ABSTRACT

Norman McDuffie, EQUITABLE CLASSROOMS REQUIRE EQUITABLE PRACTICES: HOW DO TEACHERS DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES TO SUPPORT EQUITABLE CLASSROOMS? (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Militello). Department of Educational Leadership, December, 2023.

The participatory action research (PAR) aimed to build educators' culturally responsive teaching capacity to support equitable classrooms. The study focused on the culturally responsive teaching development and decision-making process of a middle school principal, three Language Art teachers, and the culturally responsive teaching influence to create equitable classrooms. The CRP team worked closely and learned together in the professional learning community. The CPR team intentionally selected diverse and inclusive text and planned culturally responsive teaching activities. The research participants used community learning exchange (CLE) protocols and built trust and relationships, first among each other and then with the students and staff. The principal's culturally responsive teaching development guided the planning and facilitating of a CLE with the CPR team. The CLE protocols led to reflection and discussion loops, which allowed teachers to identify and implement attributes of equitable classrooms.

EQUITABLE CLASSROOMS REQUIRE EQUITABLE PRACTICES: HOW DO TEACHERS DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES TO SUPPORT EQUITABLE CLASSROOMS?

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By
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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to those unsatisfied with the status quo and with dreams feeding their passion for what could be. Your dreams will require courage and actions that the status quo will not understand. Help the status quo see your dreams and don't stop pursuing them if they don't.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank God for wisdom, strength, guidance, and passion for this work. There is no doubt that God guided the thinking and the writing. I want to thank my wife, Lashawn, and children, Sydney, Christopher, and Kayla, for their support during this process and for giving me a pass on a few husband and daddy duties whenever possible. Thank you for sharing your perspectives during our many equity family discussions. Your love and support allowed me to stay focused during this process. I want to thank my mom, Thelma Bell, for her guidance, wisdom, support and love that she has and continues to share. I want to thank the late Lester McDuffie, my granddaddy, for instilling in me that hard work pays off, and once you get it (education) between the ears, no one can take it away. To all of the McDuffies in the family tree, we did it. Thanks to the CPR members, we learned together. Lastly, I want to thank Dr. Militello for sending a district email invite ten years ago to attend a CLE. Since then, you have provided challenges that have allowed me to grow personally and professionally. I am grateful to have you as a coach, a friend, and for seeing EdD potential that I did not see myself. Many thanks to Dr. Hernandez, Dr. Hodgkins, Ms. Lynda, my cohort, and my dissertation committee for all the hours of support and encouragement during this process.

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CHAPTER 1: FOCUS OF PRACTICE

"You cannot change what you cannot acknowledge" ~McGraw (2007)

Educators must "get better at getting better" (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 7). This mantra is central to the work of this project, as we need a new approach to improving teaching and learning in our schools. Culturally Responsive Teaching practices provide a potential model to improve student achievement and staff learning. Additionally, culturally responsive teaching develops teacher relationships, increases academic discourse, equitable curriculum design, and ultimately more equitable student learning outcomes. Originally, educators designed culturally responsive teaching to achieve more significant results with historically marginalized populations; however, early indicators suggest culturally responsive teaching benefits all students and school staff (Bryk et al., 2015). This participatory action research (PAR) study seeks to build teacher culturally responsive teaching capacity to improve staff practices and create equitable classrooms. Specifically, this PAR study aims to provide insights into efforts to increase culturally responsive teaching capacity in a medium-sized middle school as a pathway for educators to escape the hamster wheel of expensive, ineffective educational reform attempts (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

According to Hattie (2015), one of the most influential factors in students' learning is teacher expectations of student ability. School leaders must examine ways to get educators to believe in their student's academic abilities. Teachers grounded in culturally responsive teaching practices are better equipped to plan and implement learning experiences that can increase the odds of reaching the academic potential of all students. For example, selecting relevant content based on culturally responsive teaching philosophies helps students make meaningful

connections with the curriculum to increase student engagement and help students achieve academic potential.

Another aspect to consider when considering the improvement of teaching and learning is collective teacher efficacy (CTE), which refers to the shared belief among teachers, school staff, and district administrators that their combined efforts will have a positive impact on students' outcomes. CTE has the highest mean effect size (1.57) of 259 identified influences on students' learning (Hattie, 2015, p. 82). Educators and students need a safe space to identify equitable practices, reflect and revise the recognized practices, and in the process, develop and support equitable classroom practices. Improving teacher self-efficacy can help teachers reframe student success by focusing on assets instead of judging students based on perceived notions of academic ability related to previous levels of academic achievement, social and financial status, race, discipline records, or negative, informal comments from previous teachers.

There are many instructional strategies that have been shown to improve student learning, such as graphic organizers, using higher-order thinking stems, student-centered instruction, direct instruction, activating strategies, front-loading, and cooperative learning. This study specifically focuses on culturally responsive teaching practices, ranging from how to develop and support culturally responsive teaching practices (Hammond, 2014) to prioritizing influences on student learning (Hattie, 2015) and creating awareness on how to avoid equity traps in schools (Kendi, 2019; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Additionally, specific aspects of leadership are connected to the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices (Khalifa, 2018). There are recognized best practices on how to implement change (Spillane & Coldren, 2011) and effective change leaders must engage and learn with the group (Fullan, 2011).

The PAR study aims to work with a group of educators within the school building to build internal capacity for culturally responsive teaching practices to create and support equitable classrooms. Personal leadership capacity around equity and creating change for the teachers is necessary. The first step is to build a trusting relationship to create gracious spaces for staff to discuss and reflect on current practices. Gracious space is a pedagogy to build trust and open communication among a group. As the group's trust and communication build over time, a safe and healthy work environment is created to engage in academic discourse, even when controversial. This PAR study has the potential to develop and document a comprehensive approach to best practices in culturally responsive teaching, improving student learning and leading change that will consistently develop and support equitable classrooms.

The following steps are multi-layered and include building staff capacity around equity, identifying inequitable practices, and initiating positive change or discontinuing the use of inequitable practices once identified. The last step will consist of critical findings from the research cycles and procedures to ensure the most effective conclusions are used to develop and support equitable classrooms.

Rationale

The demographics of A.G. Cox Middle School have changed over time, and the school has become increasingly diverse. The current demographics are 59% students of color and 41% white students, with a total enrollment of 911 students. Student enrollment five years ago was roughly 100 fewer students, and student demographics were closer to a 50% split between students of color and white students. The staff demographics have changed as well. Five years ago, the teaching staff was 10% teachers of color compared to 19% today.

Previous school goals revolved around testing data and student growth; the school's goals are now focused more on student engagement and mental health. Even though the school's demographics have changed, I assert that our practices and beliefs have not changed and have marginalized many students of color. How do educators build culturally responsive teaching capacity to help all students feel like they belong in school, create a positive learning environment, and consistently teach academic rigor to all students?

Next, I will analyze the micro, meso, and macro assets and challenges for A.G. Cox (see Figure 1). The micro-level is classroom practices, the meso is school-level practices, and the macro is district-level practices.

Assets and Challenges

In this section, I explore the assets and challenges associated with conducting this participatory action research (PAR) study, examining them through the lens of three distinct levels: the micro, the meso, and the macro. By dissecting these dimensions, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic landscape in which this PAR is situated.

Micro Assets and Challenges

The micro assets include controllable content delivery, opportunities for Connect the Text, and PLC effectiveness. School leadership allows teachers to control the delivery and selection of text to teach subject content within the state standards. This approach increases teachers' engagement in the text, student engagement, and teacher expectations. Connect the Text is a school-wide approach to improving student engagement. Time and funds are provided to teachers to seek content material and plan lessons that make their content relevant and engaging for students. The Professional Learning Community's frequency and discussion topics are structured but flexible for teachers to adjust content pacing and delivery based on students'

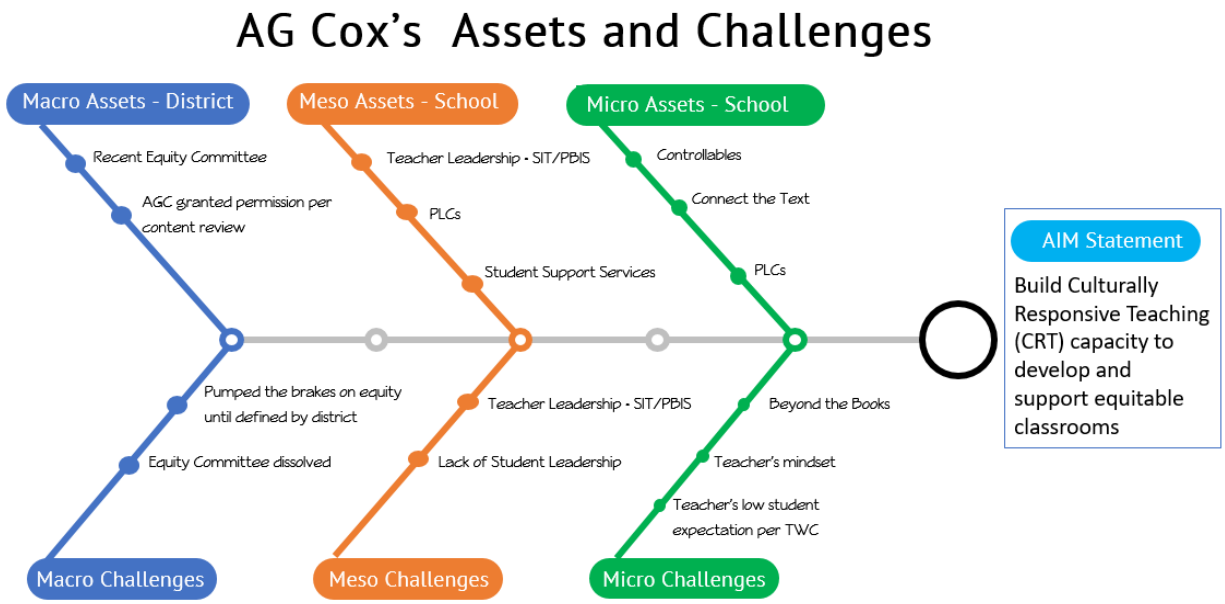

Figure 1. Fishbone diagram: A.G. Cox's assets and challenges.

needs. Teachers participate in weekly PLCs to discuss content pacing; previous, current, and upcoming standards; create common formative assessments; and complete assessment data analysis when available.

Challenges at the micro level include teachers' mindsets toward improving their teaching practice, non-inclusive lesson delivery, and low expectations. The school's Teacher Working Condition Survey indicated that the teachers desired differentiated professional development for staff. The survey also revealed non-inclusive lesson delivery as an area of focus. Non-inclusive lesson delivery exists on a large scale despite teachers' time, funds, and freedom to plan lessons. The Teacher Working Condition Survey revealed that teachers have low student expectations. One can see how this is a challenge, especially as Hattie (2015) listed teacher expectation as the most predictive of student success out of 195 student influence factors.

Finally, the district granted permission for A.G. Cox to have equity conversations pending prior approval of material. The district equity committee dissolved and decided to stop equity conversations at all schools until the district defined equity. The district's decision caused some hesitation in the school-level equity conversations and text selection.

Meso Assets and Challenges

Meso assets include PLC effectiveness, teacher leadership committees, and student support services. The Professional Learning Communities are flexible yet structured. Teachers participate in weekly PLCs to discuss content pacing; previous, current, and upcoming standards; create common formative assessments; discuss teaching strategies; and analyze data. Teacher leadership committees are groups of teachers with diverse experiences that provide ideas to improve the school climate. Teachers may serve no more than two years in a row in the same position to continue the flow of new ideas. Meso challenges include teacher leadership because

SIT and PBIS teachers' representatives are not always communicating information to grade-level teachers. Another meso challenge is the lack of student leadership, as the student government association has not been operational for the past two years.

Macro Assets and Challenges

Macro assets include a district equity committee, and the district permitted A.G. Cox Middle School to expand upon those equity conversations within the school context. Even though the district's equity committee has since dissolved, the previous presence of a district equity committee was considered an asset as it showed the district understood the need for districtwide equity conversations. The staff at A.G. Cox Middle School was concerned that the district's announcement to halt equity conversations and dissolve the district's equity committee would affect their school-level equity conversations. Despite this district-level decision, A.G. Cox Middle School was granted permission to continue their ongoing equity work at the school level.

Both identified macro challenges concern the lack of understanding of the need for districtwide equity conversations. The macro challenges include the dissolution of the district equity committee and the district issuing the edict to halt equity conversations until the district can formally define equity. These two challenges are at the core of the significance of this research study.

The CPR group will build upon A.G. Cox's identified micro, meso, and macro assets. The key Focus of Practice (FoP) component is to build teachers' culturally responsive teaching capacity through Connect the Text and PLCs within the CPR group and staff's control. The FoP will build upon teachers' autonomy to select diverse material to teach their content. A.G. Cox has been granted permission to continue equity conversations pending district review of AGC's

equity material. A.G. Cox being permitted to continue equity conversations is a huge asset amid the district's halt to equity discussions districtwide. A secondary FoP goal is to create enough culturally responsive teaching awareness so the staff can establish an equity committee. The FoP hopes to use A.G. Cox's FoP experiences and momentum to reestablish the district's equity committee and prompt equity conversations.

Significance

The focus of practice will influence educators' teaching practices, increase students' learning, and improve educational outcomes. This PAR study will improve the process to identify, develop, and support equitable practices, curriculum, and leadership required to support equitable classrooms. Other schools can adapt the practices to replicate learning experiences for teachers and students. The PAR study shows an opportunity to consistently develop and support equitable classrooms through collaborating with specific culturally responsive teaching and change leadership practices to improve learning. In that case, the findings and recommendations will influence current and future education practices toward highly productive struggles for all students. Classroom lessons with consistently high rigor and student engagement will increase critical thinking and student exposure and opportunities. After the discussion of the PAR project, I will elaborate on recommendations for practice, policy, and research.

Practice

The findings from this research study promise to influence current school practices in several ways. This study provides insight into how to prepare educators before beginning academic discourse centered on culturally responsive teaching. The academic discourse centered on culturally responsive teaching will increase teacher knowledge in culturally responsive teaching practices. Teachers will be more mindful of culturally responsive teaching content,

develop lessons with a culturally responsive teaching emphasis, and use culturally responsive teaching practices to deliver the lesson.

Policy

The research findings can influence school and classroom policies in several ways. The study recommends the creation of a new standard of instruction with a culturally responsive teaching component, followed by a new tool to design and deliver a daily lesson plan that includes an equity component. During PLCs, the new culturally responsive teaching approach will develop daily lesson plans with a culturally responsive teaching component. The culturally responsive teaching component will include equity discussions and practices such as equitable anchor charts and rubrics. Finally, the study will influence a new approach to classroom observation. Teachers will be more aware of classroom equity practices, and administrators will become more aware of culturally responsive teaching practices by using a classroom observation tool that includes an equity component. As a result, there is potential to influence classroom-level practice, the holy grail of school improvement efforts.

Research

The research findings can influence subsequent research in several ways. First, it will emphasize the benefit of using practitioners in a research study. The people closest to the issue are also those closest to the solution. Co-practitioner research (CPR) participants will collaborate to identify a need and solution and learn together during the process. The PAR process creates a ripple effect in building culturally responsive teaching capacity together, which leads to increased culturally responsive teaching capacity for individual leaders and teachers. The research findings will influence the approach to change leadership and provide insight into best practices to implement change regardless of the initiative. Conversation and reflections of

classroom observations and academic discourse with the PAR and staff will impact change leadership. Reflections are essential, but these reflections must lead to action and become a continuous cycle of reflection and action balance to create change, as described by Freire (1970, 2020).

The co-practitioner research participants will analyze practices and curriculum to identify equitable practices at the school and classroom levels. This collaboration will focus on classroom observations, embedded culturally responsive teaching practices, post-observation conversations, and the academic discourse around culturally responsive teaching. The focus will also include how culturally responsive teaching is embedded in PLC discussions, lesson plans, and delivery.

PAR's democratic principles and processes allow all stakeholders to gain knowledge in public and learn as a group through several options of research cycles (Pain et al., 2019). The collaboration during the PAR helps eliminate a hierarchy of knowledge production and the possibility of having a select few dictate the questions to ask and decide the following steps (Richter, 2016). Learning is social, and for all participants to understand culturally responsive teaching practice, they must be engaged and allowed to share their perspectives.

The CPR team will learn to identify inequitable practices and implement processes to develop and support equitable classroom practices. The CPR team will end inequitable school and classroom practices through ongoing reading, collaboration, and data analysis. PAR is more than improving the identified concern; PAR allows a better understanding of one's participation in the theory and practice of the identified concern during the research cycle process (Winter, 1993). Over time and in real-time, a better understanding will develop with the CPR group. The percentages to positively influence the identified concern increase as real-time learning is used correctly in the upcoming research cycle. Richter (2016) describes the three steps of the social

change process as (1) unfreezing - identify the concern to change; (2) change - diagnosis, investigate, and test new models of behavior; and (3) refreeze - adapt and apply the new behaviors.

Connection to Equity

This research seeks to build culturally responsive teaching capacity towards developing and supporting education practices to support equitable classrooms. Are educators relying on the "banking" model, as Freire (1968) describes, “teaching students to accept and adapt to current educational practices instead of questioning current practices and making an effort to change inequitable practices” (p. 76). A high percentage of current schooling requires students to depend on teacher-led content instructions. Teachers’ daily deposit of teacher-led instruction is similar to making daily deposits in the bank. The concern is that education should be a collaborative learning process of teacher-to-student, student-to-student, and student-to-teacher.

The Focus of Practice (FoP) directly relates to the influence of equity in the classroom in multiple ways, ranging from how state and district practices support equitable classrooms to how schools, classrooms, and individual teachers’ practices support equitable classrooms. Equitable classrooms cannot exist without equity practices in the class, and just because an equitable practice exists does not mean it is an equitable classroom. The same holds for equitable practices on the school level. Figure 2 depicts the philosophical, political-economics, and sociological frames for the FoP. In the subsequent section, I will discuss each frame.

Philosophical Framework

“Structured Blindness...not to be investigated further” is a primary concept that can be identified as a thinking point in the Racial Contract (Mills, 2019). The concept of structured blindness relates to a system created by a few selected people but applied to all. This approach

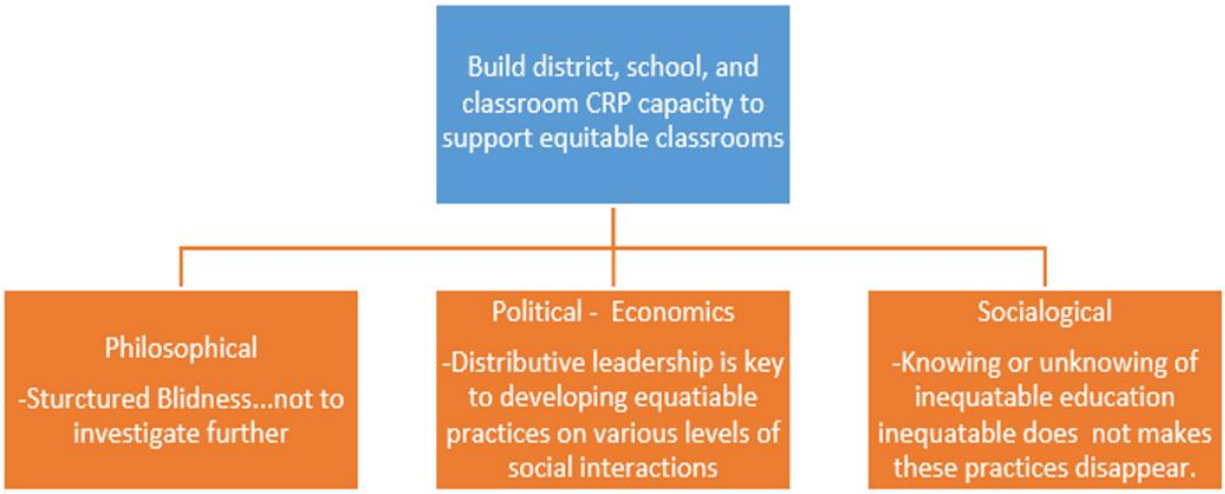

Figure 2. Frames depicting the focus of practice.

will benefit the selected few, knowingly or unknowingly, and just because members of that group are unaware of its benefits does not mean the benefits do not exist. Mills (2019) shared similar thoughts and stated, “It is ironic how the group that created the system fails to understand the system it created” (p. 18). Educators must identify the structured blindness not supporting equitable classrooms in daily practices before taking the next step to address, revise, or discontinue the daily practice or policy. A question remains regarding if this failure to understand or lack of self-awareness that Mills (2019) speaks of is intentional or is a result of structured blindness, but regardless, school leaders must provide teachers with personalized learning experiences to combat the institutionalized deficit thinking of marginalized students, which harms all students. Making changes in school practices is challenging and nearly impossible when teachers do not perceive students with an inclusive lens.

Political Framework

Gutiérrez (2013) believes math teachers must do more than produce lesson plans and challenge the inequitable political narratives constructed in society over time. This ideal is not limited to math teachers and can be adopted in all disciplines. One political phrase referenced by Gutiérrez is the achievement gap, and any efforts to close the achievement gap require a technical approach. Teachers need the capacity to identify, resist, and challenge definitions within the profession that historically underserved and marginalized youth. Teachers should build political knowledge to help them recognize that their teaching is political and political clarity is key to what is learned in classrooms and which students are learning. We have compulsory education, yet we do not have equitable education for all students or equitable school funding. Leandro vs. State (Packard, 1997) is an example of litigation regarding inequitable funding within a school district, leading to inequities in school resources, student

expectations, and classroom learning. In this case, the courts ruled that students have the constitutional right to a sound, basic education, but provided no constitutional guarantees regarding the funding for said education.

Sociological Framework

"There is no such thing as neutral education. Education either functions as an instrument to bring about conformity or freedom" (Freire, 1968, p. 14). As Wilkerson (2020) described, education practices should be examined as one examines an old house - it may be appealing to the eye but, on further examination, has much-unseen damage behind the walls, in the attic, and the basement. Not seeing the damages does not mean they do not exist. Eventually, the damages must be addressed, or the house will collapse. Not digging deeper and reflecting on educational practices will maintain the status quo as in the old house. Eventually, the educational practices eroding the foundation of earning for all students will need to be addressed, just as the damages behind the walls, in the attic and basement of the old house. The current education system has been created and supported by political and sociological frames to educate students before the Civil Rights movement. As a result, several historical, institutional, and economic practices do not support learning for all students. These inequitable practices become part of our psyche and the overall fabric of normalized school operations, and we must "dismantle oppression and reveal privilege and entitlement within their respective organizations" (Davy, 2016, p. 10).

These frameworks provide a foundation for the FoP. Once we understand culturally responsive teaching and develop processes to discuss and identify school and classroom practices, we will determine whether identified practices promote or hinder equitable classrooms. This identification will be a critical step out of the hamster wheel toward creating a learning environment that intentionally focuses on all students' assets, connects the text, and increases the

opportunities for student engagement for all students. This identification will improve the opportunities for participating staff and students to learn at higher levels.

Participatory Action Research Design

Participatory Action Research is a research approach to identifying and addressing a concern. The PAR approach includes participants and stakeholders close to the problem forming a research group and working through identifying and defining the concern, developing processes to address the concern, and summarizing recommendations based on result reflections (Whyte, 1989). Within this study's context, working with a group of educators within the school will create the best opportunity for change than having outsiders come in and make suggestions (Danley & Ellison, 1999). The PAR focus will build internal capacity for Culturally Responsive Curriculum, Practices, and Leadership to support equitable classrooms. The selected stakeholders will be instrumental in exploring, understanding, and identifying the necessary tools to develop and support equitable classrooms.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The FoP involves working with educators to build internal capacity for Culturally Responsive Curriculum, Practices, and Leadership to support equitable classrooms. The overarching research is: *How do teachers develop and implement culturally responsive teaching to support equitable classrooms?*

The sub-questions further guiding this study are*:*

1. To what extent do teachers develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions around culturally responsive teaching to support equitable classrooms?

2. To what extent do educators make classroom curricular and pedagogical decisions to develop and implement culturally responsive teaching practices supporting equitable classrooms?
3. To what extent does my leadership in culturally responsive teaching support teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices?

Theory of Action

If the CPR group can build culturally responsive teaching knowledge, identify and question school and classroom practices, and explore processes to develop and support equitable classrooms, *then* staff and students will be better equipped to engage in critical thinking and improve learning.

FoP Description

The focus of practice for this study was to work collaboratively with the CPR group to create a Gracious Space for all practitioners to build capacity in culturally responsive teaching, equity, and leading change. Gracious space protocols and pedagogies challenge the CPR complacency with the education's status quo (Ely, 1999). The CPR reviewed school policies and practices to determine which policies and practices are deemed equitable. Gracious Space allowed the CPR to challenge traditional everyday policies and practices at the school and classroom levels. The CPR was able to develop equitable practices and policies, including making revisions, creating new proposals, and ending some inequitable policies and practices altogether.

Project Activities

The PAR process included building personal leadership capacity around equity and creating change. The first step was to build a trusting relationship to create gracious spaces for

staff to discuss and reflect on current practices. The next step was multi-layered and included building staff capacity around equity, identifying inequitable practices, and initiating change or discontinuing the use of inequitable practices. The last step consisted of collating critical findings from the research cycles and processes to ensure the continued use of essential findings deemed most effective to develop and support equitable classrooms.

The first step was to seek FoP co-practitioner research volunteers following IRB approval (see Appendix A). In preparation for the study commencement, I paid close attention to ongoing equity and culturally responsive teaching conversations during morning staff check-ins, School Improvement Teams (SIT) and Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) meetings, PLCs, and virtual parent Lunch and Learn sessions. These conversations helped identify which staff members were ready, somewhat ready, or unprepared for involvement with the co-practitioner group's work around culturally responsive teaching, equity, and leading change. Once the CPR group was formed, we reviewed the FoP challenges and assets to ensure the CPR is aligned with the PAR study. From there, the CPR group planned and determined the focus topic for a local Community Learning Exchange (CLE). Community Learning Exchanges are deliberate pedagogical processes that engage people to share their wisdom, personal stories, beliefs, and perceptions, as learning is a social process. The CPR learning together and learning in public are additional benefits of using CLE axioms for this PAR study and additional information on each step of this process are detailed in Chapter 3. Journey line activities and discussions, circles, learning partners, and infinity groups are a few of the many CLE pedagogies the CPR used throughout the course of this study. As a collaborative group, we engaged in three cycles of inquiry, fall of 2021, spring of 2022, and fall of 2022, and revised our activities for each cycle based on the evidence from the previous cycle.

Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

The confidentiality and privacy of participants and the data was tantamount. All transcribed interviews, group focus sessions, observations, meetings, and notes have been kept in a secure location and the data was used only for its disclosed and intended purpose. All participants had the right to decide if they would like to be identified with their response data or if they preferred to remain anonymous. Confidentiality and privacy safeguards have been a main priority through all research cycle stages.

Conclusion

A teacher's limited capacity to create effective learning environments for all students limits student achievement. As McGraw (2007) asserts, “you cannot change what you cannot acknowledge,” understanding and addressing root causes of inequities rather than symptoms is a critical strategic shift. For schools to improve, improve student learning, and develop students as critical thinkers, schools must first improve teachers’ learning and develop teachers to be critical thinkers. The timing of this FoP is not coincidental. In theory, if a middle school leader can work with a group of teachers and build culturally responsive teaching capacity, then those teachers will become more aware of the school and classroom practices that support equitable classrooms and intentionally select diverse content material selections to support equitable classrooms. Chapter 1 has introduced why there is a need for a new approach to improve student learning and why building teachers’ culturally responsive teaching capacity is the approach to supporting equitable classrooms. The study's rationale, significance, and the setting's assets and challenges impact practices, curriculum, and leadership. A close examination of the literature is presented in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

All means all! This phrase, heard in schools and districts across the country, professes a goal of successful learning experiences for every student. Indeed, it would prove challenging to find any educator, politician, or parent that does not back the notion of providing an equitable and rigorous experience for all children. It is a powerful aspiration that asks, "How do we reach all students?" We know the answer: Culturally Responsive Teaching. Indeed, culturally responsive teaching shows promise in our pursuit to educate all students. The real question now becomes, do we have the will and courage to reach the elusiveness of "all means all?"

In the current socio-political climate, it is essential to understand the definition of culturally responsive teaching. Many definitions exist, but I used Ladson-Billings' (1994) definition for this study: Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. However, I considered other culturally responsive teaching definitions, including those with an emphasis on culture, race, or both. Martinez (2020) noted that culturally responsive teaching has evolved. Different researchers have used culturally responsive teaching interchangeably with phrases such as "culturally appropriate" (Au & Jordan, 1981), "culturally congruent" (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), "culturally responsive" (Cazden & Leggett, 1981), "culturally compatible" (Jordan, 1985; Vogt et al., 1987), "cultural synchronization" (Irvine, 1990), "multiculturalism education" (Banks & Banks, 2019), "culturally sustaining pedagogy" (Paris, 2011), and most recently, "culturally adaptive teaching" (Hramiak, 2015). I chose Ladson-Billing's culturally responsive teaching definition for this study because it emphasized culturally responsive teaching as a pedagogy. Culturally responsive teaching is more than just teaching content, as culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that encompasses learning styles, feedback, and assessments. Another

reason why I chose Ladson-Billings culturally responsive teaching's definition was because it emphasized that the students' culture should be used in all aspects of student learning, which goes beyond students' race.

The participatory action research project aims to build a culturally responsive curriculum, practices, and leadership that develops and supports equitable classrooms. To accomplish the PAR aim, we must build knowledge in three key areas: the historical context of Culturally Responsive Teaching, core principles and competencies, and the strategies and processes for building Culturally Responsive Teaching classrooms (see Figure 3).

Historical Context of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally Responsive Teaching is not a new teaching theory or initiative. The foundation of culturally responsive teaching began during the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a societal push for equal rights for African Americans and other students of color to access resources and quality education. Civil rights activists believed public school learning is a white middle-class perspective and, as a whole, has the mindset that the culture of students of color is a deficit. This deficit thinking in education leads to people identifying other people as the problem and not the systems that created and perpetuated the problem. The Civil Rights Movement inspired many educational reforms, such as culturally responsive teaching. John Dewey (1938) believed education was a goodwill democratic society in which individuals would move past their racial or cultural biases and self-interest to provide learning for all students. Dewey (1938) identified and warned others of one specific barrier to education: one group of people dictating what was in the best interest for other groups. Researchers such as Geneva Gay (1979) and Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) extended and fine-tuned Dewey's educational theory, focused on educational

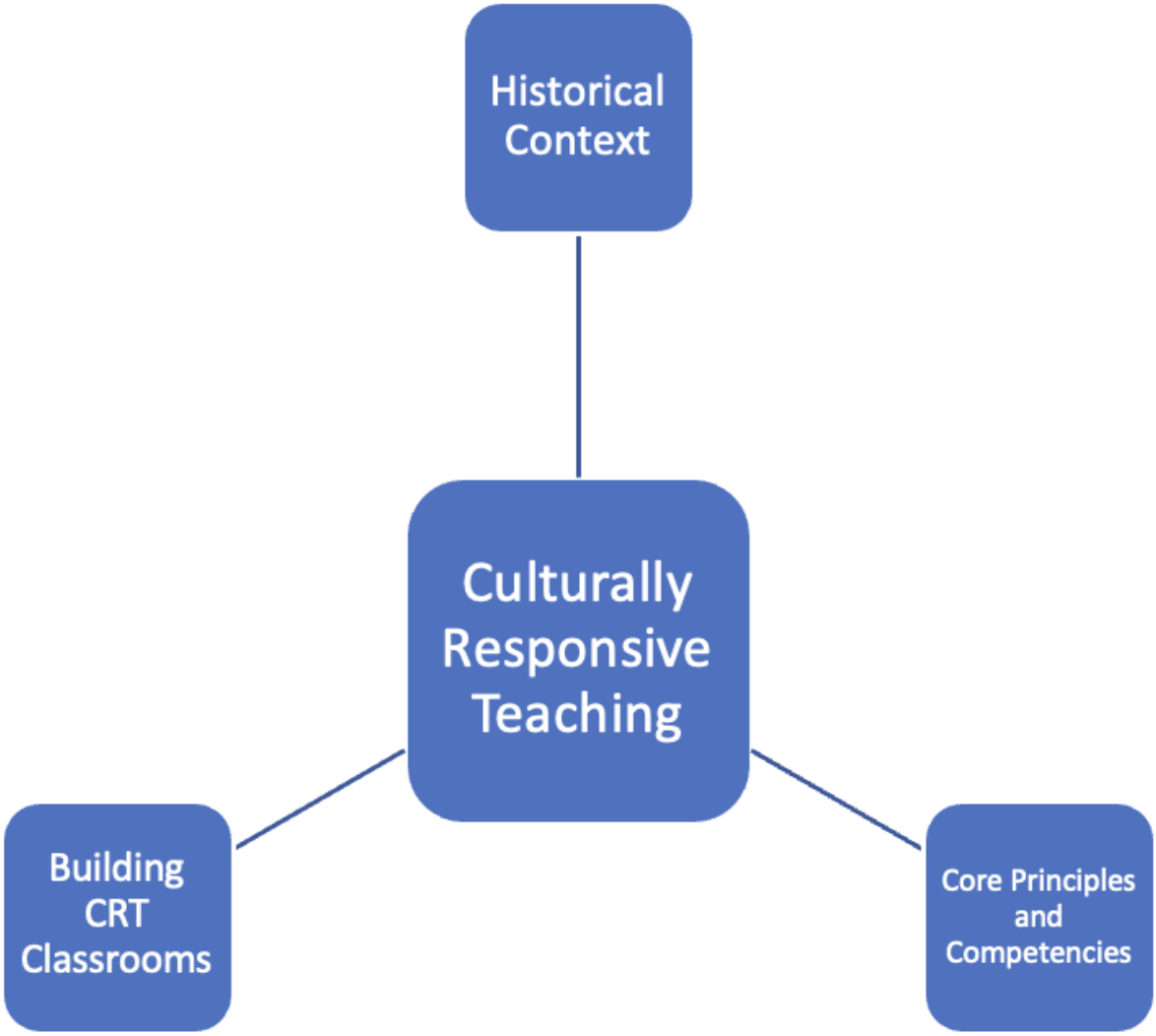

Figure 3. Literature review infographic.

equity for students of color, and identified the most effective approach to teaching students of color.

Gay's extensive culturally responsive teaching research dates back to 1975 and focused more on the importance of curriculum having accurate facts about how ethnically diverse groups were represented. Gay believed this accurate representation would provide both minority and majority students with a better understanding of past, present, and future societies. Gay's research evolved to focus on culturally responsive teaching instruction and the responsibility of teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching and create a positive learning environment for all students, especially students of color (Gay, 2000). Gay (2000) defined culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 29).

Culturally responsive teaching strives to increase the engagement and motivation of students of color who have historically been academically unsuccessful and socially alienated from their public schools (Vavrus, 2008). The importance of culturally responsive teaching continues to grow. "Research on curriculum and instructional practices has primarily focused on white middle-class students, while virtually ignoring the cultural and linguistic characteristics of diverse learners" (Krasnoff, 2016, p. 1). Curriculum and pedagogy have focused on the dominant cultures in a homogenous society. However, demographics are shifting. The K-12 U.S. student demographics were 64.8% white students and 37.2% students of color in 1995 and are now 45.6% white students and 54.4% students of color in 2021 (De Brey et al., 2021).

Vavrus' (2008) use of educational reform while describing culturally responsive teaching indicates traditional education or teaching pedagogies may not be successful for all students,

contrasting with Dewey's description of education. Dewey (1938) used phrases such as "body of information and skills, the transmission of knowledge, standard rules and conduct for moral training, a pattern of organization, discipline, obedience, and teacher-centered" to describe traditional education (p. 14). Au and Jordan's (1981) research developed three main criteria as foundational for culturally appropriate instruction:

1. The instruction would be comfortable for the students.
2. The instruction would be comfortable for teachers.
3. The instruction would increase students' attainment of basic academic skills.

Hramiak's (2015) research used Gay's and Landon-Billings' culturally responsive teaching research as a lens to analyze her research data and extend culturally responsive teaching to culturally adaptive teaching. Hramiak (2015) believed teachers should continuously adapt their curriculum and teaching based on cultural sensitivity to meet the need of their students. Irvine (1990) coined the term cultural synchronization: the need for students' cultures and European-influenced classroom cultures to merge versus one culture dominating the other. Irvine believed black males could not reach their academic potential precisely when teachers focused more on European-influenced behaviors than actual instruction. Students not engaged in learning have a higher percentage of not reaching their potential, leading to a higher risk of dropping out (De Brey et al., 2021; Newell & Van Ryzin, 2007).

Culturally Responsive Teaching Core Principles and Competencies

Culturally responsive teaching is one of many needed approaches to address inequities in education. Culturally responsive teaching implementation in education faces several hurdles, as "many teachers are inadequately prepared with the relevant content knowledge, experience, and training" (Krasnoff, 2016, p. 1). Gay (2018) and Ladson-Billings (1995) believe inadequate

culturally responsive teaching preparation creates a cultural gap between teachers and students, and one may even argue that inadequate teacher preparations continue the cultural gap.

Culturally responsive teaching teaches to and through the strengths of students (Gay, 2018, p. 29). Gay also notes that a lack of cultural inclusion or cultural blindness negatively affects academic learning for students of color. Therefore, Gay encourages educators to intentionally plan and deliver inclusive lessons regardless of students' classroom demographics. When done correctly, deliberate culturally responsive teaching planning increases students of color affirmation and self-identity within the Eurocentric dominant learning culture. When students' classroom experiences, especially students of color, are connected to their home culture, they develop a sense of belonging, see purpose in learning, and are motivated to do well (Delpit, 2012; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2012). Sleeter (2012) believes three key barriers have marginalized culturally responsive pedagogy practices: "(1) persistent faulty and simplistic conceptions of what it is, (2) too little research connecting its use with student achievement, and (3) elite and white fear of losing national and global hegemony" (p. 568). The faulty conception of what culturally responsive teaching is has led to cultural celebrations. It overlooks low expectations for students that have been historically marginalized.

An overview of the culturally responsive teaching research approaches of Ladson-Billings (1995), Gay (1980), and Muñiz (2020) are summarized in Table 1. Ladson-Billings (1995) culturally responsive teaching research identified three categories to consider when defining and implementing culturally responsive teaching practices. One category of note is the need to develop and bridge connections between students' cultural references to their academic skills and concepts to ensure high student engagement and learning. Even though Ladson-Billings (1995) culturally responsive teaching categories are broad, they provide a foundation for

Table 1

Comparison of Culturally Responsive Teaching Approaches and Philosophies

Culturally Responsive Teaching – Gay 2018	8 Competencies for Culturally Responsive Teaching – Muñiz 2020	Culturally Relevant Teaching – Ladson-Billings 1995
Emancipatory – allow students freedom mainstream so they can be open to new ways of learning and knowing	Reflect on one's cultural lens Recognize and redress bias in the system	Develop bridges connecting students' cultural references to academic skills and concepts
Validating – Affirms heritage, learning style, and home culture of the learner	Draw on students' culture to shape curriculum and instruction	Engage students in critical reflection about their own lives and societies
Comprehensive – Develops intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning	Bring real-world issues into the classroom	Facilitate student' cultural competence
Transformative – recognizes and enhances existing strengths as accomplishments ethnically diverse student population	Model high expectations for all students Promote respect for student differences	
Empowering – Strengthens student self-efficacy	Collaborate with families and the local community	
Multidimensional – encompasses curriculum content, learning content, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and performance assessments	Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways	

culturally responsive teaching research to follow, as later seen in the work by Gay (1979) and Muñiz (2020). As an extension of Ladson-Billings (1995) culturally responsive teaching research, Gay identified six culturally responsive teaching categories to familiarize ourselves with when beginning the culturally responsive teaching journey. Emancipatory and Multidimensional are two of the six categories Gay (2018) identified as critical components in defining culturally responsive teaching practices.

Emancipatory focuses on educators having academic freedom and allowing students to engage and learn in a variety of new ways when compared to mainstream education practices. Multidimensional compliments Emancipatory and reminds educators that culturally responsive teaching practices are more than just selecting teaching content representing people of color. Multidimensional introduces educators to the intentionality needed in daily school practices, such as selecting curriculum and classroom content, instructional delivery methods, building student-teacher relationships, and assessing students. As described, consistent efforts in Emancipatory and Multidimensional are a step in the right direction to engage and support all students to learn at high levels. Muñiz (2020) identified eight competencies in effective culturally responsive teaching and, like Gay (2018), is an extension of Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally responsive teaching research. Three of the eight competencies are vital to building culturally responsive teaching capacity and moving culturally responsive teaching from knowledge to practice to support equitable classrooms.

The first to note is to reflect on one's cultural lens. The self-reflection process allows educators to identify the parts they play in equity or inequity practices in their classrooms. The second key competency is drawing on students' culture to share curriculum and instruction. Again, to ensure all students are learning and engaged at high levels, especially students of color,

students should see diverse curriculum and instructional strategies regardless of classroom demographics. The last competency to note from Muñiz (2020) is recognizing and addressing bias in the system. Educators recognizing their bias is a start, but it is not enough. Similar to the FoP, which focuses on building teachers' culturally responsive teaching capacity, there must be action to develop and support equitable classrooms.

Ladson-Billings (1995, 2022) continues to share findings as culturally responsive teaching's focuses on educators' attitudes, dispositions, and overall mindsets to listen and adapt culturally responsive teaching practices when planning instruction and assessments. A significant takeaway from Ladson-Billings' research was the identification and definition of culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1995) believed culturally relevant pedagogy is more than just sprinkling student culture in lessons. Ladson-Billings defined culturally relevant pedagogy as one "that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp. 16–17). Ladson-Billings later notes that culturally relevant pedagogy should extend beyond individual student empowerment and move towards collective student empowerment. Ladson-Billings (1995) described a framework for culturally relevant pedagogy encompassing three components:

1. Culturally relevant pedagogues think in terms of long-term academic achievement and not merely end-of-year tests. After later adopters of culturally relevant pedagogy began to equate student achievement with standardized test scores or scripted curricula, Ladson-Billings (2022) clarified what more accurately described her intent: “student learning—what it is that students know and can do as a result of pedagogical interactions with skilled teachers” (p. 34).

2. Culturally relevant pedagogues focus on cultural competence, which "refers to helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving their socioeconomic status and making informed decisions about the lives they wish to lead" (Ladson-Billings, 2022, p. 36). Culturally relevant pedagogues understand that students must learn to navigate between home and school. Teachers must find ways to equip students with the knowledge needed to succeed in a school system that oppresses them (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2022).
3. Culturally relevant pedagogues seek to develop sociopolitical consciousness. After later adopters of culturally relevant pedagogy began to equate student achievement with standardized test scores or scripted curricula, Ladson-Billings (2022) clarified what more accurately described her intent: “student learning—what it is that students know and can do as a result of pedagogical interactions with skilled teachers” (p. 34).

Cultural competence means helping students “recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving their socioeconomic status and making informed decisions about the lives they wish to lead” (Ladson-Billings, 2022, p. 36). Culturally relevant pedagogues understand that students must learn to navigate between home and school. Teachers must find ways to equip students with the knowledge needed to succeed in a school system that oppresses them (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2022). Sociopolitical consciousness includes a teacher's obligation to find ways for "students to recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequalities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476). Sociopolitical consciousness is when teachers understand how

race, class, and gender influence their lives before implementing culturally responsive teaching in daily lessons.

Building Culturally Responsive Teaching Classrooms

Culturally responsive teaching will play a critical role in my PAR study. It involves working with teachers within the school building to build internal capacity for Culturally Responsive Curriculum, Practices, and Leadership to support equitable classrooms. Culturally responsive teaching principles will help the CRP understand diverse cultures and the significance students' culture plays in students' learning. The CPR needs to be open to different perspectives and be willing to expose students to different perspectives. It is essential to know and start with the end goal of equitable classrooms and begin to work backward to identify the needed people and resources, similar to the three stages of the Understand by Design framework. In the pre-cycle, the CPR identified equitable classrooms and the desired results. The CPR will determine which strategy or strategies to implement, collect data, and evaluate in the first cycle. The evidence may combine adapted rubrics, products, artifacts, or performance measures to identify whether equitable classrooms exist. The CPR will plan the learning experience and instruction for the CRP based on the artifacts and coding from the CLE in the last cycle. The evidence will help the CPR understand culturally responsive teaching and equitable practices at the school and classroom level through experiences and lesson activities to later transfer into daily classroom practices. (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Curriculum

Gay (2018) believes that when students' lived experiences are used as a reference for instruction, students have higher interests and learn more easily, resulting in improved academic achievement. School districts have established K-12 curriculum standards for teachers based on

students' grade level or subject matter. Educators must intentionally review textbooks and content resources to decide if the information and or resources recommended favor a specific group of people over another or support equitable classrooms. Educators should encourage other educators to allow student voices to shape assignments, projects, and assessments. While shaping instructional resources and delivery, educators must be mindful of culturally scaffolded connections between new academic concepts and students' lived experiences to ensure a high yield of student success.

Practices

How do we create a change for culturally responsive teaching practices in schools and classrooms? The schools' and teachers' practices must include self-reflections for educators' own bias, the content or resource selection process for instruction, how teacher-student relationships are formed, how academic and behavioral expectations are communicated to all students, and the quality of resources provided to help students meet those expectations. Instructional delivery practices must include increasing student engagement and providing instruction for multiple learning styles. Educators should learn about their students' cultural backgrounds and provide a collaborative classroom environment.

Leadership

How do we create this change in culturally responsive teaching practices in schools and classrooms? First, it will require a change in school leadership practices. Burns (1978) transformational leadership research believed that "leaders and followers help each other reach a higher level of moral or motivation" (p. 425). The leadership must motivate and inspire educators to go beyond themselves, consider what suits students' best, and focus on changing the process to be more effective for the student's interests versus perfecting the current process.

Consistent use of culturally responsive teaching practices will move the educational profession ahead of the status quo; as Burns (1978) stated, transformational leadership helps employees become better, stronger, and more autonomous in moving the organization ahead (Stevens, 2011).

Culturally Responsive Teaching Discussions

"Racism is always present, but seldom discussed" (Ladson-Billings, Tate, 1995) and our current societal norms make addressing racism difficult and uncomfortable. So, how do we create a safe space to engage in academic discourse to identify, address, learn, unlearn, and relearn about areas of equities and inequities in schools and classrooms? James Gee defines lifeworld discourse as “the way that we use language, fell, and think, act and interact, and so forth, in order to be an “everyday” (non-specialized) person”. Gee defined lifeworld “as different groups of people have different ways of being-doing “everyday people” (Gee, 2012, p. 3). Before educators can help and lead students into academic discourse, educators must help and lead each other in academic discourse. Educators, just like students, bring their interpretation of recent current events into schools and classrooms based on their identity kits (Gavrin, 2017). Tredway (1995) stated, "Socratic seminars are more of a structured discourse about ideas and moral dilemmas” that can engage students in intellectual discourse” (p. 1). Tredway goes on to say that this type of cooperative inquiry is “active learning” as it provides students multiple ways to build thought-provoking skills through analyzing, generalizing, applying, and gathering evidence for current and new ideas Tredway (1995). Strong (1996) believes Socratic seminars motivate "the acknowledgment and cultivation of one's voice while students become empowered by their ability and then develop a stake in the conversation because they are defending their identity itself" (p. 50). Gavrin’s (2017) theory that teachers need to engage each other in academic

discourse supports the idea that teachers will benefit from Socratic seminar principles described by Tredway (1995) and Strong (1996). Active learning applies to students and adults participating in Socratic seminars as conversations around race and equity can help one better understand one's identity and the identity of others.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 provided insight into influential culturally responsive teaching researchers' perspectives, such as Ladson-Billings, Gay, and Muñiz. Chapter 2 also shared literature on the history and evolution of culturally responsive teaching principles, core culturally responsive teaching competencies, what culturally responsive teaching practices resemble in curriculum, school and teacher practices, and the leadership required to lead culturally responsive teaching practice changes in schools and classrooms. The literature identified Socratic seminars as an approach to creating gracious space for academic discourse for educators and students to develop and support equitable schools and classrooms.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

This study examines how teachers develop and implement culturally responsive teaching to support equitable classrooms. Specifically, I designed a participatory action research (PAR) study to work with a set of teachers to build their culturally responsive teaching capacities to select diverse content intentionally, plan inclusive lessons, and deliver rigorous instruction that supports equitable classrooms. As a result, the intention was to support teachers in developing daily culturally responsive teaching practices. This chapter explains the research design to answer the research questions and build teacher capacity to practice culturally responsive teaching.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research provides a scientific approach to exploring and understanding a particular issue. Qualitative research methodology helps researchers describe and understand specific interventions of a phenomenon. Additionally, qualitative research "honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of reporting the complexity of a situation" (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 4). My research utilizes a specific qualitative design, participatory action research.

Participatory Action Research

The PAR study used a qualitative research design to explore the focus of practice and research questions. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that, "no one discipline has the right to qualitative methods, nor does qualitative have a cookie-cutter research method that belongs solely to qualitative research methods" (p. 17). Participatory Activist Research is an extension of PAR, and it is one of many activist tools that take the researcher beyond the research's what and why, and into an exploration of whom the research is for. Participatory Activist Research is an

option for researchers seeking “understanding and facilitating social change through research” (Hunter et al., 2013, p. 1).

The PAR is a project and a study as “the research participants themselves either are in control of the research or are participants in the design and methodology of the research” (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 1). After each research cycle, the co-practitioner researchers will complete analysis to gain knowledge and seek a solution to the research questions. The PAR findings will use evidence from meeting notes, observations, conversations, reflective memos, and other narrative and visual sources that provide ongoing evidence. The PAR study consisted of three cycles of inquiry using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) framework. The PDSA framework gives teachers the “ability to design, adapt, and refine effective instructional practices that tightly couples teacher learning to practice and is essential for teacher learning” (Lozano, 2017, p. 27).

Lozano (2017) states that the PDSA process allowed CPRs to “learn fast, fail fast, and improve quickly” (p. 29) from each selected practice. This PAR project was completed with a Pre-Cycle followed by two PAR cycles, as shown in Table 2. As the lead researcher, the CPR group and I will seek to “promote understanding about how to transform current structures, relationships, and conditions which constrain development and reform” (Higgs & Titchen, 2001, p. 49). The PAR study’s two primary qualitative methodologies were Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Community Learning Exchanges. PAR is a process that develops practical knowledge while pursuing worthwhile human purposes (Bradbury & Reason, 2006). The CLE axioms and PAR practices intertwine and are exemplars to guide research. Just as the PAR emphasizes listening and learning from each other during the research planning, data collecting, analyzing, and action steps, the CLE axioms emphasize learning together in public through storytelling and conversations. Figure 4 illustrates the CLE’s five axioms. CLEs provide “theory

Table 2

Research Timeline

Research Cycle	Key Personnel	Time Period	Activities
PAR Pre-Cycle and setting the context	CPR Team	August 2021 – February 2022	● Engage in monthly CLE pedagogies ● CPR Meetings
PAR Cycle One	CPR Team	March 2022 – November 2022	In addition to activities in PAR Pre-Cycle, Engage in classroom observations ● Analyze data from CRP meetings and classroom observations ● CPR members will identify and implement culturally responsive practices
PAR Cycle Two	CPR	January 2023 - April 2023	In addition to activities in PAR Pre-Cycle and PAR Cycle One, these are additions: ● Analyze artifacts from CPR meetings and classroom observations ● Analyze the CPR team's understanding and implementation of culturally responsive teaching

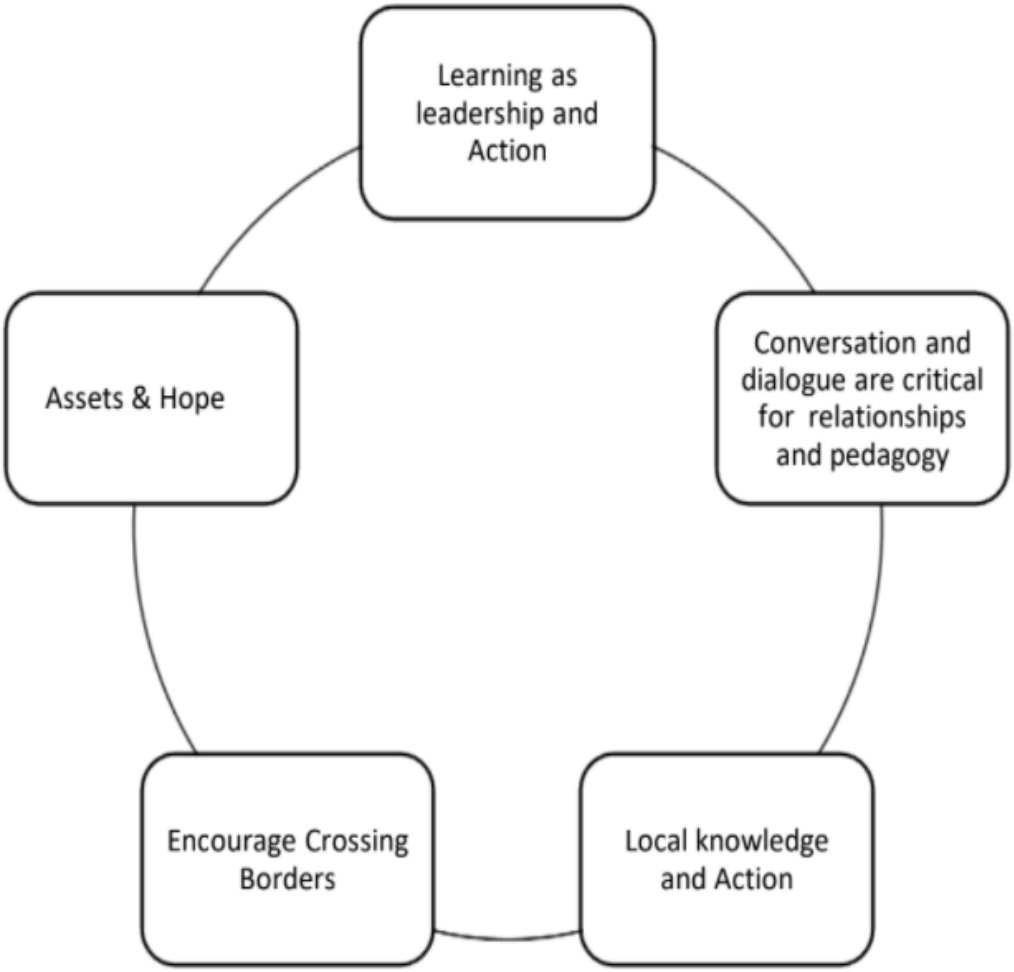

Figure 4. CLE Axioms.

and pedagogical ideas for how to honor the wisdom of people and the power of place to improve the knowledge and skills of all in the learning environment" (Garcia, 2019, p. 61). One CLE axiom encourages crossing borders to engage in dialogue around participants' life experiences and the life experiences of others. Researchers need to be cognizant that conversations build relationships. In return, the relationships may create a safe dialogue space. This safe space will allow researchers to move towards self-reflection and problem-solving.

Building personal capacity to create an environment to help the CPR see themselves as being fully engaged in the process will yield the best opportunity for learning to improve (Bryk et al., 2015). According to Bryk et al. (2015), "…developing the necessary technical knowledge to transform good ideas into practices that work, building human capabilities necessary for this learning to spread" (p. 32) is a crucial step. This concept serves as a reminder as there has been little or no significant return on most educational reform ideas due to a lack of understanding of improvement science.

The CPR will seek to build capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices to develop and support equitable classrooms. The CPR must move beyond culturally responsive teaching knowledge and put the culturally responsive teaching knowledge into action; as Freire (1968) states, "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world to transform it" (p. 79). The CPR's actions will consist of academic discourse among colleagues and students, intentional culturally responsive teaching lesson planning and delivery, data collection, and analysis of reflective memos, CLEs artifacts, and other documents identified by the CPR. The PAR's collaborative work is instrumental in the study to allow the CPR to reflect on current practices, learn in public, and put learning into action. The PAR's collaborative reflection is a form of "self-reflection problem solving" (McKernan, 1988, p. 184). The self-

reflection opportunities will influence the researcher as a leader to identify areas of strength and improvement. Once identified, the lead researcher must act on the newly gained knowledge and move into action.

Research Questions and Timeline

The PAR study's overarching question is: *How do teachers develop and implement culturally responsive teaching to develop equitable classrooms?* The PAR will participate in multiple cycles of inquiry: Fall 2021 (pre-cycle), Spring 2022 (PAR Cycle One), a short cycle in Summer 2022, and Fall 2022 (PAR Cycle Two). Each inquiry cycle will produce evidence to be analyzed, decide the next steps, and share beyond the current setting. Table 3 summarizes each research cycle with a description of the sub-questions, the data sources, and the time period.

Context

The study context is A.G. Cox Middle School (AGC) in eastern North Carolina. AGC began as Winterville Academy with just two teachers in 1865. Winterville Academy was renamed Winterville High School in 1901. The school was finally renamed A. G. Cox Middle school in 1974 after the founder of Winterville, NC, Amos Graves Cox. AGC is part of the Pitt County School system and serves approximately 876 students from the city and surrounding area. AGC has 55% students of color, making equitable and equitable classrooms critical for all students to learn at high levels.

Participants, Data Collection, and Analysis

The following section presents the heart of the study: the participants, the data collection procedures, and the analysis. I began by selecting participant researchers and providing insight into the lead researcher, creating a space for participants' honest reflections. The following section reviews how data was collected throughout the study, analyzed, and coded to understand

Table 3

Research Questions and Data Sources

Research Sub-questions	Data Sources	Triangulated Data	Time Period
To what extent do educators make classroom curricular and pedagogical decisions to develop and implement culturally responsive teaching practices supporting equitable classrooms?	CPR Meetings Interviews	Reflective Memos	Pre-cycle: Fall 2021 & Spring 2022
To what extent do teachers develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions around culturally responsive teaching to support equitable classrooms?	CPR Meetings Classroom Observations Conversations CLE	Reflective Memos	Cycle I & II: Spring 2022 & Spring 2023
To what extent does my leadership in culturally responsive teaching support teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices?	CPR Meetings	Reflective Memos	Fall 2021-Spring 2023

better how to build culturally responsive teaching capacity over time. Then it discusses the assets and challenges at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Then final section presents the cycles of inquiry and briefly describes each tool used to collect data. The last part of this section will explain the data analysis process used to define codes, categories, and themes to make informed decisions for action steps.

Participants

In selecting teachers for the CPR group for my PAR, I recruited various educators from the A.G. Cox Middle School staff ranging from assistant principal to media coordinator assistant. Because this study emphasizes building teachers' culturally responsive teaching capacity, I emailed A.G. Cox Middle School's staff with a description of the study and the desired qualifications for inclusion to solicit CPR participants. The selected participants were qualified and committed to the common goal of developing and supporting equitable classrooms.

Once the CPR participants were selected, teacher volunteers were solicited to allow classroom data collection. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), participants should be purposefully selected to help the researchers understand the problems and questions. In this study, the data collection primarily focused on classroom teachers in the CPR group who participated in the CLE pedagogies during CPR meetings. The collected data was analyzed to measure teachers' culturally responsive teaching capacity and ability to transfer culturally responsive teaching classroom practices to support equitable classrooms. Selecting teachers open to attempting culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms is critical.

The goal was to have four to six staff members voluntarily serve on the CPR and a subset of two or three teachers from the CPR who would willingly allow classroom data collection. Each participant volunteer signed a consent form (see Appendix D) explaining IRB guidelines,

emphasizing that participant volunteers may discontinue participating in the research study at any time during the study.

The CPR allowed the lead researcher to gain insight into how to change daily practices to develop and support equitable schools and classrooms. Implementing culturally responsive teaching daily practices and identifying resistance to change culturally responsive teaching daily practices are critical components of the research. As the lead researcher, I valued the perspectives and experiences each co-participant contributed to the CPR. The PAR study will focus on educators that work at the same school, only serving the sixth through eighth grades.

Data Collection

The ultimate goal of this PAR research was to identify daily practices that support equitable schools and classrooms. Key qualitative data artifacts were CPR meeting minutes, PLC minutes, reflective memos, CLE artifacts, lesson plans, teacher observations, and post-observation conversations. In combination, these data points provided a variety of insight into participants' definitions of culturally responsive teaching, their current teaching practices, student expectations, and the mindset of possibilities to develop and support equitable classrooms.

Data collection for the PAR study occurred over 21 months, from August 2021 to April 2023. I planned and facilitated a CLE with the CPR team in Spring 2022. Reflective memos and artifacts were collected, coded, themed, and analyzed throughout this PAR study.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), qualitative research involves three basic types of data collection procedures: (a) qualitative observations, which involve the use of field notes in which activities from the research site are recorded in structured and unstructured ways; (b) qualitative interviews, which involve semi-structured and generally open-ended questions to

elicit views and opinions from participants; and (c) documents, including journal entries, email, letters, and meeting minutes. In this study, I collected various data such as classroom observations, post-conference conversations, lesson plans, artifacts from CLEs, and documents such as CPR meeting notes. In addition, I wrote and analyzed reflective memos. The CPR completed several triangulations of the recoded data to better understand how culturally responsive teaching, change leadership, and academic discourse impact equitable classroom development and support. All data is triangulated, and member checks are used for validating and confirming the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data triangulation also deepens the understanding of the research group. Each data collection activity is explained in detail.

Classroom Observations

Observations provided evidence of the teachers' transfer of culturally responsive teaching practices. I observed the classrooms of three specific CPR members to collect data and analyze culturally responsive teaching practices toward an equitable classroom. Observations were my inquiry into how to intentionally select and deliver diverse text in an equitable classroom. The Observation Tool Calling-On Type 2 – Selective Verbatim protocol from Project I^4 was used to collect data during classroom observations (see Appendix E). This tool has a section for the observer to document the time and the evidence. The classroom observation tool has specific areas for coding the collected data and emphasizes that the coding process needs to occur after the observation and not during the classroom observation.

Community Learning Exchanges

The Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms and pedagogies are used throughout the study. CLEs, as a structure, serve as a methodology for conducting research. The experiences, wisdom, and childhood spirit of the CPR will allow people closest to the FoP to

engage and activate from the heart for culturally responsive teaching development individually and as a group. The CLEs will generate personal narratives, stories, visual artifacts, etc. The CLE protocol from Project I^4 (see Appendix F) was used to facilitate participants' conversations and collect artifacts for later data analysis. Participants in CLEs were required to sign the consent form associated with this study (see Appendix D).

Reflective Memos

Reflective memos are opportunities for written reflection about the research process (Saldaña, 2016) and included notes from formal meetings with the CPR team and informal conversations with staff. I used memos, which documented my reflections about my activities, thoughts, conversations, feelings, and connections focused on equity. These memos, triangulated with other qualitative data, supported the evidence for the PAR study.

Interviews

Individual interviews with CPR participants will be conducted at the beginning and end of the study. Throughout the course of these interviews, participants were encouraged to reflect upon their personal insights, experiences, and the evolving nature of their engagement with culturally responsive pedagogy. The questions posed encompassed a range of topics, including participants' perceptions of culturally responsive teaching, the strategies they employed to integrate culturally responsive elements into their instructional practices, challenges encountered during implementation, and the perceived impact of these practices on student learning outcomes. The Group Interview Protocol (see Appendix I) from Project I^4 was used to conduct participant interviews.

Data Analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that “systematically evaluating or critiquing a qualitative study involves considering the overall design of the study, as well as the rigor with which the study was conducted” (p. 72). The CPR collected and analyzed data from multiple sources, such as reflective memos, questionnaires, CLE, CPR reflections, and artifacts during the PAR study. The research design will allow analytical concepts to be developed and expressed using participants’ words, meanings, and perspectives (Bell & Bryman, 2007; Suddaby, 2006).

A “code Is a word, phrase, or sentence that represents aspects of data and captures the essence or features of data” (Saldaña, 2016, p, 83). Coding is cyclical progress, sometimes called a feedback loop (Adu, 2019). Saldaña (2016) emphasized that data is not coded; data is "recoded" and stated that coding involves the comparison of “data to data, data to code, code to code, code to a category, category to category, and back to data” (p. 58). A codebook was created and used throughout this study to code, recode, and modify codes as data comes in and is analyzed. Figure 5 illustrates the coding to theorizing process, which emphasizes reducing data while not losing data. The first coding stage is to capture participant’s realities, review the data, and tally the frequency of codes. Anchor code categories are identified based on the code trends. Next, categories were synthesized to determine themes. Identified themes were used to answer the research questions. The knowledge gained and identified throughout this PAR study was instrumental in exploring the next steps for each PDSA cycle.

Study Considerations

As the school principal and lead researcher for the PAR project, I came to the study with biases based on lived experiences and positionality. My position as the school principal and its related power requires me to be conscious of my actions during the study to ensure that all

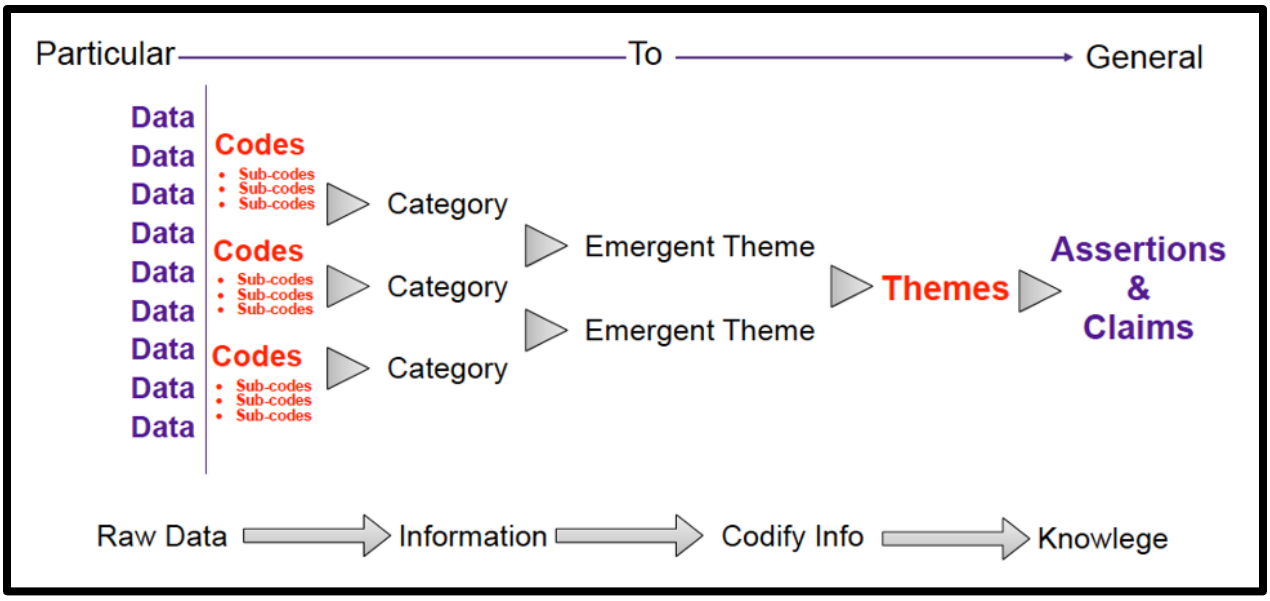

Figure 5. Diagram of coding using Saldaña's terminology.

participants are comfortable participating and speaking out. Therefore, before participation, all assistant principal and teacher participants were asked to sign informed consent forms without any coercion or sense of commitment; in addition, all participants were able to terminate consent and participation in the study at any time during the study without retaliation. The measures taken to address positionality are also intended to reduce bias (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

Limitations

As with all research, this research does have some limitations. First, the PAR study was limited to participants from a middle school staff in eastern North Carolina that worked under my direct supervision. Therefore, the recommendations from this PAR study may not be generalizable to all elementary or secondary schools or the principals that govern them. Second, my presence as a researcher and direct supervisor may have influenced participants' comments and actions. I overcame this limitation by intentionally building rapport with all participants in each participant's unique work environment with the intent for participants to share transparent perspectives and reflections. These multiple observations will make participants more comfortable interacting naturally in my presence and within the CPR. Another limitation is each participant's varied levels knowledge and experiences with equitable classroom practices.

The CPR participants did not all understand equity practices or resources used to support classrooms, especially in the research-focused fields of culturally responsive teaching, change leadership, and academic discourse. Another limitation is the small sample size used for the PAR study. There was no indication that having more or fewer participants in the CoP would have changed the findings of the study, but it still should be noted as a limitation. This PAR study was limited by the allotted time to do the research, as the long-term benefits of equity practices would

take longer than 10 months to see a pattern of positive results. Still, it highlights themes and an emerging framework based on data analysis.

Validity

During this study, I ensured that data collection and analysis procedures exemplified sound qualitative research practices to establish validity and trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe the worth of a research study is based on its trustworthiness. The objective for the CPR group was to learn together using identified data collection tools: CRP meetings and agendas, classroom observations, post-observation conversations, interviews, CLE artifacts, and reflective memos. Throughout the study, I triangulated the data with the CRP group, conducted member checks, and wrote reflective memos to discover aspects of the study that may have been both obvious and hidden knowledge. Carter et al. (2014) shared that "triangulation is the use of multiple data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena" (p. 546). This phenomenon has led the CPR group to understand culturally responsive teaching practices and develop and support equitable classrooms.

The PAR study occurred at a sixth through eighth grade middle school in Pitt County Schools in eastern North Carolina. One should note that the study findings might be generalized to schools in eastern North Carolina with similar student and staff demographics. One should take caution when replicating and applying the research findings to other schools outside of this location and with different school and staff demographics. Some research findings apply to all schools when adjusted to meet the needs of individual students and staff.

Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

Before data collection, the research proposal was reviewed by the East Carolina University ethics review board and IRB (see Appendix A). The researcher submitted a paper and

electronic version to the district leadership for research request approval. The research used an electronic version for individual participant consent approval. The district and participants' research consent forms explained the purpose of the research PAR study and its significance to positively impact educators' and students' learning, especially students that have been historically marginalized. All participants were advised that their participation in the PAR study was voluntary. They could withdraw from the PAR study without consequences until the research PAR study was submitted to the university. The coding allowed comments by each participant to be used without revealing the identity of the participants. The key code and the list of individual participants will be kept safe electronically within the researcher's home without access to any external individuals. These documents are all kept in an online digital file which only the researcher has the password to access. All information obtained remained confidential, and there were no security breaches of individual participants' identities or research information. As the principal, I must reflect on my practices to avoid persuading the study. I only used open-ended questions for CPR meeting activities. A few times, I modeled responses before asking CPR members' responses and there were other times I was the last to respond to ensure I did not persuade the CRP team. This approach communicated that I was learning with the group. There are no foreseeable risks for the district or participants participating in the PAR study. There was no compensation to the district or participants in this PAR study.

Conclusion

This study uses PAR, CLEs, and document analysis to explore how teachers can build culturally responsive teaching capacity to develop and support equitable classrooms. The CPR team included three eighth-grade Language Arts A.G. Cox teachers and the lead researcher. Classroom data was only collected and analyzed from their classrooms. The CPR Team

participated in three meetings in the pre-cycle and used CLE pedagogies to understand culturally responsive teaching practices and equitable classrooms. The CPR team participated in a CLE in the first cycle to identify CLE pedagogies for teachers to implement and document their use and effectiveness of the identified pedagogies in the classrooms. Project I^4 observation tools collected and analyzed data from classroom observations and post-conference conversations. Follow-up conversations were designed to engage teachers' academic discourse to implement and sustain culturally responsive teaching practices toward equitable classrooms. Artifacts from the CLE were collected and analyzed by the lead researcher independently. The CPR team used Project I^4 academic discourse protocols to analyze the data collected. The research was designed to allow researchers to reflect on their current and new practices. Chapter 4 will provide results from the study and show that the study's methodology was followed as described in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 4: PAR PRE-CYCLE

The PAR Pre-Cycle occurred during the Fall 2021 semester in an attempt to address the four research areas of study: (1) deepen the Culturally Responsive Teaching knowledge, skills, and disposition with the CPR team, (2) develop an understanding of equitable classroom practices, (3) identify current equity practices in their current classrooms, and (4) strengthen my culturally responsive teaching leadership to help teachers sustain equitable classrooms. First, we participated in PAR activities to create a safe environment built on trust and respect. Second, the CPR team utilized learning in public protocols with current culturally responsive teaching literature to investigate best practices. Third, we discussed what culturally responsive teaching practices might look like in classrooms. Finally, I examined my leadership to support the actions and process of culturally responsive practices in classrooms. This chapter describes the context of the study, the Pre-Cycle process, the data collection and analysis, lessons I learned as the researcher, and planning for PAR Cycle 1.

Context (place)

A.G. Cox Middle School in Winterville, NC, is one of 40 schools in the Pitt County School District in Eastern North Carolina. The school opened in 1865 as Winterville Academy, a two-teacher boarding school for white students. In 1900, Winterville Academy expanded into a new building and relocated to the current location on land donated by Amos Graves Cox and Dr. Beriah T. Cox. In February 1901, the name changed to Winterville High School while continuing to serve only white students. In 1974, the Pitt County School System desegregated and transitioned Winterville High School to A.G. Cox Middle school. A.G. Cox Middle School is named after Amos Graves Cox. During this time, A.G. Cox Middle School was integrated, served sixth through eighth grade students, and enrolled students beyond the Winterville

community for the first time. In 2019, Pitt County passed a bond to renovate and add an additional wing to the original school building. Next, I describe the staff, student demographics, and the composition of the PAR study CPR group members.

A.G. Cox Middle School Demographics

A.G. Cox Middle School serves over 900 students and is the largest of six traditional middle schools serving the sixth through eighth grades in the Pitt County School System. The school employs 31 core subject teachers, 11 exceptional needs teachers, 12 elective teachers, two counselors, 13 support staff, one principal, and two assistant principals. The staff diversity consists of eight staff of color and 15 males. The school's student demographics include 65.1% of students of color and 34.9% white, as shown in Table 4. Black and multiracial students were the top two student groups for students of color; the male and female students' breakdown is 54% and 46%, respectively. The free and reduced student percentage was 44.5%.

Context (people) Co-Practitioner Research Group

The Co-Practitioner Research Group consisted of three eighth-grade Language Arts teachers and myself, the principal. Table 5 provides a brief description of each CPR member. I am completing my sixth year as principal of A.G. Cox. Previously, I served two years as an assistant principal at DH Conley High School in Pitt County Schools and two years as a principal at Greene County Middle School. In addition, I served three years as an assistant principal, four years teaching high school math, and two years teaching middle school math in the Brunswick County School system.

Table 4

2019-2020 Student Demographics by Grade

Grade	AMIN	ASIAN	HISP	BLCK	HI	WHTE	MULT	TOTAL
6th	1	4	14	140	0	112	26	297
7th	0	3	12	118	0	90	19	242
8th	2	6	13	157	0	85	20	283
Total	3	13	39	415	0	287	65	822
Total %	0.36%	1.58%	4.74%	50.49%	0.00%	34.91%	7.91%	

Table 5

Co-Practitioner Research Team Members

Name	Description
Teacher A	Black male in his late twenties and grew up in a small town in rural NC. He is completing his third year at A.G. Cox. He had previously taught ninth and tenth high school English for six years.
Teacher B	White male in his mid-thirties who grew up in New York. He first served as a support staff while facilitating a current event reading class before transitioning to his third year as a Language Arts teacher at A.G. Cox.
Teacher C	White female in her early fifties, 25 years of teaching experience (Special Needs, AIG, and Language Arts) Completing her fourth year at A.G. Cox as an ELA teacher. She taught my kids in 6th grade in another district

PAR Pre-Cycle Process

Activities

The Pre-Cycle occurred August-December 2021. The team participated in two CPR meetings and several individual equity-based conversations. The CPR team created a gracious space and used personal narratives to develop trust during each meeting. After CPR meetings and individual conversations, I wrote reflective memos centered around equity discussions, CPR group decisions, and the impact on my equity leadership. Next, I describe the CPR meetings and individual equity conversations.

CPR Meetings

I facilitated three CPR meetings during the Pre-Cycle. During the first meeting, each participant was allowed to share their voice and answer the prompt: "What life experience do you recall that involved equity?" The responses were personal and led to insightful and profound conversations. The second CPR meeting included only two CPR participants. We had a conversation around the question: "What does equity look like in the classroom?" Each member had an opportunity to share during the open dialogue. In the third CPR meeting, the CPR team watched two videos to build culturally responsive teaching capacity. After watching each video, the CPR members responded to the following prompts: "I heard, and I wonder." Responses were captured in Jamboard (see Figure 6) and showed the CPR team's understanding of culturally responsive teaching practice. I took notes during the CPR meetings and used personal narratives, field notes, and reflective memos as artifacts. I coded the artifacts after the meetings. The CPR meetings provided authentic data that was analyzed to determine the CPR team's understanding of culturally responsive teaching at the beginning of the study and to determine the CPR team’s next steps to build culturally responsive teaching

Figure 6. CPR reflection statements and questions on CRT.

capacity. In the next section, I will discuss how I used gracious space, personal narratives, field notes, and reflective memo artifacts and how I coded the artifacts.

Gracious Space

During the previous five years, I intentionally focused on creating a Gracious Space of respect and trust with all teachers in the school. Hughes (2012) defines *gracious space* as "a spirit and a setting where we invite the 'stranger' and embrace 'learning in public'" (p. 11). The CPR meetings were an extension of the Gracious Space environment created throughout the previous five years. I believe cultivating trust and relationships is an ongoing process to create a safe space for dialogue. Therefore, I emphasized storytelling and utilized personal narratives and protocols to ensure the team continued to bond and be in a gracious space. Storytelling provided a deeper understanding of each participant and a better understanding of the CPR group as a whole.

Personal Narratives

Tien (2021), states, "when humans gather to remember our lived experiences and connections, to write our stories, and then share and mix them together, we as humans let new worlds erupt." Personal narratives allowed CPR members to reflect and share their personal experiences. Personal narratives became individual and group learning experiences for participants. In addition, personal narratives gave each CPR member a voice which helps to honor their lived experiences and allow others to gain a different perspective of the experience. These personal narratives provided vital data points for coding and analysis.

Equity Conversations

The field notes documented my reflections on equity conversations and experiences with family members and colleagues. The equity conversations included short conversations with

family members about a particular current event or ideology related to equitable practices and colleagues' discussions during principal meetings. Equity conversations and experiences with family and colleagues generated natural conversations that led to authentic data. The field notes contained descriptive information to develop context of the experience or interaction, followed by reflective information about my thoughts, ideas, and questions about the experience or interaction. I analyzed and coded field notes based on my experience with Saldaña's coding process. I found more comfort with additional coding practice and embraced Saldaña (2016), who said, "coding is not a precise science; it is primarily an interpretive act."

Reflective Memos

Reflective memos allowed me to reflect on the conversations and experiences related to the PAR study. I engaged in several one-on-one and group conversations with the CPR team, other school staff, and family members. Reflective memos allowed me to document my reflections on the content of the meetings and conversation with participants when engaged in equity talks. I also participated in equity-related graduate school assignments, school and district-level meetings, and conversations with family and friends. Many activities centered around current events, my PAR research project, equity in education, and social justice. Reflective memos from these activities served as a record and baseline for my leadership growth. The learning gained from the reflective memos, field notes, and ongoing self-reflection about culturally responsive teaching research provided a deeper understanding of the complexities of equity. The Pre-Cycle activities provided artifacts that I coded. Next, I describe the coding process, which led to emergent categories.

Coding

The coding process undergirds the data analysis process. I utilized Saldaña's coding methods and manually coded the data. I inserted the codes and supporting evidence into a codebook. The process included identifying codes from the raw data and grouping similar codes. I engaged in a second and third round of coding for greater clarification of the data. I color-coded similar codes into the groups. Saldaña (2016) states, "coding is not just labeling, it leads you from the data to the idea and from the idea to all the data pertaining to the idea" (p. 9). As I identified each code and made connections, I examined common patterns in the codes. I identified emergent categories based on the frequency and similarities of codes. After several coding sessions, the codes and codebook evolved. The three most frequent codes that consistently emerged from the data were: (1) create a safe space, (2) allow student voice, and (3) invest in student success. Table 6 shows examples of evidence for three codes and the emergent category: attributes of an equitable classroom. I analyzed the notes from the CPR meetings, field notes, and reflective memos to organize and identify the most frequent codes.

Emergent Categories

I identified two emergent categories in the PAR Pre-Cycle data analysis: teachers identified three key attributes of an equitable classroom and teachers are questioning their practices. In addition, I identified three potential categories to notice as the research evolves: teachers collaborate on culturally responsive teaching, people are influenced by their experiences, and stereotype awareness. Table 7 illustrates the emergent categories, potential categories, and their frequency from the Pre-Cycle activities. The evidence supports two of the PAR research questions:

Table 6

Codebook Evidence Sample

Code	Codebook Evidence
create a safe space	focus on how the classroom feels
	making it (classroom) a welcoming place to enter
	focus on how the climate of the classroom feels
	allow students to manage group work
	importance of safety stood out
	involve student personal culture!
	they(students) need a place they feel able to stretch their knowledge and inquisitiveness
	decorating a classroom
	creating a classroom climate that is inviting
	it (classroom) shows a reflection of the students themselves
allow student voice	involve student personal culture
	seeing how the kids would like to be taught or want to learn
	student relationships
	actually, letting them (students) teach something

Table 7

Frequency Chart of Emergent Categories

Emergent Categories	CPR Mtg #1	CPR Mtg #2	CPR Mtg #3	Overall Total
Category 1: Attributes of an Equitable Classroom				
create a safe space		10	9	19
allow student voice		6	4	10
invest in student success		10	4	14
Total		26	17	33
Category 2: Teachers questioning practices				
questioning content delivery that promotes student thinking		6	2	8
questioning how to meet their students' need		6	3	9
questioning traditional teaching practices			3	3
how to grow and build CRT capacity			4	4
Total		12	12	24
Potential Category A: Teachers Collaborate on culturally responsive teaching				
staff conversations	1			1
staff has a voice	1	1	1	3
desire to learn culturally responsive teaching pedagogies			1	1
Potential Category B: People are influenced by their experiences				
low expectations by others	4			4
questioning belonging	2			2
Potential Category C: Stereotype Awareness				
deficit mindset	4			4
low expectations by others	1			1

1. To what extent do teachers develop knowledge and skills to develop and support equitable classrooms?
2. To what extent do educators make classroom curricular and pedagogical decisions to develop and support equitable classrooms?

I will provide evidence and examples supporting the two emergent categories aimed at developing and supporting equitable classrooms.

Attributes of Equitable Classrooms

The CPR team identified attributes of an equitable classroom. Equitable classrooms are critical to ensure that a student's potential is attainable. Russell (2020) states that "teachers can create an equitable and inclusive classroom through the art and actions of culturally responsive teaching and having a caring attitude for their students." In defining the attributes of an equitable classroom, three attributes were most common: (1) creating a safe space, (2) investing in students' success, and (3) allowing student voice. As the CPR team builds their capacity and skills in culturally responsive teaching, they define the attributes of an equitable classroom and the importance each attribute contributes to an equitable classroom. Next, I describe each attribute using evidence from the codes, cite examples of use, and show how the attribute connects to the research.

Creating a Safe Space

Creating a safe space is essential to creating an equitable classroom. The CPR team described the classroom environment as the space teachers create for students to feel welcome and the description appeared 19 times in the codes. Examples of teachers' comments to create a safe space were: "allow student's feelings," "allow student's opinions," and "allow student risk-taking." The CPR team believed that if a classroom is safe, students are allowed to be their true

selves. A safe space will increase opportunities for effective instruction to occur, which in turn allows students access to engaging and appropriate curriculum (Medina, 2021). The teachers also stated the importance of creating a safe space, similar to Cohn-Vargas and Steele's (2016) thought that when students feel the classroom is a safe place to learn and their teacher cares about them, they are more likely to follow procedures and expectations. Gaddy (2020) also supports the CPR members' beliefs to create a safe space and takes it a bit further and states, "...that fear or awareness of stereotypes attributed to a major group, particularly negative ones, can adversely affect the performance of students in the classroom" (p. 17). If a teacher contributes to positive or negative stereotypes in the classroom, knowingly or unknowingly, it creates psychological fear for students. This psychological fear hinders a student's concentration, motivation, and working memory capacity, which limits students from reaching their learning potential (Hammond, 2014). Creating a safe classroom is a foundational attribute of an equitable classroom and is free of positive and negative stereotype threats.

Investing in Students' Success

Investing in students' success (ISS) is another key attribute of an equitable classroom that will allow students to reach their learning potential. Teachers investing in students' success is critical to creating an equitable classroom, as teachers' beliefs can foster a learning environment and allows students to reach their full potential (Belcher, 2022). Invest in students' success appeared 14 times in the codes. Some statements of CPR members' descriptions of invest in student success are:

- Give everyone (student) support based on their needs.
- This (assignment) is not going to be a grade. I just need to know where you are.
- Coach students to reach their academic potential.

- Provide (students) opportunities to redo assignments.
- Meet them (students) where they are.
- Let us look at everything, talk about it, then see what we think.
- Growth is more important than proficiency.

These statements imply that teachers believe students can learn and bring a variety of knowledge to the classroom. Teachers' expectations impact students reaching their full potential, another factor in investing in students' success. Belcher (2022) shows that teachers setting high student expectations are related to high student success, and teachers with low student expectations are related to depressed student success. The CPR team identified investing in students' success as a critical factor in an equitable classroom, and teacher expectations impact their investment in students' success.

Allowing Student Voice

Allowing student voice is an essential attribute in creating an equitable classroom. The final attribute, allowing the student voice, was coded 10 times. As described by the CPR team, it is essential that when educators provide opportunities for student voice, it helps to acknowledge the students' contribution to classroom and schoolwide learning. Some examples of teacher statements were: "all (students) talk to a partner, then talk to the whole group," "allow different student views," and "all I do is allow students to do is talk." Torquato (2021) states, "when educators focus on the empowerment and honoring of student voice, students become stakeholders in the culture of caring not only in the classroom but within the entire school" (p. 26). In the next section, I will discuss the second category, Teachers questioning practices, as it emerged in the data

Teachers Questioning Practices

Teachers are questioning their teaching practices to ensure maximum student learning. Teachers questioning practices is critical in creating equitable classrooms and emerged as a category. Teachers questioning practices appeared 24 times from two main codes. The two codes within teachers questioning practices with the most frequency were teachers questioning how to meet their students' needs (13 codes) and teachers questioning the delivery of the content that promotes student thinking (11 codes). Teachers were questioning how to meet student needs as one CPR member said there is no "plug and play" in education. CPR members asked how to teach students, help students see their capacity, and address student needs. Teachers questioning their content delivery to promote students' thinking is a step beyond just planning a lesson. There is a focus on student critical thinking as one CPR member asked, "how do we teach students to be critical learners." Teachers questioning how to grow and build culturally responsive teaching capacity is a subcode to note even though it was not an emergent category. Teachers questioning their teaching practices is instrumental in gaining a better understanding of educational practices to become more effective in meeting the needs of students. This type of questioning also helps to improve the delivery of content that promotes student thinking. In addition, questioning teacher practices is also an opportunity for self-reflection, as self-reflection promotes growth. The following list provides examples of teachers questioning their practices:

- What if we look at the same information from a different perspective?
- How do we teach students to be critical learners?
- Do you believe it is a challenge to teach students to think?
- I feel it would be a difficult learning environment if students are not given the opportunity to think or see different viewpoints.

- Should we consider it teaching excellence if we're teaching at high levels but unable to facilitate student thinking?

Hammond (2014) states, "we have to confront our discomfort through self-reflection and analysis of our underlying assumptions in order to become aware of the unconscious biases that influence our teaching." Teachers questioning practices provide opportunities for educators to examine their personal beliefs and practices, which is a step towards becoming culturally responsive and leads to equitable classrooms. Teachers questioning personal practices will allow teachers opportunities to gain a better understanding of self and an understanding of best practices to create and support equitable classrooms.

Reflection and Planning

There are two focus areas to address as the research moves into Cycle One. First, I will mindfully focus on the learning and action of the CPR group toward creating and supporting equitable classrooms. Second, I will allow the data to guide the study and intentionally collect and organize data after CPR meetings and equity conversations. My analysis during and following PAR Pre-Cycle suggested that the CPR group collectively built culturally responsive teaching knowledge and began to name attributes of an equitable classroom. The CPR group will continue to build their culturally responsive teaching knowledge and skills as well as discuss attributes to look for during observations in Cycle One. Once attributes were identified, the CPR group will develop an observation tool to document evidence. I must be mindful and cautious while guiding the CPR group and study, not to persuade the CPR group but listen and continue the collaborative learning.

I have gained a better understanding of how to code the data and how to continue conversations centered around equity. Coding is challenging due to my lack of experience in

research and coding. I had a light bulb moment while discussing the research data with my research coach. I discovered and accepted that coding is a process that takes time to do well, and the research evidence is not the code. This realization occurred while doing the third round of coding for the same data set. During the original coding, the naming of codes was too vague. I used the evidence as the code to create an emergent category versus using the code to create emergent categories. After this realization, I recoded data, up to four times, before developing possible categories. Another critical self-reflection I discovered is to avoid certain words while discussing culturally responsive teaching to keep culturally responsive teaching conversations moving forward. I gained a better understanding of my role as a researcher, culturally responsive teaching, and my leadership.

I periodically reviewed coding as, after several attempts in the Pre-Cycle, I began to develop a better understanding of the coding process. I realized the evidence is different from the code, and multiple rounds of coding may be required. During the original coding, the naming of codes was too vague, and I used the evidence as the code to create an emergent category. After this realization, I recoded data, up to four times, before developing possible categories. Codes and categories may change based on the research data and as CPR members' knowledge of culturally responsive teaching practices evolves.

CHAPTER 5: PAR CYCLE ONE

In the PAR project and study, I investigated how to build and sustain teachers' culturally responsive teaching capacity to support equitable classroom pedagogy. In this chapter, I present the evidence I collected during PAR Cycle One and provide an analysis that informs the study's three research questions. The chapter is organized into three sections: (1) PAR Cycle One activities; (2) emergent themes derived from the codes and categories; and (3) leadership reflection on my learning.

PAR Cycle One Activities

In PAR Cycle One, we continued meeting as a CPR group, and I conducted classroom observations to support teachers as they made decisions about how to change their practices. I collected and coded evidence from the meetings and classroom observations. The co-practitioner researcher (CPR) members (n=3) participated in four CPR meetings centered on culturally responsive teaching practices and supporting equitable classrooms between March and November 2022. I included a member check with the CPR team during this time, in which we analyzed the data and made decisions about the next steps. I conducted 17 classroom observations from September through November 2022, and collected evidence from CPR members' responses and discussions during CPR meetings and classroom observations. The data sets included data for analysis and coding that informed the emergent themes (see Table 8).

The first CPR meeting had two parts. First, I engaged in a follow-up reflection on the Jamboard from the Pre-Cycle. Second, CPR team members responded to this question: What do you notice about the Pre-Cycle data? Lastly, we reflected on the progress of the CPR team building capacity as culturally responsive teachers. In the second CPR meeting, I focused on reviewing data and codes collected from the Pre-cycle to the present to establish the research

Table 8

PAR Cycle One Activities and Data

Date	Activity	Data
March 8, 2022	CPR Meeting ● What do you notice? ● Analyze culturally responsive teaching practices	Data from JamBoard
September 1, 2022	CPR Meeting and Member Check ● What do you notice? ● Analyze CR practices ● Analyze Pre-cycle data	Review Data Analysis/Codes
Sept. 16-Nov. 10, 2022	Classroom Observations and Conversations (*n*=17)	Observation Data
November 16, 2022	CPR Meeting and Member Check ● What do you notice? ● Analyze observation data ● Discuss Three Attributes of an Equity Classroom ● Discuss culturally responsive teaching practices	Observation Data
Throughout PAR Cycle One	Informal Conversations with teachers	

study progress with the team at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. The CPR team discussed the data, codes and possible relationships of codes, and examples of codes that appeared most often. During the third CPR meeting, the CPR team reviewed and discussed the data and codes from 17 classroom observations over two months. The observation process consisted of short unannounced classroom visits to CPR members' classrooms; they agreed with the format and process. Each visit varied in length from seven to 15 minutes and varied during the time of day, as all observations had to be complete by 1:15 p.m. before the eighth-grade students transitioned to their elective classes. The CPR team was unsure if the bell schedule and time of observations affected the teachers overall content delivery or student engagement. The observation data showed that the most frequent codes included creating a safe space, providing opportunities for student voice, and investing in student success. I collected data in meetings and classroom observations. I determined emergent themes after collecting and analyzing data from PAR Cycle One. I determined emergent themes by the frequency of the codes related to the category and then analyzed the categories to identify themes. Throughout the entire PAR Cycle One process, I maintained positive connections with teachers by engaging in “small talks,” which are informal strategic conversations with teachers to build and sustain relational trust, a necessary condition that is vital to change efforts (Tredway & Militello, 2023).

Emergent Themes

In PAR Cycle One, I analyzed the data, codes, and related categories to generate two emergent themes: (1) Determining attributes of an equitable classroom and (2) creating space for collaboration on culturally responsive teaching. While we know that equitable classrooms have attributes related to teacher-student relational trust, student safety, and student engagement, I analyzed how key attributes were in evidence with the teachers in the CPR group. They

discussed these attributes, and then I observed them in classrooms. The three key attributes of equitable classrooms were: Creating a safe space, providing opportunities for student voice, and investing in student success.

Attributes of an Equitable Classroom

As I understood the attributes of an equitable classroom, I understood how these data informed a response to the research question: To what extent do educators make classroom curricular and pedagogical decisions to develop and implement culturally responsive teaching practices to support equitable classrooms? Since students come to the classroom with various experiences and knowledge, attributes of equitable classrooms are steps toward creating a positive environment to maximize student learning, especially for students of color. The U. S. Department of Education (2023) states, "a positive school climate is associated with better academic outcomes (e.g., test scores and graduation rates), greater student engagement, improved risk prevention and health outcomes, and increased teacher retention" (p. 7). The PAR Pre-cycle data helped the CPR team define attributes of an equitable classroom: creating a safe space, providing opportunities for student voice, and investing in student success as codes. As we progressed through PAR Cycle One, I identified the attributes of an equitable classroom multiple times during meetings and classroom observations. The PAR Cycle One observation data fortified one attribute of an equitable classroom – creating a safe space for student learning (n=22 instances or 28% of the data), as shown in Table 9.

Creating a Safe Space for Learning

As PAR Cycle One progressed through CPR meetings and classroom observations, the direct connection of the category, creating a safe space supported, more detail about this particular attribute of learning, including building relationships and defining expectations, had

Table 9

PAR Cycle One Data: Attributes of an Equitable Classroom

Emergent Categories	Codes	CPR Meetings	Classroom Observations	Total
Creating a safe space (*n*=22 or 28%)	Building relationships	4	11	15
	Defining expectations	1	6	7
Providing Opportunities for Student Voice (*n*= 29 or 37%)	Promoting student voice	11	11	22
	Asking open-ended questions		7	7
Investing in Student Success (*n*=21or 27%)	Providing soft skills support	3	8	11
	Providing academic support		10	10
TOTAL (*n*=72 instances)		19	53	72

the highest frequency in the data for creating a safe space category. CPR members were aware of the need to build and then maintain relationships. They reported that they knew that they should not "come in as a hard ass (teacher) on the first day" (NM, Member Check, September 1, 2022). Instead, two CPR members used storytelling through journal prompts throughout the year to build and maintain relationships. The CRP members showed vulnerability by sharing first to create a safe student space. Two members recalled the following journal prompts that stood out based on students' responses:

- Think back to your first day at A.G. Cox. How have you changed since then?
- Who is your closest family member? What makes them important?
- Describe the perfect world. What would it look like? What kind of people would live there?
- Something is missing. What is it, and where has it gone?
- What is your truth?
- Why do kids your age have trouble sticking up for others?...for themselves?
- What do you want to achieve in high school?
- What is your biggest fear?

First, teachers followed the key precept of building relationships with students; they were intentional in the Pre-Cycle and PAR Cycle One about explicit ways they learned about student identity. Teachers looked at journal entries to learn about their students and recognized that there was more than one way to build relationships with students. As I observed, I documented how teachers framed building a relationship as in these observation examples: “teacher acknowledged a student when he walked in the classroom,” “(teacher) looked for journal entries to learn my

students," and "there's more than one way to build relationships with students" (NM, Member Check, September 1, 2022).

Teacher-defined expectations is another category that supports creating a safe space for learning. Teacher-defined expectations establish procedures for the flow of the learning environment and the teacher's expectations for students to meet those expectations. Teacher-defined expectations include how students enter and leave the classroom, turn in assignments, ask for help, work in groups, and respect themselves and others. These are examples of clear procedures that support student participation; they know what to "count on" and how they should proceed. Lyman (2022) refers to these processes as bordering – meaning the teacher sets expectations and gives clear directions so that the students can move from one activity to the other without distraction.

As I reflected on the teacher-defined expectation codes, I observed some teacher-defined expectations. I noted other teacher-defined expectations that I did not observe based on the flow of the classroom and interactions between the teacher-to-students and student to student. One teacher expectation I observed was how the teacher redirected loud students; instead of making a scene about the disruptive behavior, the teacher looked up and over towards the table where the loud talking was coming from and said, "Knock it off." The students responded with a softer talking tone within their group and continued doing their work. Another teacher-defined expectation example that was not overtly observed but understood was noted as "students were on task and knew what to do when their computers were not working" " (NM, Classroom Observation, September 19, 2022). This example relates to the Jussim et al. (1996) research that suggests teachers' behaviors and attitudes about their students' expectations can be a self-

fulfilling prophecy as the teacher believed that students would know how to complete assignments when their computer is not working or unavailable.

The teacher-defined expectations communicated clear and positive expectations that could be described as a warm demander, a culturally relevant pedagogy. Warm demanders are culturally relevant, have high empathy and high expectations for students. Sumer (2022) stated, "culturally specific teaching styles can influence the level of success of students of color" (p. 12). A culturally specific teaching style improves communication and reduces miscommunication between traditional white-middle class norms and students of different cultures. Improved teacher-to-student communication improves teacher-to-student relationships and student success, especially for students of color. Two teachers expressed affirmed student progress by saying, "you (student) are all caught up," "he (student) finished his work, and he's ahead," were communicated in a positive tone (NM, Classroom Observations, October 3, 2022). These examples show asset-based responses that concentrate on positive expectations of effort and perseverance.

Thus, creating the conditions for learning provides a structure for student learning, and teachers planned and used personal writing prompts in many classrooms before the lesson content to form relationships with students and learn about them. Using the personal narratives of the students helps teachers set the necessary conditions for student learning (Tredway & Militello, 2023). Secondly, being consistent about the procedural elements of teaching is critical for students to engage and stay focused. Teachers "lose" student attention when the expectations for what to do and how to do it are unclear. By attending to the personal and procedural teaching elements, they are creating a safe space for student learning.

Providing Opportunities for Student Voice

CPR meetings and classroom observations showed a direct connection to the category, providing opportunities for student voice – 29 instances or 37% of the data in PAR Cycle One. Similarly, opportunities for student voice included asking particular students to respond. I observed these opportunities for student voice are "student ask questions, Ella, what do you see, and do you want to add something to it Caleb?" (NM, Classroom observation, September 9, 2023). Using the student's name after the question is typically best practice so that everyone in the class attends to the question. Appropriate wait or think time was not necessarily present, but the teacher called on a particular student at the end of the last question. A second opportunity for student voice is asking open-ended questions; these included: "Do you (student) see success as monetary," "how do you (student) fill fulfilled as a person," and "what is more important, success or love?" (NM, Classroom observation, September 28, 2022).

While these examples provided evidence of the initial stages of student voice, teachers clearly needed more knowledge or direction on engaging students fully. They needed to practice the basic tenets of think pair share with think time, equitably call on students using names at the end of a question and continue to use analysis-level questions that required students to choose and defend their choices.

Teachers Investing in Student Success

Lastly, investing in student success means teachers understand that learning is social and academic. Focusing on both aspects of learning became a critical attribute of an equitable classroom. Just as creating a safe space and providing opportunities for student voices showed strong connections to support the emergent theme attributes of an equitable classroom, investing in student success has a solid connection to support attributes of an equitable classroom.

Teachers providing student support were coded 21 times or 27%, including those addressing soft skills (*n*=11) or social-emotional and academic support (*n*=10).

The data show that teachers invested in student success through non-academic or soft skills support; soft skills are directly connected to providing academic support to maximize student success. Teachers can ramp up the rigor and become warm demanders for academic success by providing these kinds of support that require strong relationships with students and organizational skills that help students focus (Delpit, 2012; Ware, 2006). Teachers defined soft skills as strategies to support student focus, provide clear learning expectations, help students with time management, and clearly identify lesson segments by chunking, bordering, and giving clear directions or structured statements. Some teachers used the 1-2 clap as an attention-getter before giving directions for the day. The teachers helped students with organizational skills by communicating the lesson flow for the day and inserting expectations for their learning. In one case, the teacher helped students with time management by transitioning as a class for students to update their interactive notebooks. Additional soft skill examples from the observations were "teacher transitions to review agenda," "the teacher says thanks to the team," and "teacher reminds the student only to open one tab open on their Chromebook" (NM, Classroom observation, September 19, 2022).

Academic support appeared several times in the data, and "teacher walking around and checking on student/group progress on current assignment" appeared the most. One teacher walked around and checked student progress three times within 15 minutes. The classroom set-up allowed teachers to walk around the classroom freely and have short conversations with a student or a group, which included teachers reassuring the student or group is on the right track on the assignment, teachers checking student responses or answers, teachers answering student

or group questions about the assignments, or teachers questioning the student or group to guide them towards an answer (NM, Classroom Observation, September - October 2022). While I could not always hear specifics of the teacher/student or teacher/group conversations due to the seating arrangements, what I observed is that the teachers walked freely around the room while checking on a student or group and asked questions. Whole class examples of teachers providing academic support included a teacher using guided instruction with the class for Blookit activity review game, annotating the text on the smart panel for the class to follow along, and thinking about the why behind a standard – "before we look at the standard, let's see what they are asking us to do with it" (NM, Classroom observation, September & October 2022).

These examples provided evidence of teachers providing student support through soft and academic skills; teachers building capacity in soft skills is as important as teachers building content knowledge. As teachers gained information about the soft and academic skill needs of each student or class, they adjusted and provided support for student success. For students to be successful in and out of the classroom, they need transferrable soft skills such as communication, organization, collaboration, and problem-solving that aid students in obtaining academic content.

Teacher Collaboration on Culturally Responsive Teaching

Analyzing the data from PAR Cycle One, I identified two categories under the emergent theme of teacher collaboration: (1) small talks and (2) teacher questioning practices (see Table 10 and Figure 7). As the school leader, I needed to ensure that I created a possibility for collaboration on culturally responsive teaching as a fundamental and necessary step so that staff can learn, unlearn, and relearn teaching practices that improve student learning opportunities, especially for students of color. Teacher collaboration on culturally responsive teaching is

Table 10

PAR Cycle One Data: Teacher Collaboration on Culturally Responsive Teaching

Emergent Categories	Codes	CPR Meetings	Small Talks
Having Small Talks with CPR members (*n*=20 or 66%)	small talks about personal life		8
	small talks about family		12
	small talks about school/classroom		2
	small talks about professional life		1
	small talks about society's controversy		2
	small talks about sports		5
Teachers Discuss Questioning Practices (*n*= 11 or 33%)	Questioning personal practices	7	
	Questioning how to build student relationships	4	

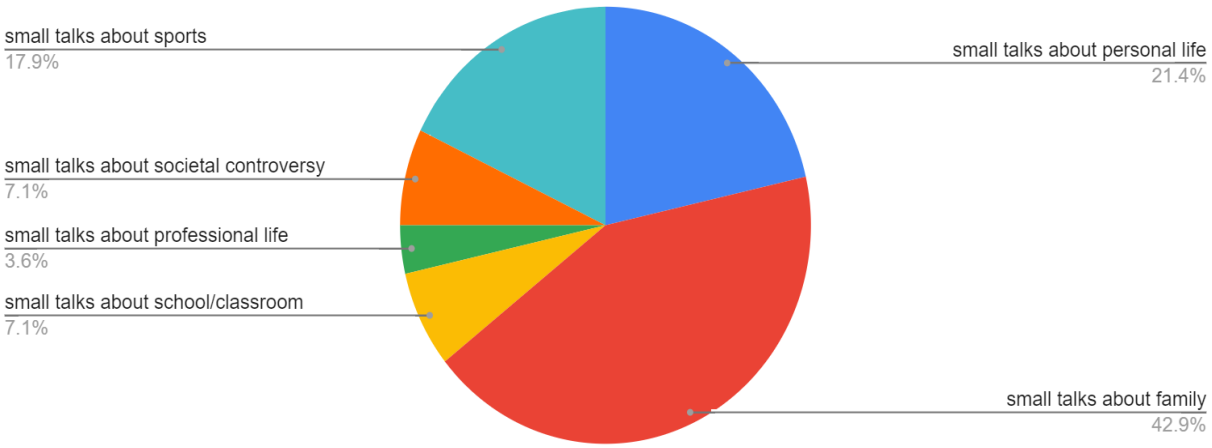

Figure 7. Cycle One small talks with CPR members.

connected to the second research question: To what extent do teachers develop knowledge and disposition around culturally responsive teaching in support of equitable classrooms? Before teachers can build knowledge and disposition about culturally responsive teaching practices, they must have a space for collaboration to learn and practice new strategies. Gates (2018) stated, "When educators work together, we create a better learning experience" (p. 1). The learning experience Gates describes applies to students and educators, meaning collaboration on culturally responsive teaching is vital for educators to grow and improve their craft. As there was no available evidence of intentional collaboration on culturally responsive teaching practices on campus before the PAR study, two ways that I promoted teachers' collaboration that would lead to conversations about culturally responsive teaching were small talks and discussing questioning practices.

Small Talks Promote Relational Trust

Small talks are authentic one-on-one conversations about personal, school/classroom, professional, society controversy, or sports-related topics with CPR members. Small talks help to build and sustain relationships. The variety of small talks during PAR Cycle One helped me build on previous relationships and engage CPR members to learn more about each other beyond the work environment. By engaging in small talks, the CPR team developed trust with me and began to see the need and benefit of collaboration on culturally responsive teaching. As PAR Cycle One progressed through small talks, the trust we built transferred to our relationships in CPR meetings and classroom observations. The data show that the category "small talks" was important as it surfaced in 28 instances, or 71% of the data for this emergent theme. Of the 28 small talk instances, small talks about family and personal life had the highest frequencies with 12 and six, respectively. The small talks were authentic, intentional, and directly related to

building relationships with CPR members, allowing trust to create a space for collaboration on culturally responsive teaching.

The two highest codes accounted for over half of the small talk codes. They were not school, academic, or equity-related but storytelling about family and personal life. Two examples of small talk about family are “daughter’s experiences of playing basketball as the only girl on the team” and “my cousin video called me while at a CPR member's brother's barbershop” (NM Field notes, 2023). Two examples of small talk about personal life were “I feel more productive by coming to work earlier in the morning” and “I talked about the difference between teaching high school and middle school” (NM Codebook, Small Talks, 2022). Lastly, two examples of small talks about society's controversy included code-switching in the school setting and guarding our minds against the news about immigrants and the border wall (NM, Small Talks, 2022).

In Rigby and Tredway (2015), a principal was intentional about having informal conversations with teachers; initially she realized that she had to schedule a time to relate to teachers on a personal level. As she built this practice into her routines, the teachers were more responsive in other areas of school improvement. In another example, the principal changed his morning routine to ensure a positive daily connection with each teacher because he wanted to model how teachers need to connect to students. I made an intentional choice to document small talks with the three CPR teachers, and this began to extend to more teachers. In developing the practice of “small talks,” I was intentional about my leadership actions to be explicit with teachers about expectations. Because I wanted teachers to be warm with students so that they could push them academically, I used small talks as a way to have deeper relationships with teachers. As a result of deepened trust, we could then have conversations about culturally

responsive teaching that we were previously unable to have. I wanted to be known for a personal stance and tone that supported teachers and set the conditions for our push for culturally responsive teaching; "there is no substitute for a leader who displays an optimizing, authoritative, and caring presence in the service of teachers, staff, family, and children" (Tredway et al., 2019, p. 10). In that case for me, that means taking the time to know staff on a personal level and, in particular, asking about family as a part of the cultural tradition in African American families relating to a discourse pattern of storytelling and humor familiar to many students, but often absent from classrooms.

Teachers Questioning Their Practices

Two types of questioning are a part of these data (33% of the data). First, teachers did need to improve their classroom questioning practices to improve academic discourse and ensure high cognitive demand or rigor in the classroom. As we built peer-to-peer dialogue in our CPR space, we modeled how students should be in peer dialogue in classrooms and forwarded a key principle of CLE work: Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes (Guajardo et al., 2016). Most of our dialogue about academic discourse centered on teacher questioning. In creating space for teacher collaboration, CPR members had more control over the content selection and delivery than they realized.

A second form of questioning is self-reflection. Teachers needed to question (or reflect on) their teaching practices and question and reflect on their relationships with students; these were not yet fully in the teachers' repertoires. However, as we discussed questioning practices to promote rigor, what came to the forefront is that teachers needed an interim step – they needed to question themselves about their practices and understand what opportunities they had for improving their practices. In particular, they did not fully understand that their practices were not

limited to external practices established by the district and school. Rather, teachers needed to question their pedagogical practices and take more ownership over possible shifts.

CPR member begin to realize they have autonomy to question their practices and make the environment a more productive space for student and staff learning. As teachers began questioning their practices, one teacher said, “I developed content for EC (exceptional children) and DHH (deaf and hard-of-hearing) students this year as last year didn't seem like my students.” Another teacher reflected, “we (teachers) must be willing to learn about culturally responsive teaching practices.” As a result, they reorganized their classroom spaces for group work, and “the tables in classroom have allowed more conversations with students and teachers is likely to do activities” (NM, Member check, September 1, 2022). Hattie (2015) states that teachers are second, after the student, as the most influential influence on student achievement and quantify this influence to be as high as 30%. This influence is almost three times the individual influence of home, school, and peers, which is statistically significant.

However, they made progress, as indicated in the discussion on creating safe space for learning and on questioning how to relate to students. While these data points do not have a large number of instances, in conversation, I am seeing the teachers’ beliefs and actions shift. What makes teachers’ actions and reflections culturally responsive? Their stronger focus is on including all students as a part of how they think about the classroom as an academic discourse space in which students who previously were disengaged are now becoming more active participants. Because they have re-focused on how to learn about each student, they were moving on the scale of cultural responsiveness from minimally inclusive to moderately and, at times, fully inclusive (see Figure 8). I observed these areas of shifts in CPR group members by the

CULTURALLY AND LIGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY Minimally Inclusive----------Moderately Inclusive----------Fully Inclusive			
Culturally Responsive Practices	• **Relationships:** Superficial and focused on work completion and behavior modification • **Personal identity of students:** Superficially recognized although generally not connected to culture • **Teacher disposition:** Focus on treating all students the same • **Content:** "Neutral"; limited attention to culture and language	• **Relationships:** Intentional relationships built & sustained with some students but not all • **Personal identity of students:** Cultural & linguistic identity celebrated but infrequently integrated into learning context. • **Teacher disposition:** Relationship often determined by teacher's level of empathy for particular student situations. • **Content:** Conscious of CRP content and processes	• **Relationships** Deep relationships with students and families • **Personal identity of students:** Identities validated as unique perspectives on content; integrated into the learning experience • **Teacher disposition:** Warm demander; fully accommodating individual learning profiles • **Content:** Community-focused with intentional connections to student experiences
ACADEMIC DISCOURSE (AD) **Teacher-Generated----------Teacher Initiated and Facilitated----------Student Generated**			
Academic Task	• **Designer:** Teacher-designed, directed & controlled • **Cognitive Demand:** Typically low	• **Designer:** Teacher-initiated & facilitated • **Cognitive Demand:** Medium to high, teacher-facilitated	• **Designer:** Teacher and student collaboratively-designed & facilitated • **Cognitive Demand:** High cognitive demand
Protocols and Questioning	• **Teacher Role:** Teacher-designed questions; teacher-controlled protocols • **Underlying focus:** Often compliance & behavior-driven; concerned with pacing & fidelity • **Primary interaction relationship**: Teacher-to-student; often pseudo-discourse • **Calling on strategies**: Typically raised hands; limited use of strategies for equitable access • **Level of questions**: Often recall and the application questioning levels with few questions at higher cognitive levels	• **Teacher Role:** Teacher-initiated, including encouraging student-to-student dialogue • **Underlying focus:** Student understanding and teacher use of student experiences • **Primary interaction relationship**: Teacher-to-student, with teacher encouragement of student-to-student & small groups • **Calling-on strategies**: Designed for equitable access of all students • **Level of questions:** Attention to higher cognitive level questions, including synthesis and creativity	• **Teacher Role:** Coaching students as facilitators; warm demander & strong student relationships • **Underlying focus:** Encouraging more student-facilitated groups • **Primary interaction relationship:** Student-to-student • **Calling on strategies:** Primarily student-generated questions & student-to-student interaction • **Level of questions:** Higher level questions that elicit creative responses & authentic problem-solving
Dialogue	• **Teacher role in questioning:** All questions by teacher; posed for short responses; teacher often looking for right answers • **Teacher-to-student dialogue**: Typically one-way dialogue and with a subset of students	• **Teacher role in questioning:** Most questions generated by teacher; questions range: recall to analysis • **Teacher-to-student dialogue:** ▪ Teacher asking for elaboration & clarification ▪ Teacher requesting support for ideas ▪ Student paraphrasing encouraged ▪ Student questions encouraged	• **Teacher role in questioning**: Collaboratively generated • **Teacher-to-student dialogue:** Primarily coaching; focusing on probing questions for deeper learning

Figure 8. Excerpt from Framework of Classroom Learning and Practice.

conclusion of PAR Cycle One. We concentrated on these teacher factors in the framework for culturally responsive teaching and academic discourse:

1. Developing intentional relationships with each other as a model for how they needed to relate to students, with some students developing deep relationships.
2. Depending on those relationships to boost student engagement as teachers learn the value of warm demanding.
3. Developing empathetic relationships with students resulted in teachers redirecting students instead of disciplining as a primary mode of connecting students to learning.
4. Recognizing that equitable discourse required them to change practices, particularly questioning and calling on practices.
5. Learning the value of high cognitive demand questioning and making decisions about how to incorporate in their practices.

The framework guides our work in becoming full-fledged, culturally responsive educators. By the conclusion of PAR Cycle One, we were on our way and continued in PAR Cycle Two, fully aware that we have to continue this work after the formal data collection and story of this dissertation work.

Determining attributes of an equitable classroom and creating space for collaboration on culturally responsive teaching are key components for teachers to build student trust, safety, relationships, and engagement. The three attributes, creating a safe space, providing opportunities for student voice, and investing in student success, became more evident as categories during PAR Cycle One. Creating space for collaboration on culturally responsive teaching is directly connected to determining attributes of an equitable classroom. Small talks and teacher questioning practices are categories that emerged and aided in creating space for

collaboration on culturally responsive teaching. McDonald (2008) shares a view describing the power of collaboration, believing that collaboration is a systematic process for people to analyze and impact practices to improve individual or group results. Determining attributes of an equitable classroom and creating space for collaboration on culturally responsive teaching is essential in developing and supporting equitable classrooms.

Leadership Evolution to Support culturally responsive teaching

Reflecting on my leadership evolution in supporting teachers to engage in culturally responsive teaching, I realized the power of modeling and explicitness. Secondly, I discuss how the emergent themes connect with the research questions, which provided an "aha" moment for teachers recognizing and acting on their autonomy. McDonald (2008) terms this a sighting or an epiphany when I understood how I needed to lead and how teachers needed to assume more personal responsibility for self-reflection. As the leader of teachers, I should be using small talks, observations, and conversations to act intentionally. As I became more intentional, teachers began to recognize their central responsibility in promoting equitable and culturally responsive learning environments.

My leadership has shifted from talking and learning about culturally responsive teaching to engaging in explicit leadership actions that build my capacity in culturally responsive teaching and the capacity of the CPR members. I realize to a greater extent how leaders must learn to use their roles as instructional leaders explicitly and in intentionally to foster equitable and rigorous culturally responsive academic discourse (Rigby & Tredway, 2015; Tredway & Militello, 2023). I discovered that my leadership could be more conscious of how to model the experiences we want in classrooms. The practice of small talk supported my relationships with teachers but, in addition, offered an important and underused avenue for dialogue with teachers – informal

conversations in which we discuss a variety of topics. However, if I am intentional about those conversations, I can build and sustain trust while simultaneously promoting culturally responsive teaching practices. Another area of learning is the facilitation of meetings. While I did not necessarily have a pre-determined outcome for the dissertation research, during CPR meetings, I intentionally made sure all members could share with the group and that no one person dominated the discussions. I learned how to push the group's thinking about equity without being directive. I must promote the practices I want to see in classrooms in all ways with adults.

The project and study have made me realize that teachers have more content selection and delivery autonomy when teaching standards. Therefore, I have intentionally encouraged other content area PLCs to seek material and make connections beyond traditional material when teaching their content. The discovery of attributes of an equitable classroom and its categories are significant because the CRP members co-created them as we built local evidence of how we should design and implement them (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). By creating a safe space for adults, I could model how they created spaces for student voice. The teachers became more conscious of how their actions could influence student success; when they applied these concepts to improve students as a group and not in isolation, they found success as teachers. Finally, the attributes can only exist because the second theme of creating space for collaboration on culturally responsive teaching exists.

Moving into PAR Cycle Two, I expected additional evidence to support these emergent themes – attributes of an equitable classroom and teacher collaboration on culturally responsive teaching are directly connected to the research questions. First, attributes of an equitable classroom developed from a category to a theme during PAR Cycle One. The evolved categories, creating a safe space, providing opportunities for student voice, and investing in student success,

are deeply rooted in the first research question – to what extent do educators make classroom curricular and pedagogical decisions to develop and implement culturally responsive teaching practices in support of equitable classrooms? The teacher is a key factor and instrumental in making decisions that may help or hinder a student's sense of feeling safe in the classroom, feeling as if he or she is being heard or have opportunities to speak, and if the teacher's instructional strategies aid in students feeling as if the teacher cares about their success in the classroom.

In reflecting on the connection, I noticed two types of reflections. One type of teacher reflection is more external regarding what is not working and is outside the teacher's control. Examples of externalizing responsibility for student success include lack of student preparation, parents being hard to contact, a recent class test average being low, and school and district pacing of the content. The second type of teacher reflection focuses on internal practices and behavior and is similar to self-reflection, which is connected to the category, teacher questioning practices. Teachers must question their practices, including their role in soft and academic skills; they have nearly total authority over these decisions. For example, suppose an educator can question personal practices. In that case, the educator can perhaps better see the connection between providing students with classroom supplies to eliminate classroom supplies as a barrier to learning. An educator questioning personal practices would see the need to question traditional teaching and parent contact practices to better engage the student and parent in the student learning. Lastly, one would believe that an educator doing an internal reflection or questioning personal practices would see the need to question content selection and content delivery to improve student engagement. The U. S. Department of Education (2023) suggests there needs to be a mixture of going beyond the data and the current reality for teachers' actions to make a

meaningful change in classrooms. The leadership implications are that teachers have more autonomy regarding how they select and deliver content, which influences students' success, especially students of color.

CHAPTER 6: PAR CYCLE TWO

In this chapter, I present the findings from the Pre-Cycle, Cycle One, and Cycle Two of the PAR, culminating activities and data of participatory action research. I collected and analyzed data from September 23, 2021 to April 26, 2023 to understand how teachers develop and implement culturally responsive teaching to support equitable classrooms. In the final inquiry cycle, Cycle Two, I provided a deeper analysis of the evidence to fortify the themes identified with the CRP members in the Pre-Cycle and Cycle One. As a result, in this chapter, I provide the cumulative evidence for two findings: Collaborative Space: create space for teacher collaboration on culturally responsive teaching and Living Equitable Practices: teachers enacted attributes of equitable teaching practices in the classroom. The chapter is organized into two sections: the PAR Cycle Two process and analysis and the participatory action research study findings.

PAR Cycle Two Process and Analysis

In this section, I describe the PAR Cycle Two activities, shown in Table 11, and the data that fortified the existing themes. The CPR team had three CPR meetings, and I did one round of observations and conducted 22 random classroom visits. The CPR meeting agendas consisted of me asking open-ended questions and prompts about the classroom visits, facilitating storytelling, and engaging in reflection. In addition, I continued using "Small Talks" to build relationships with CPR members.

Activities

I began PAR Cycle Two in January 2023 and continued to engage in Small Talks as I became more aware of my Small Talks conversations with CPR members. The Small Talks were categorized as family, personal, school/classroom, professional, societal controversy, or sports.

Table 11

PAR Cycle Two Activities and Data

Date	Activity	Data
Jan. 17 – Feb. 16, 2023	Classroom Observations and Conversations (*n*=22)	Observation Data
March 14, 2023	CPR Meeting and Member Check ● What do you notice? ● Analyze Small Talk data ● Discuss Small Talk codes ● Discuss Small Talk in the classroom	Small Talks
April 4, 2023	CPR Meeting and Member Check ● What do you notice? ● Analyze observation data ● Discuss Three Attributes of an Equitable Classroom ● Analyze culturally responsive teaching practices ● Discuss personal practices	Observation Data
April 26, 2023	CPR Meeting and Member Check ● Rewatch two videos from the PAR Pre-Cycle ● What do you notice? ● Review JamBoard data ● Discuss Cycle Two code frequencies ● Analyze culturally responsive teaching practices ● Discuss personal practices and goals	Two Culturally Responsive Teaching videos Data from JamBoard Cycle Two Code Frequencies
Throughout PAR Cycle Two	Informal Conversations with teachers	

The first CPR meeting activity was on March 14, 2023. The CPR team reviewed and discussed the evidence on Small Talks. The teachers responded to the question, "What do you notice about the Small Talks evidence?" We noticed a similar frequency of small talk topics in Cycle Two as in Cycle One. Small Talks about family had the highest frequency (*n*=7), followed by personal life (*n*=6), and the third highest frequency was societal controversy (*n*=5).

The second CPR meeting was on April 4, 2023 and the CPR team reviewed the data from 22 random classroom observations. Teachers had access to all the observation notes and I explained the color-coding process used to help organize the data collected. I organized the notes by creating a spreadsheet with three columns. Teachers had about 15 minutes to reflect on their observational data and document what they noticed about the observation notes in a spreadsheet. After each teacher added their reflection on the observations, the team took about seven minutes to review the data from each team member's reflections. During the next part of the meeting, each teacher had an opportunity to share what they noticed about their observational data and respond to the team members' comments.

The third CPR meeting was on April 26, 2023. The CPR team rewatched two video clips on culturally responsive teaching that we had watched two years previously at the start of the PAR study. The video clips were about three minutes each. One video clip was an interview with Zaretta Hammond (2014) on culturally responsive teaching. In the video, Hammond defined culturally responsive teaching, shared misconceptions of culturally responsive teaching, and described a few strategies on how to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies. The second video clip included several teachers' perceptions about being a culturally responsive teacher. After we watched both clips again, we used JamBoard to capture our responses to the following open-ended reflective questions.

1. What do you know now about culturally responsive teaching that you did not know the first time you watched the video?
2. What is your personal culturally responsive teaching goal moving forward?
3. Advice for others trying to navigate the culturally responsive teaching space?

After all team members posted their digital responses, each member summarized the responses, and we discussed the PAR study. The team members shared their culturally responsive teaching goals, next steps, and the progress made individually and as a CPR team during the study.

Like observations in Cycle One, I was limited to time, and CPR teachers had an end-of-the-day planning period. Therefore, the observations were completed between 8:30 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. I completed 22 random visits to CPR members' classrooms, which ranged from 10 to 20 minutes for each observation. I scripted what teachers and students said and documented their actions during the observations. This differed from the documentation in Cycle One, in which I focused primarily on teacher and student actions in the classroom. Each teacher individually analyzed notes from their classroom observations, and then we analyzed them as the CPR team, followed by discussion and reflection.

Analysis

The CPR team analyzed data from the Pre-Cycle, Cycle One, and Cycle Two according to Saldaña's (2016) coding method. Saldaña (2016) stipulates that data is "recoded" and involves the comparison of "data to data, data to code, code to code, code to category, category to category, and back to data" (p. 58). The coding process allowed codes to evolve from the Pre-Cycle into categories and emerging themes in Cycle One, as seen in the codebook. In addition, the coding process allowed two previously perceived categories from the Pre-Cycle, attributes of

an equitable classroom and teacher collaboration on culturally responsive teaching, to evolve into themes throughout the study.

The emerging themes from Cycle One evolved and continued to be validated by multiple coding sessions in Cycle Two. The evolution of the codebook impacted the evolution of codes, categories, and themes, as some categories did not show continued validation throughout all Cycles, similar to the feedback loop described by Adu (2019). After each research Cycle, the CPR team gained knowledge and sought solutions to the research questions guiding the study. I utilized the evidence from previous Cycles and made connections to PAR Cycle Two data progression of both themes throughout the study. In analyzing the data for PAR Cycle Two, I determined there were no new emergent themes, but I found evidence to fortify themes from Cycle One.

The CPR team included three eighth-grade Language Arts teachers, Ms. White, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Willey. All three have unique backgrounds and paths to A.G. Cox Middle School. Ms. White has taught in North Carolina for 25 years in a combination of middle and high school and has taught Language Arts, Academically Gifted (AIG), and Science-Technology-Engineering-Math (STEM). Ms. White and I worked together in a previous district as she was my kids' sixth grade AIG teacher and I served as her principal. Ms. White was the free spirit member of the team. She deeply cares for her students and intentionally addresses students' social-emotional needs before academics. Mr. Smith taught high school Language Arts for seven years in North Carolina before joining A.G. Cox Middle School. He is completing his third year at A.G. Cox with his last two teaching eighth grade. He and I are from the same area; we know some of the same people, and some of our family members know each other. Mr. Smith transformed ordinary lessons into relevant lessons for the CPR team. These lessons produced

high student engagement and collaboration. Mr. Willey taught for two years in New York before joining A.G. Cox Middle School. He started as a reading specialist teacher assistant before becoming an eighth-grade Language Arts teacher, in which he is completing his second year as a teacher at A.G. Cox Middle. Mr. Willey and I enjoy similar music and sports. During the study, Mr. Willey served as the Professional Learning Community (PLC) facilitator. Mr. Smith intentionally built teacher/student relationships by using open-ended question journal prompts to teach his students and promote class discussions.

The CPR team built capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices and became more aware of personal practices, which transferred to intentional culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. Not only did the coding process evolve during the study, but so did the CPR Team and my leadership in culturally responsive teaching. The CPR Team evolved from making statements about traditional teaching practices to questioning personal teaching practices based on a recently acquired understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices. The study's findings are based on the data collected from the Pre-Cycle, Cycle One, and Cycle Two.

Findings

In this section, I provide a complete account of the evidence to support two findings:

1. Collaborative Space: Create space for teachers to collaborate on culturally responsive teaching
2. Living Equitable Practices: Teachers enacted attributes of equitable practices in the classroom.

The data over the three cycles supports Finding 1, *Collaborative Space*, which steadily increased instances (see Figure 9). Collaborative Space documents spaces of when teachers were

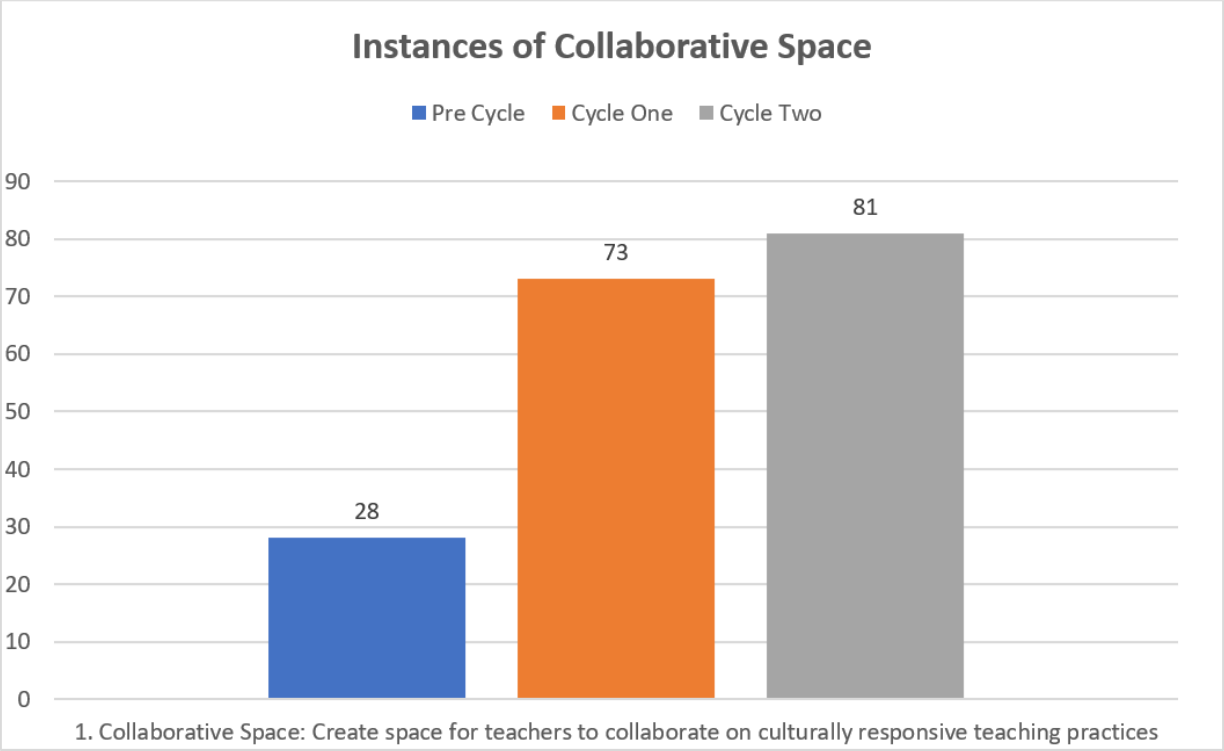

Figure 9. Instances of Collaborative Space across the PAR Cycles to determine findings.

or had the opportunity to collaborate on culturally responsive teaching. The types of collaborative spaces varied during the study (see Figure 10).

The theme, teacher collaboration on culturally responsive teaching, supports Finding 1, which is supported by the categories of Small Talks and teachers questioning practices to develop culturally responsive teaching awareness. The data over the three cycles supports Finding 2, *Living Equitable Practices,* and similar to Finding 1, had a steady increase in instances throughout the study (see Figure 10). The themes Attributes of an Equitable Classroom support Finding 2, which is supported by the categories create a safe space, provide opportunities for student voice, and invest in student success. Next, I examine each of these findings in depth.

Finding 1: Collaborative Space

Creating collaborative spaces for teachers to discuss, question, and reflect on culturally responsive teaching practices is pivotal to fostering an equitable learning environment. Questioning practices, awareness, and Small Talks were two new categories that supported the Finding (see Figure 11). I learned that for teachers to co-construct attributes of an equitable classroom, I had to create the space, activities, and time to focus on culturally responsive teaching. The teacher's voice was promoted by using open-ended prompts and reflection activities. Learning as a group was the most critical aspect of creating the space. There were no hidden agendas or dictations of where the study would lead, as the study's original goal was to build capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices. The intentional selections of readings, videos, and questions led to conversations and discussions on culturally responsive teaching that evolved into the CPR team co-constructing attributes of equitable classroom practices. In

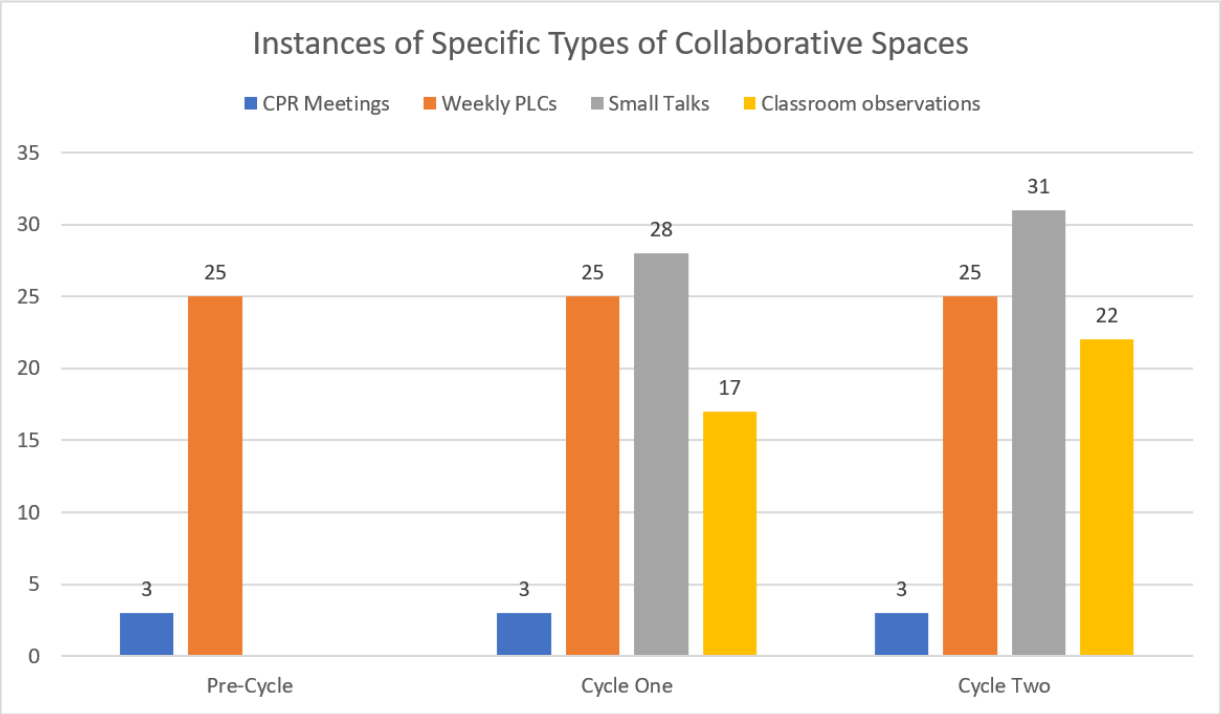

Figure 10. Instances of Specific Types during all PAR Cycles to determine findings.

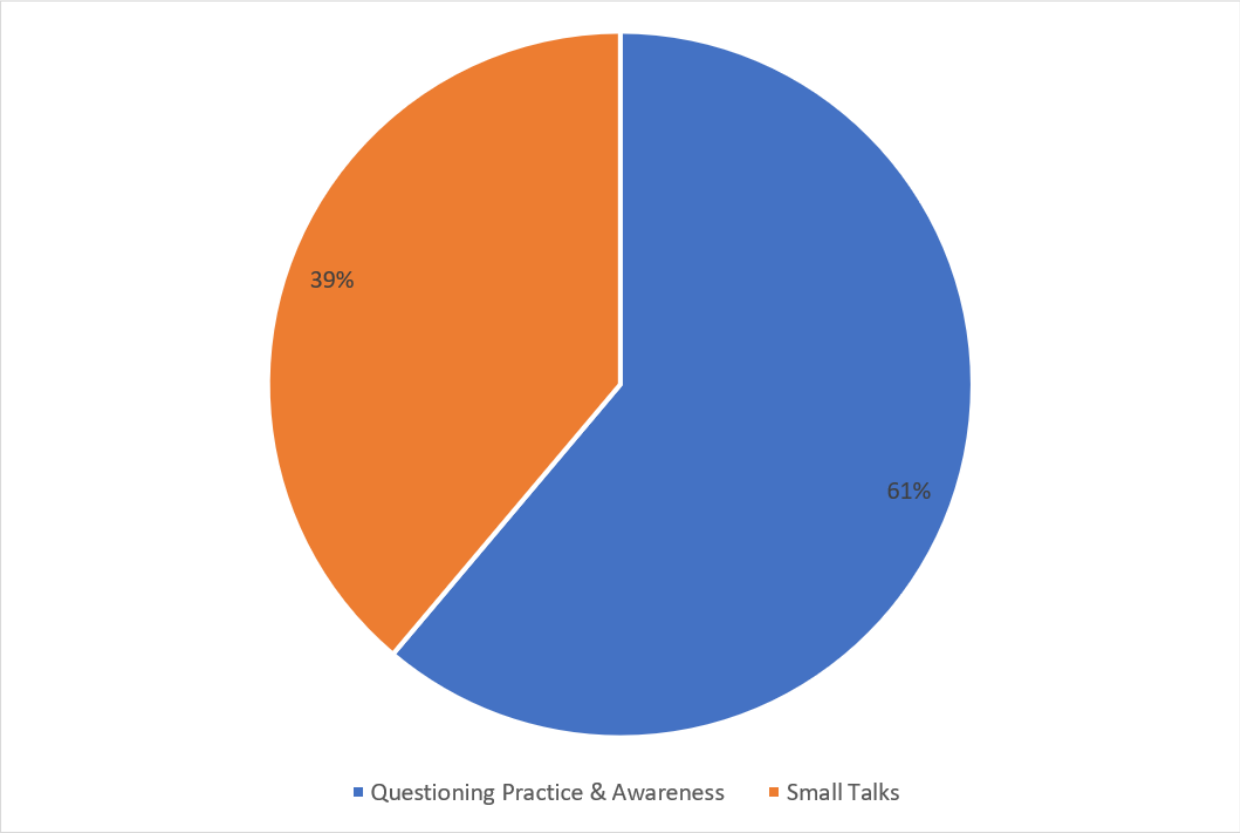

Figure 11. New categories from Cycle Two that support Finding 1: Collaborative Space.

addition, the Finding, Collaborative Space, is supported by categories of Small Talks, and teachers build culturally responsive teaching awareness through questioning practices, which are discussed in the next section.

The collaborative space was created for and with teachers by building relationships through Small Talks and asking open-ended questions during CPR meetings to promote personal awareness. Small Talks are casual 1-on-1 conversations with teachers. Creating a space for collaboration on culturally responsive teaching is essential to promote equitable classrooms. The collaborative space was safe due to the established relationships I developed and continued to strengthen during the study. I modeled expectations and intentionally gave teachers a voice, ensuring acknowledgment and value of their perspectives and contributions to the study. Building relationships, providing teachers opportunities to question practices, and developing personal awareness are steps toward creating a space for collaboration with the hopes of building capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices.

The collaborative space promoted questioning and reflection, which led to teachers' personal awareness of culturally responsive teaching. In addition, collaborative space helped create a safe space for the CPR team. I intentionally asked opened-ended questions in CPR meetings that eventually allowed teachers to reflect on their identities, beliefs, and biases and how these factors may influence their interactions with students and the learning environment. The intentional open-ended question took the CRP team beyond traditional school discussions, usually only surface-level. The CPR team dug deeper into the importance of culturally responsive teaching, continued our learning, and intentionally tried to make classrooms more equitable by using the newly learned culturally responsive teaching practices in classrooms.

Teachers Develop Personal Awareness Through Questioning Practices.

When I created the time for collaborative spaces, I found that teachers developed their awareness of culturally responsive teaching from questioning practices. One way in which teachers developed their awareness was by questioning their practices and engaging in discussion reflections. Notice how the instances of teaching questioning increased from the Pre-Cycle to Cycle Two, even though there was a slight decrease in instances in Cycle One (see Figure 12). A few examples of teachers questioning their practices include:

- "I think because they felt safe, they actually stood, they actually stepped in."
- "Made me think, how much independent work do we do."
- "Am I planting an idea, or am I leading them(students) to think."
- "I need to pay attention to how much I'm saying."
- "Then I should have always gone back more to double-check."

Teachers developed personal awareness through open-ended discussions and questioning activities in CPR meetings. The discussions and questioning activities allowed teachers to examine their biases and assumptions, inspired teacher-led questions, and encouraged critical reflection. In addition, the CPR discussions and activities provide opportunities for teacher reflection on comparing their teaching, traditional, and culturally responsive teaching practices. A few examples of open-ended questioning prompts and teacher questioning that developed during a CPR meeting video reflection activity:

- How do you make sure that all (students) are responding to the instruction?
- What is the algorithm to increase students' ability to handle more of a cognitive load?
- How do we increase the student's learning muscle?

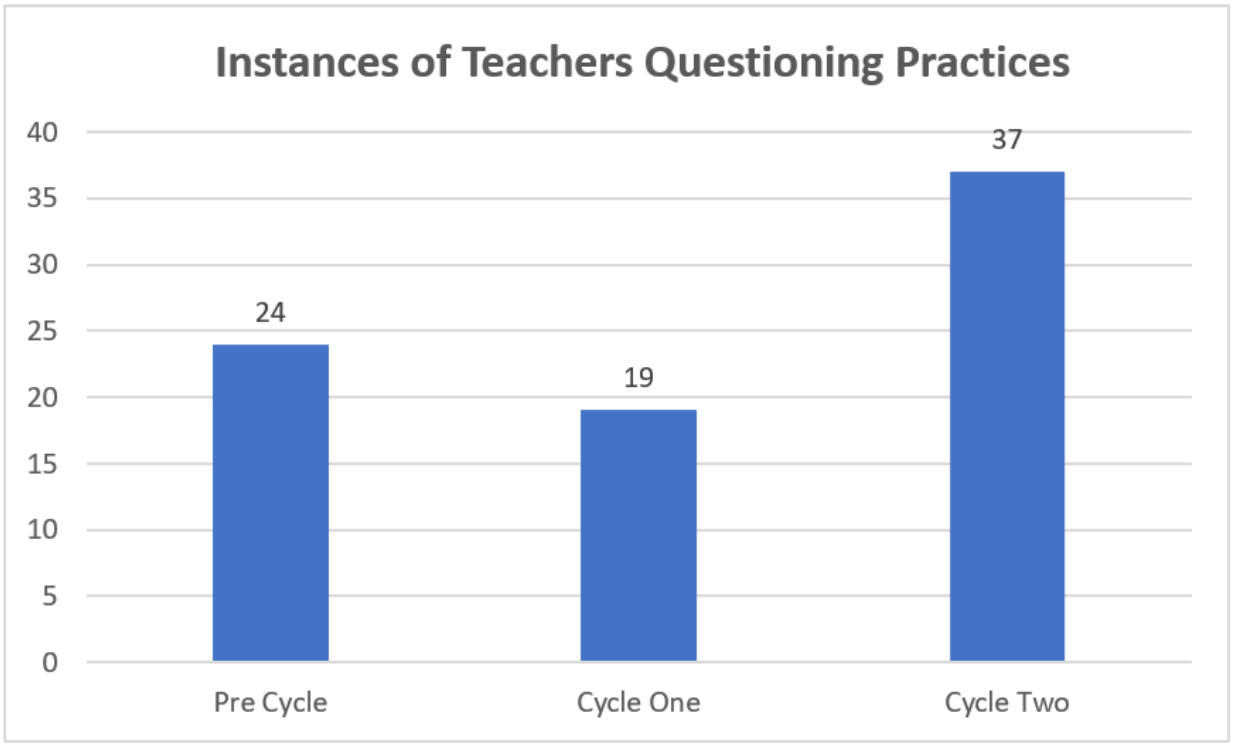

Figure 12. Instances of teachers questioning practices.

- How can I get a better understanding of how my students want to be taught?
- What can (what will we allow) students teach us?
- What do you know about culturally responsive teaching that you didn't know the first time you watched the video?
- I wonder how it would be to put this (equity discussion) on the PLC agenda schoolwide.
- I wonder how children would define an equitable classroom. (CPR Meeting, Jamboard Activity, February 23, 2022)

Eventually, these open-ended questions, discussion prompts, and reflections led to personal awareness of culturally responsive teaching practices and ideas as to how teachers can intentionally incorporate these practices into the classroom. This unique awareness helped teachers become more aware of their conscious and unconscious teaching actions. “Educators must seek out and utilize educational resources that improve their professional ability, self-efficacy, and personal awareness” (Shepherd, 2018, p. 40). Teachers showing signs of personal awareness had a frequency of 15, and all 15 codes were from CPR meetings. I believe these codes, which are teacher statements, developed due to open-ended questions and prompts during CPR meetings. A few codes are:

- "I wanted it (culturally responsive teaching definition) written in black and white, but now I see it more as like the practical application in the classroom."
- "I think because they felt safe, they actually stood, they actually stepped in, " because of Small Talks, I could go back and ask deeper questions."
- "We don't think about the importance of the everyday conversations with kids."
- "I use small talk in a way to leverage students to do better academically."

- "I think Small Talks is a really good tool that teachers should not shy away from but know boundaries."
- "It's the fact that it (culturally responsive teaching) is more of an intentional practice" (observation reflection, NM 2023).

Teacher discussions offer opportunities for learning from peers as hearing different perspectives and approaches broaden teachers' understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices.

Small Talks Build Relationships and Trust

Small Talks are crucial in building relationships and fostering a sense of openness and collaboration within the CPR team and the classroom between teachers and students. When team members trust and understand each other, they are more likely to participate in collaboration and actively see its benefits. Small Talks varied in topics (see Figure 13). Family and personal life have the most frequency in Cycle One, leading to personal life and societal controversy having the highest frequency in Cycle Two. Small Talks helped build relationships with individual teachers, contributing to the CPR team's relationship. The relationships of CPR team members had open communication, respect for different perspectives and fostered a sense of belonging. Small Talks frequency was 31 in Cycle Two. Small Talks about personal life, societal controversy, and school/classroom had the highest frequencies, with 11, nine, and eight, respectively. Personal Life small talk was also one of the highest codes in Cycle One. Personal life Small Talks provide an opportunity to connect with CRP members and students on a personal level that continues to be a valuable tool for building and sustaining relationships.

Engaging in Small Talk creates an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing his or her thoughts and opinions. Small Talks led to more meaningful discussions and a greater appreciation for diverse perspectives. Through these interactions, the CPR team engaged

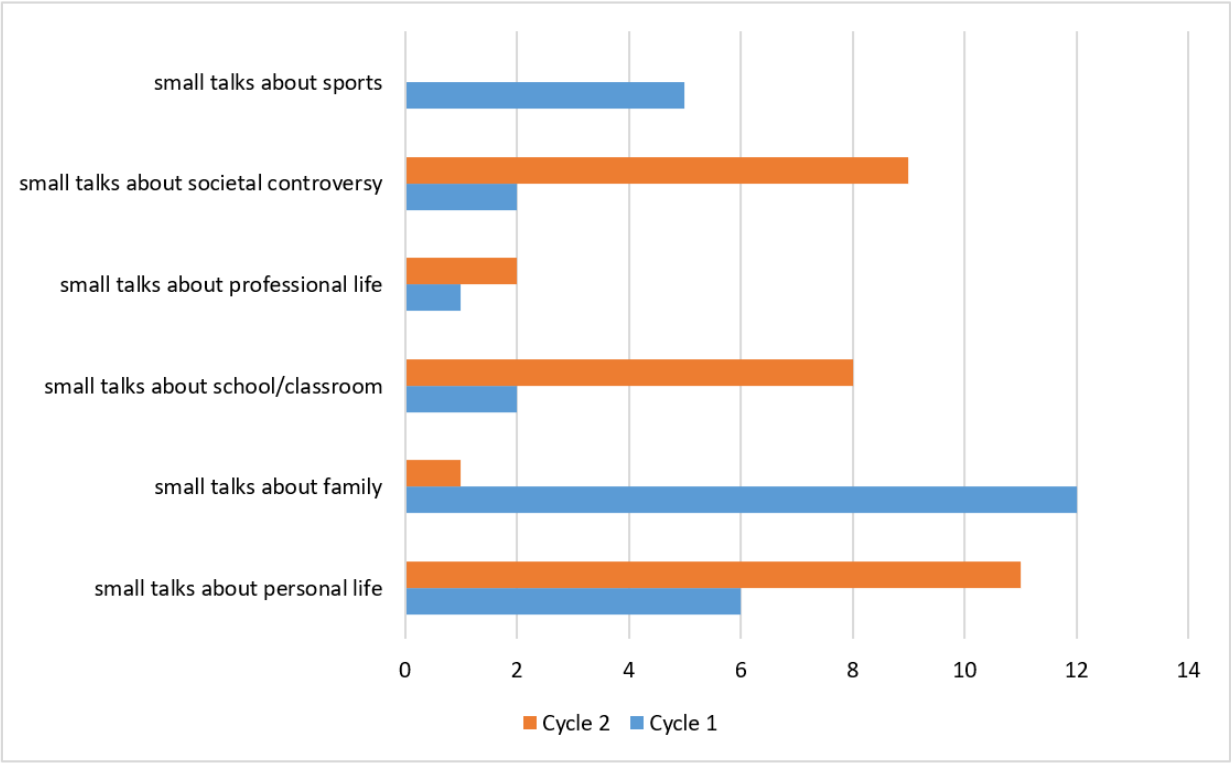

Figure 13. Small Talk data across the PAR Cycles to determine findings.

in challenging conversations such as societal controversies, classroom equity, or other subjects, which helped build a deeper understanding of each teacher.

The collaborative space allowed the CPR team to learn as a group and build capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices. The knowledge gained individually and as a group allowed the CPR team to co-construct attributes of an equitable classroom. The identified attributes are not limited to and include; create a safe space, provide opportunities for student voice, and invest in student success. Now that the attributes are identified, the next step is to see them in classroom practices, which leads to Finding 2, *Living Equitable Practices,* which I will discuss in the next section.

Finding 2: Living Equitable Practices

The data from the PAR study provided evidence that three categories evolved during the Pre-Cycle and continued to evolve through Cycle Two and support Finding 2, *Living Equitable Practices,* (see Figure 14). Cycle One provided evidence that teachers were practicing what they preach to enact attributes of the equitable classroom into classroom practices:

- Teachers create a safe learning space
- Teachers provide opportunities for student's voice
- Teachers invest in student success

Four new categories evolved during Cycle Two, (see Figure 15).

1. Teachers create a safe learning space - build teacher/student relationships through positive interactions
2. Teachers provide opportunities for student's voice – ask students open-ended questions

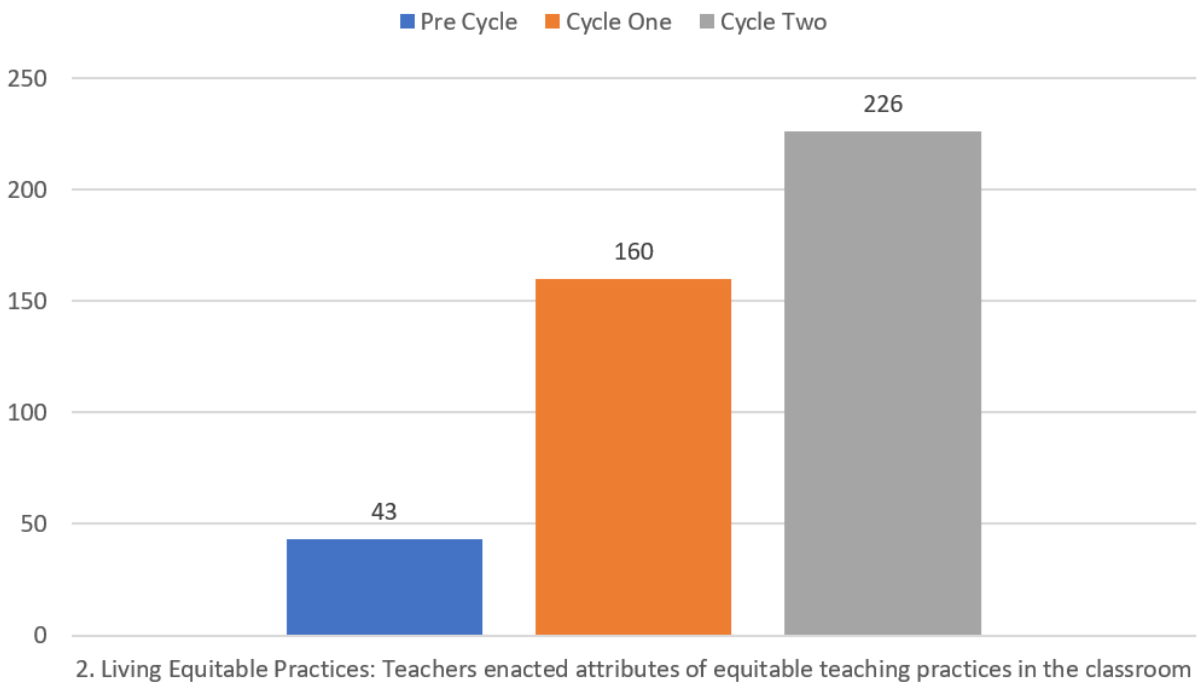

Figure 14. Instances of Living Equitable Practices across all PAR Cycles.

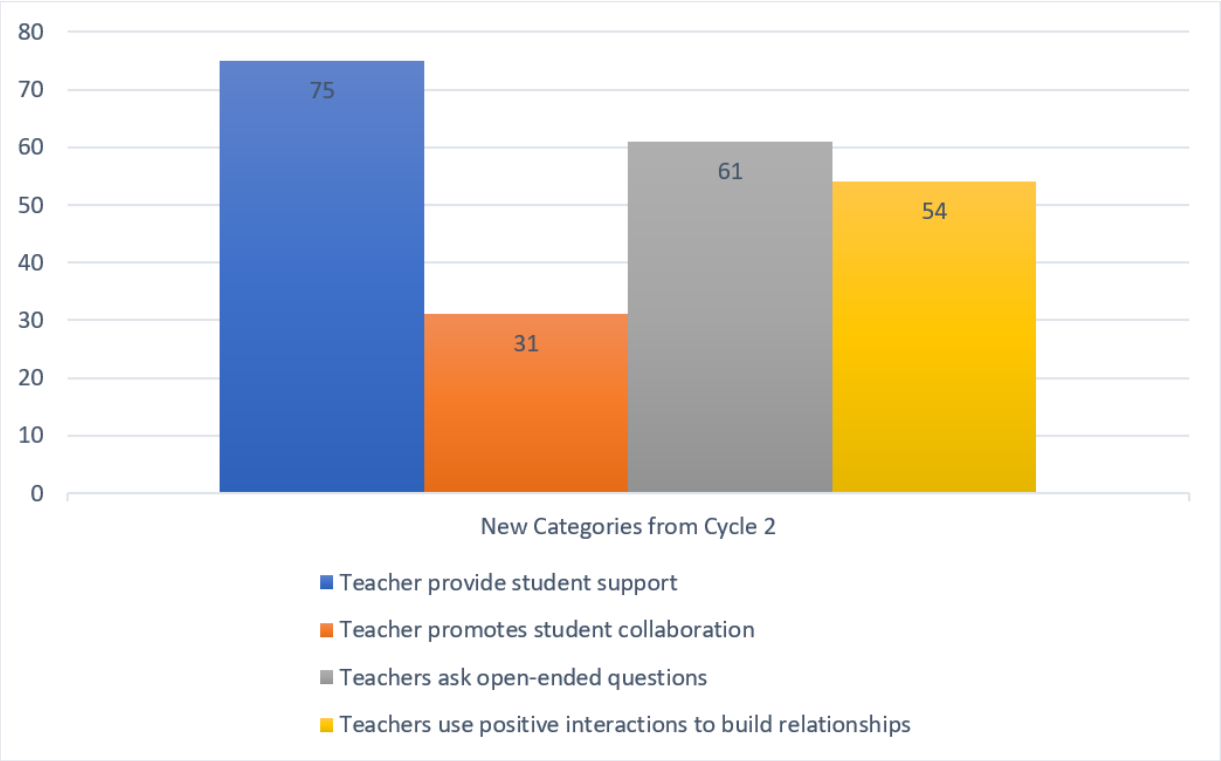

Figure 15. New category instances during Cycle Two.

3. Teachers invest in student success – promote student collaboration
4. Teachers invest in student success - provide academic and affective support and promote student collaboration

Teachers Create a Safe Space

Teachers engaging in positive interactions with students helped to build relationships. Teachers building relationships with students created a safe space, an attribute of an equitable classroom. These positive interactions may include any combination of examples, such as highlighting kindness, respect, and the worth of others, which strengthens relationships, and creates a safe space for learning and personal growth. Teachers discussed engaging in positive interactions with students (13 instances) in CPR meetings, and the observation notes showed 35 positive interactions. Positive interactions with students were identified in PAR Cycle One, but the frequency was much higher in PAR Cycle Two. Some examples of teachers' positive interactions were:

- "What you (student) just said is incredibly profound."
- "When y'all (students) do something good, of course, we're (teachers) gonna make a big deal about it."
- "Each one (student), teach one (student)."
- " I know you (student) got it (answer)."

When teachers modeled positive interactions with students, it fostered a safe and supportive atmosphere for learning. The power of positive interactions lies in the consistency and genuine belief of the teacher. Teachers using positive interaction with students is a source of student empowerment and suggests mindsets can be positively altered (Miller, 2022). Incorporating positive interactions into classroom routines and modeling their usage helps students build

relationships with each other and cultivate a positive mindset of lifelong skills for personal well-being and success.

Teachers Provide Opportunities for Student Voice

Asking open-ended questions is a powerful tool for promoting student voice and active engagement in the learning process. Open-ended questions demand higher-order thinking skills to make connections of background knowledge to the present learning. The learning connection leads to students explaining their ideas and options, as there is more than one correct answer. Teachers asking open-ended questions had a frequency of 52 in Cycle Two, more than seven times the frequency of Cycle One (see Figure 16) and a few examples were:

- "How do you know they were talking negatively about the other person?"
- "What's the connection to your book?"
- "Why do you want to be enrolled?"
- "Should 13-year-olds be allowed to vote?" (NM observations, 2023)

Allowing students to share their authentic voices is new data that amplifies the theme: Identify attributes of an equitable classroom. In doing so, students will begin to perceive that their voices matter, which leads to a greater sense of belonging, motivation, and a positive school climate. Student's voice, as agreed upon by the CPR and formally defined by (Galloway, 2023) as "listening and collaborating with students, individualized youth participant voice, and domain of inquiry that aims to document the ideas, perceptions, opinions, or perspectives of the student within situated schooling contexts and for specific purposes" (pp. 13-14). In PAR Cycle Two, I found more examples of teachers providing opportunities for student voice by allowing students to share their authentic voice. Students sharing authentic voices had a frequency of 15, which is additional data to amplify the category. A few examples were:

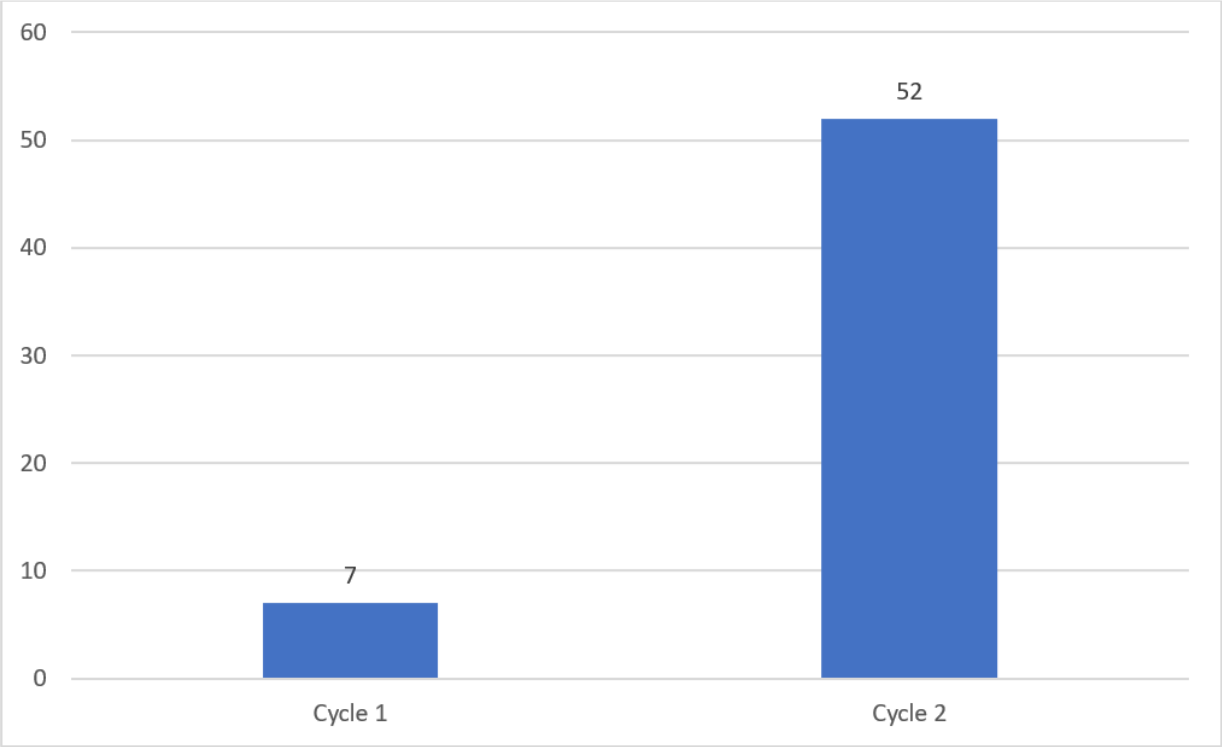

Figure 16. Frequency of open-ended questions.

- "Some people have bad nerves is why they smoke."
- "They (men and women) shouldn't all play together in physical games due to boys are normally stronger."
- "You're (teacher) not listening to what she's (student) saying."
- "Men will blow up like a teapot, and women will express their feeling and move on quicker than men."

Students who feel heard and involved tend to have higher levels of satisfaction, which contributes to their overall academic success and emotional well-being.

Teachers Invest in Student Success - Student Collaboration

Teachers promoting collaboration is a way to invest in student success and support the Cycle One theme, identifying attributes of an equitable classroom. Teachers promoting collaboration had a frequency of 25. A few codes from observations were:

- teacher facilitates a class discussion,
- teachers allow students to work with a partner, in a group, or individually,
- students are working in six groups of about four students each (you can hear student conversations about the content), and three students are working individually, and
- one teacher said: “you should be talking to each other” (Observation, February 15, 2023)

By promoting collaboration in the classroom, teachers can create an inclusive learning environment where students actively participate, learn from one another, and achieve higher levels of success. Classroom collaboration allows students with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to contribute ideas. This diversity enriches the discussion as students can learn from one another and gain new insights they may not have considered.

“Collaboration in the classroom is a useful strategy when teachers wish to see students improve in their achievement” (Lucero-Carrillo, 2017, p. 36).

Teachers Invest in Student Success - Provide Support

Teachers invest in student success by providing student affective support and academic support, which enhanced student collaboration opportunities promoted by teachers. Teachers providing student support had a frequency of 75, the highest frequency of all codes in the invest in student success category. Of the 75 frequencies, there were 44 codes for teachers providing academic support and 31 for teachers providing affective support (see Figure 17). A few examples of affective codes through teacher comments or actions, but are not limited to, addressed student redirection, student ownership, future planning, and time management examples were:

- "One thing, look up here…what do you think I want you to put in the center of your paper."
- "Do you have everything written, sir? Keep writing."
- The counselor is sharing high school information about concentration areas.
- The teacher used a timer for the assignment to support time management (Observation, March 2023).

As stated previously, teachers providing academic support had a frequency of 34 in Cycle Two. Teachers providing academic support appeared as teachers helped students with assignments. The majority of the teacher providing academic support were the teacher helping an individual student (n=16) or the teacher helping a group of students (n=13).

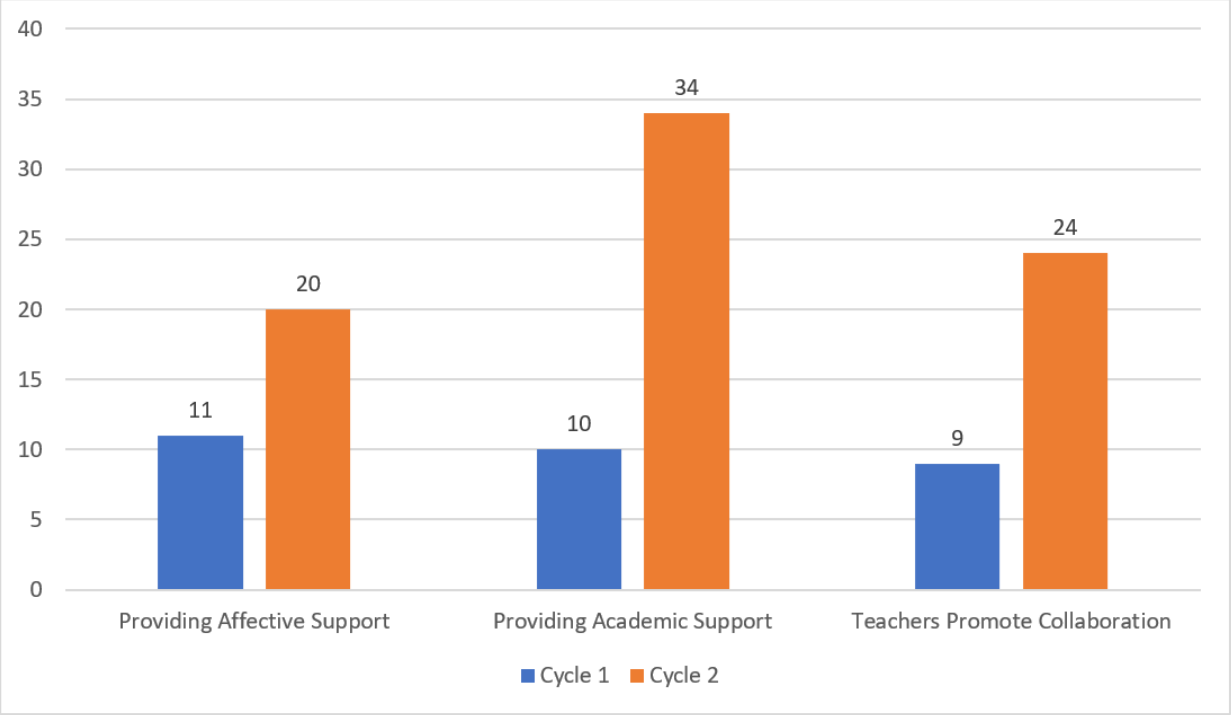

Figure 17. Instances of teachers invest in student success.

Create a Safe Space

Teachers engaging in positive interactions with students helped to build relationships. Teachers building relationships with students created a safe space, an attribute of an equitable classroom. These positive interactions may be any combination of examples, such as highlighting kindness, respect, and the worth of others, which strengthens relationships, and creates a safe space for learning and personal growth. During the CPR meetings, teachers discussed engaging in positive interactions with students (13 instances), and the observation notes showed 35 positive interactions. Positive interactions with students were identified in PAR Cycle One, but the frequency was much higher in PAR Cycle Two. Some examples of teachers' positive interactions were: "what you (student) just said is incredibly profound," "when y'all (students) do something good, of course, we're (teachers) gonna make a big deal about it," "each one (student), teach one (student)," and "I know you (student) got it (answer)." When teachers modeled positive interactions with students, it fostered a safe and supportive atmosphere for learning. The power of positive interactions lies in the consistency and genuine belief of the teacher. Teachers using positive interaction with students is a source of student empowerment and suggests mindsets can be positively altered (Miller, 2022). Incorporating positive interactions into classroom routines and modeling their usage helps students build relationships with each other and cultivate a positive mindset of lifelong skills for personal well-being and success.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I detailed the PAR Cycle Two activities, study findings and provided evidence from three PAR cycles of inquiry of how teachers built capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices and transferred practices into the classroom. The evidence from the

three cycles supports two findings: Co-construct Equitable Practices: Create a necessary space for teachers to collaborate on culturally responsive teaching practices and Living Equitable Practices: How teachers enacted equitable teaching practices in the classroom. The co-construction of equitable classroom practices includes creating a safe space for learning, providing opportunities for student voice, and investing in student success; these are results of the study's focus on culturally responsive teaching practices. Living equitable practices resulted from the study's focus on self-awareness through open-ended discussions and activities. Overall, the findings suggest that educational leaders must create a safe space for teachers to collaborate on culturally responsive teaching practices, question practices, and develop self-awareness before teachers can implement equitable classroom practices.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this participatory action research (PAR) study, I examined how three eighth-grade Language Arts teachers and I formed a co-practitioner research group (CPR) and collaboratively learned about culturally responsive teaching practices to develop and support equitable classrooms. I facilitated collaborative CPR meetings to support equitable classrooms that focused on building culturally responsive teaching practice capacity through a series of cycles of discussion, planning, action, observations, and reflection. The structured cycles were aimed to increase culturally responsive teacher capacity to create more equitable classrooms and improve the learning environments for students and staff. As a result, the members of the CPR group built the capacity for implementing culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom.

Over time, we collaboratively built our culturally responsive teaching capacity and identified and implemented culturally responsive teaching classroom practices. Through collaboration with the CPR group, we gained valuable knowledge and, most importantly, empowered each other to improve our culturally responsive teaching methods. Therefore, I am confident that the CPR group obtained the PAR project and study's goal of building culturally responsive teaching capacity to support equitable classrooms. In the end, this study demonstrated how a collaborative approach improved classroom practice, benefiting staff and students' learning experiences.

The context of the PAR study was a rural middle school in eastern North Carolina. The school's mission is to:

- Prepare students for high school and beyond
- Help students grow academically and socially.
- Help students become productive citizens.

The PAR study focused on culturally responsive teaching practices to live the element of the school mission. To actualize this, the PAR study findings revealed how teachers do (or do not) accept ownership of the school mission was crucial. This was accomplished through the project's clear focus on student success and teacher learning. Hattie (2003) states, “we should focus on the greatest source of variance that can make the difference (on student learning) - the teacher, (p. 3). Throughout the PAR study, teachers reflected and questioned traditional teaching practices by engaging in culturally responsive ones. Teachers reflecting and questioning their personal instructional practices is a significant starting point to create personal awareness of their culturally responsive teaching awareness, knowledge, and practices. Once teachers recognized personal practices through discussion and reflection, the learning, unlearning, and relearning of culturally responsive teaching practices began for the CPR members individually and as a group. Participating actively in collaborative activities led to building culturally responsive teaching capacity and equitable classroom practices.

The PAR study spanned 22 months and consisted of three cycles: the Pre-Cycle, Cycle One, and Cycle Two. Each cycle included planning, reflection, and discussion that aided the CPR team in co-constructing knowledge on culturally responsive teaching practices. The research design included the Community Learning Exchange practice to honor the context of the school setting and the assets of the teachers involved in the study. The CLE axioms were instrumental in promoting reflection and enhancing the group’s learning on culturally responsive teaching, specifically that those closest to the issue are best situated to solve local problems, and conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes (Guajardo et al., 2016).

In the pre-cycle, the CPR group identified attributes of an equitable classroom together. The CPR meetings were intentional PAR activities focused on engaging teachers in meaningful

collaboration, reflection, and, ultimately, action steps or "praxis" of implementing culturally responsive teaching practices in the classrooms. In addition, during Cycle One and Cycle Two, I conducted classroom observations that focused on identifying evidence of the attributes of equitable classrooms. Cycle One observations documented teacher actions and evidence of the attributes of equitable classrooms. Cycle Two observations went a step further and scripted what teachers and students said and how teacher-student interactions were evidence of the attributes of equitable classrooms. Table 12 summarizes activities that helped provide a comprehensive approach for the CPR team to build capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices to support equitable classrooms. In the next section, I link the findings from these activities to the extant literature and the focus of practice. I then turn to an emergent framework for developing and supporting equitable classrooms through culturally responsive teaching practices. I close with the implications for practice, research, and policy this study generated, as well as the implications to my leadership development.

Discussion

In this section, I revisited the two findings from the study in order to show their connection to the literature. In Chapter 2, I summarized some culturally responsive teaching literature from key researchers. Culturally responsive teaching began during the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and had a focus for educators to move past their racial and cultural biases to ensure all students learn, according to Dewey (1938). Gay and Ladson-Billings research contributed to developing teaching strategies to maximize educational equity for students of color. In addition, the literature emphasizes that researchers such as Martinez (2020) communicate the need for culturally responsive teaching practices to evolve and became interchangeable with "culturally responsive, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and culturally adaptive teaching (Cazden & Leggett,

Table 12

Key Activities: Three PAR Cycles of Inquiry

Activities	PAR Pre-Cycle Fall 2021 (Aug-Nov, 2021)	PAR Cycle One Spring 2022 (Jan-Apr, 2022)	PAR Cycle Two Fall 2022 (May-Sept, 2022)
Meeting with CPR members (*n*=9)	3	3	3
Classroom Observations-Formal (*n*=39)		17	22
Small Talks with CPR members (*n*=49)		25	24

1981; Hramiak, 2015; Paris, 2011). Re-analyzing the research findings generated several complementary connections, including the need for deliberate and thoughtful collaborative spaces for teachers to understand and engage in culturally responsive teaching, obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary to lead and enact culturally responsive teaching efforts, and culturally responsive teaching must be lived in the daily practice of educators. Each of these elements is re-examined next.

Creating Necessary Collaborative Space

The main finding of this PAR study was the need for collaborative space. The finding centered on the need for teachers to have the time and space (both physical and mental) to acknowledge, understand, and collaborate around the notion of culturally responsive teaching and learning. This simple premise is new learning, dismantling old notions, and relearning. Additionally, meaningful change in education could be faster. The institution of education has deep roots, and change comes slowly, if not incremental (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Educators need space to discuss, question, reflect, share ideas, and share learning. Here, educators themselves are best situated to discover solutions to local concerns. (Guajardo et al., 2016). Militello et al. (2023) elaborates on these concepts and states, “Leaders utilize distributed leadership by harnessing the skills and wisdom of local assets across the school community; including key constituents to work on issues based on the strengths and ideas they bring to the group” (p. 443). Such engagement fosters a creative agency that helps people find their power and voice, and the process responds to the need for local communities to own their destiny. This collective process puts the power back into the hands of the people most impacted by the conditions and decisions of the day. In this study, the collaboration was built on relationship building and was a product of Small Talks.

The Power of Small Talks

The data from this PAR study generated an essential feature of building trust with educators, which I called Small Talks. These Small Talks were vital social functions. They were informal, frequent tidbits or short stories about sports, family, societal challenges, and education. These Small Talks established trust and rapport with CPR members. Such informal trust-building is supported in the literature (Bryk & Schneider, 2004; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Such Small Talks enhanced relationships with CPR members and were used to ease into deeper conversations with individual CPR members and the CPR team. Small Talks often led to discovering similar interests and experiences, thus enhancing relationships with CPR members and the CPR team. Small Talks also led to the discovery of cultural non-verbal cues and accepted social norms promoting different perspectives. Conversations about culturally responsive practices have proved difficult in educational settings (Singleton, 2012). However, these conversations could be more problematic with the current political landscape. While challenging, these conversations are not impossible (Irby, 2022; Khalifa, 2018).

What Collaborative Space Looks Like

The collaborative space allowed the CPR members to share their experiences, discuss strategies that worked, and build upon those strategies to develop even better practices to use in the classroom. The continuous cycle of interacting with colleagues about culturally responsive teaching practices created a continuous learning process in which CPR members expanded their knowledge and skills. Woo and Henriksen (2023) described a similar process as co-design: "Co-design approaches are a potential solution that can be used to network diverse interests and viewpoints to generate solutions that address problems by transcending our individual capabilities" (p. 2). The collaborative space created a collective efficacy and support system for

the CPR members during the PAR study. By collaboratively addressing culturally responsive teaching practices, CRP members sought advice, gained insight from each other's perspectives, and learned as a group.

The CPR members learned as a group and built capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices. As described in the previous section, the collaborative space led to collective efficacy, which is essential for the CPR team to learn as a group. Dewey (1963) explains that we should give students something to do and not something to learn and believes that when students are doing, it demands thinking, and learning is a natural result of students doing. I applied Dewey's theory to the CPR members, and I intentionally engaged the CPR members through storytelling, discussion, questioning, analyzing observations, and reflection throughout the PAR study. Dewey (1963) believed that learning is educational and personal. CPR members reflected on their experiences and daily student interactions during the CPR meetings. Teacher reflection on how to support students was vital to the CPR members' learning as a group, as all CRP members were familiar with the student's behaviors, motivations, challenges, and successes. Learning as a group is connected to Vygotsky's social learning theory, "cognitive development relies on cooperative problem solving and peer interactions" (Grimm, 2004, p. 26). The CPR meeting activities encouraged a holistic approach to learning as a group, as the CPR team reflected on individual and group experiences throughout the PAR study.

Questioning and Reflection Loops

CRP members questioned and reflected on school and personal teaching practices, which led to CPR members building culturally responsive teaching capacity. Questioning school and personal teaching practices as a group is essential to professional growth for teachers and improved learning for students, as Karp (1973) states, "Good teaching is matter not of method of

the heart and more a giving of right questions than…of right answers" (p. 272). Questioning practices encouraged teachers to reflect on teaching methods and strategies and helped teachers identify their strengths, areas for improvement, and impact on student learning. CPR members exemplified this throughout the PAR study:

- "I didn't realize I was the center of the class as much…maybe I'm talking more than I think I am."
- "I would give them too much time to get some stuff done."
- "Made me think, how much independent work do we do?"
- "Am I planting an idea, or am I leading them to think?"

Having the CPR members reflecting and questioning their practices was necessary. Doing without thoughtful reflection can be counterproductive and lead to merely reifying current practices. Argyris and Schon (1992) clearly distinguish between single-loop and double-loop learning. Without reflecting on one's action and changing practice based on that reflection—there is no authentic learning nor change in practice. CPR members questioning and reflecting on their practices led to the CPR team building their culturally responsive teaching capacity. In one example, the CPR intentionally talked less during the lessons and allowed students to talk more to improve student learning. Questioning and reflecting on culturally responsive teaching practices increased teaching capacity and led to continuous improvement individually and within the grade level. Questioning and reflecting on personal practices helped CRP members gain a better understanding of their students and encouraged the adaptation of teaching practices to meet the needs of students. CPR members reflected on their observational data and the observational data of other CRP members with the intent to learn from each other to continue building capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices. CPR members had the autonomy to

reflect and question personal and school practices and, over time, understand how these practices supported equitable classrooms. CPR members learned individually and as a group. They supported each other in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. Creating space for building trust and reflecting on practice are one thing; transforming one's practice is another.

Living Equitable Practices

Transforming practice is the gold standard for any improvement effort in any profession. Changing practice has also proven difficult in all professions. Change is personal and historical, and there are institutional and organizational barriers (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The space created vis-à-vis Small Talks enabled teachers to enact attributes of equitable teaching practices in the classroom. The CPR members acquired knowledge and skills in culturally responsive teaching to create the attributes of equitable practices. The acquired knowledge and skills led to building capacity in culturally responsive teaching that transferred to classroom practices. Due to CPR members supporting each other in the learning process, the effectiveness of transferring equitable practices from CPR meetings to the classrooms was amplified.

The changes in practice witnessed in this PAR study were a by-product of commitment and capacity building (Kofman & Senge, 1993; Rowan, 1990). The spaces created engendered a commitment to improvement efforts in general and specifically around culturally responsive teaching. Once this awareness was realized, there was room for professional growth through skill development. This developmental process necessitated time for individuals to understand their growth needs and then learn how to realize them.

The CPR members transferred culturally responsive teaching practices into the classroom after gaining a better understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices. This transfer of practice is progress towards a more inclusive approach to education. The transferred practices include a variety of examples defined by the CPR team as attributes of an equitable classroom. Several examples from the data support teachers transferring the theory of culturally responsive teaching into classroom practices. One example from the beginning of the study is when CPR members asked the CRP group, after watching a video on culturally responsiveness, "How do you make sure that all are responding to the instruction?" The theory in this example is that there are strategies that increase the percentage of students connecting to and learning the instruction.

Another example of culturally responsive teaching practice included teachers intentionally allowing students to work in groups to promote student collaboration. In addition, during our reflection on classroom observations, one CPR member stated, "Giving students the opportunity to interact goes beyond the lesson materials. They learned to collaborate and begin valuing each other's thoughts." The CPR members implemented culturally responsive teaching, reinforcing the theoretical knowledge developed individually and with the CPR team during the PAR study. Slavin (1991) shared that student motivation and task engagement increase when collaborative structures are daily classroom procedures. Students tend to become more vested in their learning and motivated by group activities compared to working independently. These principles were applied to the CPR team, meaning CPR members became more vested and increased task engagement due to the collaborative open-ended questioning during CPR meetings throughout the study. CPR members engaged in real-time culturally responsive teaching-learning activities, essential for authentic development in culturally responsive teaching practices.

Finally, the CPR members created a transformative learning environment by collaborating with their peers to support change. Changes in educational practices do not happen in isolation. Teaching practices shift when teachers support each other in improving content delivery and classroom practices, often leading to new perspectives and strategies. Intentional PAR activities were used throughout the PAR study to build trust and allow all voices to be heard in reflections and discussions. Building trust and allowing voice during this process created a space for CPR members to support each other, creating a collective effort to improve classroom practices to improve student learning. The collective effort of the CPR team to improve classroom practices went well beyond CPR members' classrooms.

In this study, the collective effort positively influenced the three CPR members' classrooms of about 90 students each and the learning of an entire grade level of about 270 students. The supportive efforts may be described as a ripple effect when a specific intervention or strategy benefits more than the intended recipients (Timperley et al., 2007). The ripple effect may continue to grow and become long-term and wide-reaching. The classroom observation and reflection loop structure was instrumental in CPR members supporting each other. CPR members analyzed and shared their observation reflection data, followed by CPR members analyzing each CPR member's personal observation reflection as a team. CPR members offered and received feedback from each other, which continued to enhance the supportive space, leading to CPR members taking risks with new strategies and sharing the experience with the CRP team. In the end, engaging in culturally responsive teaching was a social activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that led to a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), ultimately transforming professional practice. Next, I offer a theory for meaningful change in professional practice.

Theory for Meaningful Change for Professional Practice

The PAR cycles generated data that was coded to yield a set of study findings. The subsequent re-analysis of the findings vis-a-vis the extant literature in the discussion section above led to a model theory for meaningful change. The Meaningful Change framework's foundation is a stacked Venn graphic organizer that shows overlapping and interconnected relationships in making meaningful change. Each circle represents a phase of making meaningful change (see Figure 18). Notice how the circles are embedded in each other, indicating that each circle depends on the next outer circles and those that lead up to the overarching outer circle. Each is offered in sequential order:

- Small Talks to Build Relationships – the outer layer as small talks are used to build relationships and rapport and encompasses all the other layers of the framework.
- Create a space for collaboration – the relationships build trust, which supports the space for sharing experiences on a common issue or concern closest to those doing the work.
- Learning as a Group – a collective efficacy to gain knowledge by sharing experiences about a common topic, issue, or concern.
- Open-ended questioning and Reflection Loops – continuous loops of questioning and reflections around open-ended questions focused on a common topic, issue, or concern.
- Personal Awareness / Build Capacity – the realization that practices, concerns, or issues in question need to improve/make decisions based on knowledge gained about a topic, concern, or issue.
- Enact Equitable Classroom Practices – implement actions based on the built capacity.

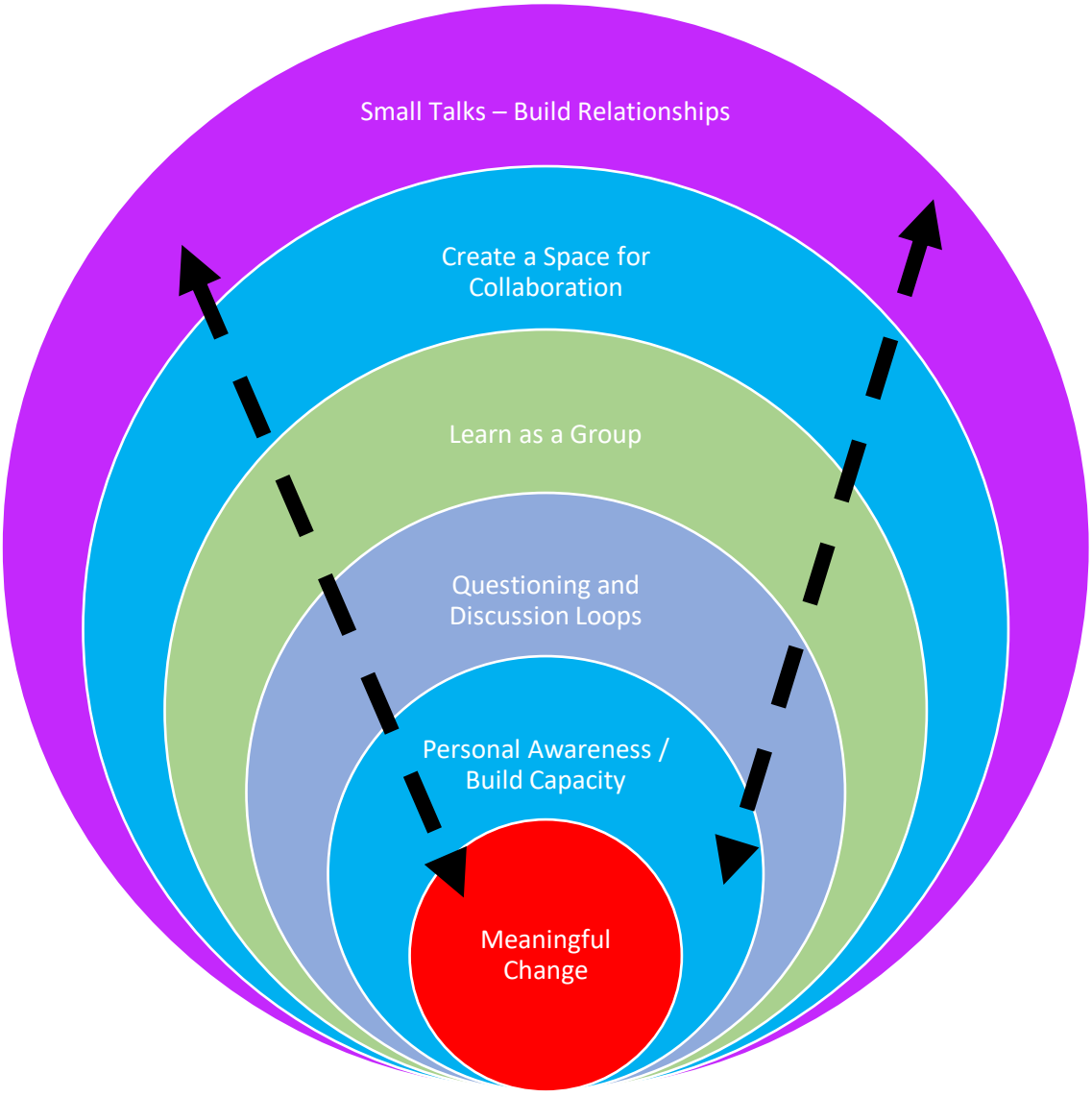

Figure 18. Meaningful change framework.

The sequence of the Meaningful Change framework is just as important as the framework itself. In this study, enacting equitable practices is the by-product of the CPR team following the Meaningful Change sequence to build capacity in culturally responsive teaching. If one attempts to enact equitable practices with a group without following the sequence, I believe the chance for implementation decreases significantly. It takes relationships to build trust and you must have trust to engage in collaboration to learn as a group. Open-ended questions and reflection loops required sharing experiences. Note that open-ended questions were intentionally used throughout the study versus recall questions to promote critical thinking and deeper personal reflections. The open-ended questioning and reflection loops are only as powerful as CPR members are willing to share. Meaning, that CPR members must accept being vulnerable while sharing their learning with the group for the benefit of the group. The existence of this type of vulnerability is dependent and only likely after relationships, collaboration, and learning as a group have been established and not before. Continuous open-ended questioning and reflection loops lead to personal awareness and building culturally responsive teaching capacity. Cartwright (2002) would describe the open-ended questioning and reflection loops process to develop personal awareness and build capacity as double-loop learning. Cartwright (2002) states, "double-loop learning is an educational concept and process that involves teaching people to think more deeply about their own assumptions and beliefs (p.68)." Open-ended questioning and discussion loops push the CPR to think critically about personal beliefs and assumptions and more importantly, to think about "doing the right things" versus "doing things right (Cartwright, 2020, p.68)." Personal awareness and building capacity are dependent upon each other. Double-Loop learning helped the CRP team to change habits of thinking and act in unfamiliar ways. As CPR members develop personal awareness by questioning biases classroom practices, and their

capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices increased. Even though there are several ways to initiate change, the Meaningful Change framework not only considers the value of each component, it provides the importance of moving along the framework sequence.

This study began with a theory of action: If the CPR group can build culturally responsive teaching knowledge, identify and question school and classroom practices, and explore processes to develop and support equitable classrooms, then staff and students will be better equipped to engage in critical thinking and improve learning. After the 18-month study, the theory of action still holds great promise. The main elements of the theory of action and the study findings support the need to build capacity and question practice if we are to realize changes in professional practice. However, the Framework offers additional insights into what are the necessary conditions to realize such change.

The essential components of the framework are Small Talks to build relationships, creating space for collaboration, learning as a group, open-ended questioning, and reflection loops, building capacity/personal awareness, and enacting equitable practices. The framework starts with Small Talks to build relationships. Small talks were perceived to be informal and casual conversations at the beginning of the study. After establishing the questioning and reflection loops with the CPR team, I realized simple acts of talking and listening to people amplified the need for Small Talks in the process of building relationships. Sheninger & Rubin (2017) describe relationships as a never-ending process and for school leaders, considers relationships to be just as important as knowledge (p.34). Once relationships are established, then, we create space for collaboration. Educators must feel safe and trusted before sharing ideas and be open to feedback beyond the surface level. In building relationships, educators get to know each other personally and gain insight into each team member's strengths and weaknesses.

This insight led to interpersonal skills, which helped create a more positive space for peer-to-peer collaborations. Johnson and Johnson (1989) submit that cooperative learning is more effective when students have strong interpersonal relationships. The trust and collaboration were all products of the relationship-building aspect of this work. Balkundi and Harrison (2006) agree, stating, “Teams in which many members have ties to one another should therefore have higher levels of information sharing and more of the collaboration necessary for successful task completion” (p. 5). Additional research supports that relationships are needed for meaningful collaboration, and face-to-face communication is ideal for effective communication, as it encourages teachers to share thoughts and concerns without fear (Gorman & Pauleen, 2016). The study aimed to build culturally responsive teaching capacity to change classroom practices. The chances of successful change increase with a culture of trust and strong relationships (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Building relationships and creating collaboration spaces are followed by learning as a group, questioning and reflection loops, personal awareness, building capacity, and enacting equitable classroom practices. Creating a community of practices is instrumental in any meaningful change process. When a group of individuals who share a common concern or interest in a topic come together to learn and continuously complete the discussion and reflection loop, knowledge, experiences, and strategies will develop. The gained knowledge leads to personal awareness and increases capacity in the common concern or topic of interest. The discussion-reflection loop must hinge on evidence-based data collection, as in this study, classroom observations. Gathering specific data on what teachers and students are doing and saying during an observation will shed some insight into the teacher's methods of instruction, teacher-to-student, and student-to-student relationships. The educator leading the community of practice should use Small Talks to build relationships, support individuals and the group,

promote voices to be heard for all involved, empower teachers to take ownership of the change process, and promote reflection and growth. When all components come together, the community of practice will significantly impact learning outcomes for those involved, and the ripple effect will impact colleagues and student learning. The framework provides a sequential order for focus for the community of practice to make meaningful change.

Implications

This PAR study had a clear focus with a small number of participants. The intent was clear: *how do school leaders work with classroom teachers to acknowledge, understand, and engage in culturally responsive practices in their daily work?* The answer to this question is complex. We understand how professional learning and change are personal (Marris, 1974), organizational (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), and institutional (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). And now, other political pressures inhibit the conversations about equity-related strategies such as culturally relevant teaching. Nonetheless, this small PAR study has clear and relevant implications for informing policy, improving practice, and recommending additional research. Each is briefly examined next.

Policy

School districts have a tremendous influence, fostering *or* inhibiting change, on teachers' pursuit of implementing equitable practices in the classroom. Some districts welcome ideas and provide educator support to address inequities and implement equitable practices in the classroom. In contrast, others constantly place barriers for educators to navigate and address those inequities. The outcome of this PAR study challenges the traditional practices of making changes in education. Findings indicated that Small Talks led to building relationships, creating the space for collaboration that is instrumental for meaningful change. As a result, some

practices can be put into place through school or district-level policies to support activities such as Small Talk.

A local school policy change would include professional development for beginning teachers (BT) to understand the power of using Small Talks to build relationships with students and colleagues. One way for implementation is through monthly BT support meetings. Having monthly BT meetings is a state mandate, but how districts and schools facilitate monthly BT meetings is at the discretion of the district and school. The monthly BT meetings should include BT mentors to respond to open-ended questions and participate in the discussion-reflection loop around attributes of an equitable classroom. As seen in the findings, the space for collaboration, such as monthly BT meetings, allowed the opportunity to build capacity in attributes of equitable classrooms as individuals and as a group.

Creating space for Small Talks should not be regulated only to beginning teachers. This study demonstrated the viability of these practices for mid to long term career teachers as well. Additionally, there is reason to believe that school and district leaders can benefit from engaging in Small Talks in order to enter into conversations about culturally relevant teaching and learning policies and practices. Similar to local policy, a district policy change could include professional development for administrators on using Small Talks to build relationships for meaningful changes around attributes of equitable classrooms. Again, the discussion-feedback loop plays a vital role in answering open-ended questions focused on the attributes of an equitable classroom. The discussion-feedback loop promotes questioning, which builds capacity in equitable classroom practices and leads to equitable practices at the district level. While not an end, free and open conversations have proven vital in change efforts, especially those inclusive of the school and district leaders.

Research

The PAR study contributes to the scholarship of equity-focused educational practices in several areas. First, this study supported the usefulness of the Community Learning Exchange axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016). The CLE axioms were "lived" throughout the PAR design. For instance, the CPR team comprised school-level teachers who wanted to investigate culturally relevant teaching and learning. More specifically, the CLE strategies and meeting protocols provided an inclusive space for this research. Participants did not feel like part of a study. Instead, they were empowered to investigate their practice with colleagues, including the school leader, in a non-judgmental setting.

Additional research could focus on other units of analysis. For instance, how might central office administrators engage in conversations about culturally relevant practices with their principals or teachers? What would school board members contribute to such investigations? Finally, how might K-12 students become involved in this type of research? Other research designs may shed additional light on this topic. For instance, to what extent do teachers in schools, locally and across the nation, want to, or know how to, engage in culturally relevant pedagogical practices? Are there differences in how educational leaders and teachers acknowledge and engage in culturally relevant practices by geographic region, local political pressures, grade level of school, or the level of experience of educators? Several relevant, parallel studies can further examine the questions posed in this PAR study. Finally, the research design can be altered to understand other perspectives. This PAR study focused on using CLE strategies in a small setting. Large-scale surveys or comprehensive qualitative research designs may generate additional insights into this topic.

Practice

I am most proud of the practical implications of my study with the CPR group. This PAR was an equity-focused, inquiry-based study that set the conditions for school teachers and leaders to bring their understandings, history, interests, and motivations to bear on a controversial topic. The CPR group became students where our interests, prior knowledge, and personal experiences (Dewey, 1963) were exposed and discussed concerning culturally relevant practices. As a result, there is clear and present evidence that we have changed some local classroom practices. One classroom practice change is that teachers intentionally used open-ended questions and writing prompts when delivering content. Open-ended questions promote answers beyond recall and promote critical thinking. Another classroom practice change included teachers intentionally promoting student collaboration with small group discussions. Small groups allow students to learn from each other as learning is a social event. The final classroom practice change to mention is that teachers understand the importance of teacher-student relationships and used Small Talks to aid in building relationships. The study encouraged teachers to think differently about their classroom practices and culturally responsive teaching practices. Teachers identifying and implementing new classroom practices to support equitable classrooms is a start to the journey towards implementing culturally responsive teaching practices schoolwide. I documented my growth as an equity-focused school leader throughout this study and a fuller account of this is provided in the next section.

The study helped identify vital components that must exist in a school environment in order to support equitable classrooms. First, there must be an equity leader with a willingness to learn different aspects of equity followed by actions of equity. Next, the equity leader should use Small Talks to build relationships with staff. As relationships form over time, the equity leader

gains vital information as to which staff members may or may not be more ready to begin the equity journey. The equity journey is an ongoing collaboration filled with emotions, beliefs, experiences, reflections, discussions, and respect for different perspectives. Therefore, to increase the odds of teachers changing classroom practices to support equitable classrooms, selecting teachers who appear to be more open to equity conversations is recommended. The collaboration around equity should include CLE axioms to guide the discussion and reflection activities. Three key CLE axioms to consider that ensure all involved have a voice and learn as a group are that learning is a dynamic social process, those closest to the concern are best suited to find answers, and crossing borders enriches the learning process. Equity leaders should keep in mind that all school environments vary. I encourage those involved in building capacity in culturally responsive teaching to adapt these strategies to meet individual school needs along the equity journey.

Leadership Development

Reflecting on my leadership journey, I realize how much I have grown professionally and personally through this PAR project. First, I have developed an equity lens, which allows me to see practically everything from an equity viewpoint. The equity lens has challenged me personally to do what I know I should do in inequitable situations. Having an equity lens and putting equity into practice is challenging. I now understand Freire's (1970) explanation of praxis as the act of putting equity into action. I gained knowledge from experiences of seeing isomorphism in education and periodically felt trapped in "stuck improving," as described by Irby (2022). As I continue to grow as an equity leader, I will say that I have identified and addressed more incidents of inequities than I usually would have due to the PAR study on

culturally responsive teaching. As I continue to grow as an equity leader, I hope to become more effective in identifying, addressing, and providing solutions to my school's inequities.

Additionally, I am an African-American male in a rural city in eastern North Carolina. Even though the Civil Rights Act was passed 55 years ago, remnants of seen and unseen racism still exist throughout the state. Freire (1970) shared that the oppressed must bring liberation to the oppressed and the oppressor. For this to happen, the oppressed and oppressor must engage in meaningful dialogue, and for the dialogue to take place, all involved should feel safe while engaging in the dialogue. Walker & Byas (2009) shared how an African American principal in the late 1950s and early 1960s had to "use intellectual wit rather than direct confrontation to challenge limitations" (p.41). A combination of readings, videos, and reflections during the PAR study has helped me define meaningful dialogue as a verbal exchange between people listening to each other. I learned that having meaningful dialogue is about more than being right but more about creating the space to engage in the dialogue. I have also learned that threatening words and phrases have been identified and accepted by America's society; they should be avoided and do not contribute to meaningful dialogue.

During this study, I developed my skills in observing classrooms. Too often, administrators go into the classroom and conduct observations based on a specific checklist of activities they expect to see during the observation. Before the study, I would script the teacher's comments and actions throughout the observation. During the post-conference, I would use probing questions to guide the conversations and include subjective comments based on what I thought would make the learning more engaging for students. The PAR study impacted how I conduct classroom observation. The documentation of classroom observations evolved from Cycle One to Cycle Two. In Cycle One, I documented teacher actions in the classroom and

occasionally scripted the teacher's comments. Based on questions my professor asked during a coaching session in Cycle One, I realized that I was not collecting enough objective and detailed evidence during the classroom observations. Therefore, I intentionally scripted what teachers and students said during the classroom observation in Cycle Two. This practice transferred to teacher evaluations and led to teacher post-conferences guided by objective evidence versus subjective documentation or suggestions.

During my role as an equity leader, I intentionally became an active learner with the CPR group, and I was able to create the spaces for authentic dialogue to take place. I relied on the CLE axiom: *the people closest to the work are best positioned to solve the dilemma of practice*, to anchor this project. As a result, I created a space for teacher collaboration on culturally responsive teaching. CPR members went beyond surface-level discussions, shared experiences and strategies that led to identifying and developing examples of culturally responsive teaching classroom practices. By acknowledging that each CPR member's understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices is a unique journey, I met each teacher where they were. As an equity leader, I now understand that learning is a social process, and by valuing teachers' voices and experiences, I created an environment that allowed meaningful change and equity within the educational setting.

Conclusion

Culturally responsive teaching is not a plug-and-play strategy, but a multi-facet of ongoing ideas, reflections, strategies, and processes focused on all students learning, being represented, and receiving what they need in the school, classrooms, content, and lessons. School leaders must emphasize the need to equip educators with strategies that connect instruction to culturally diverse students. Martinez (2020) had a more concise perspective as she stated, "All

teachers should be prepared to teach all students at all times" (p. 159). Implementing culturally responsive teaching practices must be done with others, as the current traditional system is well established and working. However, the approach to building culturally responsive teaching capacity should be a collaborative group that is like-minded, willing to share, discuss, reflect, and be vulnerable to learning with the group. The collaborative group must not discount the need to build and continue building relationships among each other as they establish a respectful learning atmosphere before making any meaningful change.

In response to the overarching question, *how do teachers develop and implement culturally responsive teaching to support equitable classrooms,* the CPR team gained knowledge in culturally responsive teaching practices through various Small Talks and CPR meetings, including sharing experiences, classroom observations, data analysis, reflections, questioning practices, and discussions. The collaboration helped the CPR team to learn as a group and take risks in curricular and pedagogical decisions in the classroom, which led to the CPR team identifying and implementing attributes of an equitable classroom: creating a safe space, providing opportunities for student voice, and investing in student success into daily practice. As the principal and lead researcher, I actively participated in all CPR activities and learned with the group. I built my capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices, which helped me plan and facilitate meaningful, open-ended questions and reflection loops. I collaborated with CPR members and supported identifying and documenting the implementation of attributes of an equitable classroom.

The Meaningful Change framework developed from the study brings a holistic approach to education changes centered on the relationships of those closest to the concern. Data and information should be collected and processed at each level and go through the open-ended

questioning-reflection loop to guide the next steps. The Meaningful Change framework appears sequential and simplistic. However, one must consider how personal experiences, biases, and open-ended questioning-reflection loops can significantly hinder the group's capacity-building progress. I acknowledge that the Meaningful Change framework has benefits and weaknesses for organizational change. Future research will reveal the importance of Small Talks to help build relationships with the group closest to the concern to make meaningful change.

Equitable classrooms require equitable practices, which is the title of this study. Reflecting on this three-and-a-half-year study, I think about growing up on a farm in Eastern North Carolina. My granddaddy, Lester McDuffie, was very influential in my life as he was full of wisdom and shared many stories. Some of those stories were about living during Jim Crow. Despite living before and after Jim Crow, he did not share any ill will towards white America. He had several sayings that still resonate in my head today, and one of them relates to this study: "Sometimes you have to deal with the consequences for doing what's right." As a child, I had no clue what he meant.

I would think to myself, how do you someone have consequences for doing what's right. Now, as an adult, I understand that saying completely. Unfortunately, I have had experiences to know that everyone does not believe in equity for all. The personal challenge has been how you put actions to what you believe and navigate possible consequences. In eastern North Carolina, you may be labeled or reprimanded for supporting equitable practices, even though it is 2023. It is the complete opposite for a colleague who lives on the West Coast who may be labeled or reprimanded for not supporting equitable practices. As I complete this study, I think of my children and the world in which they live and their world when I am no longer here. We have many current event family conversations that led to deeper discussions of equity, and everyone is

entitled to a certain quality of life. I have learned from a young person's perspective, even when we agree to disagree. I believe the world will improve as we continue to address inequities followed by actions. A better world will lead to better schools addressing inequities and ultimately having more equitable classrooms.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

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: Norman McDuffie
CC: Matthew Militello
Date: 11/19/2021
Re: UMCIRB 21-001655
McDuffieEquitable Classroms Require Equitable Practices

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 11/18/2021. 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.

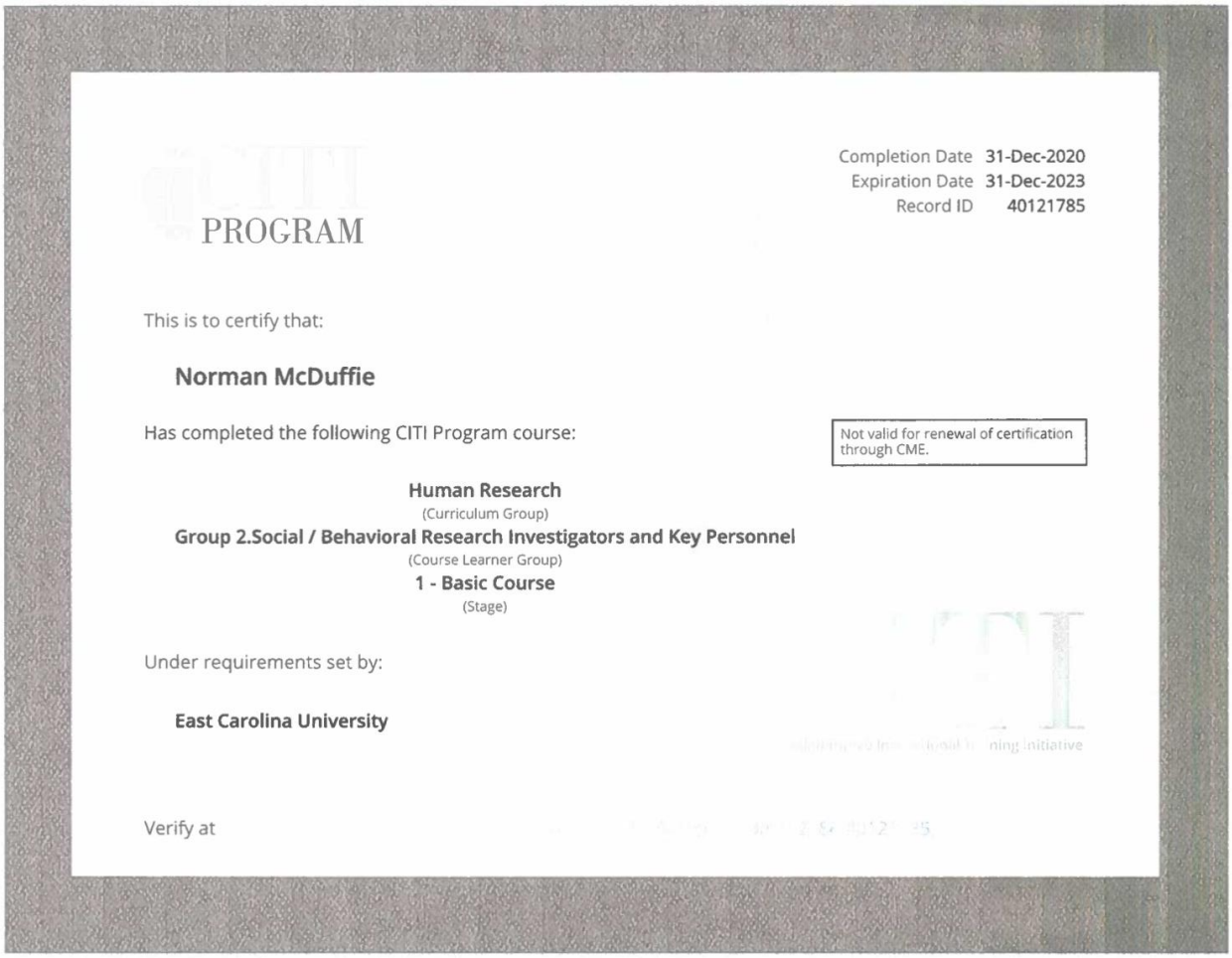
This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the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

Document	Description
CALL Survey(0.01)	Surveys and Questionnaires
Dissertation Proposal(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Interview Protocol(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Recruitment Email(0.01)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Updated Consent Form with CALL info(0.02)	Consent Forms

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.

APPENDIX B: CITI TRAINING CERTIFICATE



CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 31-Dec-2020
Expiration Date 31-Dec-2023
Record ID 40121785

This is to certify that:

Norman McDuffie

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

Verify at

APPENDIX C: DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER

Pitt County Schools

1717 West Fifth Street
Greenville, North Carolina 27834
http://www.pitt.k12.nc.us

TEL: 252-830-4200
FAX: 252-830-4239

July 13, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Pitt County Schools recognizes the benefits of participating in relevant, well-designed research studies proposed by qualified individuals. Approval for conducting such studies is based primarily on the extent to which substantial benefits can be shown for Pitt County Schools and its mission of educating students. The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the **approval** for Norman McDuffie to conduct the dissertation study titled, "How do teachers develop and implement culturally responsive teaching in support of equitable classrooms?" with participants in Pitt County Schools. We also give permission to utilize the following spaces at AG Cox Middle School to collect data and conduct interviews for this dissertation project: How do teachers develop and implement culturally responsive teaching in support of equitable classrooms?

The project meets all of our school/district guidelines, procedures, and safeguards for conducting research on our campus. Moreover, there is ample space for Norman McDuffie to conduct his study and his project will not interfere with any functions of Pitt County Schools. Finally, the following conditions must be met, as agreed upon by the researchers and Pitt County Schools:

- Participant data only includes information captured from the state data collection strategies.
- Participation is voluntary.
- Participants can choose to leave the study without penalty at any time.
- Any issues with participation in the study are reported to the school administration in a timely manner.
- An executive summary of your findings is shared with the school administration once the study is complete.

In addition to these conditions, the study must follow all of the East Carolina University IRB guidelines.

We are excited to support this important work.

Respectfully,

Steve M. Lassiter, Jr., Ed.D
Assistant Superintendent of Educational Programs and Services
Pitt County Schools

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

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: Building culturally responsive capacity to support equitable classrooms

Principal Investigator: Norman E. McDuffie
Institution, Department or Division: East Carolina University, Department of Educational Leadership
Address: E. 5th Street, Greenville, NC 27858
Telephone #: 252-328-4260
Study Coordinator: Dr. Matthew Militello
Telephone #: 252-328-6131

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) 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 (PAR) project is to build teachers' capacity in culturally responsive teaching practices in order to support equitable classrooms. The development and support of equitable classrooms will increase student engagements and learning for all students, especially students that have been historically marginalized. You are being invited to take part in this research because you have knowingly or unknowingly exhibited some culturally responsive teaching practices. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn to how to create an atmosphere, which allows culturally responsive teaching discussions, and identify daily school and classroom practices to support equitable classrooms.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about thirty people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

There are no known reasons for 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 A.G. Cox Middle School in Winterville, NC. You will need to meet face-to-face or virtually approximately 10-30 times during the study. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately ten-hours over the next twelve months.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to participate in an interview and/or an observation during or after professional learning communities. The interviews or observation may be recorded in addition to handwritten notes by the research team members. All of the interview questions will focus on your self-reflection experiences and classroom practices to develop and support equitable classrooms.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?
We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't 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 not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study,

Will it cost me to take part in this research?
It will not cost you any money to be part of the 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:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.
- 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 phone number 910-512-6111 (weekdays, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm) or email mcduffien19@students.ecu.edu.
If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2941 (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 of the ORIC at 252-744-1971.

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 (PRINT)	**Signature**	**Date**

APPENDIX E: OBSERVATION TOOL

Calling-On Type 2 - Selective Verbatim and Coding

The observer uses selective verbatim to capture the teacher's actions, the time, and the student responses. While think time is a part of the question form and question-level tools, the observer can record TT (think time) or NTT (no think time). The lack of think time between asking the question and calling on a student often leads to certain students being quicker thinkers who raise their hands. First, the observer collects time and selective verbatim. After the observation, the observer codes the evidence.

Time Stamp	Evidence	Code (After observation)

After the observation using selective verbatim, tabulate the number of instances of each type of calling on.

Teacher **Observer** **Date**

Duration of Observation _____ to _____

R*	Raised hand	Total Number
CC**	Cold Call	
CCD	Cold Call for Discipline	
B-A	Blurt out-Accepts	
B-I	Blurt out-Ignores	
C&R	Call and Response: Teacher asks for group response or indicates students should "popcorn"	

ES	Uses equity strategy (equity stick or card to call on student)	
TR* **	Teacher repeats student response to class verbatim	
TRV* **	Teacher revoices student response	
TPS	Think and Pair and then Share	
Other	Any other strategy you note	

APPENDIX F: COMMUNITY LEARNING EXCHANGE PROTOCOL

Each semester for the duration of the participatory action research study, the researcher will host a Community Learning Exchange on a topic related to the research questions in the participatory action research (PAR) project. At the CLE, the researcher will collect and analyze artifacts that respond to the specific questions listed below. The researcher will collect qualitative data based on the activities in which the participants engage at the CLE. The data will be in the form of posters and notes that participants write and drawings that participants make in response to prompts related to the research questions.

Participants will include the Co-Practitioner Researchers and other participants who sign consent forms. If students are participants, consent and assent forms will be used.

Date of CLEs: Spring 2022 / Fall 2022 Number of Participants: *10 / 80*

Purpose of CLE: Build teachers' culturally responsive teaching capacity to develop and support equitable classrooms.

Questions for Data Collection: How do educators build culturally responsive teaching capacity to develop and support equitable classrooms?

APPENDIX G: POST-OBSERVATION CONVESATION PROTOCOL

After a researcher conducts classroom observation, the researcher facilitates a 15-minute post-observation conversation with the teacher. The researcher takes notes on the observation and then codes the post-observation notes using a set of pre-established codes and open coding.

Date of Post-Observation Conversation:

Teacher Identification Code:

Brief Description of Lesson Focus

TIME	Notes of Conversation	Coding

FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Researcher uses four categories with 23 possible codes for evidence from post-observation conversation. The codes and categories have been validated by calibration by other researchers (Saldaña, 2016; Policy Studies Associates 2020).

Opening and Coaching Stance

1. Greeting
2. Quick turnaround on analyzing evidence
3. Transparency of conversation
4. Collaborative approach
5. Direct informational approach

Processes and Strategies in Conversation

6. Follow-up questions: paraphrasing teacher responses
7. Question form: open-ended and clarifying questions
8. Ratio of talk time (observer: teacher)
9. Redirect to focus on teaching and learning
10. Responding to ideas from teacher
11. Positive feedback on key parts of the lesson
12. Acknowledging tensions of roles; emphasizes support and development role
13. Teacher knowledge: checks teacher knowledge about instructional practices
14. Observer summary: frequently summarizes conversation

Focus on Evidence

15. Opening question: related to equity data
16. Focus on evidence throughout, particularly equity data
17. Teacher has data in advance of conversation
18. Use of tool and factual evidence
19. Next steps teacher-driven & related to evidence and equity focus

Body Language, Tone and Setting

20. Sitting side by side
21. Nonverbals: looking at teacher, nodding, sub-vocal responses (hmm)
22. Asset-based
23. Supportive

APPENDIX H: SURVEY

The PROJECT I^4 Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership for Learning (CALL)

Section 1

Welcome to the I4 CALL Survey! The survey is divided into three sections that contain questions related to different areas of leadership in a school.

Some of the answer choices in the survey describe a situation that may not fully capture your desired response. For this reason, please be sure to read the question and all the answer choices before choosing the response that best applies to you and your school.

This first set of questions focuses on the ways that leaders in your school create structures to support instruction and student learning.

i4_010210

Which of the following best describes the collective expectation for student learning in your school?

a) There is no pervasive vision of high expectations for student learning operating in our school.
b) A limited number of adults in the school have high expectations for all students.
c) Some adults in the school have high expectations for all students.
d) Many adults in the school have high expectations for all students.
e) All adults in the school have high expectations for all students.

i4_010110

Based on your experience, which of the following best describes the leadership model in your school?

a) People with specific leadership titles make most of the decisions without input from others.
b) People with specific leadership titles make most of the decisions and gather input from others.
c) The primary school leader and team of leaders are the primary decisionmakers and do not gather input from others.
d) The primary school leader and team of leaders are the primary decisionmakers, and they gather input from others.
e) Leadership is distributed throughout the school with opportunities for every person to provide input in the decision-making process.

i4_010131

Which of the following best describes the function of the Leadership Team in your school?

a) The Leadership Team does not meet regularly nor engage in meaningful work.
b) The Leadership Team mostly conveys information from school administration to the staff.
c) The Leadership Team works collaboratively with school administration to engage in decision-making processes.
d) The Leadership Team works collaboratively with school administration to engage in decision-making processes and effectively communicates to the staff the Team's functions and decisions.

i4_010140

In general, how do teachers and staff respond when school leaders introduce significant changes that affect classroom instruction in your school?

a) School leaders do not introduce significant changes.
b) Teachers and staff work against significant changes.
c) Teachers and staff are generally indifferent to significant changes.
d) Teachers and staff generally support significant changes.
e) Teachers and staff generally work with school leaders to make significant changes.

Section 2

This next section focuses on how school leaders work with teachers to support instructional practices to enhance student learning. Most of the questions in this section inquire about classroom observation practices, addressing student learning needs, and developing strategies for instruction.

i4_020110 In the last year, how has your school conducted and used observations of teachers to set and evaluate progress toward meeting goals for improving student learning?

a) Not conducted.
b) Conducted but not used.
c) Used to set goals.
d) Used to set goals and aid in evaluating student learning progress.

i4_020150A (Admin version)
How often do school leaders return to the classroom after a classroom observation to continue the conversation on teaching practices?

a) Never
b) Rarely
c) Occasionally, at the teacher's request
d) Occasionally, at the administrator's request
e) Routinely

i4_020161T (Teacher version)
Which of the following best describes the conversations on instructional practice you typically experienced with school leaders?

a) The conversations I experienced consisted of feedback given to me in the form of generic, positive statements.
b) The conversations I experienced included specific evidence from my teaching practices.
c) The conversations I experienced included specific evidence from my teaching practices, and focused on meaningful approaches on how to improve. i4_020161A (Admin version)

Based on your experience, which of the following best describes the conversations on instructional practice teachers typically experienced with school leaders?

a) The conversations teachers experienced consisted of feedback in the form of generic, positive statements.
b) The conversations teachers experienced included specific evidence from teaching practices.
c) The conversations teachers experienced included specific evidence from teaching practices, and focused on meaningful approaches on how to improve.

i4_020240
For this question, "scaffolding" means that the teacher builds supports based upon what the students already know. As the student begins to master new abilities, the supports are removed. This can be used to support individual student needs as well as whole group instruction.

Which of the following best describes your school's approach to differentiating instruction?

a) There is not a specific approach.
b) Teachers implement scaffolding in individual classrooms.
c) Our school has adopted an approach to providing language-focused instruction through scaffolding that some teachers utilize.
d) Our school has adopted an approach to providing language-focused instruction through scaffolding that most teachers utilize.
e) Our school has adopted an approach to providing language-focused instruction through scaffolding that almost all teachers utilize.

The next set of questions inquires about the practice of formative assessment, which is a planned, ongoing evidence-based process used by students and teachers to improve learning outcomes and promote self-directed learning.
i4_020270

Students provide and receive feedback to meet their learning goals.

a) Process has not been developed.
b) Process is currently being developed.
c) Process is developed but not used.
d) Process is developed and actively used.
e) Process is developed, actively used and helps to improve student learning.

i4_020280
Which of the following best describes the role school leaders have in making sure teachers use formative assessments of student learning in classrooms?

a) They do not make sure that teachers use formative assessments in classrooms.
b) They want teachers to use formative assessments, but do not provide guidance on how to design or use the data from them.
c) They require teachers to use specific types of formative assessments, but do not provide guidance on how to use data from them.
d) They require teachers to use specific types of formative assessments and provide them with guidance on how to use the data from them.

i4_020380
To what extent are leaders in your school viewed as knowledgeable and resourceful regarding how best to promote meaningful discussion in classrooms?

a) Not at all
b) A little
c) Somewhat
d) Quite a bit
e) A great deal

Section 3

This section focuses on how schools leaders create professional learning opportunities. Most of the questions inquire about planning and implementing professional development activities, focusing on culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, and creating meaningful collaboration opportunities.

i4_030140
In general, which of the following best describes how teachers create plans to improve instruction?

a) Teachers create plans to improve instruction on their own without input from others.
b) Teachers voluntarily collaborate to create plans to improve instruction with others.
c) Teachers participate in a structured, school-wide process to create plans to improve instruction.
d) Teachers participate in a structured, school-wide process to create plans using classroom evidence to improve instruction.

i4_030141T (Teacher version)
To what extent have you developed and implemented a teaching plan that uses classroom evidence to improve instruction and enhance learning?

a) A plan has not been developed.
b) It is currently being developed.
c) It is developed but not used.
d) It is developed and actively used.
e) It is developed, actively used and helps to enhance student learning.

i4_030150

Which of the following best describes the design of school-wide professional development activities to address teacher learning needs in your school?

a) They do not reflect the instructional goals of the school.

b) They reflect the instructional goals of the school, but do not address needs for teacher learning.
c) They reflect the learning needs for some teachers, but are not differentiated to address the various learning needs of the teachers.
d) They are differentiated to address the various learning needs of teachers, but do not utilize teacher expertise.
e) They are differentiated to address the various learning needs of teachers and delivered using the expertise of teachers.

i4_030160

Which of the following best describes your principal's participation in school-wide professional development activities?
Our principal:

a) …rarely participates in these school-wide professional development activities.
b) …limits participation to a few of these activities that he or she views as important.
c) …attends these activities regularly and take over as an over-active participant.
d) …attends these activities regularly but does not actively participate.
e) …attends these activities regularly as an active and productive participant. i4_030170T (Teacher version)

Which of the following best describes how much of an impact professional learning has on your teaching practices?

a) It does not impact my teaching practices at all.
b) It has a narrow or limited impact on my teaching practices.
c) It allows me to reflect on my teaching practices.
d) It allows me to reflect and make some improvements to my teaching practices.
e) It allows me to reflect and make significant improvements to my teaching practices.

i4_030180T (Teacher version)

Professional learning opportunities may encourage staff to engage in critical reflection of beliefs, which challenges educators to examine their beliefs, assumptions, and practices.
Which of the following best describes how professional learning opportunities have impacted your critical reflection of beliefs for teaching?

a) It does not impact my critical reflection of beliefs about teaching.
b) It has a narrow or limited impact on my critical reflection of beliefs about teaching.
c) It allows me to engage in critical reflection of beliefs about teaching with limited impact on my teaching practices.
d) It allows me to engage in critical reflection of beliefs about teaching and make some improvements to my teaching practices.
e) It allows me to engage in critical reflection of beliefs about teaching and make significant improvements to my teaching practices.

i4_030180A (Admin version)
Professional learning opportunities may encourage staff to engage in critical reflection of beliefs, which challenges educators to examine their beliefs, assumptions, and practices.
Which of the following best describes how professional learning opportunities have impacted teachers' critical reflection of beliefs for teaching?

a) It does not impact teachers' critical reflection of beliefs about teaching at all.
b) It has a narrow or limited impact on teachers' critical reflection of beliefs about teaching.
c) It allows teachers to engage in critical reflection of beliefs about teaching with limited impact on their teaching practices.
d) It allows teachers to engage in critical reflection of beliefs about teaching and make some improvements to their teaching practices.

e) It allows teachers to engage in critical reflection of beliefs about teaching and make significant improvements to their teaching practices.

i4_030260
Based on your experience, what is the role of school leaders in the development of curricula and the support of teaching practices that are culturally responsive to different groups of students in schools?

a) Neither school leaders nor staff develop curricula and teaching practices that are culturally relevant to different groups of students in schools.
b) School leaders provide culturally relevant curricula to staff.
c) School staff develop or select culturally relevant curricula mostly on their own.
d) School staff develop or select culturally relevant curricula with some support from school leaders.
e) School leaders provide guidance and resources to support school staff to implement culturally relevant curricula.

i4_030310
What is the main focus of regular staff meetings?

a) Announcements and details about upcoming events
b) Issues regarding student behavior and school management
c) Activities for team and culture-building
d) Presentations that include information about instruction
e) Opportunities for sustained discussions among teachers about instruction i4_030320T (Teacher version)

i4_030330T (Teacher version)
When you discuss ideas about teaching or instruction with colleagues, what do you mainly talk about?

a) Managing student behavior
b) Planning curriculum or lessons
c) Looking at student work
d) Analyzing student work to improve teaching practices

i4_030330A (Admin version)
When teachers discuss ideas about teaching or instruction with their colleagues, what do they mainly talk about?

a) Managing student behavior
b) Planning curriculum or lessons
c) Looking at student work
d) Analyzing student work to improve teaching practices
e) I don't know

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

How do teachers build capacity to develop and support equitable classrooms?

Introduction

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedules to meet with me today. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this focus group interview and will limit the time to one hour.

My name is Norman McDuffie and I will serve as the moderator for the interview. The overall purpose for this study is to develop and support equitable classrooms. During the research journey towards this purpose, we will lean how to create gracious space for culturally responsive teaching conversation. I hope the CRP collaboration will identify key findings needed to begin, develop, and maintain culturally responsive teaching practices leading to equitable classrooms.

Disclosures:

- Your participation in the study is voluntary. It is your decision whether or not to participate and you may elect to stop participating in the interview at any time.
- The interview will be digitally recorded in order to capture a comprehensive record of our conversation. All information collected will be kept confidential. Any information collected during the session that may identify any participant will only be disclosed with your prior permission. A coding system will be used in the management and analysis of the focus group data with no names or school identifiers associated with any of the recorded discussion. All recordings will be immediately deleted after transcribing.
- The interview will be conducted using a semi-structured and informal formatSeveral questions will be asked about both the individual knowledge and skills gained and the organization practices used. It is our hope that everyone will contribute to the conversation.
- The interview will last approximately one hour.

Protocol

Interview Questions

TURN RECORDER ON AND STATE THE FOLLOWING:

"This is *Norman McDuffie,* interviewing (*School Name)* on *(Date)* for the Evaluation Capacity Building Problem of Practice Study.

- **How is your understanding about equity evolving?**
- **Share a recent classroom culturally responsive teaching practices you attempted and what did you learn? What do you believe your students learned from the practice?**
- **How have you recently modified instruction or will modify upcoming instruction so students can see themselves and others in the curriculum?**
- **How have you helped students or a staff member appreciate current or historical events from different perspectives?**
- **How is the school promoting and using multiple assessment tools and strategies that are evidenced-based?**