

## **ABSTRACT**

Ying Mimi Guan Kasner. JOYFUL LEARNING MATTERS: TEACHER PRACTICES IN AMPLIFYING JOYFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR CHINESE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Militello). Department of Educational Leadership, December, 2023.

The purpose of this participatory action research project (PAR) was to study how a group of teachers designed and implemented strategies with the intent of amplifying joyful learning experiences for Chinese English Language Learners (ELLs). The research focused on four classroom teachers in an elementary school as Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) who worked collaboratively to articulate the characteristics of joyful learning, co-design an observation tool, and select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELLs. The researchers incorporated Community Learning Exchange (CLE) processes, three PAR cycles of inquiry, and collaborative work. Using the axioms of CLE, we learned together by engaging in deeper understanding of the potential cultural and historical influences in Chinese ELL students' learning and through authentic experiences of examining our practices in classrooms. Through data analysis of evidence from observations, CPR member reflections, documents, and artifacts, two key findings emerged from the PAR study: (1) teachers who cultivate intentional relationships with students support a safe and joyful learning environment for students; and (2) teachers who plan and implement lessons with specific CLRP strategies support ELL equitable access, academic rigor, and agency. Based on the study findings about how teachers can collaborate to shift their practices to incorporate more access and rigor for ELL students, school leaders can consider three recommendations when designing professional learning and facilitating instructional shifts: foster a learning environment with gracious space to empower staff; cultivate relational trust and agency to engage collaborative work; and center

learning on strengthening teachers' culturally and linguistically responsive practices to amplify students joyful learning experiences.



JOYFUL LEARNING MATTERS: TEACHER PRACTICES IN AMPLIFYING JOYFUL  
LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR CHINESE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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## **DEDICATION**

As I reflect on this incredible journey of writing this dissertation, I would not feel the sense of joy and accomplishment without the most important people in my life: my husband, Steven, and our daughters, Melika and Ilana. I want to dedicate this accomplishment to my family with heartfelt gratitude and love.

Steven, you have been my confidant, support, and believer. My success has been fueled by your never-ending encouragement, patience, and understanding of my abilities. Your sacrifices, whether they involved taking on more responsibilities at home or missing time together, have made it possible for me to focus on my research and study. Your love, emotional support, and confidence in me have seen me through this most challenging time. I love you.

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## CHAPTER 1: NAMING AND FRAMING THE FOCUS OF PRACTICE

*When teams of educators believe they have the ability to make a difference,  
exciting things can happen in a school.*

Donohoo et al. (2018)

Approximately five million students in the United States are English Language Learners (ELLs) (<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf>). Academic data consistently reveal that the students underperform compared to their age peers (<https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-outcomes/index.html>). Researchers and practitioners have published many studies, articles, and books to discuss pedagogies, instructional strategies, and learning environments that could bridge the gap, but how are schools doing in addressing the gap? In the participatory action research (PAR), I examined how we must look beyond instruction to understand the ELL students' learning experiences and how teachers planned and implemented joyful learning experiences as a critical component of the teaching and learning environment.

The site for this study was a public elementary school in San Francisco's Sunset neighborhood, an attendance area with over 30% of the students classified as English learners, including the reclassified English learners of predominantly Chinese descent. San Francisco Unified School District's (SFUSD) mission states: "Every day we provide each and every student the quality instruction and equitable support required to thrive in the 21st century" (SFUSD, 2021b). However, we did not have clarity on what quality instruction and equitable support looked like in schools to ensure ELL students to reduce the achievement gap. Kendi (2019) argued that we should rename the achievement gap an opportunity gap, following on the scholarly work of Carter and Welner (2013) – we should not put the responsibility on students who did not test well, but on the structural elements of the system that did not provide equitable opportunities. How does this framing of the achievement gap apply to ELL students? What

equity lens do educators need to hold to address the student learning? We believed this collaboration would elevate the learning experiences and strengthen the quality of practices for teachers and principals. Donohoo et al. (2018) stated, “Success lies in the critical nature of collaboration and the strength of believing that together, administrators, faculty, and students can accomplish great things” (p. 44). The PAR project and study gave me the opportunity to engage with a group of teachers in professional learning as Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR). We worked together to nurture relational trust, observe, and design learning strategies for ELL students that would amplify joyfulness and cultural and linguistic responsiveness. In addition, I furthered my understanding of how to connect and transfer the adult learning experiences to the ELL students through instructional practices. I intended to facilitate a joyful experience for teachers that would, in turn, inform their teaching practices.

In this chapter, I discuss the rationale for the participatory action research (PAR), the assets and challenges of the site, the PAR connection to equity, and the potential impact on practice, policy, and research. Then I provide the research questions and an overview of the study methodology and proposed activities.

### **Rationale**

I was in my 36th year of service in education when I started this research. I have two master's degrees from universities in the United States; however, I consistently felt the challenges and the anxiety of using English in reading and writing. As an English Language Learner, I struggled to feel confidence and joy in reading and writing. I constantly thought that my language usage was not good enough, and I wondered if the ELL students in our school felt the same challenges and anxiety as language learners.

My past experiences in teaching English Language Learners had primarily focused on

practices that measured student success by evaluating their academic performances and language proficiency levels. According to Valdés (2020), we have spent much of the time on policies and practices of assessing and classifying students, and have neglected to focus on teaching and learning. In actuality, we help miseducate students of language minority groups. As they progress through K–12 public schools, according to SFUSD data, ELL students typically perform worse than other groups (2021). The SFUSD principals and teachers received professional development on pedagogies and instructional strategies to support the ELLs; however, we rarely discussed the social-emotional needs of the students and their learning experiences as they were fully immersed in an unfamiliar academic environment with minimal language and understanding of a new dominant culture.

As a school leader and a researcher, I intended to seek practical ideas about how to build and maintain an inclusive school environment where students feel welcomed and have a sense of belonging. The social-emotional learning data from SFUSD indicated our ELL students had the lowest positive responses in the four core competencies used to measure the social-emotional skills of the students-growth mindset, self-efficacy, self-management, and social awareness (SFUSD, 2021c). These competencies describe the essential skills for student success and what teachers should do to support student self-regulation and independence, empathy, and interaction. We want students to believe in effort and develop control of their motivation.

In the participatory action research, we investigated how a group of teachers worked collaboratively to select and implement ELL strategies that would improve their teaching practices in amplifying ELL students' joyful experience in learning academic content. When learning experiences are joyful, ELL students are more engaged in learning activities and have a

stronger sense of belonging. Next, I first describe the focus of practice (FoP) of the study and then highlight the assets and challenges of the school, district, and state levels.

### **Focus of Practice Description**

Our school and district have continuously supported the ELL students due to their low academic achievement and social-emotional indicators. Students at the school of this study came from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds. The students represented 24 different primary home languages. The teachers utilized identified ELL strategies in their instruction, including differentiated instruction, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies, and Designated ELD instructions. However, they did not see the expected level of learning outcomes for the students. In addition to the low social-emotional data for the ELL students, we wanted to address those persistent results. We investigated how the teaching practices could shift to more joyful learning experiences. I collaborated with a group of teachers using an iterative learning process to identify, select, and implement culturally and linguistically responsive practices that could elevate the ELL students' joyfulness in learning.

From the input and feedback from previous school professional development and staff professional learning, the teachers found working with peers offered them the most benefit. They exchanged ideas, shared expertise, and provided feedback to each other. In this project, I created a collaborative learning environment for the CPR team to design local responses addressing the equity dilemmas. I chose the facilitator role to conduct the research activities over the three iterative cycles of inquiry to determine what strategies we could implement that would fully engage ELL students and amplify their joyful learning experience.

### **Analysis of Assets and Challenges**

I analyzed the assets and challenges of the school; these included the micro-level at the

school, the meso level of the district, and the macro level of California state and federal. Each level of the data contributed to the condition of the practices relating to ELL instruction and support. In order to understand what teachers at the school thought about the assets and challenges related to ELL students' learning experiences, I asked for input on the assets and challenges of the focus of practice at a staff meeting in November 2020 before I proceeded with the study. Eleven staff members and one leadership coach participated in the meeting. I asked the participants what joyful learning they experienced as learners and what they observed from their students over time; they identified the assets and challenges in their teaching. The responses indicated these topics: Structure of ELD instruction, curriculum and strategies, family connections, and professional development.

In the area of assets, the teachers identified the following: (1) a clear structure for designated ELD scheduled time and integrated ELD instruction with additional small group support of ELL students weekly during the distance learning time and daily during regular in-person learning; (2) the Lau plan (1974) had set the expectations for teachers to ensure ELD instruction and services to ELL students; and (3) the English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) of parents and teachers was active.

The teachers shared these challenges:

- Half of the classroom teachers were new to the school with fewer than five years of teaching experience. Therefore, most teachers needed more ELD curriculum training;
- Teachers had difficulties fully engaging ELL students; and
- Teachers were implementing ELL strategies, but the ELL students were not showing the progress the teachers expected.

At the meso-level, our district adopted the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum in 2018. This curriculum provided instructional content for daily designated ELD instruction and integrated ELD throughout daily learning. However, teachers had only received one professional development (PD) video from the curriculum department and two site-based curricular planning and use of ELD strategies. Teachers who had joined the school in recent years, had not received any formal PD on the ELD curriculum and effective ELD strategies to support ELLs in building their language competence and confidence, and academic discourse using language objectives. To support ELL families to access information, resources, and meetings, as an asset, the district provided interpretation and translation services to the families in multiple languages and data information for schools to monitor the learning progress of ELL students. As a challenge, throughout the district, the Long-Term ELLs were not showing improvement.

At the macro level, all California credential teachers had to obtain the CLAD (authorization for Cross-Cultural, Language, and Academic Development) certificate authorizing teachers to teach ELLs. This certification validated the foundational qualifications of teachers to work with ELL students in their daily instruction. The state and Federal allocated specific dollar amounts each year for the school district to hire additional staff to support the ELL students and families. However, the sunset of Lau Plan after forty years placed accountability monitoring at the district level instead of the state level; the A-G requirement for students, a college readiness measure in California, requires students to complete four-year high school English with a letter grade of C or higher to be eligible to apply for the University of California schools. Because of the additional ELD classes, many ELL students do not have the opportunity to take the required English classes for college entry or time to take the advanced placement courses. This challenge

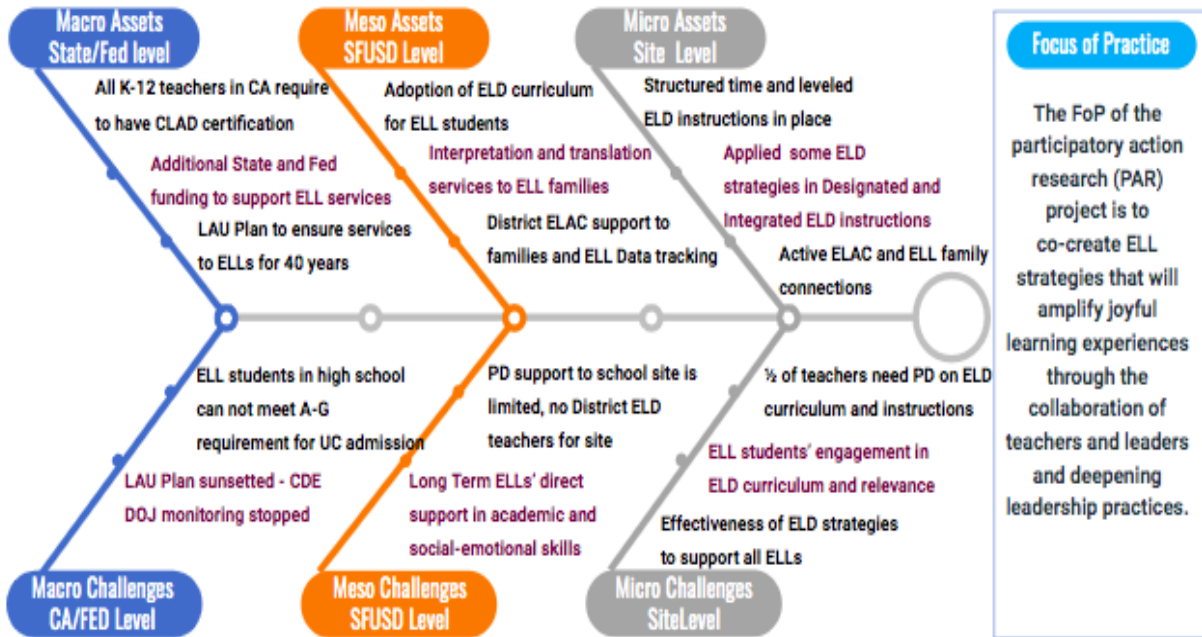
makes it more critical for schools to elevate the ELL students' performance in early grades. Figure 1 gave a snapshot of the assets and challenges at the time of the school for the FoP.

### **Significance**

The PAR project is significant because we had the opportunity at the school level to address the inequity of services to ELL students. As a school site leader at the time of the study, I collaborated and learned with a group of teachers as Co-Practitioner Researchers to study teachers' practices, examine existing instructional strategies, and observe the learning environment using culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. Specifically, this study supported us to gain a deeper understanding of how our practices influence Chinese ELL students' learning experiences. The focus of practice (FoP) intended to engage the CPR group of four teachers and the assistant principal from the school in defining the characteristics of joyful learning, examining our teaching practices and strategies, and building the capacity of professional growth of the educators. We broadened the field of expertise and experiences from learning together, connecting to our own experiences and identities, reflecting on our practices and literature review centering on equity. From the community learning exchange (CLE) and team meeting, the CPR teachers analyzed and selected various CLRP strategies that shifted their practices in order to disrupt systemic barriers and deficit thinking in supporting ELL students so that these practices could amplify the joyful learning experiences of the ELL students. Furthermore, by collaborating with teachers and administrators who are practitioners, teachers and administrators could improve their professional skills in the following areas, but not limited to: peer learning, self-reflection, instructional strategy selection, and a deeper understanding of effectiveness in teaching ELL students, culturally and linguistically responsive practices, connection of social-emotional learning and academic performance, and authentic engagement.



# Assets and Challenges



*Note.* Revised fishbone (Rosenthal, 2019).

*Figure 1.* A revised fishbone diagram provides an analysis of FoP assets and challenges.

In addition, this study could be significant to the district as a model for site leaders to use as they work with their teachers to collaborate and co-construct teaching plans to improve ELL instruction and elevate students' joyful learning experiences for positive outcome. I plan to share the research findings and CLRP strategies with other school leaders in the San Francisco Unified School District to potentially shift decisions on resources and programming to support ELL students attending their learning experience and social emotional wellbeing. Next, I highlight the practices and policies relating to the PAR project that had a direct impact on current practices at the school and in the district as assets and challenges in the fishbone.

In San Francisco Unified School District, schools are expected to offer ELD instruction at the designated ELD (D-ELD) time and support ELL students throughout the academic coursework with Integrated ELD (I-ELD) instruction. Grade-level teachers assign ELL students into groups based on their English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) levels for D-ELD instruction. The district sets clear expectations for ELL instruction and support using the adopted ELL curriculum and ELL strategies. The expectations for teachers are the commitment to “help all students develop strong academic knowledge and skills, as well as a host of dispositions and behaviors, that increase their curiosity and engagement, activate their full potential for learning, and prepare them for life, work, and study beyond their secondary school years” (The Graduate Profile, SFUSD, n.d.). In the PAR study, as we examined existing teaching practices and studied how these practices were effective in supporting ELL students, we sought strategies that could build the confidence of both the teachers and the students. Thus, this learning could benefit the school and the district on improving practices for ELL learners and particularly for Chinese ELLs.

Through the PAR process, the CPR group engaged in a deeper understanding of the

district policies and expectations on ELD instruction and ELL support. The findings from this study could be significant to inform our practices and influence the decision-making on programs, funding, and personnel needs to sustain practices and teacher professional development. With the CPR group as co-facilitators, we experienced the success of the collaborative work to support each other and would expand this practice to other teachers and potentially to other schools.

### **Connection to Equity**

Psychological, sociological, and political frames influenced the focus of practice. In describing each framework, I name the equity dilemma related to FoP and provide an overview of how each framework connected our practices and ELL students' learning experiences. In the psychological frame, I discuss the potential impact of engaging ELL students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and limited English language proficiency in learning. In the sociological frame, I share personal connections as an immigrant to the socio-economic implications to immigrants. At the same time, I talked about the relationship of a few highlighted historical events that impacted the children of Asian immigrant families from access to education and quality education.

### **Psychological Frame**

English Language Learners (ELL) share similar challenges as they enter the public school system regardless of how long they have been living in this country or whether they have been born in the United States or another country. Students in SFUSD are identified as ELL when families indicate their primary home languages are languages other than English, and the students use the non-English language to communicate with family members at home. From a

cultural and linguistic point of view, these students came from diverse cultural backgrounds. Their exposure to the English language was limited, affecting their opportunities to access learning content and their connection to learning activities and people in school setting.

While our school system supports affluent groups of students with the opportunity to develop their cognitive skills, but we create inequities for students who need support if we over-scaffold instruction or underestimate the cognitive ability or intellectual capacity of the marginalized students, including ELL students (Hammond, 2015). “For culturally and linguistically diverse students, their opportunities to develop habits of mind and cognitive capacities are limited or non-existent because of educational inequity... cognitive growth is stunted, leaving them dependent learners, unable to work to their full potential” (Hammond, 2015, p. 13). This tendency could reduce the productive struggles of the students and discourage brain growth.

By recognizing the importance of understanding cognitive development, we can build instructional strategies that will challenge and stretch the students’ cognitive abilities while building their language proficiencies and supporting their social-emotional growth. As the ELL students learn a new language and immerse themselves in a new environment both academically and social-emotionally, the demands for their extra efforts to stay engaged and produce learning outcomes have heightened. The lack of participation in learning activities, often muted responses during partner work, or “poor” quality work can mask intellectual capacity and cognitive understanding. Teachers need to examine the engagement strategies focusing on oral or written responses and how these strategies will allow ELL students to participate in classroom activities and share their thinking, build confidence, and growth mindset while feeling valued and included. “Being listened to and having our thoughts valued is important at all ages. Moreover,

the skill of valuing other people's thoughts is highly beneficial in life" (Zwiers & Crawford, p. 23, 2011). In the PAR study, I aimed for the CPR team to consider the potential psychological factors that English language learners experience in schools and to develop strategies and teacher capacity in creating a positive learning environment for the ELL students.

### **Sociological Frame**

With 78% of the ELL students at this elementary school being Chinese immigrants, their need for economic stability and opportunities for a better future were among the top priorities for the Chinese immigrant families. Immigrant parents hold a strong cultural value of giving their children a "good education." However, as Labaree (2008) stated, "one of the fundamental beliefs of contemporary economics, international development, and educational policy [is] that education plays a central role in economic development as a valuable investment in human capital" (p. 454). Thus, our educational policy attempts to solve aspects of social problems. I recognized the challenges many of immigrant families face and the disconnect these families often experience with the schools and with their children. I identified these sociological dilemmas from working with ELL families in the past twenty-one years as an educator in SFUSD:

- Students assimilated to the American culture easier and often sooner than their parents. This created a disconnect in the generational relationships and putting the children in stronger positions of power that are counter to the cultural traditions of the families.
- Immigrant families' understanding of academic success is reflected mainly by their academic grades.

- Parents found it was difficult to support their children’s learning due to the conflict of how they learned vs how students are learning.
- Students lose their primary home language as they advance in grades, while parents have difficulty learning English.
- Communication between students and parents or grandparents gradually reduces.
- Connection to learning content is challenging due to limited English and cultural knowledge of their homeland

As a school community with a large number of immigrant families, embracing multiculturalism and celebrating diversity became routine practices. Building authentic relationships and trust with the ELL community was essential to school leaders so the community could share cultural understanding and created gracious spaces for each member to connect with and collaborate. Guajardo et al. (2016) placed emphasis on interpersonal relationship building. “If the climate, spirit, and interaction between participants, facilitator, and their environment are not inviting and safe, it is difficult for sustainable and public learning to take place” (p. 31). However, we had not been able to adequately address the socio-cultural assets of the students and build on them to ensure their learning. The CPR group sought strategies and practices using equity frameworks to create space and environment for students, families, and staff to connect and build trusting relationships so they could together promote joyful learning and classroom engagement.

### **Political-Economic Frame**

From the political and economic framework, I highlighted and discussed the historical contexts of Asian immigrants, especially Chinese immigrants. The historical events have political implications and economic impacts on the immigrants’ life historically and currently.

Historically, the “melting pot” concept attracted many immigrants to America. People came here to seek a better life, the idea of freedom, and opportunities for their families. Including myself, the newer immigrants or the first generation of immigrants do not obtain the knowledge or understanding of the dominant culture and policies emphasized and how the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and other anti-Chinese sentiments impacted the Chinese and other Asian communities. It was not until 1971, in San Francisco, 2856 Chinese children were allowed to be integrated into the public school system as the result of *Lee vs. Johnson* (Supreme Court of The United States, 1971). In 1974, *Lau vs. Nichols* Supreme Court ruling opened the door for bilingual education, English Language development curriculum, and meaningful support for ELL students to receive school education (*Lau v. Nichols*). In 2017, as the president of the Asian American Administration Association, I supported the San Francisco Board of Education to rescind a 1906 resolution that excluded Asians from attending “normal” schools (San Francisco Board of Education, 2021).

Without knowing the historical oppression of the Asian communities, I recognized the difficulty of understanding how to use critical lenses to analyze the effectiveness of policies and our educational practices in supporting ELL students. Rigby and Tredway (2015) stated, “two key levers that move from the rhetoric of equity to action: understanding self, school community, and the intersection in-between; and connecting to a larger community of like-minded leaders” (p. 331). In Spring 2019, as one of the ten largest urban school districts in California, SFUSD celebrated its success for overall high performances on Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), while our ELL students were the lowest-performing group. This California State standardized assessment “utilizes computer-based tests and performance tasks that allow

students to show what they know and are able to do” (Smarter Balanced Assessment System, 2020).

As Valdés (2020) highlighted in her detailed account of how immigrant children are miseducated, part of the reason is concentrating on classification and assessments, rather than learning. The PAR project and study allowed the CPR group to examine further and understand these data stories. We looked at the needs of the ELL students in connection to the policies and equity practices in our schools and the district and how school leaders must frame the equity work to invoke the changes as they develop strategies for change.

### **Participatory Action Research Design**

In this section, I discuss the purpose of the PAR project, the overarching and research sub-questions, and the design of the PAR project. Next, I outline the theory of action and how I addressed the FoP. Finally, I highlight the project activities, including the intended involvement of the CRP group, the timeline for three PAR cycles, and the overview of the research.

#### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of the participatory action research (PAR) was to identify and implement strategies to elevate the ELL students’ joyful learning experiences by collaborating with a team of teachers as Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR). I reference the term “joyful learning” using the definition from The Joyful Learning Network (n.d.): “Engaging, empowering, and playful learning of meaningful content in a loving and supportive community. Through the joyful learning process, a student is always improving knowledge of self and the world” (<http://www.joyfulearningnetwork.com>). The CPR members engaged initially in defining the term and its meaning before the team examined current practices during the Pre-Cycle work. The overarching question of the PAR study asked: *How does a group of teachers amplify joyful*



*learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs?* In the PAR study, we addressed these sub-questions:

1. To what extent can teachers articulate the characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?
2. How do teachers co-design an observation tool for joyful learning in Chinese ELL students?
3. To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?
4. How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth?

The CPR group followed these guiding questions to conduct PAR research and inform the theory of action (ToA).

### **Theory of Action**

The theory of action (TOA) for the PAR stated: *If teachers build capacity in articulating joyful learning for Chinese ELLs, then they can implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students in math classes.* First, the CPR group engaged in a deeper understanding of joyful learning experiences by defining the characteristics of joyfulness. Then the group collaborated to understand culturally and linguistically responsive teaching in joyful learning for Chinese ELL students and used this information to guide practices eliciting joyful experiences for the students in math.

The CPR group evaluated and analyzed what strategies were optimal for ELL students through PAR cycles by reflecting on own practices and sharing knowledge with team members. Through these PAR cycles, we strengthened the teachers' professional skills, cultural

competencies, and mindsets to improve teaching practices as I built my leadership capacity as the lead researcher and administrator. The school could potentially replicate these practices and strategies to amplify all learners' joyful learning experiences and improve learning outcomes of ELL students.

### **Project Activities**

We conducted this PAR study at Francis Scott Key Elementary School (FSK). All evidence and data were from the school and the participants detailed in this study. The CPR group at FSK included four classroom teachers and the assistant principal of the school. The group met on a monthly basis for the duration of the study of 18 months (see Figure 2). I designed and conducted the project activities through three PAR cycles as described. With the intention of addressing the research questions, I centered each research cycle with activities relevant to the questions.

- PAR Pre-Cycle: (Spring 2022) During this cycle, the CPR group focused on defining the attributes of Joyful Learning. I collected and analyzed the data from members personal connections, reflections from their own definitions and their perception of joyful learning of the ELL students. The team discussed the data to determine what ELL strategies or practices might support the learning experience. I employed the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) inquiry cycle (Bryk et al., 2015) to guide the research process (Hudson, 2018).
- PAR Cycle One: (Fall 2022) During this cycle, the CPR group co-designed the observation tool through several iterations and selected strategies in alignment to culturally and linguistically responsive practices (CLRP). I conducted several rounds of observations. Based on the data from the observations, team discussions and

# Timeline

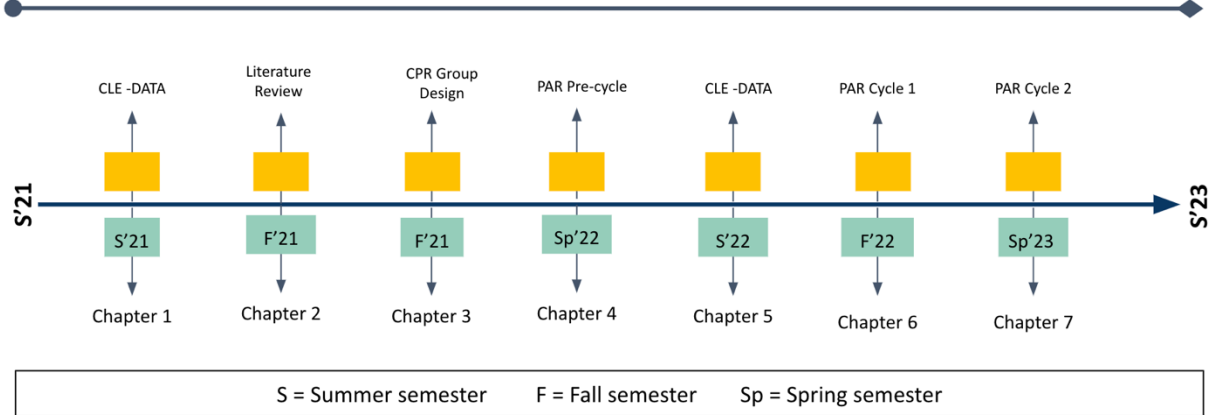


Figure 2. Project activities timeline.

reflections from the CPR teachers, I categorized the information into emergent categories and themes.

- PAR Cycle Two: (Spring 2023) During this cycle, the CPR group continued to collect and reflect on the evidence-based data to determine the indicators of the ELL joyfulness in learning and the CLRP strategies and practices supporting the joyfulness of the students. This data from multiple sources led to the findings of the PAR study.

Specifically, the CPR work plan and collaboration structure included:

1. Community Learning Exchange: with CPR group
  - a) Define attributes of joyful learning by connecting to personal experiences, teachers' perception of ELL students' learning experiences
  - b) Share and reflect on learning and experiences
2. Monthly CPR meeting with gracious space
  - a) Define current practices of ELL strategies and connection to both personal experiences and the experiences of ELL students through surveys, discussions and reflections
  - b) Review and triangulate data and discuss practices
3. Design CPR meeting and CLE meeting agenda and collaboration structure
  - a) Define purpose and design meeting schedule
  - b) Identify key action steps and meeting protocols
  - c) Identify strategies using inquiry cycles
  - d) Design and modify observation tools
4. Review and synthesize key supporting research literature and identify pedagogical approaches that are evidence-based.

To achieve these projected activities, I selected the Community Learning Exchange axioms and methodologies as we move through the PAR process by particularly focusing on two of the axioms (Guajardo et al., 2016):

- the people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns
- hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and their communities

In addition, we use the CLE protocols and processes to address the six improvement science principles (Bryk et al., p. 17, 2015):

1. Make the work problem-specific and user-centered.
2. Focus on what works, for whom, and under what conditions.
3. See the system that produces the current outcomes.
4. Measure through the use of qualitative evidence and coding the evidence to support iterative decisions (Saldaña, 2016).
5. Anchor improvements in disciplined inquiry: Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA cycle).
6. Accelerate improvement through networked communities that we call the Co-Practitioner Researcher group (CPR).

I share and discuss the result from each of the three iterative cycles of inquiry and data analysis outcome with the CPR group. We extended the learning to share with other teachers in the school.

### **Study Considerations**

The considerations or limitations of this qualitative research study included generalizability, researcher bias, restrictions of policies and protocols from the school district, the researcher perceptions and the unexpected global pandemic. In terms of generalizability, this study applied to this school and might be useful to schools like this. The school is a large urban

elementary school serving over 560 with transition kindergartens to 5th-grade students. There are 90% of the students living in the neighborhood. The teaching staff comprised various levels of teaching experiences.

Following the guide from CITI training in recognizing the vulnerability of human subjects, I took the necessary steps to protect the data and confidentiality of the study. All documents are stored in a password-protected hard drive and a locked cabinet that only I can access. I use pseudonyms instead of the participants' real names. I invited the participants and offered the consent form to all participants with clearly defined language, allowing them to withdraw from the study at any time and protect their confidentiality, including participants' identity and privacy. Here are the considerations and limitations of the PAR:

- All documents including meeting notes, artifacts, observation notes, authorized data files are protected and secured on a hard drive accessible to me only
- The signed IRB consent letter of participation are kept in the secured locked file cabinet.
- The details of confidentiality and ethics are in Chapter 3.
- All data sources and data analysis with the CPR group followed the guidelines defined by CITI training.

### **Summary**

In summary, the purpose of this participatory action research (PAR) was to engage a group of teachers as the Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) to examine our practices and strategies to elevate the Chinese ELL students' joyful learning experiences. I shared the context of the study, the rationale for this study and the PAR connection to equity, and the potential impact on practice, policy, and research. From the analysis of assets and challenges of the current

state of the school, the district and the state of California, I emphasized the significance of the study in engaging practitioners in collaborative work and deeper understanding of the equity dilemma. In describing how psychological, sociological, and political frames influence the focus of practice (FoP), I provided an overview of how each framework connected our practices and ELL students' learning experiences.

Our collective theory of action for the PAR project focused on engaging the CPR to build a collaborative relationship, select, refine and implement culturally and linguistically responsive practices and strategies that amplify ELL students' joyful learning experiences through improving teachers' teaching practices. I outlined the PAR research design and timeline for three PAR cycles of the research project using community learning exchange (CLE) protocol and cycle of inquiry to guide the process. Following the guide from CITI training in recognizing the vulnerability of human subjects, I presented the study consideration and limitation.

In Chapter 2, I review extensive selections of literature related to my research topic to understand the concept of joyful learning, the cognitive, emotional, and cultural influences on learning, the learning theories and pedagogical approaches that support the focus of practice for the PAR project and study. In Chapter 3, I discuss and analyze the methodology of the research. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I discuss in detail the context of the research, research activities, data-collection and analysis through three PAR cycles: Pre-Cycle, Cycle One and Cycle Two. By delving into the data collection and analysis process, I deciphered the interpretation of the evidence that leads to the findings of the study. In the final Chapter 7, I discuss the study findings in relation to the extant literature and the research questions, implications in a broader context of teacher capacity development and potential practical applications, conclusions from this PAR study, and recommendations for future research based on limitations from this study.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese English Language Learners? In the literature review, I examined the empirical, theoretical, and normative literature on three topics related to joyful learning: physiological and psychological processes, including neuroscience, mindset, and sense of belonging (Dweck, 2008; Steele et al., 2018; Willis, 2007); identity and cultural influences related to Chinese English Language Learners (ELLs); and multiple support systems that include the district's graduate profile, learning theory and pedagogical supports for students, and collaborative support for teacher development.

First, I examine the physiological and psychological attributes of joyful learning that set the foundation for me to understand the key factors that support joyful learning. In the second section of the literature review, I discuss the identity and cultural factors that support and inhibit joyful learning; we need to understand the cultural and historical experiences of Chinese ELL students and the implications of those experiences for cultural values and identity. Last, in order to understand and select strategies that amplify the Chinese ELL students' joyful learning experiences, I present the district graduate profile and its link to joyful learning, reviewed the literature on learning theories, pedagogies, and communities of practice that support student learning, teaching practices, and the teachers' learning. By examining culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy and mindsets, I share the importance of using culturally and linguistically responsive practices (CLRP) to address the equity dilemma of ELL students. By using the mindset framework to guide teaching practices supporting ELL, I seek deeper understanding on beliefs and practices that are effective in building student confidence in their academic skills and knowledge. To develop teachers' collaborative work and learn together, I



share research on the community of practice and community of learning exchange (CLE) to better understand the ideas and process of study and learn as Co-Practitioner Researchers. As a result, I anticipate the CPR team conceptualize the meaning of joyful learning and develop a deeper understanding the cognitive, emotional, and cultural influences on learning, as well as the learning theories and pedagogical approaches that support the focus of practice for the PAR study.

### **Joyful Learning**

*Teachers must build in students a sense of beneficence as in ‘you got my back’.*

Claude Steele

Joyful learning experiences inspire a more positive and successful life trajectory as students transition from childhood to adulthood (Steele, 2018). When students are engaged in the learning opportunities that encourage creativity, embrace curiosity, and ensure well-being, they find a strong sense of belonging and confidence, which leads to more success both in academic achievement and social-emotional development (Dweck, 2008, Steele, 2018, Willis, 2007). The Joyful Learning Network (JLN) defined joy as “an emotion evoked by well-being” (<http://www.joyfullearningnetwork.com/what-is-joyful-learning.html>, 2020). Joyful learning is characterized as the high level of engagement of students who benefit from a learning experience that allows the “sense of wonder and curiosity” while both teachers and students share mutual interest and purpose of the learning process. The JLN (2020) offered this definition of joyful learning: “Engaging, empowering, and playful learning of meaningful content in a loving and supportive community. Through the joyful learning process, a student is always improving knowledge of self and the world. To better understand learner’s joyfulness, I examine how joyful learning connects with neuroscience research, the mindset of students,-and a sense of belonging.

## **Neuroscience and Joyful Learning**

A key factor for understanding the importance of joyful learning is understanding the way the brain works to process cognitive and affective signals. Our emotions and feelings have a dominant influence on the ways our brains process the information we receive. In particular, the limbic system of the brain is involved as students process information and stress, and the amygdala controls the cognitive and affective signals (Pawlak et al., 2003). When learners are stressed, the amygdala is sending anxiety signals and interrupting cognition (Steele, 2010; Hammond, 2015). When learners are joyful and happy, their brains allow for higher cognitive memory to store and process. Willis (2007) indicated that the brain processes information much more effectively when the brain is in less stressful condition. “In other words, when stress activates the brain's affective filters, information flow to the higher cognitive networks is limited and the learning process grinds to a halt” (p. 2). Neuroimaging shows stress and anxiety can interfere with learning. Positive emotions and engaging classroom experiences bring higher learning outcomes. Educators can create a learning environment in which (1) learning content is relevant to students, such as math lessons with the word problems that relate to daily examples that are culturally responsive; (2) teachers offer brain breaks with fun activities to boost students interest in learning; (3) teachers acknowledge success and provide positive reinforcement for students to sustain and extend learning; (4) information is organized and prioritized so that students can learn without being overwhelmed; (5) students have choices and agencies to explore learning and feel safe to ask questions.

Because English Language Learners have limited language proficiency, their brains are working to process language and content simultaneously. This may create barriers for the learners to access the learning content quickly. When learners cannot understand the dominant

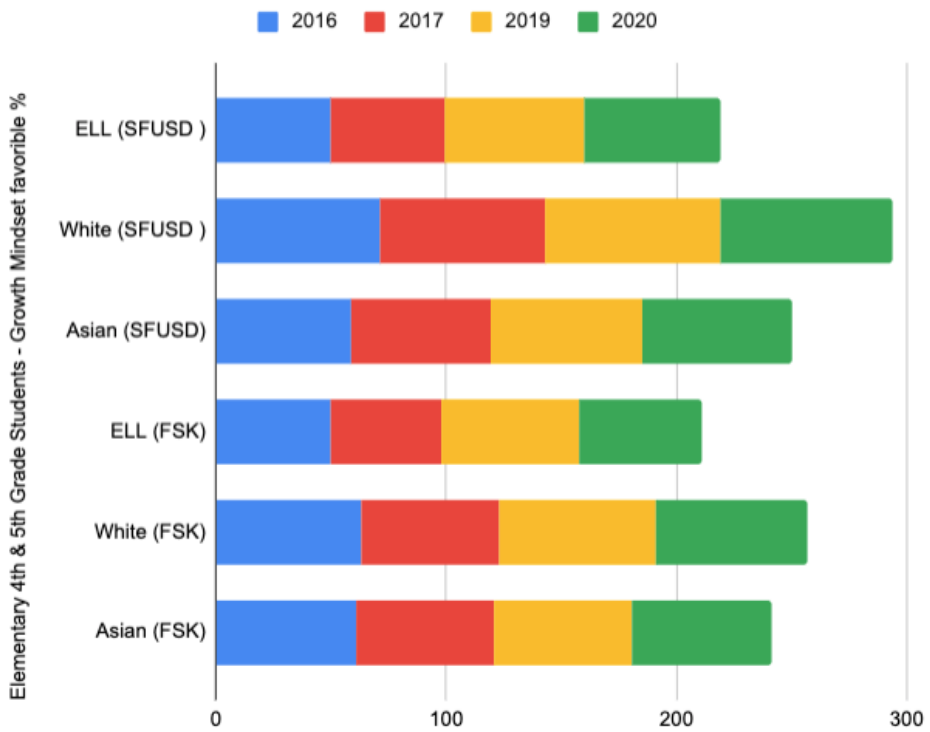
language in daily learning, the struggle sends stress signals through the amygdala to the frontal cortex and interrupts the cognition. Teachers need to recognize the stress that influences the students' cognitive levels of learning the new information. The students can achieve a higher cognitive effect when the learning environment is joyful and supportive. To support the physiological functioning, the concept of growth mindset contributes a critical component of supportive psychological conditions for learning which also affects learners' experiences.

### **Growth Mindset**

Learners' mindsets influence learners' effort, progress, and self-confidence in learning, which, in turn, influences learners' belief system about themselves and impacts all learning experiences. Dweck (2015) defined mindset: "When you enter a mindset, you enter a new world. In one world - the world of fixed traits - success is about proving you're smart or talented. Validating yourself. In the other - the world of changing qualities - it's about stretching yourself to learn something new" (p. 15). From the past several years of district social-emotional data on growth mindset, English Language Learners in our school and the district scored lower than the dominant white groups of students (see Figure 3). According to Dweck (2015), if the students or the adults, including the educators, have a fixed mindset, they will focus on achieving their goals to look smart, but may not believe they can develop their ability and talent through hard work and persistence. On the other hand, the growth mindset people will continue to develop their ability and skills with the effort to seek solutions and resources persistently. In such an environment, students will be more willing to take risks and learn from failures.

A growth mindset reflects people's beliefs, confidence, ability, and willingness to make changes. To develop a growth mindset, Dweck (2015) asserted that there are four steps:

Growth Mindset Survey Data 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2020  
(2018 data omitted due to incomplete available Data)



*Note.* SFUSD Social Emotional Learning data, 2016-2020.

*Figure 3.* The ELL students consistently score lower in SEL factors than white students.

1. Embrace the fixed mindset by recognizing and accepting that everyone has some fixed mindset(s).
2. Pay attention to the cause of the fixed mindset to help understand the origins of the mindset better.
3. Name the fixed mindset to dig deeper into fears and reflect on a particular mindset.
4. Be ready to face the challenge and step out of the comfort zone. Confronting the fixed mindset requires permission for self to take the steps for change.

Recognizing teachers' mindsets correlates to the performance and learning experiences of the students. First teachers need to identify their mindsets about students and reflect on other practices that might better create and sustain the growth mindset culture, emphasize struggles and learning, belonging, and build a community of growth mindset. In Dweck's (2015) framing, the culture of growth mindset embraces positive learning experiences and, by extension, brings more joyfulness to learning. That comports with research on the relationship of attributes of mindset and learning.

The emerging research on growth mindset examines the effects of mindset on achievement. These studies help to inform how explicitly addressing mindset for students may contribute to their academic growth. Bai and Wang (2020) in a study of 4<sup>th</sup> grade English language learners in Hong Kong determined that his attributes of self-regulated learning, including the growth mindset elements of self-monitoring and effort regularly, supported improvements in learning the language. They concluded that "growth mindset, self-efficacy, and intrinsic value were contributors to self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning in turn played an important mediating role between motivational beliefs and English language learning achievements" (Bai & Wang, 2020, p. 18).

Two middle school studies address how mindset is emerging as a factor. Claro and Loeb (2019) in a study of middle school students in California CORE districts, of which San Francisco is one, found that “mindset predicts academic gains for students with different socioeconomic levels, race and ethnicity, gender, EL status, previous academic achievement, and grade level” (p. 18). Asian students in the study had the highest effect size for improvements in ELA and Math test results, but caution that more research is needed to determine the usefulness of mindset use across different demographic groups and student experiences. The Destin et al. (2019) study of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students indicates that “the connection between mindset and academic achievement was significant and consistent across students from different socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 9), but students from low SES have a more fixed mindset about their abilities to perform and succeed than their counterparts from the high SES demographic group.

In a study in Clark County, Nevada. Snipes and Tran (2017) concluded that ELL students show stronger variability in exhibiting growth mindset attributes. In particular, the study examined the role of performance avoidance or the tendency to change behavior because of fear of failure or embarrassment. The authors present a frame and establish through their findings the importance of learning strategies from teachers as a key factor for students in overcoming performance avoidance. However, the study concentrates on the role of teachers in another way: The extent to which teachers’ beliefs about growth mindset and the value of their students’ academic efforts vary across schools serving students with different economic and demographic characteristics could have important implications for practice. It could affect the degree to which teachers’ beliefs and attitudes should be among the primary targets of education interventions. (Snipes & Tran, 2017, p. 4). From this Clark County study, in comparison with non-English learner students, the study showed English learner students demonstrated lower levels of growth

mindset, higher rates of performance avoidance, and slightly less frequency of academic behaviors (see Figure 4).

For the PAR research, I examined how teachers' practices and strategies could begin to influence the mindset of the Chinese ELL students in their academic and social-emotional learning and how this mindset or these mindsets contribute to the learners' experience in the daily work of teachers. While we are, of course, interested in their academic performance, I wanted to use a small qualitative study to understand how the day-to-day work of teachers might decide on practices that might ensure a growth mindset learning environment for ELL students, so that the students can build their academic confidence to fight against the threat of failure and improve their language proficiency, cultural understanding, and have positive learning experiences.

### **Sense of Belonging and Stereotype**

Another psychological factor is critical in examining the role of joyful learning in establishing the all-important sense of belonging (Maslow, 1943). The hierarchy of basic needs include key psychological needs, including a sense of belonging, as necessary for growth in terms of cognition (see Figure 5). When students have a sense of belonging, the students are more likely to have positive connections to their learning environment and trusting relationships with their peers and their teachers. For historically marginalized groups based on their race, language, and gender, a sense of belonging helps to prevent distractions to their cognitive attention and learning. The students do not need to worry about being judged, discriminated against, or left out.

English Language Learners are often labeled as students whose low academic performance in English is acceptable. Stereotyping ELL students exists the teachers' minds and

**Table 2. Average student growth mindset, performance avoidance, and academic behaviors scores on a Clark County School District survey, by student characteristic, 2015**

Student characteristic	Growth mindset (1, completely true, to 5, not at all true)	Performance avoidance (1, not at all true, to 5, completely true)	Academic behaviors (1, never, to 5, always)
All students (Standard deviation)	4.0 (0.97)	2.3 (0.94)	4.0 (0.69)
<b>Prior academic achievement<sup>a</sup></b>			
Emergent	3.5	2.7	3.8
Approaches standard	3.8	2.5	3.9
Meets standard	4.1	2.3	4.0
Exceeds standard	4.3	2.3	4.2
<b>English learner status</b>			
English learner student	3.5	2.6	3.9
Non-English learner student	4.0	2.3	4.0
<b>Race/ethnicity<sup>b</sup></b>			
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.1	2.3	4.1
Black	3.9	2.3	4.0
Hispanic	3.8	2.4	3.9
White	4.1	2.3	4.1
Multiracial	4.1	2.3	4.0

**Note:**  $n = 103,066$ . *F*-tests indicated that the differences in average scores across all subgroups of each characteristic were significant at  $p < .01$ .

a. Based on performance on the Nevada Criterion Reference Tests math assessment from the previous academic year for elementary and middle school students and from grade 8 for high school students.

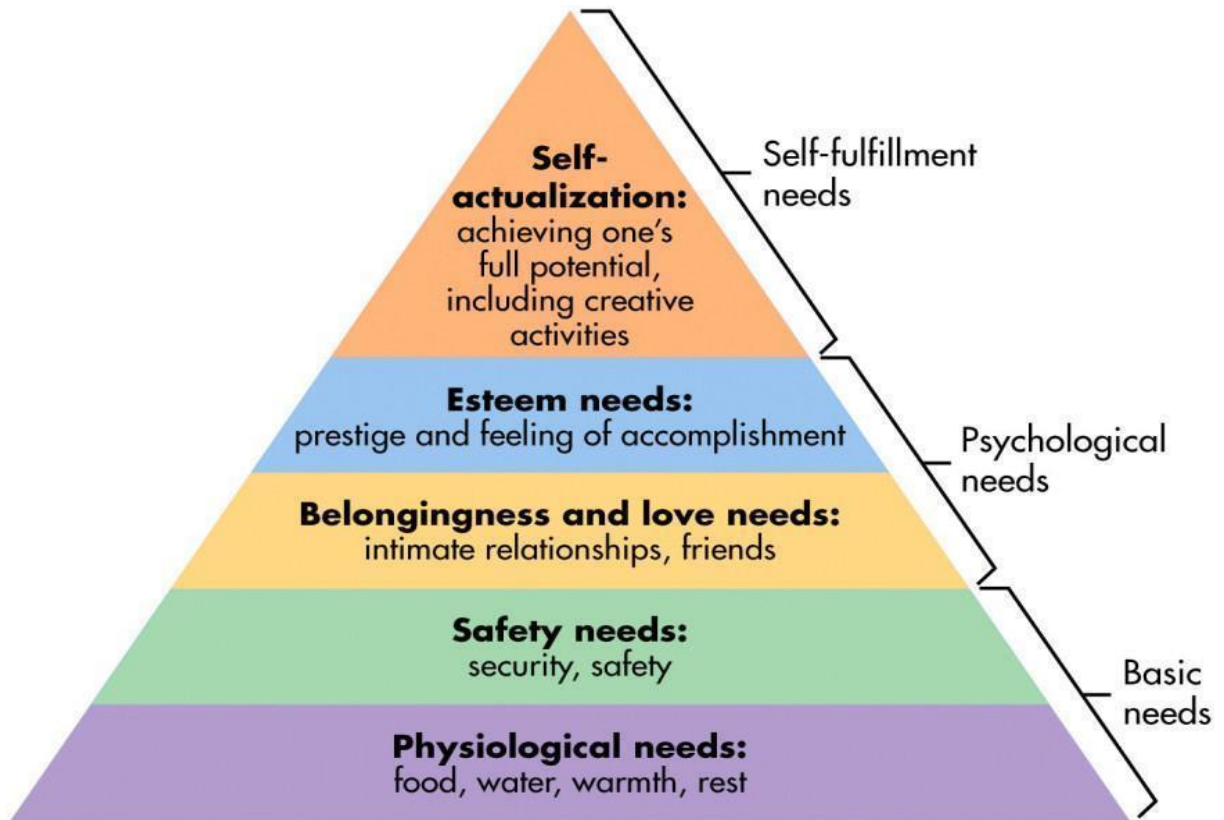
b. Asian includes Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Black includes African American, and Hispanic includes Latino.

**Source:** Authors' analysis of 2015 survey data and administrative records from Clark County School District.

*Note.* Snipes, J., & Tran, L. (2017). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory West. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>. (p. 9)

*Figure 4.* Study data on growth mindset, performance avoidance, and academic behaviors.





Note. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

Figure 5. A sense of belonging is fundamental to developing a growth mindset.

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is transmitted to students. These stereotyping labels reflect the lack of understanding about culture, historical influences, mindset on social emotions, and academic achievement of the students. Steele (2010) pointed out how stereotypes stigmatized individuals with thoughts that put people in an inferior position and self-doubt. In connection to mindset, Dweck (2015) believes both positive and negative labels of stereotypes can create disruption of people's minds if they have a fixed mindset. The positive label may make people afraid of failure while the negative labeled stereotype idea may prevent people from believing in themselves and their worthiness. People with a growth mindset view these stereotype labels as an opportunity to grow and to improve.

Murphy in a conversation with Claude Steele and Gregory Walton defined that the sense of belonging is not measured by the number of connections students have, but rather the quality of the relationship students have with peers and teachers (Steele, 2018). She found that stereotypes hold down students' achievement; when students are focusing their attention and vigilance is on whether the students feel they belong, the executive function is compromised. When students have a sense of belonging, they can devote their full cognitive attention to learning, but not feeling distracted by concerns of belonging. Secondly, Murphy describes how we locate prejudice with a person instead of locating the larger context that continues to influence how students do or do not feel they belong. They rename this phenomenon as prejudice places, the structural contexts that reproduce inequality. Thus, the focus is on institutions and practices. Thus, how teachers foster relationships and let the students know that they are seen and valued is critical in our work. As we look at the outcomes of the students, we should look at the psychological experiences of the students in a learning environment so that they feel the

sense of belonging, fit, and being valued. Our policies and practices should focus on the institutional level to address the bias and stereotype threats.

When educators have a clear knowledge of how a sense of belonging influences student learning and develop ways to create places for belonging, students can then build skills in developing relationships, communicating effectively about their learning, and receiving feedback from their teachers and peers. How can we create an environment that privileges a sense of belonging as fundamental to our work? These are the questions to keep in mind as I seek answers to the PAR study. Next, I examine how Chinese learners develop identities and how the model minority myth and culture influence learning.

### **Chinese English Language Learners' Identity and Cultural Influences**

In this section, I review research on the multiple and competing influences on learning for Chinese ELLs. I discuss the internal cultural influences that inform the family expectations and the external influence of the “model minority” myth. Then, I analyze how these cultural influences and the model minority affect the identity contingencies of Chinese English Language learning students. In this section, I aim to better understand their views on schooling experiences and how key factors influence their academic experiences and mental health.

### **Chinese Cultural Influences on Learning**

In Chinese culture, academic success is the ultimate goal for students to achieve, and this message about the need for success often starts at the preschool age. As an immigrant from China, doing well at school brings everyone in one's family joy and brings praise and confidence from families and friends. However, joy is rarely the topic in connection to learning experiences, choices, mindset, and a sense of belonging. The cultural influences are internal and external.

Internally, the student is responding to family values, and externally, they are responding to the model minority myth.

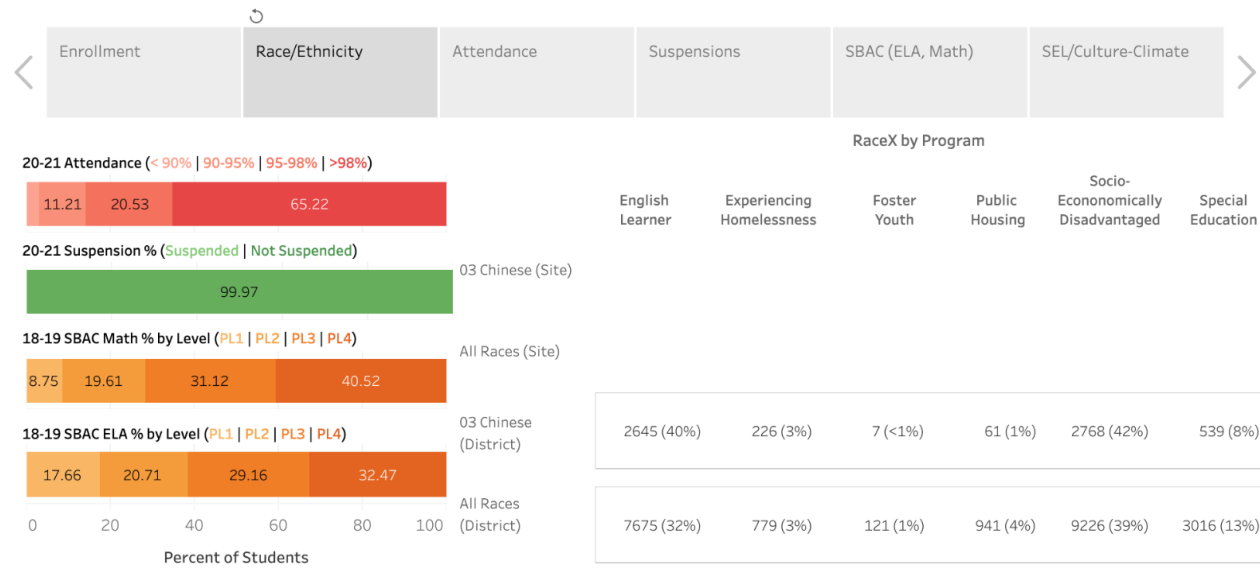
The contrast between Western education and Eastern Confucian ideas sets a clear divide in how students view their responsibilities as students. The Western view of education promotes autonomy, freedom, and self-direction while Confucian values emphasize relationships, obligations, and prosperity. Wang (2020) captured the historical meaning of education and the cultural attitude toward the educational system. She focused on the final year of middle school students in the compulsory education system in China. The study highlighted the complexity and multiplicity of the learner identity. Parents prioritize investment in their children's education. The outcomes of education play a critical role in determining the students' future. Parents' involvement and guidance are obligations for the students while the students have obligations to do well in school and their prosperity in the future. Wang (2020) used the term "enterprising self" to describe the young people calculating their options for their future education or career and hold strong beliefs in self-efficacy and self-determination as one student shared about the testing dominated schooling: "If you perform excellently in exams, you will be wealthy and go to university in the future" (p. 3). Meanwhile, the Chinese young students consider caring for their parents as "the familial self". Wang (2020) pointed out such family obligation roots from the Confucian norm. As some students expressed the attitude of their parents towards them often aligned with their academic performances, they genuinely believed that they needed to do well to satisfy their parents.

The understanding about family expectations validated some of the behaviors and expectations I observed over the years from the Chinese ELL students and their parents in regard to schooling, many of whom shared similar experiences in the United States. According to Li

(2012), Asian parents hold higher expectations for their children in academic performances as compared to European-American parents. They expect their children to get all straight As. However, the purpose of school learning is clear for both the Western and Asian researchers. They acknowledge school learning “provides an individual with knowledge and skills to make a good living and increasing opportunities for social mobility” (p. 68). In connection to cultural influence, regardless of the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students, Li (2012) stated the compelling forces behind learning approaches of both European-American students and Chinese/East Asian students “are their cultural traditions” (p. 69).

As immigrant families and children try to acculturate to the Western or American culture, their cultural beliefs could conflict with American cultural standards and expectations. Asian immigrant adolescents have more difficulties in adjusting to American culture than European Americans under the pressure of academic achievement (Li, 2012). Putting effort in all learning tasks at all times is consistent in all situations for Chinese learners while it is more of a personal effort depending on specific academic tasks for Western learners. However, to understand the conflicts of the cultural differences and influences on immigrants, we need to recognize that among Asian or Chinese, specifically, communities, the variation of beliefs and academic achievement outcomes are closely related to the reality that not all Asian students are the same with the same level of performances and achievement. According to Shih et al. (2019), “Asian Americans have been portrayed as the model minority for seemingly having achieved socioeconomic success and being free of problems. Such stereotypes may have lasting and negative impact on Asian American individuals, families, and communities” (p. 1). From SFUSD public data (see Figure 6), 42% of the grade TK-5 Chinese students fall in the socio-economically disadvantaged category while 28.36% of these Chinese students are at basic and

# SFUSD Public Data Dashboard



Source: RPA Demographics Table 2021-2022 Date: 2021-09-08 Definition: Includes active enrolled students. Charter school students are not included. Asterisks are displayed when data are suppressed due to a small number of students in a given group (fewer than 5).

*Note.* (SFUSD, 2021a). Free data visualization software. (n.d.), from [https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/san.francisco.unified.school.district/viz/SFUSDPublicDataDashboard\\_2021-22/Story1](https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/san.francisco.unified.school.district/viz/SFUSDPublicDataDashboard_2021-22/Story1).

*Figure 6.* 2021-2022 Socio economically disadvantaged data and performance data of Chinese students from grade TK to 5 in San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD).

below basic level in Math and 38.37% are at basic and below basic level of performance in English Language Arts. The data clearly contradicted the model minority stereotypes.

The stereotype created the unrealistic expectations that Chinese American students face. It leads to the consequences that the existence of the racist discrimination and oppression against Asian American are being dismissed. According to Shih et al. (2019), Asian American community continues to suffer from such a reality which causes harm to their mental and physical health and Asian students must manage the issues of “psychological distress, depressive symptoms, chronic worry, fear of failure, and feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and shame” (p. 422). Other affects to Asian students from the discrimination and oppression include low self-esteem, safety concerns, bullying, anxiety, and depression. How are we addressing the stereotype in our schools? The fact we do not recognize the existence of the harm, we limit ourselves from finding solutions. Understanding the model minority myth will help us to look into the cultural conflict and the connection of our practices in connection to the support of our ELL students.

### **Model Minority Myth and Consequences**

Identity and cultural beliefs influence learning, stereotypes, and bias influence how people view and assume their expectations of learners. In a study of how Asian American students acculturated to western values, Panelo (2010) raised a concern on how the conflicts between family values and western values affect Asian American students. When Asian American students acculturate to Western culture, then some students find difficulty in interacting with their first or second-generation immigrant parents. Still others struggle to adapt to mainstream education when facing discrimination with lack of social support.

Asian American students are often identified as the “Model Minority” due to the perception of the academic motivation and success rate (Panelo, 2010). Such perception,

however, has contributed to negative effects on the students. Panelo references the 2003 study by Cress and Ikeda that, with high expectations, many Asian American students feel depressed, anxious, and frustrated when dealing with family pressure for excellence, feeling embarrassed for seeking academic support, and embracing the model minority myth. He urges the higher education system to have a deeper understanding of Asian culture to best serve the students.

Contrary to the myth, Asians have fewer social and psychological problems, when in fact, the students have to deal with a plethora of stresses and traumas related to immigration, racial conflicts (Crystal, 1989; Leong, 1986). Although these issues were identified nearly 30 years ago, the model minority myth has persisted, and Asian American students have experienced negative effects (Panelo, 2003). Cress and Ikeda (2003) concentrate on the high expectations that university students feel and report that many Asian American students feel depressed, anxious, and frustrated when dealing with family pressure for excellence and feeling embarrassed for seeking academic or mental health support.

Therefore, I have to assume that some of these issues begin earlier in the life of the students; thus, we need to understand the culture while studying the learning experiences of Chinese English Language Learners - what pressures they are feeling and how we might mitigate those pressures through a process of incorporating joyful learning in our instruction. What is the effect of the "Model Minority" stereotype in elementary schools, and how does this stereotype affect school and district leadership in decision making and program design? Next, I discuss how identity contingencies affect students with diverse cultural backgrounds and how we can use a culturally and linguistically responsive lens to address their learning needs.

### **Identity Contingencies as Chinese Students and English Language Learners**

Steele (2010) defines an identity contingency as a circumstance an individual has to deal



within a social identity. In this case, I am examining the identity contingencies that Chinese English Language learners face as they navigate schooling to understand how Chinese they view their identities as learners and the rooted experiences of education that contributed to learner identities. First, I discuss two identity contingencies: relational and reflexive. Then I discuss their identity as English Language Learners and the school and family stress this can cause.

The relational identification includes both school and family. In the relational identity, the Chinese students navigate how they are identified as good or bad students. When good students dropped their ranking or performance on a test or other metric of success, they could receive disapproval from parents and school, potentially losing “their preferential treatment at school” and feeling ashamed for being “excluded” from the good student group (Wang, 2020). Parents’ involvement in students’ education can be overwhelming for the parent in terms of time and for the students in terms of expectations. They often fully dedicate themselves to their children. adolescents understood that they were supposed to satisfy their parents’ educational aspirations (Fuligni & Zhang, 2004; Tao & Hong, 2014). Passing the exams is the ultimate goal. With all the attention on what Wang (2010) terms the enterprising self, students receive little support in other non-academic areas from both teachers and families that make them feel entrapped and lack purpose in life.

The reflexive identification results from the intensity of testing-oriented competitions. Being diligent is commonly used to encourage the students to make their best effort. Yet, such effort does not always bring the expected results. The competitive pressure has a direct and reflexive impact on the parents as the success of their children is equated with their success. Thus, competition creates stress and anxiety for many students. They were overwhelmed and afraid of failing with little social-emotional support. This study may provide the opportunity for

the CPR team to understand and make meanings of the learner's identity, relationship with teachers and parents when we design the practices as we study the internal and external cultural influences of the Chinese ELL students.

To fully understand how this connects to student expectations in SFUSD, in the next section, I present the SFUSD Graduate Profile outlined the K-12 students' competencies in connection to culturally and linguistically responsive teaching addressing students' learning experiences. Then, based on the research on various types of learning, I discuss how learning intersects with culture and cultural influences.

### **Learning Types and Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching**

I connect those attributes to the K-12 Student Competencies of the San Francisco Unified School District to show the expected outcomes of the students in the public school system. Then, I discuss research on how the brain works in learning experiences.

### **K-12 Students Competencies**

The district vision for students is an asset to our work to promote joyful learning, and the competencies we expect provide a rationale for fully examining how to include more joyful learning experiences in the lives of EL learners. To equip the students with the 21st-century skills and knowledge that enable them to have a successful academic and/or career pathway through their education from Pre-k to 12th grade, San Francisco Unified School District designed the Graduate Profile and the Vision 2025 to guide the strategic plan of the district (SFUSD <https://www.sfusd.edu/about-sfusd/our-mission-and-vision/vision-2025/graduate-profile>, 2021).

The Graduate Profile identifies six areas of indicators of capacities and readiness for students:

- *Content Knowledge*: critical thinking skills in the mastery of the core curriculum content, competencies outlined by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

- *Career and Life Skills*: the knowledge, problem-solving skills, and experiences needed to navigate in everyday life and in the workplace
- *Leadership, Empathy, and Collaboration*: interpersonal skills and the ability to positively influence and collaborate with others.
- *Global, Local and Digital Identity*: global skills in *navigating and engaging the world with inclusion and connection on a global scale*
- *Creativity*: communication skills with the ability to express themselves freely, confidently, and authentically
- *Sense of Purpose and Sense of Self*: self-identity skills as they perceive themselves with meaning and value

The graduate profile highlights the needed learning experiences and abilities of the students. These elements of the profile align with the concept of joyful learning from JLN. As the students master the core curriculum, learning is designed to empower the students to connect to real-world problems, build leadership and collaborative skills, have a strong sense of self and value, hold knowledge and responsibility for the broader society, and seek solutions with confidence. Learning is with meaningful content. Each year, school leaders design strategic plans to identify programs, learning activities, professional development opportunities for teachers, and support for students to aim for the graduate profile. When we analyze the needs of English Language Learners, how do we connect these identified skills and knowledge to the needs of ELL students? How do we know if the strategies we use support ELL students in finding success and joy that potentially offer the students long-term benefit as learners? To better understand the Chinese ELL students' learning experiences, I, first, share the research on the neuroscience of joyful learning experiences and academic achievement.

Educators need to equip learners with not only the skills and knowledge of the academic contents but also need to equip them with the ability to connect their cultures, values, perspectives, and experiences as they make meaning of their learning. In this section, I discuss the pedagogies on culturally and linguistically responsive practice (CLRP) and the learning types to support my understanding in designing research activities to work with the CPR team on selecting and implementing culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students.

### **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practice (CLRP)**

For teachers to offer a learning environment and experience that is culturally and linguistically responsive to diverse learners, teachers must equip themselves with a clear understanding and knowledge of the essential elements of culturally responsive teaching as defined by Gay (2002). I analyze several concepts related to culturally responsive teaching: four-layered equity model (Muhammad, 2018), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), the Project I<sup>4</sup> Equity Framework (Tredway et al., 2019), and the social justice mathematics framework (Berry et al., 2020).

Culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy emphasizes the importance of elevating the level of practice that is inclusive and learner centered. From the cultural, linguistic, and responsive teaching, Muhammad (2018), in her four-layered historical framework, emphasized the importance of adding identity development and criticality to skills and knowledge. This framework brings attention to educators how instruction supports students in reading, writing, and thinking across content areas. The goal for developing the identity and criticality of the students is for students to make sense of what they read, write, and think. These are the critical skills in math literacy as well. In everyday learning, students can benefit from both of these

frameworks to build their capacity as critical thinkers connecting skill and knowledge to better understand social injustice, power, privilege, oppression, struggle, and needs of historically marginalized groups (Muhammad, 2018). In other words, if students do not examine their identity, they cannot develop ways to be critical readers and thinkers. She stated that before students learn literacy skills, they need opportunities to learn about themselves and others. The development of criticality will engage students to think critically and negotiate meaning in connection with their culture, value, power, and the world around them. As teachers use the equity framework of CLRP to guide their instruction, they can empower students' learning with a clear intention in developing their needed skills.

To better address the teaching of English Language Learners using CLRP, Paris (2012) challenged the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy to “embrace cultural pluralism and cultural equality” by offering the term of culturally sustaining pedagogy (p. 93). He believes that cultural relevance and responsiveness do not support preserving the heritages and cultures of the students and their community. He presented his argument against the white, middle-class standards as the “superior practice” (p. 93); instead, he stated that culturally sustaining pedagogy would explicitly support students with their cultural and linguistic competencies while accessing dominant cultural competence.

Muhammad (2018) and Paris (2012) emphasize the recognition of students' identity and the cultural and historical influences on students' learning. To be culturally responsive, we must integrate the knowledge, perspectives, and experiences of the students in developing their criticality and multiculturalism. As we are analyzing effective teaching and learning, we need to look at what our students know and how they learn while truly addressing social injustice and inequity in our education system.

In the Project I<sup>4</sup> Equity Framework, which focuses on full inclusion of students, teachers need to engage students in deeper and more complex content with multiple perspectives and utilize the cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts of the students. The Project I<sup>4</sup> Framework of Classroom Teaching and Learning outlined these significant points: (1) practices need to move toward students as co-generators and co-facilitators with the teacher (p. 2); and (2) practices need to move from minimally inclusive toward fully inclusive (p. 7). The framework illustrates what classroom practices are minimally inclusive; for example, personal identity of students would be generally recognized, but not in connection to the students' culture. For fully inclusive practice, the students' identities are not only valued but also students' cultural information is integrated into learning. To sustain learning, teachers need to promote multiculturalism and multilingualism to elevate the importance of sustaining the diverse perspectives and appreciation for cultures and values and to explicitly engage students to ask questions, connect to self and community, understand social injustice, inequality, and systemic oppression. We are educating the future, and students need the critical lens to be activists and meaningful contributors to our society.

Teaching mathematics to students with social justice contexts creates opportunities for students to develop a deeper understanding of the relevance of mathematics to real-life and connect mathematics to meaning that reflects the social, cultural, community, and world narratives. The six elements of the Social Justice Mathematics Framework (Berry et al., 2020) defined the importance of the mathematics instructions to impact students with positive social, cultural, and mathematical identities and to engage students in developing actions addressing the social issues through conceptualizing, investigating, and reflecting knowledge using mathematics. In addition, Driscoll (1994) supported the idea that learners make learning more

memorable when they have the opportunity to make meaning of the learning content through the encoding process. These memories become permanent and part of their knowledge.

### **How People Learn: Types of Learning**

In National Academies (2018) revision of *How People Learn*, the authors emphasized culture as the learned behavior of a group of people that generally reflects the traditions of that people and is socially transmitted from generation to generation through social learning.

“Learning does not happen in the same way for all people because cultural influences pervade development from the beginning of life” (p. 22). Considering that Chinese ELLs are from various origins of China and the world, each Chinese student may have different cultural norms. Their experiences in learning and expectations of learning are not the same; however, they may share some of the broader cultures and traditions with other Chinese populations. As we study how learners learn, we need to attend to their individual experiences to better understand their way of thinking and knowledge of how people interact with one another.

National Academies noted that people learn differently and use various strategies and multiple processes to learn from simple to complex, often learning is “influenced by context and by the learner’s own characteristics and preferences” (2018, p. 38). These basic types of learning include:

1. Habit formation and conditioning refers to habits learned and unlearned over time and unconsciously most of the time. Once we are aware of our habits, we can try to reinforce them or change them with clear intention.
2. Learning by observation allows the learner to expand the repertoire of behaviors without necessarily going through trial-and-error learning or from explicit feedback. It is a cost-effective way of learning.

3. Implicit pattern learning is called statistical learning; this type of learning happens through learning from regular patterns and often happens unintentionally
4. Perceptual and motor learning is learning through sensory experiences. People learn through their senses, and learning can change their senses. Both perceptual and motor learning can make significant changes in their perceptual system.
5. To learn facts and to remember facts requires the learners to make sense of the facts through multiple examples and meaningful process. By connecting the newly learned facts to prior knowledge, the memory of the learning becomes more sustainable.
6. People often create inferences in order to make sense of what they try to learn. These inferences may not necessarily be accurate but will help with the explanation of the learning.

In addition to these crucial types of learning, teachers need to consider ELLs' home language background, culture, and prior experiences of learning to design the instructional approach and select strategies that will address the types of learning. "Before a teacher or learner can design an ideal learning situation, she has to decide what kind of learning she is trying to achieve" (National Academies, 2018, p. 55) Since most people learn using multiple types of learning and elementary teachers teach multiple subjects, students use their senses to see, listen, touch, and speak; while observing from each other, they look for patterns and connect to what they already know to practice phonics, solve math problems, or do a science experiment. Through integrating types of learning, teachers can explore the learning activities and strategies that will engage students in developing more sustainable skills and knowledge.

## **Summary**

As we seek answers to the focus of practice, I engaged in literature review for a deeper



understanding of the meaning of joyful learning and how learning experiences influence the learning outcome. The researchers in neuroscience and growth mindset helped me to understand the connection of the learning experiences with social emotional wellbeing. I based the review on key researchers to frame the PAR work as we study and select the culturally and linguistically responsive practices (CLRP) that can potentially provide joyful learning experiences to our Chinese ELL students. Having a clear understanding of the Chinese students' identity and cultural influences on learning, the CPR team needs to recognize the historical implications and stereotype threats that exists in our education system and practice. In order for teachers to amplify culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning experiences in math class for Chinese ELLs, the CLRP provided the pedagogy to support our PAR study.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the research literature that provided key supports to my overarching research question: How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs? The sub-questions include:

- To what extent can teachers articulate the characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?
- How do teachers co-design an observation tool for joyful learning in Chinese ELL students?
- To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?
- How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth?

In the first section of the literature review, I focused on the definition of joyful learning, the expected competencies of the students, the neuroscience and mindset supporting the social

emotional well-being of learners, and the learner's sense of belonging. Then, I discussed the Chinese learners' identity and the myth of Model Minority, the cultural influences, and the stereotype threat to help understand the connection of our practices and Chinese ELL students. Lastly, I shared my review on CLRP and how people learn from various researchers and scholars. The literature review provided me clarity and framed concept for designing the research activities to answer the PAR research questions. As we proceeded in the study, teachers defined the meaning of joyful learning and selected and implemented CLRP strategies to elevate joyful learning. The teachers needed the learning opportunity to delve in deeper level of understanding of culturally and linguistically responsive practices (CLRP).

Through the PAR project, I intended to develop and strengthen the knowledge and skills of the teachers in designing the teaching practices supporting Chinese ELL students. In addition, the process of conducting the PAR study gave me the opportunity to develop as a leader in the area of collaborative work and use researched-based theories, pedagogies, and practices to further support my leadership growth

### CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this participatory action research (PAR) was studying teachers' practices that positively affected Chinese English Language Learners' (ELLs) joyful learning experiences. The term *joyful learning* focuses on students' engagement, agency, meaningful learning content, and elevating the students' experiences as learners (The Joyful Learning Network, 2020). The overarching question of the focus of practice (FoP): *How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs?*

As an English Language learner and an educator for more than 30 years, I found reading and writing in English challenging. I saw the same struggles from the ELL students when I walked through classrooms. ELL students consistently showed lower academic performances and positive responses in social-emotional learning skills than other students. This disparity continued for years as they navigated through K-12 public education. According to the Willis (2007) study on neuroscience and joyful learning, students' joyfulness in learning contributes to positive outcomes and engagement in higher cognitive memory of the learning contents.

The PAR occurred at the school where I had been the school principal for six years when the research study began. The school had 560 students at the time; approximately 24% of the students are English Language Learners (ELLs), and 13% of the school population receive special education services. Among the ELLs, there were 24 different primary home languages spoken. Of all students, 42% were Asian, and 37% were Chinese. The teachers at the school used many recommended ELL strategies from the district's Department of Curriculum and Instruction, including differentiated instruction, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies, and Designated English Language Development instructions. However, the teachers did not see the expected levels of learning outcomes from the ELL

students. Meanwhile, our ELL students had consistently shown the lowest positive responses on the district Social Emotional Learning (SEL) data in all areas (SFUSD, 2021c). For the focus of practice (FoP) in the PAR project and study, I investigated how teachers could amplify ELL students' learning experiences by selecting and implementing culturally and linguistically responsive strategies and teaching practices. I invited four classroom teachers and the assistant principal to join this research effort as Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR). During the eighteen-month of research, they worked with me intensively as I conducted primary data collection from monthly CPR meetings, classroom observations, team and individual reflections and conversations, and community learning exchange (CLE) meetings.

Our theory of action (TOA) for the PAR was: *If a group of teachers build capacity in articulating joyful learning for Chinese English language learners, then they can implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students.* The teachers collaborated in a community of practice (COP) to understand culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning for Chinese ELL students, and they used this information to elicit joyful experiences for the students in math.

In this chapter, I present the research design of the methodological approach I used, the research questions, possible participants, the data collection process, how data analysis informed the focus of practice, and the considerations of potential limitations, validity, and confidentiality and ethics related to the research. I chose participatory action research (PAR) through the activist action research methodology to help the CPR teachers further understand the cultural, historical, and political implications that influence the students and their learning experiences (Herr & Anderson, 2014; hunter et al., 2013). Using improvement science and the Plan-Do-Study-Action (PDSA) cycle of inquiry (Bryk et al., 2015), I articulated the theory of action for the PAR

project. In addition, I used community learning exchange (CLE) axioms and processes to design and reflect on the implementation of the strategies (Guajardo et al., 2016).

### **Research Design**

In qualitative research, “the research takes place in the natural setting, relies on the researcher as the instrument for data collection, [and] employs multiple methods of data collection” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 333). The type of qualitative research I chose to use in this project was participatory action research with an activist lens. I incorporated cycles of inquiry, community learning exchange (CLEs) processes, and collaborative work through CPR team meetings. In this section, I discuss participatory action research (PAR) as the form of qualitative research, research questions, and the three PAR research cycles.

### **Participatory Action Research**

Participatory action research engages the lead researcher as an active participant in the research. hunter et al. (2013) pointed out that “the act of research is not just to understand the world but also to work within it to change it, that is, to change social structures, institutions, and cultures” (p. 2). In the PAR research, I examined teachers’ understanding of elements that impact learning for Chinese ELLs. To develop educational practitioners' cultural competencies and responsive practices, I needed to develop teachers’ capacity in moving from the rhetoric of equity to action, learning, acknowledging and understanding how ELLs struggle academically and socially-emotionally.

As I focused our work on responding to the research questions, I facilitated learning activities for teachers to reflect and take actions to address the equity dilemma related to Chinese ELLs. The activist component of the participatory activist action research (hunter et al., 2013 term this PA<sup>1</sup>R) is considered the methodology for “value-driven” process for social change (p.

8). In this activist action research, the CPR Team engaged in open conversations about the equity dilemma facing ELL students and encouraged to cultivate trusting professional relationships among the educators. Furthermore, activist research produces higher-quality information when researchers participate actively in the study process and benefit from what they learn (Hale, 2001). I used inquiry cycles, such as, Plan-Do-Act-Study (PDSA) from improvement science processes to guide the research and to gain a deeper understanding of what teachers know and what teachers need to learn about Chinese English language learners.

### *Improvement Science*

Bryk et al. (2015) supports cycles of inquiry with clear evidence to change practices; “improvement science deploys rapid tests of changes to guide the development, revision, and continued fine-tuning of new tools, processes, work roles, and relationships” (p. 8). Improvement science centers the approach for continuous improvement to problem-solve through the inquiry cycles and offers six improvement principles to help school leaders to make positive changes in teaching practices (Hudson, 2018).

1. Make the work problem-specific and user-centered
2. Focus on variation in performance
3. See the system that produces the current outcomes
4. We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure
5. Use disciplines inquiry to drive improvement
6. Accelerate learning through networked communities

For my PAR study, I used these principles as a guidance, especially principles number three and number six. Based on these two key principles, the CPR team worked closely to examine our practices, to plan and implement learning activities and strategies, to review and reflect on their

practices, and to collaborate and learn together to improve teaching of ELLs (see Figure 7).

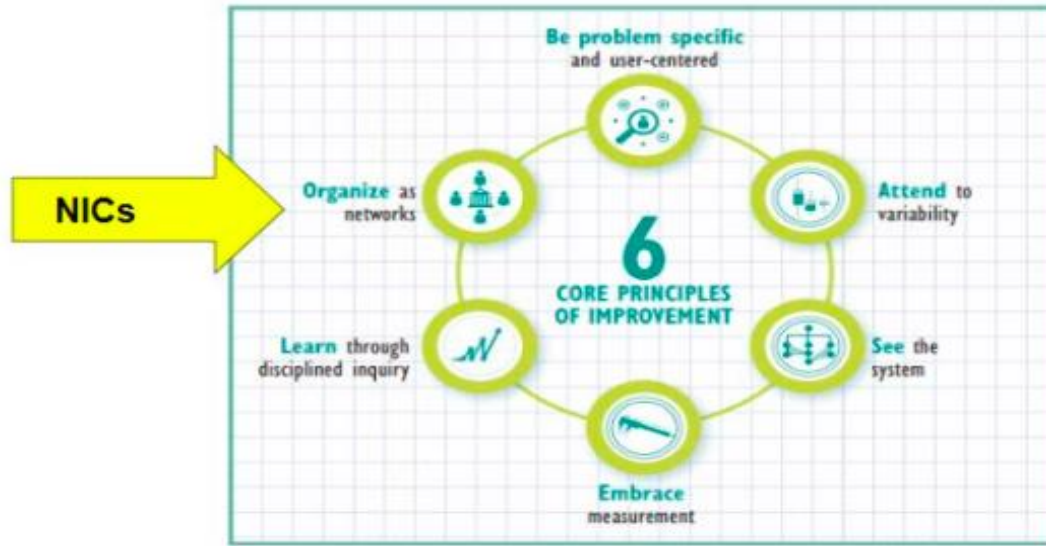
As the lead researcher, I facilitated the CPR learning process following the inquiry cycle of plan-do-study-act (PDSA). This inquiry method offers four steps for making rapid changes for improvement, from “a good idea to a quick prototype” (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 122). “*Plan*” refers to the steps to define the changes needed and the goal for the change; “*Do*” carries out the plan and gathers data from the implementations; “*Study*” gives the research team the opportunity to reflect on findings and understandings from the learning; “*Act*” helps the researchers to evaluate the changes and take the next step. During each of the three PAR cycles of inquiry, I used the PDSA cycles to guide the process of designing and implementing teaching practices, testing strategies, studying results, reflecting on practices, and modifying practices to further our understanding of the learning and the continuous improvement in elevating the Chinese ELL students’ joyful learning experiences (see Figure 7 for six principles). These cycles helped teachers to learn how the implementations worked and the changes in small scale before implementing changes at a systemic level (Lewis, 2015). The improvement science offered the process for teachers to focus on their problem of practice as they plan, implement, review and modify their strategies and practices.

### ***Community Learning Exchange***

In addition to the improvement science processes, I used the community learning exchange (CLE) protocols to provide opportunities for the diverse school community members to engage in deeper learning activities and share insights and ideas for changes. Guajardo et al., (2016) introduced five axioms that support the community learning exchange methodology:

1. Learning and leading are dynamic social processes.
2. Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes.

# 6 Improvement Principles



Source: Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, 2017

*Figure 7. Six principles of improvement science.*

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3. The people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns.
4. Crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational processes.
5. Hope and change are built on the assets and dreams of locals and their communities (pp. 24-27).

Through the PAR cycles, I employed the CLE axioms to guide the PAR work, facilitated our inquiry learning from the people closest to the issues, and built on the assets and dreams of the school community. CLE processes offered a safe and trusting environment in which participants found their power and voice. In cultivating a gracious space, the CPR members sought the wisdom from their colleagues and counted on the community assets. As Guajardo et al. (2016) stated, the CLE invites participants to share their “stories, experiences, questions, and passions to the gathering” (p. 28). People “learn best from real experiences, and authentic and honest relationships” (p. 38). The participants’ hope and change was to have a deeper understanding of strategies and students’ learning experience; thus, working together to amplify joyfulness.

### **Research Questions**

I developed the research questions based on my interests and experiences working with Chinese English Language learners over the years and an analysis of the social-emotional wellbeing of these students. I used these questions to guide the research process, frame the research design, and inform the theory of action (ToA). The overarching question of the FoP is: How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs? The sub-questions for the PAR study include:

1. To what extent can teachers articulate the characteristics of culturally and

- linguistically responsive joyful learning?
2. How do teachers co-design an observation tool for joyful learning in Chinese ELL students?
  3. To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?
  4. How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth?

For this PAR study, I addressed the questions through three iterative cycles of inquiry and draw findings of the study. I engaged in the design process and carried out the project activities in the PAR cycles using PDSA inquiry throughout the study: PAR Pre-Cycle, PAR Cycle One, and PAR Cycle Two.

### **Action Research Cycles**

In the PAR Pre-Cycle (Spring 2022), the research group focused on the definition of joyful learning and the characteristics of students' learning experiences based on the definition from literature reviews in connection to culturally and linguistically responsive practices and their own experience as learners. The CPR team reflected on current ELL practices to further understand how joyful learning impacted ELL students as they overcome their language barriers while immersed in the new dominant culture. I hosted community learning exchange (CLE) and monthly research group meetings to help participants make meanings of Joyful Learning using the culturally and linguistically responsive framework (Tredway et al., 2019) during study and act stages of the PDSA cycle.

In PAR Cycle One (Fall 2022), the CPR teachers in the research group co-designed and refined an observation tool to study the identified CLRP strategies in math classes. The team reviewed and reflected on the evidence from observations and collaborative conversations from

the team meeting. From the learning, I assessed and shared data with the team to further study the strategies and practices potentially amplify the joyful learning experiences of ELLs. We modified strategies and practices as needed throughout the inquiry cycle.

Finally, PAR Cycle Two took place in the Spring 2023. I collected, reviewed, and analyzed the evidence, artifacts, and data from observations, meeting notes, reflections, and memos to study the themes emerged leading to the findings of the research, the joyfulness of learning experiences of the ELLs, as well as the levels of improvement of teaching practices and my leadership development (see Table 1).

For this study, I intended to gain a deeper understanding of the Chinese ELL learning experiences using CLRP, and to build trusting relationships and collaborative efficacy among the participants. In addition, I wanted the participants to be able to transfer the knowledge and practices from the study to their own professional growth and learning with their colleagues to help nurture joyful learning experiences for all students.

### **Participants, Data Collection, and Analysis**

Action research is an inquiry and is implemented “by and with the insiders in an organization...” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 14). I chose to use qualitative data for the study with the intention of working with a small group of teachers who are at the center of the work and who are closest to the dilemma of equity of our study. In this section, I discuss the research team members, the methods of data collection, and the data analysis tools I used for this research project and study. The data collection included artifacts from the community learning exchanges, meeting notes, feedback from the group’s collaborative work, observation and reflection notes, and reflective memos. I shared my data coding and analysis using Saldaña (2016) methods to

Table 1

*PAR Improvement Cycles*

Research Cycle	Time Period	Activities
PAR Pre-Cycle	December 20, 2021 – May 1, 202s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organize monthly Community of Practice (CoP) using selected Community Learning Exchange (CLE) protocols</li> <li>● Listen, learn and define the characteristics of Joyful Learning</li> <li>● Select and discuss ELL strategies and practices for implementation informed by PDSA</li> </ul>
PAR Cycle One	September 2, 2022 – December 7, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement and modify ELL strategies that amplify ELL joyful learning experience using CLE Axioms</li> <li>● Design and adjust observation tool</li> <li>● Analyze data and artifacts from CLE and observations through triangulation during member checks</li> <li>● Collaborate with colleagues to reflect on ELL strategies and joyfulness through PDSA cycles</li> </ul>
PAR Cycle Two	Jan. 15, 2023 – May 19, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue the reflection on practices</li> <li>● Discuss, reflect and making meaning of the collected data and artifacts to inform findings</li> <li>● Triangulate findings of the PAR research with the CPR team</li> </ul>

identify categories in the PAR Pre-Cycle, emergent themes in PAR Cycle One and Two, and the key findings in PAR Cycle Two.

### **Participants**

The PAR study occurred at an elementary school in the San Francisco Unified School District. As the lead researcher, I intended to collaborate with four teachers from the school and the school's assistant principal to investigate strategies and teaching practices that would elevate Chinese ELL students' joyful learning experiences in math classes. I facilitated monthly meetings to hear authentic reflections and input from the team members through inquiry cycles. Their learning through the research study and their learning experiences could potentially contribute to the learning of other teachers in the broader school community.

### ***Sampling***

I selected the teachers as part of the research group using the purposeful sampling model for the PAR study (Patton, 1990). I chose teachers based on their teaching experiences, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, and interest in the study of focus of practice. The teachers represented the diversity of the staff, a wide range of teaching styles, and years of expertise, especially in supporting school initiatives and coaching other teachers. Another factor I considered when selecting the research group was the teachers' desire to learn and understand how culturally and linguistically responsive teaching supports students' learning experiences.

The experiences and expertise of this team could bring rich insight in working with Chinese ELLs as I investigate and collaborate with the teachers on strategies and practices to amplify the learning experiences of ELL students. Evidence from their classroom observations offered guidance and informed the steps I took during this study. Their participation was

voluntary, and the CPR members could leave the study at any time. Each participant signed the consent form upon approval from the IRB.

### ***Co-Practitioner Researchers***

The teachers of the research team were Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) for this study. They provided insight and guidance throughout the research. This team studied and selected culturally and linguistically responsive practices and strategies to amplify joyful learning for Chinese ELLs in math classes. Together, we reflected on and learned from the data, reviewed the evidence I analyzed from observations, selected ELL strategies, and artifacts from community learning exchanges to further understand the implementation of the strategies.

This research benefited from the knowledge and skills of the Co-Practitioners. The contributions of the CPR and studying the learning experiences of English Language Learners will further my understanding of learners' experiences and practices.

### ***Other Participants***

During this research study, I expected that the CPR members might share what we had learned with a larger group of teachers within the school and or beyond the school. Thus, the CPR teachers engaged with their grade-level partners and other members of the school staff for feedback and suggestions as they selected and implemented the ELL strategies to amplify the joyful learning experiences of the Chinese English Language Learners. These staff members included educators outside of the classroom, such as literacy coach, student advisor, and social worker who worked with the students on academics and social-emotional skill development. Their participation was voluntary, and they could leave the study at any time; they signed consent forms.

## **Data Collection Process and Tools**

Qualitative research methods “rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 179). I collected and analyzed qualitative data throughout this participatory action research study. I used multiple methods to collect and triangulate the data to answer the research questions. The data collection tools included documents, CLE artifacts, observation notes, and post-observation reflections, reflective memos, and the team members surveys (see Table 2).

### ***Documents***

I collected a variety of documents to support the PAR project. These documents included the CPR meeting agendas and notes, teachers’ lesson plans, CPR meeting notes and field notes. They were essential in helping me, the lead researcher, to understand the progress of designing, selecting, and implementing ELL strategies, as well as the reflection and feedback on teaching and learning using the strategies that are culturally and linguistically responsive. In addition, the notes included the participants’ discussions, feedback, and input on research activities and findings and reflection on the project’s progress. I documented the topics, date and time of meetings, list of participants, meeting objectives, and meeting protocols. These documents kept the process transparent by showing the progress and activities of the research and reflections on the steps the CPR group took to answer the research questions. The meeting agendas and notes captured the facilitation approach I implemented to ensure the gracious space for participants. Other documents for data collection included posters, pictures, images, post-its, and graphics. I coded these documents accordingly for analysis as a part of the research data.

Table 2

*Research Questions, Proposed Data Collection, And Triangulation*

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*Overarching Question: How does a group of teachers amplify joyful learning experiences in math classrooms for Chinese ELLs?*

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



### ***CLE Artifacts***

From the community learning exchange (CLE) meetings, we collected meeting artifacts as part of the data collection. These artifacts captured the ideas, stories, and experiences of the participants relating to the research study. I reviewed these artifacts and coded the information to seek answers and understandings of the research questions.

### ***Observation Tools (see Appendices E and F) and Conversation Guide***

The CPR team co-designed observation tools specifically focusing on the research questions to capture the evidence of joyfulness from the implementation of the strategies. During each PAR Cycle One and Cycle Two, I used the observation tools (Joyful Learning Observation Tool and the Joyful Learning Observation Tool we co-designed) to capture how teachers engaged Chinese ELL students in learning and building self-efficacy and confidence in developing academic and social-emotional skills. I used post-observation conversation protocols to guide discussion of pertinent data with the teachers on strategies and practices. The analysis of the data from these observations informed the research team what CLRP strategies and practices teachers used and the frequency of each strategy.

### ***Reflective Memos***

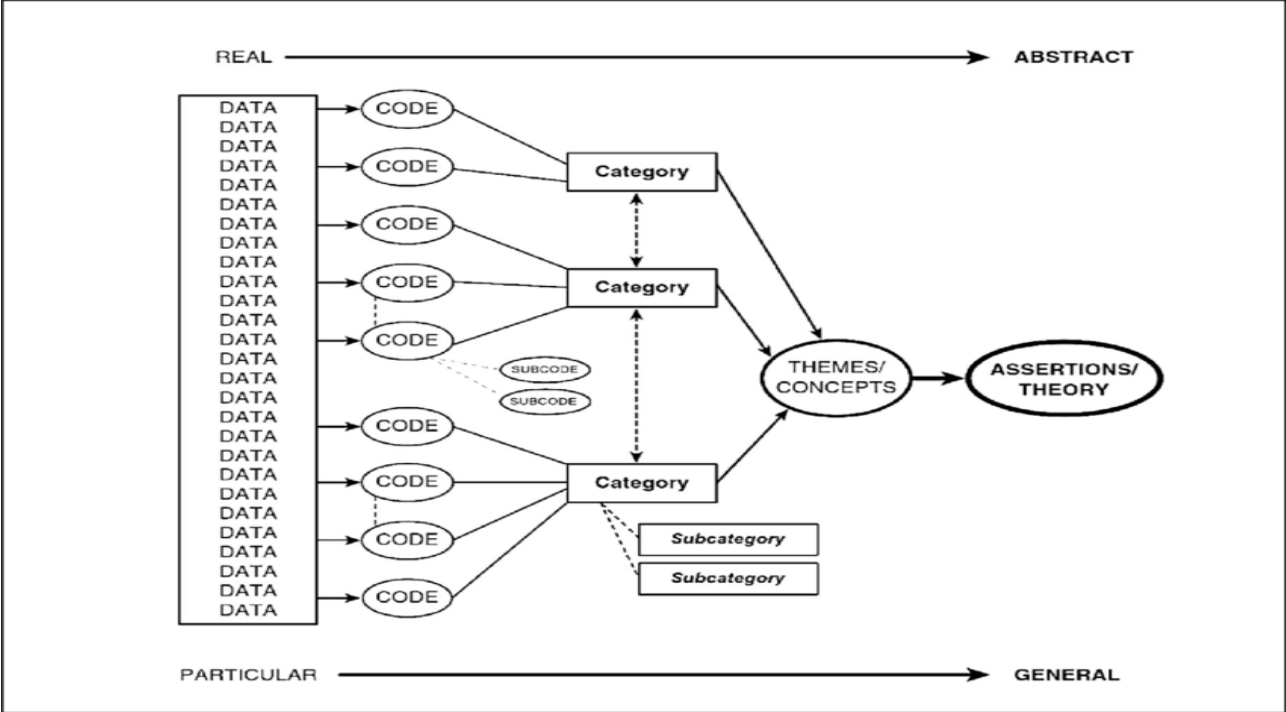
I wrote reflective memos throughout this research process to provide answers to the sub-questions. The CPR team engaged in discussions with colleagues about culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) and used the feedback as one method of data collection. The data from the memos offered first hand of information on teachers' professional growth and allowed for the triangulation to ensure the accuracy of the team learning and understanding. I used the individual CPR members' memos and team reflection notes to further analyze the thinking, discussions, and observations during the research. The reflective memos

## **Data Analysis**

The process for data analysis is to engage in iterative cycles of coding and analysis as required by qualitative researchers (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). I based the qualitative data and coding process on Saldaña's coding manual as the guide I reviewed initial codes from Pre-Cycle data and categorized them to inform activities in PAR Cycle One. Then I analyzed data from PAR Cycle Two to develop emergent themes and inform activities of PAR Cycle Two. At the conclusion of PAR Cycle Two, I analyzed data from all three cycles to determine findings. To make sense of the data through iterative cycles, I organized the data using an open coding system to identify and then categorize the data for patterns, relevance and indications that lead into emergent themes; and I used close coding system to further analyze the codes supporting the themes and findings. Through the iterative process, these themes supported the findings ((see Figure 8).

The CPR members conducted member checks at each CPR meeting. As the lead researcher, I met with the CPR group monthly to monitor the research activities, calibrate progress and ensure the integrity, as well as the validity of the research. I asked the participants clarifying questions and checked for understanding of the emergent categories, themes and findings, the accuracy of the theme, and the fairness of the interpretations (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018). This process for member checks at the end of each PAR cycle allowed me to collect data from meetings and CLEs.

I reviewed the data and generated codes to further inform and frame categories into themes that supported the planning for PAR Cycle two activities leading to the findings.



Note. Saldaña, 2016.

Figure 8. Qualitative data coding process of iterative cycles of inquiry.

## **Study Considerations: Limitations, Validity, and Confidentiality and Ethics**

In this section, I discuss the limitations of the study, the internal and external validity of the research, and the trustworthiness of the research. Then I discuss confidentiality and ethical considerations for the participatory action research. As the lead researcher, I shared the research topic and discussed the PAR process with the teachers prior to confirming their participation on the CPR team. The teachers received the invitation to participate in this study with the understanding that participation was voluntary. Therefore, they could withdraw from the study freely. To meet the requirement of ethical compliance relating to human research, I completed the Institutional Review Board Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification in December 2021 (see Appendix B) and I have an approval letter from the district (see Appendix C). See Appendix A, the approval letter from IRB to conduct the study.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this qualitative research study included generalizability, researcher bias, restrictions of policies and protocols from the school district, the researcher perceptions, and other unexpected occurrences impacted the study. I organized these limitations into three main topics: the scope of the study, the role of the lead researcher, and the global pandemic.

In terms of generalizability, this study applied to this one school and might be useful to schools alike. The school is a large urban elementary school serving over 560 students from transition kindergarten (TK) grade to 5th-grade (SFUSD added the TK grade in August 2022). Based on the SFUSD data, there were 90% of the students living in the neighborhood. The teaching staff comprised various levels of teaching experiences. Among the certificated teachers, thirty percent of the teachers had five years or fewer of teaching experience, thirty eight percent had five to fifteen years of teaching experience, and thirty two percent had fifteen plus years of

teaching experience. Among the students, about 36% of the students were English Language Learners and 12-13% of the total student population receive special education services. The setting of this research was only this school, and the applicability of the study findings may not be suitable to other contexts. However, the process we used for the PAR study can be replicated for researchers to use in different contexts.

Being the school principal at Francis Scott Key for six years and a Chinese English Language Learner myself, I hold knowledge of the school culture and the culture of my heritage. However, this knowledge could create biases in data analysis. In addition, the authority role as site leader could make the CPR members feel that they were in a disadvantageous position during observations and decision making. I addressed these potential biases by triangulating the data, feedback, and reflections through member checks and reflective memos to be transparent and open minded.

The CPR group consisted members with diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences who added a wide range of expertise to the study. Meanwhile, the members of the CPR added a variety of perspectives to the study. In this inquiry research, the group listened and learned together in order to sustain the study's integrity by ongoing involvement, observation, triangulation, reflection, and regular member checks. The team shared their understanding of the analysis of the data.

The global COVID pandemic in early 2020 added an additional limitation to the study. The unexpected shortage of staffing and elevated social-emotional needs of the students and staff required more attention from educators. The need to strengthen the sense of belonging and relationships with colleagues and students became heightened. I incorporated learning activities

for the research team to connect with one another and to build resilience and confidence in our work as educators.

### **Validity**

The research topic was relevant to the CPR team. We wanted to better understand our English language learners' learning experiences and how teachers could influence students' learning using the CLRP framework. As the lead researcher, I met with the CPR group monthly to monitor the research activities, calibrate progress, and ensure integrity. I ensured the validity of the research through triangulation and member check. Team members had opportunities asking clarifying questions and checked for understanding of research activities, data, and processes. The opportunities for member check throughout the PAR cycles allowed the researchers to make sure of the accuracy of the data collected and cross-check the documentations or artifacts collected from meetings and CLEs (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018). The research process emphasized the respect for multiple perceptions. I looked for patterns, categorized evidence into themes, and determined the validity of the outcomes.

### ***Internal Validity***

The research questions were directly related to the interests of the CPR and thus the results of the study were useful to them; Hale (2008) identifies usefulness to participants as a key criterion of validity. The CPR team aimed to understand the meaning of joyful learning and collaborated our understanding to identify and implement ELL strategies. The study provided relevant and useful learning to their professional growth. Through the FoP process, the team members addressed the trustworthiness of the evidence collected from the PAR activities. To validate the data and articulate the findings, I checked with team members at monthly meetings, cross-reference notes from CLE and CPR meetings, reviewed reflective memos and documents

to ensure the accuracy of the data. In addition, the CPR team collaborated on design practices to triangulate multiple data sources and methods to confirm the findings as they were coming together.

As the lead researcher, I monitored the internal validity by including multiple perspectives and considering researchers' biases, honesty of opinions, and protected gracious space for the participants to hold truth, interpretations of multiple ideas and the conceptualization of theories in each PAR cycle.

### ***External Validity***

The PAR project involved a small group of Co-Practitioner Researchers. The setting of the research was limited to our school. The three PAR cycles extended to a period of 18 months. With the limitations of the study, we cannot generalize the findings in other contexts. However, the research study can set the foundation for future research and as a resource to support a deeper understanding of the FoP. The collaborative relationship can benefit the entire school community beyond the research group. The study's outcome can engage conversations and dialogues on students' learning experiences connected with students' social-emotional learning and academic achievement. The strategies developed can further support English Language Learners in SFUSD.

### **Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations**

Following the guide from CITI training in recognizing the vulnerability of human subjects, the research team took necessary steps to protect the data and confidentiality of the study. All documents were stored in a password-protected hard drive and a locked cabinet that only I can access. We used pseudonyms instead of participants' real names. The research team signed the consent form (see Appendix D) which included clearly defined language; they were

informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I protected their confidentiality, including participants' identity and privacy. I stored the data according to IRB guidelines and will continue to store for three years; then I will destroy the data.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the methodology and research design I used to conduct the research study. The qualitative research utilized the method of participatory action research with the component of activist action research. The three PAR cycles utilized the PDSA inquiry and CLE protocol to research the answers to the FoP project and guide the design of the research activities in the eighteen months. I selected participants who work with Chinese English Language learners daily with preferred expertise and experiences in teaching. I engaged multiple qualitative data collection methods to collect and analyze the data, including documents of notes, agendas, reflective memos, observations notes, and CLE artifacts. I scheduled member checks at the end of each cycle of inquiry to ensure validity. To protect the confidentiality and the participants of the research project, the CPR team considers the study's limitations along with the process, ensuring internal and external validity and I followed all IRB guidelines for human subjects.



## **CHAPTER 4: PAR PRE-CYCLE**

In this chapter, I discuss the participatory action research (PAR) Pre-Cycle related to how to observe and promote joy in classrooms for Chinese English language learners. First, I outline the PAR context, including a description of the history, demographics, and sociological-historical aspects of the location where the study took place and the demographics and biographies of the CPR members. Secondly, I outline the PAR Pre-Cycle process and the activities in which I engaged the CPR members and community through the Community Learning Exchange (CLE) process. Then, I discuss the data I collected, coded, and analyzed from meeting notes, CPR members' input, reflection memos, artifacts, and CLE artifacts. From the codes and the analysis of the pieces of evidence, I identified the emergent category of engagement that informed our work in PAR Cycle One. Finally, I focus on my leadership development as a researcher and practitioner leading a CPR group.

### **PAR Context**

I describe the context of the school where the study took place, including population and practices, and the CPR members, all of whom were on the teaching staff at the school, highlighting their experiences as educators and their interests in the focus of practice. I share descriptions of the CPR group members, their biographies, and their personal interests in participating in the PAR study.

### **School Context**

The PAR study took place in a public school in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), one of five elementary schools located in the Outer Sunset district. The majority of the students live in the neighborhood within walking distance or a short drive to school.

The school, originally named Oceanside School, was founded in 1903. It was demolished and rebuilt in 1913 (see Figure 9), and the name was subsequently changed to Francis Scott Key School. In 1938, the school was relocated to its current location in the Sunset District of San Francisco, a few blocks from Ocean Beach (see Figure 10). It should be noted that during the course of this study, the SFUSD School Board decided to rename any school whose current name had any connection to slavery. Key was a slaveholding lawyer attached to a Maryland plantation family; therefore, despite his connection to the national anthem, his name will be removed and the school will undergo a renaming process.

The school is housed in a 1938 art deco-styled building and serves over 560 students. It comprises 26 teaching classrooms, a computer lab, a school library, and a cafeteria/auditorium, and provides both general education and a special education program with multiple pathways. We are proud of inclusion as a school belief and practice. As a caring community, the staff promotes building healthy minds and bodies of the students. The school is committed to supporting the whole child—each child’s academic, social, emotional, physical, and creative growth.

In addition to offering art, science, and technology programs, Francis Scott Key (FSK) Elementary School has received multiple awards for academic excellence. The school has launched a cohesive STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) program while continuously developing students’ academic skills through reading & writing workshops. In collaboration with parents, the school’s vision is to provide students with a learning experience that is nurturing, compassionate, supportive, and challenging, and to equip students with appropriate 21st-century skills, growth mindset, and confidence by embracing creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.



*Note.* (Source: Architectural and Historic Resources of Oceanside (<http://www.outsidelands.org/oceanside.php>).

*Figure 9.* Francis Scott Key, 1913 former Oceanside School.

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*Note.* Photograph by Kasner, 2022

*Figure 10.* Francis Scott Key: Current school building.

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### ***School Population***

There were 560 students enrolled in the school at the time of this study. Of those students, 43.6 % identified as Asians; 30% of the total school population identified as Chinese descent. However, these numbers may not reflect the actual percentage of students who share Asian heritage, because students who identified as only multiracial (MR) or declined to state (DS) might be partially Asian.

Twenty percent of the students were actually identified as English Language Learners. However, many more students who had been reclassified or redesignated and were no longer identified as ELL still shared many of the academic and social-emotional challenges as the English Language Learners. In addition, thirteen percent of the students received special education services (see Figure 11).

The staff at the school consisted of 22 classroom teachers, five special education teachers, three other content specialists, and two administrators. Table 3 shows the ethnicity breakdown of the certificated staff. The predominant ethnicities were Chinese (44%) and White (37.5%). Staff teaching experiences varied: 12 had 1-5 years, 8 had 6-15 years, and 12 teachers had over 16 years of experience in education.

### ***School Practices***

San Francisco Unified School District's (SFUSD) vision is: "Every day we provide each and every student the quality instruction and equitable support required to thrive in the 21st century" (SFUSD, 2021b). The staff at FSK redefined the vision to align with practices that would allow them to provide students with learning experiences that were nurturing, compassionate, supportive, and challenging. Thus, as a staff, we reimagined teaching and learning through the lens of learners designated as ELLs and students with disabilities.

## Enrollment

## Enrollment Trends (TK-5)

**Key (Francis Scott) ES (TK-5) Enrollment Trends (2017-18 to 2020-21)**

Year	All	AA	AI	AS	DS	FI	HI	PI	MR	WH	EL	SPED	SES	Foster	Homeless
2017-18	565	0.7	0.0	47.4	7.1	1.9	9.2	0.2	10.8	22.7	30.6	11.5	36.6	0.0	0.4
2018-19	551	0.5	0.0	43.0	16.7	1.8	9.3	0.0	10.9	17.8	27.9	12.2	35.6	0.4	0.2
2019-20	550	0.7	0.0	44.4	6.0	2.5	9.6	0.0	13.1	23.6	24.7	14.0	30.2	0.0	0.2
2020-21	551	0.7	0.0	43.0	6.2	2.4	9.4	0.0	12.3	26.0	20.3	13.1	27.2	0.2	0.5

AA = African American; AI = American Indian; AS = Asian; DS = Declines to State; FI = Filipino; HI = Hispanic/Latino; PI = Pacific Islander; MR = Multi-Racial; WH = White; EL = English Learner; SES = Low-SES; Foster = Foster Youth

*Figure 11.* Enrollment data from SFUSD from 2017 – 2021.

Table 3

*School Teacher Ethnicity Profile, 2020*


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Staff Role	Classroom Teachers	Special Ed Teachers	Other Content Specialist	Admin	Total	% of Total
White	6	3	2	1	12	37.5%
Chinese	12	0	1	1	14	44%
Not Specified	3	1	0	0	4	12.5%
Other Asian	1	1	0	0	2	6%
Total	22	5	3	2	32	100%

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The staff recognized, however, that they were not entirely clear about what quality instruction and equitable support for ELL students looked like or how to close the achievement gap. I shared what Kendi (2019) argued—that we should look at the achievement gap as the opportunity gap, placing responsibility not on students who do not test well but on the structural elements of the system that do not provide equitable opportunities. Through classroom redesign and the implementation of personalized learning, we started to create an environment that would optimize learning opportunities for students, especially English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. We designed a classroom environment that was flexible and comfortable, where students could access their peers in close proximity and have more collaborations throughout each day. We applied these experiences to our staff learning. We found that the opportunity for collaboration created more connection and support among the staff. The teachers appreciated these learning experiences. The engagement in redesigning their classrooms and the professional development on mindset shifts of teaching showed positive results. Yet, we knew that we needed to learn more so that we could serve the students even more effectively.

### **Study Participants**

The PAR project and study gave us the opportunity to engage in professional learning with a group of teachers who acted as Co-Practitioner Researchers. As the lead researcher, I assembled a CPR team consisting of four classroom teachers and the assistant principal. I chose four 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers who reflected a wide range of teaching styles and years of expertise and had held various teacher leadership roles throughout the years of their teaching, including coaching and mentoring new teachers and providing services to the school community and staff. The combined experiences and expertise contributed rich insights into



the work with Chinese ELLs, brought cultural and linguistic perspectives on teaching English Language Development (ELD), and helped drive the PDSA cycles of research.

Rachel C. L. has been a teacher at the school for 17 years. She came from a Chinese immigrant family and grew up with many siblings and cousins. From the time she was young, she carried many responsibilities to care for others and support her family, as well as serving as a translator for the English Language learners in her classes. As a teacher, she enjoyed working with students and teaching concepts in creative and engaging ways and wanted to inspire her students in learning. She believed that many of her Chinese ELL students struggled with explaining their mathematical thinking and focused on answers rather than the process of getting answers. She is a lifelong learner who desires to learn more about culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies (CLRP). She led the school effort in building Personalized Learning Environments (PLE) with technology-embedded and project-based learning (PBL). She collaborated with her grade-level team and learned teaching pedagogies and approaches with them. Rachel wanted to understand and find ways to spark joy in learning in her students.

Genevieve G. D. has taught at the school for 13 years. She holds a strong belief that all students can learn. From her various teaching experiences working with students with special needs, English Language Learners, and multiple grades, Genevieve developed a keen understanding that her students all had different needs and learning styles. Immigrating to the US at a young age, she experienced what it meant to be a newcomer. Although she learned English in her native land, she was treated as a language learner with lower expectations of her academic skills. Genevieve shared: “Stereotypes were assigned to me automatically based on my appearance and status as a new immigrant. People spoke down and slow to me because

they assumed I spoke no English when I was actually fluent.” She was determined to make learning relevant to her students and build their independent skills and self-efficacy. She was among the first teachers to redesign her classroom with flexible seating and spaces. She continuously worked on building project-based learning experiences, and she wanted to develop as an educator with a strong social justice lens. She was excited to be part of the CPR team to develop a deep understanding of how to elevate students’ joyful learning experiences through culturally and linguistically responsive practices.

Skye S. C. was the last one in the CPR group to join the school community. She came from an immigrant family. Her educational experiences included both public school education and private school education. As an immigrant child, she described herself as a silent observer growing up. She took on the responsibilities (as do many young newcomer students at home) of helping her family translate mail and phone calls, and she was not sure how her parents viewed her as a student. Public school and private school experiences gave her a contrasting view of herself: at public school, she was the “smartest” student in the English learner class, but at the private school she felt minimal and average. She was excited to learn new things and considered every day a new experience. She wanted to bring the confidence of learning to all her students and believed she could bring her students the joy of learning. She was still an observer, but not a silent observer. She paid attention to every student and wanted to know how she could best teach them.

Jamie B. Q. has been teaching for more than 20 years. Through that time, she constantly wondered what else she could learn and do to make the most significant impact on her students’ learning. Jamie grew up in a neighborhood with many cultures around her. She enjoyed being independent at an early age. She experienced being judged for attending a

public school and discovered the inequity of being in a “gifted” class when her friends could not be. She made every effort to ensure her students did not have such experiences by providing them access to all learning opportunities in her class. Jamie had a great passion for books. She read a book per day with her students and celebrated their accomplishments. She took on the challenge of redesigning her classroom, and, in the process, had the opportunity to connect with ELL students and understand their learning experiences. She found joy in the challenges she encountered in teaching strategies and math content as she looked for the most effective way to teach and work with students with multiple disabilities and learning needs. Jamie recalled her own first-grade teacher who made a long-lasting positive impact on Jamie; as a result, she recognized how important it is when a teacher notices her students.

Assistant Principal Nellie M.P. joined the school in 2019. She taught English to ELLs in a Latin country for five years before she took a Spanish bilingual teaching position at SFUSD. After 6 years, she became a literacy coach to coach teachers and support the literacy program at her school. She has extensive experience in working with English language learners and feels a strong sense of purpose that she can benefit the Spanish-speaking ELLs with her knowledge of English to help them to be more successful. With her proficient Spanish language skills, she believes she can help the students connect to the language and the culture. As an assistant principal at the school, Nellie designs and facilitates teachers’ professional development and evaluates program implementations and effectiveness. In addition, she works closely with the Coordinated Care Team and Culture and Climate Team to ensure services for students and the well-being of the students and staff. Through collaborative work and clear communication, Nellie shares her passion for collective goals and enhancing positive relationships with colleagues and students’ families.

As the sixth member of the CPR and the lead researcher in this PAR study, I would like to understand how teachers use culturally and linguistically responsive strategies to amplify English learners' joyfulness in learning. I came to this country at twenty-five to pursue an M.A. in teaching English as a Second Language. Soon, I realized how intimidated I was when I tried to write in English. I did not have the cultural knowledge and language proficiency to support essays, nor the confidence in my writing ability since writing was not a common practice in my native language. To fully immerse myself in this new world, I had to make an exceptional effort to master the English language, learn about American culture, and navigate through the complex educational system. I experienced the fear of a lack of cultural knowledge and language proficiency. As an ELL student, I consistently struggled with academic writing and fluency in writing. These struggles have impacted me for many years as a teacher and later as a leader.

In 37 years of working as an educator, I had worked as the school principal for the last seven years before I took the Director for Principal Leadership position in October 2022. During my principalship, I received several innovation awards for redesigning the learning environment and promoting student-centered learning. The redesign process sparked joy for our teachers as we learned and understood how learners learn. I hope the PAR research questions I chose helped build the teachers' capacity to amplify the joyful learning experience of Chinese ELLs so that our young immigrant students are fully equipped with the skills and confidence they need throughout their school years (see Table 4).

The teachers in the CPR were interested in learning more about social justice in education. Each of them participated in several school-wide innovation projects. They learned together about pedagogies and practices that could support students' academic and social-

Table 4

*Co-Practitioner Researchers*

Teacher Names	Yrs. of Service	Grade(s)	Ethnicity	Expertise and Site-Based Leadership Roles
Rachel C. L.	17	2nd grade	Chinese	ELD - Gen Ed, Chinese bi-lingual, served as Liaison on PTA Executive Board, and Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) member. Other leadership experience including lead teacher in implementing Deeper Learning, classroom redesign and PBL
Genevieve G.D.	13	2nd grade	Filipina	ELD - Gen Ed, Special Education, served as Digital Learning Facilitator Other leadership experience including lead teacher in implementing Personalized Learning, classroom redesign and PBL
Skye S. C.	6	3rd Grade	Chinese	ELD - Gen Ed in multiple grades, served as Health Advocate and School Cultural and Climate Committee member
Jamie B. Q.	20	3rd Grade	White	ELD - Gen Ed in multiple grades, served as Art coordinator, and Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) member Other leadership experience including lead teacher in implementing Classroom redesign and Flexible learning environment and art coordinator collaborating and managing artists-in-residency program
Nellie M.P.	11	Tk - 5	White	Assistant Principal – Spanish Bilingual, facilitated staff professional development, program evaluations, led School Culture & Climate Committee, Coordinated Care Team, and Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)

emotional learning, especially English Language Learners and students with special needs. They were motivated to develop their understanding through design questions, ideations, and prototypes. Their experiences in teaching ranged from 6-20 years, and three of them were interested in pursuing leadership roles and opportunities to advance their careers. They wanted to learn more about ELLs and how to use culturally and linguistically responsive teaching to amplify students' joyful learning experiences. These teachers were open to changes that improved practices and were willing to collaborate and learn as a team.

Next, I describe the activities I conducted for data collection. I designed surveys and community learning exchange meetings to help with the development of observation tools and to have a better understanding of what the CPRs knew about joyful learning. In addition, I wanted to know how their experiences as learners influenced their articulations of the characteristics of joyful learning. The CPR team based the research activities in the Pre-Cycle on the first two research questions and planned to use the observation tool for PAR Cycle One research:

1. To what extent can teachers articulate the characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?
2. How do teachers co-design an observation tool for joyful learning in Chinese ELL students?

### **PAR Pre-Cycle Process**

I facilitated the research to understand how teachers' practices amplify joyful learning experiences for Chinese English Learners. The research process consisted of three iterative inquiry cycles: Pre-Cycle, Cycle One, and Cycle Two. In each cycle, I engaged and collaborated with the CPR team members to further our knowledge of Chinese ELLs' learning

experiences and identify strategies that would amplify their joyful learning experiences. The research process focused on collaborative work and shared learning.

During the Pre-Cycle, I conducted four CLE meetings and four CPR meetings (see Table 5). During these meetings, we focused on defining joyful learning and finding ways we could capture students' learning experiences based on the definition from the literature review in Chapter 2 and articulated by the CRP team in connection to culturally and linguistically responsive practices. One of the two CLE meetings was with a group of principals from my district cohort, and the other one was with the CPR team. Widyawulandari et al. (2018) stated that the "implementation of a joyful learning approach contains four stages, which can support the ongoing learning, among others: experience, interaction, communication and reflection" (pp. 55-56).

During monthly CPR meetings, I had the opportunity to engage in deep conversations with the CPR members on understanding ourselves and our professional journeys as learners and educators to guide our research on joyful student learning experiences. The CPR team members reflected on personal experiences as teachers and learners to identify joyfulness attributes. Through discussion and analysis of the culturally responsive practices using the Project I<sup>4</sup> Equity Framework, the team members collaborated, observed, and considered learning strategies for ELL students that exhibit joyfulness and intersect with culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. As the researcher, I collected multiple data from the surveys, reflective memos, and meeting artifacts and notes. I then coded them to determine the emergent categories.

### **Community Learning Exchanges (CLEs)**

I conducted a CLE using the structure for instructional rounds at the school. During

Table 5

*Activities: PAR Pre-Cycle, From December 20, 2021 - May 1, 2022*

WEEK (12/21 - 04/22)	1 12/ 20	2 01/ 03	4 01/ 17	5 01/ 24	6 01/ 31	8 02/ 14	9 02/ 21	10 02/ 28	11 03/ 07	12 03/ 14	13 03/ 21	14 04/ 04	16 04/ 18
Meetings with CPR (n=5)				•			•				•		•
Principal CLE Meetings (n=17)						•				•			
Reflectiv e memos (n=5)		•	•		•	•		•		•		•	
CPR CLE Meetings (n=6)	•								•				

*Note.* n = number of participants.



the study, our district (SFUSD) schools were organized in cohorts. In my cohort, we had 17 elementary schools under the supervision of one assistant superintendent and one director. For principal professional development, we used the Instructional Rounds protocol for principals to learn together, “a disciplined way for educators to work together to improve instruction” (City et al., 2009). In this process, principals listen to the host principal’s problem of practice, participate in classroom observations and learn together through collaboration and problem-solving using leadership improvement strategies.

During the CLE meeting, I shared our study’s research questions and focus of practice with other principals. All the principals had students who were Chinese English Language Learners, and I found value in accessing their knowledge and skills through teacher observations using the CLRP framework (Tredway et al., 2019). Their insights could support the research team’s process in designing an observation tool we could use while observing teaching practices. The principals visited classrooms and generated three prototypes of concepts for us to consider in developing an observation tool. In addition, the principals shared personal learning experiences that had brought them joy. I shared the artifacts from the meeting with the CPR team to further the conversation and discuss instructional practices that could impact students’ learning experiences, especially the Chinese English Language learners.

Then, I launched the PAR process in a CLE with the CPR team. I shared the meeting protocols and the expected outcome from the meeting. We reviewed the research questions and the research activities for the Pre-Cycle. The goals for the meeting were to connect with each other and connect to who we are, while for the team to build a trusting relationship using an emulation poem, and journey lines to reflect on each member’s learning experiences. In

addition, each CPR member shared their thoughts and experiences using a survey designed with topics on joyful learning experiences, perceptions of Chinese English Language Learners, and their understanding of CLRP. The survey captured the first set of data.

### **CPR Meetings**

I engaged the CPR members in four monthly meetings using CLE processes. The co-practitioner researchers reflected on their practices, shared their understanding of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP), and had in-depth discussions on possible ways to observe practices that amplify students' joyfulness in learning. I included mindfulness and personal narratives to foster connections and relational trust among the team members. In addition, I included new learning so that the researchers would continue to develop a deeper understanding of joyful learning and CLRP indicators. I collected data to help determine what steps to take for the next research cycle. Each CPR meeting had a specific focus.

In the first CPR meeting, I introduced the Project I<sup>4</sup> Equity Framework focusing on CLRP, and teachers wrote a reflective memo about their learning and experiences. I conducted a self-rated activity using the PI<sup>4</sup> CLRP framework (Tredway, et al., 2019) for the members to identify where they are in terms of their practices. With our goal in mind - how to design an observation tool or tools to capture practices that would amplify the ELL students' joyfulness in learning - we recognized the importance of taking the time to understand ourselves and our own practices to move towards a common understanding.

In the second CPR meeting, we discussed and reviewed the prototypes from the principals' CLE meeting. In the third meeting, we articulated the characteristics of joyful learning and discussed observable behaviors of students, and in the fourth CPR Meeting, the team members reviewed the PI<sup>4</sup> CLRP framework (Tredway, et al., 2019) and discussed the

alignment of CLRP and joyful learning characteristics to identify potential ELL strategies. I collected CPR member responses to the question of how they experienced joyful learning as a learner and, in a photo scavenger hunt activity, I collected data on their views of what joyful learning looked like in practice. I designed the photo scavenger hunt activity for teachers to share what evidence they considered as joyful in connection to learning activities. They have the choice to select photos from their classrooms or the hallway. Each teacher took several photos and shared why they chose the photos and what brought them joy. I coded the frequency of what information surfaced as a code. From their responses, I looked for patterns relating to the definition of joyful learning.

### **Coding Evidence**

During the Pre-Cycle, I collected and coded artifacts from the teachers' self-reflection surveys, the CLE, and reflective memos from the CPR meetings. I used the *in vivo* coding method to do the first round of coding to "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106). I highlighted words and phrases related to their learning experiences from this initial coding process. Using an open coding process, I then looked for patterns that showed the characteristics of joyful learning that I had defined in the literature review and the CLE meetings. This approach gave me the opportunity to reflect on the data with an open mind.

I reorganized the codes and modified them multiple times to ensure they were consistent and concise. Each round of coding and reorganizing gave me the opportunity to reevaluate the evidence and how the elements connected with one another. I recognize now that the coding process is complex, and I still need to refine it further, as the category was too broad and the code is at the category level. Since this was my initial coding experience, I

planned to refine my coding skills in the next inquiry cycle. Next, I detail the emergent category of engagement and articulate the thinking process and the analysis of the codes I chose to use and how the evidence led to that emergent category.

### **Emergent Category: Engagement**

During the PAR Pre-Cycle, I collected, coded, and analyzed multiple data sets from CLE meetings and the CPR teamwork. These data included a teacher self-reflective survey, an emulation poem, a photo scavenger hunt activity, posters from the principal CLE meetings, self-rated practices using PI<sup>4</sup> CLRP framework (Tredway, et al., 2019), and reflective memos from the research team. I coded artifacts and evidence that illustrated what the educators considered joyful learning and our emerging understanding of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. These findings led me to one emergent category of engagement.

“Student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education” (Sabbott, 2016, <https://www.edglossary.org/student-engagement/>).

According to the Joyful Learning Network's (2022) definition, joyful learning is "engaging, empowering, and playful learning of meaningful information in a loving and supporting community" ([www.joyfulearningnetwork.com/what-is-joyful-learning.htm](http://www.joyfulearningnetwork.com/what-is-joyful-learning.htm)). This concept encompasses the category of engagement, which is consistent with how the teachers described their experiences and methods of joyful learning. The participants shared that they found joy when learning was fun, enjoyable, and rewarding. They emphasized the importance of having choices, opportunities to contribute their thinking, connecting their learning to their personal experiences, prior knowledge, and cultures, and connecting to each other. The ability

to do hands-on activities, collaborate with peers, and produce work excited them. When learners are motivated to learn, they engage attentively in their learning activities. Thus, learners' agency, participation, and connection surfaced as the most frequently identified codes associated with joyful learning. I use the three concepts to define the meaning of the data because they each represent an aspect of engagement (see Table 6).

The three codes highlighted the key engagement characteristics, including the learners' intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and cultural engagement. The data relating to intellectual engagement indicated that learners showed their attention and motivation when learning, held their curiosity, and challenged themselves, as stated by one of the teachers: "...when I am challenged and I feel that my work will lead to something else (B.Q., CPR Survey, 2021)." Socially and culturally, the opportunity for learners to connect to their prior experiences and share understanding with their peers and their teachers validated their learning. The connections to learning through experiences created joy, and built excitement and curiosity, as one teacher indicated in her response, "Joyful learning is when things are fun when I am able to make connections and apply them (C.L., CPR Survey, 2021)." The data indicated that flexible space and choices for learning activities brought learners joyful physical and emotional experiences. The agency for making choices of learning space and activities provided students the ownership of their learning environment and supported their interests.

### **Agency**

Based on PI<sup>4</sup> Framework, "agency" refers to "providing students from historically stereotyped subgroups the opportunity to see themselves in learning, be agents and owners of their learning experience, and to develop a self-affirming narrative we are able to reduce the

Table 6

*Codes and Definitions*


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Code	Definition	Frequency	Examples
Agency	Opportunities for learners to communicate, voice, and self-advocate their needs, their belief in self, and confidence; and make decisions and choices stay motivated and interested in learning activities and environment	17	"Chinese ELL with IEP so motivated to write to his pen pal, he was joyful during this assignment, felt challenging and useful" "When I learn something and am able to share it with others, that is joyful learning for me."
Participation	Learners are engaged in learning activities that are hands-on and product-based; that involve creativity, connect to prior knowledge and experiences, and allow learners to initiate, contribute and share their culture and understanding	19	"Joyful learning is when I am able to contribute to the group conversations, my voice is heard and valued." "maker space materials for students to create"
Connection	Learning engages learners to make connections to learning content, collaborate with peers and teachers and apply their learning	4	"Joyful learning is when things are fun when I am able to make connections and apply them."

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threat that can lead to student achievement gaps” (Tredway, et al., 2019). We can engage students in learning when we empower them by giving them agency, allowing them to participate in learning activities actively, and creating opportunities for students to connect with one another and their prior experiences.

What the CPR members considered joyful experiences highlighted the ownership of their learning, their voices being heard, and their contribution to learning activities. They reflected on personal experiences and their experience as teachers and recognized that joy comes from having choices such as flexible space and optional seating (the environment that is conducive to learning), and the books of their choice (see Table 7). The data showed 17 times that the teachers referred to their joyful learning experiences relating to voices and choices, specifically, in the area of being given the opportunity to share their learning and choose their learning activities. The CPR members shared that their students exhibited joy when they could make a choice on learning activities, select the space that best supported them, and when their “voices are heard and valued” (C.L. CPR Survey, 2021).

## **Participation**

Participation refers to the learners being actively involved in the learning activities. From the data, I noticed several responses related to the productivity and creativity of work. These examples included maker space, cookbooks, and scratch art. One CPR member described that one of her Chinese ELL students with an IEP was “so motivated to write to his pen pal that he was joyful during this assignment because he felt challenged and useful” (B.Q. Photo Scavenger Hunt, 2021). Another member shared that the students enjoyed their art project, and “kept talking about it and showing their friends” (S.C. Photo Scavenger Hunt, 2021). The creativity brought the students a sense of accomplishment and they felt proud to

Table 7

*Sample Codebook from Photo Scavenger Hunt, 2021*

Teacher's Explanation of their photo choices for joyful learning	First code	Second Code	Category
C.L. photos (Stitch, flexible seating - student choice, PBL presentation ideas)	Stitch, flexible seating - student choice, PBL presentation ideas	Agency - Choice (seating) Agency - student voice (ideas)	Engagement
- students have choice, what sparks their interest,	Student choice Student interest	Agency-Choice (activities)	Engagement
book bins - got series books that they wanted: DogMan and other Graphic novels, cart	Book choices	Agency - Choice (books)	Engagement
- maker space stuff	Maker space	Participation - Creativity	Engagement
- choice for when they are finished with their work,	Student choice	Agency -Choice (activity)	Engagement
Current math lesson - difficult but kids enjoy it,	Math lesson difficult enjoy	Rigor - Challenge	CLRP: Rigor
B.Q. IDEAS gallery - take kids to learn from it, love that we do this as a school,	IDEAS gallery Learn, Love, do	Equity - participation	CLRP: Equity
Ferdinand - read aloud by a student who has resisted reading, difficult yet manageable challenge,	Read aloud Resisted reading Difficult manageable challenge	Rigor - manageable challenge	CLRP: Rigor
my bookshelf - I try to represent all students, reading aloud to kids brings me joy,	Bookshelf Represent all students, read aloud joy	choice(books) teaching	CLRP: cultural representations



Table 7 (continued)

Teacher's Explanation of their photo choices for joyful learning	First code	Second Code	Category
PenPal letter - Chinese ELL with IEP so motivated to write to his pen pal, he was joyful during this assignment) challenging, useful	Pen Pal letter ELL, IEP motivated joyful challenging, useful	creativity, participation – rigor, relationship with peers	Engagement CLRP: Rigor Motivation
G.D. me out of felt - spur of the moment, show a connection,	Felt cut out of teacher by student	Relationship connection	Relationship
letters students have written to me - connection,	letters	Relationship connection	Relationship
cookbooks - connection with food, shows students personalities	Cookbooks, food, student personality	project/ product Connection to students and families	Engagement: participation connection to culture
Teacher L's bulletin board - humor and word play in kindergarten) connection	Student Bulletin board	connection, products, creativity	Participation
S.C. - art activity - kids were challenged with this activity, holiday spirit, perimeter project	Art projects, challenge,	Student product Relationship: Connection to culture,	Participation Relationship Rigor
- Student W. and Para W, scratch art	Scratch art	Student product	Participation
scratch art - seeing kids do this project, kids kept talking about it and showing their friends,	Scratch art Kept talking about it Showing their friends	Product Sharing creativity	Participation Relational trust

share with others. Participation made it possible to make connections to learning content and culture, collaborate with peers and teachers, and apply their understanding and knowledge to their new learning. For example, a teacher created a classroom library with books representing students' cultures. She enjoyed her experiences when she read aloud with her students using these books. Another teacher shared how much joy she felt when reading her students' letters. She found that connecting with her students built trusting and caring relationships. From their experiences as educators, the CPR members recognized that connecting with families helped them bridge the learning experiences of the students, especially the ELL students, and support them both at home and at school.

### **Leadership Reflection And Planning**

The process of leading the CPR team to further understand the meaning of the FoP was rewarding. I constantly reflected on my leadership development, discoveries, challenges, and mindset shifts. As an educational leader, I valued the collaboration with the CPR team members and the partnership of the other principals. Through the CLE meetings, I practiced facilitation skills with clear intention and process. One of the five CLE axioms states that people who are closest to the work are in the best place to find solutions to the problems (Guajardo, et al., 2016), and the CLE participants' insights helped me with a deeper understanding of joyful learning. To reflect on the research journey, I compartmentalized my learning experiences on discoveries, challenges, and mindset shifts.

### **Discoveries**

During the research, I made many discoveries that helped me to reframe the planning and design of PAR activities. As I learned that the PAR process is a continuously evolving process, I adjusted using the data to inform the next steps. As a researcher and a participant in

the research, I started with a set idea and expectation of how to find the answers to my questions. I soon realized that with every step, the original plan or agenda changed as the team carried out discussions and learned new knowledge. We found ourselves constantly reframing our ideas and concepts of what a culturally responsive practice looks like and revisiting and redefining the definition of joyful learning. I initially found it difficult to design an observation tool using CLRP practices when the level of understanding of the CLRP varied among the CPR members. We needed the time to design based on teacher responses slowly. The coding process taught me that we do not know what story our data will tell until we get there. As I coded data sets, I had challenges, and I changed the codes and the thinking intentionally to let the data tell the story.

### **Challenges**

Two of the most challenging aspects were the time to coordinate the CPR meetings and observations, and the meaning-making of joyful learning. Coming through the COVID pandemic, the CPR member had more demands on their time. All four CPR members took on various leadership roles at the school to support the curriculum shift and instructional reform, so the time commitment from each team member became challenging. As our collective stress increased, I carefully engaged the team in a gracious and collaborative space. The meaning-making process was rewarding to me.

### **Mindset Shifts**

I came into this research with an open mind. From the literature review to the CLE meetings, I have grown as a leader and as an educator. As I pushed myself to become an equity warrior, I started the journey of self-reflection and self-discovery. Being in education for 37 years, I have experienced many reforms and innovations. I consider myself an

innovator with a growth mindset. However, through the data collection process, I needed mindset shifts in two areas: what I knew versus what I learned, and what I planned versus what I needed to do.

In order to know how the teachers amplify joyful learning experiences, I knew I had to develop an observation tool to capture the learning experiences of the students. From the CLE meetings to CPR meetings, the principals and teachers spent considerable time discussing how to observe or measure joyfulness. From the dialogue, the CPR team came to recognize that in order to understand the student's learning experience, they needed to hear from the students. They needed to know what students felt about their work and their experience from their learning activities. The question was, how do you observe the experience? I have learned that we did not need to look for the students' experiences, but to look for the teachers' behaviors that affect the students' learning experiences. This realization was critical to my understanding.

One of the main activities I planned to do in the PAR Pre-Cycle was to work with the CPR team to develop an observation tool. The CPR team struggled with how to observe students' learning experiences and spent considerable time discussing the types of tools we could utilize to observe teachers' practices. After the observations, I planned to conduct post-observation conversations with the teachers to discuss the key evidence for the joyful learning experiences of the Chinese ELL students. Over time, we expected to see changed outcomes. Teachers need to keep the following questions in mind:

1. What are we noticing in the learning experiences in the classrooms?
2. What are we noticing about the Chinese ELLs in their learning?

It has been difficult to observe the students in one sitting on their joyfulness, but over time, what evidence will come through to show their joyfulness?

I found that getting to know CPR team members rewarding and creating a gracious space made people feel comfortable sharing. Each member was excited about the discoveries from reading and self-reflection. They recognized how valuable these learning experiences were in supporting them to become equity-minded and student-centered educators. My mindset shifted to acknowledge and accept that I needed to trust the research process.

### **Developing as a Practitioner-Researcher**

The writing process and organization process of the chapter were challenging. I found it difficult to decide how to narrow the focus on the categories. The emergent category surfaced when the data made sense. This was a learning process for me as a researcher. I had a better understanding of what joyful learning meant to educators through the process of analyzing the data. I learned how a concept emerged through multiple tries. When I did the first coding round, I highlighted the words that I thought were important. I found that I started to frame the ideas of what I should code and what were the possible categories. I often used the assumed categories to look for data that would fit into the category. After several iterations, I realized that each time I looked at the data, something new surfaced, and my codes did not make sense anymore. For instance, when I first tried to code the response, “I experience joyful learning when something that I previously did not know or understand suddenly clicked,” I wasn’t sure what to code. I decided the code should be “emotion, excitement.” After coding the rest of the response, I questioned what exactly this response was telling me. When learning makes sense to the students, what exactly is it connecting? I

realized that the joy is about understanding the content of the learning materials, so I recorded it as a “connection to content.”

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I described the PAR Pre-Cycle, starting with the research context, including the description of the history, demographics, and sociological-historical aspects where the study took place. I, then, shared the research process and the activities I conducted. From the data collection, I organized the most frequently surfaced codes: agency, participation, and connection, which led to the emergent category: engagement. From my leadership reflection, I shared the rewarding experience of collaborating with the CPR team and my discoveries, challenges, and mindset shifts throughout the research process.

I consider the research process a learning process from both my experience as a researcher and an educator. I plan to build on the learning from the PAR Pre-Cycle to design PAR Cycle One activities. I need to review the codes I used for the evidence I collected and will collect to make sense of what might be the emergent categories and the emergent themes of joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELL students.

## **CHAPTER 5: PAR CYCLE ONE**

In Chapter 5, I drew on what we learned as a result of the PAR Pre-Cycle and used our preliminary data analysis to design learning activities for the CPR team, develop iterations of an observation tool, and identify strategies that could amplify the joyful learning experiences of Chinese English Language Learners (EL). In this chapter, I share how I engaged the CPR members through Community Learning Exchange (CLE) processes, reflection, and observations of and conversations about practices to understand the emergent themes. The CPR members studied culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies and shared their professional growth in connection to the instructional practices supporting the EL students' learning experiences and joy as learners. After I discuss the emergent themes, I share my leadership reflection on how I centered my research using the Community Learning Exchange (CLE) axioms to ground my work.

### **PAR Cycle One Process**

As the CPR team developed a deeper understanding of what brings joy to their students and how to uplift their learning experiences, we recognized the importance of understanding ourselves, our identities as learners and educators, as well as the purpose and the responsibilities we hold to nurture the joy of learning of our students. I launched PAR Cycle One with a CLE meeting to engage the CPR team members in reviewing the categories and quotes from the literature review. The team revisited the culturally responsive pedagogies in relation to Chinese cultural beliefs and discussed the emergent categories from the data collected during the Pre-Cycle, focusing on joyful learning experiences. We designed and revised the observation tool throughout the cycle to determine ways of measuring the professional growth of teaching and amplifying the joyful learning experiences of Chinese EL students.

## **Key Activities**

During PAR Cycle One, I conducted two CLE meetings, two CPR team meetings, and three rounds of classroom observations and group conversations (n=11). In each CLE meeting, I designed the agenda based on the objectives of amplifying joyful learning. I centered all activities on the theory of action that building teacher knowledge and capacity in implementing culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese EL would transfer to teachers' classroom practices. The key agenda components for both CLE and CPR meetings included dynamic mindfulness, personal narratives, key learning activities, data triangulation, and reflection. Each meeting included opportunities for team members to connect to self-identity, reflect on their cultural beliefs and practices, discuss culturally and linguistically responsive practices, and synthesize selected excerpts of research articles. I conducted three rounds of teaching observations of the CPR team members, coded the observation notes, and analyzed the data. Then I had group conversations about the evidence. I discuss the data analysis and emergent themes drawn from the categories. The PAR Cycle One activities and data reflect the meeting dates, activities, and data collection (see Table 8).

## ***Community Learning Exchanges***

I pre-scheduled the CLEs and CPR meetings to secure the time for the team to meet. I continued to build relationships with the team members and study their learning experiences, purposely designing the meetings with opportunities for teachers to connect to their cultures, identities, experiences, and belief systems to identify key teaching practices and strategies that support Chinese EL students. The CLE meetings included personal narratives, literature review and reflection, data review and member checks, and research activities. From each activity, I analyzed the members' understanding of research-based pedagogies and theories.



Table 8

*Chart of PAR Cycle One Activities and Data Collection Activities*

Meetings	Date	Activities	Data Collected
CLE Meeting	September 2, 2022 *(n=9 persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Narrative</li> <li>• Lit Review: Joyful learning, Chinese EL, Neuroscience</li> <li>• CLRP Framing</li> <li>• Observation Tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda</li> <li>• Meeting Notes</li> <li>• Group Reflections</li> <li>• Reflective Memo</li> <li>• Observation tool</li> </ul>
Observations Round 1	September 29, 2022 (n=12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLRP Joyful Learning Observations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selective Verbatim Observation Data</li> <li>• Debrief note</li> </ul>
CLE Meeting	September 29, 2022 (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation Tools Reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLRP Observation Tools modification notes</li> </ul>
Observations Round 2	October 18, 2022 (n=3) October 19, 2022 (n=1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLRP Joyful Learning Observations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selective Verbatim Observation Data</li> <li>• Reflective Memo</li> </ul>
CPR Meeting	October 25, 2022 (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Narrative</li> <li>• Lit Review Reflection</li> <li>• Observation Reflection and Discussion on EL Strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda</li> <li>• Field Notes</li> <li>• Group reflections</li> <li>• Reflective Memo</li> </ul>
Observations Round 3	November 18, 2022 (n=3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLRP Joyful Learning Observations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selective Verbatim Observation Data</li> <li>• Reflective Mem</li> </ul>
CPR Meeting	December 7, 2022 (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Narrative</li> <li>• Member check on data</li> <li>• Reflection on Culture Shock</li> <li>• CLRP Strategies TPS vs TT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda</li> <li>• Artifacts</li> <li>• Meeting Notes</li> <li>• Group Reflections</li> <li>• Reflective Memo</li> </ul>

**Personal Narratives.** I selected literature excerpts relevant to the topics of the research and reflective questions for each CPR and CLE meeting to understand how CPR members connected their personal experiences, their views of culturally responsive pedagogies, and their practices. Each member had the opportunity to connect with others and to self-reflect on their effectiveness in validating, affirming, building, and bridging their cultural responsiveness in their daily practices.

For example, one personal narrative activity centered on a family table and what the table signified. The participants' stories were all different; however, each story reflected family traditions, cultures, and values. The *table* was the space where families and relatives gathered, "where we shared our joys and sorrows, our trials and our achievements, and accepted and loved each other for who we are" (G.D., CLE meeting notes, September 2, 2022). I designed this activity to activate the members' prior knowledge and cultural experiences that they would then use to cultivate a similar space in their classroom where students would feel a sense of togetherness and sense of belonging (see Table 9).

**Literature Review and Reflection.** I used selected quotes or articles from the literature review that were relevant to the research to design this activity as a space for facilitated learning. From the team members' reflections and class observations, I recognized that each had different approaches to teaching Chinese ELs and various levels of understanding culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies (CLRP). Thus, I realized that I needed to guide the members to a more comprehensive understanding what CLRP strategies or practices could amplify Chinese ELLs' joyfulness in learning; and, further, to show the teachers how to develop their metacognitive skills and cultural competencies in order to select and use the strategies successfully. I modeled paying attention to the learning style and level of each adult individual.

Table 9

*Personal Narrative: Childhood or Youth That Was Important to You, CLE 9.2.22*

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Category	Example	Code
Sense of Belonging	This is where we shared our joys and sorrows, our trials and our achievements, and accepted and loved each other for who we are. (G.D.)	emotion: joy, sorrow sharing successes sense of belonging
Culture	... the table for offerings to our ancestors, We still use some form of a table now and pass on this tradition to younger generations. (C.L.)	ancestors tradition generations
Culture	We were required to sit down at the dinner table every night. Everyone had an unspoken assigned seat...the table was used for doing homework, at-home science experiments, or just a place to put the mail. (S.C.)	Expectation: required, unspoken assigned seat function: doing homework, science experiments, the mail
Sense of Belonging	It (the table) sat in the tiny kitchen and we all gathered there for meals, for conversations, for homework. It meant we were only inches from each other. (B.Q.)	family tie/community: gather conversations, homework, closeness: inches from each other
Sense of Belonging	My table is round and often filled with chocolate and love... A space for laughter and worries Where children are gathered to share their curiosity, where grownups seek resources and joy that children bring (M.K.)	Emotion: chocolate and love, laughter and worries family tie/community Sharing experience: curiosity, resources and joy

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We focused our discussions and conversations on our cultural belief systems and knowledge of CLRP in connection to research-based studies on joyful learning, CLRP, and Chinese ELs. The teachers shared their teaching experiences and potential strategies to build positive learning experiences for their EL students and synthesize their understanding of the cited research studies.

**Data Review and Member Check.** I shared research progress and data with the team members to ensure the accuracy of the data I collected from meeting notes, field notes, reflections, and class observations. We reviewed the information and validated what they had learned, discovered, and changed in their practices. In addition, we used the CLE space to share their self-observations of teaching Chinese EL students—the successes, challenges, suggestions, and feedback.

**Research Activities.** I followed the PAR Cycle One research schedule to conduct activities, including reviewing and modifying the Observation Tool, selecting EL strategies, collecting data on how teachers used these strategies to amplify EL’s joyful learning experiences, and assessing whether these strategies are culturally responsive (see Table 10). Following each observation, we discussed the evidence and specific strategies, such as the think time in Think-Pair-Share, bordering for activity transitions, and other strategies, to be more intentional.

#### ***Co-Practitioner Researcher (CPR) Meetings***

Similar to the CLE meetings, I designed CPR meetings for teachers to learn what data surfaced from the observations and what strategies we needed to discuss. In each CPR meeting, I also included a personal narrative. During the first CPR meeting, I asked the teachers to reflect on things that happened in their classrooms that day that brought them joy. The CPR members shared that they found it rewarding when they saw the success of their students, the “a-ha”

Table 10

*Codebook: Teacher Reflection & Classroom Observation*

Theme	Category	Code	Context of quote	Activity Source/ Data Source	Frequency	Examples/Quote
Student Agency	Student Empowerment	Opportunity to Share	C.L. Reflected on building joyful learning of Chinese EL student	10/25/22 CPR meeting teacher reflection on strategies used to teach EL and noticeable change on practices	44	When asking about what they want to write about for their PBL project, (EL Students) they want to share about their foods and what they do.
Student Agency	Student Empowerment	self-advocacy	CPR Team discussion on strategies that support EL	12.7.22 CPR meeting notes on strategies that support/things to look at in Observations	12	Students' feedback on learning
CLRP	Teacher Disposition	Push student cognitive load	C.L. Reflected on building joyful learning of Chinese EL student	10/25/22 CPR meeting teacher reflection on strategies used to teach EL and noticeable change on practices	42	When asking about what they want to write about for their PBL project... Because they are experts in the topic, they are very comfortable in writing about it. The students have a lot to say and write about.
CLRP	Accessibility to learning	Peer support,	B.Q. Reflected on building joyful learning of Chinese newcomer student	10/25/22 CPR meeting teacher reflection on strategies used to teach EL and noticeable change on practices	51	My student who is brand new to the country with no English knowledge (doesn't even know letter names or sounds yet) needed to be involved in a math activity. So I had him choose the numbers and his two partners wrote a multiplication story.

Table 10 (continued)

Theme	Category	Code	Context of quote	Activity Source/ Data Source	Frequency	Examples/Quote
Sense of Belonging	Relationship	Student to Student	G.D. Response on what brings joy to her as a teacher	10/25/22 CPR meeting teacher reflection on strategies used to teach EL and noticeable change on practices	14	Seeing the kids genuinely care and try to help a friend struggling in and out of the classroom.
Sense of Belonging	Relationship	Student to Teacher	S.C. Reflect on joy from this week's teaching	12.7.22 CPR Meeting - Think about one or two things today that brought you joy.	27	Connecting more with my students. I didn't realize they wanted to know me that well
CLRP	Teachers' Disposition	Push Cognitive Load	Observations - G.D. asking students ways they can compare sizes using different references	Classroom observations: Teachers have students carry the cognitive load to think deeper or extending their answers	42	G.D.: Why did you use eraser (to reference the measurement)? G.D.: How do you know? G.D.: What evidence do you have?
Student Agency	Choice & Student Empowerment	Flexible Environment Opportunity to share (student voice)	Students' seating & space options; showing understanding: graphs, or visual drawings; and choosing student partners...	Classroom observations/field notes: Students have choices on choosing partners, space to work, or ways to show their understanding; self-advocacy and self-efficacy	13 44	-Students move into different spaces in the room for independent work and/or group work -Student passing the mic around to another student to answer questions

Table 10 (continued)

Theme	Category	Code	Context of quote	Activity Source/ Data Source	Frequency	Examples/Quote
CLRP	Accessibility to Content	EL Strategies: <i>Proximity, Think-Pair-Share, Scaffolding</i>	Teachers' direct support to EL students using strategies.	Classroom observations/field notes: Teachers provided direct support to individual students (Mostly ELs in their classrooms) in close proximity, create wait-time for TPS, scaffold with materials, tools	94	Teachers lean in to support students, checking for understanding, giving feedback, or modeling steps to solve a math problem, such as when the students creating math stories, B.Q. monitoring the newcomer student's work to ensure he understood the task.
CLRP	Accessibility to Content	Give feedback	Teachers monitored students' work and gave them feedback on their work	From classroom observations: Teachers offered individual feedback on students' work	14	G.D.: I like how you are on task. I am glad. Are you letting your group know (your answer)? B.Q.: Don't be afraid to make different trees. B.Q.: I want to see perspective. That's ok. That's why we practice.

moments when students worked through a learning task with joy, and when students were able to transition from task to task smoothly (Field notes, CPR meeting, October 25, 2022). These reflections elevated the awareness of their practices that would bring joy to their students, especially EL students. The teachers were able to design effective learning activities, protocols, and support for EL students when they understood how to amplify the joyfulness of their students. CPR member B.Q. reflected that the awareness of inclusive practices helped her to put peer support in place so that one of her newcomer students from China could participate in learning activities and experience more success. She shared that, “I need to teach my other students how to give ELs a role during group assignments. We need a poster for questions we can ask and ways to use supports so all are included” (CPR Meeting October 25, 2022). Other agendas of the CPR meetings included discussions on observations and post-observation debriefs, review of CLRP EL strategies, and reflections on learning.

**Observations.** My goal was to understand what each CPR member did in their daily practice that would amplify Chinese EL students’ joyful experiences; therefore, I engaged the team members in reviewing the CLRP Framework and determining what were the observable practices or strategies for our observation tool. During each CPR meeting, we shared our understanding of CLRP strategies and revised the observation tool. Using the tool (see Appendix K), I conducted three rounds of observations.

During the first round of observations, I was joined by other principals and a dissertation adviser. We observed the teachers, and then calibrated our observations and data. One component from the tool clearly surfaced as missing: bordering, the process of students transitioning to a different activity. We observed that effective bordering required the teachers to give explicit and clear directions or steps to students. I shared the observation debrief with the



team in the subsequent CPR meeting and added the code for the other two rounds of observations.

During PAR Pre-Cycle, I planned to meet with every CPR member after the observations. However, due to time restraints and my job change, I had to shift the individual post-observation conversation to a group debrief. I shared my noticing and engaged the team members on EL strategies highlighted on the observation tool. We had the opportunity to synthesize the data and discuss how to use some of the strategies effectively. I embed some of the examples in the data analysis under emergent themes.

**Strategy Discussions.** Three of the four CPR members are Asian, one born in the Philippines, two born in the US from immigrant families came from Vietnam and China. They shared their learning experiences and what brought them joy as learners. We discussed the elements they considered important and culturally responsive in building the learning environment and creating experiences that are joyful for their Chinese EL students. We reflected on the observations we conducted and further discussed if these strategies would amplify students' learning experiences. For example, when we observed teachers using the strategy Think-Pair-Share (TPS), we noticed that teachers did not give think time; specifically, teachers did not set a clear protocol for students on how to engage in TPS. Generally, students chatted with a partner and shared when called; however, we determined that use of TPS needed to be more intentional (Lyman et al., In press). The conversations about strategies were engaging and collaborative. The primary strategies included four key areas: student dialogue, student agency/choice, nonverbal cues (smile, lean in, proximity) from the teachers, and teacher reinforcement. Beyond the strategies on the observation tool, we discussed strategies that surfaced from the reflections, personal narratives, field notes, and meeting notes from CPR

meetings. The most noted strategies include relationships, EL support, and connections to learning content.

**Reflection.** Reflection was a key component of the research. I coded reflection notes from the team members to understand their experiences and their thoughts. I believed that if teachers knew what specific strategies they could employ, they could create a joyful learning environment. We connected our personal experiences as learners to identify the elements that sparked joy and reflected on our own teaching practices to see how to spark joy from the students. As Hammond (2015) pointed out, a safe and joyful learning environment supports students' ability to process information and retain information at a higher level. The emotional brain determines how students engage in their learning. One teacher reflected that "Designing learning activities to be fun and accessible then, would, in theory, lead to happier, more engaged students and better absorption of knowledge and increased retention of knowledge" (G.D., CLE, September 9, 2022).

Chinese EL students need to feel a sense of belonging and support to access learning content. As the teachers continued to build their understanding of culturally responsive teaching, we reflected on strategies to elevate the joyfulness of learning in their classrooms. From the reflections, I evaluated the progress of our learning and collaborated with each CPR member to analyze the effectiveness of the strategies for further implementation.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis Process***

In order to fully understand how teachers amplify Chinese EL students' joyful learning experiences and what CLRP strategies they employ to do so, I collected data from these sources: CPR members' reflections on their teaching practices, research literature, field notes, collaborative learning with colleagues, and classroom observations. I used *In Vivo* coding

method to analyze the teachers' reflections. I used both inductive and deductive coding approaches to code the reflections and the observation data for emergent categories and themes. "Coding is a cyclical process" (Saldaña, p. 38, 2016). Through multiple coding and recoding cycles, I found myself reevaluating the codes continuously until they made sense to me. This process helped me to gain a better understanding of what joyful learning meant to each participant. I was able to draw the emergent categories and themes from the collected data sets (see Table 10).

Vygotsky (1998), Nachmanovitch (1990), and Anggoro et al. (2017) characterized joyful learning as what learners may experience, play, interact, discover, and use to problem-solve. These attributes of joyful learning aligned with the data. Hammond (2015) affirmed that neuroscience research indicates that a safe and joyful learning environment directly affects information processing, the memory system, and the brain's ability to receive or shut down information. With that in mind, I wanted to find out what the CPR team considered joyful in learning experiences and what strategies they would select to bring the learning experiences that were joyful to their Chinese ELs. The responses from teachers' reflections showed the most frequent codes leading to the emergent themes are student agency, sense of belonging, and culturally and linguistically responsive practice. The emergent themes from the classroom observations were similar to the emergent themes from the teachers' reflections.

### **Emergent Themes**

In this section, I discuss the data analysis and emergent themes drawn from the emergent categories. In the PAR Pre-Cycle, I shared the emergent category of engagement. From the data collected in PAR Cycle One and through multiple coding processes, I reorganized the initial data categories to make sense of what themes were emerging from these codes. From the two key sets

experiences. I used the observation tool the CPR team co-designed to observe their classes and conducted group post-observation debriefs to discuss patterns and observations in the areas of strategies and practices that contribute to EL students' joyful learning experiences.

Since the majority of EL students in the classes were Chinese ELs, I simply refer to them as ELs. I coded and analyzed the verbatim observation notes, the reflective responses from the CPR members and field notes from the CPR and CLE meetings to determine the categories and emergent themes: student agency, sense of belonging, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices (CLRP) (see Figure 12). I collectively added the opportunities and frequency column to show how the codes surfaced in each emergent category (see Figure 12). Some numbers reflected the frequencies of student actions, such as 44 instances for the opportunities to share, while some of the numbers only reflected the opportunities that the teachers gave to the students when all students participated, such as 13 instances for flexible environment. Since all students had the opportunity to choose their seating and space for their independent work or group work, I counted each setting as one, rather than the number of students who had the option.

I created the pie chart to illustrate the frequency percentage of each code in relationship to other codes related to how teachers created various opportunities and utilized strategies to amplify joyful learning experience for EL students, (see Figure 13). I now discuss and explain how my codes led to the emergent categories and then the emergent themes.

### **Student Agency**

The emergent theme, student agency, referred to opportunities for students to communicate, voice, and self-advocate for their needs, build self-confidence, and make decisions and choices to stay motivated and interested in learning activities and environment. Student

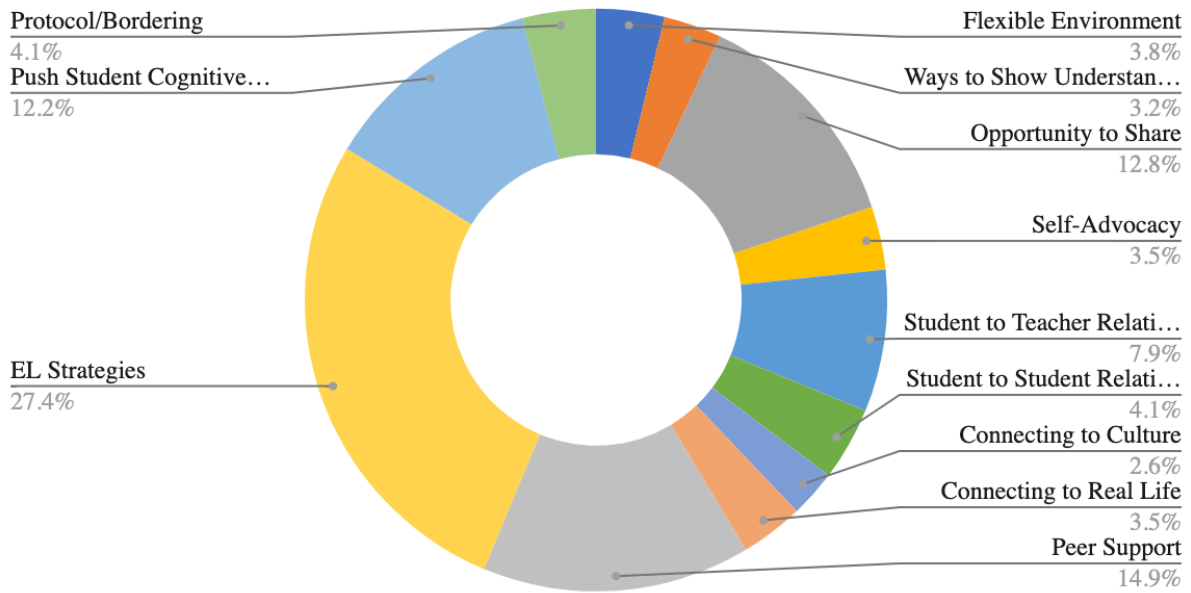
## Joyful Learning Emergent Themes Data Organization

Emergent Themes	Emergent Categories	Codes	Opportunity - Frequency
Student Agency	1. Student Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible Environment</li> <li>Ways to show understanding</li> </ul>	13 11
	2. Student Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to Share</li> <li>Self-Advocacy</li> </ul>	44 12
Sense of Belonging	1. Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student to teacher relationship</li> <li>Student to student relationship</li> </ul>	27 14
	2. Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connection to Culture</li> <li>Connection to Real World</li> </ul>	9 12
CLRP	1. Accessibility to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer Support</li> <li>EL Strategies</li> </ul>	51 94
	2. Teacher Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Push Cognitive Load</li> <li>Bordering</li> </ul>	42 14

*Figure 12. Chinese ELL students: Joyful learning emergent themes, Fall 2022.*

## Codes & Frequency of Observable Evidence

Kasner PAR Cycle One Data - Fall 2022



*Figure 13.* Codes and frequency of observable evidence, PAR Cycle One, Fall 2022.

agency is critical for EL students to build confidence become independent learners. According to Hammond (2015), empowering students is one way to interrupt the teaching practices that prevent our students from becoming independent learners. To support students' neuron development, we need to create a learning environment that encourages students to tackle problems and make their own decisions. Under this emergent theme, I organized the codes into two key emergent categories: Student Choice and Student Empowerment.

### *Student Choice*

CPR teachers empower students with agency when they embedding various opportunities or create a classroom environment for EL students to make choices that they believe were the best for them. Examples of agency are giving students the ability to choose seating, especially during independent work sessions; choosing partners; and choosing the presentation mode that best supports their learning and showcases their work. From the observations and teacher reflections, flexible environment and ways to show understanding surfaced most frequently. From 11 classroom observations, I identified 24 opportunities where students could make an independent choice.

**Flexible Environment.** In a flexible environment, students can choose their learning space, materials to use for their group work, and seating options or spaces during their independent work. The data for this code indicated a total of 13 opportunities in 11 out of 11 observed classes, which showed all students had opportunities to be in an environment that was supportive to their learning. In every class, students had the ability to choose their space to work at a table, on the floor, or in the class library. For example, some students used the classroom library space to read while others were reading on their laptops sitting on the floor with their lap

desk. When students transitioned from activity to activity, they needed limited direction from their teachers and knew their choices (Field notes, October 18, 2023).

**Ways to Show Understanding.** Students had options on how to show their understanding, including what mode they chose to present their learning. For example, for the biography PBL project in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classes, students independently chose the person who most inspired them, the media in which to present their learning, and the books to read for their research. For the Culture and Tradition project, one teacher shared that her EL students found joy in sharing about their cultures and traditions (C.L., CPR meeting, October 25, 2022). From the observations, this code showed up 11 times from the teachers' direct instruction to students on ways they could demonstrate their understanding. In one example, students in B.Q.'s class were working on group posters to show a multiplication word problem, and each group chose one way or multiple ways to illustrate how they could solve the problem. Then, B.Q. encouraged the groups who had only used one illustration to think about using multiple ways to show their understanding. Some students chose to use a visual solution, making a drawing to show how they created multiple groups of symbols (5 groups of apples with 6 in each group), and some chose to use equations ( $5 \times 6$ ). Not only did students have the choice of ways to show their work, they engaged with their peers to discuss their thinking and mathematical reasoning. I coded this experience under student choice, recognizing that choice is connected to student empowerment.

### ***Student Empowerment***

Student empowerment specifically refers to the opportunities that teachers intentionally create for students to share their knowledge, understanding, experiences, cultures, and ideas. Our school district recognized that students needed to develop 4 sets of social emotional learning competency skills. Self-efficacy is one of the skills that “reflects confidence in the ability to exert



control over one's motivation, behavior, and environment and allows students to become advocates for their own needs and supports” (<https://transformingeducation.org/resources/introduction-to-self-efficacy/>, 2020). When students have opportunities to self-advocate and have a voice or choice, they develop self-efficacy skills. CPR members shared that when students enjoyed talking to their peers about their thinking, they could “bring a lot of themselves into their learning” (G.D., CPR meeting, October 25, 2022). Students could contribute their ideas, experiences, and knowledge to their conversations and their work. Meanwhile, students validated their understanding by discussing their opinions of the learning content with their peers. From the observations, students had 44 opportunities (12.8% of the total coded evidence) to offer their insights independently and feel a sense of accomplishment. When teachers used strategies such as think-pair-share (TPS), turn & talk, or call to respond and partner work, they created more opportunities for sharing.

**Opportunity to Share.** Lyman et al. (In press) stated that “students’ thinking is best supported by their talking with each other to verbalize their insights, listen to ideas from peers, and encode information” (p. 124). When students share their learning and talk about their learning with their peers or with their teacher, they are better able to process that information and conceptualize the content. EL students can benefit from practicing their language acquisition when communicating with others. Through verbalizing their learning, the students build their agency in developing confidence and self-efficacy. For example, during the October 19th observation in G. D.’s class, students were adding coin value to \$1.00. Every group of students was busy with spinning paper wheels, chatting about the correlating coins they had, and recording the results to their tally sheets. One student was checking on his EL partner to make sure that he recorded his work accurately and subsequently offered him a thumb up.

In each class observation, all four teachers gave students the opportunity to share their thinking and understanding, either with their group or the whole class, which included the times when students responded to teachers' questions, opportunities working with their tablemates, sharing their thinking during think-pair-share and turn and talk time, and time to collaborate with their partners during their math lesson. When all students were doing partner work, I counted the frequency for opportunity to share as one time.

**Self-Advocacy.** Self-advocacy is the ability to initiate conversations with peers and express one's interests and points of view. As a result, the student can develop independence as a learner and be more self-directed. When a newcomer Chinese EL student without any knowledge of English joined one of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes, his teacher, B.Q., tried to connect with him and support him. She created multiple opportunities for the student to access the learning content and participate in class work. The student did not open up and communicate with B.Q. or his peers for a few weeks, and he was reluctant to participate in many activities; however, when he was able to use Google Translate to help with conversations and activity directions, he and the teacher were both delighted. He was a step closer to independence as a learner. In addition, I coded evidence under self-advocacy when students asked clarifying questions, gave suggestions, or advocated for an activity. When G.D. read a story about a girl who won the spelling bee and felt very nervous, one of her students suggested to do belly breathing with the class at that moment.

In Table 11, I emphasize the key components of developing student agency by examining the number of times students had opportunities to develop as independent learners through creating flexible environments, show understanding, share with each other or teacher, and self-advocate. In seven of the sixteen coded instances, teachers offered opportunities for student

Table 11

*Percentage of Opportunities in Classroom Observations for Student Participation*

Code	Opportunities (Teacher Action)	% of opportunities in 11 Observations	Frequency (Student Action)	Evidence
Flexible Environment – Choices	11	100%	13	in all classes, students have choice with seating and space
Ways To Show Understanding	10	91%	11	Students can show their mathematic thinking and understanding in different ways: use visual representation, words, equations, verbal explanations, and games
Opportunity To Share	11	100%	44	Think-Pair-Share, Turn & Talk, call to respond, share out, show work to partner, collaborate with peers on group project
Self-Advocacy - Voice	11	100%	12	Students work independently, in group and share their thinking and ask questions
Student To Teacher Relationship: Using Names	11	100%	<b>27</b>	Teachers use student names, acknowledge students,
Student To Student Relationship	7	64%	9	share learning with peers, supporting and interacting with peers, work in collaboration with peers, cheer for peers
Connecting To Culture	4	36%	9	PBL projects: share cultures, interview families,

Table 11 (continued)

Code	Opportunities (Teacher Action)	% of opportunities in 11 Observations	Frequency (Student Action)	Evidence
Connecting To Real Life	10	91%	12	use real life examples, references, and realia, experience, etc.
Peer Support: Direct Support	7	64%	<b>30</b>	Support EL students by providing translation, help with directions, or sharing their examples, checking for understanding, etc.
Peer Support: Partner Work/ Group Work	11	100%	21	Students work with partners or in groups to share their understanding, to collaborate on group work, to support each other or to give feedback
EL Strategies: Scaffolding/ Modeling	11	100%	18	Use strategies to support learning, such as, visual, modeling steps, vocabulary list, translation,
El Strategies: Proximity	10	91%	<b>70</b>	Lean in to check for students' understanding, push thinking, asking for clarification, etc.
EL Strategies: Think Time/Wait Time	6	55%	6	Give students time to think before responding or sharing their understanding
Push Student Cognitive Load	10	91%	<b>42</b>	Ask students to do the thinking and push for deeper level of responses
Protocol/ Bordering	10	91%	14	Give clear directions and set guidance/expectations for activities
Teacher Give Feedback	11	100%	14	Teachers monitored students' work and gave them feedback on their work

agency in 100% of the coded instances and in five of the sixteen, or 91%. A key area for improving was connecting to culture (36%); however, teachers offered multiple student opportunities for developing agency with a range of 55%-100% of the time. These opportunities were fortified by the ways in which a student felt a sense of belonging in the classroom.

### **Sense of Belonging**

As EL students immerse themselves into schools with new cultures and new languages, their learning experiences are different from a student whose first language is the dominant language and who is familiar with dominant culture. According to Pawlak et al., (2003) our emotions and feelings have a dominant influence on the ways our brains process the information we receive. The limbic system of the brain is involved as we process information and stress, and the amygdala controls the cognitive and affective signals. To reach the cognitive level of learning, EL students need to feel a sense of joy and a sense of belonging so that their brains can process the information they receive. When learners are stressed, the amygdala is sending anxiety signals and interrupting cognition (Hammond, 2015; Steele, 2010). In the data I collected, the sense of belonging and inclusivity in schools appeared as two key emergent categories: Relationship and Connection.

### ***Relationship with Students and Among Students***

Students' sense of belonging influences their emotions and well-being. A sense of belonging correlates to the quality of the relationship students has with peers and teachers (Murphy, 2018). English Language learners who do not know the dominant language and culture face barriers that keep them from fully understanding instructions, and that make it difficult to navigate their learning throughout each day. When students feel a sense of belonging, they can devote their full cognitive attention to learning. Based on the data, teachers' building

relationships with students was essential. The CPR team shared various examples that highlighted the relationship between teachers and students and between students and students in their classes.

**Student to Teacher.** The relationship between students and teachers are often two directional which means that when teachers try to get to know their students, their students are simultaneously learning about them as teachers. Teachers acknowledged that getting to know their students was the first step in understanding how to teach the students. C.L. shared that her students were happy when they knew that their teacher wanted to know more about them (CPR Meeting, October 25, 2022). Meanwhile, S.C. shared that she did not realize that her students wanted to know more about her. This experience encouraged her to make more of an effort to share about herself to build their relationship.

From the classroom observations, the evidence indicated each teacher had a relationship or an interaction during instruction. Teachers used student names when calling on them to respond to questions, referred to their work when showing examples to the class, acknowledged students for their effort, and gave positive praises and encouragements. This code showed up in every class and collectively 27 times (7.9% of total data in Figure 11), the highest frequency in this emergent theme.

**Student to Student.** The caring environment and the relationship EL students had with their peers were essential for them to feel confident and happy. Teachers noticed that EL students had more agency and enjoyed interacting with others when they had close relationships with their classmates, especially new EL students. I observed evidence of this when I saw how one EL student was working with his tablemates doing a math activity of drawing perspectives (Observation notes, November 8, 2022). He showed his peers how he drew the trees from near-

to-far, and from big-to-small. In all classes, students enjoyed interacting with their peers; there were many conversations and excitement. I coded the opportunities that teachers gave for students to support each other or share their work. As G.D. reported, the relationships among students made her proud; she was happy to see “the kids genuinely care and try to help a friend struggling in and out of the classroom” (G.D., Meeting notes, October 25, 2022).

### ***Connection***

By making connection to students’ culture and experience, the teachers found that the EL students were more engaged in their learning and shared their knowledge and stories; however, as indicated in the data, this is an area of improvement for teachers that I would need to concentrate on more in observations. Hammond (2015) pointed out that culture guides how we process information and offers an opportunity for students to make more meaningful contributions to discussions and activities. CPR team members shared how cultural connections and real-world connections contributed to joyful learning experiences from twelve real-world connections that the teachers offered students for their PBL projects and the nine opportunities for cultural linkages that they established during their instructional sessions.

**Connection to Culture.** Teachers shared their personal experiences on the importance of understanding their cultures and the biases they hold; G.D. shared that she needed to create more for her students: “Opportunities to share beliefs, traditions, cultures, experiences; opportunities to tie that into learning” (CPR Meeting notes, October 25, 2022). Teachers recognized that they need to have clear intention to acknowledge students’ cultures and create opportunities for students to connect to their cultures when they design instructional activities.

**Connection to Real World.** Based on the data, teachers connected real world content for students to process new learnings. They engaged students with learning activities that required

the students to share prior knowledge and give real life examples to problem-solve. In G.D.'s 2<sup>nd</sup> grade math lesson about measurement, she used shoes as an example to compare the sizes between hers and one of her student's; then students chose a prop to explain their mathematical thinking. One student shared that her 8" ruler is 2 and ½ erasers long because she knew that each eraser is about 3" long. The teachers encouraged students to collaborate with peers and or teachers. "Joyful learning is when things are fun, when I am able to make connections and apply them" (S.C., Meeting notes, December 2, 2022). In implementing the Culture and Tradition PBL project, the students interviewed family members and contributed their stories and traditions to their projects.

### **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices**

Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices help teachers make better educational decisions for eliciting, involving, motivating, sustaining, and increasing the intellectual ability of ALL of our students (Hammond, 2015). During the PAR Pre-Cycle and PAR Cycle One, the CPR team reviewed culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies (CLRP) using the Project I<sup>4</sup> Equity Framework (Tredway et al., 2019). Each member reflected on their understanding of the pedagogies and practices. G.D. shared that as they continued to improve their teaching toward more culturally responsive teaching, they “started with more diverse books with diverse perspectives, having our families and communities share their personal cultures, traditions, experiences, etc.” (Meeting notes, October 25, 2022).

Based on the data, several practices surfaced in using CLRP. To ensure that EL students have equitable access to learning content and learning activities, the teachers created peer support systems in their classes and employed EL strategies. As the teachers became more mindful of the challenges the EL students encountered, their dispositions and demand for rigor



indicated a higher level of expectation for students. In the data table (see Table 11) and the data chart (see Figure 12), three out of four codes I used for this emergent theme had the highest percentage of frequency in comparison to the other codes. EL strategies indicated a frequency of 94 times or 27.4% of the data. The other two high frequency codes for accessibility to learning content are peer support with 14.9% and push student cognitive load with 12.2%.

### ***Accessibility to Learning Content***

Accessibility to learning content refers to the support and strategies teachers put in place to ensure the EL students have equitable access to learning opportunities. From the observations and reflective conversations with the CPR team, peer support and EL strategies surfaced frequently. Even though teachers were familiar with many of the strategies, we discussed what teachers needed to do to increase their effectiveness. The team shared their practices and collaborated on ways to build positive learning experiences for their students.

**Peer Support.** Due to language barriers, EL students faced the difficulty of fully understanding the teachers' direct instructions, following activity guides, and doing independent work. EL students often relied on their peers' support to access their learning. G.D. shared how wonderful it was to see "the kids genuinely care and try to help a friend struggling in and out of the classroom" (CPR meeting notes, October 25, 2022). Often, the teachers paired the EL students with someone who shared the same home language so they could provide support to the EL students or be a partner for group work. With partner/peer support, the EL students did not need to wait for their teacher's help. B.Q. shared that with the support of other students to translate directions or by using iPad Google Translate, her EL students were more actively engaged in learning activities (CPR meeting notes, December 7, 2022). She shared that her students willingly partnered with classmates. Meanwhile, in all four classrooms, teachers created

many opportunities for students to work with others through think-pair-share, turn and talk, partner work, and group activity. The EL students in all these classes had access to learning content with the support of their peers.

**EL Strategies.** The CPR team used several CLRP EL strategies to study the effectiveness in supporting EL students' learning. We included think-pair-share (TPS) in our observation tool, a reliable and tested strategy for incorporating think time and supporting student thinking before engaging with a peer. All CPR team members use this common strategy, but being clear about the steps of the process and the learning theory that supports verbal processing with a peer was critical (Lyman et al., In press). From the observations, I noticed that teachers were choosing turn and talk or think-pair-share but, in most cases, teachers were not allowing adequate thinking time before they directed the students to share with partners. For EL students, according to Lyman et al. (In press), "teachers need to fully understand *why* they are choosing instructional strategies that support inquiry and conceptual thinking and *how* to carefully structure the use of protocols. Otherwise, the value of the dialogical relationship in paired or small group learning is minimized or lost" (p. 124). Teachers must provide adequate thinking time for language learners to process more effectively and to make the learning and sharing more meaningful. I observed that some teachers allowed the EL students to write their responses; in this way the students could visually process the learning content and, in turn, share that thinking process visually with peers. The discussion on the difference of TPS and turn and talk brought the CPR team to a deeper level of understanding of how to use the strategies effectively.

Among the EL strategies, the nonverbal strategy with the highest frequency was proximity. The code showed up 70 times. In every class, the teachers designed independent work time or partner work time for their students. In 10 out of the 11 observations, teachers circulated

throughout the classroom and checked with every student at least once during that time. They asked the students questions to validate their understanding and to extend their thinking. They often offered students positive reinforcement and support by reviewing the learning objectives and modeling examples. In addition, I coded modeling and scaffolding under the EL strategies on the occasions when teachers provided specific support to model and or scaffold instruction. For example, teachers used an analog clock to explain time, or used drawing to model the steps for students who had difficulty understanding the learning tasks. From the data, EL strategies surfaced 94 times, including 18 instances of teachers' scaffolding or modeling, 6 instances that teachers gave wait time to students during Think-Pair-Share and 70 instances of proximity. This code, EL strategies, showed the highest frequency of 27.4% among all codes.

### ***Teacher Disposition***

Teachers set high standards for their students; in so doing, they needed to consider what they expected students to learn and how students could reach their learning goals. Based on the observations, teachers did "push student cognitive load" by using higher level and probing questions and assigning tasks that encouraged students to problem-solve. For example, in the PBL project lessons, C.L. pointed out that the EL students enjoyed sharing about their culture and traditions from personal experience as well as from research from books and the internet (CPR meeting notes, October 25, 2022). The PBL inquiry process challenges students with high demands and sparks their curiosity to know more. Teachers' dispositions set the standards for the students to move toward mastery of the learning content.

I recognized that two of the four teachers asked their students to turn and talk to their partner without reviewing the protocol (Field notes, September 29, 2022), a strategy not conducive to learning. While most students were compliant and talked to their partner, I noticed

at least three students in one class did not say much; two were ELs. When students transition from whole group direct instruction to turn and talk, the teacher explicitly needed to review the protocol: a) Please make sure that each partner gets to share their thinking; b) When partner A is speaking, partner B will be listening; c) then switch, partner B will speak and partner A will listen. Consistently reviewing the process would help all students to have a chance to share their thoughts. Reviewing or setting clear directions or protocols to guide learning tasks is crucial for students. I shared this observation during the October CPR meeting along with the discussion of protocol for TPS strategy. We used the code “bordering” here to frame activity expectations and to understand how this helped EL students minimize their misunderstanding of the learning task and maximize productivity.

**Push Cognitive Load.** “Brain growth is stimulated when we have to figure out something new, engage in a complex task, or complete a puzzle” (Hammond, p. 49). When teachers asked students to explain their thinking or to provide feedback to their peers, the students were more likely to activate their brain power to seek answers from their learning. The cognitive input supports them to process the learning content. From the observations, pushing the cognitive load appeared 42 times, or a frequency of 12.2%; teachers engaged students with questions and or activities that pushed them to think more deeply or expand their responses.

**Bordering.** Bordering, the transition from one lesson segment to another, requires the teacher to provide explicit directions and support students to process the directions and engage. From the observations, I noticed that often the teacher gave verbal directions to students without clearly defining the expectations or having a protocol in place. The transition from one activity to another was challenging for EL students. They often relied on their peers to support them. Without clarity, ELs experience stress and many not stay engaged in learning. Setting a clear

boundary for activities is necessary when moving through different parts of a lesson. The observation data showed that 14 times or 4.1% frequency in which teachers offered clear steps and expectations for students to transition into a new activity.

In summary, during PAR Cycle One, I collected evidence from three rounds of observations, two CLE meetings and two CPR meetings. I coded the evidence from the observation notes, personal narratives, reflections, CPR meeting notes, and field notes. After several coding iterations, 12 codes led to six emergent categories. I then organized these emergent categories into three emergent themes: Student agency, sense of belonging, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices. I shared examples of the code book, visual data organization chart, and a code frequency chart to support the data analysis and rationalization of the emergent themes. Based on the learning, I continue to collect data and make sense of the data through analyzing the codes leading to the emergent themes. The themes help me to plan for the next steps and further understand my research questions. In the next section, I reflect on my leadership and preview PAR Cycle Two.

### **Leadership Reflection**

I continued to lead and facilitate the research using the CLE axioms (Guajardo et al. 2016) to guide the work of the community learning exchange (CLE). Specifically, I centered on two of the five axioms to help me conceptualize the developmental processes of the research.

CLE axiom # 2 states that conversations are critical and central to pedagogical processes. Creating a gracious space for the CPR team to share their stories and experiences was essential to our monthly meetings. In this space, each member engaged in dialogues and discussions on understanding our Chinese EL students, the stereotype biases, their reflections on teaching practices, and how their personal experiences related to the students. The trusting relationships

were evident when each of them openly shared their personal experiences, perceptions of the EL students, and willingness to hear suggestions from one another. I learned that the conversations and space for learning together were valuable to all of us. I got to know the team well and began to differentiate each teacher's assets and challenges so that I could better support them. When teachers recognize the importance of building relationships and connections, changes happen; modeling how to do that in meetings increases the likelihood of adults transferring those relationships to classrooms. Intentional effort on the part of the administrator makes the changes possible and meaningful. We must model dialogue in our meetings if we expect to observe equitable dialogue in classrooms.

CLE axiom # 5 states that hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and their communities. Learning does not just happen without effort. I struggled with not seeing the changes and shifts happening in class observations at a pace I had in mind. I constantly worried that the research activities I designed might not lead to change or elicit evidence that would substantiate the goal of the research. When the CPR team experienced barriers designing the observation tool, we tried to redefine the meaning of joyful learning and what we should see that was observable in a classroom. As we continued our learning and connecting to who we were, the CPR team started to map our ideas, hopes, and methods that could amplify the joyfulness for EL students. When B.Q. expressed stress about her ability to support a newcomer student, S.C. shared how she mobilized her students to support her newcomer student. This inspired B.Q. and changed her way of thinking. She not only mobilized peer support for her student; she created a system that made it exciting for students to step up and provide support to their peers. This small change was significant for the Chinese EL student who had not been connecting with other

students and was reluctant to participate in any learning activities. I began to see how the role of incrementalism in change and the necessity of the regular conversations about transfer to the classroom (Gawande, 2017) was critical to success.

At the beginning of October 2022, I transitioned to a district leadership position as the director for principal leadership of a cohort of 17 elementary schools. With the change of position, I recognized two key areas of leadership growth that I had benefited from because of this research process. The first one was the relationship I had built with the CPR team, and the second was how I was taking many of my lessons as a leader and applying them to practice in my new role.

By learning with the CPR team, I developed a deeper connection with each member and cultivated their interest in understanding how their teaching might influence the learning experiences of their students. They supported my transition, and we continued our research without any interruption to allow me to protect the integrity of the study. I continued to conduct all the scheduled meetings and observations even though we experienced difficulties. I believe our work was not about changing minds—as teachers did know what to do—but changing hearts. What we hold in our heart is what we will put effort into accomplishing.

In the new position, I have the opportunity to work with 27 school site leaders to support and develop their leadership skills. I valued the importance of building relationships and providing gracious spaces for anti-racist work. As I coached principals, I found myself grounded on student-centeredness and street data (Safir & Dugan, 2020). I facilitated CLE meetings at sites for the school communities to listen and share their stories in order to reach their common goal and hopes for students and families. I became a strong equity warrior with the tools and mindset

to disrupt the inequity in our systems. I saw how I had changed as a part of the CLE processes with the EdD cohort and how I had instituted processes that supported teacher change.

From PAR Pre-Cycle to PAR Cycle One, I have learned that many initial assumptions were not sustained from the data collected. The original emergent category was too broad; in fact, the codes that supported the emergent category could be a category or a theme. As I learned how to be a more successful practitioner-researcher myself, I gained a better understanding of why I need to be patient and analyze data with an open mind. The initial understanding evolved as I collected and coded new data. In PAR Cycle Two I continued class observations and meetings with the CPR team to further understand the effect of the CLRP EL strategies that amplify the joyful learning experience of Chinese EL students.

### **Conclusion**

In PAR Cycle One, I conducted two CLE meetings and two CPR meetings where the participants shared personal stories as learners, cultural beliefs, and reflections on enhancing their practices in amplifying joyful learning experiences of Chinese EL students. In addition, I completed three rounds of class observations to collect evidence using the CPR co-designed observation tool and coded the evidence from the reflections and verbatim notes of the observations. From reviewing the coding results, I recognized how important multiple coding and re-coding processes are. I found myself reevaluating the codes continuously until they made sense to me. The initial set of codes was too broad, and I reorganized the codes and analyzed them for the emergent categories, which led to the emergent themes. Through PAR Cycle One process, I now have a better understanding of how each participant relates their experiences to teaching and what CLRP strategies teachers should consider in their practices to potentially amplify Chinese EL students' joyful learning.



The emergent themes from the data analysis of student agency, sense of belonging, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices are the cornerstone as we move forward in this study. The teachers stated that the key strategies to best support the Chinese EL students included setting up intentional peer support, pushing students' cognitive load, establishing clear protocol or explicit directions (bordering) for students to transition from activity to activity, ensuring wait time for strategy like TPS for EL students to process, and providing opportunities for students to connect with their teachers and peers through sharing stories, cultures, and traditions.

## **CHAPTER 6: PAR CYCLE TWO AND FINDINGS**

In PAR Cycle Two, I engaged the Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPRs) in meetings and observations to collect evidence supporting the emergent themes for joyful learning. Three themes emerged that emphasized how teachers amplify Chinese ELL students' joyful learning experiences: teacher practice to develop student agency, a sense of belonging, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices. In this chapter, I describe the PAR Cycle Two process, consisting of research activities and data analysis. Following the data analysis, I share evidence that affirmed the themes from previous cycles of study and additional evidence that surfaced to strengthen the claims drawn from the data to support the findings. To amplify the Chinese ELL students' culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning experiences, I determined two findings:

1. Teachers who cultivate intentional relationships with students support a safe and joyful learning environment for students.
2. Teachers who plan and implement lessons with specific CLRP strategies support ELL equitable access, academic rigor, and agency.

### **PAR Cycle Two Process and Themes**

The focus of practice (FoP) of this study was to determine how teachers amplify joyful learning experiences for Chinese ELLs. In PAR Cycle Two, I collected these data—three rounds of observations, two CPR meetings, and one CLE meeting. I analyzed the data to determine the key themes, which informed the study findings.

#### **Activities**

I started PAR Cycle Two with a CPR meeting to review the journey of the PAR study, reflect on changes in the CPR members practices, and identify strategies the members could

implement to amplify Chinese ELL students joyful learning experiences. I conducted classroom observations to observe the strategies. During the CPR and CLE meetings, the teachers, as CPR members, reflected on their experiences in connecting with each other through personal narratives and connectors, shared their learning and practices through conversations, and discussed their understanding of how the research questions were connected to the work. We reviewed the evidence and triangulated the data to ensure the accuracy of the categories and themes (See Table 12).

### ***CPR Meetings and Community Learning Exchange***

I created the agenda for each CPR and CLE meeting to include connectors or personal narratives for teachers to continue relationship-building and deepen their understanding of joyful learning. We discussed the emergent themes and evidence from implementing CLRP strategies that could amplify the positive learning experience of ELLs. The CPR members shared their experiences and understandings of using the ELL strategies and collaborated on methods to implement culturally and linguistically responsive practices.

In our first PAR Cycle Two meeting, we reviewed our research journey, the CLRP strategies we discussed, and the identified strategies in the observation tool. The meeting happened to take place during Chinese Lunar New Year week so I engaged the CPR members with a connector by using the characters of Chinese Zodiac animals. This activity inspired conversations about culture and how teachers can incorporate culture in their teaching. B.Q. shared in her reflective memo that she “felt joy figuring out facets of my personality and those of the other group members.” She enjoyed the conversations and felt “how powerful joy was in the desire to participate in our discussions” (B.Q., Reflective memo, February 1, 2023). The CPR teachers acknowledged that the connector was a great way to engage students in learning about

Table 12

*Chart of PAR Cycle Two Activities and Data Collection Activities*

Meetings	Date	Activities	Data Collected
CPR Meeting	February 1, 2023 *(n=5 persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Journey Review</li> <li>● EL Strategies Review</li> <li>● Observation Tools</li> <li>● Learning Reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agenda</li> <li>● Meeting Notes</li> <li>● Strategy Review</li> <li>● Reflection Notes</li> </ul>
Observations Round 1	February 9, 2023 (n=2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CLRP Joyful Learning Observations</li> <li>● Post Observation Conversation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Selective Verbatim Observation Data</li> <li>● Debrief note</li> </ul>
CPR Meeting	March 21, 2023 (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CLRP Strategies Review</li> <li>● Observation Data &amp;</li> <li>● Reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting notes</li> <li>● Reflection memos</li> </ul>
Observations Round 2	April 6, 2023 (n=2) April 11, 2023 (n=2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CLRP Joyful Learning Observations</li> <li>● Post Observation Conversation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Selective Verbatim Observation Data</li> <li>● Reflective Memo</li> </ul>
Observations Round 3	April 12, 2021 (n=3)	CLRP Joyful Learning Observations	Selective Verbatim Observation Data
CLE Meeting	May 19, 2023 (n=11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Team Connection</li> <li>● Emergent Themes</li> <li>● Member check</li> <li>● Reflections &amp; Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agenda</li> <li>● Artifacts - CLRP Self-assessments</li> <li>● Meeting notes</li> <li>● Group Reflection note</li> </ul>

*Note.* n=number of participants.

cultures and connect to cultures (CPR Meeting notes, February 1, 2023). In addition, the teachers shared that their joyful learning experience during the PAR research had been impactful. They transferred joyful experiences to their teaching. S.C. stated that connecting to her own joyful experiences helped her to create that same joyful experience for her students (S. C., Reflective memo, October 25, 2022).

As we reviewed the observation tool to identify the key strategies through the lens of CLRP, we identified two specific strategies to calibrate our understanding on ELL access to learning: turn and talk (T&T) and think/write-pair-share (T/WPS). Think/write-pair-share is a strategy that requires the teachers to plan for more structured learning so that students can have think time to process learning information and problem-solve (see Figure 14). From the observations, I determined that the teachers utilized T&T more frequently than T/WPS. We analyzed the difference between the two strategies using a Venn Diagram to understand when and why teachers would choose one strategy over the other. According to the teachers, the preference for turn & talk was to create a spontaneous opportunity for ELL students to process learning by talking to a partner without pressure and to give students additional opportunities to practice using the language. However, they acknowledged that T/WPS was a more intentional strategy. When the teachers used the T.WPS strategy, they were more aware of think time for processing. During the March CPR meeting, we reviewed and triangulated the evidence from observations and reflections on CLRP strategies and discussed how these strategies would support the joyfulness of ELL students. As the CPR teachers learned more about CLRP strategies, they acknowledged that they had become more aware and intentional in choosing the strategies to support ELLs. For example, students were more confident in sharing their work with others and talking about their thinking when they had a partner or worked in a small group,

## Characteristics Comparison

# T&T vs TPS/WPS

Modified Feb. 2023

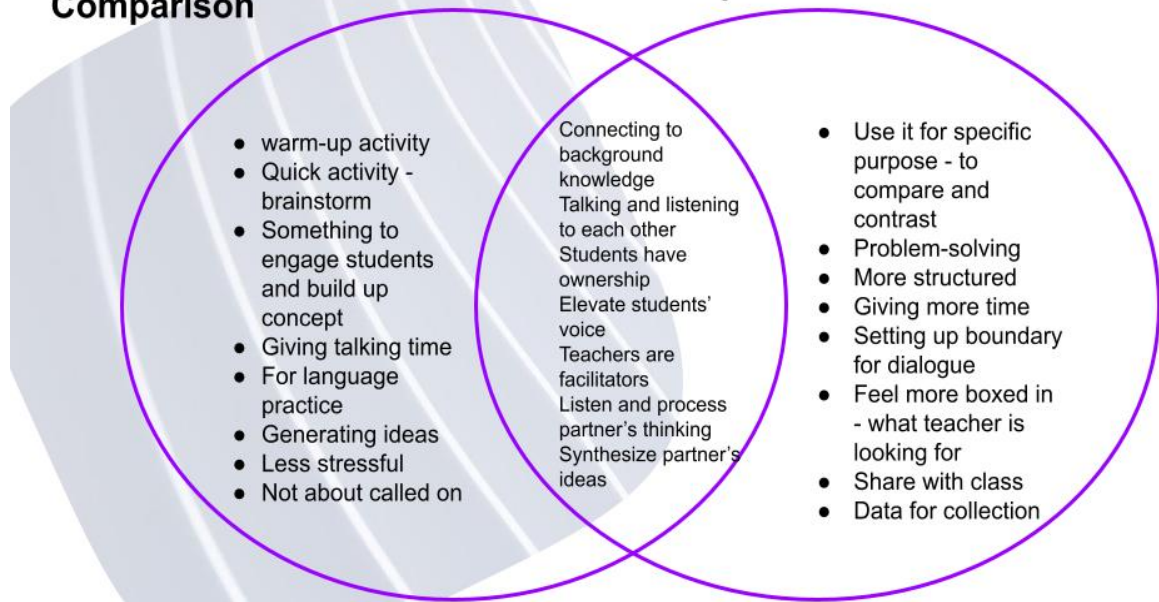


Figure 14. Comparison of Turn and Talk vs. Think/Write-Pair-Share, CPR team, PAR Cycle

Two, Spring 2023.

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or when the teachers provided frequent guiding questions and direct support to ELLs. Their participation and productivity rates increased (CPR Meeting notes, March 21, 2023). The CPR team affirmed that when teachers created opportunities for students to interact with each other, ELL students had more time to practice English language development. They further stated that when they created a supportive and collaborative environment, ELL students, along with all other students, felt safe and empowered to have a voice and engage in learning activities more actively and successfully. Muhammad (2023) stated that “[j]oy is not a fleeting feeling of happiness, but a sustained sense of fulfillment and self-determination, self-liberation, and self-empowerment” (p. 100). She emphasized that as educators, we need to recognize that children, like flowers, are “destined for beauty and growth” (p. 18). When children do not show their growth in learning, we should find solutions that will facilitate their growth and bring them joy.

The May CLE meeting was the last meeting for PAR Cycle Two. I met with the CPR team and a CPR team from another school jointly to share our learning journey and reflections. We reviewed and shared the emerging themes: teacher practices to develop student agency, a sense of belonging, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices. Team members validated the evidence via dialogues, reflective memos, and meeting notes. To assess how they developed increased capacity, the CPR members responded to a third self-assessment of their level of implementation of practices based on the Project I<sup>4</sup> Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy Framework (Tredway et al., 2019). Next, I discuss the second part of our PAR Cycle Two learning activities, observations.

### ***Observations***

I scheduled each observation with one or two of the CPR members so they could observe each other’s teaching. Because of scheduling difficulties, we could only do team observations in

four classes, two of G.D.'s and two of B.Q.'s, throughout the cycle. We used the selective verbatim method and the observation tool (see Appendix F) developed in PAR Cycle One to record the teachers' instructional approaches and actions. After each observation, we debriefed and reflected on strategies the teachers used during the lessons. Among the four observations, three lessons involved hands-on activities and project-based learning presentations. In all four classes, students had the opportunity to work independently. I analyzed the data from the observations and the data from the conversation notes, field notes, and meeting notes.

### **Analysis of PAR Cycle Two Data**

In PAR Cycle Two, I conducted class observations and meetings with the CPR team to further understand the effect of the CLRP ELL strategies that amplify the joyful learning experience of Chinese ELL students. I drew conclusions from previous cycles about three emergent themes that amplify the joyful learning experiences of Chinese ELL students: student agency, a sense of belonging, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices. The evidence from PAR Cycle Two deepened the CPRs' understanding of how teachers amplify Chinese ELL students' culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning experiences. From the analysis of the data, I revised the themes and determined more relevant themes: teacher practices to develop student agency, a sense of belonging, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices (see Table 13). I used the inductive coding method to derive codes from the data, which helped me to verify and validate the themes. Next, I present the changes and the rationale for each theme.

#### ***Teacher Practices to Develop Student Agency***

In PAR Cycle One, I determined the emergent theme of student agency. Agency means that teachers make strategic decisions about creating opportunities for students to have choices;



Table 13

*Themes with Categories and Codes*

Emerging Theme	Categories	Codes and Subcodes
Teacher Practice to Develop Student Agency. (n=112 or 20%)	Student Choice (n=26 4.5%)	Flexible Environment (n=5) Ways to show understanding (n=11)
	Student Empowerment (n=86 or 15.5%)	Opportunity to contribute (n=27) Self-Advocacy (n=59)
Sense of Belonging (n=83 or 15%)	Relationship (n=51 or 9%)	Students to teacher (n=10) Students to students (n=41)
	Connection (n=32 or 6%)	Connection to culture (n=15) Connection to real-world (n=17)
Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices (n=364 or 65%)	Access to Learning (n=116 or 21%)	Peer Support (n=51) EL Strategies (n=65)
	Teacher Instructional Approach (n=70 or 12.5%)	Push Cognitive Load (total n=60) Protocol/Bordering (n=10)
	Engagement (n=178 31.5%)	Positive Experience (n=125) Creativity/Productivity (n=53)

I determined two categories of agency: choices about where to work and choices about how to demonstrate knowledge. From the evidence, teachers' practices and actions ensured the opportunities for student agency. First, teachers designed a classroom environment with flexible space for students—desk, rug area, classroom library, standing desk— and seating options, including soft top chairs, stool, floors, or standing. I observed that all teachers created learning environments in which students had seating choices and spaces conducive to joyful learning. For example, when students were doing independent work, some worked at a desk while others preferred to sit on the floor in the classroom library nook. Secondly, to provide opportunities for student to share their knowledge, teachers plan learning activities that foster peer-to-peer feedback, shared thinking, and language practice skills. To develop agency or authority over their learning, students need opportunities to be metacognitive so they understand how they learn best and can make choices (Hammond, 2015).

Student empowerment surfaced as a second category supporting the theme of student agency. Teachers created opportunities for students to contribute their knowledge and understanding of the learning content to develop confidence and self-advocacy. Teachers provided multiple opportunities for students to initiate conversations with peers and express their interests and points of view. Student agency was evident (53 instances or 9.5% of the total coded evidence) as teachers asked students to provide feedback to their peers. Specific examples included students using post-it notes to write feedback or comments to peers after individual student presentations in G.D.'s class, and students providing suggestions to each other to complete a science project in B.Q.'s class (see Table 14).

Table 14

*Codebook: PAR Cycle Two Classroom Observations and Field Notes*

Theme	Category	Code	Total Frequency	Context of quote	Examples/Quote
CLRP	Accessibility to Learning	EL Strategies: Think-Pair-Share	1	02/09/23 Group Observation: GD	GD: "Think about it, then talk to people near you if you agree or disagree."
CLRP	Accessibility to Learning	Peer support	43	4/12/23 Field Note: BQ Observation	Teacher set up peer support: One ELL student w/IEP struggled with putting the critter together, his partner showed him how to shape the body. When he expressed his frustration about making it stand, his partner suggested he make two shorter legs. The student was happy when he succeeded and showed his teacher, B.Q. with a big smile.
CLRP	Accessibility to Learning	EL Strategies proximity - T circulating the room with direct support	46	04/06/23 Field Note: GD	Teacher is sitting near the presenter to support Zoom and tech. GD offered reminders and encouragement to students during the presentation. For one EL student who has difficulty focusing, GD whispered "Remember what you need to share the story of your person? Don't worry about the format, tell us why you choose this person...)
CLRP	Engagement	Positive experience	74	02/09/23-GD Observation	When GD asked students to pick the most important part of the story, students raised hands and said "Ooooh" excitedly

Table 14 (continued)

Theme	Category	Code	Total Frequency	Context of quote	Examples/Quote
CLRP	Engagement	creativity/ productivity	50	4/12/23 Group Observation: BQ	BQ assigned students to design their critter traits in science notebook: ear color & shape, nose color & shape, traits from parent 1 and 2...
CLRP	Engagement	Positive experience: rewards, affirmations,	41	02/09/23 Group Observation: GD	Teacher mark points on a chart as she walked around to check students' work or affirm students' efforts or responses.
CLRP	Teacher instructional Approach	Bordering - clear intention	8	04/12/23 Group Observation: BQ	Explicit direction for creating the offspring of the two critter parents following traits
CLRP	Teacher instructional Approach	push student cognitive load	60	02/09/23 Field Note: GD	Each student presented their PBL project: Biography-why is the person important? How did the person make a difference in the community? What are they inspired by the person?
Sense of Belonging	Connection to the real-world	connecting to prior knowledge/ experience	17	02/09/23 Group Observation: GD	GD: What are those colors? S: Pink and red for Valentine's. Pink seahorses hide in coral reefs from predators.

Table 14 (continued)

Theme	Category	Code	Total Frequency	Context of quote	Examples/Quote
Sense of Belonging	Relationship	Student to student relationship: peer support	41	04/11/23 Group Observation: GD	Students share their thinking and get feedback from their peers. Two students started a list of descriptive words on the iPad for a newcomer who needs translation and vocab support.
Teacher developing student agency	Student choice	Flexible environment	5	02/09/23 Observation: GD	Students pick different seating and space when they transition from whole group activity to partner work or group work - some are sitting at a table, some are on the soft riser blocks, some are on the floor, one student is reading under the table, fully participating in discussions
Teacher developing student agency	Student choice	Ways to show understanding	11	04/06/23 & 4/12/23 Field Notes	Students chose their own person who inspired them the most for their PBL project include slides presentation, posters, an artifact represent the person, e.g., plant seeds in a pot symbolized the work of Wangari.
Teacher developing student agency	Student Empowerment	contribution/s hare learning	15	02/09/23 Observation: GD	Students discussed with their elbow partners "Why they agree or disagree is the most important part"
Teacher developing student agency	Student Empowerment	Self-Advocacy: peer feedback	53	04/06/23 Field Note	Every student wrote feedback to each presenter after their presentation on post-its.

### *A Sense of Belonging*

Sense of belonging emerged from two key categories: relationship and connection. From the evidence in both observations and CPR members' reflections, I noted that teachers valued building relationships with students and making connections to students' cultures and life experiences. Teachers shared their efforts in building relationships in the classrooms to help ELL students feel included and supported. B.Q. expressed her excitement over the positive outcomes that occurred as a result of her training. For example, she used intentional language to encouraged students to support the newcomer students (CPR Meeting notes, May 19, 2023).

Teachers realized the importance of creating a class culture in which students could take ownership. B. Q. collaborated with her students on how to support each other and created a point system to acknowledge students' efforts in building an inclusive class environment. B.Q. shared that she modeled the system for participation and found success when her students used their agency to provide various support to their peers. By implementing a point system for participation, B.Q. increased her ELL students' participation (Observation, April 12, 2023). According to B.Q., the inclusive class culture helped her ELL students build relationship with their peers, and the students showed more confidence in learning activities and had more access to learning (Meeting notes, March 21, 2023).

Teachers increased the sense of belonging for students and that influenced the students' emotions and well-being. Murphy (2018) asserted that a sense of belonging correlates to the quality of the relationship students have with peers and teachers. Teachers intentionally implemented strategies to build an inclusive classroom, thus ensuring opportunities for students to develop relationships and minimize stressors that would limit cognitive ability to process information (Pawlak et al., 2003).

### *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices (CLRP)*

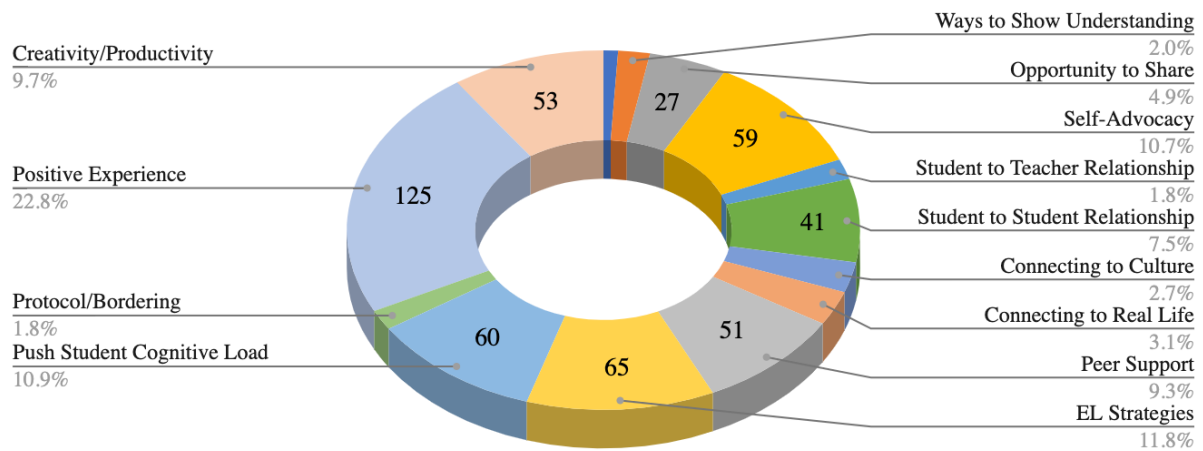
Three categories from the data support the third theme, culturally and linguistically responsive practice: access to learning, teachers' instructional approaches, and engagement. In analyzing the codes that supported this theme, I added engagement as a category and changed teacher disposition to teachers' instructional approach.

I recognized that the codes I used in PAR Cycle One to support the emergent category, engagement, were too broad. I re-coded the evidence and made the changes to reflect the emergent themes. In PAR Cycle Two, engagement surfaced with strong evidence through positive experiences and creativity/productivity; I coded 178 instances of evidence (with a frequency of 31.5% among all codes) for positive experiences (125 instances) and creativity/productivity (53 instances) from observations, teachers' reflective memos, and CPR meeting notes. The code, positive experiences, included teachers' positive reward systems to acknowledge students' effort and success through students' excitement, joy, and active participation in learning (see Figure 15). For example, B. Q. observed that her ELL students were not making progress. She shared, "the lack of progress (of the new ELL students) [was] zapping my joy" and she needed to "bring back my own joy so that I can foster my students' joy" (B.Q. Reflective Memo, December 7, 2022). After B.Q. built more peer support and taught them how to support their ELL peers, B.Q. found it was rewarding and shared her joy with the CPR members (CPR Meeting notes, May 19, 2023).

I changed the second category from teacher disposition to teacher instructional approach. I recognized the two codes—push student cognitive load (60 instances, 10.5% of all codes) and bordering (10 instances or 2%)—represent teachers' instructional moves rather than their values and beliefs. The data indicated that teachers designed learning activities, such as project-based

## Code and Frequency of CPR Observations, Reflection, Field and Meeting Notes

PAR Cycle Two Data - Spring 2023



*Note.* Percentages are exact in figure and rounded to nearest .5% in text and Table 14.

*Figure 15.* Codes and frequency of observable evidence, PAR Cycle Two, Spring 2023.



learning and hands-on science projects, to engage students in building critical thinking skills and produce work through an inquiry process. Teachers created opportunities for students to connect to their interests, knowledge, and cultures. Students worked collaboratively with peers and shared their understandings and accomplishments with the class. Teachers used these instructional approaches to encourage students to work independently and carry the cognitive load (Observations, April 6, 11 & 12, 2023). With these few changes, the theme CLRPP reflected the specific strategies teachers used to support ELL students' learning experiences and skills toward independence. These CLRPP strategies included peer support, scaffolding, close proximity, think-pair-share, turn & talk, pushing student cognitive load, protocol/bordering, positive experiences, and creativity/productivity.

The data analysis affirmed the themes of the research. To amplify the Chinese ELL students' culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning experiences, teachers need to design and deliver learning activities that develop student agency and a sense of belonging and utilize CLRPP strategies to ensure students' access to learning and rigor. Without elevating the expectations for ELLs due to their linguistic backgrounds, teachers could devastate ELL students in believing in their worthiness for quality education and future success (Daniel, 2014).

The evidence showed that teachers found that learning together was powerful and joyful when they had the opportunity to connect and share personal narratives and collaborate on practices. The teachers shared their understanding of implementing the ELL strategies and reflected on changes in teaching ELLs. We reviewed the research sub-questions and calibrated how well we could answer those questions.

The participatory action research study elevated teachers' understanding of the characteristics of joyful learning. Through collaboration with CPR members, the teachers

acknowledged that they were more aware and intentional about strategies to support Chinese ELLs and to cultivate joyful learning experiences for all students (CPR Meeting notes, March 21, 2023). However, the team recognized that there is still much to learn and practice with CLRP strategies (CPR Meeting notes, May 19, 2023).

The 18-month PAR project provided clarity to the CPR team about the importance of learning through an interactive process to elicit active participation. As we built joyful learning experiences for students, we needed to attend to the learning experiences of the adults. Engaging the teachers with learning opportunities for relationship development, fostering a sense of belonging, and encouraging conversation in a gracious space played a vital role in the success of learning. The findings from this learning journey validated the importance of connecting our experiences to our practices.

### **Findings**

I determined two findings for this research project and study based on analysis of data from three cycles of participatory action research and learning as lead CPR. These findings highlighted the capacity teachers need to develop in order to amplify Chinese ELL students' culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning experiences:

1. Teachers who cultivate intentional relationships with students support a safe and joyful learning environment for students.
2. Teachers who plan and implement lessons with specific CLRP strategies support ELL equitable access, academic rigor, and agency.

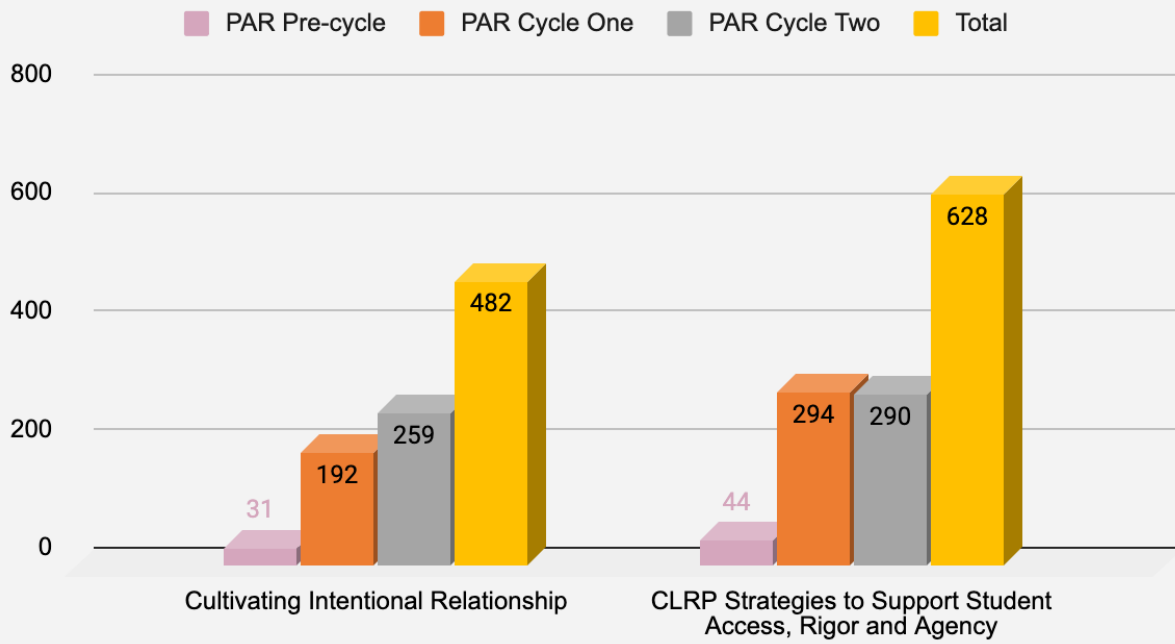
These findings are the result of the action research which emphasized the importance of using the method of collaborative, self-reflective problem solving in a community context while addressing an equity dilemma. hunter et al. (2013) defined “action research [as] a research

approach that works with a community on a common topic of interest, that is, engaging the community in finding answers and applying those answers to the point of concern” (p. 17). In Figure 16, I share the complete data for the two findings.

Based on collaborative work and reflections on practices, the CPR teachers had a clear understanding of the definition and characteristics of joyful learning. Their understanding elevated their awareness of which CLRP strategies best support the ELL students. Widyawulandari et al. (2018) stated that the “implementation of a joyful learning approach contains four stages, which can support the ongoing learning, among others: experience, interaction, communication, and reflection” (pp. 55-56). The CPR team validated their joyfulness through the iterative cycles as they interacted, communicated, and reflected on their learning together. The experiences of each team member varied, but the contributions to the conversations and collaborative work were rich and powerful. As we reflected on our experiences and shared our connection to our work with Chinese ELL students, the teachers recognized that we all have biases and deficit thinking (Kasner, Reflective memo, February 10, 2023). Continuous learning and improvement is necessary to shift practices centering on ELLs’ culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning experiences (Yurkofsky et al., 2020).

Teachers need to have a clear understanding of the importance and the necessary processes in creating and cultivating intentional relationships with students so that they can establish and sustain a safe and joyful learning environment for students. This first finding represented the importance of a sense of belonging those teachers experienced in the CPR group and transferred to their classrooms. The data included the teacher relationship with students, the peer relationships of students, and the connection of learning to students’ cultures and real-world experiences. The teachers need to create the necessary conditions for CLRP in classrooms.

### Data across the three PAR Cycles



*Figure 16.* Data across three PAR cycles of inquiry to support findings.

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The second finding pointed out that the teachers recognized the importance of planning and implementing lessons incorporating the culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy so students can fully have equitable access to learning content, academic rigor, and agency as students developed independence as learners. Figure 17 shows how the findings developed.

Next, I discuss in the PAR cycles and how these themes supported each finding. In addition to discussing the findings, I included the extended finding that supported teacher capacity development in implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

### **Cultivating Intentional Relationships with ELL Students**

ELL students often experience stress when they do not have the language capacity to fully participate in learning (Hammond, 2015). Teachers must build and cultivate intentional relationships with Chinese ELL students and the relationship among students so that the ELL students feel safe and supported. The sense of belonging and inclusivity impact the ELL students' learning experience.

#### ***Sense of Belonging***

Teachers' intentional effort of creating opportunities to connect with their students through cultures and real-world experiences, as well as cultivating peer relationship and support, can help alleviate stress for the ELL students and support their increased participation in academic tasks. The research data affirmed that building relationships with students is important (see Figure 16). From the three PAR Cycles, I recorded a total of 482 instances (or 43.4% of all codes) in connection to building relationships in amplifying joyful learning experiences for students. The CPR teachers sought effective alternatives to communicate with ELL students who often do not possess the language capacity to communicate verbally. Teachers shared that they must consider various opportunities to build relationships with their students (and families)

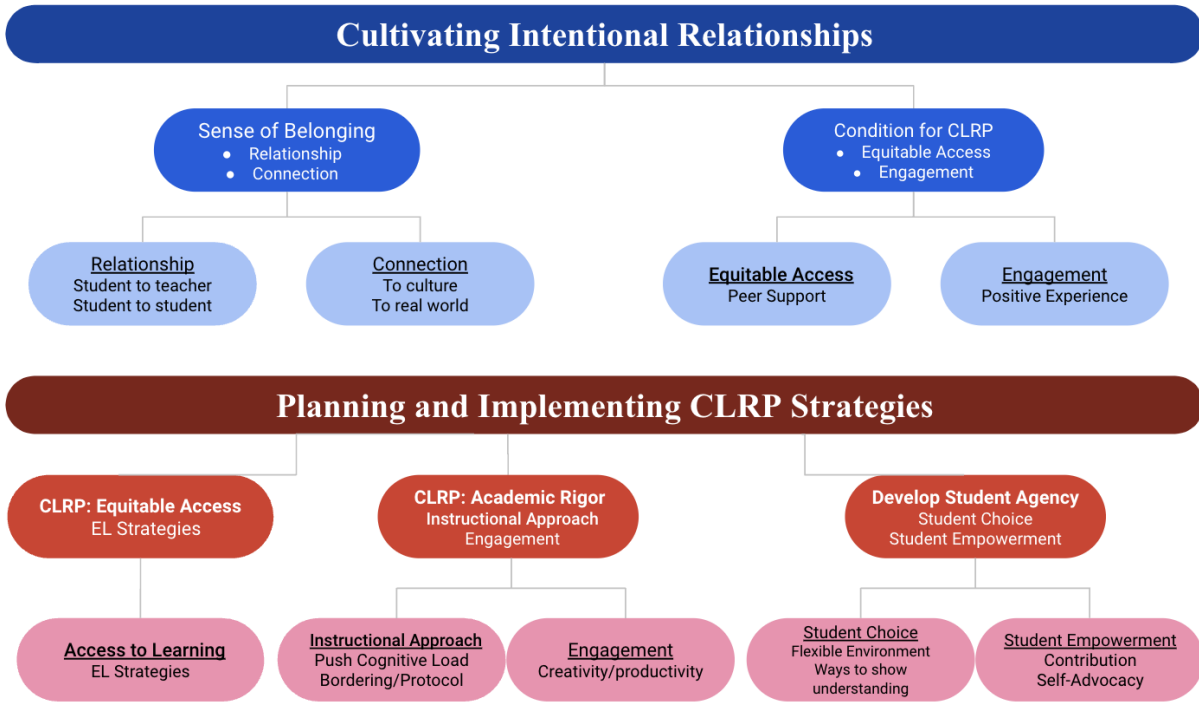


Figure 17. Findings and supporting themes, categories, and codes.

throughout the school year, including using a translation tool to help students with instructions and directions for activities, developing a peer support system in the class, inviting parents to the class to share their cultures, promoting multiculturalism through the PBL project, and family interviews. The CPR team reflected on the importance of validating students' cultures to best engage them (CPR meeting notes, May 19, 2023).

S.C. shared her success with peer support as a strategy to help a newcomer student who did not speak English at all. S.C. recognized that the newcomer student had a language barrier, but the student was eager to learn and had strong abilities to adapt to the new learning environment. S.C. coached her students with strategies that they could use to help the new student transition and feel a part of the class, such as using translation app on the iPad to communicate with each other. With this intentional support, the new student quickly began interacting with peers (CPR meeting notes, March 21, 2023).

With clear intentions, the teachers became more active in seeking strategies and sharing practices with colleagues. They recognized the benefit of building relationships with their teacher peers and believed that their students would benefit from strong relationships with their peers as well. In the December 2022 CPR meeting, the CPR team explored and discussed methods to connect with students and the meaning of building relationships with students. S.C. shared that she had an eye-opening moment after she realized how much her students wanted to know about her. As she got to learn about her students, she started to shift her practice and began sharing her stories with the them. She felt joy when she discovered the impact her shift of practice made on herself and when she noticed the joy the students were expressing. . . She determined to make sharing stories a regular classroom practice so she and her students could get to know each other better and feel connected (CPR meeting notes, February 1, 2023). From the

research, the intentional relationship building set a foundation for creating a sense of belonging and joyful learning experience for ELLs.

### *Conditions for CLRP*

Teachers' intentional effort to ensure students' equitable access through peer support and learning in a positive environment have strengthened the relationship of the ELLs with their peers and their teachers. The CPR teachers created structures or systems for students to support their ELL peers so that the ELLs could have better access to learning activities. They created a positive class culture for students to have fewer stressors about engaging in activities. These necessary conditions ensure that ELLs learn in a safe and culturally and linguistically responsive joyful environment.

B.Q. shared that when she designed specific opportunities for her students to support ELLs in her class, she observed that the peer support, such as language support and strategic partnership, not only helped the ELL students to feel a sense of belonging but motivated them to participate in learning activities with confidence (B.Q., Reflective memo, February 10, 2023). She was proud of the outcome when her ELL students started to respond to her intentional strategies.

The teachers found joy when they connected learning experiences to students' interests and created an environment where students could immerse themselves in characters as they learned. For example, G.D. knew her students were interested in the thematic environment and story of Harry Potter, so she created a Hogwarts in her class, a school of wizardry in the Wizarding World universe based on J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. G.D. engaged her students to be problem solvers and connected their daily learning activities to the story lines of Harry Potter. Another approach she implemented was to establish a point system to encourage



and support students in developing independent learning skills, such as tracking students' progress of their work, students' collaborative effort working with partners, asking questions, completing learning tasks, and having a growth mindset. With the supportive culture established, G.D. offered various methods of recognition to acknowledge students who were kind and inclusive to their peers. G.D. modeled how to support her ELLs, such as using encouraging language, repeating teacher's directions, and organizing supplies for table activities. The peer support and inclusive culture in the classroom helped students stay engaged in their work. When teachers created a culture to nurture relationships with and among the students, the teachers cultivated an intentional relationship in their classrooms where students feel included and joyful as they have equitable access to learning (Field notes, February 9, 2023).

Teachers who cultivate intentional relationships with students help to build a sense of belonging and peer support, thus supporting students' positive learning experience that is safe and joyful. When students have a sense of belonging, they can devote their full cognitive attention to learning (Steele et al., n.d.) As teachers developed more awareness and intention when designing their culturally responsive practices, ELL students established stronger relationships with their peers and developed a higher capability to devote their attention to their learning (Steel, 2018). As B.Q. shared, "I am more aware of opportunities or lack of those opportunities for the Chinese ELL students to engage during lessons. I find myself seeking out more strategies to reach these students" (CPR Meeting notes, February 1, 2023).

While we center our work to provide the ELL students with a safe and joyful learning experience, we need to remain mindful of the development of teachers. It is imperative that we provide teachers clear explanations and intentions to assist them in selecting CLRP strategies and designing learning environments. Learning activities should connect to students' cultures and

experience so that ELL students can contribute and share their values and cultural appreciations with peers. By utilizing peer support and establishing systems and structures to promote inclusivity and opportunities for student interaction, teachers can engage ELL students in learning with positive experiences and reduce the impact of ELLs' language barriers.

### **CLRP Strategies - Equitable Access, Academic Rigor, and Agency**

When teachers plan and implement CLRP strategies in their lessons with clear intention, teachers support ELL student equitable access to learning content, academic rigor, and agency. The study indicated that teachers had greater ability to assess and support students when they facilitated learning by creating opportunities for students to work independently or with partners. Using specific CLRP strategies, teachers offered more direct support to ELL students and developed their academic confidence and independent skills, which in turn led to joyful learning experiences. The teachers promoted joyful learning through play, social interaction, experiential learning, discovery, and problem solving in order to overcome student barriers to learning (Anggoro et al., 2017; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). In order to promote learning through social interactions, discovery, problem solving, and hands-on activities, CPR teachers focused on several CLRP strategies to support ELLs: equitable access, academic rigor, and agency.

#### ***Equitable Access***

Equitable access specifically in this study refers to teachers utilizing CLRP strategies for language learners to ensure that students have adequate access to learning content. The teachers used strategies such as non-verbal support, extended think time, language support, and scaffolding. With these strategies, teachers checked for understanding and provided immediate feedback to students. They set up learning environments in which ELL students could engage in

conversations with their peers during their partner work or group work. These interactions provided ELLs with language models from English speaking students and supported ELLs to process their understanding and share their work. For example, G.D. modeled how to compare and measure two objects for a math lesson. She then engaged the students to think about what they would choose to measure. As students worked with their table mates, G.D. checked in with each student and asked them to explain their mathematical thinking (G.D., Observation, September 29, 2022).

As Hammond (2015) emphasized, an educator's goal is to teach students learn how to learn; therefore, teachers needed to design lessons with appropriate strategies to support the ELL students. The CPR team recognized that they sometimes "over-scaffold" their instruction, such as offering sentence frames for writing math problems, which prevents their students from developing their own thinking (CPR meeting notes, March 21, 2023). Teachers were concerned about newcomer students who might not have the language capacity to understand the instruction or communicate their ideas; however, too often that concern resulted in the teachers limiting student access by not encouraging students to go through productive struggle. At the same time, all four teachers had shifted learning toward promoting academic rigor and student agency. Teachers in the study needed to find the balance between providing support and encouraging productive struggle to ensure the ELLs have equitable access to learning.

### ***Academic Rigor***

As teachers push rigor and support students to carry the cognitive load, we must consider the support the students need to participate successfully. When teachers plan and intentionally create support systems, their students have a better chance to produce quality work and have ownership of their work. Their voices were visible when they talked to a partner or partners. I

observed that in every classroom, when teachers prepared learning activities for ELL students to do independent work or work with a partner, the students actively participated in their activities. B.Q. elevated academic rigor in her science class by requiring students to use scientific language to describe their work and explain their choice of design for the project (Observation, April 12, 2023). B.Q. designed the lesson with clear intention for students to dialogue with their peers and share their thinking, thereby causing students to problem-solve with others. B.Q. monitored students in close proximity, asking questions to push students' thinking and giving immediate feedback. In conjunction with developing students' cognitive skills, teachers engaged students with hands-on activities and inquiry-based learning. Teachers designed learning opportunities for students to create and produce work; in turn, students expressed their excitement and positive experiences from their presentations and projects. As a result, teachers promoted student agency with student choice and empowerment.

### ***Student Agency***

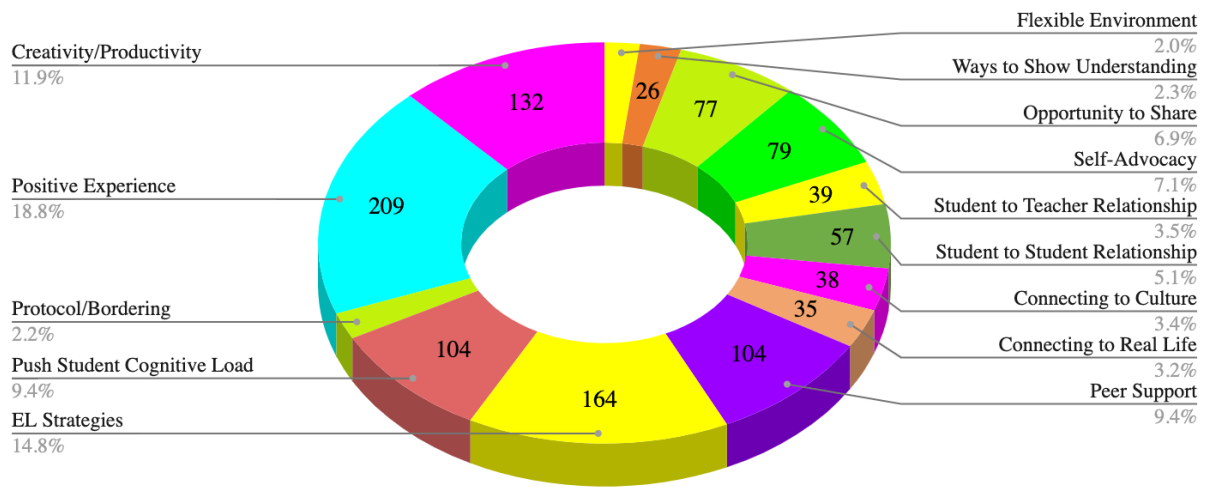
Students learn and practice at higher levels in environments that supports their learning by providing choices. This was evident in all CPR teachers' classes. The teachers made strategic decisions and provided opportunities for students to have choices; the two categories supporting this finding included choices about the location in the classroom where they would work and choices about how to demonstrate knowledge. In each classroom, teachers designed a learning environment with flexible spaces - desk, rug area, classroom library, standing desk— and seating options—soft top chairs, Wobble Stools for movement, floors, or standing. I observed that all four teachers gave students the autonomy to choose their space and, sometimes, to choose their partners. Teachers rarely needed to give verbal reminders or redirections. The environment was conducive for students to shift from one activity to another and focus on learning activities. In

addition, teachers set up the learning environment to accommodate students with sensory needs or other needs. For instance, when one student in S.C.'s class needed to stand and move frequently, S.C. made sure that the student knew what space he could use, and he moved around without interrupting his and his peers' learning (Observation, October 18, 2023).

The data indicated several practices that teachers used to empower students by providing more opportunities for them to contribute their knowledge and understanding in partner or in small group settings. In the initial survey of CPR members, the teachers shared that the Chinese ELLs did not like to share their thoughts or speak up in the classroom. When teachers created opportunities for ELLs to work with others, the teachers observed that the Chinese ELLs showed more confidence and had more opportunities for self-advocacy, such as delivering PBL presentations and offering peers feedback and comments (Field notes, April 6, 2023).

From the data in Figure 18, the codes that surfaced most frequently supporting this finding included: self-advocacy (79 instances or 7.1%), push student cognitive load (104 instances or 9.4%), creativity/productivity (132 instances or 11.9%), ELL strategies (164 instances or 14.8%), and positive experiences (209 instances or 18.8%) (see Figure 17). These codes solidified the importance of supporting ELL students with CLRP strategies to access, academic rigor and agency. The intentional planning and implementation of these strategies will ultimately support the ELL students to strive for independence as learners.

When teachers make the learning experience for Chinese ELLs joyful, the students can experience learning that is engaging and empowering. They will find success in a loving and supportive community. Through the joyful learning process, the students will feel a sense of belonging and improve their knowledge of self and the world around them (<http://www.joyfullearningnetwork.com>).



*Figure 18.* Frequency of codes Across the PAR Cycles.

## **Extended Evidence for Findings**

Through the PAR cycles, I sought to understand what teachers knew about culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. I asked teachers to complete three self-assessments using the Project I<sup>4</sup> Equity Framework (Tredway et al., 2019). The first assessment was at the beginning of the PAR Pre-Cycle, the second one was during PAR Cycle One, and the last one was completed toward the end of PAR Cycle Two. The assessment results helped me frame our CPR meeting content and determine the selections of readings. From the self-assessments (see Figure 19), all four teachers made significant progress in their practices from minimally inclusive to maximally inclusive.

From the first assessment, the overall instances of using CLRP strategies was 44 during PAR Pre-Cycle in comparison to 290 from PAR Cycle Two. PAR Cycle One showed a higher frequency with 294. The discrepancy between the PAR Cycle One and PAR Cycle Two occurred because I collected data from eleven classroom observations in PAR Cycle One and only four classroom observations in PAR Cycle Two. During PAR Pre-Cycle, I did not conduct observations. I collected the data from member surveys, reflective memos, reflections, and meeting notes. One of the CPR members shared in her survey on their understanding of CLRP, that “I am very weak at describing big ideas like this. I read about it but have difficulty synthesizing my ideas. I know that students need to see themselves in the materials we use in the classroom (CPR member Survey, December 2021).” After three PAR cycles, CPR members have increased their confidence in understanding CLRP strategies and in their implementation of the strategies in their daily practices. This capacity development supported the increased use of CLRP strategies to cultivate intentional relationships and empower students toward independence.

## CPR Member CLRP Practices Self Assessments 2022-2023

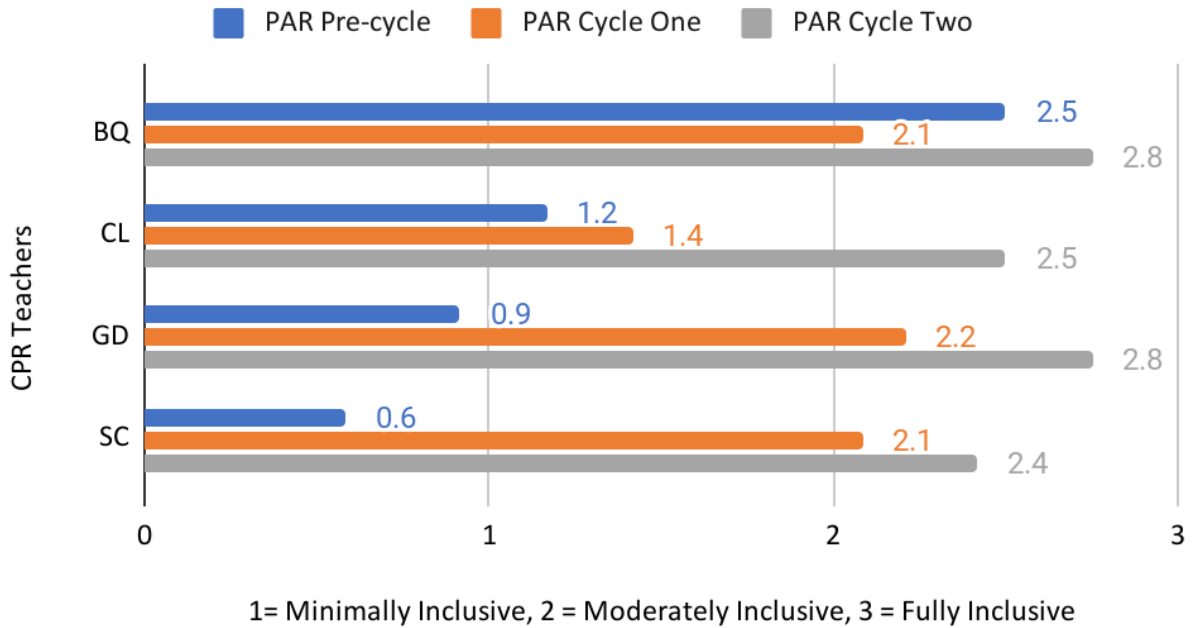


Figure 19. CPR member CLRP practices self-assessment across PAR cycles.



## Conclusion

According to the Learning Network's (2022) definition, joyful learning is "engaging, empowering, and playful learning of meaningful information in a loving and supporting community" ([www.joyfulearningnetwork.com/what-is-joyful-learning.htm](http://www.joyfulearningnetwork.com/what-is-joyful-learning.htm)). To amplify Chinese ELL students' joyful learning experiences, the necessary conditions were a safe and inclusive environment and relationships with peers and teachers. With appropriate CLRP strategies and intentional planning and implementation, teachers created opportunities for ELL students to develop their independence through equitable access, academic rigor, and agency. However, teachers needed support to develop their awareness and understanding to capably plan and implement learning activities with clear intentions. Collaborating with colleagues and connecting with their culture and experience supported the learning experience of the CPR team. The joy of the teachers from the PAR research project and study was evident and transferrable to the learning experience for their students. CPR members articulated the characteristics of joyful learning by connecting to their experiences, personal narratives, connectors with team members, and reflections on their teaching. We co-designed an observation tool and refined it through several iterations. We found the need to redefine the definition of joyful learning so that we could find a way to measure joy.

If we expect teachers to plan and implement CLRP strategies to support ELL students, we need teachers to understand the intention and the skills before they can implement effectively, and teachers need experiences in their professional learning that are similar to the classroom experiences we expect them to create for students. In supporting ELL students, teachers needed to know the students and students' cultures in order to select strategies appropriately. One member recognized that she was apprehensive about her ELL students who

might find it difficult to write a math word problem. Apprehensions may prevent a teacher from maintaining high expectations for ELL students. Thus, leaders need to nurture teachers' competencies in using CLRP strategies effectively. We must acknowledge the need for teachers to continue their learning on equity work to build an inclusive learning environment, scaffold appropriately, and have talk spaces to discuss their concerns and work together on solving their instructional dilemmas. Loh (2017) states that the importance of cultural influences on students' learning styles cannot be underestimated and recognizes different cultural learning styles. Chinese students may not like to speak up and often are quiet in class; nevertheless, they are still mentally alert and attentive, actively listening, and rehearsing and processing new information (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Loh, 2017). Their teachers need to recognize and support culturally-specific learning styles to guide students to become independent learners.

As educators, we seek solutions to foster joyful learners. Children are like flowers; they are beautiful and hold their own genius. As Muhammad (2023) vividly described: Children are destined for beauty and growth. They are the flowers. When a flower does not grow, we don't uproot it. Instead, we change the amount of sunlight and water, we change the type of soil, we nourish it. We look for solutions that will facilitate its growth (p.18).

We, as principals and teachers working collaboratively, hold the solution.

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

*Too often, we focus on only doing something to culturally and linguistically diverse students without changing ourselves, especially when our students are dependent learners who are not able to access their full academic potential on their own.*

Zaretta Hammond

As an ELL myself and an educator for several decades, I consider myself proficient with the English language, yet I still carry the burden of a lack of confidence in using English in my daily professional work; the challenge often brings anxiety. In this participatory action research project, I studied how teachers worked collaboratively to select and implement English Language Learner (ELL) strategies to improve their teaching practices in amplifying ELL students' joyful experiences. As Hammond (2015) emphasizes, the amygdala in our brains affects our ability to focus on learning; when learners feel anxious or experience stress, they cannot reach their capacity to access learning effectively. In contrast, joyful learners can reach higher cognitive levels to sustain learning materials (Willis, 2007). Despite English Language Development (ELD) daily instruction, many Chinese ELL students continue to underperform academically and consistently exhibit the lowest positive responses on the district social-emotional learning data in all areas including social awareness, self-efficacy, growth mindset, and sense of belonging.

The context of the study was an urban elementary school in San Francisco. The school's vision emphasizes providing students with a learning experience that is nurturing, compassionate, supportive, and challenging—a school that equips students with appropriate 21st-century skills, growth mindset, and confidence by embracing creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. The majority of students who attend the school are from the neighborhood. The largest ethnic group is Chinese, making up 40% of the total population of 553 students. During this study, among the Chinese students, 67% were English language learners.

I engaged four elementary school teachers as Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) to examine practices that would elevate ELL students' joyful learning experience through building their skills towards confidence and independence as learners. In the focus of practice of the study, we addressed the equity dilemma with this theory of action: *If teachers build capacity in articulating joyful learning for Chinese ELLs, then they could implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for students.*

I designed and facilitated three participatory action research (PAR) cycles. In each cycle, I intentionally followed the community learning exchange (CLE) protocols and axioms to foster authentic dialogue, discussions, and reflections to build deeper understanding and knowledge for the CPR group on joyful learning and culturally and linguistically responsive practices (CLRP) as well as to model equitable engagement for teachers. I reviewed the literature on learning theories, pedagogies, and communities of practice to guide the CPR iterative process. The learning activities required the CPR team to decipher their personal experiences in connection to the physiological and psychological attributes of joyful learning and the key factors that support the experience.

We used CLE and CPR meetings each month through the three PAR cycles or inquiry as a form of connecting to shared knowledge and understanding of learning experiences and to reflect on our practices in teaching the ELL students (see Table 15). When people are the closest to the work, they are the best situated to seek solutions and solve problems using their insights and knowledge (Guajardo, et al., 2016). The CPR members valued what each brought to the conversations and discussions. As the team closely analyzed their teaching, they observed that they needed to build knowledge and improve practices. From self-discovery of their experiences and identity, they connected to what brought them joy as learners and as educators. The teachers

Table 15

*Data Sources from PAR Activities: Three PAR Cycles of Inquiry*

Activities	PAR Pre-Cycle Dec. 2021 – May 2022 Artifacts	PAR Cycle One Sept. 2022 – Dec. 2022 Artifacts	PAR Cycle Two Jan. 2023 – May 2023 Artifacts
CPR Meetings (n=9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CPR Member Surveys</li> <li>● Emulation Poem</li> <li>● Journey Line</li> <li>● Member CRP self-assessment</li> <li>● Photo Scavenger Hunt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting notes</li> <li>● Member CRP self-assessment</li> <li>● Reflective Memos</li> <li>● Observation Tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting notes</li> <li>● Member CRP self-assessment</li> <li>● Reflective Memos</li> </ul>
Community Learning Exchanges (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting notes</li> <li>● Member CRP self-assessment</li> <li>● Reflection notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting notes</li> <li>● Observation Tools</li> <li>● Reflection notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting notes</li> <li>● Reflective Memos</li> </ul>
Classroom Observations (n=26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No classroom observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Observation Tool</li> <li>● Observation notes</li> <li>● Observation Data</li> <li>● Codebook</li> <li>● Field notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Observation Tool</li> <li>● Observation notes</li> <li>● Observation Data</li> <li>● Codebook</li> <li>● Field notes</li> </ul>
Post-Observation Debrief Meetings (n=8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting notes</li> </ul>

felt safe and comfortable sharing their stories with each other during CPR meetings and appreciated the gracious space in which we fostered understanding, open-mindedness, and deep listening and learning of diverse opinions and experiences (Hughes, 1994). They reflected that the experience of learning from and collaborating with each other was joyful. The PAR study led to two findings:

1. Teachers who cultivate intentional relationships with students support a safe and joyful learning environment for students.
2. Teachers who plan and implement lessons with specific CLRP strategies support equitable access, academic rigor, and agency for ELL students.

In this chapter, I connect the findings to the extant literature, the research questions, and present a conceptual framework I developed for shifting practices to support ELL students' joyful learning experiences and teacher capacity development. After discussing implications for practice, policy, and potential research, I conclude the chapter with a reflection on leadership as a response to the final research question.

### **Discussion**

When students participate in learning opportunities that foster creativity, embrace curiosity, and promote well-being, they develop a strong sense of belonging and confidence leading to significant success in both academic achievement and social-emotional development (Dweck, 2008; Steele et al., 2018; Willis, 2007). A sense of belonging and academic confidence are keys to joyful learning experiences. The PAR study findings helped the CPR group affirm teaching practices that can build joyful learning experiences by fostering a sense of belonging and building students' independence as learners. These findings solidified the points from several critical pieces of literature I reviewed; I focus first on how an understanding of

neuroscience is critical for understanding how to approach joyful learning for ELLs. Then I discuss how cultivating relationships with and among students can foster a sense of belonging. Finally, I connect teachers' CLRP practices with promoting equitable access and fostering independence and growth mindset. After discussing the connection between my findings and literature, I propose a conceptual framework for teacher capacity development that influences students' learning experience.

### **Neuroscience and Joyfulness**

When students feel joyful, they retain learning content and their brains are more likely to process cognitive memory successfully. According to Willis (2007), when the brain experiences less stress, it processes information considerably more effectively. When teachers use the CLRP strategies to help ELL students develop more confidence in themselves, they mitigate stress for the students; with less stress, the students show positive progress despite language barriers. Willis further claimed that "superior learning takes place when classroom experiences are enjoyable and relevant to students' lives, interests, and experiences" (2007, p. 1). The PAR research data indicated that when teachers created a learning environment that was positive and supportive through relationship building, fostering a sense of belonging, and engaging students' learning that is culturally and linguistically responsive, the ELL students were able to participate in learning activities with more confidence and joyfulness. With intentional partner work and a peer support culture, CPR teachers shared that the ELLs were motivated, showed more independent participation, and produced more outcomes.

We discovered that ELLs, like other students, had the ability to make choices independently in the learning environment that were most conducive to supporting their learning when they were empowered with agency. Through their agency, the students were able to voice

and contribute to their knowledge and to solicit help with ease. Neuroimaging has proven that when students feel minimal stress, their brains can achieve higher levels of cognitive functions, connect to learning content, and experience the excitement of new discoveries. The amygdala of the brain allows learners to learn without any barriers when stress is minimized (Kohn, 2004). The students can achieve a higher cognitive effect when the learning environment is joyful and supportive. It is essential for teachers to minimize the barriers so that ELL students can maximize their learning.

### **Cultivating Intentional Relationships and Fostering a Sense of Belonging**

Our initial work was to foster relationships in the learning environment so ELL students would feel a sense of belonging. ELL students can develop skills in building relationships, effectively communicating about their learning, and receiving feedback from teachers and peers when educators have a clear understanding of how a sense of belonging influences student learning and therefore create spaces for belonging. To enhance ELLs' joyful learning experiences, teachers created opportunities for ELL students to share, celebrate, and appreciate the diverse cultures and knowledge within each classroom.

Hammond (2015) stated that our brains use cultural knowledge to make sense of our world and make sense of learning. Teachers must gain access to the cognitive structures of dependent learners' brains in order to provide culturally responsive education, especially for our ELL students at our schools. Students need to connect to and embrace their knowledge and experience to make sense of the learning content in order to increase their cognitive capacity for higher-order thinking and problem-solving. Safir and Dugan (2021) emphasized that students feel a sense of belonging when they know "I see myself, I am seen and loved" (p. 103).



From this study, the CPR teachers affirmed that the work of cultivating relationships with students and ensuring a sense of belonging among students required intentional efforts. Teachers not only need to make specific connections with students and their families to learn about the students, they need to create opportunities in daily practices for students to interact and collaborate with each other to strengthen the relationships leading to stronger sense of belonging. Through intentional opportunities, teachers can further cultivate relationships and build an inclusive classroom where students continue to thrive as a joyful learner.

The first finding of the study—teachers need to have a clear understanding that creating and cultivating intentional relationships with students is essential in building a safe and joyful learning environment for students—validated the importance of building and cultivating relationships among teachers so that they could transfer that to classrooms and ensure that ELLs feel safe and joyful. The CPR teachers acknowledged that they experienced joyful learning throughout the PAR cycles when they connected with each other more and felt a sense of belonging. They engaged in learning activities and deeper conversations through CPR meetings and CLE meetings, using tools such as emulation poems, journey lines, personal narratives, and literature reviews on identity, stereotypes, cultures, personal learning experiences, collaboration on ELL strategies, practices, and reflections. The teachers felt safe sharing their stories and valued how each brought their perspectives regarding joyfulness to the group. As they built relational trust with their colleagues in the CPR team, they learned from each other. They became more intentional and began to replicate some of the learning experiences in their practices, such as elevating authentic opportunities for students to work with partners, integrating students' cultures in PBL projects, shifting towards facilitating learning to allow students to develop independent skills, and to have more direct check-in time to push rigor with students

individually and in small groups by asking extended questions in regards to learning topics.

When students feel that they belong, they can focus all of their cognitive energy on learning without being distracted by issues with belonging (Steele, 2010). Murphy (2018) emphasized that to build a strong sense of belonging, the quality of a student's relationships with classmates and teachers should exceed the quantity of connections. This calls for teachers to examine the authenticity and intentionality of their practices. The CPR team shared that building authentic relationships among students involves training all students and embracing a caring classroom culture. Teachers engaged students as part of the problem-solving process to increase assistance for ELL students when needed. Some of the examples included: using encouraging words, offering feedback, sharing thinking, checking for understanding of learning activities, and being a partner. Although I did not capture all of these relationship-building activities during the classroom observations, they were evident from teachers' conversations and reflections. The intentionality of teachers' practices influenced the quality of the ELL students' relationships with their peers and their teachers. When students have a sense of belonging, they can devote their full cognitive attention to learning (Murphy, 2018).

### **Ensuring Equitable Access, Academic Rigor and Agency for ELLs**

To disrupt the inequity for ELL students to have full access to learning, we need to ensure that teachers use intentional CLRP practices that support equitable access and agency to foster ELL students' independent skills; only then will students have full access to learning content and academic rigor. The study validated the positive results of providing students with a learning environment that supports student flexibility and opportunities to collaborate with their peers and encourages the freedom to make choices and share their knowledge in various ways.

Additionally, we learned that, with appropriate CLRP support, English Language Learner (ELL) students developed their skills toward independent learning.

As Hammond (2015) stated, education is not just about filling students with information, but helping them learn how to learn. In the second finding of this study, I determined that teachers who plan and implement lessons with specific CLRP strategies support ELL student access, academic rigor, and agency. The CPR group validated the importance of amplifying ELL students' joyful learning experiences through being intentional about equitable access to learning and providing opportunities for students to make choices and be more independent learners. To help students become independent learners, educators must create the right conditions to encourage and support their development. This includes promoting opportunities for processing information, making decisions, and taking on tasks in their learning. Hammond (2015) highlighted the significance of empowering students by providing a learning environment that promotes neuron development and stimulates myelination, the process of neural wiring in the brain to support new learning. Teachers should implement practices and create a conducive atmosphere that feels safe and supportive so that students actively engage in problem-solving, discussions, collaborations, and feedback. As a result, they are able to develop a growth mindset and feel a sense of confidence and accomplishment as they become stronger independent learners.

### ***Shifting Away from Banking System to Ensure Access Using CLRP***

Without active engagement in learning through these activities, students are merely receivers of the information, not processors of the information. Freire (2018) called this concept of learning a banking concept of education. When students only receive information, much like a bank deposit, they do not engage creatively or transform their thinking or skills. Freire claimed

such banking education dehumanizes learners. Freire stated, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). For English language learners to humanize their learning, ensure their sense of belonging, and develop their ability to communicate and think critically, teachers must use culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices to challenge the existing inequities that often prevent ELLs from learning. With teacher attention to CLRP practices, ELLs connect with others, cultivate an academic voice, develop self-efficacy, and make critical decisions. Their ability to overcome the barriers from the dominant culture and language will assist them in building independence.

When teachers plan and implement lessons to foster equitable access and rigor for ELL students, they create opportunities for students becoming independent learners. By using specific CLRP strategies—appropriate think time for ELL, connections to students’ culture and experience, close proximity, and bordering activities with explicit directions—the teachers increased student access and rigor. We rejected the banking system and found that when teachers created and supported partner work for students, students had higher engagement in learning and supported the conditions of joy that had not been obvious in the beginning. While the study aimed to examine and analyze teacher practice, we—as long-term educators—observed more readiness in students to engage, a sense of accomplishment on their faces and in their actions toward the teacher and their peers, reduced anxiety, and a sense of satisfaction. While these student attributes require other research efforts, I concentrated on the observable changes to teacher practices as they shifted away from banking system to accomplish these student outcomes.

### ***Facilitating Learning to Promote Agency, Rigor, and Confidence***

Teachers took the role of facilitating the learning process and fostered the conditions for students to collaborate and communicate with each other. Instead of depositing information to students (Freire, 2018), the teachers employed intentional seating, pairing, and grouping to foster dialogue. In that model, when students have frequent opportunities to do independent or partner work, teachers have more time to support individual students or small groups and engage students to demonstrate their learning. The CPR teachers discovered that with more time to assess student learning and support students, they could shift the cognitive demands to students as they reviewed students' work through extended questions, project-based learning activities, problem-solving, supporting peer work, and necessary scaffolding. Being able to hear what students know or understand, the teachers gained first-hand *street data*. Street data, according to Safir and Dugan (2021), are not "just stories," street data is "right in front of us all the time" and offers teachers the information to guide their instructional moves in a timely manner (p. 57). The practice of gathering street data shifts the reliability of standardized assessment for information on students' learning to teachers' immediate knowledge of what students learned.

In addition, the cognitive demands elevated the academic rigor of the questions that teachers prepared and the think time that the teachers offered. When ELL students have limited language proficiency, the amygdala sends stress signals to the frontal brain, interrupting thoughts, which in turn affects their ability to acquire new materials (Hammond, 2015). By creating a learning environment that minimizes anxiety, thus allowing the brain to function more effectively, teachers can deliver a greater positive impact to the students' cognitive function so that the. Teachers have more direct access to monitor students' learning when they apply the model of facilitated instruction.

When teachers empowered students with agency and offered multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning, even ELL students with limited English language proficiency could showcase their learning through presentations, projects, visual representations, or visible thinking. SFUSD launched its Deeper Learning Framework to guide the implementation of instructional coherence. To address the rooted “structural and systemic racism,” the district is seeking meaningful ways to elevate and include experiences and perspectives of all students. This framework outlined the importance of student-centered instruction and learning through questions, learning by doing. To ensure students’ academic ownership, the framework highlighted two key instructional priorities: collaboration and inquiry. This PAR study echoed the importance of such priorities. Teachers’ intentional planning and implementation of CLRP strategies is essential to ensure implementation of practices that support ELLs’ academic growth through collaboration and inquiry-based learning.

As a final point, beyond the direct opportunities for teachers to have students assume the cognitive load in their teaching, the teachers used practices to foster a growth mindset so students could increase their self-confidence, learn from mistakes, or take risks as they problem solved and worked with partners. Dweck (2015) affirmed that the culture of growth mindset embraces positive learning experiences and, by extension, brings more joy to learning. When teachers shifted the cognitive load to ELL students and increased agency, they brought more opportunities for students to take risks and step out of their comfort zones. As a result, ELL students had more experiences in using their language skills and gained abilities to express their understanding and demonstrate their learning, all leading to becoming independent learners.

## **Conceptual Framework for Developing Joyful Learning**

The focus of practice (FoP) of this PAR study intended to engage the Co-Practitioner Researcher (CPR) group of teachers in defining the characteristics of joyful learning, examining our teaching practices and strategies, and building the capacity of professional growth of the educators through CLE and reflective work. The two findings capture the core outcomes of building teacher capacity in connection to culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP). By learning together, the teachers acquired new knowledge and experience in the learning process through collaboration and reflection and developed clear awareness and understanding of the CLRP strategies. This learning supported teachers in developing and cultivating intentional relationships with their students. Teachers can ensure student access, rigor and agency by adopting a clear intention in planning and implementing CLRP strategies in their practices. Further, sustained relationships contribute to developing students as independent learners, which ultimately, amplifies ELL students' joyful learning experiences. The conceptual framework outlines the four stages of how teachers' capacity development influences the students' learning experiences (see Figure 20).

In the conceptual framework, I present the process of practice that can support school leaders when they design professional development for teachers and shift practices. I designed this framework from information processing theory; the sensory input is the process of defining joyful learning. Through dialogue on CLRP strategies and connection to personal narratives, teachers developed awareness of what strategies support joyful learning. After continuous learning and reviewing strategies, teacher awareness became an intentional plan, and the implementation practices became part of the long-term memory and sustainable. However, the process indicated in this framework does not align exactly with the stages outlined within the

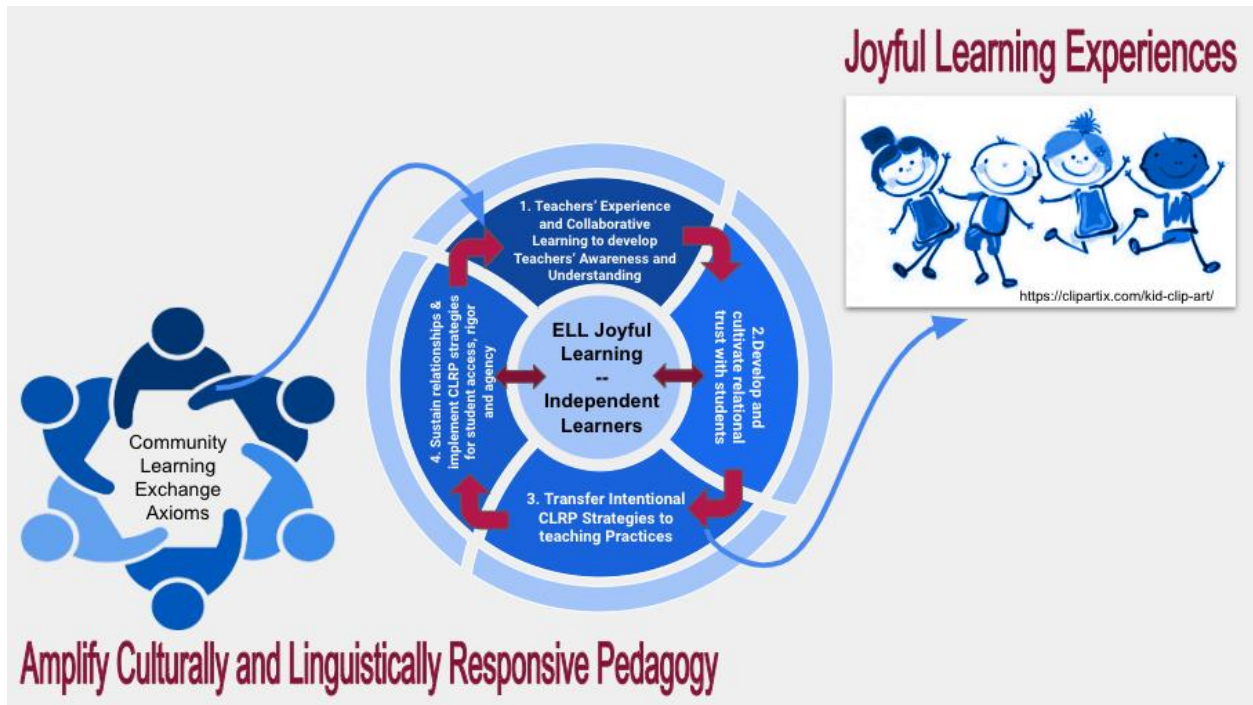


Figure 20. Expanded theory and conceptual framework evolved from the PAR study.



information processing theory. Since the entry point for teachers' learning differs among individuals, learning can happen at any stage as teachers are practitioners with various experiences. New knowledge may challenge and shift what people have already stored in their memory and may transform thinking and understanding with new foundational concepts.

The expanded concept for this framework is that the community learning exchange (CLE) protocol and the CLE axioms played a powerful function in guiding the learning process. I emphasize the importance of engaging people who are closest to the issues to seek solutions (Guajardo et al., 2016) as a primary goal and incorporate these axioms in our work:

1. Learning and leadership are dynamic social processes. Learning how to lead and learn within the context of relationships is at the core of leadership and the construction of the necessary conditions is what nurtures this development in an inviting and dignified manner.
2. Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes. At the core of social learning theory is creating gracious spaces and healthy relationships for participants, learners, and teachers alike to share their stories. Storytelling and conversation are the mediating tools for the relationships that exist at the core of the learning process.

When schools face a local issue or problem of practices, leaders or teachers can consider using one or more of these axioms to elicit conversations and stories from the community to construct meaning and find solutions. Donohoo et al. (2018) stated, "Success lies in the critical nature of collaboration and the strength of believing that together, administrators, faculty, and students can accomplish great things" (p. 44). She restated Bandura's (1993) argument that collective efficacy influences how educators feel, think, motivate themselves, and act. Collective efficacy can play a

factor in school changes and shifts of practices. That is why engaging the community to listen and understand before making changes is crucial to change efforts.

### **Review Research Questions**

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

1. To what extent can teachers articulate the characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning?
2. How do teachers co-design an observation tool for joyful learning in Chinese ELL students?
3. To what extent do teachers select and implement culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning strategies for Chinese ELL students?
4. How does participation in the PAR study influence my leadership growth?

Through the three PAR cycles, the CPR group met monthly and discussed and studied the indicators of the joyful learning experience of their ELL students in the school setting and the culturally and linguistically responsive practices that would amplify the joyful experience. Teachers understood that each member had experiences and interpretations of the meaning of joyful learning; therefore, dialogue and conversation became necessary processes for the team to calibrate the characteristics of joyful learning for Chinese ELLs. As Freire (2018) stated, “Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking” (p. 92). He argued that without dialogue, communication will not happen and there will not be any true education. The PAR research was an inquiry learning process. CPR teachers are practitioners and learners at the same time. The dialogue and conversations helped to strengthen the teachers’ understanding of the true meaning of joyful learning as learners and sharpened their criticality in

addressing cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Muhammad (2020) emphasized the importance of educators working towards transformation with a critical lens to disrupt the oppression and social injustice. They committed to further their work with Chinese ELLs concerning cultural identity and equity with clear intention towards true cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

Defining and redefining the characteristics of joyful learning is an iterative process. From reflecting on personal experiences and reviewing research articles and literature, CPR members affirmed that joyful learning for ELL students is engaging, empowering, and playful; learning content is meaningful and relevant to support students' continuing growth of knowledge and self; and the learning environment is supportive and inclusive (<http://www.joyfullearningnetwork.com>).

However, knowing is not doing. As the CPR teachers elevated their awareness of building a joyful learning experience, their work became more intentional. Both awareness and intention played important roles in supporting the teachers in selecting and implementing appropriate CLRP strategies. The team recognized that not all practices would surface consistently during observations when the team tried to co-construct the observation tool.

I invited a cohort of school principals to participate in a CLE meeting to share their expertise on teacher observations. From multiple interactions with the CPR team, the co-constructed a selective verbatim observation tool (see Appendix E) that outlined several key practices that would contribute to amplifying joyful learning experiences. An observer can capture significant evidence using this tool. I found the tool to be more effective when I focused on a few specific practices or strategies at one time with conversations and reflections after to make the observation meaningful. As Dewey (2015) pointed out, "Exercise of observation is, then, one condition of transformation of impulse into a purpose" (p. 68). As adult learners, the

CPR team saw the benefit of collaborating together to calibrate strategies and share experiences to effectively change practices. Their direct engagement in meaning-making, connecting their own experiences, and co-constructing understanding of the CLRP strategies led to the transformation of practices.

Addressing the third research question, the CPR team used the Project I<sup>4</sup> equity framework as a tool to calibrate the strategies that are culturally and linguistically responsive in supporting the ELLs. Classroom observation and selection of CLRP strategies were used in tandem. Teachers used the observations as a tool to inform the team of their practices and the CLRP strategies they used. These selected strategies varied from teacher to teacher based on their specific learning content and the needs of the students. As a result, I added additional strategies to the observation tool to observe patterns and frequency of use.

The teachers developed a deeper understanding of CLRP strategies to amplify ELLs' joyful learning experience. When they designed and selected strategies to build intentional relationships with ELL (and all) students and cultivate the relationships, they helped students develop a sense of belonging while connecting to self and others. When the teachers facilitated and supported learning for ELL students from dependent to independent learners with agency and empowerment, they provided students with more access to learning content and rigor. "One of the goals of education is not simply to fill students with facts and information but to help them learn how to learn" (Hammond, 2015, p. 12). In learning to learn – and developing metacognition about how to learn – teachers experienced joy and transferred that to classroom experiences for Chinese ELL students to experience joy.

In summary, I discussed the findings from the PAR study and how the literature review supported the research. From the expanded conceptual framework, I explained how teachers'

experience and learning developed through the iterative process. Although the process for teachers to build long-term memory of the learning seemed to align with the information processing theory, the research involved many iterative processes for them to rehearse, retrieve, and encode the learning. The work is not linear. Learning continued to evolve as the teachers continued to develop their capacity. I further discuss the implications from this study that contribute to practice, policy, and research. In order to create and sustain a learning environment that is joyful and inclusive for English language learners, I share my thoughts on further research and study regarding joyful experience for multilanguage learners.

### **Implications**

The PAR study findings support future studies in developing teacher capacity to promote practices and deepen understanding of social emotional learning and to cultivate relational trust with ELL students. To disrupt the systemic barriers and deficit thinking among educators, teachers need professional learning experiences on social emotional learning and must take an active role in designing and participating in a joyful learning process. Cunningham and Rainville (2022) emphasized that teachers must experience “inherently joyful” teaching to “give those experience to students” (p. 9).

I employed CLE protocols in this PAR study and observed that participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and engaging in courageous conversations utilizing CLE axioms and gracious space. As Guajardo et al. (2016) assert, in a gracious space, CLE participants can be open-minded and respect the stories of other as they have honest conversations. Using personal narratives and reflections are essential elements in setting and maintaining a gracious space. In the CPR meetings, teachers had a protected time and space to

connect to their identity and culture, which were deeply embedded in their experiences and contributed to building relationships, trust, and a sense of belonging.

While we often design learning experiences for teachers without considering their learning needs or prior knowledge, I offer the conceptual framework as a tool and discuss the potential implications for practice, policy, future research, and limitations to better serve the needs of the educators in academic setting.

## **Practice**

In order to provide “each and every student the quality instruction and equitable support required to thrive in the 21st century” (SFUSD Mission, 2021), educators must look beyond satellite data (Safir & Dugan, 2021) and everyday curriculum. Educators must incorporate practices that strengthen relational trust among teachers and with the students, families, and communities. As we cultivate students’ joyful learning experience, especially for English language learners, I urge district leaders and school administrators to consider practices in three areas: Teacher capacity development in building culturally and linguistically responsive practices, curriculum selection and implementation that emphasize complex multiculturalism with rich values, and community engagement centered on building relationships and cultural diversity. To do so effectively, I urge the use of practices that address the necessary condition of relational trust as the foundation for any school improvement (Tredway & Militello, 2023).

### ***Teacher Capacity Development***

As a district, we need to invest in teachers and understand how to garner intentional effort to develop teacher capacity. We must focus on practices that put the CLE axioms in practice and using CLRP strategies that support ELL students and consider that teachers should engage in experiences in professional learning that parallel the practices we want them to use in their

classrooms. To elevate students' agency and a sense of belonging in general, the district needs to invest time and resources to engage teachers as active partners. The data in the PAR study demonstrated that the teachers had a basic knowledge of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, but they did not know how to apply the strategies in their everyday practices. They shared that they did not implement most of the strategies in the Project I<sup>4</sup> framework because they lacked an awareness and understanding of precisely how to enact their espoused values. After the eighteen-month PAR project and study, the self-assessment data showed growth in both the teachers' understanding and implementation of the CLRP strategies. To be truly culturally and linguistically responsive, we need to remind teachers "that it is harmful to see the students all the same just because they are of the same ethnicity" (Chen, 2005, p. 31).

In order for teachers to own their learning and shift their practices towards equity, districts must engage teachers through professional development, should value the teachers' cultures and experiences, and promote a sense of belonging. Drago-Severson (2012) advises that we must create holding spaces for adult learning before teachers can transfer their learning to classrooms. As Cunningham and Rainville (2022) describe, "With joyful teaching and learning at the center, emotion, pedagogy, and content knowledge became intertwined" (p. 3). Learning becomes meaningful and relevant when it is actively connected to teachers' experience, knowledge, identity and cultures. The meaning-making process is a necessary step before teachers take actions; as a result, teachers engage in what Norris (2022) terms sensemaking and sense giving. Mezirow (1996) stated that learning for adults is a "process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future actions" (p. 162). Precisely as we know student learning is based on prior experience, we know that adult learning is the same. We need to invest time and opportunities to

develop teacher capacity by elevating teachers' sense of belonging so they can apply what they know and transfer their knowledge to practice. Belonging is like the "oxygen-all around us, yet can go unrecognized until it's missing for us" (Cunningham & Rainville, 2022, p. 3).

### ***Curriculum Selection and Implementation***

The second implication that surfaced from this study is that teachers need to have access to high quality curriculum to implement. The material must be standard-aligned and support diversity and multilingualism. A study of The New Teacher Project (TNTP, 2018) on the quality of student assignments in our district found that although there was a high percentage of assignment completions (71%), only 17% of those assignments met grade-level proficiency. The report indicated that "districts were adopting materials of widely varying quality and that in spite of having these district-provided materials, teachers were spending a significant amount of their planning time creating or selecting their own" (p. 31). As a result, 20% of the assignment aligned to the academic standards. A high-quality curriculum should spark students' joy and be relevant to their stories and cultures. Muhammad (2023) asserted that the majority of the curriculum and education are still skill-driven and do not take into account cultural or historical context. She pointed out that one of the national problems of the curriculum is the "lack of intricate multiculturalism that tokenizes culture" (p. 51).

### ***Community Engagement***

The third implication of practice is the importance of engaging the school community through fostering relationships and cultural competency. Educators can influence student outcomes and increase achievement for all students in a school when teachers and staff share a belief through their collective effort and action (Donohoo, 2018). I extend this concept of the school community to include administrators, students, and families. Bandura (1993) determined



that teachers who collaborate to foster a strong feeling of collective competence in their school community can significantly improve the academic performance of students. To address the racism, social injustice, and inequity that exist in our environment, it is necessary to cultivate a community that can disrupt the systemic oppression and unearth the joy of children who will thrive. As Muhammad (2023) asserted, “If systems, structures, and practices were developed with the genius of diverse children in mind, we would see immense growth” (p. 18). The strength of collaboration and the conviction that administrators, instructors, and students can achieve great things together are key to success (Donohoo et. al., 2018). The joint effort of the school community as a collective agency is paramount to the success and growth of all students.

### **Local, District, and State Policy**

Our district needs a continuous effort in developing a sustainable culturally and linguistically responsive practice that will amplify the joyful learning experiences of ELL students and close the achievement and opportunity gap. From reviewing the assets and challenges at each micro, meso, and macro level, I ascertained that ELL students continue to receive English Language Development (ELD) instructions and some level of support services from district and state. However, teachers’ quality professional development continues to be a challenge. Without the federal level of monitoring that the Lau mandate provided, we now have the responsibility at the state and district level for accountability, and instruction of ELD shifts to the district and schools. According to Valdés (2020), we often spend so much time on regulations and processes for classifying and assessing students that we have neglected to focus on teaching and learning as a result. In fact, she determined that we support the miseducation of students from linguistic minority groups. ELL students consistently underperform compared to

other groups (SFUSD SBAC Data, 2023). This gap often persists for years as they move through K–12 public school.

I urge the policymakers to evaluate policies at all levels focusing on teaching practices and students' learning outcomes using the antiracist lens and a culturally and linguistically responsiveness mindset. When teachers in this study amplified Chinese ELL students' culturally and linguistically joyful learning experiences, they had a positive impact on students' learning. At the local level, the annual social-emotional learning (SEL) data indicated that the favorable responses from ELL students were lower than the district average in all categories while their academic performance was lower than the district average, with 17.8% meeting ELA proficiency vs. 53.3% of all students meeting proficient level. The district provided clear expectations and requirements for ELD instruction, yet practices at each site vary considerably. The indication from the PAR finding emphasized that support for ELLs is beyond academic learning. School leaders and teachers should incorporate CLRP strategies to build intentional relationships with students and support their learning by empowering them with agency, connections to cultures, and experiences. Schools should incorporate CLRP in their practices from planning to implementation and cultivate a school culture that values the diversity of its members. To be culturally and linguistically responsive and change the deficit discourse concerning ELL students, teachers should understand “how oppression in schooling operates not only at the individual level but also the systemic level” (Gutiérrez, 2013, p. 12).

To examine the policy at the district level, I want to recognize that the district is moving toward instructional coherence to ensure standard-aligned instruction. Teachers who apply a deeper learning framework can promote learning through inquiry, collaboration, assessment for learning, equitable access, and demand and technology that enables core instructional priorities.

However, while frameworks help us understand coherence, the proof of use often differs. Actualizing a framework is complex for teachers, and school leaders and teachers need practice and classroom evidence to ensure that they transfer the goals of a framework to the reality of the classroom experience for students. The PAR study confirmed that shifts toward access and rigor depend on observations and conversations between the school leader and the teacher(s)—one recommendation of the Grissom et al. (2021) meta study of improving student learning. Then, as the study recommends, the school leader can use the evidence from individual classrooms to address site level professional learning.

At the macro level, state policies should support teachers in ensuring that ELL students have access to learning content in all subjects while developing language proficiency. Due to the need for additional ELD instruction, students in high school have difficulty meeting the subject requirements (A-G) for graduation and University of California admission (<https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/admission-requirements/freshman-requirements/subject-requirement-a-g.html>). This policy creates barriers for ELL students' equitable access to higher education. The policymakers should consider funding support to supplement the staffing needs for schools to provide for integration of English language development into all core subject areas including arts, technology, and PE.

## **Research**

Based on the findings of the PAR research, I offered the conceptual framework and tools to guide leaders and policy makers to consider these three recommendations for changes in designing professional learning and leading instructional shifts: (1) Foster a learning environment based on CLE axioms, protocols, and gracious space; (2) center learning on strengthening culturally and linguistically responsive practices to amplify students joyful

learning experiences; and (3) cultivate relational trust and agency to support collaborative work. Then, I posit that research at the local, district, and perhaps university levels is necessary to fully understand how best to approach the shifts in practice.

### ***Foster a Learning Environment***

The first recommendation for research is to more fully examine how protocols that foster relational trust link to improved teacher capacity. Bryk et al. (2010) view relational trust as a key factor that contributes to school improvement outcomes. Because the use of CLE axioms and protocols was so successful, including the shift to cultivating relational trust through gracious space, school and district leaders should invite the involved teachers or site leaders as part of the professional learning process in which they research their own work. CLE protocols and gracious space emerged as powerful tools for participant experiences as they shared perspectives, knowledge, expertise, and ideas. In a safe and engaging gracious space, the participants help broaden perspectives to support the decisions related to changes and shifts. Gracious Space toolkit can support the design of the decision-making process (<https://www.ethicalleadership.org/gracious-space-toolkit.html>). Leaders can decide which tool will best support them in their efforts and use school level evidence (Safir & Dugan, 2021) to inform their efforts.

### ***Center Learning on Applying CLRP***

The research finding has confirmed the importance of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching in building positive learning experiences of ELL students. For the second recommendation, the Project I<sup>4</sup> Framework highlighted several key indicators of what fully inclusive learning looks like and provided a guide to which practices to use (Tredway et al., 2019). Leaders can support collaborative learning on curriculum implementation using deeper

learning framework by employing a framework as a reference tool for teachers to self-assess their understanding and level of practices using culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (SFUSD Deeper Learning Framework, 2023). The implication of the PAR study shows that leaders should lead by example and create and cultivate an environment where staff value who they are, have deeper relationships and respect for each other, and acknowledge and connect their experiences as they strengthen their CLRP teaching in their classrooms. District level research or university-based researchers could examine how teachers and leaders transfer their learning from the framework to the classroom.

### ***Cultivate Relational Trust and Agency to Engage in Collaborative Work***

On my conceptual framework, educators center needs to engage in learning experiences, collaborative learning, academic outcomes, and social-emotional well-being. This conceptual framework and CLE axioms provide the guidance for leaders and policymakers to empower educators and community with agency and voice to collaborate on building relational trust and play active roles on developing practices and policies that are inclusive and supportive to our students, especially for those who need additional support, including ELLs and students with special needs.

From the PAR research findings, agency engaged students as active learners and supported their joyful learning experience. By empowering educators and community members with agency, they become part of the decision-making process and have their voices heard. They will more likely make changes and shifts with collective efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Thus, while this PAR study was conducted at one school centering on practices supporting Chinese ELL students in an academic environment, the study process could be the subject of research efforts. Researchers must examine the factors contributing to amplifying the learning experience.

Replication of those factors is possible if the researchers centered their studies on involving people's voice and agency. Future research should consider including ELL students and their families in the study. This would provide direct insight into students' learning experiences and learning outcomes. Students' family cultural identities and beliefs could potentially impact the findings of the study. To observe the long-term impact as the result of joyful learning, the research study should include multiple years of study following the participants.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations had an impact on this qualitative research study. These limitations included the scope of the study, the role of the lead researcher, and the global pandemic. These limitations reflected the generalizability, researcher bias, restrictions of policies and protocols from the school district, and lack of perspectives from those closest to the problems.

### ***The Scope of the Study***

This study was at one of the 72 PK-8 schools in the district, and the findings are useful to similar schools. The profile of the school represented a large urban elementary school serving over 560 students from transition kindergarten to the 5th grade. Ninety percent of the students live near the school. The teaching staff represents various levels of teaching experience. At the start of the study, 30% of the students at this school were English language learners; however, this percentage dropped to 17% over the course of the PAR research. There is no correlation between the population change and the study. The scope of the study concerned one particular school and the study size is small, but the methodology we used to perform the PAR study can be adaptable by researchers in various settings, although the findings may not be transferable to other situations.

### *The Roles of the Lead Researcher*

The multiple roles I held as the lead researcher posed limitations in three areas: Dual roles as an administrator and lead researcher, position change, and as an English language learner. I started the PAR research study as the site principal with six years' tenure. During PAR Cycle One, I transitioned to a district position as an executive director supervising 17 schools. My former school, where I conducted this research, became one of the 17 schools under my supervision. With the roles as the lead researcher and as an administrator, I had the advantage of facilitating the research activities. At the same time, this could represent disadvantages for the CPR members during observations, conversations, and reflections considering the sensitivity of the content. In particular, the transition affected my ability to conduct PAR observations and post-observation conversations. However, through the number of observations I was able to complete in PAR Cycle One and Two, I was collected adequate data for analysis and conclusion of the findings.

As a Chinese English language learner myself, I hold knowledge and a particular perspective of the school culture and cultural heritage. This knowledge could affect the data analysis. To be transparent and open-minded, I addressed these potential biases by triangulating the data with CPR members through member checks and reflective memos. These data included observation notes, reflections, field notes, and meeting notes.

With their rich cultural backgrounds and experiences, the CPR teachers contributed various perspectives to the study. The team listened and learned together, protecting the integrity of the study through active involvement, observations, triangulation, reflection, and regular member checks. They collaborated on their findings and shared their practices aimed at amplifying the ELL students' joyful learning experience.

## ***Global Pandemic***

The global COVID pandemic that began in early 2020 created a significant impact on education—one outcome was to elevate awareness of the students’ social emotional learning (SEL) needs in all educational settings across the nation. We increased the focus on SEL support for all students and staff, yet many schools had limited resources and staff to support the increased needs. As a consequence of the pandemic and political atmosphere in the country, we had an unprecedented shortage of teachers. The need to strengthen the sense of belonging and relationships with colleagues and students became heightened. In addition, due to the closing of schools, all students experienced a year of online learning. The lack of social interaction with peers demanded a greater urgency for teachers to engage students in building joyful learning.

These limitations were addressed to protect the integrity of the study. As I encountered various barriers, I used the Resilience Manifesto (Aguilar, 2018) to work with teachers, and that continues to inspire our work and support our resilience collectively: “We cultivate our resilience and become stronger so that we can help others become stronger; we cultivate our resilience so that we have the energy to heal and transform the world” (p.19). We are destined to build resilience in our students and educators.

## **Leadership Development**

The word “education” in Chinese is 教育 (jiàoyù). Although each character carries its own meaning, 教(jiào) means “to teach, to educate”, while 育(yù) means “to bring up, to nurture and cultivate”, when we refer to education, these two words are inseparable. Together, 教(jiào) and 育(yù) completes the meaning of “education”. As we teach, we nurture and cultivate. This PAR study deepened the meaning of being an educational leader. Through the process of leading the research, I often examined how participation in this study influenced my leadership growth



and affirmed who I am and my belief system. The learning from the research broadened my knowledge and deepened my understanding of equity work. I led with my heart and my advocacy as I set the necessary condition for 教育 (jiàoyù).

The collaboration and relational trust with the CPR members impacted the learning experience of the CPR team and strengthened my leadership skills. My leadership style has shifted toward distributed (Blitz et.al., 2015) and inclusive. From the participatory action research, I summarize my leadership development in three areas: the journey that helped me to have a deeper understanding of myself as a leader; how the leadership approach centered on humanizing the work; and the impact of the study on my work as an equity warrior.

### **Journey: Deeper Learning of Self**

I considered the journey of the PAR study to be a journey of self-discovery. As an immigrant from China in my mid-20s, I knew the expectation to do well in school was the norm. From reading literature on the sense of belonging, model minorities, and identity influence in learners, I came to the clarity of who I am as a learner and as an educator. Although in Chinese culture the definition of success is often rooted in academic performance, I realized that doing well at school brings joy and confidence to families and friends, but not necessarily to me. What brings joy to me as a learner? Reflecting on my learning journey, I recalled a personal experience of social injustice when I received a grade purely based on the fact that English is not my first language. I experienced learning from a banking system, a system that lacks joy and satisfaction because it does not interact or connect the learning content to the life I know. I experienced teaching as scripted process of instruction that did not attend to individual students' needs, nor did it incorporate students' cultures and diversity.

The PAR study provided the opportunity for me to reflect and understand who I am and how the awakened consciousness of my identity inspires my work and role as a leader. Steele (2010) defines an identity contingency as a circumstance an individual has to deal with in a social identity. Being an immigrant to this country, I have the privilege to have both my home culture and a new culture we collectively share. We co-exist in a multicultural world. As an educator, I recognize that we all share this collective identity. Finding pathways to embrace and celebrate this diverse identity becomes an ultimate task for educators to help students connect and bridge cultures.

### **Leadership Approach: Humanizing the Learning**

As I sought answers to enacting joyful learning for self, teachers, and students, I wanted to ensure that the learning journey experience was full of joy. I approached the research project as a process of making a production. I created conditions and planned for each stage of the production so that the CPR members found that the experience from the study brought them a sense of fulfillment.

The first stage was the pre-production stage, the PAR Pre-Cycle. I set the stage to review assets and potential barriers to consider as I planned the action steps to conduct the research. The second stage was the production stage, PAR Cycle One. As the lead researcher, I worked with the CPR team to collect evidence through CLE meetings, reflections, and classroom observations and analyzed data through a cyclical process. The third stage was the post-production stage, PAR Cycle Two. As the lead researcher, I analyzed and synthesized the data to seek an understanding of the data categories and themes that led to the study findings.

I centered my research on humanizing the work. Each CPR member has a unique experience and cultural background. I facilitated the learning experiences that connected to their

experiences, knowledge, culture, beliefs, and values through these stages. As an educational leader, I valued collaborating with the CPR team members. Through the CLE meetings, I practiced facilitation skills with clear intention and process. One of the five CLE axioms states that people closest to the work are in the best place to find solutions to the problems (Guajardo, et al., 2016), and the CLE participants' insights helped me with a deeper understanding of joyful learning. The participants' engagement offered them direct involvement at each step through the process. This humanistic approach fostered the CPR teachers' agency and capitalized on inclusivity and application of their learning (Blessinger et. al, 2019). As Sergiovanni (2000) states, we must ensure that the lifeworld humanizes the systems world in which we live and work in schools. The lifeworld must be the focus so that the systems world does not interrupt and cause us to forget who we are in the process of all the technical and bureaucratic responsibilities in leadership.

### **Leadership Impact: Equity Warrior**

I consider myself an equity warrior. As Leverett (2002) stated:

Equity warriors are persons who, regardless of their role in a school or district, passionately lead and embrace the mission of high levels of achievement for all students, regardless of race, social class, ethnicity, culture, disability or language proficiency. They view themselves as having the power to influence the teaching and learning agenda in meaningful ways. (p. 1)

The journey of this research project has become the beginning of my authentic path to being an equity warrior. As an educational leader, I carry the obligation to build schools with environments and cultures where teachers and staff can authentically connect with all their

students and know each individual student; where learning is joyful and inclusive; and where high-quality learning is accessible to all students.

As we continue our learning, we advocate for social justice and fight against systemic racism. I encourage educators to challenge the policies that are the dominant power behind the decisions of our practices, as the caste system continues to influence the unspoken hierarchy of race and culture (Wilkerson, 2020). Recognizing the institutional racism in our educational practices still influences decision-making based on the demands of the privileged few. We continue to see inadequate funding support for English Language Learners, and districts make decisions without collaboration and dialogue with people closest to the problems. I hope I can continue to inspire and empower those who are being systematically oppressed. “It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves” (Freire, 2018, p. 65). As an equity warrior, I hold the responsibility to elevate the understanding of the inequity of services to our students who are often experiencing economic and sociological struggles in their immigrant families and to empower teachers and students to develop capacity with culturally and linguistically responsive knowledge and skills to advocate for social justice.

Educators need to equip learners with not only the skills and knowledge of the academic contents, but the ability to connect to their cultures, values, perspectives, and experiences as they make meaning of their learning. Leaders need to equip educators with the tools and strategies they need to understand the sense of urgency of the equity work in order to support and empower students with the skills and knowledge to become culturally and linguistically responsive adults.

## Conclusion

“Trust is the most important part of any relationship, and at the same time, it is the most vulnerable and sensitive” (Hensley & Burmeister, 2008, p. 131). As we learned and grew as educators, relational trust was the foundation for the research team to engage in self-discovery activities, and we held courageous conversations about our biases and vulnerability in acknowledging our assets and challenges. The CPR team found success in “the critical nature of collaboration and the strength of believing that together, administrators, faculty, and students can accomplish great things” (Donohoo et al., 2018, p. 44). The CLE protocol and five axioms provided the structure for the research activities and grounded our equity-centered focus in this qualitative study.

From this participatory action research (PAR) project and study, the CPR team examined teaching practices beyond instruction to understand the ELL students’ joyful learning experiences and how the experiences are a critical component of the teaching and learning environment. The focus of practice (FoP) centered the PAR study for the Co-Practitioner Researchers to closely examine the characteristics of joyful learning using culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP), and to solidify strategies and practices addressing the inequity of current services to Chinese ELL students. The PAR study gave us the opportunity to capture the significance of the core outcome of teachers’ capacity development in connection to CLRP and identify the needed shifts for teachers to apply in their daily practices against systemic barriers and deficit thinking influencing ELL students’ learning experience and outcome.

As a result, the participatory action study emphasized that the CPR teachers elevated their awareness and deepened their understanding of the impact that joyful learning experiences have

on Chinese ELLs. As the CPR team developed their knowledge and understanding, their work became more intentional and strategic, specifically in building and cultivating relationships with students to nurture a sense of belonging and supporting students with access, academic rigor and agency to develop their academic skills and confidence by applying specific CLRP strategies.

As the lead researcher and an educational leader during this research journey, I reinforced the importance of how we lead in the work for change. Without humanizing the learning, we may face the danger of distrust and lack of collective efficacy (Sergiovanni, 2000). “The job of a leader should be one that brings joy, excitement, and validation to one’s life” (Hensey & Burmeister, 2008, p. 130). We need to lead with our hearts and advocate to embrace harmony and peace. Leading change requires that leaders have clear intention and foster collaboration with those who are closest to the issues. This is what we have accomplished in this study, and the practices I learned in the study will continue to guide how I facilitate learning for others.

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# APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



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

## Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
To: [Ying Kasner](#)  
CC: [Matthew Militello](#)  
Date: 11/23/2021  
Re: [UMCIRB 21-001667](#)  
Joyful Learning Matters

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 11/23/2021. 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
Community Learning Exchange Protocol(0.02)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Kasner Dissertation Proposal(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Kasnery_Appendix C_Consent Form- Adult.pdf(0.01)	Consent Forms
Kasnery_Appendix H_Reflective Memo For CPR Team Members.pdf(0.01)	Data Collection Sheet
Observation Tool(0.01)	Additional Items
Post Observation Protocol(0.01)	Additional Items
Recruit Script(0.01)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts

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



Completion Date 27-Dec-2020  
Expiration Date 27-Dec-2023  
Record ID 40028199

This is to certify that:

**Ying Kasner**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

**Human Research**  
(Curriculum Group)

**Group 2.Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel**

(Course Learner Group)

**1 - Basic Course**  
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**East Carolina University**

**CITI**  
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w7609e5f8-a32f-4243-9964-456344d93443-40028199](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w7609e5f8-a32f-4243-9964-456344d93443-40028199)

## APPENDIX C: SFUSD DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER



**SFUSD** SAN FRANCISCO  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

December 7, 2021

Ying Mimi Kasner  
Francis Scott Key ES  
1530 43rd Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94122

Dear Ms. Kasner:

Thank you for your request for San Francisco Unified School District's permission to conduct your research titled, *Learning Matters: Improving Teachers' Practices for Chinese English Language Learners*.

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

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

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

Good luck with your research. Your primary RPA contact for supporting the study is Quynh Tien Le, so please feel free to contact her if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norma Ming".

Norma Ming  
Manager of Research and Evaluation  
Research, Planning, and Assessment Department

Table 1. Approved research personnel

Names of approved research personnel	Completed research ethics training	Clearance for direct student contact / site visits
Ying Kasner	Valid from 12/23/21 to 12/22/23	N/A

Table 2. Partnership and communication table

Stage of research	Involving which SFUSD staff/site/department, if any?		Involving which external audience(s), if any?	Date(s)
Initial project ideas	none		ECU professors	06/20/2020
Study design	none		ECU professors & IRB	08/01/2021
Research approval	RPA		N/A	<i>Allow ≥2 mos.</i>
Recruitment & data collection	Primary data	N/A	N/A	Fall 2021 - Spring 2023
	Secondary data*	RPA	N/A	[MMM YYYY]
Updates on interim progress & findings	School PLC: preliminary findings/ cycle 1/ cycle 2/cycle 3		N/A	12/19/2021
				05/19/2023
Internal presentation	School Staff Meeting; C5 school leaders		N/A	05/1/2023
Drafts of reports prior to submission	N/A		N/A	03/30/2023
Executive summary	RPA, Cohort 5 leadership		N/A	06/30/2023
Formal report	RPA, Cohort 5 leadership		Final Defense 3/2023	06/30/2023
Submission for public circulation	N/A		N/A	06/30/2023

## APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM – ADULT



**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: Joyful Learning Matters: Teacher Practices in Amplifying Joyful Learning Experiences for Chinese English Language Learners

Principal Investigator: Ying Mimi Guan Kasner  
Institution, Department or Division: East Carolina University, Department of Educational Leadership  
Address: 220 Ragsdale, ECU, Greenville, NC 27858  
Telephone #: 415-205-5567  
Study Coordinator: Dr. Matthew Militello  
Telephone #: 252-328-6131

Participant Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Please PRINT clearly**

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) **and** San Francisco Unified School District study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems, and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in the research.

### **Why am I being invited to take part in this research?**

The purpose of this participatory action research project is to focus on teachers building capacity in working with Chinese ELLs in math instruction and engage in studying how educators learn and understand culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (CLRP) and joyful learning strategies in order to support Chinese ELLs. By using the improvement science process in a professional learning community, you will engage in PDSA inquiry cycles, reflect and collaborate on practices, and examine culturally responsive teaching. By doing this research, you will gain more insight on how to better support Chinese ELLs in improving equitable joyful learning experiences.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about   4   people to do so.

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

The research carries some minimal risk. Some of the risks might come in the form of discomfort or concerns about privacy with regard to judgment by colleagues.

### **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 *Francis Scott Key School, San Francisco, CA*. You will need to come to the two-hours *monthly professional learning communities meeting, Room 120 or other designated classroom meeting location* 18 times during the study. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 18 hours over the next *18 months*.

**Consent Version # or Date:** August 1, 2021 \_\_\_\_\_ **1**

**What will I be asked to do?**

**Title of Study:** Joyful Learning Matters: Teacher Practices in Amplifying Joyful Learning Experiences for Chinese English Language Learners

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to participate in the following:

- Participate in an Equity-Centered CPR and Collaborate with colleagues
- Share your mathematical experiences and articulate characteristics of culturally and linguistically responsive joyful learning
  - Create observation tools and participate in post-observation conversations
- Read articles and books on Culturally Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy, Chinese ELL Identity, Mindset, and Sense of Belonging.
  - Participate in improvement science that involves plan-do-study-act cycles
  - Plan and Implement strategies in your classroom based on CPR action plans
  - Reflect on practices through journaling, reflective memos or providing CPR feedback.

**What might I experience if I take part in the research?**

Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. The research will not be included in any evaluations. We 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 be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study. You will be paid up to 18 hours of extended pay based on the contracted extended hour's rate for any collaborative work that is outside of your contracted work hours. Compensation will not be based on your implementation or completion of the research study.

**Will it cost me to take part in this research?**

It will not cost you any money to be part of this research.

**Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?**

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- The sponsors of this study.
- SFUSD Research and Planning Achievement Department
- 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.

**Consent Version # or Date:** August 1, 2021 2

**Title of Study:** Joyful Learning Matters: Teacher Practices in Amplifying Joyful Learning Experiences for Chinese English Language Learners

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at 415-205-5567 (Monday to Friday between 8:00 am to 5:00 pm) or email [kasnery@sfusd.edu](mailto:kasnery@sfusd.edu)

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director for Human Research Protections, at 252-744-2914.

**Is there anything else I should know?**

1) Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens and, after such removal, the information or biospecimens could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you or your Legally Authorized Representative (LAR). However, there still may be a chance that someone could figure out the information is about you.

The following research results will be provided to you when requested, and these results will be shared with you once the study is completed.

**I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?**

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

---

**Participant's Name (PRINT) Signature Date**

**Person Obtaining Informed Consent:** I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above, and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

Ying (Mimi) Kasner 08.17.2021

**Person Obtaining Consent/ Principal Investigator (PRINT) Signature Date**

*Consent Version # or Date:* August 1, 2021 3



## APPENDIX E: JOYFUL LEARNING OBSERVATION TOOL

### Joyful Learning - Observation Tool - planning for PAR One

Do teachers create classroom environments that foster joyful learning?

*Did it happen? How many times did it happen?* (Quantitative data)

Note: First, the Principal does it. CLE and vet the tool together. Tuning protocol together.

Then, have the teachers use it next semester after we go through principal and observations and post-obs dialogue.

Time Stamp	Codes up to 7-8 things 2-3 names for sense of belonging/SEL, environment, academic	Evidence	Tally	Subtotal	Notes - CPR review: evidence - √ - key focus by CPR
	Students called by name				√
	Positive Redirection				√
	Collaboration, table/partner work,				Peer/partner work
	Growth Mindset statements/framing - language				Make it simple, not too broad
	Prior experience/knowledge				
	Feedback given to Students				
	Rigor/ZPD challenging (engagement)				Warm demander - teachers' expectations, instructional moves
	Choices provided				√ Teacher's move for students to have choice: space, options to demonstrate...
	Wait Time				√
	Mini survey/Exit Tickets?				
	Questioning and/or Open-Ended Strategies				
	Cultural identities represented in room				
	Nonverbal list/Cues:				Teacher proximity, smile, hand gestures, talk move...
	Choices provided/agency				√

#### **Process:**

Triangulate: Reflective memos, CPR meeting collaboration, observation notes & post observation dialogue

Codes: surfaced from observation

**Review Notes: consideration for codes organization.** Where do CLRP intersect in these codes?

- 2-3 things (codes) about the environment: student recognition, CLRP, EL strategies
- 1 academic (code) - wait time (count the seconds, should be 3-8 seconds), TPSW (think, pair, share, write/draw)
- 2-3 things (codes) about a sense of belonging - social emotion: calling by name, positive redirection, connection
- Add non-verbal protocol



## OBSERVATION EVIDENCE

<b>Student Dialogue (Access &amp; Rigor)</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Student agency/choice (empowerment)</b>	<b>#</b>
TPS - Think Pair Share TT - Turn and Talk  Think Time  Protocol: _____ Protocol: _____  push cognitive level (level of task)  push cognitive level (questioning) Other:		Choose partner  Choose activity  Choose response form  Choose space  Other  Raised Hand	
<b>Nonverbals (climate, support)</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Teacher Reinforcement (engagement, support)</b>	<b>#</b>
Smile  Leaning in  Other: Proximity		Positive statement Redirect Revoice Push cognitive level Other:	

### Post observation conversation guiding steps

The following are steps **after the observation**:

**STEP ONE: Analyze the data/evidence and use it to guide the conversation;** depending on the situation, **give data to teacher ahead of the conversation.**

**STEP TWO:** Decide on an **approach/coaching stance** and a location for post-observation conversation

**STEP THREE:** Prepare an **opening question** that relates to the evidence

**STEP FOUR:** Ask **coaching questions** (acknowledging, paraphrasing, clarifying, shifting, restating); summarize throughout the conversation as you move through the evidence and conversation

**STEP FIVE: Summarize next steps** that teacher has chosen and set date for another observatio

