. This mirrored the teachers' actions in

the classrooms as they selected and implemented ELL strategies to amplify joyful learning.

CHAPTER 5: PAR CYCLE ONE

In this chapter, I discuss the participatory action research (PAR) Cycle One process and the emergent themes. I share the activities, coding and data analysis process, and the emergent themes that evolved with the goal of responding to research questions. Because the activities are critical to the data collection and form the foundation of building relational trust, I emphasize them in this chapter. Our collective work was foundational to changing teacher practice, and the dialogue that we had during the activities was fundamental to understanding the importance of student dialogue in the classroom. During this cycle, the CPR group examined what they knew and understood about joyful learning and culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy (CLRP) as it pertained to their personal experiences as students and as educators. In their discussions, they identified the instructional practices they needed to adjust in order to address student needs. As a result of the dialogue, the teachers and I cultivated a gracious space in which we could learn in public and engage in joyful experiences for our professional learning. The end of the chapter details how we used the data to influence the steps to take in PAR Cycle Two.

PAR Cycle One Process

During PAR Cycle One (August-November 2022), the CPR group reviewed the definition of joyful learning and discussed the importance of CLRP for Chinese ELLs. In the PAR Pre-Cycle, we strengthened our relationships within the group and recognized the importance of cultivating relationships in a safe, gracious space so that learning could take place. One possible category that emerged in the Pre-Cycle was: learning in a social context with an emphasis on the value of kinesthetic, hands-on learning. However, we realized that we needed more time to review the definition of CLRP and the CLRP framework in order to understand the implications of teaching Chinese ELL students in a way that met their needs. In August 2022,

two of the CPR members from our group (Emma Chang and Von Strauss) dropped out of the

project for personal reasons, leaving our group with three teachers instead of five.

By solidifying our understanding of CLRP and the learning styles of Chinese ELLs, we

selected teaching strategies and practices that would amplify and enhance Chinese ELL students'

joyful learning experiences at school. We deepened our collective understanding of CLRP and

joyful learning and the intersection of the two. Joyful learning and CLRP entail building deep

relationships, creating a sense of belonging, getting to know students personally, and validating

and integrating their experiences (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bouchard & Berg, 2017; Conklin,

2014; Gay, 2002). We used our understanding of this intersection to select and implement

potential best practices and strategies to encourage joyful learning for Chinese ELL students. We

devised an observation tool to capture teacher capacity in frequency or comfort in using these

best practices and strategies, and I used the tool to record the frequency of using the strategies;

and the CPR members' reflective memos served as a measure of whether the selected strategies

were effective. The group focused on changed and improved teacher practices based on teacher

observation notes, discussions in the CPR meetings and post-observation meetings, and

reflections (see Table 5 for activities during PAR Cycle One).

Activities

I launched PAR Cycle One by hosting a joint CLE meeting with another site principal

and CPR team. We began with introductions and used the poem, "Perhaps the World Ends Here"

(Harjo, 1994), which illustrates the significance of a family's kitchen table. The CLE participants

shared personal narratives about tables that held significance to them. These codes surfaced:

truth, learning, growth, duty and obedience, family and ancestral tradition, important decision

making, gathering, bustling yet consistent daily life routines. We imagined how we might set a

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Table 5

PAR Cycle One Activities and Data

Meetings/Date	Activities (including readings)	Data Collected
CLE Meeting September 2, 2022	● Personal Narrative ● Learning Experience of Joy ● CLRP Framing ● Neuroscience and the Brain ● Observation Tools	● Agenda ● Meeting Notes ● Group Reflections ● Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting #1 September 21, 2022	● Video and scan article on CLRP ● Review Tool ● Sign up for Observation ● Observation Reflection	● Agenda ● Field Notes ● Group reflections ● Reflective Memo
CLE Meeting September 29, 2022	● CLRP Observation Tools Reflection	● CLRP Observation Tools modification notes
Observations Round 1 October 5, 2022 (n=2) October 17, 2022 (n=1)	● CLRP Joyful Learning Observations	● Selective Verbatim Observation Data ● Reflective Memo
Observations Round 2 October 26, 2022 (n=3)	● CLRP Joyful Learning ● Observations	● Selective Verbatim Observation Data ● Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting #2 October 27, 2022	● Personal Narrative on Joy ● Member check ● Review CLRP Strategies ● Define Bordering	● Agenda ● Artifacts ● Meeting Notes ● Group Reflections ● Reflective Memo
Observations Round 3 Nov. 3, 2022 (n=1) Nov. 14, 2022 (n=1) Nov. 16, 2022 (n=1)	● CLRP Joyful Learning ● Observations	● Selective Verbatim Observation Data ● Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting #3 November 30, 2022	● Member check on observation data ● Reflection on Culture Shock & Stereotypes ● CLRP Strategies TPS vs TT	● Agenda ● Artifacts ● Meeting Notes ● Group Reflections ● Reflective Memo

Note. (n=number of observations).

metaphorical table for learning in our classrooms and learning environments and noted they could be places of welcome, gathering, and inspiration.

We used a jigsaw protocol to read excerpts defining joyful learning, implementing CLRP for Chinese ELLs, and studied the neuroscience of joyful learning. Each person selected one of these topics and read an excerpt from articles to share their reactions and learning with the group. We discussed a Venn diagram illustrating the intersections of joyful learning and CLRP, including cultivating relationships, cultural views, connection to prior experiences, opportunity for access, and sense of belonging and community.

At the end of the meeting, we shared an initial version of an observation template with the CLE participants that had possible codes for providing evidence: positive redirection, collaboration, choice provided, wait time, questioning strategies, providing, or lifting rigor. The participants decided which strategies most uplifted joyful learning with Chinese ELLs, and they identified providing choice and collaboration strategies as foci for lesson design and observation. As I considered the teacher feedback, I met with another principal focused on the same questions, and together we devised and refined an observation tool (see Appendix E) that incorporated evidence of student dialogue, student choice, nonverbal communication, and teacher reinforcement.

During the September 21, 2022, CPR meeting with our site's three teachers, we continued our discussion of joyful learning and CLRP by reviewing the research questions and reading and discussing an article. We highlighted these salient points: relationships matter and getting to know cultures that are not our own requires attention, energy, and care to support engagement and work. After reading and discussing the article, we watched a video on culturally responsive teaching that described CLRP as an asset-based pedagogy that focused on students'

prior knowledge and cultural experiences as assets. We reinforced our understanding of how we too often view language levels from a deficit perspective and should rather view them as a springboard to language development (https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/connect-students-background-knowledge-content-ell-classroom). Following the video, we examined the observation tool template and the possible codes to use in observing teaching practices: use of wait/think time, student choice, collaboration, and positive redirection. The CPR members and I constructed an observation schedule so I could make regular visits to their classrooms for observations and post-observation conversations.

During the second CLE meeting (September 29, 2022), I visited the other principal's school site. We used the new observation tool in classrooms to calibrate and code what we observed in the classes. We used selective verbatim and coded quickly. At this meeting, we talked about the importance of *bordering*, a term that Frank Lyman (2022) coined. In a CLE meeting on September 21, 2022, Tredway reflected:

> Bordering is a term Frank Lyman always used to put boundaries on parts of the lesson. That structure and the clarity of the directions at each border area when the teacher is moving students to a different part of the lesson should be clear.

We clarified the distinction between what has become the ubiquitous Turn and Talk (TT) vs. the more useful and structured Think Pair Share (TPS). We observed four teachers at the CLE school site and coded their lessons. I gave my codes to the other site principal for her own information, but I did not use that data in my own site research. It served as a relevant practice for my own observation cycles.

I used the new observation tool at my own site during Observation Cycle 1 in early October 2022. The teachers attempted the basics of equitable access while incorporating think

time, question forms, student to student dialogue, and different forms of calling on besides hand-raising. I was particularly interested in the frequency of CLRP joyful learning strategies such as teachers designing lessons for student choice, using collaboration protocols, providing opportunities for student talk, and providing positive redirection. After the observations, I coded the data and conducted post-observation conversations using the data to have a coaching conversation with each teacher.

We engaged in Round 2 of observations in all three classrooms (October 26, 2022). I discussed what I had observed regarding the TT and/or TPS protocols and the use of appropriate wait/think time, which was glaringly absent in the TT protocol. I scheduled the October CPR meeting to discuss the similarities and differences. We started the meeting with a personal narrative (often termed a connector in our district) by identifying one or two things that brought us joy that day. After sharing and modeling think/write/share, we reviewed the research questions again and examined the third research question: To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?

We pondered the assertion from Hammond (2015) that states the importance of creating safe and joyful environments and learning opportunities for students. The limbic layer of the brain, or emotional brain, decides what circumstances to engage in and what potential threats to shun. Neuroscience research confirms that creating a safe and pleasant learning environment directly affects information processing, memory system, and the brain's ability to receive or shut down information (fight or flight) (Hammond, 2015). This assertion led to a discussion of how we could create learning spaces for students to feel safe to engage and share. We realized that often depended on how the teacher set up the learning environment and the lesson itself.

We talked about the use of TPS as a discussion protocol, and how that differed from the common usage of TT. We used a Venn diagram template to examine the two protocols, TT vs. TPS, "In using Think-Pair-Share (TPS), the teacher asks a question, gives students time to think individually and silently, provides structured paired time with a partner, and then has them share with the group" (Lyman et al., 2023, p. 124). We noticed that one big difference in the two protocols was the lack of sufficient think time or wait time using TT. Another difference is that the TPS protocol assumes the frequent use of bordering to guide the students along to be able to develop and share their thinking, as opposed to the quick/brief interactions or warm up/brainstorm nature of TT.

We considered a common definition of learning— the processing of information and encoding it into memory for later retrieval and use— and how we needed to create safe places for that to take place. In addition, we discussed Lyman's definition of TPS and talked about the importance of using TPS and preparing students to engage in thinking before speaking. We discussed how sufficient wait/think time for ELL students (or any student) was critical for language and content processing. We recognized that the students may not participate, engage, or access learning because they simply needed more time to process their thinking. TPS allowed that to happen by the very nature of its set up. First, the think time is embedded for students to process information individually; there is time to rehearse and repeat the information (encode), and then to further one's thinking with a partner—what Vygotsky calls intersubjectivity (Driscoll, 1994). Finally, there is time to share, retrieve, and use or apply the information.

The CPR group participated in the last round of observations on November 3, 14, and 16, before meeting as a CPR group on November 30, 2022. At the CPR meeting, we responded to a writing prompt on our definitions of culture shock and then compared our definition to the

dictionary definition: "a sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture%20shock). We reviewed two excerpts about the learning styles of Chinese ELLs and wrote our initial reactions and responses and watched two video clips on stereotypes, *A Timeline of the Model Minority Myth* and *I am an American.* We wrote responses and reactions to how these stereotypes influence Chinese ELL experiences and what we as educators should be aware of in understanding our students. After reading and watching the video clips, we wrote reflections and next steps for the strategies that the group wanted to focus on in PAR Cycle Two.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data from a variety of sources, including CLE and CPR meeting notes, group reflections and reactions, reflective memos, activity artifacts, selective verbatim observation data, and notes from post-observation conversations with teachers about their teaching strategies and adjustments for next lessons. For the meetings, we took notes and recorded responses and reactions directly onto a shared Google slide deck and then participants typed their reflective memos into a different template. For observations, I typed selective verbatim notes onto the observation template, coded the data, and reviewed the data with each participant. The participants understood that as we analyzed the data together, they had the opportunity to decide on next steps based on what they observed and realized about their teaching.

After collecting all the data, I used in-vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016) to examine the data and use codes that surfaced in the notes or transcripts. I used pre-determined codes from the observation template, such as TPR, wait time, collaboration, teacher questioning, calling on strategies, etc. Because these codes were pre-identified in the Pre-Cycle and as we devised the

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observation tool, I used some closed coding techniques (Saldaña, 2016) to code for these specific

codes, looking for the frequency of how many times (if any) these codes showed up, and whether

any patterns started to reveal answers to the research questions. Additionally, when other codes

evolved, I suggested to participants that we could look for these codes as well or that they were

recurring and may be significant. I coded each data source as a group, then I tallied up the

frequency of the codes and transferred them to a master PAR Cycle One spread sheet. Coding is

a tedious but necessary process in order to get the most precise codes and to establish validity

from multiple sources and coding iterations for qualitative analysis (Miles et al., 2019). During

this process, I looked for patterns in the codes to support larger groups of data or categories.

From there, I looked for further patterns in the categories to identify possible emergent themes

(see Table 6 and Figure 11).

Emergent Themes

In discussing the emergent themes that evolved from the data collection and analysis

process, I identified student access to content and sense of belonging, I examine the themes that

support CLRP joyful learning in the classrooms as evidenced by the data from PAR Cycle One.

Each theme is supported by categories and codes from the evidence.

Student Access to Content

Student access to content developed as an emergent theme with teacher reinforcement,

nonverbals, pushing rigor, and student dialogue as supporting categories. Four categories made

up 69% of the data that relates to student access to content. The teachers used teacher

reinforcement (50% of the data), nonverbal strategies to ensure student access (19.2% of the

data), began to push rigor in the content (16.7% of the data), and created opportunities for

Table 6

Emergent Themes with Categories and Codes

Emergent Theme	Categories	Codes and Subcodes
Student access to content (n=78 or 69%)	• Teacher reinforcement (n=39 or 50%)	• Bordering (n=15) • Direct Instruction (n=7) • Redirect (n=8) • Sentence frames (n=5) • Revoicing (n=4)
	• Nonverbal (n=15 or 19.2%)	• Hand signals checks for understanding (n=7) • Proximity (n=8)
	• Pushing rigor (n=13 or 16.7%)	• Questioning (n=11) • Asking students to explain (n=2)
	• Student Dialogue (n=11 or 14.1%)	• Turn and Talk (n=6) • Whole group discussion (n=2) • Work with a partner (n=2) • Share perspectives (n=1)
Sense of belonging (n=32 or 31%)	• Cultivating relationships (n=18 or 20.5%)	• Calling by names (n=12) • Learning about others (n=3) • Personal stories (n=3)
	• Conditions for gracious space (n=14 or 13.8%)	• Positive Statement (n=8) • Teacher models graciousness (n=3) • Welcome (n=3)

Student Access to Content	Teacher reinforcement	• Bordering • Direct Instruction • Redirect • Sentence Frames • Revoicing
	Non-Verbal	• Hand signals checks for understanding • Proximity
	Pushing rigor	• Questioning • Asking students to explain
	Student Dialogue	• Turn and Talk • Whole group instruction • Work with a partner • Share perspectives
Sense of belonging	Cultivating relationships	• Calling by names • Learning about others • Personal stories
	Conditions for gracious space	• Positive Statement • Teacher models graciousness • Welcome

Figure 11. Emergent themes, categories, and codes.

student dialogue (14.1% of the data). As an emergent theme, student access to content is a significant step in creating CLRP joyful learning for Chinese ELLS.

Teacher Reinforcement

The teachers used different strategies to ensure access to content, and 50% of the data was related to examples of teacher reinforcement. In order of frequency, these included bordering (clear direction, expectations, and transitions), direct instruction (I do, we do, you do), redirecting (prompting students to get back on task), sentence frames, and revoicing (paraphrasing, not repeating, responses). If teachers simply repeat what students say instead of urging the student to expand on their response, students do not listen to each other because the teacher simply repeats. However, for ELLs, repeating may be useful in certain circumstances, especially if the teacher asks students to repeat as a means of reinforcing and using language. One teacher used repeating/revoicing to help elevate student comprehension: "I repeat what students say in case people didn't hear or understand them" (TL, CPR meeting notes, October 27, 2023). While teaching a lesson on measurement, Terilyn revoiced why a student chose to use a ruler versus a measuring tape or meter stick to measure a pencil: "On a pencil, he said he uses the ruler because it is not round. It is flat and it is not super-duper long" (TL, Observation notes, October 4, 2022). Using these strategies led to stronger student engagement as students had more systematic access to the content.

As discussed previously, bordering was a new but useful term for teachers, and we spent time in our meetings developing clarity about the meaning and use. The conversations transferred to teachers as bordering had the highest frequency of the teacher reinforcement strategies. By ensuring that the teacher is clear about transitioning from one activity to another, providing clear directions, and ensuring that the teacher *sets the mode* or direction for the

students and *fixes the mode* so students fully engage, the teacher helps to anchor the lesson and communicate expectations for the lesson (Lyman, 1986; Lyman, 2023). The three teachers used this strategy in their lessons to make sure students knew what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and how long to do it; for example, one teacher said, "All right, go get your workbooks and go work on p. 18. We are going to come together in about one minute!" (LS, Observation notes, October 17, 2022). When teacher directions for student expectations were clear, the students did not have to decipher what was expected and could go straight to work, therefore accessing the content. Transitions were seamless for the students and saved valuable class time. At times, if directions for a task are complex, the teacher can use TPS, and students can share directions with each other so they are clear.

All three teachers used redirection to get off-task students focused and on-task: "If you can hear me, touch your ears; if you can hear, me touch your nose" and "just look over here" (RF, Observation notes, October 5, 2023). Mr. Fong used a combination of sentence frames, such as "You can write, Mr. Andrew bought a total of blank. This part is asking you to solve —. Mr. Andrew bought—" (RF, Observation notes, October 5, 2023). The sentence frames served as a scaffold and visual starting place for students to utilize language and vocabulary that leads to accessing the curriculum.

Nonverbal Cues

Nonverbal cues proved effective in checking for understanding and therefore led to students' access to content. Teachers often used hand signals to gauge and assess how individual students were responding in a lesson and what needed more explanation and who needed more assistance. For example, they used a number rubric: "On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being easy, 5 being hard, what do you think about the problem? We've got some 2s and 3s" (RF, Observation

notes, October 5, 2023). Others used a simple yes or no format to alert the teacher about the need to spend time re-teaching or explaining: "Give me a thumbs up if your group has this" (LS, Observation notes, October 17, 2023).

Proximity was the other nonverbal strategy often used to help students stay on task and access the content. Proximity is a teacher's physical nearness to his or her students during a lesson to support and monitor student engagement. To stay in proximity to students, teachers often circulated in the room, making intentional stops at every table and taking more intentional time with students who struggled with the content: "circulates to Aiden. Helps Jay" (TL, Observation notes, October 17, 2023). Remington circulated to eight different students and tables in the span of six minutes (RF, Observation notes, October 5, 2023) to make sure he assisted whoever needed help or seemed to be having difficulty in their math notebooks. This special effort to actively help students elevated their ability to access the content; without this attention students can struggle to figure out how to tackle a task. Teacher prompting, questioning, or revoicing encourages them. Proximity served as a physical and visual reminder to stay focused, and actively work in their math notebooks, discuss with a partner, or ask a question. Teachers intentionally used proximity to elevate student access to content.

Pushing Rigor

Teachers reflected on how often they posed questions (sentence form) and what the level of the questions they asked students was (cognitive demand). Their reflections helped them be more intentional and strategic with their use of questioning to push student rigor. For example, Leona said:

> I tend to overlap my questions to help clarify and lead student thinking, but I think what was said about how students can view that as multiple questions is a good point. I'm

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thinking that I can also use wait time as a way of stopping myself from asking multiple

questions (LS, Reflective memo, September 2, 2022).

She noticed that her rapid-fire sequence of questions could overwhelm her ELL students. While

they were still trying to figure out her first question, they had to simultaneously navigate multiple

steps as she posed more and more questions. She decided that allowing wait time after her

questions would allow students to process content without having to navigate processing the

language demand of multiple questions.

Terilyn noticed from her observation data that she asked a lot of yes/no questions that did

not allow for much elaboration or pushing further thinking: "I notice I ask mostly level one depth

of knowledge questions" (TL, Reflective memo, October 27, 2022). The clarity of the data

prodded her to change what kind of questions she asked, from yes/no or one-word answers to

how and why questions that pushed the rigor and shifted the cognitive processes to the students.

Leona noticed a pattern in her data of asking multiple questions with the intention to

incorporate more wait time: "I struggle with being more aware of my questioning habits—

usually after the fact—but haven't been able to interrupt them" (LS, Reflective memo, October

27, 2023). The opportunity to reflect on her lessons through observation data helped her identify

the need to work on her questioning strategies to push rigor and allow for student understanding.

Remington asked students to explain their thinking as he circulated the room, either

writing in their math notebooks or articulating verbally to a partner or to the teacher: "Zoey,

what's the process here? Explain it" (RF, Observation notes, October 5, 2022). Asking students

to explain their thinking and giving them the choice to write it down or process verbally with a

partner helped to push the cognitive load and rigor of the lesson.

Student Dialogue

Teachers used a variety of strategies to elicit student dialogue, collaboration, and communication. Teachers employed strategies such as TPS/TWPS, provided space to write or draw, asked higher level/why or how questions, and allowed for think time/processing time before students shared out loud to the class. Teachers assigned collaboration partners or small groups and set up sentence frames and roles so that students knew how they were to communicate. One teacher noted that sharing helped her to process and shape her own perspective and thinking and she appreciated the discussion time: "I'm glad that I'm able to see other perspectives and change direction at these meetings. It helps me to remember that there are many different perspectives and emotional responses to every moment shared by a community" (TL, CLE meeting notes, September 2, 2022).

In a reflection on his observation data, Remington noted, "I talk a lot. I was hoping for it to be more of them, especially when it comes to collaborative work" (RF, CPR meeting notes, October 27, 2023). He realized he wanted to devise more structure to allow for student dialogue. In his next lesson on mixed fractions, he created different opportunities for student dialogue, giving the students a choice to work with their partner or individually: "What's different? Turn to your partner and discuss" (RF, Observation notes, November 3, 2023). Leona intentionally tried to pivot from turning and talking to a partner, to "Think, thinking" for a minute before setting the students to the task of talking and discussing. She continued to prompt students with "Think, think, think" and allowed for nearly a minute of wait time. Then she prompted them to show their neighbors their thinking on their mini board.

CLRP joyful learning happens when students are given ample wait time to think, an opportunity to rehearse their thinking out loud, or in drawing with a partner; and then encoding

the learning into their memory by repeating it to the group, When teachers are strategic about think time, they provide an avenue for Chinese ELLs to process and form their thoughts with drawing, verbal language, and discussing with their partners. Both teacher reinforcement and student dialogue are categories that lead to themes of student access and comprehension and sense of belonging.

Sense of Belonging

The theme of sense of belonging emerged from two categories: cultivating relationships and creating a gracious space. Sense of belonging occurred with a frequency of 32 instances or 31% of the data. Teachers built in opportunities for students to share and cultivate trusting relationships by calling students by name, using a kind voice and positive statements, and explicitly teaching growth mindset ways of thinking. They reiterated "it's okay" to get something "wrong" as long as the students were trying and learning. Remington remembered a time when he experienced the opposite of a growth mindset, and it caused anxiety for him: "The English language was foreign to me, and I have gotten into trouble a few times because I did not know what was happening" (RF, Reflective memo, November 30, 2022). Sense of belonging encompasses cultivating relationships with students, peers, family, community and creating a gracious space to learn (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hughes & Grace, 2010).

Cultivating Relationships

Cultivating relationships includes calling students by name, learning about others, and sharing personal stories. When individuals feel known and valued, they learn without worry because the teacher has built trust and confidence. Calling students by first names occurred twelve times as evidence that teachers want to relate to their students personally. Through personal story telling and connection, teachers can learn about their students more deeply:

I appreciate everything that was shared. Everyone has a story to tell, and the spaces important to us seem to hold similar sentiments. Aside from the theories and research of cultural relevance, I also enjoyed listening to the stories people share about their experiences. Sometimes, research can only cover so much because not everyone's stories can be generalized under Confucian thinking. It is just as important to look at street data to see how we can apply our teaching to best respond to the students in the classroom. Being a newer person in the group, I want to observe more before I respond to discussions. From this session, it was a good reminder to be more intentional about my teaching practice to best reach students. (RF, Reflective memo, September 2, 2022)

Learning occurs more readily when a student does not feel isolated or judged. Cultivating relationships by learning other people's stories, cultures, experiences, and calling by name creates a sense of being known and a sense of belonging; learning can happen in a safe space among people that students feel connected to and with.

Creating Gracious Space

A gracious space is one in which people in a meeting or classroom feel a communal spirit and feel safe and comfortable in the setting. As a result, they invite the stranger (new people or ideas) and learn in public, often developing the ability to be comfortable making mistakes and discussing them (Hughes & Grace, 2010). Creating gracious space in the classroom environment, during circle time and work time, proves crucial and welcomes all students or adults to be treated with respect and kindness. To establish gracious space, teachers must welcome diverse personalities, dwell on the assets and spirit of others, set the classroom environment to be comfortable and motivating, invite all to share their perspectives and have a voice, and be willing to make mistakes and learn from them, modeling for their students how to learn in public.

"The table we need to set for each other as we prepare for this work must be a welcoming one, where people feel comfortable to speak their truth" (TL, CLE notes, September 2, 2022). When Chinese ELL students feel a sense of belonging and welcome, they are free to open up and become more vulnerable, trusting that they will be accepted and included. "Some of you, it's okay to say, 'I don't know.' . . . you are learning. Is it okay to say, 'I'm not sure?' Let's practice saying that: I don't know; I'm not sure. Should our partner laugh when we say that? Never." (TL, Observation notes, October 4, 2022). When teachers use positive statements, they also lower a student's affective filter and create a sense of acceptance and belonging. As teachers build deeper capacity for cultural understanding and acceptance, the students' sense of belonging fosters confidence which leads to CLRP joyful learning classrooms.

In summary, the two emergent themes that point to fostering joyful learning in Chinese ELL students are student access to content and sense of belonging. Teachers design opportunities for students to access content while reinforcing their lessons with specific strategies, using nonverbal strategies to keep students on task, raising the level of questioning to push rigor, and creating opportunities for student dialogue and collaboration to rehearse and process new learning.

As teachers cultivate relationships among and with students in their classroom community, getting to know their personal stories, perspectives, and cultural and life contexts, students become known as assets and not deficits. As teachers create conditions for gracious space, students feel welcome, encouraged, and able to make mistakes and to be gracious to others; they trust that their learning environment is safe. As students feel safe and welcome, they absorb and process their learning into long term memory absent the possible triggers of anxiety or stress and, therefore, can concentrate on learning.

Leadership Reflection and Action Steps for PAR Cycle Two

During PAR Cycle One, I intentionally started to use whatever strategies we were trying to employ as a group to amplify CLRP joyful learning with the group itself. First, I invested intentional time into cultivating these specific relationships within the team. Then I used specific instructional strategies in our meetings after creating a safe and gracious space through special attention to facilitation utilizing CLE axioms.

Cultivating Relationships

Through Remington's experience as a former student in our school district and an English language learner, I witnessed firsthand how cultivating relationships played an instrumental role in creating a gracious space for participants to share comfortably and truthfully. His statement, "Being a newer person in the group, I want to observe more before I respond to discussions" (RF, CLE meeting, September 2, 2022), reminded me that newcomers need time to process language and time to process and assess the situation. Cultivating relationships and building trust can help individuals open up and be vulnerable so that deeper work can happen. I made sure that I did not call on him during the meetings unless he was ready and willing to share. Some of the things he shared were only in writing to me and not with the group. I learned that by cultivating a trusting relationship with Remington and others that needed time to feel comfortable and safe, I needed to create that safe and gracious space. I intentionally practiced wait time while people processed their thoughts.

Use of Wait Time and TWPS

I was occasionally tempted to talk or explain during silent moments, but I learned to wait in case someone was processing a thought to share. For the people who were not verbal learners and could not readily absorb from reading texts, we read things in small excerpts and rehearsed

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and shared our thinking only after Think-WRITE-Pair-Share. The more we practiced articulating

joyful learning and CLRP characteristics out loud, the more we could articulate CLRP and what

joyful learning looked and felt like in classrooms.

Facilitation of CPR and CLE Meetings

I attempted to create a safe and gracious space for the participants to share their truth in a

non-judgmental environment. I reviewed classroom data without criticism or valuation. We

started every CPR meeting with a connector or personal narrative. Then, I offered participants

the opportunity to choose what excerpts to read, and tried to use different modalities:

storytelling, watching video clips, poetry writing, etc. Using a variety of choices and creating a

gracious space as a standard practice in meetings supported our efforts to have discussions about

our classrooms and be open to discussing our experiences, ideas, and fears and then take

professional risks to shift our practices.

In the Pre-Cycle, I believed that three emergent categories were sense of belonging,

kinesthetic learning, and learning in a social context. However, learning in a social context

became a larger "umbrella" for the data; learning together was crucial because we needed to

rehearse and encode our thinking with partners and small groups as we dissected our thinking.

As I facilitated a safe and encouraging atmosphere and incorporated Think Write Pair Share, I

witnessed our group developing a rhythm of dialogue that generated ideas and shifts in practice.

Because teachers were given time to process thinking, time to rehearse and practice our thinking,

and time for sharing while their brains encoded the learning, they were eager to do the same for

students. For example, students could engage and access a lesson through writing/drawing if they

were not able to demonstrate through speaking. The other emergent theme, sense of belonging,

was addressed by teacher revoicing, using personal names, cultivating relationships, and

questioning. Teachers who impart those skills early on will help their students access to the curriculum. By creating a sense of belonging in the CPR through personal narratives and getting to know each other, the teachers were able to access the new learning through articles, videos, post observation conversations and discussion.

One important shift to my leadership was that I visited classrooms regularly and consistently for observations. The kind of conversations I held afterwards were new; in the past I had simply presented data and the teachers had to devise their own next steps based on the data about their teaching. I have learned that I do not need to tell them what or how to do things; they learned and asked me questions along the way after reflecting and looking more closely at their practices. My next steps with the observations were to look for specific strategies that the teachers came up with, for instance, Think Write Pair Share for student engagement with the curriculum. For example, all three teachers believed they had incorporated more TPS into their instruction than they actually had, and after looking at their observation data, they strategically planned for more opportunities for TWPS to happen in their lessons.

As I thought about next steps for PAR Cycle Two, I wanted to know how the teachers were deciding what strategies to incorporate. They chose TWPS and used mini white boards, traveled around the room to check in with all students, and tried to deliver positive statements. They tried to incorporate higher level thinking questions and more wait time for students to process. We continued to promote ways students could share their thinking with peers confidently, and not only engage in a back and forth with the teacher. I was most eager to learn how creating a sense of belonging for our ELLs correlated with student learning (if it does), which strategies amplified learning the most, and if the learning environments of the teachers changed because of this. As I coached the teachers, relationships deepened, and teachers felt

heard. There was greater trust and validity in what our CPR team chose to enact. In the next

chapter, I discuss the activities from PAR Cycle Two, data collection and analysis, and the

themes and findings that support CLRP joyful learning for Chinese ELLs.

CHAPTER 6: PAR CYCLE TWO AND FINDINGS

During the participatory action research (PAR) project and study, I facilitated three cycles of inquiry, collected and analyzed data, and used the data to inform the activities and actions needed to amplify joyful learning in Chinese English Language Learners (ELLs). During the Pre-Cycle, I became acclimated to the research process, coding, and creating a gracious space for our meetings. These foundational practices and routines helped set the tone and approach for deeper learning to happen in each subsequent cycle. In PAR Cycle One, two emergent themes surfaced: student access to content and a sense of belonging. I used the two emergent themes to guide our process and study in PAR Cycle Two. These emergent themes remained present during PAR Cycle Two, and an additional theme surfaced: building teacher capacity in culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP). During three cycles of inquiry, teachers reflected regularly on their practices and selected and implemented best strategies to improve joyful CLRP lessons in elementary math classrooms for Chinese ELL student learning. Upon completion of PAR Cycle Two, I determined two key findings for the study:

- Teachers need to engage in a set of experiences and practices that promote joyful learning so that teachers transfer learning to student learning experiences.
- As teachers built a common definition of joyful learning, they implemented CLRP strategies that fostered student access, rigor, and student independence.

In this chapter, I describe the PAR Cycle Two process, including activities, data analysis, and themes. Then I discuss in more detail the findings from the PAR project and study.

PAR Cycle Two Process

In PAR Cycle Two (February-April 2023), I facilitated two CPR meetings and one CLE meeting; in both settings we discussed strategies to implement and look for during observations

and throughout the year. In addition, I observed each teacher on a minimum of five occasions and facilitated post-observation conversations. In the meetings, CPR members read and responded to short quotes, reviewed and responded to the research questions, shared observation data with the group, and wrote reflective memos on their practices and experiences through the project.

I launched PAR Cycle Two with a CPR meeting to review research questions with the members (see Table 7). We used the term connector to refer to personal narratives to start the meeting. Then, we reviewed the overall project, or "Our Research Journey," to discuss how to proceed in the final cycle of inquiry. We concentrated on the overarching research question: *How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs?* Then we focused on the sub-questions:

1. To what extent do teachers articulate the characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?

2. How do teachers co-design an observation tool for joyful learning for Chinese ELL students?

3. To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?

4. How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth?

Terilyn Lee showed much trepidation at first, saying that she would have a difficult time responding. However, the more we discussed the questions, she and the other CPR participants responded confidently and thoughtfully. In reviewing the data from PAR Cycle One, we discussed the codes and themes, the differences between simple turn and talk and think pair share and analyzed strategies with a joyful CLRP lens. We reviewed the terms of joyful learning and

Table 7

PAR Cycle Two Activities and Data

Meetings	Activities	Data Collected
CPR Meeting #1 February 10, 2023	Respond to quotes Research Journey Changes in our practice teaching Choose strategies	Agenda Meeting notes Group reflections Reflective Memo
Observations Round 1 (n=5) February 15, 2023 February 27, 2023 March 13, 2023	CLRP Joyful Learning Observations	Selective Verbatim Observation Data Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting #2 March 15, 2023	Connection to others Review research questions Definition of joyful CLRP Changes in our practice Member check on observation data	Agenda Meeting Notes Group Reflections Reflective Memo
Observations Round 2 March 15, 16 (n=3)	CLRP Joyful Learning Observations	Selective Verbatim Observation Data Reflective Memo
Observations Round 3 (n=3) March 22, 2023	CLRP Joyful Learning Observations	Selective Verbatim Observation Data Reflective Memo
Observations Round 4 (n=3) April 3, 2023 April 5, 2023	CLRP Joyful Learning Observations	Selective Verbatim Observation Data Reflective Memo
Observations Round 5 April 12, 2023 April 17, 2023 April 19, 2023	CLRP Joyful Learning Observations	Selective Verbatim Observation Data Reflective Memo
CLE Meeting May 19, 2023	Member check on observation data Reflection on the year CLRP Strategies TWPS and wait time	Agenda Meeting Notes Group Reflections Reflective Memo

Note. n= number of observations.

CLRP and the benefits of using dialogic teaching (structured conversations) and teaching students explicitly how to have a conversation using sentence frames, use hand signals to respond, and how to ask each other clarifying questions (Resnick et al., 2015). We reviewed the term of bordering, or setting clear expectations throughout the lesson, especially before a transition, in order to make the lessons smooth and accessible.

The group identified think write pair share (TWPS) as a strategy they wanted to try in order to give students sufficient processing or think time, an alternative to speaking immediately. In providing time to think and then write before pairing with a partner, teachers gave students ample time to rehearse their thinking, increasing their ability to be ready to share with the whole class. This strategy involved four elements to look for: wait time, writing or drawing as an alternate way to demonstrate thinking, collaborating and working with others, and ultimately sharing their thinking with the class.

During this cycle, I visited each teacher for five observations. I visited during their regular math blocks and then sat with each teacher for15-20 minutes after the lessons to discuss what they observed from my notes. The conversations were not evaluative or judgmental, but rather, they were guided by the data. In these coaching conversations, I asked neutral questions such as "What strategies did you select and implement in order to elevate joyful CLRP experiences of our Chinese ELLs?" After discussing what took place in the actual teaching of the lessons, I affirmed and guided the collaborative thinking, and together we identified possible next steps or techniques to try for the next observation.

The first observation cycle (week of February 15, 2023) occurred after our first CPR meeting. As agreed upon by the CPR, I looked for four strategies: wait/think time, write/draw on a mini white board or notebook, partner work or table collaboration, and an opportunity to share

with the whole class. The teachers intentionally planned their lessons to allow time for these elements in addition to the elements they previously identified in PAR Cycle One, such as collaboration, offering student choice, and hands-on learning. I noticed teachers using manipulatives in nearly every lesson for exploration and ways to express their thinking; in addition, the teachers intentionally put writing and drawing opportunities early in the lesson as a precursor to talking with their partners or groups. I made note of how Chinese ELLs demonstrated or articulated their work during class.

In the coaching conversations, I reiterated that the conversations were not evaluative and that we were using the data to guide our conversations. As teachers analyzed their data, they discovered they had been misjudging the time they gave to elements of their lessons, sometimes thinking they had used more time, sometimes less. The teachers used the data to identify the changes or alterations they would need to make. They chose adjustments to their lessons to incorporate wait time, write/draw time, partner/group collaboration, and sharing out. Some teachers altered their calling on strategies right away as they realized that cold calls versus other engagement strategies did not promote gracious or safe space. Another teacher discussed her need to prepare for potentially uncomfortable silences while she allowed time for students to process their thoughts and respond; she had to learn not to fill those silences with distracting teacher talk. One teacher described her need to be intentional about why they were inserting talking into parts of their lesson. She responded to the needs of her students who were still new to communicating or producing responses in English by providing exercises that allowed for alternate ways to express student thinking, such as hand signals or written responses. Teachers were starting to note that planning for intentional choices in the lesson enhanced student access to content. As teachers incorporated independent thinking and work time, they fostered

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collaborative work and collaborative thinking as an intentional offering of "choice" in their lessons.

At the next CPR meeting on March 15, 2023, we discussed what made us feel connected to others and what inspired us to learn. We named a quality of joyful CLRP that would continue to be in evidence— the satisfaction of working hard at something and learning something. Students were persevering through a problem and achieving understanding, and in this process, we observed student satisfaction. This manifested in two ways: as students adjusted to think and write time, more students were ready to talk to partners and then to the whole class, and teachers had time to scan the class and offer scaffolding to students who were not comprehending as quickly. We discussed how Chinese ELLs culturally value consistent effort over innate ability and that trying hard and applying consistent practice can improve one's ability. We were careful to remain attuned to that cultural value as we responded to the research questions every time we met. At the beginning of the meeting, members were hesitant and even expressed some anxiety about being able to respond to the questions; however, as we approached the questions collaboratively and allowed for different entry points of engagement, each participant realized they had valid contributions as their knowledge and experience grew. This was empowering for the participants; they described the process as satisfying and joyful as they realized that we were learning together in a collegial setting in which mistakes, re-workings, and discovery were welcome. That teacher experience started to transfer to classrooms more consistently.

In the subsequent observation rounds and the coaching conversations, we continued to discuss how to offer Chinese ELLs alternatives to speaking in front of the whole class. I continued to document strategies such as wait time, write/draw, partner/group work, choice to work independently, and opportunities to share out to the whole class. One teacher often used

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proximity to check for understanding and assess student demonstration of learning. Another teacher suggested offering gallery walks or having an elbow or table partner revoice what their partner shared as methods for students in the early stages of learning English to share their thinking with the rest of the class. These adjustments arose from personal teacher reflections in reflective memos and from discussions in the CPR meetings and subsequent coaching sessions. The teachers learned first by experiencing and then transferring their learning to their own teaching environments, creating gracious spaces in their own classrooms, and employing teaching strategies we experienced together in the CPR meetings.

In the last CLE meeting, May 19, 2023, we discussed the data trends from PAR Cycle One and from the classroom observations in PAR Cycle Two. The meeting was a collaborative celebration and reflection with our neighboring school and their CPR team. We discussed what we had learned individually and as a team and how we appreciated the opportunity to learn in a focused, intentional, and safe space to discover and build our capacity in understanding and articulating joyful CLRP strategies. With that understanding and capacity building, we selected and implemented strategies that amplified joyful CLRP learning experiences for Chinese ELLs. We were excited to reflect and share what we had learned thus far, and we were encouraged and enthusiastic to continue our work in the next school year. We expressed our eagerness to disseminate our learning with other teachers in the same grade levels and eventually the whole school to bring about greater change in overall teacher practice.

Analysis of PAR Cycle Two Data

I gathered 413 artifacts of codable data for PAR Cycle Two (see Table 8) and determined three themes: Teacher-created opportunities for student access to content, building teacher capacity in CLRP, and a sense of belonging amplifies joyful learning experiences in

Table 8

Themes with Categories and Codes

Themes	Categories	Codes and Subcodes
Teacher-created student access (n=204 or 49.4%)	Teacher reinforcement (n=105 or 24.5%)	• Bordering (n=34) • Direct Instruction (n=30) • Redirect (n=20) • Repetition (n=5) • Revoicing (n=4) • Other Scaffolds (n=4) • Visuals (n=3) • Vocabulary (n=3) • Metacognition (n=2)
	Non-verbal (n=37 or 8.9%)	• Proximity (n=23) • Kinesthetic hands-on or body (n=6) • Checks for understanding (n=8)
	Pushing rigor (n=33 or 7.9%)	• Questioning (n=26) • Clarification (n=7)
	Student Dialogue (n=29 or 7%)	• partner collaboration (n=16) • Turn and Talk (n=8) • Table group work (n=3) • Whole group discussion (n=1) • Closing Circle (n=1)
Building teacher capacity in joyful CLRP (n=114 or 27.6%)	Teacher discovery (n=27 or 6.5%)	• Reflection (n=13) • CLRP elements (n=6) • Productive struggle (n=4) • Satisfaction (n=4)
	Change in teacher practice (n= 87 or 21.1 %)	• Wait time (n=19) • Write/Draw (n=18) • Choice (n=17) • TWPS (n=10) • Intentional Strategy (n=8) • calling on (n=3) • pacing (n=3) • structured conversations (n=3) • verbal instructions (n=3) • dissemination (n=2) • preferences vs. skill (n=1)

Table 8 (continued)

Themes	Categories	Codes and Subcodes
Sense of belonging (n=95 or 23%)	Cultivating relationships (n=32 or 7.7%)	• Calling by names (n=14) • Connection to others or content (n=13) • relationships (n=4) • Communication (n=1)
	Conditions for gracious space (n=63 or 15.3%)	• Student Voice (n=14) • Positive Statement/Affirmation (n=12 • Safe and Welcome (n=8) • Growth Mindset (n=7) • Inspiration (n=7) • Show student work (n=5) • Alternatives to speaking in front of the class (n=3) • No judgement (n=3) • Exploration (n=2) • Behavior expectations (n=2)

math classrooms for Chinese ELLs. The data from PAR Cycle Two strengthened and continued our learning from the previous cycles and helped us understand how our research would guide us as we build teacher capacity for our target population, Chinese ELLs, and subsequently build teacher capacity in best practices for all students.

Figure 12 depicts the three themes with corresponding percentages. Teacher-created access to content serves as the dominant theme with 49.4%. As we co-created the observation tool and discussed strategies to create student access to content, teachers intentionally planned to implement selected instructional moves into their lessons in order to promote student access and engagement for Chinese ELL students. They focused on creating equitable access to content for Chinese ELL students who previously could not access content due to language barriers or could not readily engage with content or peers.

Building teacher capacity in understanding and articulating joyful CLRP (27.6% of the total data) helped inform and change teacher practices. Teachers tried new strategies and/or implemented proven strategies, adjusting their use in response to my feedback on the selected strategies. Sense of belonging (23%) showed that learners need a safe place to learn without judgement or fear, and as teachers experienced a growing sense of belonging in our CPR group, they in turn valued creating a sense of belonging in their classrooms.

Student Access to Content

Four categories support the first theme, teacher-created student access to content: teacher reinforcement (24.5%), non-verbal support (8.9%), pushing rigor (7.9%), and student dialogue (7%). Teachers used proven strategies within their instruction and delivery of lessons such as bordering, direct instruction, redirection, repetition, revoicing, visuals, vocabulary, other scaffolds, and metacognition to help boost student access to content. For example, one teacher

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Sense of belonging
23.0%

Teacher-created student access
49.4%

Building teacher capacity in joyful CLRP
27.6%
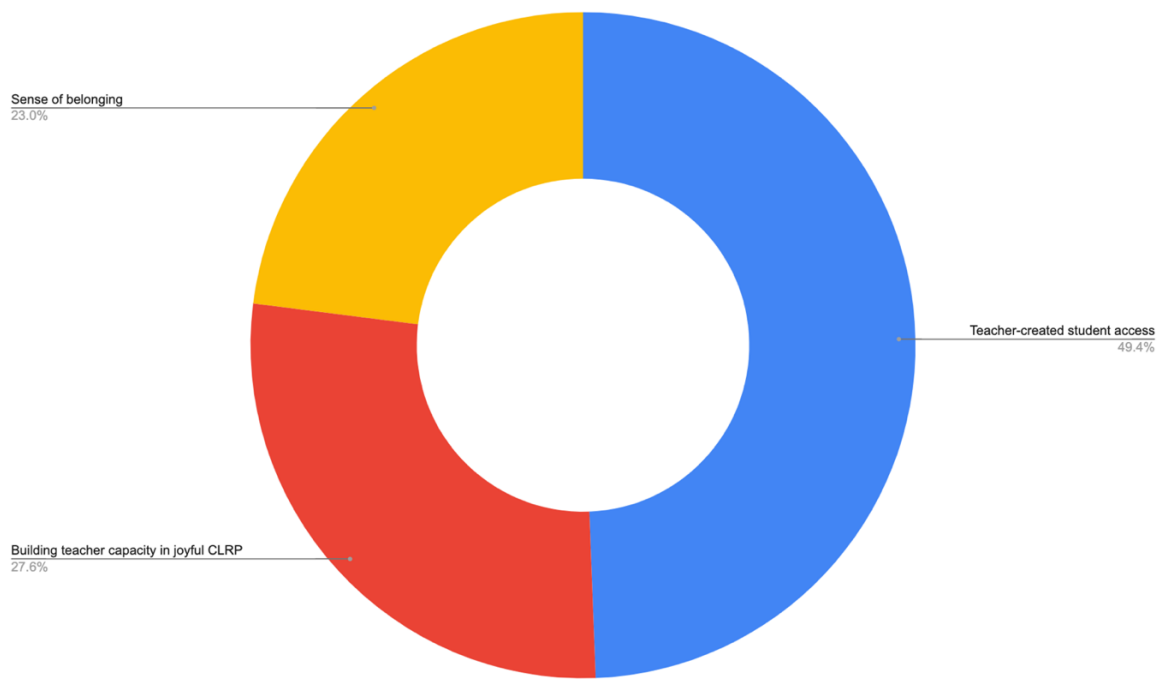
Figure 12. PAR Cycle Two themes.

used bordering to transition students to the next part of the lesson smoothly, making different parts of the lesson and its demands accessible to students: "Put your shapes back together. Open your notebooks and take out your protractors. You are going to draw your own shapes in your notebook" (RF, observation notes, April 19, 2023). They used nonverbal strategies such as close proximity to check in and support students, taught hand signals for engagement, and offered manipulatives and other hands-on experiences to amplify student access: "How many of you thought it was easy to do, using hand signals. Thumbs up, side, etc. Are we all answering the same way? No? And it's okay" (LS, Observation notes, April 27, 2023). They pushed rigor to challenge students to access grade level content by using questioning strategies and asking students to clarify their thinking. Teachers created opportunities for student dialogue through peer collaboration and rehearsal of ideas, leading to improved student access to content: "Christa and Savannah, how do you know there's no other answers? Think first, and now go and talk with your partners about it" (TL, Observations notes, March 15, 2023).

Joyful Learning Strategies

The second emergent theme, building teacher capacity in joyful CLRP strategies, supports the evidence from PAR Cycle One: as teachers had joyful experiences in their learning in the CPR meeting, they expressed increased enthusiasm and willingness to try new strategies and thus, changed their teaching practices. Teacher discovery (6.5%) included learning and solidifying understanding of the components of joyful learning and CLRP practices. The specific codes included reflection, CLRP elements, productive struggle, and satisfaction. In particular, I highlight satisfaction as an element of joy. While an emotion like satisfaction is difficult to code, I found it possible to do so by relying on the teachers' observations of students who seemed more engaged and appeared to find pleasure in their learning with others. As one teacher

commented in a reflection, "We want that element of satisfaction— whether it's moving towards understanding/solving or just being curious, joyful learning is about feeling satisfied" (LS, Reflective memo, March 15, 2023). "I prefer not to ask kids if they 'liked' a lesson, because it is not specific enough. Instead, I would rather focus on how satisfied people are with the work they did today" (TL, Reflective memo, March 15, 2023). Our growing understanding helped teachers to consider the idea that learning preferences, sometimes influenced by culture and personality, do not determine value or intelligence. "I've also had a mind shift towards students who prefer to work independently versus collaboratively or prefer worksheets over freeform assignments. Previously I thought those students needed more support developing social skills or feeling confident …versus my own judgement" (LS, Reflective memo, May 22, 2023). Our research in joyful CLRP strategies led teachers to realize trends and patterns in their own teaching and approaches, such as incorporating wait time, writing/drawing, choices, TWPS, calling on strategies, and pacing. As they reviewed their observation data, teachers adjusted their lessons as the cycle progressed and incorporated new changes in their practice and classroom routines. Terilyn noticed these changes in her practice over time through participating in the research project:

> As I continue to try to implement the strategies we've been working on, I am now going to try to pay closer attention to the ELLs satisfaction during lessons. I have already noticed that Terrence (one of my focus Chinese ELL students) is much more attentive and participates fully during math lessons compared to before this study began. (TL, Reflective memo, March 15, 2023)

Terilyn noticed the increased confidence and participation of one of her ELL students, and this inspired her to continue to incorporate the strategies we selected with consistency and focus.

"Even more is needed to help ELLs feel comfortable and confident during lessons…After participating in these PAR Cycles, I … select and implement strategies that have been introduced …every lesson… they are becoming part of my teaching repertoire" (TL, CLE notes, May 19, 2023). I observed an increase in student confidence and participation as a result of teachers using strategies such as wait time, drawing, and partner collaboration. All of these strategies contributed to students' joyful learning as they found their voice and, specifically, their sense of belonging.

Sense of Belonging

The last emergent theme, sense of belonging, included creating a gracious space (15.3%) and cultivating relationships (7.7%) as a continuation of learning in the previous cycles. The codes for gracious space included student voice, positive statements, safe and welcome, growth mindset, inspiration, showing student work, alternatives to speaking in front of the class, no judgement, exploration, and behavior expectations. Teachers acknowledged that as they themselves experienced a growing sense of belonging in our small CPR community, they engaged in our learning, tried new things, and collaborated in ways that they would not have attempted in other settings due to lack of trust or fear of being judged. "I'm more flexible with my teaching methods…I haven't explored more because of the risks of messing up. I've been better at accepting the risk and trying out new ways to engage students" (RF, Reflective memo, May 22, 2023).

The relationships built during the project helped the participants experience joyful learning within the CPR meetings, the lesson observations and feedback, and in other relational contexts. Codes for cultivating relationships included calling by name and connection to others and content. Remington chose to be vulnerable with the group and shared how he, as an ELL

student, sometimes needed more processing time and/or needed time to read the room, and that "processing time gives students a better idea of what to say. Based on how I use my processing time, it helped me to understand how students could be using theirs" (RF, Reflective memo, March 15, 2023).

After Remington shared his experience with our CPR group, Terilyn changed her calling on strategies and, rather than making cold calls on students, simply asked, "Does anyone else want to share?" as a more open way to invite participation without ". . .putting anyone on the spot or causing anxiety" (TL, CPR notes, March 15, 2023). Terilyn made a connection and an assertion, "students didn't say anything because of lack of trust," when she reflected on past ELL student engagement and empowerment, and she was inspired to implement strategies and create a welcoming environment that would engender that trust: "When ELLs do not feel comfortable, safe, or included, they will not be able to experience joyful learning. Therefore, I need to work on being more of a warm demander" (TL, Reflective memo, May 22, 2023). Remington shared another vulnerable memory of when he was a new ELL student who did not yet have a grasp on the language, "The English language was foreign to me, and I have gotten into trouble a few times because I did not know what was happening" (RF, Reflective memo, November 30, 2022). His memory sparked a connection for the CPR participants as we realized that students may be feeling disoriented and may harbor a sense of culture shock. Consequently, we need to be patient as we cultivate a trusting relationship with our students and foster trust among student peers. Remington's vulnerability illustrated his trust and feeling of connection to the CPR group members and served as an example of what could happen in classrooms when a sense of belonging develops and flourishes; people find their voice and are heard and valued.

In sum, I analyzed three emergent themes from the data: creating opportunities for student access to content, building teacher capacity in CLRP joyful learning strategies, and creating a sense of belonging. Each of these emergent themes amplified joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs. I verified that the themes that emerged from PAR Cycle One, and were strengthened in PAR Cycle Two, led to findings from the study related to the literature and responses to the research questions. In the next section, I discuss the findings.

Findings

In the PAR study, teachers experienced how we intentionally cultivated relationships among all CPR participants, including with me as the lead researcher. The teachers experienced the safety of a gracious space during our CPR meetings and post observation conversations. During the research project, we read definitions of joyful learning and the components of CLRP that led to a collective understanding of CLRP joyful learning strategies. As a result, teachers selected and implemented specific strategies to amplify learning experiences for Chinese ELL students in math classrooms. As their understanding of joyful CLRP strategies solidified and I continued to conduct consistent observations and feedback sessions with each teacher, the teachers noticed patterns and trends in their teaching. These understandings informed their next steps, including determining specific elements in their teaching they wanted me to look for during observations and then share with the rest of the CPR members.

As I compiled the data from three data sets in each iterative cycle, I determined two findings:

1. Teachers need to engage in a set of experiences and practices that promote a sense of belonging and joyful learning so that teachers transfer learning to student learning experiences.

2. As teachers built a common definition of joyful learning, they implemented CLRP strategies that fostered student access, rigor, and student independence.

To illustrate the findings, I reviewed codes, categories, and themes across three cycles of inquiry and observed patterns and trends. The findings from the three cycles in the project support the contention that teacher experiential learning transfers to teacher practice, and clear definitions of joyful CLRP learning enable teachers to select and implement strategies that promote student access to learning (see Figure 13).

Teacher Experiences Transfer to Student Learning

As the CPR participants learned together in the CPR meetings and had specific experiences in the CPR group, teachers learned from their experiences and transferred their learning to the classroom. For example, the CPR members learned how to create gracious space and cultivate trust with each other, and their experiences transferred to how they interacted with students in their classrooms. Relational trust is a necessary condition for teacher professional learning before they attempt to change their practices (Tredway & Militello, In press). As they experienced gracious space and strengthened relational trust, the teachers experienced an increased sense of belonging in the CPR group. When asked what conditions were needed to foster learning in the CPR, Leona answered, "Trust. A supportive environment where I can be honest about where I need help and where I feel—or know—I'm falling short, and like-minded people who will inspire me when I'm in need and connect" (LS, Survey, December 3, 2021). In a gracious space, teachers gradually feel more comfortable learning in public as they experiment,
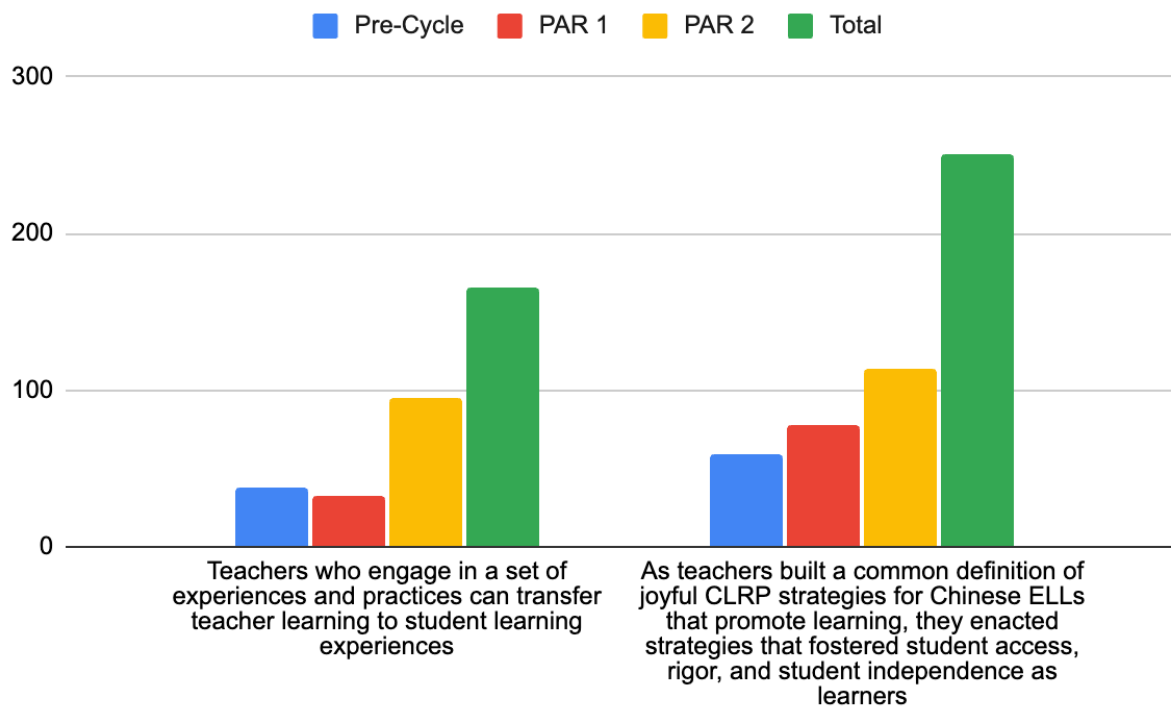
Figure 13. Data across the PAR cycles to determine findings.

make mistakes, become inspired, and learn from each other. They develop increased relational trust and cultivate a sense of belonging in a professional environment. In addition, based on a set of experiences in the CPR group and in the observations and conversations, teachers began to transfer their professional learning directly into crafting student learning experiences.

Gracious Space

As the leader, I modeled gracious space—an intentional space that attends to the spirit and the setting so that participants feel comfortable to learn in public (Hughes & Grace, 2010). I was intentional in creating a gracious space for learning by providing a smaller room for a pleasant environment, food for hospitality, and a projector focused on a big screen for easy visuals. TL reflected, **"**We started today's meeting by enjoying each other's company and munching on tasty treats. Then we shared a favorite song and commented on what it means to us, further strengthening our small community and allowing us to feel more connected" (TL, Reflective memo, March 18, 2022). Our meeting space emanated welcome and invitation for all CPR members to feel comfortable. During a CLE activity, each participant reflected on a table in their lives and what it represented after reading the poem, *Perhaps the World Ends Here* (Harjo, 1994). Then we responded to a prompt to imagine the table we are setting for each other and our students as we approached the work. Leona shared her reflection of her childhood table: "where all the good stuff happened…symbolizes welcome to me and a certain level of casualness. You come as you are…you can all do things together or you can all do your own thing. You still belong and are welcome" (LS, CLE notes, September 2, 2022), and then transferred this to her own teaching throughout the year. [Students'] home knowledge is valued and honored instead of invalidated. Students feel like they are part of the community, that there is a space for them and

that they are welcomed to bring their full selves into the classroom" (LS, CLE notes, May 19, 2023).

Another way I modeled for teachers was by being intentional about supporting a growth mindset in teachers, and I welcomed "mistakes" as we continued through our learning; as a result, we were more open about what we needed to do and encouraged each other as we delved deeper into each iterative learning cycle. We discussed our learning preferences and personality characteristics early in the project as we learned about each other and how to help each other engage. Remington shared that he has been misunderstood and labeled as disengaged in the past, and consequently he disengaged even further in his past settings. Through being vulnerable with the group, Remington's sharing allowed us to consider and honor other learning styles and to invite his participation. He stated:

> How I process information is quiet and reflective but does not indicate I am
> disengaged. Many times, I have been misunderstood because of that. If we are to be more
> responsive in our teaching, we should spend time to learn more about how each
> individual responds in their learning to better work with them. (RF, Reflective memo,
> November 30, 2022)

As a result, we cultivated and sustained our growing relationships.

Cultivating Relationships

Cultivating relationships with and within the CPR group proved crucial to establish the trust I needed to enter classrooms and speak to teachers' practices. I spent regular time with the CPR members in meetings, observations, post observation coaching meetings, both casually and intentionally. I carved out consistent time to give each member attention to their needs and instructional practices. The members grew in their appreciation of each other. "I appreciate

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everything that was shared…I enjoyed the stories people shared about their experiences…It is

just as important to look at street data to see how we can apply our teaching to best respond to

the students in the classroom" (RF, CLE notes, September 2, 2022). The members grew in their

appreciation of how they experienced our CPR meetings: "I always enjoy our sharing . . .it

makes me feel closer to the group and helps me see them as who they truly are. Thank you for

these opportunities…to strengthen our community and have a chance to bond" (TL, Reflective

memo, March 4, 2022).

Outside of our formal meeting and observation times, we spent time to eat meals together

and even went to see a play together based on Chinese and English language and the

miscommunication that can happen when things are lost in translation. These informal times

provided more opportunity to build trust and get to know each other in a collegial environment.

As teachers experienced joyful cultivation of relationships with colleagues, they were able to

transfer that approach among and with students. Remington commented:

> One factor of joyful learning is when students feel a connection to the teacher through
>
> shared experiences...culture, ideas, or interests. Teachers can incorporate shared
>
> experiences into teaching for students to relate and apply to their learning. For that to
>
> happen, we need to learn about our students. (RF, Reflective memo, May 22, 2023)

Sense of Belonging

As a result of this research project, I witnessed that creating a sense of belonging with

and among the teachers increased their participation in our meetings. Due to the gracious space

and cultivating relationships with the CPR members, learning alongside them and being the extra

set of eyes to support them to examine their daily practice, teachers felt comfortable and excited

to request things to observe and things to work on – including transferring practices to ensure students' sense of belonging.

I designed out CPR meetings to address what each member shared with the group regarding learning preferences for speaking, writing, using visual aids, crafting hands on projects, providing choices, reading short texts and quotes, and allowing wait time so that every member would be comfortable to participate and engage (Paryani, 2019). I honored their learning styles and preferences in order to invite maximum participation and access to our collaborative learning. Terilyn shared:

> I am not a joyful learner when I feel frustrated due to distractions. It makes me anxious when I can't get a task done because of … too much noise…it makes me wonder about what kind of work environment each child needs to be productive and feel comfortable.
>
> (TL, Reflective memo, March 4, 2022)

As the teachers felt an increasing commitment to each other in meetings in which our gracious space fostered growth in both relationships and their abilities to learn in public, they more systematically built their professional capacities as teachers. "The more you invest in your relationships with people, the more likely you are to have joyful learning" (LS, Reflective memo, May 19, 2023). "Personal connections translate into what we do in the classroom and affect professional interactions" (CLE meeting notes, May 19, 2023).

Teacher Experiences Transfer to Classrooms

As a result of our growth in positive relationships and trust in learning from and with each other, I organized non-evaluative observations and regular, consistent conversations; the teachers reported that they had little to no anxiety as there was no judgement levied on their personal practices and instructional choices; we let the data speak for itself and guide our

conversations. As the teachers experienced a new way of gathering, meeting, and looking at their practices, they began to craft joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELL students. Reflection and sharing were regular components of our CPR meetings, and after experiencing this, Leona incorporated these important elements in her teaching.

For example, after a post-observation coaching session, Leona, I shared my observation that the students held up their boards after think/write but only showed their thinking to the teacher. Leona adjusted her next lesson by seating the students in a circle formation in order to show their thinking to peers. This promoted peer-to-peer discussion and collaboration, shifting the cognitive load to the students and not the teacher: "Utilizing a circle formation…as opposed to rows… so students share their work with one another instead of just me…it seems more engaging for students and demonstrates more of their work/voice" (LS, Reflective memo, May 22, 2023).

Leona stated she wanted to "work on bordering…this makes me realize how helpful that context is" (LS, Post-observation conversation, October 17, 2022). She noted that she wanted to incorporate regular reflection and closing circle time to help alleviate stress when students shared how they struggled with a lesson; by hearing from classmates, other students would realize they were not the only ones, and might therefore be encouraged to persevere: "by asking them to reflect on it and sharing communally, definitely a lot of people thought the [problems]at the end were harder, and they were not the only ones who thought it was hard" (LS, Post-observation conversation, April 17, 2023). Teacher experiences led to planning and implementing student experiences.

As the teachers participated in specific learning experiences together, they planned and incorporated similar learning experiences for their students that included persevering in problem-

solving and engaging in rigorous productive struggle so that students could find a sense of satisfaction, purpose, and joy in their daily work. The teachers created safe environments for learning to happen; as they tried new strategies and made some inevitable missteps, they supported students to explore, discover, and participate in differentiated ways; and in so doing crafted experiences for joyful engagement and learning to occur. In discussing how the teachers built their capacity in understanding, selecting, and implementing joyful learning strategies, they became aware of how to create joyful experiences for Chinese ELLs.

Building Teacher Capacity to Enact Joyful Learning

Building teacher capacity in joyful CLRP strategies involved engaging in data-driven observations and conversations which, in turn, helped to develop a collegial level understanding and change in teacher practices that improved student access to content. During the PAR study, we read several articles, excerpts, and quotes at our CPR meetings about joyful learning and CLRP to engrain characteristics and to spark discussion. As the CPR members' understanding of joyful learning and CLRP grew, and their intersection became clearer, the teachers constructed a common definition of joyful CLRP learning: "engaging, empowering, rigorous, and accessible learning in a safe, supportive, welcoming, and inclusive community where all learners find a sense of belonging, acceptance and value" (CPR meeting notes, October 27, 2023).

Once the CPR participants constructed a common definition, they selected and implemented four focal joyful CLRP strategies based on TWPS to elevate Chinese ELL students' learning: wait/think time, write/draw, pair/rehearse, share/show the whole class. At times, these four strategies happened intentionally and sequentially, but at other times, any of these four strategies might be used individually as well. The language or linguistically responsive element was important to recognize and consider as we selected strategies to make the

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curriculum and content accessible to Chinese ELLs who did not yet understand English, the dominant language, but could understand the content. Giving students options and choices to show or share their work, other than raising their hand to speak in front of the class, was crucial. As they met and made decisions, teachers agreed that observations and data-based conversations about their classroom data were critical (Safir & Dugan, 2021; Tredway et al., 2019). As teachers enacted strategies with attention to student engagement, they realized that one important component of joy in the classroom was a result of enhanced student confidence to participate. As they established a safe and trusting environment for students, student confidence increased, participation increased, and, in turn, joyful learning increased in which students could explore, take risks, and try new things without fear of failure or ostracization. What most supported teachers in their quest to enact joyful learning was the consistency of observations and conversations between individual teachers and me. Then we used that data to support our conversations in CPR meetings. Teachers practiced learning in public with me and then with colleagues and created the conditions for learning in public to happen for their students.

Regular Observation and Conversations

As teachers built their knowledge in joyful CLRP and had consistent meetings with me in a non-evaluative and caring environment, they co-developed an observation tool, and I used the tool to observe classroom practices and have conversations. The observations and conversations in the context of gracious space and trusting relationships, coupled with the teachers renewed sense of belonging to a professional group, led to successful collaboration on the observation tool. Thus, teacher discovery around joyful learning and decisions about selecting effective strategies led to collegial levels of understanding, implementation, and creating opportunities for student access to content.

Teacher Discovery. Teachers continued to discover more about joyful CLRP learning and made individual discoveries about their teaching, gaining valuable input into adjusting the observation tool to meet their professional needs. During the September 2, 2023, CLE meeting, teachers decided on which strategies they wanted me to look for during observations. The strategies they discussed were positive statements, positive redirection, rigorous engagement, questioning level, wait time, student choice, and opportunities for peer collaboration. Collaboration time and opportunities for choice emerged as the top two choices (CLE notes, September 2, 2023). During a second CLE meeting with another school conducting research, administrators and other educational leaders observed in four classrooms using the tool. We modified the tool for easier use to include specific codes that included questioning, partner work, turn and talk (TT) or think pair share (TPS), proximity, redirection, and other (CLE notes, September 29, 2023; see Appendix E for tool).

As we progressed in each cycle, the teachers became more comfortable with observations and discussing the data from their lessons. As they analyzed the classroom data, the teachers could draw conclusions about their teaching and identify the specific areas in their work they wanted me to examine, such as level of questioning and student voice versus teacher talk. For example, one typical interchange included this conversation with Teacher RF:

R: I'm noticing a lot of yes/nos. Am I doing a lot of hand-holding for this lesson?

D: What do you mean?

R: I'm telling them too much stuff instead of exploring? (RF, post-observation

conversation, April 12, 2023).

This resulted in Remington planning to elevate his level of questioning to promote rigor and to elicit more student voice and exploration, and I continued to focus on this concern in subsequent

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classroom observations. Remington realized that he wanted to use different collaborative work groupings, more intentional planning to better deliver instructions, border the lesson, and to use strategies consistently. (RF, Reflective memo, March 15, 2023)

In another example, Leona grew in her capacity to understand joyful CLRP learning for Chinese ELLs, as evidenced by her comment that the observation tool should include opportunities for "individual and collective student engagement…teacher provides supports and scaffolds respectfully in ways that work for a wide variety of students/personalities" (LS, CPR notes, May 19, 2023). Leona elaborated by saying that she now focuses on "how I can offer choice within an assignment that will appeal to diverse students and validating students who want to work independently, i.e., making group work a choice sometimes" (LS, Reflective memo, May 22, 2023).

Terilyn commented on her levels of questioning, "I notice I ask mostly level one depth of knowledge questions" (TL, post-observation conversation, October 27, 2023) and subsequently started to ask higher order questions in her lessons to encourage student thinking. She allowed for more wait time in order for students to think and formulate how they wanted to share their thinking: "I am trying to give longer wait time…and providing challenging tasks and opportunities for kids to help one another" (TL, Post-observation conversation, April 12, 2023).

Additional teacher examples included wait time without teacher talk, alternative ways to demonstrate learning to peers that expanded on collaborative small groups and whole class circles, and student choice during independent work time in addition to collaborative group work. These specific requests occurred after teachers reviewed observation data and had coaching conversations with me in a low/no-anxiety and high trust environment after experiencing collegial learning through the CPR group experience.

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Teacher Experimentation. During every CPR and CLE meeting, we reviewed the research questions to see how our activities contributed to our collective understanding. In each meeting, we supported our understanding of the questions through reading, responding, connector activities, member checks on the collected data, and reflections, and we made progress Each time, we could respond to the questions more confidently and members were better able to articulate their responses. At first, we engaged in "an in-depth discussion of the research questions and our attempts to respond to them. We went from feeling unsure as a group to realizing that we did have a grasp on it" (LS, Reflective memo, March 15, 2023). Terilyn reflected on her growing understanding of joyful CLRP strategies: "As…an Asian American working with Chinese ELLs, …it's important to me to be a good role model for Asian students…I want to make different choices in my teaching strategies…I want to provide experiences that allow all learners to grow..." (TL, Reflective memo, March 15, 2023). These conversations led to decisions about changing their classroom practices.

We discussed culturally and linguistically responsive practices for teachers to use with students in the pre-production or early production stages (Krashen & Terrell, 1983); speaking slowly, clearly, and accurately prove vital during instruction. Remington looked at his classroom observation data with time stamps and realized he needed to be more intentional with enunciating and speaking more slowly in order for students to access his instruction: "Just recently, I've learned I can talk fast, so I have to slow down" (RF, Reflective memo, October 27, 2022).

As teachers discovered patterns in their teaching practice, they identified areas of needed growth and experimented with new strategies in their lesson design. As they experimented and took risks to incorporate new strategies, their teaching practices changed.

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Changes in Teacher Practice

After analyzing post-observation data, Remington realized he used too much teacher talk and that he spoke too quickly: "If I feel like I am in too much of a rush, I have less wait time" (RF, Post-observation conversation, October 5, 2022). As he became more cognizant of incorporating intentional wait time and speaking more slowly during his lessons, Remington continued to discover things about his teaching and used that knowledge to include level one questioning and provide alternative ways for students to demonstrate their thinking, such as displaying student work on the overhead projector, conducting a gallery walk, or having a partner revoice what they just heard their partner share.

Terilyn noticed from post-observation data that she called on the same students who raised their hands to participate and only requested a non-verbal response once. This prompted her to re-think her calling on strategies and incorporate more hand signals to allow students to demonstrate their understanding, such as using their fingers to indicate numbers or specific gestures to communicate their answers. She intentionally planned to incorporate more wait time into her lessons. She reported that at the end of the year and our research project, she recognized a change in student access; one of her ELL students was fully and confidently engaged in the math lessons as a regular participant, a complete reversal from his behavior at the start of the project.

Leona intentionally planned wait time and write/draw time into her lessons after we discussed and selected TWPS for implementation. Although she reported that she still struggled with wait time—her inclination was to fill the silence with teacher talk—she continued to plan for it. She incorporated write/draw time using mini white boards. At first, she would say, "Think, Write, Show!" and students would hold up their white boards to face the teacher. However, after

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one of our post observation conversations, she realized that only she could see their responses and there was no peer-to-peer interaction. In order to address this, she had the students sit in a closing circle at the end of the lesson, to show their responses to their peers. This was a small but significant shift in promoting student voice and served as an alternative to speaking in front of the class to demonstrate student thinking (LS, Post-observation conversation, April 10, 2023). Teachers began to realize that thinking time for ELL students should be extended to as much as 10 seconds, and therefore began to monitor themselves more closely to ensure that they were creating greater access for students.

Creating Opportunities for Student Access to Content

The teachers invested time and energy into creating lessons that promoted student access to content. They intentionally used strategies imparted from our district ELL office: Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) and English Language Development (ELD) strategies such as providing sentence frames, vocabulary, visuals, revoicing, hand and body signals, and proximity. Although teachers had known about these strategies for some time, they were able to apply them intentionally and regularly during the project, to greater effect. The heightened intentionality when using these known strategies promoted consistent practice. This was underscored by the teachers' requests for me to observe and have conversations on their lessons using the observation tool, as the tool included some of these strategies as possible codes to observe. Questioning, calling on, and student dialogue strategies and protocols contributed to student access to rigorous content. A new code and term, bordering— providing clear explanations during lesson transitions so that students can easily access lesson content (Lyman, 1992)—added to our understanding and implementation of joyful CLRP strategies. These codes for creating access to content showed up across PAR cycles (see Figures 14-16).
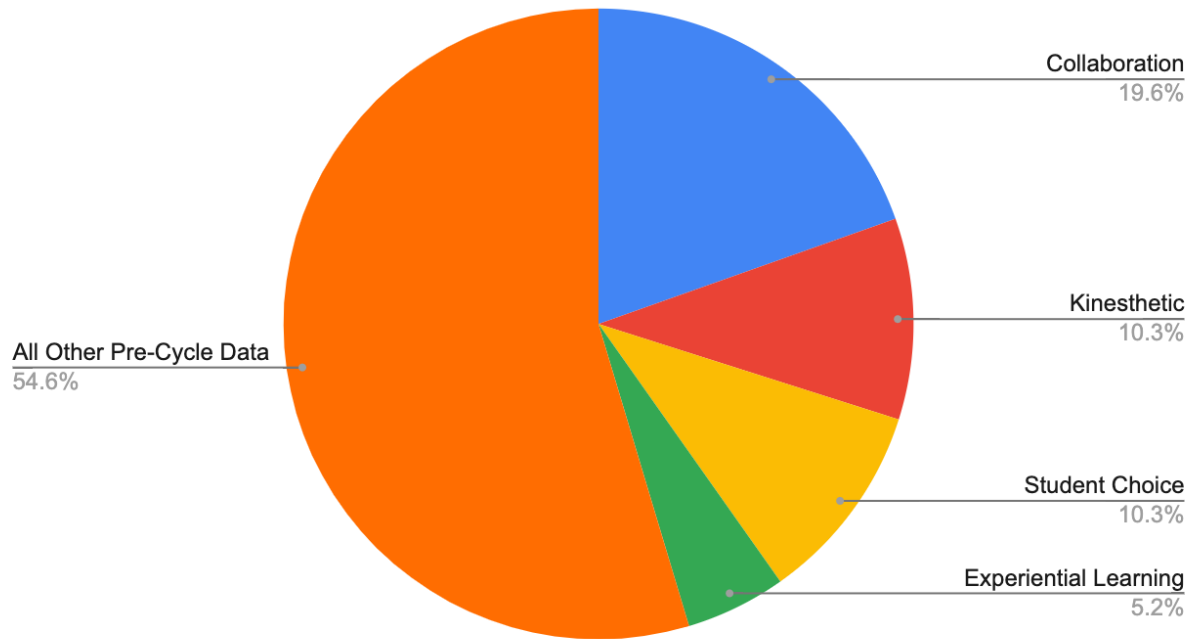
Figure 14. PAR Pre-Cycle: Teacher created student access to content.

Figure 15. PAR Cycle One: Teacher created student access to content.

PAR 2

Teacher Reinforcement
25.4%

Non Verbal
9.0%

Pushing Rigor
8.0%

Student Dialogue
7.0%

Change in teacher practice
21.1%

All Other PAR 2 Data
29.5%
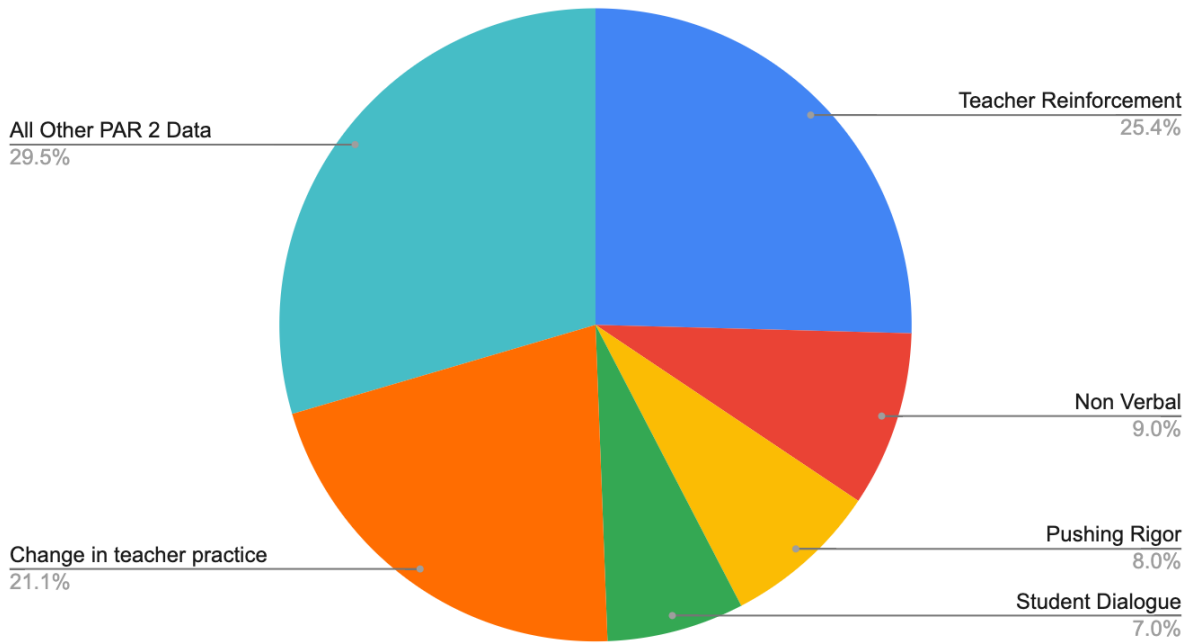
Figure 16. PAR Cycle Two: Teacher created student access to content.

The PAR study solidified the current research on the importance of cultivating relationships and creating gracious spaces and supported how both contribute to a larger sense of belonging. Furthermore, the study confirmed that when teachers experience these tenets in a professional learning setting as adult learners, they can transfer their learning to their classrooms and enhance the student learning experience. Studying and building a collective understanding of CLRP joyful learning resulted in teachers selecting and implementing specific strategies to amplify learning experiences for Chinese ELL students in math classrooms. While co-creating and adjusting the observation tool during the PAR project, observation data and post-observation conversations conducted in a safe and trusting environment contributed to improving and changing teacher practice. The findings from the three cycles in the project support that teacher experiential learning transfers to teacher practice, and clear definitions of joyful CLRP learning enable teachers to select and implement strategies that promote student access to learning.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the PAR Cycle Two activities, data analysis with evidence, and determined the overall findings with evidence. First, teacher experience leads to improved ability to craft student experiences, and parallel learning stems from leader to teacher to student as healthy practices are established. With regular attention and supervision from the school leader through carefully constructed gracious space, cultivated relationships, and collegial learning together in the CPR group, three teachers were able to change and improve their teaching practices to amplify joyful learning for Chinese ELL students, the school's largest focal population. Secondly, teachers grew in their capacity to understand, articulate, select, and ultimately implement joyful CLRP strategies. As a result of increased teacher capacity and

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relational trust, teachers co-created and adjusted an observation tool for the administrator and CPR group to use in order to elevate joyful learning in Chinese ELL students.

I have attempted to do this work for nearly five years with my entire staff, studying best ELD strategies and selecting one or two to focus on each year; however, I had never been able to improve teacher practice in the ways I observed during the PAR project. My efforts to enact improved practices were realized through the PAR process. In sum, the study provided a tangible way to move teacher practice forward by first providing parallel learning experiences for teachers, then later encouraging teachers to replicate those experiences in some capacity for students. By creating a safe and welcoming environment for students to learn and make mistakes, we established a climate where both adult and student learners took more risks and tried new things without fear of failure. Learners felt a sense of belonging and acceptance that stemmed from having caring relationships with others. Additionally, teachers created a common definition and understanding of joyful CLRP in order to intentionally create opportunities for student access to content. They selected at least four focal strategies to elevate opportunities for Chinese ELLs to experience joy and satisfaction in the math classroom. Teachers opened their classrooms to regular observation and feedback from their administrator, and thereby co-created and adjusted an observation tool throughout the course of the project in order to improve teacher practice.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.
                                                    –William Butler Yeats

The knowledge I gained during this study sparked a fire that improved teacher practice, and the embers burned bright and steady as we ignited joyful learning in the classrooms. In the PAR study, I facilitated a team of three teachers in a Co-Practitioner researcher (CPR) group to amplify joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELL students in math classes. As a result of the project and study, comprising three participatory action research (PAR) cycles, teachers deepened their understanding of CLRP and developed the abilities to articulate, select, and implement culturally and linguistically responsive (CLRP) strategies that imparted joyful learning for Chinese ELL students. As a result of the teachers' experiences as learners, they created joyful learning environments and conditions and co-designed an observation tool to improve their practices as teachers.

The theory of action (TOA) for the project and study was: *If teachers build capacity in articulating joyful learning for Chinese ELLs, then they can implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students in math classes*. I experienced joy in the process as teachers not only gained skill in articulating and implementing joyful CLRP learning strategies, but cultivated a solid network of trusting relationships in a community of practice and experienced a gracious space for adult learning. These results were largely due to the teachers utilizing personal experiences and CLE axioms and protocols to create a collective sense of belonging and conditions for teacher learning that they transferred to classroom practices.

The context of the PAR study was an elementary school in the urban district of San Francisco where 33.9% of students were English language learners and 37.5% were Asian or

Asian/Pacific Islander. The Focus of Practice (FoP) centered on building teacher capacity in understanding, selecting, and implementing salient CRLP strategies to increase joyful learning for Chinese ELLs, the largest focal population at the school, mirroring the demographics of the district. The process of increasing voice and amplifying the experiences of Chinese English Language Learners in math represented an equity issue; although Chinese ELLs are a large focal group at our school and in our district, we observe an opportunity gap for educational success (Gorski, 2013) for the students, both academically and social-emotionally. The PAR study took into consideration culturally and linguistically diverse students and how they learned differently from their American-born counterparts while learning the dominant language (English) and academic content in English at school. During the PAR project, teachers participated in understanding and incorporating joyful CLRP learning strategies for Chinese ELLs to disrupt inequities for Chinese ELLs.

The teachers improved their understanding of CLRP and considered and validated Chinese culture and student identity; and, in so doing, improved the students' experience of belonging, resulting in joyful learning. As the CPR group members cultivated relationships and experienced conditions for gracious space within the CPR meetings, they re-created and transferred their learning into classrooms. I, as a Chinese American female principal, facilitated the learning of three CPR members, one White female second grade teacher, one Chinese American female second grade teacher, and one Chinese ELL male 5th grade teacher. We shared our diverse perspectives related to our cultural identities and experiences as we learned from each other and worked collaboratively to seek answers to the overarching research question: How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs? I focused the data collection and analysis on these sub-questions:

1. To what extent do teachers articulate the characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?

2. What factors of joyful learning do teachers use to co-design an observation tool for joyful learning of Chinese ELL students?

3. To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?

4. How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth?

We used the improvement science processes over the course of 18 months, utilizing three iterative Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles of inquiry in which we scrutinized the evidence that informed the outcomes of the project (Bryk et al., 2015). During the cycles of inquiry, we read literature, collected CLE artifacts, gathered for CPR meetings, held community learning exchanges, conducted classroom observations, and engaged in post-observation conversations. The study yielded fruitful learning for adults as they experienced gracious space and learned about joyful learning strategies, Chinese culture and student learning, and CLRP. In addition, the study provided joyful learning environments and experiences for the teachers, who then transferred their learning to classrooms to support Chinese ELL students. As ELL students experienced a sense of belonging, had more choices in their learning, and had sufficient think time to process information, they participated more equitably in classrooms. Although the focus of the project was the teacher experience, the student participation was also notable to me as an experienced principal and observer of instruction (see Table 9 for a list of activities). The data from three cycles of inquiry substantiate the PAR findings:

Table 9

Key Activities: Three PAR Cycles of Inquiry

Activities	PAR Pre-Cycle Spring 2021 (Dec 2021-Apr. 2022)	PAR Cycle One Fall 2022 (September 2022- Jan. 2023)	PAR Cycle Two Spring 2022 (February -April 2023)
Meeting with CPR members (n=11)	*******	***	**
Community Learning Exchange (n=4)	*	**	*
Classroom Observations-Formal (n=24)		*********	***************
Coaching Conversations with CPR members (n=12)		***	*********

1. Teachers who engage in a set of experiences and practices transfer teacher learning to classroom instruction.

2. As teachers built a common definition of joyful learning and chose CLRP strategies for Chinese ELLs, they intentionally implemented strategies intended to foster student access, rigor, and student independence as learners.

In this final chapter, I discuss the findings from the research, implications for current and future practice, policy and research, and the limitations of this study. In addition, I discuss my growth and development as a leader, which is a response to the last research question. In discussing the findings, I link the findings to extant literature, share a framework based on the findings, and discuss the findings in relation to the research questions.

Discussion

Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn.
–Benjamin Franklin

The available literature fortifies the findings and supports how adults learn and implement best practices. Teachers engaged in experiences and transferred learning to classrooms; as they built a common definition of joyful learning, they implemented CLRP strategies for Chinese ELL students. After discussing how the findings align with the literature, I share a framework for amplifying joyful learning in Chinese ELLs, which other principals and teachers may find useful.

Teacher Learning Precedes Student Learning

In this PAR study, I sought to spark joyful learning in math classes for Chinese English Language Learners at our elementary school. As indicated in the introduction, it has been my mission for many years to shift teacher practices. My ability to achieve that goal was hampered by the lack of teacher experiences. Teachers need to participate in a learning environment that is

parallel to the learning environment we want them to create for students; absent that experience

their practices did not change (Machado, 2021). Once the teachers participated in the community

learning exchange processes, they shifted their classroom practices. Their experiential learning

followed the tenets of Dewey (1938)—interaction and reciprocity—and the basics of

constructivist learning from Vygotsky (1978), in which teachers engage in dialogue to support

learning. The critical part of this finding is that teachers must experience joyful learning in their

professional learning if they are to transfer that learning to classroom instruction.

I experienced and facilitated a dynamic and powerful experience for the CPR group by

creating a safe and gracious space for teacher learning and paying keen attention to facilitation of

gatherings through the guidance of CLE axioms. As a result, we had fertile ground for adult

learning that allowed teachers to envision how to create the same type of spaces in their

classrooms; as stated by Drago-Severson (2012), we must create holding spaces for adult

learning so they in turn do so for students. Being a part of a community of practice in which we

co-learned and improved together was instrumental for all of us involved: the leader, the

teachers, and ultimately the students. As teachers participated in shared cognition, they increased

their knowledge and skill for creating similar spaces for students (Lave, 1996).

As Kemmis et al. (2013) remind us, "…One of the most important things that happens in

critical participatory action research is simply that participants get together and talk about their

work and lives" (p. 33). Making the time and space to reflect on our practices felt like a luxury

but proved a necessity in our learning as adults. We spend our time planning for student learning,

but too often we do not devote adequate time and attention to our own learning (Drago-Severson,

2009). First, I reflected on my learning experiences in the doctoral program and then transferred

that learning directly into my role as lead researcher and facilitator of the CPR group. Teachers,

in turn, transferred what they learned and experienced into their classrooms to help foster student learning.

I first experienced and learned about gracious space and the guiding principles of the CLE axioms in my doctoral program through community learning exchanges (in-person and virtual), reading articles, studying, and discussing issues and theories with other doctoral candidates. I made sense of my learning in a variety of ways with art, reflective writing, iMovie presentations, Flipgrid videos, and other techniques to demonstrate my learning. I became better equipped, having had these experiences, to create a safe and gracious space for the CPR group and to facilitate a learning environment in which we welcomed and encouraged discussion and experimentation. As the teachers experienced how to create conditions that promoted joyful learning, they transferred this learning into creating environments conducive for Chinese ELLs to learn. First, relying on the CLE axioms was a cornerstone for our work; secondly, creating a gracious space supported teachers; and, finally, cultivating relational trust in which teachers felt renewal and a sense of belonging was a necessary condition for change.

CLE Axioms Light the Way

The use of the CLE axioms shaped our PAR project and study; in particular, we learned collectively through dialogue, forms of engagement such as art and music, meaning-making, reflection, and actions that ultimately led to improvement and liberation (Guajardo et al., 2016). According to social constructivist theorists, learning happens in a social context (Bruner, 1961; Vygotsky, 1978). The CLE axiom—the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns—encouraged me in my role as facilitator and the CPR members in their roles as teachers to explore answers and find our voices in articulating ideas and solutions. We transferred our experiences to classroom practices that we intended to foster student

exploration and voice. The axiom, crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process, guided us toward culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogical choices and an understanding of cultural nuances among our CPR group and our students. We used that experience to understand CLRP and cultural and linguistic factors that shaped our students' way of thinking and learning as well as the perspectives of their families.

Through conversations and by sharing discoveries, we leaned into the CLE axiom—conversations are critical and a central pedagogical practice. By blending our private, or lifeworlds, and our public spaces, or systems world (Kemmis et al., 2013; Sergiovanni, 2000), we activated our ability to learn in public to effect change. The conversations and sharing fortified relationships and learning in front of others in the classroom as well. Because the CLE axioms focus on creating conditions for gracious space and cultivating relationships, the teachers were intentional about creating joyful learning environments and cultivating relationships with and among students.

Gracious Space

As I became more familiar with CLE axioms through research, study, and experiences, I learned to incorporate the tenets of gracious space using the CLE axioms as a guide for engagement (Guajardo, 2016; Hughes & Grace, 2010). The methods I used to facilitate meetings contrasted with typical district and site professional development and staff meetings. I carefully and intentionally considered the principles of adult learning, and therefore crafted agendas in which I incorporated art integration to spark creativity and dissipate stress. Lowering the affective filter and reducing stress through exploration and artistic creation increases attention and concentration, which in turn creates mental space for attentive listening and alertness to participant input and feedback (Martin et al., 2018). The neuroscience of the brain supports

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assertions that we can achieve high levels of cognition when the affective stress filter in the amygdala sends signals to the brain that the environment is safe (Hammond, 2015; Willis, 2007). As teachers experienced a lowered affective filter, they were able to consider how their students experienced learning; they learned that joy in the classroom is related to pacing and sufficient time for processing. Remington reflected:

> Sometimes ELs need more time to process their thoughts, or they might be reading the room, so they might not speak right away. Based on how I use my processing time, it helped me to understand how students could be using theirs… How can I balance out my teaching practices to engage everyone? (RF, Reflective memo, March 15, 2023)

As a result, teachers incorporated strategies to lower stress for Chinese ELLs; the specific strategies included longer wait/think time, alternatives to speaking to demonstrate learning, affirming mistakes as part of learning, and reinforcing effort and perseverance in working towards solutions (Boaler, 2016; Dweck, 2019; Lyman et al., 2023).

As I created conditions for a gracious space in our adult meetings, I heeded the definition for gracious space-- a spirit and a setting where we invite the 'stranger' and learn in public (Hughes & Grace, 2010). I incorporated this into my practice while facilitating CLE gatherings, meeting with the CPR group, and in one-on-one conversations. I nurtured a reduced-stress environment, encouraged exploration and curiosity, welcomed diverse perspectives, and fostered learning with and from each other, publicly, without fear of failure. Operationalizing what Dweck (2019) calls a growth mindset encouraged participants to persist when they were learning something new, and not give up or be discouraged when not arriving at the "right" answer. When these factors are applied, students are more likely to persevere, show effort, and engage in productive struggle. These attributes align with the research on Chinese culture and ways of

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thinking and learning in which diligent effort was valued over innate gifts to learn, improve, and achieve mastery (Chen & Uttal, 1988). Applied to learning, the attributes of a growth mindset create opportunities for the brain to change and grow, as "mistakes" cause the brain to physically change and re-route neurons for learning pathways (Boaler, 2016). I encouraged risk-taking in the CPR group and replaced fear of failure with permission to experiment and seek adventure, and that experience motivated teachers to encourage risk-taking, exploration, innovation, and consistent effort in the classroom.

The Importance of Relational Trust

As we consistently incorporated the CLE axioms and fostered gracious space in our CPR meetings and in all our interactions, the CPR group cultivated a community of practice (CoP) in which we invested in relationships as we shared a passion for promoting joyful learning and choosing strategies of practice for our Chinese ELL students (Wenger & Wenger-Traynor, 2015). As we cultivated relationships and had a gracious space to nurture professional learning, we experienced new understanding of how to create safe and joyful learning environments in classrooms by creating a strong sense of belonging. As we developed relationships and participated in the CPR group, we cultivated relational trust in ways that were useful to us and then to the entire faculty. Relational trust is an essential resource for school improvement, meaning that it is a resource that we must co-create so that we can engage together (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Grubb, 2009; Strean, 2012). Two key results of relational trust are a collaborative ethic of care in which we trust each other to foster equitable opportunities for students and authenticity in which we take responsibility for our actions to create those opportunities for students (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Thus, we focused on how our sense of belonging in the CPR group transferred to classrooms and students.

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Sense of belonging is an integral human need (Maslow, 1943), and a sense of belonging for students is critical in light of the fact that students spend many hours of their day in school (Goodenow, 1993). Teachers spend even more time at school and benefit from a solid sense of belonging in the workplace. Fostering positive interpersonal relationships between and among students and teachers and among student peers contributed to *feeling known* and fostered a healthy sense of belonging in school (Bouchard & Berg, 2017).

As the teachers experienced the strengthening of collegial relationships and their sense of belonging in the CPR, they also strengthened their convictions about the importance of relationships in the classroom. Adults need many experiences and a safe place to take risks, learn, and construct meaning-making (Bruner, 1961; Dewey, 1929; Knowles, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978). The CPR helped us to shift from relying on outside experts for creating solutions to looking inward at the growing expertise within our CPR (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In turn, the teachers encouraged students to become experts in the classroom, persevering at solving problems and sharing the cognitive load instead of the teachers. As the CPR worked in a small collaborative group, members observed the importance of collaboration and, consequently, they designed lessons with opportunities for student partner work and table groups as well as individual work.

In addition to fostering collegial relationships and relational trust within the CPR, I provided each teacher with consistent attention through regular observation and conversations. As educators, we often put the needs of students above all else, but we must recognize that adults thrive under consistent and thoughtful care (Bolman & Deal, 2009). As their leader, I appreciated that by creating a sense of belonging and holding high expectations, I in effect gave them permission to take risks with new strategies: "Managers' assumptions about people tend to

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become self-fulfilling prophecies…the essential task of management is to arrange conditions so that people can achieve their own goals best by directing efforts toward organizational rewards" (McGregor, 1960, p. 6). In this case, the reward was amplifying joyful learning for Chinese ELL students. Our purpose as a CPR group was to learn together to try and understand, and then improve. This required me, as the school leader, to consistently provide effective supervision, identify areas for improvement, and invest in "the everyday thing we do to get better at our practice; professional learning is not a one-time event but every day" (Field notes, July 1, 2023). In the coaching process, teachers reflected and received regular feedback. In turn, having experienced the importance of reflection and conversations, teachers included intentional opportunities in their lessons for student check-ins, group reflection, and individual and collective feedback.

We discovered that as we experienced transformations through our learning, we could transfer not only informational facts and knowledge to our students but could also create a sense of belonging and value for each student. "Education must teach, reach, and vibrate the whole person rather than merely transfer knowledge" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 177). The teachers embarked on teaching the Chinese ELL students and saw the students' differences as assets, welcoming and seeing each student as whole. The teachers strove to reach the whole person by amplifying joyful learning instead of merely delivering content knowledge.

Building Teacher Capacity Opens New Doors for Student Access

Building teacher capacity in CLRP joyful learning was pivotal in opening new doors for teachers to improve their instructional practices and routines. The teachers used their newfound understanding about joyful learning to select and implement ELL strategies and develop lessons for the students. "Adulthood can be a rich time of growth and learning" (Drago-Severson &

Blum-DeStefano, 2014, p. 22). The more the teachers grew in their understanding of joyful

learning, neuroscience, CLRP, and Chinese culture, the better they could plan, select, and

implement appropriate strategies; they had the will to persevere with the strategies in order to see

a change in the joyful learning environments and opportunities they created for students.

Joyful Learning as Learning Theory

This project confirmed what we read about joyful learning as a guidepost and eventually

informed our practices. Play, social interaction, experiential learning, discovery, risk-taking, and

problem-solving were crucial to lifting barriers to learning (Anggoro et al., 2017; Bruner, 1961;

Conklin, 2014; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Sanseter, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). To combat barriers to

learning and enact joyful learning experiences in the classroom, teachers embedded choices,

student voice, collaboration and partner work, and hands-on learning; and they communicated

that mistakes were a part of the learning process. Joyful learning is the result of creating the

optimal learning experience so that students can feel a sense of *flow*. In a flow experience,

learners are intrinsically motivated, lose self-consciousness, and are fully immersed and engaged

in a task that pushes them to think and act (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In this PAR project, we

discussed and acknowledged the need for access to rigorous instruction for all students. I had

observed in past ELL classrooms that teachers often dismissed ELL students, assuming them to

be incapable of accessing rich content. Teachers had lower academic expectations for ELL

students and had given ELL students less rigorous tasks; for instance, ELL students were given

simple worksheets while the rest of the class engaged in more dynamic content. In the PAR

project, teachers disrupted these inequities and focused on selecting and implementing joyful

engagement strategies for ELLs and all students, so that all students gained equitable access to

content. All students have a right to equitable, rigorous, educational opportunities with appropriate challenge and embedded support (Gorski, 2013; Heywood, 2005).

According to neuroscience, the brain is hard-wired to allow rigorous tasks to pass through the reticular activating system (RAS) in the brain more readily than dull and tedious tasks (Hammond, 2015; Khon, 2004; Tekkumru-Kisa 2020; Willis, 2007). Teachers designed lessons that considered students' cultural, linguistic, and learning style diversity as assets and worked hard to develop lessons for all students to access and engage in rigorous activity. We concentrated on some basics of learning in general and adapted them to ELL students. For example, we understood that wait/think time was a critical strategy; however, we recognized that turn and talk without any think time did not result in student dialogue. Therefore, we reviewed the basics of think-pair-share (Lyman et al., 2023) and added additional think time or think and write time so that ELL learners could better process language and develop responses.

Ultimately, we discovered that joyful learning resulted from experiences, experimentation, and risk-taking while engaging in rigorous tasks. Participating and engaging in rigorous tasks kept adult and student interest and created a profound sense of satisfaction and flow in the work. Anxiety filters and fear of failure were lifted as we incorporated wait time to process thinking in a meaningful way.

Joyful Learning as a Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practice

We studied and considered how Chinese ELL students process learning and adjusted our teaching practices. Chinese cultural values assert that success is the result of hard work, effort, productive struggle, and constructivist learning, rather than innate ability. Teachers paired these values with creating environments for student access to rigorous instruction (Dweck, 2019; Gay, 2000; Huang & Rinaldo, 2007; Wu, 2008). As one teacher wrote in a reflective memo,

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I think I am more aware of and better understand similarities among our Chinese EL

students and how culture influences them…when I plan assignments, I think more about

how I can offer choices that will provide most students with a sense of joy and

accomplishment. (LS, Reflective memo, May 22, 2023)

In Huang's (2005) study, 66.8% of Chinese ELL students credited stress and anxiety to

overuse of questions and discussion. Without understanding the constructivist learning theory

and the cultural nuances that affect Chinese students, "this can lead to mismatched pedagogy,

teaching styles, and evaluative beliefs of White educators in American schools who are

attempting to educate Chinese students" (Thakkar, 2011, p. 52). The PAR study encouraged the

CPR members to understand how Chinese students learn in order to design effective learning

environments. Teachers were supported in their use of appropriate teaching strategies for their

Chinese ELL students, most notably the use of wait time and choice to demonstrate students'

thinking through drawing, use of manipulatives, writing, and partner collaboration and support.

Loh (2017) expressed the importance of cultural influences on students' learning styles:

Chinese and/or Asian students are not passive learners in class, but should be considered

reflective learners, still mentally alert and attentive, actively listening, and rehearsing and

processing new information (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Loh, 2017). Remington, as an ELL,

confirmed this assertion and helped our CPR group consider how to interact with each other and

ELL students:

How I process information is quiet and reflective but does not indicate I am

disengaged. Many times, I have been misunderstood because of that. If we are to be more

responsive in our teaching, we should spend time to learn more about how each

individual responds in their learning to better work with them. (RF, Reflective memo, November 30, 2022)

As teachers grew their capacity in understanding and articulating CLRP, they selected and implemented teaching strategies to enact joyful learning with a CLRP lens. They validated and affirmed home culture and language and saw Chinese ELL students as assets in the classroom with important ideas and abilities and embraced them as important members of the classroom community (Gay, 2000; Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Chinese ELLs and other historically marginalized students were acknowledged and seen as valuable contributors to the classroom communities: "If teachers are aware that students come from different backgrounds and upbringing, then they can use different strategies to reach those kids who may fall through the cracks or lose interest in learning" (TL, CPR notes, May 19, 2023).

Through collaborative discussions regarding research articles on the topics of joyful learning, Chinese culture and learning preferences, and CLRP, we built a new definition of CLRP joyful learning: "engaging, empowering, rigorous, and accessible learning in a safe, supportive, welcoming, and inclusive community where all learners find a sense of belonging, acceptance and value" (CPR meeting notes, October 27, 2023). Taking the time to seek answers to the PAR study questions helped to build teacher capacity in understanding, and that understanding therefore led to selecting and implementing learning strategies to promote joyful learning strategies.

As teachers became more confident in their learning, they began to take more risks, contrary to the typical *grammar of schooling* in which teachers enact the same things that their institutions have told them to do, instead of taking risks (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). When teacher capacity expanded and solidified, the teachers better understood how to reach students with a

CLRP lens. "Linguistic identity is a crucial aspect of who we are…our language is a representation of our heritage, including family, community, and history" (Hollie, 2012). Here, we relied on a critical CLE axiom—crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process—to guide us in shifting perspectives through dialogic interaction, experimentation, and collaboration in seeking to learn and understand more about different cultural ways of learning and knowing as it pertained to Chinese ELL students (Guajardo et al., 2016). Leona shared earlier in the PAR study that, at first, she was nervous about differentiating centered on ethnic identity, especially since she observed so many differences among Chinese ELL students. However, by the end of the study, she felt more confident and had learned strategies to push rigor, hold high expectations, and value cultural identity.

> Joyful learning is about productive struggle, growth, and students feeling valued. It means that students have different ways to demonstrate their learning and that correct grammar and enthusiastic conversation is not the main determinant of whether or not a child has successfully learned something. It means that their home knowledge (including the methods of solving problems they learn at home) are valued and honored instead of invalidated. Students feel like they are part of the community, that there is a space for them and that they are welcomed to bring their full selves into the classroom. Students are given the opportunity to make choices and have a voice. Students are honored as partners in their learning who bring information, experience, and prior knowledge to the table instead of being viewed as sponges. (LS, CPR notes, May 19, 2023)

By giving keen attention to building teacher capacity and providing relevant articles, discussions, and activities, teachers addressed the opportunity gap between Chinese ELL students and their native English-speaking peers (Carter & Welner, 2013; Gorski, 2013; Kendi,

2020; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). We had dedicated the time to plan, implement, study our data and supporting articles, and adjust our practices, and from engaging in these iterative cycles, we developed the momentum and conviction to sustain and continue this work.

Influential Theoretical Concepts and a New Framework

> *You cannot solve our problems with the same consciousness that created it.*
> *You must learn to see the world anew.*
>
> –Albert Einstein

Three theoretical concepts played an important role as I conducted my research: psychological, sociological, and political. Each of these theoretical frames addressed the view of Chinese ELLs as marginalized members of the community and society. In the PAR project and study, the CPR members and I disrupted the common view and recognized the urgent equity issue that faced Chinese ELLs. We worked to reverse these alienating attitudes to create an inclusive and joyful environment for all.

In the psychological framework, Chinese ELLs were not seen or wanted in this country and society and, as a result, their growth and learning in classrooms were often stunted (Barton & Tan, 2020; Hammond, 2015; Steele, 2010). The teachers in the PAR study worked to create a learning environment in which cultural and linguistic differences were viewed as an asset. Instead of creating dependent learners, teachers sought ways to create equitable student access to rigorous content and concurrently support independent thinking and problem-solving.

Creating a sense of belonging for every student was imperative to them experiencing a safe, engaging, and joyful learning environment. "Being listened to and having our thoughts valued is important at all ages. Moreover, the skill of valuing other people's thoughts is highly beneficial in life" (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011, p. 23). Teachers in the project communicated that

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they recognized, wanted, and saw students for who they were and viewed their differences as assets to the classroom community. Chinese ELLs had important things to say and important thoughts to share and felt safe to do so when teachers intentionally set up safe conditions for learning and participating.

In the sociological framework, Chinese ELLs are sometimes mislabeled as passive learners because they are sometimes reticent speakers. In the PAR study, teachers addressed this by giving students longer think time, alternatives to speaking to demonstrate their thinking, and thoughtful pairing/partnerships to allow helpful peer collaboration. Teachers recognized that some students did not talk initially because they were processing language and making meaning as reflective learners. Teachers started to intentionally incorporate more think or wait time and group reflection times in their lessons to affirm this need. In addition, teachers sought to understand home cultures and perspectives and saw these as assets. Building relationships and valuing all students as contributors proved vital to creating a healthy sense of belonging and allowing for students to take risks in a safe and joyful learning environment. As valuable members of the community, Chinese ELLs did not have to abandon their cultural and linguistic identities in order to meld to the dominant culture as they were welcomed to come as their whole selves (Kendi, 2019; Wilkerson, 2020).

The political climate during the time of the PAR study further informed out work. The COVID19 pandemic had begun, and many political leaders and community members were calling COVID19 the "China Flu," based on where it was first identified. Chinese ELLs were facing increased racism, a rise in anti-Asian hate crimes, and prejudice, and students and their families were shunned in public and faced racist comments and attitudes. Many were afraid to come to schools across the district during that time for fear of both overt hostilities and more

subtle disparagements. Historically, inequities had persisted from the first perceptions and treatment of Asian immigrant students in the 1880s to current inequities in the 2020s. Examples include The Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882, Tape vs. Hurley in 1885, Lau vs. Nichols in 1974, Prop 227 in 1998, and the continued lack of Asian American history in schools. We did not allow either history or current conditions to deter us in our work. Our PAR project increased teacher capacity and understanding in joyful learning and CLRP in order to create equitable access to rigorous instruction for Chinese ELLs, in spite of limited research and district resources. We did not let limitations derail our passion and desire to seek out better conditions for our Chinese ELL students.

In examining the findings from the PAR study, I regarded the outcome of the work differently from when I first started the project. I had initially thought the quest for joyful learning could be explained with a series of building blocks, but the new framework that resulted from our study revealed the process to be cyclical. The framework now allows for more iterations of teachers and communities of practice to continue amplifying joyful learning for Chinese ELL students. In addition, I discovered that, by learning as a leader, I could transfer that learning into facilitating the CPR group. In turn, the learning transferred to teachers as they interacted with and set up the learning environment for students. During the coaching cycles, the teachers and I learned collaboratively.

Our focus was to building teacher capacity in understanding and articulating joyful learning for Chinese ELLs so that teachers could select and implement relevant strategies. The project not only achieved amplifying joyful learning for teachers, but it also began to amplify joyful learning for the students. The teachers reported looking forward to our times together; their growing satisfaction in their work as professionals stemmed from discussing their learning

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in public and having the confidence to employ new practices to spur joyful learning in the classrooms. Joyful learning did not happen spontaneously; we worked methodically to cultivate the optimal conditions for meaningful learning to happen through relationships, gracious space, and ultimately, a sense of belonging that fostered risk taking, curiosity, creativity, and playful exploration. The framework depicts the capacity building as cyclical, in which the leader and teachers learn and grow in iterative cycles of inquiry. Building teacher capacity resulted in joyful learning for all as teachers selected and implemented consistent strategies during the study (see Figure 17).

Review of Research Questions

The overarching question of the focus of practice during this study was: *How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs?* The PAR group studied these sub-questions:

1. To what extent do teachers articulate characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?

2. What factors of joyful learning do teachers use to co-design an observation tool for joyful learning of Chinese ELL students?

3. To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?

4. How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth? Over the span of eighteen months, the CPR group met regularly to examine these questions, and we built a close-knit community within our small group.

As we studied the attributes of joyful learning and CLRP, and the intersectionality of these attributes, the described and recognized the ingredients that contributed to amplifying joyful

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Framework for Amplifying Joyful Learning

Leadership growth spurs continuous learning
As I've grown as an equity leader, I commit to sustaining this work with future cycles of improvement and future groups of teachers

Joyful Learning

Teacher learning precedes student learning
As teachers saw and experienced a gracious space for learning and deeper relationships, they were able to transfer this learning to joyful student experiences

Building teacher capacity opens door to student access
As teachers learned about joyful learning, Chinese ELL learning styles, and CLRP, they selected and implemented ELL strategies that promoted student access and rigor

Figure 17. A framework for amplifying joyful learning in classrooms.

learning experiences for Chinese ELL students. Every time the CPR met, we reflected on the research questions, what we learned from our reading and discussion, and what we learned from working with the students.

After completing the Pre-Cycle and into PAR Cycle One, the teachers articulated the attributes of CLRP joyful learning and comfortably acknowledged and welcomed the whole child as someone with prior knowledge and cultural and linguistic assets. We co-created a sense of belonging in our CPR group that teachers transferred to their classrooms. We held each other accountable in the CPR meetings to holding high expectations and providing access and rigorous learning for all students. We were committed to fostering independence and discovery for students because we experienced our own learning. We had a renewed sense of satisfaction amid continuous effort and hard work, and we wanted students to feel satisfied in their learning.

The teachers co-designed and contributed to the observation tool used in the classroom observations by giving input during post-observation conversations and in subsequent CPR meetings. We looked for changes in teacher practice (more wait/think time, choices, etc.) that established the conditions for student engagement and access to content and understanding. We adjusted the observation tool as teachers identified a goal: they chose to work on elevating student voice through increased wait time and stepping back from carrying the cognitive load (and carrying the conversation) in any given lesson. We examined how teacher practices set up the conditions for student access and rigor. Students seemed to exhibit increased confidence; we observed a sense of satisfaction as students made choices about how to participate and who to talk to, had time to rehearse responses with partners before speaking in the full class, and generally seemed happier in the class. Although these factors of increased confidence are elusive and thus hard to codify, we are continuing to work on an observation tool that will allow us to

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collect observable evidence, calibrate our understandings of the evidence as we name those qualities, and use the tool for peer observations.

After establishing a gracious space for learning and building teacher capacity by understanding and articulating CLRP joyful learning, teachers solidified a common definition of CLRP joyful learning, combining some of the characteristics they learned from their reading with their personal experiences. They felt the power of "engaging, empowering, rigorous, and accessible learning in a safe, supportive, welcoming, and inclusive community where all learners find a sense of belonging, acceptance and value" (CPR meeting notes, October 27, 2023) and wanted to provide that for students. The teachers, spurred by the common definition of CLRP joyful learning and the discussions during the CPR meetings, homed in on the selection and implementation of two ELL strategies: offering choice and collaborative work during PAR Cycle One. However, as their understanding deepened and we continued to discuss the data from their classroom observations, they selected and implemented four ELL strategies that recurred in all of their classrooms: think/wait time, write/draw, pair, and share (verbally or in alternative ways). Teachers selected strategies based on their prior knowledge and resources in PAR Cycle One and added to those strategies in PAR Cycle Two as they noticed the importance of wait time. They used the strategies consistently and discussed the impact to better leverage some of the strategies they already knew. I will address research question number four in the leadership section.

Implications

In this section, I describe the implications of the PAR project and study, including the revised framework of how a joyful equity leader and teachers affect one another and spur each other's learning. First, we are all in a constant flux of learning, and the conditions a joyful leader creates with a collaborative group of teachers permeates throughout the community. Teacher

learning precedes student learning. In the CPR group, the adults were the students as we learned together. I first had to ground myself in the CLE practices of establishing a gracious space, incorporating art and storytelling, and fostering a growth mindset and sense of belonging and community in order to lead this work. This filtered into how I led the CPR group while we studied important issues at hand. Subsequently, learning transferred to students' CLRP joyful learning experiences in the classroom. Without the adult learning, the student learning could not happen. As students learned, teachers continued to observe and reflect on how to improve their teaching practices.

Secondly, building teacher capacity opened doors for student access. As teachers gained a better understanding of CLRP joyful learning for Chinese ELLs, they were able to select strategies that promoted student access to rigorous curriculum, productive engagement, and student satisfaction and pride in their accomplishments. The project directly affected teacher practice in the three classrooms in the study. In the future, I hope to replicate this with other teachers in other classrooms throughout the building.

Practice

The teachers involved in the PAR study expressed that their understanding and ultimately their practice transformed: "I think I am more aware of and better understand similarities among our Chinese EL students and how culture influences them" (LS, Reflective memo, May 22, 2023). As they better understood the characteristics of CLRP joyful learning and selected and implemented ELL strategies, they saw an increase in student confidence, risk taking, and engagement which led to joyful satisfaction and access to the same rigorous curriculum as their native English-speaking peers.

The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), which consists of one member from each grade level, will discuss what is happening in grade level learning to inform the vertical planning and professional development (PD) across grade levels for larger staff meetings and PDs focused on joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students at our site. The teachers endeavor to share their learning with other grade levels and, ultimately, with other teachers in district PD days. "What I do in the classroom with my students will show what I have learned from being a part of this study. Ultimately, paying it forward and teaching other educators the strategies we've been using to reach our Chinese ELL students would be awesome, too" (TL, Reflective memo, March 15, 2023).

School leaders who seek to implement changes in joyful teaching practices for ELLs should ensure that teachers experience the conditions they hope to create by first learning about gracious space and CLE tenets, then applying that learning with a small group of teachers, and ultimately encouraging their teachers to implement changes in their classroom spaces to enact joyful learning. After setting up the gracious spaces as optimal learning environments, the leaders should introduce coaching observation cycles to look for teaching strategies that amplify joyful learning for ELLs, using TWPS as a model or sample. "School leaders should place equity and cultural responsiveness at the center of student learning; that is, PLCs must be culturally responsive...school leaders must work with parents and teachers to embrace equity in addition to academic excellence." (Khalifa, 2018, p. 142).

Policy

The PAR design addresses the inequities and opportunity gaps for Chinese ELLs in our district, state, and national levels. The district has yet to adopt many materials in the Chinese language, does not have an office for AAPI or Chinese families to seek assistance, and does not

offer consistent and calibrated professional development for teachers of ELLs. A policy implementation recommendation includes providing solid professional development for teachers and administrators to understand the characteristics of CLRP joyful learning as those characteristics pertain to Chinese ELL students, a menu of ELL strategies, including TWPS, and the commitment to purchasing relevant ELL resources and curriculum for Chinese ELLs.

In addition, local schools and districts must provide training for administrators in the CLE axioms and how to create gracious space, cultivate relationships, and create a sense of belonging for all students. The pre-service training days that districts utilize should incorporate CLE gatherings for all administrators to experience first-hand. Furthermore, all administrators need training in PDSA cycles and how to use them with a CoP. Administrators must experience and then understand the rationale of CoPs and how to lead them at their own schools. Perhaps leaders could join smaller CoPs of administrators and meet regularly to study joyful learning for Chinese ELLs across schools.

Lastly, on a state or national level, teacher preparation programs should include learning about CLRP joyful learning and creating a sense of belonging through embracing diverse identities and storytelling with CLE axioms as a credentialling requirement for new teachers. Teachers and administrators should learn to use evidence-based observation tools and evidence-based data to guide their post-observation conversations with the goal of increased teacher capacity and improved teacher practice. This responsive, accountable culture and climate should be fostered in every school through methodical and strategic professional development and experiences for teachers and administrators. This process is not haphazard; it requires a culture of regular observation and feedback to succeed and flourish.

Research

The PAR project actualized the conceptual work of Freire (1970) by using his concept of praxis (reflection that spurs action) to guide us while we listened closely to the participants and encouraged deeper understanding through dialogic engagement (Militello et al., 2009). In our CPR group, we used improvement science methodology to develop a qualitative study over three cycles of inquiry (PDSA cycles) in quick succession. We modified processes and continued the research project to enact change, while utilizing CLE axioms to create the conditions conducive to learning—learning in the context of relationships, conversations, and crossing boundaries to promote CLRP joyful learning (Bryk et al., 2015; Guajardo, 2016). We studied current research on CLRP from Ladson-Billings, Gay, Hammond, and Muhammad to better understand the importance of teacher capacity and understanding of CLRP in the classrooms and how applying both effectively develops a student's sense of belonging, acceptance, and confidence that can lead to student access. We studied Chinese ways of knowing and learning as well as adult learning theory. We studied play, brain science, and growth mindset (Boaler, 2016; Dweck, 2019; Hammond, 2015; Nachmanovitch, 1990) and how lowered stress, risk taking, and curiosity contributed to safe and gracious spaces for learning. We studied Dewey's (1938) philosophy on experience and learning; "when education is based upon experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process, the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities…" and discussed how teacher learning preceded student learning in this project (p. 59). We highly recommend that teachers and administrators engage in book and article studies to build their knowledge and skill.

The research project and study confirm and contribute to the literature in the areas of joyful learning strategies, creating sense of belonging through relationships and safe space,

Chinese culture and impact on learning, and CLRP in the classrooms. There is little research available in regard to promoting joyful learning for Chinese ELLs, and our district commits few resources and limited human capital towards advancing Chinese ELL experiences in the classroom, despite the high number of Chinese ELLs in our district. Thus, one recommendation is to commit to more research into joyful learning for Chinese ELLs to better inform the school communities as little research on this topic currently exists.

I would recommend research to examine how utilizing CPRs at grade level meetings can change teacher practice in joyful CLRP for an entire community. Some questions could include:

1. How do you prepare a group of grade level teams in understanding and articulating joyful CLRP in schools to amplify Chinese ELLs?

2. To what extent can a group of teachers as Co-Practitioner researchers develop systems and structures to promote joyful CLRP for Chinese ELLs school wide?

3. To what extent can an administrator enact change for an entire school?

Limitations

A variety of limitations existed during the study. As principal and supervisor of all the participants, my positionality could have inhibited authentic participation. Therefore, I made the intentional effort to listen more than I talked, and I facilitated the group by asking probing questions to shift the cognitive load to the participants rather than "depositing ideas" to the group (Freire, 1970, p. 89). I modeled wait/think time for members to feel comfortable contributing through speaking and writing, fully aware that the teachers were the "people closest to the issues [and] best situated to discover answers to local concerns" (Guajardo, 2016, p. 25). The CLE axioms posit that each participant's contributions hold value.

As the administrator, I carried authority for school wide decisions; thus, I needed to ensure that we used shared decision-making about observation times, the observation tool, and group discussions and planning. Additionally, there was the risk of members wanting to participate in order to please me as their supervisor, so I emphasized that participation in the CPR group was voluntary, not mandatory, and that the observations and feedback were not evaluative. All members gave informed consent without coercion and could drop out at any time. Two initial members did, in fact, drop out of the group after the Pre-Cycle concluded.

Another limitation of the study was researcher personal bias regarding ethnicity, culture, and language as additional factors to navigate. Three of the participants were of Chinese descent, one being a Chinese ELL himself, and one was White with a Chinese American partner. All of us had our biases due to our experiences, and we learned new things together by reading and discussing learning styles of Chinese ELLs, cultural values of Chinese ELLs, and sharing personal stories within the CPR and CLE meetings to combat potential biases and share multiple perspectives.

Additionally, the research timeframe posed a limitation as we needed more than 18 months to observe and collect data. The constraints of time during a work week posed challenging at times when we had other meetings or work duties competing for our time. We intentionally blocked out observation and meeting times in our calendars, but we had to reschedule a few times due to other work demands. Our study size of three teachers and one administrator (n=4) may have been a limitation, as the study only spanned three classrooms and two different grade levels. However, the process has been useful to participants, one of the key factors of validity in action research (Hale, 2008), and we plan to continue.

Another limitation specific to the historical timeframe of this study was the impact of the global pandemic, COVID19. One member contracted the virus during the study, causing a delay in observation time in that member's classroom by over two weeks. Moreover, due to COVID19, I inherited additional time-consuming duties as the site's lead COVID19 officer, including contact tracing and covering classes due to a substitute shortage. Despite several limitations, the group members valued our time and put forth effort to learn together.

Leadership Development

I attended my first CLE WebExchange for the doctoral program on April 30, 2020. As part of an art integration activity for the personal narrative, we read and engaged in dialogue from John Donohue's (2018) poem:

> *Awaken your spirit to adventure;*
>
> *Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;*
>
> *Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,*
>
> *For your soul senses the world that awaits you.*

As I reflected on my leadership journey, I realized how much I have learned and how that learning has changed the way I see and operate in the world as a leader and as a person. I started the PAR study at the beginning of the worldwide COVID19 pandemic. As a leader during the pandemic, I was often tasked with logistical tasks and decisions, like how to operationalize getting remote devices into the hands of each student and how to support families' access to remote learning. Time in classrooms was superseded by the need to ensure that student and teacher wellness remained at the forefront.

Additionally, I was a Chinese American female leader leading a largely Chinese community during a time when anti-Asian hate and violence became prominent in the news,

media, and in the world. Many leaders left our district or quit the profession during this time; I found that staying was crucial as there were very few Asian American leaders at school sites or central office positions at the cabinet level in our district. I wanted to be a positive role model for teachers and students and even colleagues. Truly, this has been a difficult time to be an educator, let alone a joyful leader, during these challenging times. "We cultivate our resilience and become stronger so that we can help others become stronger; we cultivate our resilience so that we have energy to heal and transform the world" (Aguilar, 2018). This quote encapsulates much of my leadership growth during the PAR project. Persistence, growth mindset, collaboration, experimentation, curiosity, and a bit of playfulness kept me joyful when the world around me was not a joyful place. Leading a CPR group for the PAR project motivated me to keep going and to learn about equity issues I was passionate about: bringing joyful and equitable learning to people on the margins.

I have never in my career been able to move teachers the way I was able to this year. My increased attention to trusting relationships and creating the safe space in which we learned together "in public" in front of each other, galvanized us to "stick to it" long enough to "make it happen" (Reflective memo, May 19, 2023). A year and a half is a long time to focus on a narrow topic in our district. Typically, our district prefers to study things broadly, and therefore often too shallowly, and is quick to abandon incomplete studies when a new trend arises. However, "inquiry-guided principals act but they do not rush to implement disjointed and ambiguous programs that have worked elsewhere" (Militello et al., 2009, p. 27). In an early reflective memo, I wrote that "I as the principal need to be focused to keep the vision while driving the PLC/COP. I need to be steadfast in being strategic, methodical, and not rushing into adopting

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educational fads or programs" (Reflective memo, September 13, 2020). I heeded this perspective and led with intention and followed the methods and planning I laid out in Chapter 3.

During this project and study, I developed my skills as an instructional coach. Administrators must prioritize addressing emergencies in the building and therefore often must re-schedule or cancel crucial classroom visits. To ensure classroom visits this year, I blocked off time in my schedule and communicated to the office staff to reroute any emergencies that arose during observation times to the assistant principal or social worker. Commitment of time and consistency toward the project proved critical. Regular attention to the teachers advanced our work significantly. Further, the regular post-observation conversations were crucial. I have visited classrooms in past years but had not been consistent in initiating effective conversations outside the evaluation process. The PAR project forced me to change my priorities and practice; now that I have experienced a culture of regular observation and feedback, I am committed to maintaining it, and I am motivated to include more and more teachers.

I built my leadership skills further by using the CLE axioms to lead: "Organizers of the CLE believe that learning is a leadership act, and that leadership is at its best when it is in action" (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 30). All CPR members enjoyed the art integrations, conversations, relationships, discussion on the readings and current research, regular and honest conversations, and learning together. I infuse the CLE axioms into facilitating faculty meetings, whether by incorporating dynamic mindfulness, music, art, conversation, storytelling, reflection, or all of the above. The meetings or gatherings are dynamic and alive, moving away from the banking method of feeding teachers information, and moving toward working collaboratively to discover solutions to real and relevant focal problems of practice in their classrooms (Freire, 1970).

In her book, *Peripheral Visions*, Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) describes "longitudinal epiphanies" and how we discover new things from familiar patterns or routines. My leadership has been transformed by epiphanies during this PAR study, including how to lead using CLEs, how to develop sense of belonging, and how to promote joyful learning among my teachers by establishing intentional conditions for learning and providing regular attention and feedback. I am a different leader now than I was three years ago, with a greater capacity to lead, support, and sustain teachers in their practice. At the beginning of this study, I considered myself an equity leader because of my beliefs, priorities, and actions. Through this project, I have sharpened the tools and skills to be a better equity leader for my school community and for those around me

Conclusion

Growing up in Mississippi as Chinese Americans in the 1940s, my uncles were denied public education in their segregated town simply because they were Chinese ELLs. My mother experienced a childhood where no peers or teachers spoke her home language. Eighty years after my uncles' experience, I saw students facing similar equity and access issues, and witnessed deficit-thinking attitudes in my own school and district. Some teachers rejected the responsibility to teach English Language Development (ELD), and some even questioned why newcomer students were in their class. I sought to transform the school culture and attitude towards teaching Chinese ELLs and to build teaching capacity around specific skills.

Through this PAR project, I built my skills as a facilitator, coach, and researcher in order to transform the school culture, one step at a time, by creating better, joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELLs. I then transferred my learning to the CPR team members while using CLE axioms to create conditions for learning. I worked with the teachers to build our capacity to understand CLRP, to value Chinese ways of knowing and learning, and to develop the

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confidence to select appropriate ELL strategies that would nurture and encourage a growth

mindset and playful exploration in their students. The results were joyful learning environments

and experiences for Chinese ELL students as they found a sense of belonging in their

classrooms, were given choices, and were allowed enough wait time and alternatives to share

their thinking. Lear (2006) states, "To be human is necessarily to be a vulnerable risk-taker; to be

a courageous human is to be good at it…to face the risks with dignity and to make good

judgements in the light of them" (p. 123). This project equipped me, as an equity leader, along

with the team of teachers invested in equity and access, to take risks with good judgement based

on research and the knowledge we gained in our cycles of inquiry so that Chinese ELL students

can have joyful and rigorous access to learning.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Diane Lau-Yee
CC: Matthew Militello
Date: 11/16/2021
Re: UMCIRB 21-001668
          Leap for Joy

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 11/16/2021. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 1 & 2ab.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
Appendix C Consent Form.docx(0.01)	Consent Forms
Appendix D Community Learning Exchange CLE Protocol.docx(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Appendix E Classroom observation form.docx(0.01)	Additional Items
Appendix F Post observation conversation.docx(0.01)	Additional Items
Appendix G CALL Survey.docx(0.01)	Surveys and Questionnaires
Appendix H Reflective memo for CPR members.docx(0.01)	Data Collection Sheet
Diane Lau-Yee_Script for Recruitment .docx(0.01)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Lau-Yee_Dissertation Proposal for IRB Nov. 2.docx(0.02)	Study Protocol or Grant Application

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

APPENDIX B: CITI TRAINING CERTIFICATE

Completion Date 03-Jan-2021
Expiration Date 03-Jan-2024
Record ID 40028201

This is to certify that:

Diane Lau-Yee

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Research
(Curriculum Group)
Group 2.Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

East Carolina University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wb8aa8ee4-0250-418b-94e0-fe01ce0fe6e9-40028201

APPENDIX C: SFUSD LETTER

SFUSD SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Research, Planning, & Assessment Division • Research, Evaluation, & Analytics Department
555 Franklin Street, Second Floor, San Francisco CA 94102 • Telephone (415) 241-6156 • Fax (415) 241-6035

December 7, 2021

Diane Lau-Yee
R. L. Stevenson ES
2051 34th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94116

Dear Ms. Lau-Yee:

Thank you for your request for San Francisco Unified School District's permission to conduct your research titled, *Leap for Joy: Amplifying Joyful Learning for Chinese ELLs.*

Our office has reviewed your request and approved it for one year. Note that this approval is at a central District office level and requires the approval of the other collaborating individuals at the school site(s) whose work may be affected by your research. District approval does not obligate any school site, staff, student, or other individual to participate in your study. *Please present a copy of this approval letter when you request data or invite sites or individuals to participate in the research. Be sure to communicate to them clearly that participation is always optional.* On the next page, Table 1 lists all approved research personnel who may be involved with conducting the study.

In keeping with the District's commitment to professional development and to ensure that all research is actionable and useful, it is critical that you share your work with the district and school community that assisted you in the course of your study. **Please provide updates according to the schedule detailed in your application**, reprinted as Table 2 on the next page, so we know your study is on track.

Please note that this approval grants permission only to conduct the research, and not to share or publish the results beyond the SFUSD community. When your study is complete, **please submit reports of findings to https://bit.ly/SFUSDresreportreview for our office to review**. We ask that you allow at least one month prior to submitting the draft for wider publication or presentation, so that all the appropriate district staff have enough time to review the manuscript.

Good luck with your research. Your primary RPA contact for supporting the study is Quynh Tien Le, whom you should feel free to contact if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Norma Ming

Norma Ming
Manager of Research and Evaluation
Research, Planning, and Assessment Department

Table 1. Approved research personnel

Names of approved research personnel	Completed research ethics training	Clearance for direct student contact / site visits
Diane Lau-Yee	Valid from 1/3/21 to 1/3/23	N/A

Table 2. Partnership and communication table

Stage of research	Involving which SFUSD staff/site/department, if any?		Involving which external audience(s), if any?	Date(s)
Initial project ideas	none		ECU professors	06/20/2020
Study design	none		ECU professors & IRB	08/01/2021
Research approval	RPA		N/A	Allow ≥2 mos.
Recruitment & data collection	Primary data	N/A	N/A	Fall 2021 - Spring 2023
	Secondary data*	RPA	N/A	[MMM YYYY]
Updates on interim progress & findings	School PLC: preliminary findings/ cycle 1/ cycle 2/cycle 3		N/A	12/19/2021
				05/19/2023
Internal presentation	School Staff Meeting; C5 school leaders		N/A	05/1/2023
Drafts of reports prior to submission	N/A		N/A	03/30/2023
Executive summary	RPA, Cohort 5 leadership		N/A	06/30/2023
Formal report	RPA, Cohort 5 leadership		Final Defense 3/2023	06/30/2023
Submission for public circulation	N/A		N/A	06/30/2023

Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Information to consider before taking part in research that
has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: Leap for Joy: Amplifying Joyful Learning for Chinese ELL Students

Principal Investigator: Diane Lau-Yee
Institution, Department or Division: East Carolina University, Department of
Educational Leadership Address: 220 Ragsdale, ECU, Greenville, NC 27858
Telephone #: 415-902-9043
Study Coordinator: Dr. Matthew Militello
Telephone #:252-328-6131

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) **and** San Francisco Unified School District
study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems
and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take
part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?
The purpose of this participatory action research project is to focus on teachers building capacity
in working with Chinese ELLs in math instruction and engage in studying how educators learn
and understand culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) and joyful learning
strategies in order to support Chinese ELLs. By using the improvement science process in a
professional learning community, you will engage in PDSA inquiry cycles, reflect and
collaborate on practices, and examine culturally responsive teaching. By doing this research,
you will gain more insight on how to better support Chinese ELLs in improving equitable joyful
learning experiences.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 20 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?
There are no known reasons why you should not participate in this research study.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?
You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?
The research will be conducted at *Robert Louis Stevenson School, San Francisco, CA*. You will
need to come to the one-hour *monthly Co-Practitioner research (CPR) meeting, Room 34 or
other designated classroom meeting location* 14 times during the study. The total amount of
time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 14 hours over the next *14 months*.

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to:

- Attend Co-Practitioner research group (CPR) meetings and collaborate with colleagues
- Share your mathematical experiences and articulate characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning
- Co-create observation tools and participate in post-observation conversations
- Read articles and books on Culturally Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy related to ELLs and joyful learning.
- Participate in improvement science that involves plan-do-study-act cycles
- Plan and Implement strategies in your classroom based on CPR action plans
- Reflect on practices through journaling, reflective memos, or providing CPR feedback.
- Participate in an anonymous CALL Survey based on distributive leadership

What might I experience if I take part in the research?
The PAR research carries some minimal risk. Some of the risks might come in the form of discomfort or concerns about privacy with regards to judgment by colleagues. As lead researcher, I will make every effort to establish norms for our meetings and mitigate any concerns the participants may have. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. The research will not be included in any evaluations. We do not know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you, but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?
We will be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study. You will be paid up to 14 hours of extended pay based on the contracted extended hours rate for any CPR work that is outside of your contracted work hours. Compensation will not be based on your implementation or completion of the research study.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?
It will not cost you any money to be part of this research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me? ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:
- SFUSD Research and Planning Achievement Department
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it? The information in the study will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection and data analysis process. Consent forms and data from surveys, interviews, and focus groups will be maintained in a

secure, locked location and will be stored for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?
You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop, and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at 415-902-9043 (Monday to Friday between 8:00 am to 5:00 pm) or email lau-yeed@sfusd.edu

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director for Human Research Protections, at 252-744-2914.

Is there anything else I should know?

The following research results will be provided to you when requested, and these results will be shared with you once the study is completed.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?
The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

● I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
● I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
● I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
● By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
● I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

_____
Participant's Name (PRINT)   Signature   Date

Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

_____
Person Obtaining Consent/ Principal Investigator (PRINT) Signature   Date

APPENDIX E: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

Utilize the chart to take selective verbatim notes. It is important to note the time of all notes. After the observation, analyze the selective verbatim notes and create initial codes. All participant data will be anonymous by creating unique identifiers. All data was secured in my locked office, 17G, at Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary School at 2051 34th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116. All data will be destroyed after three years from the completion of the project.

OBSERVATION TOOL: JOYFUL LEARNING

TEACHER _____ **CLASS** _____
DATE _____ **TIME IN CLASSROOM** _____

Configuration of student work (check all that apply within observation; include time)
Group **Partner** **Individual**

TIME	EVIDENCE	CODE

OBSERVATION EVIDENCE

Student Dialogue	#	Student agency/choice	#
TPS Think Time Protocol: _____ Protocol: _____ push cognitive level (level of task) push cognitive level (questioning) Other:		Choose partner Choose activity Choose response form Other	
Nonverbals	#	**Teacher Reinforcement**	#
Smile Leaning in Other:		Positive statement Redirect Push cognitive level Other:	