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How do Principals' Behaviors Facilitate or Inhibit the Development of a Culturally Relevant Learning Community?

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HOW DO PRINCIPALS' BEHAVIORS FACILITATE OR INHIBIT THE DEVELOPMENT

OF A CULTURALLY RELEVANT

LEARNING COMMUNITY?

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by

Gwendolyn Julia Kelley

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expectations, school culture, data analysis, professional development, deficit model thinking

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the question: "How do principals facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning environment?" A second question asked, "What is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community?" The criteria for purposely selecting the 12 principals chosen for the study included finding principals who served in schools with a 50% or greater non-White population and who also had served a minimum of three years as the school's leader at the time of the study. Additionally, the schools chosen from various districts around the state showed an upward trend in student performance and growth model data for all of their ethnic groups. Based on a literature review, which provided a cursory view of topics related to understanding cultural competency, questions were formulated that explored what creating a culturally responsive learning community looked like. The interviews revealed many practices that described effective schools and what effective principals do. Five themes emerged in the findings. Linked to each of the findings is a range of five to 11 subthemes. With varying degrees of understanding and implementation, principals in the study demonstrated practices that included (a) having high expectations for all, (b) developing a sense of community, (c) using analysis of data and monitoring/evaluation of staff, (d) providing professional development that addressed cultural competency issues, and (e) promoting awareness and knowledge about cultural proficiency practices. Noting their current progress, all of the principals expressed their desire for their staffs to have more training to increase their levels of cultural proficiency.

PREFACE

In 1996, Michele Foster published case studies on 20 African American educators who were highly regarded in their communities when they taught or served as principals for predominantly African American children. With integration, however, came a major shift in those school communities and others across the nation. During that change, African American children lost the value of having a plethora of role models who looked like them; and many lost a sense of community as they were bused to suburban districts because of court rulings documenting *de facto* segregation. Disproportionately, across the nation, Black teachers lost their jobs as White teachers began to teach Black children; but Black teachers were not as well received. The initial turmoil of White parents finally accepting Black teachers for their children died down as children and staffs were finally integrated (Foster, 1996). However, as G. Orfield (1996) found from his work, the resegregation of schools had started over again, as many racially imbalanced schools based on neighborhood housing patterns have re-emerged.

The question comes, does it really matter who teaches our children? In 2011, at the beginning of a new decade, the country witnessed another major shift in who was teaching our children. As the age and years of experience of the teaching force changed, there was only a slight shift in the number of non-White teachers as a whole. According to the U.S. Department of Education's, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES; 2010), after compiling data from 1,076 surveys representing a 45% return rate, when 2011 data were compared to data from previous years, several new trends were seen (as cited in Feistritzer, 2011). Based on that study,

Feistritzer (2011) stated that there are currently 3.2 million teachers in America teaching 49.4 million children in public schools. Of that number, a new trend had reversed findings from the 1990s. The number of teachers under 30 rose as the number of teachers 50 and over decreased. The younger cohort of teachers under age 30 had increased from 11% in both 1996 and 2005 to 22% in 2011. Conversely, the number of teachers who were 50 and older dropped from 42% to 31% between 2005 and 2011 (Feistritzer, 2011). Teachers with more than 25 years of experience shifted downward from 27% in 2005 to 17% in 2011, while those with five or fewer years of experience moved upward from 18% in 2005 to 26% in 2011.

Across the nation, the teaching staff continued to grow as a predominantly White female occupation, representing 84% of the force in 2011, up from 69% in 1986. Another trend showing a slight increase was the numbers of people of color, especially Hispanics, who are entering the profession at the fastest rate. However, as the number of Hispanic men increased, the number of African American males decreased. The number of African American teachers representing 7% of the force in 2011 had fluctuated slightly between 5 and 7% since 1986 (Feistrizer, 2011). All of the schools in this study evidence these numbers of predominantly White teachers teaching students of color.

The population of the country has also undergone a similar transformation. In 2005, minorities made up 33% of the American population with Hispanics representing 14% and Blacks representing 12% of the overall total. By 2020, it is estimated that the non-White population will represent 39% of the total, which is a 32% increase as compared to a 4% increase of the White population (NCES, 2010). As the total population shifts occurred, the student population in the schools mirrored that growth, with some states, depending on the region they were located, having much higher or lower rates than other areas of the country.

The implications for these numbers are thought provoking considering the training teachers received, both as pre-service and practicing teachers. More teachers of color have entered the profession in non-traditional programs. In fact, about one-third of all new teachers "hired since 2005 entered the profession through an alternative program other than a college-based teacher education program" (Feistritzer, 2011, p. ix). Another question arose then. What training and support have these teachers received to be able to meet the needs of a diverse school population?

The data confirmed that older teachers were retiring and leaving the profession, as younger teachers were replacing them. Furthermore, Feistritzer (2011) proposed that these "newer teachers are considerably more open to proposed reforms in the profession and in American education" (p. x). Hopefully these new teachers, as Ladson-Billings (2001) described, will display the skills and cultural competency to become examples of those Joshuas who "crossed over into Canaan" as her book title implied when Moses and the older generation could not.

From the 2011 survey compiled for the *Profile of Teachers in the U.S. 2011* (Feistritzer, 2011), the teachers surveyed identified the two most valuable ways that they continued to gain competency in their profession. They ranked collaboration and discussion with colleagues and using their own teaching experiences as the most effective ways that they learned. Furthermore, they believed that their life experiences have also equipped them to deal with issues they faced in the classroom (Feistritzer, 2011). These findings of the study provide principals who value collaboration and plan ways to make collaboration happen an upper-hand in knowing this.

Does it matter what is taught? Between the pages of the texts, there is a "hidden curriculum" that predicts which children will be successful in a school setting. There are

"hidden rules" that are not posted on classroom walls. Many of those who come to school already assimilated by their parents and community into middle-class values and lifestyle believe that school will help them do well in life—probably do better in school than those who have not been taught the hidden rules. However, when students come to school with language and behavior patterns as well as economic conditions that have adversely influenced their home culture, and their behaviors differ from the expectations that their teachers hold, those students face great obstacles. Compounding this, sometimes as children take on the speech and behavior patterns that are characteristic of the school culture, other students from their own culture ridicule them.

Moreover, teachers are proficient in their own cultural background, and the children are proficient in theirs. When different cultures meet, tensions could create a "cultural dissonance" because the children must adapt to the school environment and the teachers may not understand how the children are viewing the world of school. Something special has to happen within the school walls to bridge between the cultures of home and school so that all students grasp the importance of education, strive for excellence, and believe that education will provide a foundation for their future. Something special must happen in classrooms that shows children that what they are learning is relevant to them and their lives, connects them to things they are familiar with and interested in, and helps them respect themselves and connect with others in the world who may be different from what they know and see on a daily basis. As teachers acknowledge the importance of understanding how their culture and that of the students intersect, that something leads to cultural proficiency.

Teachers come into education to make a difference. But good feelings and intentions are not enough. Developing skills in cultural competency in a society that is rapidly changing its

demographic face is mandatory. However, this does not happen without deliberate effort. Teachers must begin to scrutinize any unconscious thinking patterns that they hold about privilege and race that interfere with expecting all children to excel and succeed with rigorous, relevant, and engaging content. Understanding culture matters. What teachers teach matters. How teachers teach matters, also. Students learn differently. They react differently to different styles of instruction practices. Many students of color are dependent upon the institution of school to help them make these connections. Teachers must adapt to this fact so that students meet success (Delpit, 1995; Jackson, 2011).

Although it is imperative that students learn the culture of school, they also must not be forced to trade their own culture for another one that is imposed on them and belittles those they esteem (Howard, 2006). Educators must also learn to appreciate and respect the assets that students bring with them from their own home cultures. Students are not blank slates. There is a major problem when teachers see no assets or values that students and their families possess.

Teachers must reframe their thinking to believe that students come with strengths. How teachers ignite the "pedagogy of confidence" in students that Jackson (2011) promoted is crucial. Her identification of "school-dependent children" (Jackson, 2011, p. 29) highlights their critical needs for being exposed to outstanding teachers who have the ability to see the strengths of their students and provide them with enriching experiences that expose them to the skills they need. Teachers must retool their practices to understand that language patterns make sense in their students' worlds and then help them find ways to bridge to standard English while developing new vocabulary and comprehension skills that relate to the text they read (LeMoine, 2011a, 2011b). Teachers must understand that their students have ways of coping with problems when they arrive at school, and although those behaviors may not match school practices, those skills

can be refocused when expectations are clear (Karp & Harris, 2011). Students must not be defined by stereotypic biases of poverty, race, nationality, or media. Each child is unique and possesses his or her own form of giftedness (Jackson, 2011).

Principals stand as the gatekeepers for what happens in their schools. As they become culturally proficient, they can lead their staffs to realize the importance of doing the same (Cleveland, 2005). The principals in this study have begun to move in that direction. They offer a glimpse into how schools that have a 50% or greater non-White population, with a predominantly White staff of teachers, are outperforming other schools in the same cohort. A few of the schools seemed unlikely choices for the study because they had the lowest overall proficiency rates of students passing both English/language arts and mathematics state assessments when compared to the other 12 schools chosen. But the trend data revealed that something special was happening in those schools, so that even their stories shed light on how to create a culturally relevant learning environment.

All of the principals had a minimum of three years' experience in their buildings, which combined with their previous backgrounds was long enough to make major changes in expectations and instructional practices in their schools. A common factor that all these principals held was their commitment to excellence as they worked to eliminate the achievement gap that existed in their schools. Within the study, as principals were interviewed, they shared how they worked toward meeting the challenges they faced.

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I also am thankful for my family and friends and the memory of loved ones who have all helped sustain me. My husband, Woodrow Kelley, has been a great cheerleader. The same is true for my daughter, Natalie, her husband, Larry, and my daughter, Nichole. I also offer a special acknowledgement to John Airola, my last principal and mentor who showed me what excellence could look like in a school.

I want to acknowledge the children in my life: my grandchildren; my great-nieces, nephews, and cousins; my godchildren's children; my young neighbors; the young people we mentor at the Juvenile Center; and the children who attend my church. I pray they will all have the best teachers and principals possible. I also salute the children I have taught for all the lessons they have taught me through the years.

A final special acknowledgement goes to the principals in this study who will never be known by name but who took the time to share their philosophies, practices, and policies to help others see how they are moving toward creating a culturally relevant learning environment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Too many of the teachers teaching poor children fall into what one of my colleagues in Math Ed calls, "The You Poor Dear Syndrome." *"You don't have much money in your family; you poor dear." "You only have one parent at home; you poor dear." "You've never been to the beach; you poor dear."* The problem with this syndrome is not only that the teachers focus their energy on sympathizing, but that this sympathy turns into a set of excuses for why they cannot expect much academically from the students. (Ladson-Billings, 2007a)

Both principals and teachers have the power to orchestrate learning that touches the

hearts and minds of their students and launch them into a lifelong love of learning. With that

power, however, comes an awesome responsibility to offer each student an equitable opportunity

to reach his or her maximum potential regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic background.

Principals have a challenging role to support, nurture, and exercise the kind of leadership that

creates a learning environment that transcends any obstacles that block learning. When

principals believe that both teachers and students can excel in performance, their power to lead

and influence a school's climate and culture increases (Bellanca, 2009).

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) argued,

The best route to influence teachers is through the principal, who, research repeatedly

shows, is key to school change. For principals to change both, their own and their

teacher's attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors as they work with students of

color, the principal must be able to identify and understand barriers to equity. (p. 628)

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) contended that principal preparation programs must include training in identifying the *equity traps* that ensnare, undermine, and hinder non-White student achievement in classrooms across the country where students of color may be found to be underperforming.

Society is indebted to the thousands of diligent teachers and principals who desire to challenge, encourage, and inspire their students and engage them in maximizing their full potential. But the inequities that lead to high dropout rates that appear in far too many urban school districts and the gap that exists in student performance between different ethnic groups show these qualities are not enough. Cultural theorists have questioned how much of that accountability can be placed squarely on the school system's shoulders and the way most schools with diverse populations typically operate. Ultimately, these theorists also have questioned the role of teachers' and principals' in assuming responsibility in the overall process (Barton, 2004; Noguera & Akom, 2000).

This study of 12 principals addressed how they used their leadership skills to create learning environments that produced encouraging results that demonstrated their diverse populations of students were making positive growth. Knowing that students bring the backgrounds of their life events into the classroom, principals must recognize that teachers, also, bring experiences with them that shape their lives and determine the lens they use to view their students. Their perspectives, whether they be positive or deficit, mold their thinking about the students in their classrooms and their learning potential (Delpit, 2004; Irvine, 2003). In order to create a climate and culture that promotes a positive learning environment, principals must address teachers' background knowledge in addition to their instructional practices.

When teachers come to a school to work, they must adapt to that particular school's environment. The influence of the climate and culture perpetuates either a positive or negative influence on how all teachers and principals react and respond to their non-White students and other colleagues (Rothman, 2001). Under old leadership, teachers may have been content to maintain the status quo that existed even though students were not succeeding academically, but with new expectations from a new leader, teachers must examine their practices and think about how doing things differently can produce different results. The 12 principals in the study helped teachers see their responsibility in helping students to achieve at high levels despite students' home, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds. In any school, when data reveal disproportionate numbers of non-White students who are either underperforming or overrepresented in special education programs, concerned principals and teachers must be ready to address if they have inadvertently reacted to their students based on preconceived perceptions or beliefs about their students' racial and socioeconomic statuses (Noguera & Akom, 2000; Rausch & Skiba, 2006).

Rather than looking at the students' backgrounds or socioeconomic statuses to predict what they can learn, or allowing the "you poor dear syndrome" that perpetuates educators blaming cultural issues as the primary explanation for why students are not performing well, professional development seems to hold one of the most plausible answers to correcting that mindset (Ladson-Billings, 2006; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Milner, 2010). However, even after professional development, principals must be skilled in how to monitor and evaluate teacher interactions and practices to ensure there is follow through. Principals must know about culturally responsive pedagogy and practices to use their influence as leaders to rectify any barriers to improving student learning (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). This study looked

at how these principals provided greater emphasis on professional development incorporating cultural competency training in a collaborative environment.

Although there are numerous studies documenting the importance of quality leadership, a recent study by Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley, (2007) concluded that there was a paucity of rigorous studies that directly linked professional development to student achievement. This seems counterintuitive, because although the connection seems undeniable, it has proven difficult to substantiate (Yoon et al., 2007). Additionally, specific findings on the principal's impact on ensuring cultural competency training for his or her staff are also scarce (R. Lee, 2007). Therefore, additional research on what constitutes effective professional development that incorporates cultural understandings could aid principals in supporting their teachers to implement effective cultural proficiency practices in their classrooms (C. Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon, & Rowe, 2003). Understanding these practices also provides principals with additional leadership skills to assess quality teaching and ensure that appropriate professional development occurs that leads to increased student achievement for non-White students (Kaplan & Owings, 2001).

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how principals' behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally relevant learning community. Two research questions guided the study: (a) how do principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning community, and (b) what is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community?

The literature review examined concepts about the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that a predominantly White and/or middle-class staff may bring to classrooms in an urban community

with its diverse population. The review also looked at factors principals must consider in developing a school climate for maximized student learning for students of color. Understanding how cultural competence training relates to these two goals may be one of the key elements that principals must recognize and work to implement in a school's professional development model. After the literature review, a set of interview questions were formulated to ask purposefully selected principals about experiences within their schools regarding how they developed a culturally relevant learning community.

What could happen when principals and teachers deliberately examine inconsistencies that may exist in how they perceive themselves and their students? How would they compare and confront the reality of how they actually deliver instructional services and interact with their students of color and their parents? Would self-corrective behaviors evolve? What is the principal's role in impacting these types of changes? Roger Cleveland, a cultural competency trainer from Eastern Kentucky University, has begun extensive work in that state with cultural audits and professional development on the impact of culture on teaching and learning. In an interview for the IPLA (2005) Cleveland explained the importance of cultural competency training. Cleveland asserted that staff members must inspect the perceptions they have about their own personal biases and also examine how well they understand their own cultures. Using these two ideas as a foundation, he asserted that educators have a better basis to examine if they need to change their attitudes and beliefs in working with the non-White students they teach (IPLA, 2005).

Preconceived stereotypes and biases may act to hinder the change process. The level of training, coupled with the frequency of staff development, must be considered and may need to be adjusted to determine the degree of awareness and the amount of time needed for change to

impact student performance (B. P. Farr, Sexton, Puckett, Pereira-Leon, & Weissman, 2005). Additional research on this area of study could bring more conclusive evidence to the forefront about what constitutes effective professional development on cultural competency for both pre-service teachers and current practitioners.

Within the framework of the resulting literature review, each unique element presented in the review could be the basis for a research topic on its own merit. To some, the literature review may seem complex, touching on numerous topics, but several intertwining factors were addressed. Thus, the goal of the literature review was to take a cursory look at factors with common connections and threads running throughout them that impact student learning. At the same time, the study could shed additional light on the principal's role in impacting teacher thinking, perception, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations to increase student achievement of previously low-performing students. By combining knowledge about what effective principals do, the additional layer of being culturally competent can reform how principals operate in urban settings.

The purpose of this study is important because, as the literature review revealed, although the subject of developing cultural proficiency is broad, mastery is not insurmountable. Because the interview questions evolved from the literature review, gaining the principals' insights on what they did to improve the student achievement of their diverse students is important and could help others in the education field define effective practices that lead to improved academic achievement for all students. The study could also help principals examine their roles in identifying and facilitating a change process that eliminates deficit thinking and other factors that block optimal learning.

The Significance of the Problem

It is hoped this study will lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon of culture and deficit model thinking that has been identified as a leading reason for why some White teachers experience difficulties in working with non-White students (Valencia, 1997). Furthermore, discussions related to race and its impact on teacher thinking, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs, and expectations may be a sensitive subject that provokes uncomfortable discourse. With the election of President Barack Obama as the first African American president in 2008, some may be reluctant to identify race as an educational issue that still merits discussion in our generation and time. However, Pollock (2008) offered a set of essays that reported how teachers still struggle with many racial issues and dilemmas. Pollock and her co-authors also offered some strategies for eliminating some of the practices that harm today's students (Viadero, 2008).

Additionally, there appears to be only a small body of research exploring the reaction of students to their teachers' expectations of them (Wenglinsky, 2001). Racial factors may explain the impact of some educators' reactions to discrepancies in perception and behavior toward some students and some students' reactions to their teachers (Ferguson, 1998). Concurrently, there may or may not be validity in thinking that African American or non-White teachers exhibit fewer traits of deficit model thinking than their counterparts and may be more sensitive to exhibiting attitudes that lead to improved student performance. On the other hand, this assumption could prove faulty. Additional training opportunities lead by the principals of buildings that house Black and White teachers and non-White students may cause a common positive response for all the teachers who receive more professional development. It is important that all of these issues be explored.

The findings of the study could prove useful to educators as they plan future professional development opportunities to improve the learning environment for their students from non-dominant cultures. By investigating the influence principals have on changing the culture and climate of a building and teacher thinking, perspectives, beliefs, and expectations on student learning, educators can examine research-based methods that could benefit pre-service teachers, practicing professionals, and principals. This study identified practices that principals could use to facilitate or hinder developing culturally competent teaching staffs.

A number of states, including Indiana, have enacted cultural competency laws and are looking for models that can help them implement the legislative intent (Oregon University System, 2001). States such as California have explored ways to improve cultural competence practices despite previous unmet expectations. Legislators recognize the California educational system had failed to meet the needs of all of its diverse pupil population and that there was still no system of accountability to ensure that cultural competency trainings were available and effective (B. P. Farr et al., 2005). So, if for no other reason than meeting legislative requirements, professional development for current educational professionals and pre-service teachers must focus greater attention on training about culturally relevant instructional practices.

Principals and teacher preparation programs should have an interest in reviewing this study as they consider implementing best-practice pedagogy related to producing future teachers who are culturally competent and ready to practice culturally relevant pedagogy in urban areas that may be unfamiliar to them. Educators may become more aware of how their thinking and expectations impact their students. If pre-service educators are introduced to culturally responsive practices, they may feel challenged, but they also may raise their expectations for all students and be better prepared to work with all students.

As school faculties explore the role of school culture and climate on student learning, they must also identify hindrances to creating the best learning environments for them and their students. Principals and other members of a school's leadership team can work toward continually improving their school's culture and climate to make it a place where all children to experience success. Cultural competency training could be instrumental in making this happen.

Research on cultural competency in most states is a relatively new field of study. As states begin implementing laws, the effects of these laws are still widely unknown (Duncan & Zanville, 2001). This study offers an opportunity to explore how legislative intent merged with corporation and individual school practices to produce educational policies that should lead to equitable opportunities. Hopefully this discussion will also continue to spark dialogue about the most effective ways to produce change that impacts practices to create much improved learning for African American and Hispanic/Latino students in diverse school settings.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers should present effective instruction so that all children receive a quality education and have an equitable opportunity to demonstrate learning at high levels of proficiency. As communities throughout our country become more diverse, our teaching population, which remains predominantly White and female, must be ready to meet the challenges of working cross-culturally to help all children succeed. The principal has a key role in shaping the development of a learning environment where both teachers and students thrive (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Waters et al., 2003).

The academic achievement gap that exists between children of color and their counterparts is well documented (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Kober, 2001). However, when children come to school, contrary to some beliefs, they are not genetically flawed because of race

or ethnicity, but have the potential to become academically strong when the right factors are in place (Foley, 1997; Hilliard, 1990). The behaviors of teachers contribute to creating a learning environment that helps to close the gaps that exist between student groupings (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Haycock, 2007). If teachers have preconceived notions about their students, or if teachers' thinking, perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs are based on faulty, offensive deficit model thinking patterns, students may not be held to the highest standard (Delpit, 1995; Valencia, 1997).

One of the ways teacher trainers have chosen to prepare future and current educators to work with cultures other than their own is through professional development (IPLA, 2005). These trainings focus on improving each teacher's cultural competence and improving the use of culturally relevant practices in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2006). One problem with this process, however, lies in principals knowing how to choose the most effective content for professional development and then making it available to their staff. Moreover, because deficit thinking is often latent to those who practice it, teachers must see the need for and the value of participating in training so that as they return to their classrooms, they will actually implement what was presented at the training (Delpit, 1995).

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) contended one of the main problems we face in education of urban students is the "avoidance of dialogue about race and racism, which results in leaving racial inequality in education unaddressed" (p. 628). This is important because a predominantly White female staff fills classrooms across the nation, and they need to discover what really works to successfully teach our growing diverse populations of students. Thus, it is crucial that we determine the value of professional development if cultural competence training is included and determine if it can actually create positive changes in perceptions, expectations,

instruction, and the general climate and culture of classrooms and schools. The questions arise, then, given various levels of principals' awareness about cultural competency: What principal understandings facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive environment? What is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community?

Research Questions

The literature review and the study that were conducted by interviewing 12 purposefully selected principals sought to answer the following primary questions:

1. How do principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning community?

2. What is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community?

Definition of Terms

Academic achievement gap. For the purpose of this study, the academic achievement gap is defined as the differences found in academic achievement between students listed in various groupings. These include students in the same peer grades when they are grouped into the categories of non-White and White, between students identified by low-socioeconomic income households as determined by eligibility for free and reduced lunch and those from middle- and upper-income households who do not qualify, between students classified for special education or gifted and talented and the general population, and between all those groups and the peer group's overall target for proficiency regardless of any subcategory specifications.

Case study. For the purpose of this study, a case study is defined an in-depth analysis of a particular case, person, or event from a social or psychological perspective that reports relevant details. Using interviews to collect data during a specified period of time, the report generated

from the study has the potential to propose why phenomena may occur and result in generating

theories and patterns in similar situations (Creswell, 2003).

Cultural competency. For the purpose of this study, cultural competency is defined as

a system of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable teachers to work effectively

in cross-cultural situations. The term includes the use of knowledge concerning individuals and

groups to develop specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes to be used in appropriate

cultural settings to increase students' educational performance. (Cultural Competency in

Education Act, 2004, §2)

Deficit model thinking. For the purpose of this study, deficit model thinking is defined

as the consistent process that some individuals use to perceive situations, performances,

individuals, or groups of people who may not fit their definitions of "like me and mine" and thus

automatically or sub-consciously and sometimes stereotypically perceive these differences as

problems and then assign biased, stereotypic attributes that are based on negative beliefs rather

than first thinking about the strengths and assets that each individual or group actually brings to

every situation or performance.

Principal. For the purpose of this study, a principal is defined as the building-level

administrator or school administrative head.

School climate. For the purpose of this study, school climate is defined as the "term that

refers to current feelings and attitudes. It reflects how students, staff, and parents feel about a

school" (Gonder, 1994, p. 13).

School culture. For the purpose of this study, school culture is defined as the guiding

beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that are evident in the way a school operates (Fullan &

Hargreaves, 1996). Culture develops over time and is deeply embedded in the underlying beliefs and assumptions of a workforce (Gonder, 1994). Culture also is

> a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group has learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, is taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1992, p.18)

Strength-based assets. For the purpose of this study, strength-based assets are defined as the positive resources and strengths identified within an entity, community, or individual that already exists and can be used to further build upon or developed to help a community, an organization, or individual become more self-sufficient. Recognizing and finding strengths helps service providers make a cultural shift in delivering services based on deficits and needs to a strategic effort to discover strengths to build on, affirm, and continue using to make future collaborative plans with those receiving services (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Teacher. For the purpose of this study, a teacher is defined as a certified professional employee teaching in a school.

Teacher attitude. For the purpose of this study, teacher attitude is defined as the personal view, disposition, value, and feeling about something that causes one to act in a certain way.

Teacher belief. For the purpose of this study, teacher belief is defined as the mental process that produces acceptance of feelings, notions, and/or opinions as the truth one may believe with certainty.

Teacher expectations. For the purpose of this study, teacher expectations are defined as presumptions that teachers make about the academic achievement of students (Cooper & Good,

1983) and are framed by the teachers' experience or culture, including presumptions about the level and rigor of instruction that teachers present to their students, the quality of student work that teachers accept, and the anticipated degree of preconceived success students will achieve.

Teacher perception. For the purpose of this study, teacher perception is defined as the mental process that teachers use for acquiring information about objects, environments, events, and people and then interpreting and organizing that information to conceive understandings about those things.

Assumptions

Assumptions of the study exist in the following manner:

1. The principals involved in this study have an accurate perception of the climate and culture of their school environments.

2. The principals involved in this study have an accurate perception about how teacher thinking, perceptions, attitude, beliefs, and expectations impact student achievement.

3. Although the definitions of thinking, perceptions, attitude, and beliefs are not totally mutually inclusive, there is such a close connection to the meaning of each word that it allows them to be used somewhat interchangeably.

4. The principals involved in this study are knowledgeable about effective professional development practices.

5. The principals in this study are aware of the need to practice using culturally relevant pedagogy.

6. The findings of this study based on interviews with the selected principals may or may not be transferable to all principals, but could serve as a reference for future research.

A Personal Statement

Researchers who use qualitative methods reflect on their role in the inquiry and are sensitive to how their personal experiences shape the study. Creswell (2003) stated that the researcher must recognize this introspection and acknowledge biases, values, and interests because the personal-self is closely related to the researcher-self.

My past experiences provided intimate familiarity with the roles of teachers, principals, and other district-level administrators in impacting change within classrooms, schools, and a district. Having worked as an elementary teacher for 29 years and serving as a building teacher–leader with an expertise in understanding cross-grade-level curriculum and effective instructional strategies, I was asked to serve at the district level as a curriculum specialist.

For six years, I worked in the curriculum and instruction division of a major urban district in the Midwest. In addition to presenting numerous workshops and staff development trainings on using effective instructional strategies, I led teams of teachers who developed curriculum frameworks for every subject area and grade level, kindergarten through twelfth grade. In addition, I supervised the development of instructional pacing guides for all grade levels for the four core subject areas. As the standards-based curriculum and pacing guides were developed, teams of teachers went to every school in the district and presented the new expectations. I oversaw the development and presentation of those workshops and also presented and observed in numerous buildings while working with other central office administrators and staff members, principals, and teachers from all grade levels, kindergarten through Grade 12. Upon leaving the school district, I served as an adjunct professor in the education department of a private university where I supervised several student teachers in both Christian and urban settings.

Furthermore, I have been involved on teams that have specifically conducted climate, cultural, and instructional audits in schools and provided feedback to those schools. Because of previous experiences in observing numerous classrooms and sharing instructional strategies that promoted effective student learning, I recognize that I bring certain biases to the study. However, every attempt has been made to ensure an objective approach in gathering data. It should be noted that many of the things I have learned during my career have lead me to choose this particular study and have provided a perspective that helped shape how I analyzed the data.

I have experienced working in and with schools when staff members have worked with students of color who are high-performing at every grade level. However, at the other extreme, I have been in schools where staff members and students struggled to meet both district and state goals. I have witnessed extreme differences in how principals led the staffs under their supervision with different degrees of success. My perspective leads me to believe that although many teachers and principals exhibited high expectations for their students and produced results that supported their beliefs, there are still other urban principals and teachers who must continually be challenged to reevaluate their deficit comments, based on their preconceived thoughts and beliefs about children of color and the low expectations they hold for children and families from low-socioeconomic income households. Thus, a study on the principal's role in developing an effective learning community that holds high expectations for both students and staff members is important.

As I began this study, I was deeply concerned about the notion of deficit model thinking. I wanted to explore its definition and find the true impact it had on African American students who are educated predominantly by White teachers. I believed that developing meaningful insight about how to identify, reduce, and eliminate this subtle, yet pervasive ideology would

help teachers to improve interactions and relationships with their students. Administrators have a staff of teachers to work with who come from varied backgrounds. Because deficit model thinking tends to be latent, it would seem that if teachers were more aware of how negative perceptions may be quietly impacting their students they might be willing to change.

I believe that few teachers, whether Black or White, would admit out loud to harboring deficit model thinking about their students, but the fact remains that media and other pressures influence all of our thinking about the role we think parents should play in raising their children, our beliefs about the communities from where our students come, and the resulting temptation to stereotypically label students. Also we must be concerned about how students perceive themselves and their learning, and most importantly for the discussion, explore what schools can actually do to overcome outside forces to reach each student's need.

I believe principals have an obligation to help teachers navigate the hard, uncomfortable conversations about race but also exercise wisdom to lead staff members to make changes that must occur to maximize student learning and reduce the effects of low expectations that come as a result of deficit model thinking based on stereotypic ideology. I believe this study will help educators recognize ways these 12 identified principals demonstrated successful efforts in creating culturally relevant learning environments, implemented effective practices, and provided strategies that can be partially replicated.

Summary and Organization of the Study

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction for the study, including a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the need to study the problem, the significance of the study, the research questions, definition of terms, assumptions, a personal statement, and the summary and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a cursory review of the literature related to issues that build a foundation for understanding the components of cultural competency. The first section looks at the socio-political landscape that helped to shape the need for cultural competency training as one way to improve academic achievement for all students. Then the review seeks to clarify how factors converge to shed light on the need for sustained changes in principal and teacher behaviors and practices that support delivering effective instruction to a diverse population of students.

The review further examines the following areas: the definition of teacher quality and its relationship to cultural competency; the out-of-school and in-school factors that influence the achievement gap and teacher perceptions about students; theories about the causes of the academic gap and how those theories relate to teacher perceptions; the role of race and deficit model thinking that may influence teacher thinking, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations; external forces driving the move for cultural competency training in the educational arena; legislative initiatives in Indiana connected to disproportionality and cultural competence; the role of school climate and culture and transformational leadership in educating a diverse population. Then the review explores the role of professional development that includes cultural competency training.

Finally, the review looks at how understanding all of the elements listed above can lead to creating a culturally responsive learning community deliberately focused on helping all children thrive, meet success, and achieve at high levels. By analyzing all these factors, the review seeks to find what researchers have already determined about the principal's role in using best practices for effective professional development that can incorporate cultural competency training to empower teachers to increase expectations of themselves and their students.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and design of the study. This chapter includes the characteristics of qualitative studies, the data collection procedure used for qualitative studies, the data analysis procedure that interprets the findings, information about the participants and the instrumentation to be used, the role of the researcher, strategies for validating findings, the way findings were reported, and the expected outcomes of the study. Chapter 4 presents findings to questions posed in Chapter 1. Interviews with participating principals have been transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Based on the interviews, profiles of the 12 participants are presented. Additionally, five themes emerged as key findings in the study. Chapter 5 reveals how the five overarching themes connect to subthemes that also emerged. Linked to each of the five themes is a range of five to 11 subthemes. These themes and subthemes were presented with quotes from the interviews that substantiated the findings with rich narrative descriptors. Chapter 6 presents a summary of the findings, discussion, recommendations, implications for future study, and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore how principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the

development of a culturally responsive learning community. This chapter discusses relevant

literature concerning cultural proficiency and what is encompassed in understanding how

principals and teachers can attain it. First the review explores societal and political factors that

shape an understanding of the role of teacher quality in creating a profession of competent

practitioners capable of working with diverse students and causing them to be successful in

school despite the many family and student variables that exist. Then the review presents

findings related to racial and educational issues that still concern researchers. Next the role of

professional development in fostering cultural competency skills that lead to cultural proficiency

and culturally engaging practices will be highlighted. Finally, the review further explores

findings about leadership strategies principals can use to develop and sustain a culturally

responsive professional learning environment through professional development that includes

culturally relevant topics.

Portions of the literature review contained studies conducted by practitioners; also

included are findings from other literature reviews and analysis, qualitative and quantitative

studies, and documents about practices related to understanding culture and cultural proficiency.

The conclusions that practitioners and researchers offer to explain theories about the somewhat

nebulous concepts of race, White privilege, cultural competency and proficiency, and culturally relevant pedagogy are grounded in solid quantitative and qualitative research practices (Banks, 1997; DuFour, 2004; Ferguson, 2002; Howard, 2006). However, to a greater degree, they rely on the qualitative studies of documented cases and the rich examples practitioners have gleaned from their work (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lyman & Villani, 2004). Although actual quantitative studies are cited, narratives from practitioners in the field of cultural competence are very revealing and informative. They tell a story that only qualitative studies and documentation of shared experiences can capture. It is in that spirit that the literature review was written to lay a theoretical foundation for what urban principals face as they work with a predominantly White staff who must learn how best to address the learning needs of their diverse population that many of those teachers, often times, may not fully understand how to reach and teach.

Whether teachers work in urban areas with high populations of students of color or in a rural or suburban areas with relatively lower numbers, teachers' thinking, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations about their students do impact student achievement perhaps more than the changes expected from the politics of legislative intent (G. L. Good, 1987; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Oakes, 1996; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Professional development can be a key factor in how teachers relate to students from cross-cultural environments and prove to be a worthwhile pursuit (Sleeter, 2001). Principals serve in a unique leadership role that positions them to impact and encourage their staffs in meaningful ways that increase the student achievement for the diverse student populations teachers may find in their classrooms (Bellanca, 2009, Carter, 2000; DuFour, 1991). Another contributing factor may be how principals help build a climate in their buildings that impacts teacher expectations and their ability to be

culturally responsive in meeting student needs that lead to increased performance for all students (Bellanca, 2009; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001).

With the aforementioned tenets outlined, the literature review begins by focusing on the prevailing socio-political implications that influence teacher thinking about students of color. Then the review explores the influence of mandates about teacher quality, followed by examining factors that impact school achievement. Next it surveys the debate on the role of poverty in student achievement, and then delves into other theories about why the achievement gap exists and persists for non-White students. In the next sections of the review, the focus turns toward understanding the origin of the cultural competency movement, addressing legislative initiatives related to cultural competency, exploring what it takes to create an effective school culture and climate, and addressing the role of leadership in creating that culture and climate. Finally, the review ends with building understanding about establishing effective professional development practices and how, specifically, to implement cultural proficiency training into a school. All of these discussions relate back to the principals and the relevance of them being able to create meaning in these areas as they monitor and assess instructional expectations and practices.

Surveying the Socio-Political Landscape

As political and legal decisions and solutions emerge, principals must be keenly aware of how their decisions will impact their schools. For many years, legislative acts and judicial decisions have tried to remedy educational inequities found in America's urban and suburban schools that educate large numbers of students of color who come from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act [IDEA], 2004; No Child Left Behind [NCLB],

2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). It is debatable how the effects of these legislative initiatives and judicial rulings have impacted accountability efforts, but two factors have remained undeniably constant in improving student performance. One is the quality of the teachers who deliver instruction and the other is the preparation and training those teachers receive (Darling-Hammond, 2000). As principals assess the backgrounds and knowledge levels their teachers bring with them, principals share a key role in ensuring that teachers under their supervision are continually equipped to meet the needs of all students (Bellanca, 2009; DuFour, 1991; Fullan, 1993).

Saiger (2005), in a law review linking legislative decisions and accountability, raised a poignant question regarding the ability to legislate accountability. He argued that although states have the constitutional right to have local control of education, federal guidelines have been imposed on states that greatly impact what they do. Before the mandates, local control was cherished. Although federal intervention has changed the landscape of educational opportunities for students of color, initially, urban districts faced much more serious scrutiny than suburban areas. However, with federally mandated legislation and accountability in place, now White-dominated suburban districts were also affected by those politically motivated dictates, howbeit in differing ways from their urban and rural counterparts (McDermott, 1999; Saiger, 2005). The current federal education law, NCLB Act of 2002 addressed two main factors. First, the law mandated 100% of students must make adequate progress toward meeting grade-level proficiency by 2014, and second, it required all classrooms to have high quality teachers (NCLB, 2002). Furthermore, in coordination with the IDEA Act of 2004, districts were required to report disproportionate numbers of students from various ethnic groups who were placed in special education programs. If found out of compliance through their calculated disproportionality

ratios, school districts had to adhere to earmarking 15% of special education money received by the state from the federal authorities to ensure that problematic citations were corrected (IDEA, 2004).

Principals in both urban and suburban districts were left to implement solutions dictated by policymakers, jurists, and grassroots community voices in response to calls for accountability, reform efforts, and concerns about equity in improving student performance (Zeigler & Jennings as cited in Saiger, (2005)). Programs and practices that addressed these needs were shaped by state funding distribution, public dissatisfaction in schooling practices and outcomes, differences in the cultural values of and between students and their teachers, and how educators mitigated the impact of their diluted traditional White majority (Wirt & Kirst, 2001). Wirt and Kirst (2001) suggested that divergent views surfaced about the wisdom of moving from a Eurocentric curriculum that tended to smooth over ethnic or religious differences and "produce Americans who constituted a nation" (p. 14) rather than concentrating on the differences and divisions in society. How best to resolve this conflicted view still remains a point of contention. The argument that the "commonality of heritage" taught from the majority perspective as the best way to hold Americans together, seemed to be giving way, especially in "big-city" schools, to the importance of understanding and reflecting the important contributions of Blacks and other ethnic groups.

Before these legal requirements, noted, suburbanites were not very concerned about the achievement levels of low-performing students beyond their boundaries, and reform efforts remained elusive in predominantly White suburban districts, with hand-picked, high-quality teachers and administrators and generous budgets to service what Peterson termed "easy-to-educate" children (as cited in Saiger, 2005, p. 1730). However, facing the political reality of

accountability, evidenced by disaggregated test data, as the urban sprawl began to reach these once-insulated suburban areas, even those educators were forced to modify the initial resentment they may have felt about the demands of NCLB and began to rethink different strategies and attitudes about how to service the "hard-to-educate" (Saiger, 2005, p. 1725) children who were moving into their districts.

The changing demographics of fiscally challenged central cities, rural areas, and inequitable financing frequently plagued first-ring suburbs compared to their suburban neighbors (Ferguson, 1991). Urban schools tended to have older facilities, social problems that teachers felt hindered instruction, and students who were labeled disadvantaged, both physically and cognitively (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). In addition, these districts began facing the reality of a possible hostile takeover of the school system by the state, which would lead to a loss of local control (*Moore v. Detroit School Reform Board,* 2002). Added to the solutions offered for remedying low-academic performance in urban districts was the potential risk individuals on the total staff, including the principal, now faced of being replaced as schools were reconstituted (G. Orfield, 1996). District enrollment may have been declining because of charter school competition, as shrinking budgets made it increasingly hard to meet anticipated expenses (Ripley, 2008); some parents may have opted to move rather than voice concerns about schools that they had previously considered adequate before test data revealed otherwise (Moe, 2001). As all of this continued to unfold, one of the principals' greatest challenges still remained recruiting, retaining, and equipping quality teachers who were certified in the core classes they would teach and who were able to demonstrate their ability to manage their classrooms (Lyman & Villani, 2004).

The differences that exist between the statistical ethnic makeup of the teaching population and the student population throughout the state also present a reason for great concern. As an example, during the 2007-2008 school year, according to the *Teachers, Full Time Equivalent (Public)* report found on the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) website, it was determined that there were 62,196 teachers in the entire state. According to the *Non-White Teachers, Percent of Total (Public)* report, of that number only 5.1% are classified as non-White teachers. In comparing data for 1983–1984, the school year with the highest reported percentage of non-White teachers since 1979, 6.3 % of the 50,507 teachers reported were counted. So it seems as the number of teachers has increased, the number of non-White teachers has decreased (IDOE, 2009c).

Looking further at the student populations listed on the *Enrollment (Public)* report for those same years, in 1983-84 there were 984,400 students compared to a steadily increasing enrollment of 1,046,609 students in 2007-08. The *Enrollment by Ethnicity* report however revealed that 24% of the students were reported as being non-White compared to the earliest date given in the database provided to the public for 1987-88, when the population of 962,653 students was 87% White and 14% non-White. Thus, it appears that as the non-White population of students increased, the number of non-White teachers decreased (IDOE, 2009b).

A larger question emanates from these findings. Who is teaching in the urban setting? Do most of the teachers who practice in urban communities live there or do they commute from suburban communities that initially minimized the need for accountability for students who fell into the subgroups given in NCLB? Do they bring the beliefs noted by Sanger (2005) with them to the urban school setting? Although no data were readily located about the residency of Indiana teachers in relationship to where they teach, concerns still lingered about the dichotomy

of the ethnic ratios discussed above. Does that possible dichotomy of thinking need to be posed and addressed through professional development opportunities and the role principals have in assessing, addressing, and facilitating strategies to minimize the discrepancies that may exist when there are cultural and socioeconomic differences between staff members and the students they teach?

Some have claimed that the expectations and sanctions imposed by the NCLB (2002) have strained the educational system as a whole by setting unrealistic and unreachable deadlines, narrowing the curriculum, taking away resources from struggling schools, taking away local school decision-making; and elevating the importance and use of high-stakes standardized testing, which many opposed (Hoff, 2007; Klein, 2007). As a counter remedy for improving student achievement and equipping quality teachers, critics denoted the pitfalls of NCLB and included, among other options, a continued plea for placing less reliance on tests and for curtailing the use of penalties. They argued that it would be far more productive to rely on increasing parental involvement and teacher and administrative training to improve student achievement and performance than to penalize schools and their staffs (Klein, 2007).

Others, however, still argued for less federal control and fewer restrictions imposed beyond local level expectations, while others continued to believe that more financial resources from the national government held the key solution to solving educational issues (Chaddock, 2007). With state budgets tightening, it is increasingly hard to imagine that states that are dependent on federal dollars to subsidize their budgets will choose to opt out of complying with expectations, as a few other states have contemplated (Brown, 2005; Saiger, 2005).

As the impact of NCLB tightened toward the 2014 benchmark of 100% accountability, schools seem to have muddled through the best combination of solutions to try to help all

children meet the goals set forth in the plan. Until the education legislation changes, districts will continue to use 10% of all Title I money toward professional development to improve teacher quality (IDOE, 2008). Each state must decide how it will allow districts to direct their resources and how they will use their professional development money.

In July 2009, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) offered an unprecedented opportunity for states to qualify for $4.3 billion in the Race to the Top program (USDOE, 2009). The money was targeted at four areas to help districts: (a) improve the rigor of academic standards with internationally benchmarked standards and the common state assessments, (b) improve student data systems, (c) ensure high quality teachers and administrators, and (d) implement reform efforts to turn around low-performing schools. Portions of the money were distributed in 2010, and changes seemed to occur within all interested districts, whether selected or not, as they scrambled to be competitive in meeting the criteria. If state mandates for cultural competency training overlapped with NCLB, IDEA, and the Race to the Top goals' intent of producing highly qualified teachers, this money would have proven to be a good way to provide cultural competency training dollars to cash-strapped districts and schools.

Ultimately, however, reconciling accountability's call for change and improved performance for all students is only as good as each state's willingness and capacity to provide certification and training guidelines, its ability to monitor and evaluate effective planning, practices and outcomes, and the allotment of resources to reward or sanction districts who meet or fail to meet criteria that satisfied both political and grassroots expectations within the frameworks posed by legislators and jurists of our nation. With or without the full measure of financial support that a principal may wish for, the principals' role in staff development to improve teacher quality remains the same.

What may vary is how well principals are equipped with the tools and information that can lead to equitable practices in public schooling and how they can help their teachers demonstrate traits that make them effective, even if they were not well prepared before they were hired to work in an urban setting (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Within the political climate that has been set, the stage of accountability cannot be removed even though some considered the original NCLB legislation and its continuing effect an unfunded mandate (U. S. Department of Education (2004). Each state, district, and school must address accountability issues and ensure that its teaching staff is competent in working with students of color and students from low-socioeconomic homes by whatever way they choose to fund professional development.

Exploring the Impact of Teacher Quality

As urban principals work with teachers in their buildings, they look for qualities that define what effective teachers do to nurture and help children from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds find academic success (Milner, 2010). Embodied in the definition of what effective teachers do is understanding how they make lessons relevant and engaging to their students and what it takes to acquire the skills needed to work with students from cultural backgrounds different than what the teacher's experience may be (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 2001). The question for this review, then, is what role has cultural competency played in defining teacher quality and what principals must know and do to ensure that their teachers are equipped to improve and maximize their levels of cultural proficiency?

Kaplan and Owings (2001) distinguished teacher quality in two ways as they defined teacher preparation/qualifications and teaching practices. *Teacher* quality refers to the preparation that teachers brought to the school when they arrived. This includes their licensure

and credentials, transcript, test scores, prior professional experiences, their own personal

demographic background, content knowledge, and their college coursework and training. On the

other hand, *teaching* quality refers to the varied, effective, and appropriate instructional practices

and strategies teachers used to create a positive learning climate where all students learn at high

levels. Principals are responsible for ensuring all their students have both *quality teachers* and

quality teaching in every classroom. As they supervise and provide opportunities to help

teachers increase their capacity, urban principals must remain keenly aware of certification

requirements and prior experiences teachers have had in working with students from non-White

populations (Kaplan & Owens, 2001).

In his law review documenting the history of accountability, standards, sanctions, and

school reform, Saiger (2004) suggested that understanding everything involved with being a

"good teacher" is very complex; so even though many people "know good teaching when they

see it," it remains impossible to clearly specify its components. Because of this lack of

specificity, he questioned the imperfect process that inherently challenges how to monitor the

intended outcomes of NCLB legislative regulations calling for highly qualified teachers. He is

not alone. Darling-Hammond (2000) likewise reported a continued need for more research on

the topic, but she also has determined from her review of literature that there is little doubt that

better qualified teachers do make a positive impact on student learning.

In Darling-Hammond's (2000) comprehensive 50-state review of policies, state case

study analyses, school and staffing surveys, and National Assessment of Educational Progress

data, she looked at how school-input factors along with teacher qualifications impact student

achievement. The data suggested that, indeed, what schools do does make a difference with a

large part of that difference being related to teacher quality (Jordan, Mendro, & Weersinghe,

1997; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Darling-Hammond analyzed both qualitative and quantitative studies about improving student achievement linking positive student academic gains with individual state performance based on the degree a state enforces standards in areas related to their teachers' general academic ability and intelligence, subject matter knowledge, knowledge of teaching and learning, teaching experience, certification status, hiring standards, teacher behaviors and practices, and adherence to state policies regarding teaching certification and in-field degrees. She also noted connections that related to how these factors impacted teacher salaries (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Other researchers also found that the impact of teacher effectiveness had a greater weight than class size or heterogeneity (Jordan et al., 1997; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wright et al., 1997). Moreover, Sanders and Rivers (1996) concluded that if a child has two ineffective teachers in a row, the chances for his or her success in school diminish. Additional studies also revealed a greater correlation to increases in student achievement to teacher skills and knowledge than to class size, pupil–teacher ratios, or teacher experience (Ferguson, 1991; Ferguson & Ladd, 1996; Fetler, 1999; Fuller, 1998; Kane & Staiger, 2008; Strauss & Sawyer, 1986).

Furthermore, Klem and Connell (2004) with the Institute for Research and Reform in Education conducted a multi-year longitudinal study of 1,846 elementary students and 2,430 secondary students and surveyed students, parents, and teachers. Key findings from the study showed the importance of teachers providing their support to improve student engagement in learning. Klem and Connell documented if students believed that teachers presented a "caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear, and fair" (p. 270), the students are more likely to be highly engaged in school, which has been associated with higher

tests scores and attendance. Interestingly, they found the need was even more apparent in middle school students than in elementary students.

The Learning First Alliance report (2005) summarized the importance of providing and sustaining effective teachers and administrators in high-poverty and low-performing schools. Compiled by numerous national organizations and submitted later to the Obama-Biden Transition Project, the research analyzed the problems and causes associated with how both urban and rural communities attracted quality staff while also providing a framework for action to address the issues. They acknowledged that research is "far too clear to ignore" (Learning First Alliance, 2005, p. 2) that teachers and administrators matter and are crucial to closing the achievement gap. While courageously addressing this challenging and sensitive issue, they noted their goal was not to "denigrate the commitment and hard work of many excellent teachers and administrators who already work in the nation's most challenging schools" (Learning First Alliance, 2005, p. 2), but they sought to bring shared solutions.

The alliance listed four research areas associated with teacher preparation and learning for "disadvantaged students." These included (a) *certification:* students are less likely to have state certified teachers; (b) *subject matter knowledge:* at the secondary level, high-poverty and high non-White students are more likely to be taught by teachers who have not completed college majors or minors in the courses they teach; (c) *effectiveness at raising test scores:* new methods of analyzing individual teacher effectiveness by classroom revealed that, "on average," students are more likely to have teachers who are "less effective at . . . raising students' test scores" (Learning First Alliance, 2005, p. 4); and (d) *experience:* "novice teachers are, on average, far less capable of raising student achievement on standardized tests than their more

experienced colleagues are" (Learning First Alliance, 2005, p. 4), although it appears that these students are more likely to have teachers with only three years' experience or less.

The Learning First Alliance (2005) report also included an eight-part framework presenting problems associated with closing the staffing gap for finding effective teachers and action steps to remedy the concerns. The Learning First Alliance (2005) found (a) the need for stronger leadership could be alleviated by ensuring principal and teacher collaboration; (b) poor working conditions could be reduced by providing adequate resource staff, manageable class sizes, safe, supportive environments, and no major physical plant problems; (c) insufficient professional support could be lessened by providing intense support in challenging classroom situations through mentoring and induction programs; (d) weak incentives to teach in challenging areas could be enhanced by compensating, recognizing and rewarding work and improvement teachers made; (e) inadequate preparation for work in high-poverty schools could be reduced by ensuring adequate preparation of teachers and principals; (f) difficulties with hiring and placement could be modified by facilitating processes for timely hiring and placement; (g) policy incoherence could be eliminated by establishing coherent federal, state, and local policies and incentives that promote recruitment and retention; and finally, (h) inadequate funding could be eliminated by ensuring adequate and equitable funding between high poverty and low-poverty districts based on student needs. Although each of the areas listed above merit a full review in themselves, for the purpose of this particular document the three key areas that seemed most relevant to teacher quality were finding ways to improve professional support, teacher preparation, and strong leadership.

In a research synthesis presented by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, Goe, Bell, and Little (2008) evaluated numerous documents on teacher effectiveness.

They found a large body of research on teacher effectiveness, but found that it was often disconnected and less cumulative that expected. After a thorough review on teacher effectiveness, they formulated a five-point definition of an effective teacher. Their literature review included policy documents, standards and principles, and other previously published reports (Berry, 2004a, 2004b; Brophy & Good, 1986: Cheng & Tsui, 1999; Tucker & Stronge, 2004). The five-point definition states,

- Effective teachers have high expectations for all students and help students learn, as measured by value-added or other test-based growth measures, or by alternative measures.

- Effective teachers contribute to positive academic, attitudinal and social outcomes for students such as regular attendance, on-time promotion to the next grade, on-time graduation, self-efficacy, and cooperative behavior.

- Effective teachers use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities; monitor student progress formatively, adapt instruction as needed; and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence.

- Effective teachers contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness.

- Effective teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents and education professionals to ensure student success, particularly the success of students with special needs and those at high risk for failure. (Goe et al., 2008, p. 8)

In discussing several criteria used for teacher evaluations that included classroom observation, principal evaluation, instructional artifacts, portfolios, teacher self-report measures, and student surveys, Goe et al. (2008) noted strengths and cautions for using each one. They

concluded that no single evaluation measure could capture the effectiveness of a teacher's contribution to the educational, social, and behavior growth that students attain and cautioned about using "value added" as a sole measurement criteria. They recommended that evaluators must be diligent to choose the correct instruments and processes to evaluate effectiveness coupled with being properly trained to use each instrument. Determining who teaches and what requirements they must meet to be considered effective remained a primary function of the state government and its local districts, but ultimately, it was the principals who evaluated their teachers' actual teaching performance.

Based on this notion, preparation and training for pre-service teachers has already begun to change linked to NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) accountability standards as many university schools of education use these six standards to measure their ability to produce quality teachers. Those standards are (a) candidate knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions; (b) assessment system and unit evaluation; (c) field experiences and clinical practices; (d) diversity; (e) faculty qualifications, performance, and development; and (f) unit governances and resources. Standard 4, with its emphasis on diversity, laid the groundwork for universities to train prospective teachers (NCATE, 2008).

It remains to be seen if that training is adequate. Additionally, meaningful in-services for practicing professionals that heighten cultural awareness also need to be assessed for their effectiveness. Yoon et al. (2007) asked, "How does teacher professional development affect student achievement? The connection seems intuitive. But demonstrating it is difficult" (p. iii). NCATE (2008) defined professional development as "opportunities for professional education faculty to develop new knowledge and skills through in-service education, conference attendance, sabbatical leave, summer leave, intra- and inter-institutional visitations, fellowships,

and work in P-12 schools" (p. 89). However, focusing on educational definitions alone, especially those related to components of Standard 4 on diversity, may not be wise because it mainly impacts pre-service teachers. However, a shift has begun with the new Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards that have updated the InTASC Model Core Standards in 2011.

Originally released in 1992 as InTASC Principles and presented by the Council of Chief School Officers (CCSSO) who are also are responsible for the Common Core Standards that many states have adopted in language arts and math, the new principles now seek to promote a greater accountability for both pre-service and practicing professionals. The new standards address professional development based on the needs of 21st century learners with their changing faces. Using key research literature and resources, a carefully chosen committee representing teachers, university personnel, and organizations supporting growth in the number of quality teachers prepared to teach, the 10 new InTASC Core Standards were developed (CCSSO, 2011).

InTASC standards define what effective teaching should look like for beginning teachers. However, "these standards are no longer intended only for 'beginning teachers' but as professional practice standards" (CCSSO, 2011, p. 8) with an upcoming continuum and performance measure to assess the knowledge, dispositions, and performance skills that all teachers should possess at different stages of their career. This new movement's focus is directed at improving teachers' knowledge about assessment literacy, developing a collaborative professional culture, and establishing new leadership roles for teachers and administrators (CCSSO, 2011).

The first section of the standards explores the learner and learning and includes how teachers analyzed engaging lessons that connected with learner development, learning

differences, and the learning environment. The second section on content includes teachers understanding content knowledge and applying that content so that it is connecting with the learners. The third section on instructional practices includes teachers understanding assessments, planning for instruction and instructional strategies. Professional responsibility, the focus for the final section, encompassed professional learning and ethical practices, and then it looked at leadership and collaboration (CCSSO, 2011).

NCATE's "Call to Action" in 2007 (NCATE, 2008) required that, as a minimum, in addition to having content knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to meet the needs of all students, each teacher candidate should effectively use pedagogical and professional knowledge, "operationalize the belief that all students can learn" (p. 7), demonstrate fairness "in a caring, non-discriminatory and equitable manner" (p. 7), and understand how discrimination has been impacted by various factors including among others, race and class. The dispositions in the standard relate to a teacher's thinking, attitudes, and perceptions.

NCATE defined dispositions as follows: "Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development." (NCATE, 2008, pp. 89-90). Presumably, the dispositions demonstrate a teacher's ability to connect with his or her students; however, the problem lies in how to measure this variable that is not easily quantifiable.

As researchers strive to understand different facets of what makes a quality teacher, trying to evaluate teacher thinking, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions finds its core definition in the disposition expectations of NCATE's Standard 4. This standard is a driving force that moved universities to promote cultural competency training for its staff, pre-service teachers, and

licensed teachers coming for recertification. It focused educators to examine how they were preparing teachers to meet the challenges of the increasingly diverse population they may have to teach. NCATE believed that understanding diversity and multicultural perspectives caused educators to consider differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, languages, exceptionalities, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical areas. Also important was understanding how these things are interconnected when set in the context of society, politics, economics, education and history (NCATE, 2008).

In a critique of the *Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action* report by The Teaching Commission (2004a), Barrett Berry, Executive Director of the Southeast Center for Teacher Quality, commented on the looming battle over alternative certification paths. He noted,

> Federal, state, and local teacher and teaching policies are constantly buffeted by ideological debates that rage among political leaders. Depending upon who holds the upper hand, policies vacillate between those built on teaching as a straightforward task most reasonably smart individuals can do, and policies that recognize teaching as a complex enterprise, requiring greater degrees of preparation, support, and professionalization. (Berry, 2004a, p. 20)

In an effort to position themselves for Race to the Top monies, state education departments began looking at ways to overhaul licensure processes with alternative ways to qualify its teachers and administrators. The changes would ultimately impact what qualified as pertinent professional development for teachers within a school district (Gammill, 2009, p. A7).

As Brackett, Mundry, Guckenberg, and Bourexis (2007) reviewed data to determine the distribution of access to highly qualified teachers for rural and urban students in New York, they noted "teacher qualifications through meeting criterion, such as certification in the subjects one

teaches, is not necessarily an indicator of teacher quality, which is associated with actual teacher performance and effectiveness as assessed through student outcomes" (p. 4). They found that state policies for highly qualified teachers varied greatly from state to state on the required assessment scores for demonstrating content knowledge proficiency, and they also varied in how much credit teachers received for prior experience versus direct measures of content knowledge.

The findings of Brackett et al. (2007) also yielded conclusions that high poverty schools had a lower percentage of teaching assignments filled by highly qualified teachers, especially in its urban population of New York City between 2004-2006, a concern also raised in other urban studies (Carey, 2004). Additionally, Kanstoroom and Finn (1999) noted that because discrepancies exist in the rigor of college majors, perspective teacher transcripts might not confirm what the teachers actually knew.

In May 2009, Taylor reported that a panel of experts on teacher quality issues participated in an "Equity in Education Forum," and all agreed that the "high quality" provision of NCLB was not ideal. During their discussion, Susan Neuman, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education reported that in 2008 the number of highly qualified teachers had risen from 87 to 97%. Sabrina Laine, Director of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality responded that, although the numbers of teachers with minimum credentials was up, the current criteria did not "tell us how good a teacher is, but at least we're moving away from having uncertified, unlicensed, uncredentialed people teaching, especially in our most high-need, high-poverty areas" (Taylor, 2009, para. 10).

Miller and Chait (2008) contended the need remained for districts and states to develop quality support for new teachers through induction and mentoring programs and not underestimate their direct connection to teacher turnover that encompassed retention, attrition to

other professions, and movement from one school to another. They also cautioned that it might be more advantageous to promote emerging methods to measure teacher quality such as "value added" models than to reconcile a tenure system. As districts located in Tennessee, Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York City move toward publishing test data connected to teacher trend data, critics argue both for and against such measures. Because Race to the Top's federal model provides incentives to use this policy, there is a new agenda to move forward with releasing test data connected to a given teacher's name (Carey, 2004; Song & Felch, 2011).

Miller and Chait (2008), in a report for the Center for American Progress, noted that tenure systems often hampered administrative decision making and could be unrelated to what we value in effective teachers and ill-defined what constituted teacher incompetence. Finally, their study noted that skewed distribution of quality teachers assigned in high-poverty and high-non-White schools also had an immense impact on achievement for students with the greatest needs. This also adversely impacted the resulting low number of future teachers the schools produced because students were ill-prepared to meet the requirements to enter college and consequently the teacher preparation pipeline. This proved troubling because they noted "teachers are prone to work in areas similar to the ones where they were raised" (Miller & Chait, 2008, p. 18), which further influenced the shortage of non-White teachers.

When districts look at the characteristics of highly qualified teachers, beyond proper credentials as required by both NCLB and IDEA, some states, school boards, and superintendents were trying to link teacher salaries to student test performance. Organizations like the National Education Association (NEA), however, have strongly opposed linking test performance to teacher evaluation (Hoff, 2007). However, states such as Tennessee have already embraced the "value-added" assessment system credited to William Sanders, who developed this

model that linked student performance to teacher effectiveness, and have reported promising findings about using this system (Carey, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Districts in other states looked at different certification procedures. As an example, when the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board in North Carolina released veteran teachers who had satisfactory evaluations and keep newly hired teachers from the Teach for America program, the district was warned by the deputy director of the state affiliate of the NEA,

> What message are you sending to a young person we need to keep in the profession who has no performance issues, who chose to become an educator, to replace them with someone who's had five weeks [of training] and didn't choose education to begin with. (Sawchuk, 2009, p. 10)

Teach for America is only one of a number of programs that provides an alternative route to teaching for candidates who have earned a previous bachelor's degree. With training models more compressed than the traditional route offered by most four-year college programs, these programs have also developed insights about the importance of teacher quality. A. Smith (2005), surveyed about 3,000 teachers who had finished their first year ($n = 1,378$) and second year of teaching ($n = 1,526$) for a total of $n = 1,970$, which included a 68% participation rate reflecting a representative sample of corps members. Additionally, approximately 200 corps members ($n = 177$) were surveyed at the beginning of their training, which represented about 10% of the total group of incoming pre-service trainees.

Addressing their beliefs and experiences about causes and solutions for the achievement gap, participants were asked to choose the top five factors out of 19 commonly named causes of the socioeconomic and racial achievement gaps. Of the top five causes most frequently cited, 55% listed teacher quality, 46% listed student expectations of themselves, 45% listed academic

expectations of the school, 45% listed academic expectations from home, and 40% listed

principal/administrator quality. Of 15 often-cited strategies for closing the academic gap, the

participants' choices revealed the following factors: 61% listed higher teacher quality, 60% listed

increased common beliefs in the potential of students in low-income communities, 50% listed

higher quality of principals and administrators, 50% listed smaller class size, and 47% listed

improvement of services outside schools. Another interesting finding disclosed

> before beginning teaching, 60 percent of pre-service corps members saw increased
>
> funding as among the top five strategies for closing the gap, whereas only 33 percent of
>
> the teachers at the end of the second year of teaching included it among their top five.
>
> Conversely, there seemed to be an increasing belief in the importance of leadership at the
>
> school level, with only one quarter of pre-service teachers citing principal/administrator
>
> quality as a key solution, while 46 percent of first-year teachers and 54 percent of second-
>
> years identify it among their top five. (A. Smith, 2005, pp. 4-5)

Ingle, Rutledge, and Bishop (2011) conducted interviews with 21 principals over a two-

year period to determine if there was consistency in how they hired and evaluated teachers on

their staffs. They found that principal beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences molded their

preferences and conceptions of teacher traits they were searching for. They also found

consistency in principals expecting teachers to be caring, be knowledgeable about content, and

have strong teaching skills and job fit. Principals were also highly influenced by federal, state,

and district mandates to make sense of what they did in hiring and evaluating teachers (Ingle et

al., 2011).

As superintendents seek ways to improve academic performance in urban school districts,

many have asked principals to evaluate teacher effectiveness and then reward strong teachers and

purge incompetent ones—regardless of their tenure status—but these threats of terminations and merit pay have brought numerous clashes with union officials (Ripley, 2008). In contrast, union leaders have argued it is more productive for districts to allow teachers to work together to improve instructional quality, increase parental involvement, and provide teacher and administrative training to improve student achievement and performance rather than penalize schools and their staffs (Fisher, 2009; Goe et al., 2008, Klein, 2007).

Summarizing findings on teacher quality, educators are continually redefining the definition of what quality teachers do and what quality teaching looks like. When accreditation is based on meeting the expectations set forth by NCATE and teacher credentialing in the state is linked to InTASC principles, infusing cultural competency training within coursework has become mandatory for higher education institutions. Those standards require pre-service teachers to exhibit the skills, knowledge, and disposition to work with diverse students. Alternative certification programs are also concerned about preparing teachers for meeting the needs of students in hard-to-staff schools (S. Farr, 2010), but they, too, struggle to find ways to increase teacher expectations of what it takes for all teachers to be successful while working in urban, suburban, and rural districts with students of color or children and students from low-income homes. It could be argued that because the teaching staffs are predominantly White, there is a culture gap that exists between them and their students. The gap is not insurmountable, but it must be acknowledged and then addressed.

Additionally, increasing numbers of states, such as Oregon, Alabama, Alaska, California, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, and New Mexico, have also taken an early lead and acknowledged the need to provide and expect teachers to implement cultural competency practices (Duncan & Zanville, 2001). Other service providers in the helping professions have begun to give more

attention to cultural competency strategies and their role in improving teacher quality (Winkelman, 2005). In the survey completed by Duncan and Zanville (2001), of all the states that had laws on cultural competence, the initial states they found have recognized the need to link quality teaching to accountability for cultural competency training.

One could still be well-meaning and ask, "Is the focus on cultural competency training relevant and justified to produce high-quality teachers, or is it just an attempt to distract from the need for individual parents and students to take personal responsibility for their own behaviors both in and out of the classroom?"

The new InTASC standards have embedded the expectation of teachers being culturally competent in over half of the new standards. The committee defined cultural relevance as follows:

> Cultural relevance is evident through the integration of cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse learners to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these learners. Culturally relevant instruction integrates a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different approaches to learning. (CCSSO, 2011, p. 23)

This expectation places a great responsibility on the educational system to produce quality teachers. Notwithstanding student and parental responsibility and what we know about increasing parental support, a growing body of research lends credibility to how cultural proficiency is linked to successful urban teacher practices and what effective school leaders do (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003). District leadership and principals must also begin to deliberately consider ways to utilize culturally relevant pedagogy and practices within their interpretation of their definitions and evaluation of highly qualified teachers and their connection

to successful in-school practices (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). The research is clear, notwithstanding out-of-school factors, that quality teachers and effective schools do make a difference; it is also clear that having cultural proficiency is crucial to having the disposition to work across cultures (NCATE, 2008).

Examining Factors that Impact Student Achievement

Many psychological and sociological factors appear to be at work determining how ready both teachers and students are to engage in the learning process. Political movements; power struggles; national, state and local government policies; legislative decrees; physical, psychological and ethical concerns, social class and economic factors; equity, gender and class issues, spiritual beliefs, family values, understandings about education and school, and numerous other cultural factors all influence both the teacher and student perceptions about school before either of them enter the classroom (Bennett de Marrais & Lecompte, 1999). It appears then that these cultural factors must be reckoned with and highly influence what happens in a school.

In their book, *The Way Schools Work: A Sociological Analysis of Education,* Bennett de Marrais and Lecompte (1999) discussed many of the areas listed above. They made the distinction between studies that had a psychological perspective from those with a sociological one. Sociologists were concerned about groups, interactions, and settings in society—things outside of the mind. Psychologists however, were more concerned about individuals and the way they think and feel—things inside the mind (Bennett de Marrais & Lecompte, 1999, p. 2). Both camps have grappled with which approach has the greatest impact on school achievement.

Commonly named dependent variables impacting student achievement, such as attendance, discipline, special education placement, free and reduced lunch, single parent homes, parental involvement, media influence, community support, and culture, may all contribute to the

perception that sociological external conditions are the root cause of poor achievement for non-White students or students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Bennett de Marrais & Lecompte, 1999). Mimms's (2007) literature review corroborated these earlier findings and identified variables she discovered related to schools, students, and family/community factors. She outlined three sets of variables that included personnel variables, program issues, and before- and after-school characteristics corresponding to student achievement.

Personnel variables listed by Mimms (2007) included hiring practices, teacher preparation, placement of qualified teachers, teacher experience and attendance, support for new teachers, instructional leadership, collaboration, and professional development. Research on program issues revealed sources for safe and orderly climate/discipline, clear and focused mission, culture, high expectations, gifted and talented courses and other high-level courses offered, counselors, teacher/student relationships/caring teachers, strong teacher encouragement, class size, opportunity to learn and student time on task /use of time, curriculum and instruction, consistency of course content, technology-assisted instruction, support for students, frequent feedback to students, early warning systems, frequent monitoring of student progress; standards, mentoring, common assessment and testing, use of data, grade retention, parent involvement, and partnerships.

Before- and after-school variables in Mimms's (2007) list included birth weight, home/school relations/parent participation, hunger and nutrition, lead poisoning, parent availability, preschool education, racial stabilization, reading to preschool children, student mobility and homelessness, and television watching,

Consequently, connecting the links that bring a holistic understanding on eliminating the academic achievement gap have been illusive and have required sifting through all of these

constantly cited variables listed above. It is difficult to discern if the main variables impacting

the gap were more deeply rooted in society through the community, home and family

environments, or internal student self-motivation. On the other hand, scholars have questioned if

institutional system-wide schooling practices, as they existed, were the leading culprit in the

perpetuating the problem (Bennett de Marrais & Lecompte, 1999; K. Ryan & Cooper, 2004).

Despite enduring arguments, for decades research has clearly painted a picture that confirms,

beyond home/community concerns, what happens in schools matters (Edmonds, 1981; Haycock,

2007).

Despite growing research on what it takes to create effective teachers and schools, across

the nation, the achievement gaps still persists in too many settings (Allington & Cunningham,

1996; D'Amico, 2001). Although numerous schools with diverse student populations could be

identified by the numbers of students receiving special education services or a large percentage

of students receiving free and reduced lunch status, many of these schools have found ways to

help their students excel academically, but other schools with similar demographics still need

help. Carter (2000) studied 21 high achieving, high poverty schools across the nation. He and

Haycock (2007) contended there are many effective strategies employed by successful schools

that may be transferable to school settings where students still languish behind academically

(Carter, 2000; Haycock, 2007; Williams et al., 2005). The academic achievement gap persists,

not only between students of color and their White counterparts, but it also occurs within gender

and ethnic groups. Data from *The Nation's Report Card* revealed that in 2007, when looking at

national averages, 78% of White students in Grade 4 scored at or above the basic level, while

only 46% of Black students and 50% of Hispanic students performed as well in reading. At

Grade 8, 84% of White students performed at or above the basic level, while 55% of Black students and 58% of Hispanic students tested did as well in reading (USDOE, 2007).

The Education Trust (2008) issued a report that continued to link lower tests results in some schools to faults out of students' control. Teachers are often assigned to subject areas where they may not be qualified to teach. A revealing analysis of the 2003-04 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) by Richard M. Ingersoll from the University of Pennsylvania was released (The Education Trust, 2008). Although Indiana appeared to have the least disparity between core academic classes being taught by highly qualified teachers and those not, comparisons throughout the entire report showed contradictions to the numbers reported by states and the results of another report, *The Schools and Staff Survey*. However, consistently, the resulting findings detailed the worst rates of out-of-field teaching appeared in high-poverty and high-non-White schools, the very ones that needed good quality teachers (The Education Trust, 2004; The Education Trust, 2008). The report further contended the problems occurred frequently because of "poor planning or administrative convenience" (The Education Trust, 2008, p. 2).

G, Orfield (1996) and others argued that progress had not matched the expectations of many, even as courts have lifted both mandatory and voluntary integration orders and schools are becoming resegregated in many urban cities (G. Orfield & Yun, 1999; Paulson, 2008). G. Orfield and Yun (1999) warned that solutions for closing the academic achievement gap remain challenging: "When African American and Latino students are segregated into schools where the majority of students are non-White, they are very likely to find themselves in schools where poverty is concentrated" (p. 3). They further noted that concentrated poverty was often linked to lower educational achievement. Segregated schools tend to lack availability of resources and

advanced courses and have a higher rate of teachers who lack credentials in the subject area they teach. Although integrated schools do not insure academic achievement, often, they provide opportunities for students to receive an education in a more competitive academic environment.

Challenging the Role of Poverty in Student Achievement

Rothman (2001) and others reported the main cause for the disproportionate gap is poverty, more so than race (Nichols, 2002; Rothman, 2001). Many school districts and individual schools across the nation have used professional development trainers such as Ruby Payne to help their teachers develop "a framework for understanding poverty" (Payne, 2003, p. 1). Others have staunchly questioned and challenged the effectiveness of that training and claimed that it reinforced a deficit model of stereotypic thinking about students who came from low-economic households (Gorski, 2005; Kunjufu, 2006). In a North Central Regional Laboratory report, Clark (2002) found that achievement test scores were more closely correlated with actions taken by students, teachers, parents, principals, mentors, and others in pursuit of achievement rather than ethnicity or socioeconomic status. He suggested that students' time-use habits (in and out of school), student participation and quality of participation in "high yield" in-school and out-of-school activities, teachers' actions, instructional habits and effectiveness, parents' beliefs and expectations for their students, and parent-teacher communication had stronger correlations to student achievement than either race or social class (Clark, 2002).

Payne (2003) discussed the differences between generational and situational poverty and associated them with more than just the lack of money. She connected generational poverty to families having been in poverty for two or more generations and often lacking the skills, resources, support systems, and language patterns to find jobs and help their children do well in school. She attributed situational poverty to a particular event such as addictions, illness,

divorce, or losing a job. She also contended that people in generational poverty often feel that society owes them something, but those in situational poverty may refuse assistance because of their pride. Although Lyman and Villani (2004) cited Payne's work as a way to conceptualize poverty, Gorski (2005) challenged Payne's statement that "generational poverty has its own culture, hidden rules, and beliefs" (Payne, 2003, p. 64).

Gorski (2005) contended, instead, that Payne's work is an example of conservative classism and a failed attempt to account for past research on poverty and its systemic impact on education, schools, and students. He also claimed that her work relied on a deficit perspective of viewing people as the problem rather than the system and society. Gorski cited several other researchers who he felt helped to substantiate his claims about Payne. He wrote,

> But Payne (2001) doesn't mention this sort of research and its connection to poverty. She also fails to mention that schools with high percentages of students in poverty tend to implement less rigorous curricula (Barton, 2004), have fewer experienced and certified teachers (Barton, 2004; Rank, 2004), have higher student-to-teacher ratios (Barton, 2003; Karoly, 2001) offer lower teacher salaries (Karoly, 2001), have larger class sizes (Barton, 2003), and receive less funding (Carey, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000; Kozol, 1992) than schools with predominantly wealthy students. How can we understand poverty, particularly as it relates to teaching and learning, without these insights, without understanding how the very structure of schools and schooling in the U.S. replicates the class inequities that keep many of our students' families in poverty. (as cited in Gorski, 2005, p. 3)

Additionally, findings from Darling-Hammond's (2000) literature review concluded that a well-prepared teacher may have a greater impact on learning than poverty, language or non-

White status (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Another study by Ogbu (2003) detailed an account of Black students in an affluent community in Shaker Heights, Ohio, who consistently out-performed other Black students in the state but also consistently under-performed their White counterparts and were disproportionately underenrolled in advanced placement classes. Ogbu concluded that poverty was not the key issue. Other societal factors were at work.

Kunjufu (2006) also questioned Payne's (2003) work and disputed if poverty was the main culprit. He, like Kozol's *Savage Inequality* (1991) and *Shame of a Nation* (2005), argued schools funded primarily based on property taxes were poorly funded and often a primary reason for inequitable educational opportunities. He further stated that in order to understand the solutions for a problem, our society must address the causes. As schools attempted to diagnose their problems, Kunjufu cautioned, they may lack the will to implement strong, relevant solutions.

Kunjufu (2006) further stated that often educators believed that poverty, parent's education level, single parent homes, and other factors could be the main causes of low academic performance. But, he also posited, it could be the educators' personal experiences and value systems that created their lenses for viewing the problem. He concluded this discussion noting that although other factors may be part of a correct assessment, it is often "poor leadership, low teacher expectation, low student time on task, irrelevant curriculum, an abundance of left-brain lesson plans, and individualist vs. communal student approach, and coed classrooms" (Kunjufu, 2006, p. ix) that are more likely the culprit.

Lyman and Villani (2004) began a four-year qualitative study and literature review on issues related to education and poverty and culminated their a case study on two elementary schools with substantial numbers of high-poverty students who were performing at high levels.

Their qualitative findings on school leadership and teacher attitudes seemed to support Gorski (2005) and Kunjufu's (2006) findings. At the time of the study, Harrison School in Peoria, Illinois, enrolled 475 students, consisting of 89.3% African American, 7.2% non-Hispanic White, and 2.3% Hispanic. Of those students, 99.7% classified as low income, 3.3% had limited English proficiency, and 10.2% were chronically truant. The average income for households in the public housing project and surrounding neighborhood where the students lived was calculated to be $5,217. The other school, Newfield School in Bridgeport, Connecticut, had an 86.5% poverty rate for a total enrollment of 188 students, consisting of 73.4% African American, 25% Hispanic, and 1.1 % non-Hispanic White.

Both schools had principals who refused to allow their staff members to use their students' poverty levels to predict their academic performance. Consequently, over several years, both schools exceeded their respective state or district performance levels in math, reading, and/or writing. Lyman and Villani (2004) linked their successes beyond producing high academic achievement to include the principals' abilities to increase the staff members' understanding of the complexities of poverty but also move their staffs to create an effective urban learning environment with "high expectations, effective teaching practices, and a firm belief that all children can learn" (p. 5). More findings from this study on principal leadership will be discussed later. However, by providing support for families and building a staff of people who were caring and concerned about the whole child and their families, the principals cultivated teachers who were able to challenge student learning rather than focus on the poverty issues presented by Payne (2003).

Ferguson (2002) conducted a nationwide survey for the Minority Student Achievement Network of 34,000 students in grades 7-11 who attended schools in 15 middle- and upper-

income districts with reputedly excellent reputations. The study found some similarities and differences in responses to survey questions analyzed by racial and ethnic groups as the districts struggled to understand why, despite high overall achievement patterns by all student groups, disparities and gaps still existed.

Black and Hispanic students were disproportionately under- and overrepresented at the top and bottom, respectively, in achievement distribution. Differences in responses by White students and non-White students indicated that non-White students had fewer family background advantages, lower grade point averages, less understanding of lessons, and lower homework completion rates, despite spending virtually the same amount of time doing homework. Asian students, however, spent more time on homework than all other ethnic groups.

Ferguson (2002) did find, however, that skill deficits and the level of home academic support and resources—not effort or motivation—appeared to be the main reasons students completed less homework. Key findings also highlighted the importance of teacher encouragement as a source of motivation for non-White students—especially African American students. The study recommended that even in well-to-do suburbs where poverty was not an issue, professional development initiatives needed to include an approach that looks at three legs of the instructional tripod, which included content, pedagogy, and relationship building, to raise achievement levels for all students (Ferguson, 2002).

The Center for Evaluation and Educational Policy at Indiana University studied the extent to which poverty contributed to racial disparity in a Midwestern state (Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons, & Feggins-Azziz, 2005). At the core of their investigation appeared to be the possibility of dissecting the complex nature of whether race acted as a "proxy" (Skiba et al, 2005, p. 131) for poverty so that the two variables could be used interchangeably, or whether

race was a significant variable on its own merit. Using the state's data set, they identified several variables associated with reasons why non-White students may have been disproportionality assigned to various special education programs. They examined two leading explanations offered by earlier researchers (a) disproportionate placement of minorities in special education may be linked less to race that to deficits in educational opportunities among poor students of color that are created by socioeconomic disadvantages (Macmillan & Reschly, 1998); and (b) the past documentation of school segregation eliminated the exclusivity of poverty as sufficient to explain the disparities experienced by non-White in special education (Losen & Orfield, 2002).

Skiba et al. (2005) found, not surprisingly, that poverty did not fully explain ethnic disproportionality, and furthermore that poverty proved to be in general, a weak and inconsistent predictor of disproportionality in placing students in special education classes. Only in the category of mildly mentally retarded (MMR) "did increased poverty predict increased disproportionality" (Skiba et al., 2005, p. 141), in the areas of emotional disturbance (ED) and moderate mental retardation (MoMR) did poverty fail to enter the equation, while surprisingly, in the areas of SL and LD, students of color were less likely placed in these categories. They summarized their findings by stating that in cases where poverty contributed to explaining disproportionality, its effect, rather than being the main determinants, magnified already existing disparities (Skiba et al., 2005).

Concluding this section on the implications of poverty and student achievement, a literature review on creating successful school by Raptis and Fleming (2003) concentrated on three areas. First they noted the work done in the 1960's that emphasized the link between out-of-school factors and student achievement. In addition, they also recognized the approach of studying school-level factors that caused variances in student achievement levels, and finally,

they acknowledged the research on the effective schools movement. From these three reference

points that impacted and challenged principals and policymakers decisions, they found eight key

indicators that are associative rather than predictive for improving student learning.

Raptis and Fleming (2003) determined that effective in-school programs met eight

characteristics: a focus on student achievement, effective classroom instruction, a shared vision

about educational purpose among staff members (staff teamwork), an orderly and secure caring

learning climate learning, strong leadership (particularly from principals), a clear link between

assessment and curricular practices, high standards and expectations for students and, finally,

supportive home-school connections. From their research, they established some vital

recommendations linked to organizational practices and student achievement. First, more

attention must be paid to teacher practices and curricular standards that vary across districts.

Because teachers are unlikely to change curriculum and instructional practices without support,

principals must provide that guidance and help teachers understand how all eight factors work

together to improve student achievement. Raptis and Fleming (2003) urged that "more research

is needed on combining the variables of school effectiveness and teacher effectiveness" (p. 9).

The final point they addressed was continued examination of system-wide systemic practices and

their relationship to student achievement.

Following up on Raptis and Fleming's (2003) work, C. Lewis (2007) used their eight

findings and developed case studies on six high poverty schools to study how the schools

sustained their improvement. Beyond the schools' descriptors of them being schools with high-

poverty, none of their findings about the schools' success were based on discussions about

poverty. Instead, they mirrored the eight findings of Raptis and Fleming describing what the

school personnel did. The six schools were chosen out of 38 applicants and were involved in a

two-year cycle of improvement. The schools had 3,800 students and 100 educators involved. The common themes found in the six schools were family/community context, distributed leadership, continuous professional learning, and at the core, a focus on learning.

Under family/community contexts C. Lewis (2006) listed the subthemes: personalized home communications, coordinated community services, and differentiated involvement strategies. Linked to distributed leadership she listed: structural and philosophical support, ongoing attention to beliefs and relationships, clear expectations, goals, support, and supervision of learning. Connected to continuous professional development was: a spirit of inquiry, meaningful collaboration, risking, rehearsing, refining, reflecting, and relating new skills, and lastly, coaching and side-by-side teaching. Finally, the core category of her findings was: a focus on learning which included: assessment for learning, consistent strategies, personalized interventions, and flexible grouping (C. Lewis, 2007).

Consequently, from the sources given in this discussion, it seems clear that schools operating under given conditions can make an impact on student performance regardless of what the home is like. Poverty, while closely linked with student achievement, may not be the primary culprit for low achievement levels of some children. Principal leadership, the practices of the teachers, the focus, policies, mission and vision of school remain powerful factors that must be explored to help explain the relationships between achievement, culture and race. While poverty is frequently linked to these topics, there is a distinction in poverty being a reason for low achievement and high-poverty schools with students who achieve in spite of poverty. Principals must be knowledgeable and ready to address the differences.

Delving into Theories about the Achievement Gap

The next portion of this literature review provides a context for understanding what effective principals in urban districts staffed with predominantly White teachers must consider about teacher expectations and their connections to racial stereotyping, probably more subtle than overt. Kunjufu (2002) contended that not only what White teachers did must be addressed, but middle-class teachers both Black and White also needed to reevaluate their practices. Looking at how principals can influence their teachers' underlying beliefs, perceptions and biases, could lead to a greater insights of how they could help their teachers work with students who may be culturally and linguistically diverse from their teachers (Chamberlain, 2005). McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) offered that principals, as "keystones of good schools" (p. 603), must recognize and address any hindrances that stymie learning.

While acknowledging factors related to both in-and out-of-school that impact student learning, some scholars have posed the notion that the whole educational system, pre- and post-NCLB, is based on a deficit model design (Harry & Klingner, 2007; Kunjufu, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Valencia, 1997; Weiner, 2006). Weiner, a professor and urban education specialist, described an all too prevalent deficit paradigm that assumed poor children and their families must be fixed (Weiner, 2006). She further warned this pattern of thinking had become more pervasive in suburban areas also.

Garcia and Guerra (2004) examined comprehensive reform studies and found evidence that suggested educators are not willing to look at root causes of poor student performance, but have a tendency to use a deficit model that found the problems within the students, their families, and their communities. They also discussed stereotypic assumptions and beliefs held about students and families in low-performing schools. Their theoretical framework was based on their

experiences as professional development specialist and findings from other research papers.

Contrasting these conclusions was a multiyear-data study conducted by Skrla and Scheurich

(2001) on four superintendents in Texas and using their school districts' academic performance.

Their findings demonstrated how sustained academic achievement for non-White and low-

income students happened when the superintendents deliberately displaced deficit thinking by

moving the importance of student achievement for all students from the basement to the main

floor of visibility and priority (Skrla & Scheurich, 2001).

Originally, after completing a synthesis review of available research, Barton (2004)

identified fourteen factors that correlated to student achievement. In a 2009 follow up report,

sixteen factors were grouped into three clusters that included in-school factors–such as the

quality of teachers, leadership, pedagogy, and professional development, and before and beyond

school factors (Barton & Coley, 2009). The grouping for before-and-beyond-school included

factors of: low birth weight, environmental damage including exposure to lead and mercury

poisoning, hunger and nutrition, talking and reading to babies and young children, excessive

television watching, parent availability–parent-pupil ratio of two parent homes, student mobility–

frequent changing of schools, and summer achievement gain/loss. The home and school

connections were measured through parental participation and teacher receptivity to parent input.

The in-school factors included rigor of curriculum, teacher preparation, teacher experience,

teacher attendance/absence and turnover, class size, availability of technology assisted

instruction, and fear and safety at school (Barton, 2004; Barton & Coley, 2009).

The 2004 report summarized in its finding that both school and non-school factors are

intertwined and that no firm data had been established to demonstrate the varying degrees of

impact each factor has on achievement. Barton (2004) concluded however, that educators must

hold themselves accountable too, as well as recognizing the causes of the achievement gap and its impact on disadvantaged, low-income and/or non-White students. The subsequent follow-up study by Barton and Coley (2009) compared the measures used in 2004 to mark progress made on closing the gap with each of the areas. Barton and Coley (2009) found,

> Although a few of the gaps in the correlates of achievement have become a bit narrower in some instances and a bit wider in others, overall the gaps identified in the earlier report remain apparent and disturbing. Overall there is little change. (p. 3)

Additionally, the correlates of achievement included factors that occurred from birth to the time students went to school and took their first school standardized tests. They cautioned along with Daniel Patrick Moynihan (cited by Barton & Cooley, 2007), politician and sociologist, the beyond-school-factors and the home-and-connection factors, although important, only helped bring greater understanding to the academic achievement gaps and in no way "diminishes the critical importance of schools and their qualities." (p. 3).

Ladson-Billings (2006), considered one of the early originators of the culturally relevant pedagogy theory, over 20 years ago, offered a unique way of dissecting the academic achievement gap. She, too, concluded that the whole educational system is based on a deficit model design because of the way it chooses to label, define, and address the achievement gap. She acknowledged the gap occurred not only with test scores, but also, in comparing the dropout rates, the number of students placed in gifted and talented classes, and in admittance and graduation from college and university programs. She also presented some main streams of research and the practitioners associated with various theories related to the achievement gap. Among others, she included these theories: cultural deficit theory, racially integrated classroom

theory, stereotype threat theory, cultural mismatch theory, the nature of curriculum and the school theory, and pedagogical practices of teachers (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The next section of the literature review gives a very cursory glimpse into several topics that cultural theorists discuss. These theories, while discussed freely among multicultural practitioners, may not be commonly known or readily accepted by the dominant culture. However, they form a basis for discussions and understanding of multiculturalism, diversity, social justice, and cultural competency. Thus a review of these components provides a place for principals and others interested in becoming culturally proficient to gain insights.

Cultural Deficit Theory

Valencia (1997) defined deficit model thinking as "a theory that posits that the student who fails in school does so principally because of internal deficits or deficiencies. Such deficiencies manifest, it is alleged, in limited abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn and immoral behavior" (Valencia, 1997, p. 2). The cultural deficit theory further contends students from low socioeconomic backgrounds or students who were part of the non-dominant culture failed in school because their values differed from and were inferior to those held by the normative White middle-class population. The dominant culture justified its claims of superiority over Blacks and other immigrant groups as it generalized cultural, moral, intellectual and cognitive shortcomings about individuals in the group and the group as a whole (Foley, 1997). Rooted in practices, policies, laws and discourse evolving from the 1600's to beyond the Civil War, Valencia (1997) spotlighted the roots of deficit thinking that justified economic exploitation, denial of social and political rights and educational opportunities, and the pathological consequences that still impact a disproportionate number of African American and Hispanic/Latino students today.

Valencia (1997) described two leading educational theories popularized at the beginning of the 20th century that supported the development of eugenics (a belief that the human race should be improved by selective genetic breeding to produce a superior race and eliminate undesirables), and hereditarianism (a belief that intelligence and human behavior can be best explained by biological evidence) and fueled the notion of White racial supremacy. Coupled with the development of systematic standardized test measurements and the contention that racial differences in performance on those measures were caused by innate, diminished intellectual abilities, these three movements were heavily influenced by the work of Charles Darwin, Sir Francis Galton, Johann Mendel, Alfred Benet and Theodore Simon. Philosophies that emerged from their work served as cornerstones of reasoning for why so many White researchers of that era equated high correlations between social class, inherited intelligence, environment, and language expression, respectively, with differences they found in how different racial groups performed on standardized tests, while failing to reconcile that correlation does not necessarily prove causality (Valencia, 1997).

Although Valencia (1997) acknowledged other anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists who criticized those assumptions, the theories continued to persist as both overt and subtle explanations for low academic performance for non-dominant populations in the United States. In particular, Valencia noted the work done by Klineberg (1935) who strongly disputed the prevailing thoughts of his time. Black scholars such as Martha McLear of Howard University published other studies that also questioned the bias and pseudo-science of previous work during that same time period. Nine African American male intellectuals who wrote in *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, periodicals for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Urban League, respectively, and Mexican American scholars like George

Isidore Sánchez in 1932, were overlooked and marginalized by traditional academic research organs, but also strongly refuted the theory of deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997).

Furthermore, Valencia (1997) referred to the concept of examining two contrasting views of the deficit theory. The findings of early Black scholars and those from the mainstream dominant White scholars differed and deserved a platform for authentic examination. An approach of looking at already established beliefs and confirming their perceived arguments as truth is called orthodoxy. This practice reinforces the dominant class view by defending the integrity of preconceived notions. Heterodoxy, on the other hand looked at the unconventional dissentions differing from the dominated class view who had an interest in challenging the imposed limits set by early researchers, and sought to challenge the arbitrary boundaries the dominant view took for granted.

Recounting the development of deficit model thinking, Foley (1997) noted earlier arguments about the effects of nature (heredity) versus nurture (environment) and their perceived influence to explain genetic deficiencies of Blacks and immigrants. These biased beliefs about the dominant White population came unraveled with the Great Depression and its impact on the White middle-class's experience with poverty. Added to this were the terrible acts of Hitler and the Nazi regime with their sterilization and genocide programs. Growing research from anthropologists such as Franz Boas who in 1911 challenged the belief that differences in the innate ability produced differences in culture (Delger, 1991). In addition, child psychologist, Jean Piaget challenged the idea that intellect was fixed and unchangeable by advocating his theories on cognitive development that knowledge is derived from action and indeed can change (Slavin, 1986).

Eugenics proponents began to refocus their ideas on genetics and heredity producing limited inherited intelligence that caused poverty, as attention turned again toward the role of culture when O. Lewis (1965) reported studies on urban poor in Mexico, New York, Puerto Rico and Cuba. He began ascribing a list of identifiable attributes and behaviors to characterize people trapped in a culture of poverty (Foley, 1997). O. Lewis organized 70 traits that were passed on to successive generations and divided them into four clusters dealing with (a) poor people's negative values, their attitudes and character, (b) the nature of their family systems, (c) the nature of their slum communities, and (d) their social and civic relations with the larger community.

His portrayal of these cultural traits, similar to what Payne (2003) wrote, presented a negative image of poor people whose way of life kept them in poverty and was judged inferior by the mainstream culture. O. Lewis (1965) used categorical descriptors such as lazy, hedonistic, violent, distrustful people living in common law union, as well as in dysfunctional, female-centered authoritarian families who are chronically unemployed and people who rarely participated in local civic activities, voted, or trusted the police and political leaders. These overshadowed any positive attributes and practices he found ,which he did not list with the 70 traits. Consequently, he provided a deficit model that appeared to be absolute truths. What resulted was a paradigm that blamed the victim, blamed the poor, and provided a stereotypic portrayal and perception of underclass actions and values (W. Ryan, 1971).

To Payne's (2003) credit, however, in contrasting her work to O. Lewis's (1965), although some believe, as discussed earlier, that she was looking through a deficit lens. She contended her goal was not to paint people in poverty as pitiful people, but to provide a way for educators to understand some situations that may occur in lower-income communities to help

them work with students and parents. The danger comes however, when educators ascribe negative traits to a whole community, and in processing the information, view the possibility of social mobility as rare.

With the war on poverty in the 1960's, additional studies continued to fuel the deficit model of thinking about how parents from the lower income class may retard their children's intellectual development and their cognitive and language development. Hess and Shipman (1965) studied 140 African American mothers and their 4-year old children and compared how the verbal feedback parents gave their children differed between middle-class and lower income class parents. They concluded that when preparing a child to complete a task, middle-class parents gave their children better verbal feedback and less negative reinforcement. Conversely, lower income class parents were conceived as more authoritarian, less verbal, and less skilled at parenting. Bereiter and Englemann (1966) presented a direct instruction language program, which Bereiter (1987) conceded, despite producing some positive results, the report fueled a belief that poor Black children suffered sensory deficits, personality impairments and an inferior Black dialect from their families. Deutsch (1965) also contended that because of the relationships found between and among race, culture, socioeconomic factors and achievement, Black and Latino's home environments were key reasons for their deficit achievement when compared to students from the White culture.

Thus, as Ford (2007), a recognized authority and proponent on identifying African American children for gifted and talented programs, noted, a deficit orientation of thinking fueled research language that interpreted and labeled "different" as dysfunctional, disadvantaged, and "at-risk. These labels focused on shortcomings or weaknesses instead of approaching student learning by building on strengths that language learners, immigrants, racial and ethnic

minorities brought to the learning setting. Differences were further interpreted as abnormal, sub-standard, and inferior. Ford further argued that standardized testing measured "familiarity with the mainstream American culture and English proficiency, not intelligence" (Ford, 2007, p. 405) and because of test results, students were disproportionately not readily identified for gifted and talented programs. She continued in her discussion and contended that the publication of *The Bell Curve* (1994) by Herrnstein and Murray revived discussions about the theory that intelligence was hereditary.

Valencia and Solórzana (1997) commented that although decades of research had countered and discredited deficit-thinking models, those approaches are still manifested in contemporary thought and practice. Deficit practices involving using genetics to explain behavior and racial or ethnic differences in intelligence still remained. Secondly, many still promoted the culture of poverty paradigm that blamed the victim, the poor, and the under-classed. The third practice they noted embraced "the theses of cultural and accumulated environmental deficits" (Valencia & Solórzana, 1997, p. 160) such as inadequate parents, home, child-centered homes and the 1960s style family expectations.

Valencia and Solorzana (1997) contended that deficit thinking grew and became entrenched in the faulty deductions drawn by Shuey (1966) who wrote *The Testing of Negro Intelligence*; the assertions of respected Columbia University scholar, Garrett, an avowed racist, who believed that Blacks were mentally inferior and thus should not intermarry or be allowed to attend desegregated schools; and Jensen's (1969) controversial conclusions that IQ scores were static and the schools could only have minimal and limited success in raising achievement levels, deficit thinking grew (Chorover,1979; Valencia & Solórzana, 1997)). Subsequently, it should have come as no surprise then, when Dunn (1987) shocked and upset Latino scholars with

conclusions found in the first major literature review on Mexican American and Puerto Rican children in the United States, which in addition to poor environmental conditions, inherited genetic material was a contributing factor to their low test performance (Valencia & Solorzana, 1997).

Similar to previous findings from the 1920s laced with beliefs about hereditarianism, Shuey (1966) concluded from all of her tests that her results, "inevitably point to the presence of native differences between Negroes and Whites as determined by intelligence tests" (p. 521). It was difficult to set aside her massive review that included 80 different tests of 81,000 Negro school children, 48,000 Negro high school and college students, criminals, homeless men, military officers, enlisted men, veterans and other adults. It was also difficult to set aside the message carried by Garrett (n.d.; 1973) over a half-million pamphlets distribution of materials like *Breeding Down* and *IQ and Racial Differences*, which were widely distributed to teachers across the nation free of charge.

Moving beyond these early planks that laid the groundwork for deficit arguments, those who have critiqued and offered anti-deficit models such as Valencia and Solorzana (1997), Ginsburg (1972), and Swadener and Lubeck (1995), had not always been viewed as credible. Valencia and Solorzana (1997) reported that as late as 1991 in a nationwide survey done by the National Opinion Research Center, Duke (1991) stated that many White people still believed that people of color were more likely to prefer welfare to hard work, were lazier that Whites, were more prone to violence, less intelligent and less patriotic. Because of continued misperceptions, Valencia and Solórzana (1997) posed, "The deficit model turns students into burdens and trades potential for risk" (p. 196). Rather than looking at how students learn through the lens of risk factors, cultural disadvantages and cultural deprivation, they encouraged educators to move

toward building a democratic educational system that promotes understanding of the problems of poverty, building relationships with students and parents from different racial and ethnic populations, and moving away from blaming and scapegoating those who are victims of a deficit educational model (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997).

Racially Integrated Classroom Theory

Leading proponents for the establishing integrated classroom theory based much of their position on Coleman's (1966) work which was instrumental in helping to craft desegregation plans that typically brought Black students to schools with predominantly White populations. Frankenburg (2006), in a review for the Harvard Law School Institute for Race and Justice, presented two arguments. First, she found that research demonstrates benefits to ensuring students attend integrated schools and documents harms to maintaining racially isolated schools serving disproportionate shares of children of color. Secondly, she found there was widespread support for racially integrated schools.

Allport (1954), in favor of integrated schools argued that to reduce prejudice, people from various groups must be in contact with one another rather than just discussing hypothetical situations and using role-play which would only yield short-term effects (Allport, 1954). When those in authority supported cross-racial understandings and interaction along with equal status for all group members, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) documented positive findings. Frankenberg (2007) stated improved opportunities for promoting more critical and complex thinking came when students were introduced to new information and understandings, and positive, modest gains also occurred in academic achievement for African American students when Black students attended desegregated schools. Conversely, deflating concerns by Whites, there

appeared to be no negative effects on White students' test performance when the schools remained predominantly White (Frankenberg, 2007).

Furthermore, Frankenberg's literature review found, life opportunities improved for Black students with attendance to racially diverse populated schools that produced higher graduation rates, higher college attendance and graduation, access to networking opportunities, and higher incomes than their peers schooled in racially isolated settings. Community housing patterns also changed as a result of desegregation and helped to stem White flight when most of a region was involved in the process, especially when racial compositions maintained similar across the area and a large portion of the population remained predominantly White (M. Orfield & Luce, 2005).

The non-partisan National Academy of Education (NAE) reviewed 64 briefs for the 2007 Supreme Court case involving parents from Seattle and Louisville who filed a suit against those districts to stop them from using race as criteria for assigning students to schools. While the court limited how those two cities planned to continue desegregation of their schools, the court allowed districts to use race in some circumstances to maintain diversity or to prevent it from creating racially isolated schools. The NAE concluded and argued that convincing evidence existed about the harms of racially isolated schools although determining when the level of harm occurs remained unclear. They underscored the documented findings that the more methodically rigorous the studies were, the larger the effects on Black student achievement appeared on students attending desegregated schools (Frankenberg, 2007).

According to Ludwig (2004), of those 3,017 adults surveyed, 90% believed conditions had improved for Black children to receive a quality education since 1954. At the time of the 2004 survey, 38% believed that opportunities were still unequal for Black children, while almost

one-third described discrimination as the cause for the disparity. Teachers, students and parents in additional surveys agreed that diverse classrooms promoted teaching respect and understanding of other cultures although the interaction between students of different races did not always occur (Bagnishi & Sheer, 2004; Frankenberg, 2007).

Frankenberg (2007) also reported that one myth, supposedly emanating from the African American community, was that there was no wide support for Black students to attend integrated schools. She cited Ludwig's 2004 study, which included 219 Black adults, surveyed at random and reported the following data:

> Opinions on educational opportunities diverged sharply along racial lines: two-thirds of Blacks (68%) hold the belief that Black children do not have education parity with White children, compared with only one-third of Whites (34%) taking this position. And while large majorities of both Blacks and Whites feel that progress has been made in educational equality over the past 50 years, this belief is significantly more prevalent among Whites (92%) than it is for Blacks (77%). (Ludwig, 2004, para. 7)

Furthermore, Frankenburg reported, 90 % of African American adults surveyed by G. Orfield (1995) indicated they favored racially integrated schools, especially, those who had experienced desegregated schools.

So, although the turbulent integration of African American students into predominantly White schools was problematic in the past with gaining peaceful desegregation, today, children from diverse cultures differing than their teachers still may face challenges that are much less aggressive, but sometimes hidden and often unchallenged. Principals should be aware that those hidden undercurrents exist and could be impacting student achievement.

Stereotype Threat Theory

Social psychologists Steele and Aronson (1995) presented a theory that when negative

stereotypic traits were attributed to a group, and then an individual belonging to that group was

introduced into that situation, a psychological process took place. When that stereotypic trait

became a salient criterion in a situation, individuals in a group became concerned that they

would confirm to those negative stereotypes. Steele and Aronson proposed that these concerns

caused group members to perform more poorly at a task than they would have if the stereotypic

variable had remained neutral. Later, Steel, Spencer, and Aronson (2002) presented this

definition of stereotype threat:

> We offer the following definition of stereotype threat: When a negative stereotype threat
>
> about a group that one is a part of becomes personally relevant, usually as an
>
> interpretation of one's behavior or an experience one is having, stereotype threat is the
>
> resulting sense that one can be judged or threatened in terms of the stereotype or that one
>
> might do something that would inadvertently confirm it. Most often stereotypes are seen
>
> to affect their targets through the discriminatory behavior and judgment of people who
>
> hold the stereotype. An implication of this definition however is stereotypes can affect
>
> their targets even before they are translated into behaviors or judgments. The mere threat
>
> of discrimination and devaluation implied by the perceived relevance of negative group
>
> stereotypes – the threat of a snake loose in the house – can have effects of its own.
>
> (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002, p. 389)

Steele et al.'s (2002) work could be connected to the concept of "double consciousness"

proposed by W.E.B. DuBois which involved being gifted with the ability of "looking at one's

self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in

amused content and pity" (Dubois, 1897, n.p.). It seems that having this gift allowed African Americans, in general, to see things with two sets of eyes which may either be perceived to have a positive or negative impact on how individuals develop their own self-perception.

Steele and Aronson (1995) deliberately used an instrument with content knowledge that college sophomores would consider as hard. They discovered that when a 30-minute graduate level verbal standardized test was given separately to both Black and White sophomore students at Stanford University, and they were asked to identify their race as a criterion for the test, Black students scored lower when White students. But when no mention of race was made, Black students scored higher than the other set of Black students, indeed, they matched that of equally qualified White students tested.

Steele and Aronson (1995) concluded that lower test scores resulted because of the existing negative stereotypes about the Black student's ability that is innately associated with in-group or out-group stereotypic thinking and biased behaviors. They postulated that students were concerned about confirming the stereotypic behavior. That concern caused group members to perform poorly in comparison to how they scored when no mention of race was attached. The stereotype threat theory is not only pertinent to Black students, it could also explain why there are fewer girls in math and science courses at the college level and it could also explain why White people may see Black people as more athletic than they are (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In a later writing, Steele(1999) asked the following question and determined:

Attempts to explain the problem can sound like a debate about whether America is a good society, at least by the standard of racial fairness, and maybe even about whether racial integration is possible. It is an uncomfortably finger-pointing debate. Does the problem stem from something about Black students themselves, such as poor motivation,

a distracting peer culture, lack of family values, or the unsettling suggestion of *The Bell Curve* genes? Or does it stem from the conditions of Blacks' lives: social and economic deprivation, a society that views Blacks through the lens of diminishing stereotypes and low expectations, too much coddling, or too much neglect? My colleagues and I have called such features stereotype threat, which is the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype. Everyone experiences stereotype threat. We are all members of some group about which negative stereotypes exist, from White males and Methodists to women and the elderly. And in a situation where one of those stereotypes applies—a man talking to women about pay equity, for example, or an aging faculty member trying to remember a number sequence in the middle of a lecture—we know that we may be judged by it (Steele, 1999).

Steele confirmed his findings when he gave a math test to two sets of White males and told one set that Asians usually performed better on the test they were about to take and indeed the White students did not perform as well as another set of White males who were not told the same information. Steele contended that there was no reason White males should have been intimidated by the test materials, except that stereotype threat was in operation. He noted that so often, African Americans know the "bad press" about how their scores are perceived, so they came into a testing situation concerned and suspect about the test's fairness.

Stereotype threat is a phenomenon that must be considered in curriculum content, design, and delivery. When students from the dominant culture saw their culture portrayed as the norm, then they assumed that anyone different from them must be disadvantaged. Students from the dominated group saw the same presentation and viewed their culture as subordinated and

consequently, may have felt inferior (Ford, 2007). Steele suggested that the stereotype threat might have been overcome on additional test when students built a degree of racial trust in the test givers and they also engaged in conversations about things that concerned the students.

Sackett, Hardison, and Cullen (2004) have criticized Steel and Aronson's (1995) findings when they were unable to replicate similar results. They further argued that eliminating stereotype threat effects does not explain away academic achievement gaps among various diverse groups of students (Sackett et al., 2004). However, additional studies have been conducted and continue to verify the initial finding that non-dominant groups may be intimidated by comparisons to dominant group members or when there is a mention of stereotypic traits ascribed to their group. Others have shown the model is applicable beyond academics (Steel et al., 2002). Remembering the possibility of the accuracy of the findings about stereotype threats should be something that principals must consider in their practice as they think of ways to eliminate the potential problem.

Cultural Mismatch Theory

Bardon (2007) defined cultural mismatch as the "mismatch between aspects of the student's home culture and the school culture. It may be appropriate to modify aspects of the school culture to "match" some aspects of the home culture. This can lead to increased academic performance by the student, as well as better understanding of the student" (Bardon, 2007, p. 3).

Berger (2006) noted in a study of students in an urban alternative school, some student behaviors viewed as disruptive by a teacher may have been, in reality, actually provoked by the teacher because of a misaligned set of values, norms and expectation between the teacher's culture and the student's culture. Ladson-Billings (2006) referenced several sociolinguistic experts such as Au (1980), Delpit (1995), Foster (1996), and B. S. Heath (1983) who offered

ways for teachers to address how they change, create, and value learning environments that accommodate the students' cultural needs and values to help their students adjust to school expectations rather than always making the students assimilate and have to fit the school culture without any accommodation or acknowledgment that there may be a misalignment of perspectives.

In addition educational researchers who have worked in this area included Irvine (2003) who discussed viewing students with the proper cultural eye, and C. D. Lee (2004) who moved a step beyond cultural mismatch to begin helping teachers and students develop a cultural repertory of practice and strategies that equipped them to succeed in school. Bardon (2007) developed guiding questions that teachers in Wisconsin could use to distinguish disordered behavior from cultural mismatch practices. They included the following ideas: Is there always a one-way expectation for accommodation? How does the classroom environment honor student strengths? Have adjustments been made to meet the cultural strengths and learning styles of the students? Have students been taught the "social capital" they need to succeed in school?

Principals must be knowledgeable of resources that offer solutions to help both teachers and students mitigate cultural mismatches. Bardon (2007) suggested that several principles are important in recognizing and alleviating cultural mismatch. Principals must help teachers understand that every person has a culture and racial identity. Additionally, schools and other institutions also have a culture. She believed that teachers must be ready to actively and positively respond to the changing ethnic composition of the country and its changing social, economic and cultural patterns. Because behavioral standards and deviances are culturally-bound, teachers must determine if cultural mismatches can account for behaviors that teachers deem inappropriate.

When a student appears to be misbehaving, that behavior occurs in a context and is based on relationships between the student, teacher, peers, the classroom, the school, the instruction and the material. Bardon (2007) further contented that even though teachers mean the best for their students, it is easy to misinterpret or misread behavior. Teachers must determine what student behaviors are a mismatch for school expectations and define the behaviors that should replace them. They must also examine if classroom activities are communal or competitive; allow for movement and interaction within the classroom, and are varied in their approach to meet the interests and learning styles of the students. How teachers and parents interact is also important in obtaining school success (Bardon, 2007). The goal then becomes how does the principal ensure that their teachers are helping their students adapt to the school culture and still retain dignity for the values and the strengths the children bring with them into the learning environment.

Nature of Curriculum and School Theory

What is taught in classrooms across the nation helps determine student outcomes and perceptions of themselves and others. Providing multicultural education as a part of a school's curriculum has met various levels of acceptance and resistance. According to Banks (2007), one of the foundational leaders of multicultural educational theory, multicultural education strives to break the stronghold that the Eurocentric culture has of causing everyone to view events, themes, concepts and issues through the eyes of Eurocentric writers who reinforced and perpetuated the dominant culture's lens as the correct filter of history. Using the example of the Native people in America who were "discovered" by White settlers who found them, epitomizes this theory. Rather than viewing the event as an "invasion" of already occupied lands, using the term "settlers" instead of "invaders" legitimized European's taking the Indian's land and depicting the

Native people as "resisters" and "rebellious" and helped in rationalizing that their resistance was considered unreasonable (Banks, 2007; Howard, 1999; Loewen, 1995).

Indeed, Howard (1999) wrote, the dominant culture imposed their will on the Native people whose cultures were marginalized, deemed uncivilized, and unappreciated as attempts were made to deculturalize them by turning them from the religions they practiced for years before the Europeans came and converted them to Christianity. Additionally, as missionaries ran some of the reservations and dictated who could leave the reservations, Native children were taken from their reservations and sent to boarding schools to learn American ways. Upon returning back to the reservations, after a number of years away, those children had a difficult time readjusting because, neither they did not fit in with their tribal communities nor into the American society as a whole who had indoctrinated them with the Western culture.

Multicultural education manifested itself "as an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process" (Banks, 1997, p. 3). It could involve programs or practices that addressed issues related to "educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups and people with disabilities" (Banks, 2007, p. 7). The goal of multicultural education was to ensure that equity existed for all students, including those who are not from the dominant culture, and that those from the non-dominant populations have a better chance to learn with equal opportunities for success. Embraced in this goal is the tenet that students must learn about social justice as they interact with others from their community and around the world from different cultures, races, religions, and nations.

The momentum of the 1960s Civil Rights era for equitable laws for African Americans, led to cries for recognition to advance the causes of the women's movement, people with disabilities, senior citizens and most recently, gay rights advocates. Fueled by the belief that it

had the right to expand West and South and annex one-third of Mexico's territory, America's

belief in its inherent superiority sometimes called its Manifest Destiny presented a complex

picture of the country's values. On one hand, America valued the ideas of equality and human

dignity while it tolerated discriminatory treatment of African Americans and other ethnic and

culture groups in the nation (Appleby, Hunt & Jacob, 1994). In recent decades as a shift has

been made to include more than the European perspective of elevating and romanticizing White

males and their deeds when many realities were excluded by ethnicity and gender. The call for a

more multicultural perspective that reveals other peoples stories has brought debate and

controversy for the nation's history textbook publishers. As some declare that all groups deserve

to have their stories and perspectives included in history books, others hold onto the idea of not

changing the past remembrances (Appleby et al., 1994), However, not including a multicultural

perspective in school materials has been perceived as problematic for non-White students.

Multicultural educator researchers Banks (2007), Gay (2000), and Grant (2003) and

curriculum theorists such as Apple (1990) and Popkewitz (1998) have explored this idea that the

school bears a large responsibility for the failure of Black and brown students to thrive in their

learning environments. Banks (2007) outlined five dimensions of multicultural education. He

documented: (a) content integration when teachers used content related to their students' cultures

and as well as others; (b) knowledge construction when teachers helped students "understand,

investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference,

perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is

constructed" (Banks, 2007, p. 23); (c) prejudice reduction by identifying "characteristics of

students racial attitudes and how they can be modified by teaching methods and materials"

(Banks, 2007, p. 23); (d) an equity pedagogy that existed when "teachers modify their teaching

in ways that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups" (Banks, 2007, p. 23); and finally, (e) an empowering school culture that examined "grouping, labeling practices, sports participation, disproportionality in achievement, and the interaction of the staff and the students across ethnic and racial lines" (Banks, 2007, p. 23) to "create a school culture that empowers students from diverse racial, ethnic and gender groups" (Banks, 2007, p. 23).

Ultimately, Banks (2007) viewed the school as a social system with major variables and factors interacted with each other to create and sustain a multicultural school environment. These dynamics included: school policy and politics, school culture and hidden curriculum; learning styles in the school, language and dialects in the school, community participation and input, counseling program, assessment and testing procedures, instructional materials, formalized curriculum and course of study, teaching styles and strategies, school staff attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and actions (Banks, 2007).

Landsman (2006), in reviewing what other prominent multicultural scholars have espoused, strongly cautioned educators to reach beyond a heroes and festival mentality, beyond multicultural celebrations, past focusing on cultural traits of students with deficits, past sensitivity training, and beyond a cultural overview that often widened entrenched stereotypes and assumptions and served as an add-on to already set curriculum (Landsman, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Neito, 2000). All these things are considered a first step, but not the step that defined what multicultural education really is. The goal that Banks and others have sought was to develop a true understanding of equity and social justice.

Banks identified approaches for individuals and groups to recognize their levels of curriculum reform related to cultural inclusion. He found that educators operated within four

continuum levels of practice and understandings. These included (a) the contributive approach with a focus on heroes, holidays and discrete cultural elements, (b) the ethnic-additive approach with a focus on content, concepts, themes and perspectives added to the curriculum with no modifications to its structure, (c) the transformative approach where curriculum structures begin to change and allow students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from a variety of diverse perceptional views, (d) and the decision-making and social action approach when students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them . Banks cautioned that moving from one level to another would probably not be smooth or easy, but would most likely be a gradual and cumulative transition (Banks, 1988). Principals must first become aware of where they fall of the continuum, as Bardon (2007) suggested, and then help teachers begin to move to the upper levels on the continuum.

Pedagogical Practices of Teachers Theory

Although other researchers such as Sleeter (2001), Zeichner (1992), and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992) have contributed to understanding how teachers use culturally relevant pedagogy, much of the foundational definition resulted from work done by Ladson-Billings (1994) and Gay (2000). In 1988, Ladson-Billings (1994) began a two-year study working with a group of eight teachers, five African American and three White, who were identified through a process called community nomination (Foster, 1991). Their small school district in Northern California had about 3,000 students who were predominantly African Americans. Ladson-Billings (1994) asked African American parents, all mothers, to suggest who they thought were outstanding teachers. Then that list was cross-checked with an independent list generated by principals and other teaching colleagues. Nine names appeared on both lists, but one teacher declined because of time constraints. The four-phase study consisted of interviews,

observations, video tapping and a final stage which involved all of the teachers analyzing and interpreting their own and each-others' practices as recorded on video tapes. From this study, emerged what became known as culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2007b).

Using the effective schools research done by Edmonds in 1981 that examined schools that produced academic success for African American students as a beacon, Ladson-Billings wanted to observe students who were successful despite low-ranked performance by many in the district. A unifying trait of all the teachers in her study was their goal to make all students academically successful. Teachers used strategies that allowed students to succeed without isolating them from their culture. Three broad categories emerged from the research that became known as culturally relevant practices: (a) conception of self and others, (b) social relations, and (c) conceptions of knowledge. Ladson-Billings (2007) defined each proposition. They are summarized below and included:

1. Conception of Self and Others: included how the teachers believed that all students were capable of academic success; saw their pedagogy as – unpredictable, always in the process of becoming; saw themselves as members of the community; saw teaching as a way to give back to the community; and believed in a Freirean notion of "teaching as mining" (Freire, 1974, p. 76) or pulling knowledge out as information from the students.

2. Social Relations: included how they maintained fluid student-teacher relationships, demonstrated a connectedness with all of the students, developed a community of learners, and encouraged student to learn collaboratively and be responsible for another.

3. Conceptions of Knowledge: involved their beliefs that knowledge was not static; it is shared, recycled, and constructed; knowledge must be viewed critically; teachers must be passionate about knowledge and learning; teachers must *scaffold*, or build bridges, to facilitate learning; and assessment must be multifaceted, incorporating multiple forms of excellence.

Language Acquisition Theory

Under the heading of pedagogy and changing practices comes one final thought and example of how cultural variables and language acquisition converge. Noma LeMoine's work completed in 1988 based on extensive travel to Africa and other countries where transported Africans lived, she found that language variations were a barrier to academic achievement. Combining her knowledge of language, speech, literacy and learning and her studies of African languages, she discovered grammatical structure patterns found in the Niger Congo language that parallel and correlate to the speech patterns of African American children although they had never been to Africa. She found that the patterns had been transmitted from generation to generation and they explained many of the grammatical differences in how students speak in urban schools and the expectation that they speak Standard English. Because of these discrepancies, she argued for a linguistically responsive teaching pedagogy and training (LeMoine, 2011a).

When children bring their language from their home culture to the school setting, it is the teacher's role in bridge any language barriers that exist between home and school. LeMoine, who was the director of the Los Angeles United School District's Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP), worked with teachers to facilitate ways for students to reach mastery of Standard American English when they came to school as speakers of non-standard languages.

She included African American, Hawaiian-American, American Indians, and Mexican American students in a grouping she called Standard English Learners (SEL). She demonstrated remarkable success in providing professional development that immersed teachers in understanding the history of language acquisitions. Without that understanding, she believed that teachers have a deficit perception of students because of the way they speak, believing that any speech patterns that varied from Standard English needed to be eradicated.

The key to making the transition for students was by fostering in the students an appreciation of their home language and culture and connecting their home language to Standard English. Through activities that showed students the parallel of languages, students became able to "code-switch" and change language patterns as needed. She suggested that teachers begin to apply six instructional approaches that would change the paradigm for creating culturally relevant teaching practices to help student grow linguistically. The approaches include:

1. Study and enhance knowledge of diverse language varieties and their derivatives.

2. Integrate that knowledge into instruction.

3. Use second-language acquisition skills with all students as needed to support literacy.

4. Use a balanced approach to teaching literacy and incorporate meaning construction, phonics, and activities that support linguistic and cultural diversity.

5. Incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy that builds on learning styles and strengths of the students and facilitate access to a rigorous standard-based curriculum.

6. Infuse history and culture of SEL students into instructional curricula (LeMoine, 2011b)

LeMoine's (2011a) discussion on language acquisition and the perceptions that teachers have of students who do not speak Standard English is revealing. She acknowledged it takes an

open mind, training and practice to change mindsets from taking a deficit view of students who do not fit the European model and providing them with tools to bridge home and school languages.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The theory of "cognitive dissonance" postulated by Festinger (1957) proposed that when people encountered information or experiences they found inconsistent with their strongly believed perceptions, beliefs or opinions, dissonance occurred. They sought to eliminate the discomfort produced in four main ways: (a) they judged information irrelevant or invalid to them that went against their beliefs; (b) they looked for information that supported their original beliefs; (c) they denigrated or disparaged the source of contradictory information; or, (d) if stereotyping was not involved, they would change their belief even in the face of newly acquired uncomfortable information (Festinger, 1957).

Sue (2003), a psychologist and educator who has dedicated his career to studying racism and multicultural diversity issues, implied in *Overcoming Our Racism: the Journey to Liberation* this may be why discussions about race seem irrelevant to many White Americans and dialogue about race often has to be championed by the non-White community. Sue asserted that without the voices from oppressed people struggling for equal rights, to prick the conscience of White America, little changes occurred (Sue, 2003, p. 271). Although White allies provided inspiration, wisdom, and commitment to help champion a cause, Sue cautioned that the burden of promoting teaching about their history, position and worldview fell on that non-White culture (p. 272).

Keltner and Robinson (1996) demonstrated the when developing understandings about oppression, they found the most accurate assessment of bias came from those who were

disempowered, not from those who enjoyed the privilege of power. So, it appeared that "people of color understand White people better than White people understand people of color" (Sue, 2003, p. 122) because although people of color operate in a White world, seldom do White people operate in the other cultures beyond surface, work relationships. It would seem likely then that the chances for racial prejudice and stereotypic thinking to develop would to be intensified by media portrayals when direct contact with diverse populations is not the norm.

Not withstanding the theories presented, after examining many of the reasons scholars gave for why the gap exists, Ladson-Billings (2006) summarized and suggested that most approaches offered short-term solutions and did not provide long-term answers to the underlying problems. She contended that America has an education debt rather than an academic achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Costing the nation in lost revenue and productivity, she conceptualized the gap as a huge debt that the nation has amassed. She asserted the nation must continue to search for a way to pay down the debt that has accumulated at the expense of identifiable groups and generations of people.

Prompted by legislation in 2002, Scottish scholars explored ways to close the opportunity gap and proposed that all students must be given equitable opportunities and resources for optimal learning (South Ayrshire Council, 2008). In 2009. The Schott Foundation for Public Education launched a movement to close the opportunity gap in American and identified discrepancies that plagued many underperforming and underserved students in America. Fueled by measures including, but extending beyond a lack of adequate funding, they identified four core minimum resources that all children must have to ensure consistent access for success in school. They included: (a) high quality early childhood education, (b) highly qualified teachers,

(c) college preparatory curricula that would prepare youth for college, work and community and

(d) equitable resources (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2009).

Cleveland (2005) also agreed that the term academic achievement gap was misleading because it assumed that one group of students may have less innate ability than another. He believed there is more likely a practice gap, which is an adult issue, rather than a student's problem. When students come to school, they may face cultural discontinuity. This occurs when student behaviors exhibited in a class differ from what their teachers valued or expected. Cleveland contended that cultural competency might be a major factor in resolving these types of situations. In his address to the Indiana Principals Leadership Academy (IPLA), Cleveland defined cultural competence simply as, "The ability to be productive in cross cultural situations." He suggested that developing caring relationships with students is the best way to help them learn. He also believed that culturally responsive teachers differentiated instruction for all students as a standard practice (Cleveland, 2005). Lead by the principal, teachers must reduce the effect of cognitive dissonance and believe that there is merit in trying new approaches to teaching a diverse student population.

The Reality of Racial Issues Theory

One of numerous research projects conducted by the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP) documented persistent disproportionate disparities between numbers of students of color and their non-Hispanic White counterparts in special education identification and placement, discipline practices, suspension and expulsion practices, retention, advanced placement, gifted and talented programs, academic achievement rates, and drop-out and graduation rates (Skiba et al., 2005; Rausch & Skiba, 2006).

Ritter and Skiba (2006) asserted that understanding the complex problem cannot be disconnected from a larger context of American's education systems and society. From documentations of their professional development outcomes with school districts, they concluded that race could be a factor that must be addressed in the context of those findings. They also acknowledged the need to begin "courageous conversations" about race, equity, disproportionality, and practices that could be difficult but that remained necessary and could prove meaningful in setting priorities for improving instruction.

Harry and Klingner (2007) addressed the system that required students to be labeled disabled before they can receive special services. They argued that it is not bad to be identified as needing help, but the problem laid in the belief system that children must be labeled with proof of intrinsic deficit to be serviced. Furthermore, their study on special education placement for services revealed another troubling aspect displayed by the lack of adequate classroom instruction prior to referral, inconsistencies in the referral process, and poor schooling practices that placed students at increased risk of failure. In the United States, African American students are placed in the Educable Mental Retardation (EMR) category one and one-half times the rate of White peers. Sleeter (1986) argued conversely that the label of Learning Disability (LD) was crafted and designed so that it accommodated White and middle-class students without a stigma for them to get help if they were not living up to expectations (Collins & Camblin, 1983). Harry and Klingner (2007) stated, "When the habit of looking for intrinsic deficits interweaves with a habit of interpreting cultural and racial differences as a deficit, the deck is powerfully loaded against poor students of color" (p. 20).

Questions surrounding stereotypic thinking, race, and White privilege have proven to be sensitive, but they have provided valuable insight into why educators validated various beliefs

and perceptions about themselves and other groups of people. Schmidt (1999) reported the challenges she and others found in the way the predominantly European-American with suburban experiences identified themselves. Typically, they described themselves as White and middle-class; however, when questioned about diversity, they saw themselves as Americans without a particular culture (Schmidt, 2005). Sue (2003) suggested that White people may even deny they have a race.

Sue (2003) defined racial prejudice as "hatred, fear or dislike based on faulty or unsubstantiated data rooted in inflexible generalizations" (pp. 24-25). Stereotypic beliefs seemed less general to Sue and could be attributed toward and between any non-White individual or group. He defined racism as "any attitude, action, or institutional structure or any social policy that subordinates persons or groups because of their color" (Sue, 2003, p. 31), and he addressed three ways it manifested as individual, institutional, or cultural racism. He further contended, "White people have control over systemic forces in our society and enforce cultural norms and values" (Sue, 2003, p. 32), and they alone are the only ones capable of systemic discrimination outcomes that are consistently demonstrated in numerous studies on who received inferior housing, education, and health services.

Differing from prejudices that are attitudinal and behavioral, Sue (2003) claimed that racism is pervasive and systemic and can only be attributed to people with political, financial, or social capital who control systemic forces in society. Addressing remarks to White people who might read his findings, he suggested that, as harmful as deliberate acts of racial hatred crimes are, "more subtle forms of well-intentioned folks, like you, do the greatest overall harm to persons of color" (Sue, 2003, p. 9). He further contended, "Every one of us harbors biases and prejudices and has discriminated or continues to discriminate against others" (Sue, 2003, p. 13).

Juxtaposed with this idea, Sue (2003) posed a very controversial theory when he contended that, although racial discrimination can occur between all ethnic groups, "only White people are racists . . . because they are the ones who hold power . . . [and] voice" (p. 31) within society's institutionalized systems. Even in light of the changing demographics of the nation, Sue concluded that often White-Euro-Americans seemed oblivious to deeply ingrained invisible aspects of race and bigotry and minimized their impact. He also found that when dialogue occurred, people were often anxious about addressing diversity or multicultural issues because of their fear of being labeled a racist or addressing the truth that the label might be true.

Sue (2003) recognized several levels of racial oppression. At the individual and institutional levels, oppression may be conscious-deliberate or unconscious-unintentional. As cultures form in the American setting, however, they are rooted in the dominant perception of American society. As long as racism was viewed at the individual level, White people can absolve themselves of being overtly racist and refuse to acknowledge the systemic cultural issues. That in itself is power—the power to deny reality. Identified as White Euro-American culture are the values and beliefs that one must be a rugged individualist, possess a competitive spirit and demonstrate achievements linked to self-esteem and material success, use Standard English, worship a single God embodied in Christianity, have a Protestant work ethic, be a linear thinker, come from a nuclear family unit, and have the physical attributes of blond, thin, and youthful (Sue, 2003). Sue implied this was only one perspective not held by all cultural groups.

Delpit (2004) discussed a "culture of power" (p. 125) that, she reflected, is pervasive in school systems that set the norms, dialogue patterns, and expectations for the context of student learning. She revealed that often middle-class White teachers deny students the knowledge and skills they need to attain academic achievement. She asserted that best-practice methods might

need to be modified if they are not working as expected with a particular population. When Black teachers or leaders try to share information from their perspectives, all too frequently, as Delpit disclosed, the phenomenon of "silenced dialogue" (Delpit, 2004, p. 124) occurs. White teachers may get defensive or suggest by their behavior or words that they already know the answer to what instructional practices will work or how to handle a situation based on the White research that other White people have written. Frequently, Delpit offered, this may cause the non-White teacher to shut down. Delpit questioned, when both parties claimed to have the same aims, why did communication gaps or blocks occur? She used an actual discussion over trying to settle whether to use *skills* versus *process* as a way to decipher the silenced dialogue theory.

Delpit (2004) offered several real examples of how dialogue shut down when the White teacher did not "hear" what colleagues, students, or parents were trying to tell them. Responses to input that resulted in dismissive demeanor, passive acceptance, and know-it-all attitudes stifled communication between teachers with different cultural perspectives. The sad part, Delpit lamented, was that the White person being addressed might have been totally unaware that the dialogue has been silenced. Sadder still is the fact that the person from the White culture probably thought the other person agreed with his or her logic because that person stopped talking (Delpit, 2004).

Delpit (2004) further asserted there were power issues enacted in every classroom, and within the culture of power, there were codes or rules that allowed participants to interact. The rules were decided by who had the power. If one did not belong to the culture of power, being told the exact rules made it easier to acquire power. However, she revealed, those with the power are "frequently least aware of or willing to admit that the power structure exists, but the ones with the least amount of power are most often aware of the existence of the power

structure" (Delpit, 2004, p. 26). Delpit noted that the notion of power and culture are basic

tenets of sociology. However, sharing the rules and admission about the power needs more

attention in research.

Based on these premises, misunderstandings of expectations occur between people from

cross cultures when there are differences over how and when to acknowledge and submit to

authority. Problems also occurred related to knowing how to respond to indirect requests about

unstated rules that may be stated in question format rather than direct telling statements that

could lead to breakdowns in communication (S. Heath, 1982). Delpit acknowledged that Black

and White families might view power differently. Black children may expect authority figures to

act with authority. Middle-class culture may expect that, because someone is the teacher in

authority, they should be respected. She noted how these subtle differences in how

communication occurred is only one of many problems that could be addressed through extended

and open dialogue between cross-cultures.

Whiteness, power, and privilege, and implications for educators. White scholars such

as Howard (1999), Landsman (2006), Wise (2005), and Gorski (2005) have all studied and

presented the issues of White privilege and gender privilege and the dangers of cultural biases

that have continued to exist, persist, and perpetuate themselves. All of them documented similar

experiences that Jane Elliott (2002) reflected about during an interview in 2002 with the Public

Broadcasting Service about hidden dimensions of racism and its inherent system that, even when

exposed, many Whites still remained reluctant to acknowledge and felt uncomfortable discussing

(WGHB Educational Foundation, 2002). Jane Elliott's original study, as a simple but daring

classroom experiment conducted on the day after Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination in

1968, changed the course of her teaching career and impacted her students for years after the

event. Children with brown and blue eyes were empowered to have control over the other group at different times (W. Peters, 1987). In recent years as Elliott continued to provide professional development for teachers and speak in other arenas, she reported she encounters some of the same reluctance to recognize the effects of discrimination, race, privilege, and gender issues (Elliott, 2008).

Probably the most troubling conclusion that one could draw from these White researchers and their findings is their insight into the lack of awareness and the demonstration of resistant and dismissive attitudes that some White people may evidence in not believing or accepting the notion of White privilege. Also of concern is the resulting complicity they identified of non-acceptance and its power of outright denial that privileges are afforded to Whites at birth simply because of their genetically encoded inheritance. Equally disturbing is the notion that these privileges that have eluded Blacks, Hispanics, and others in non-dominant populations and continue to exists even today (Elliott, 2008; Howard, 2006).

In Howard's (2006) qualitative account, he wrote about why he found the need to continually defend why a White man would be involved in a movement to promote diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. In uncovering his Whiteness, he noted that he originally had no need to be concerned about racial identity and its related factors because he had little interaction with non-Whites, so the issue was a "non-relative concept" (Howard, 2006, p. 13). The information he heard or knew of in the 1950s and 1960s was filtered through White media and its bias and was only disturbed by the fear of intrusion that came through interactions with Blacks who threatened to intrude into his own "cultural capsule" that shielded him behind "an artificial barrier of racial isolation" (Howard, 2006, p. 14). Additionally, he acknowledged the "boundary of ignorance" (Howard, 2006, p. 15) was easily reinforced because White Americans

could carry on day-to-day activities without ever having to engage in a meaningful relationship with non-Whites.

In retrospect, as Howard began interacting with Blacks when he lived in their culture, he worked closely with them as they worked to solve community issues. It was during this time that he recognized that sparse scholarly work existed in what he termed *antiseptic journals,* written in the1960s and 1970s, that documented perspectives that differed from the Eurocentric viewpoint. As research unfolded during that timeframe, it highlighted the deficit concept of cultural deprivation that promoted the "liberal paternalism" shaped by the Great Society of the 1960s and the "missionary" appeal for Whites to work with non-Whites to make a difference in their lives. Howard admitted the need for Whites to become involved in social justice for change called for "direct engagement across cultural lines" (Howard, 2006, p. 22). He acknowledged that only then do Whites and non-Whites help each other learn the truth about multicultural relationships and practices, move past "rhetoric and best intentions," and begin to value other cultures without feeling depressed about the history and painful feelings of the past. Howard wrote in his reflections on coming to grips with his own White identity, "Barriers of dominance and racism and the pressure of assimilation have neutralized our connection to culture. We have collectively destroyed other cultures, buried our own, and denied the histories of both" (Howard, 2006, p. 25).

Both Sleeter (1996) and Howard (2006) recognized the urge Whites had to close the discussion on White dominance and the sins of the past and the tiring portrayal of Whites as the "demons of history and the omnipresent oppressors of those not White" (Howard, 2006, p. 30). Concurring in her writings, Sleeter cautioned that a shallow approach to understanding social inequity could lead to superficial and ineffective corrective actions that perpetuated dominance

rather than end it. Indeed, Howard struggled with how to present an anti-racist position without being perceived as anti-White. He answered his own concern by identifying the enemy as dominance, not Whiteness, as he explored the concept of social dominance theory presented by researchers such as Sidanius and Pratto (1993).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) presented an initial argument connecting education to the critical race theory that came into being during the Civil Rights era as a way to explain legal constructs linking racism, law, and power. They contended that race continues to be a factor of inequality in the United States, a fact supported through statistics that evidence disproportionality in data outcomes. They also asserted that the uneven distribution of property rights seemed to matter more than human rights contributed to inequitable conditions. They used an example of the equitable distribution of resources in communities with large populations of students of color in comparison to schools with predominantly White students. Although the issues they raised are still going unanswered, their discussion provided a portal into understanding the crucial role of race, power, and privilege in America and its education system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Dominance theory. This field of research is broad and brings together educational and social science concepts related to studying "prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, racism, sexism, neoclassical elitism theory, social identity theories, and work in the field of political socialization" (Howard, 2006, p. 31). Howard (2006) stated that dominance is built on four strands that included understanding minimal group paradigms, social positionality, social dominance theory, and privilege and penalty.

Tajfel's (1970) work on minimal group paradigms concluded that inter-group dynamics always lead to dividing, classifying, and discrimination practices. Howard (2006) reported that

when minimal differences or attributes were assigned to two groups, whether meaningless or arbitrary, the two groups began to favor their own in-group members while discriminating and marginalizing the efforts of the other out-group and ascribing the values of superiority or inferiority to the groups. Howard wrote that when a visible marker such as race was added to the factors, inter-group relations formed a pattern that was extremely resistant to change (Rothbart & John, 1993).

Rosaldo (1989) also clarified another aspect of understanding dominance through findings about social positionality. Using a subjective view, although group members looked at themselves, they also considered how others viewed them. Those using an objective view, however, looked at measurable items such as income, education level, or job title to determine someone's position in society. Additionally, although people from non-dominant cultures frequently identified with their collective group identity, Howard (2006) suggested Whites may not perceive themselves as belonging to a collective group framed by Whiteness, which affords them a sense of invisibility related to dominance.

The third strand of research is based on four assumptions provided by Sidanius and Pratto (1993) related to the social dominance theory. They believed that (a) human social systems are predisposed to forming hegemonic groups that place in the top group those who frequently are in authority within social institutions, whereas those in the bottom group, regarded as the negative reference group, are the least likely to be represented in authority; (b) hegemonic groups tend to display male dominance; (c) social oppression such as racism, sexism, and classism are manifestations of social hierarchy; and (d) social hierarchy is a survival strategy. Furthermore, Sidanius and Pratto claimed that people developed attitudes, values, beliefs, and legitimized

myths that supported their hierarchal systems and explained and rationalized the power structure and the reward system in favor of the dominant group.

Additionally, the literature on dominance turned its attention to the system of privilege and penalty discussed by McIntosh (1988) and Neito (2005). They believed that convenient social arrangements of dominance caused privileges to flow to a certain group of people over others, whether those privileges were earned or not. Conversely, penalties, punishments, and inequities flowed to other groups through no fault of their own other than their group membership (Howard, 2006). Both Delpit (2004) and Sue (2003) cautioned educators who work for social justice and who want the best for all children to be aware of the inherent biases that existed as a result of the monocultural, ethnocentric view that both researchers had documented. Books and scholarly articles on cultural competency, race, and equity can serve as a framework for informed principals to bring their unique perspectives on racial dialogue and guide cultural competence training for the school's professional development menu.

Microaggression theory. Finally, the theory of microaggression, based on the work of Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Willis (1977), must be considered. Sue (2010) later articulated a definition as follows:

> Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership (Sue et al., 2007). In many cases, these hidden messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of target persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with

the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment. (p. 3)

Understanding the possibility that teachers and others from the dominant population could be involved in this behavior is important because microaggressions, although pervasive, are usually under-identified by the majority culture. Sue (2010) presented a perplexing finding that many people in the dominant White culture refuse to acknowledge or identify that this practice exists or believe that they as individuals would engage in such behaviors. Ironically, the practice deals with how well-intentioned individuals who are unaware that they have devalued others in a way that may negatively impact people from a non-White culture through subtle, indirect, and covert racism. Often, according to Sue (2010), these behaviors by the majority population may be deemed as harmless, trivial, or something about which the other culture is too overly sensitive. Furthermore, when those who are the targets of microaggressive behavior recognize it is happening and point out the offense, frequently, they are told they are out of touch with reality, paranoid, or have inaccurate perceptions which, in the end, may contribute to the "stereotype threat" syndrome presented by Steele et al. (2002). Thus, exposing these hidden biases threatens the perpetrator's self-image of being an unbiased person with inherent good intentions, making it very uncomfortable to bring a discussion on this topic into the open. This principle is something that principals need to understand and be ready to discuss with staff members.

Equity traps. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) proposed a construct about equity traps. They defined equity traps as "ways of thinking or assumptions that prevent educators from believing that their students of color can be successful learners" (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, pp. 601-602). They proposed that having knowledge about these equity traps would increase a

principal's likelihood of improving the possibility for establishing successful learning environments for students of color. Furthermore, agreeing with King in order to break the cycle of "dysconscious" thinking, which "is an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs) that justifies inequity" (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 603), McKenzie and Scheurich contended that principals must work diligently to help their teachers get to know their students and their families and learn how to accept the dignity of each family.

In a qualitative study at a school with predominantly non-White students, eight White teachers with three or more years of experience (some with 15 to 20 years) were chosen based on their reputations for being good teachers. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) interviewed and held focus groups with the teachers to discuss their instructional practices. The intent was to study the teachers' perceptions of their students and of themselves as White educators and how those perceptions impacted their relations with their students and even their own racial identity. From their study, they identified four equity traps. They were (a) a deficit view, (b) racial erasure, (c) avoidance and employment of the gaze, and (d) paralogical beliefs and behaviors. The researchers shared how each trap manifested and outlined strategies for eliminating them.

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) found several themes that bear out Valencia's (1997) definition theory about deficit thinking patterns. They discovered that the teacher comments supported the belief that low-academic achievement was caused by a combination of inherent or endogenous student deficits linked to inadequate motivation, behavior problems, and generational cultural problems associated with the children's families and communities. The predominant answer given for inadequate student motivation was "the student's parents did not value education" (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 608). Additionally, the teachers reported that

it was not the schools' place to develop that motivation and desire to learn or teach children how to behave properly. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) concluded, "Thus, these teachers appeared to hold strong beliefs that their children of color walked in the school door at four years old with built-in deficits that the teachers should not be expected to overcome" (p. 609).

The second theme that emerged from the McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) study was "racial erasure" (p. 613), a theory encapsulating the work of bell hooks (1992), a professor and social activist. Thought of as a sentimental idea, hooks's premise of "racial erasure" was based on the notion that "racism would cease if everyone would just forget about race and just see each other as human beings who are the same" (hooks, 1992, p. 12). When questioned about why students of color are performing lower than their White counterparts, the teachers denied that race was the issue. Instead they linked the problem to economics and poverty issues, although they still used race as the primary marker when they talked about their students. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) noted that both Whites and other scholars of color have been critical of the "color blind" lens through which some teachers claim they view children and not their color.

Sleeter (1993) addressed color blindness by suggesting that people not spend time denying what they do not really see. She postulated that this profession of being color blind served as a cover for suppressing the negative qualities individuals attached to people of color. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) concluded that by ignoring race as a key factor for low student performance and not believing that race was a critical variable but instead placing the blame on poverty, the teachers could be relieved from the responsibility for the low academic performance of their students. However, in their focus groups, teachers "belied their refusal of race with their persistent focus on it" (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 616) and frequently interchanged the words *poor* and *Black* as substitute words. A telling statement from one teacher included in their

report who admitted she saw color was that she tried to "ignore their color and imagine them as White" (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 614). It appeared that race might be more important than the teachers reported.

The third equity trap, identified by McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) as "avoidance and employment of the gaze" (p. 619), was based on information found in Foucault's (1977) work. His definition of the *gaze* revealed a way people looked at others with the intent of controlling behavior. Foucault theorized that a gaze had the power to control people, their thoughts, and their behaviors. That "inspecting gaze" (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 619) could be exercised with a look, words, or silence toward others who were influenced by its weight and perceived power of oversight. McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) saw the gaze theory at work in two ways: (a) through avoidance of feeling its effect on themselves, and (b) by the way they imposed its influence on others. Most of the teachers reported previously working in other middle-income schools. They admitted leaving those schools, in part, because of the pressure of being watched by administrators, other teachers, and parents. Thus, they avoided the surveillance portion of the gaze. They admitted that they were able to do and say things at this school that would have been totally unacceptable at the other schools by both its parents and administrators. They felt justified because they believed their new school needed them.

The second way the gaze was utilized was to control the level of expectations of other teachers. When teachers spoke out with positive statements about the students or their parents, going against the deficit conversations or discourse that most of the teachers presented, the dissenting voices were opposed and silenced as the gaze normed the thinking of dissenting teachers.

The final theme McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) identified was "paralogical beliefs and behaviors" (p. 624). From the medical field, paralogism is a "conclusion that is drawn from premises that logically do not warrant that conclusion . . . [or] false reasoning that involves self-deception" (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 624). After admitting and examining some of their own negative behaviors, beliefs and feeling when children demonstrated "madness," angry or abusive behavior, the teachers blamed their reactions to the students on the students themselves and the way the students treated them and other students. McKenzie and Scheurich alleged the false premise was that teachers rationalized their own behaviors and blamed the students for making them react the way they did when they lost their tempers, screamed at the students, and used humiliation tactics. There were even instances of blaming the parents and the way parents disciplined the children for why the teachers felt justified in reacting in the ways they described.

Other considerations. Bennett et al (2004) in The National Study Group for the Affirmative Development of Academic Ability drew conclusions in their research that paralleled other findings that acknowledged the achievement discrepancies between various groups of students, listed the characteristics of effective learning models, highlighted the strategies for successful delivery of instruction, analyzed the psychological processes associated with high achievement, and documented environmental supports necessary for developing intellectual competence and character (Jackson, 2005). Part of that environmental support was related to how teachers viewed their students.

The distance that some teachers may have felt with their students because of cultural differences, misconceptions about various ethnic groups, and lack of understanding about how to make instruction meaningful and relevant to all students may be a result of deficit model thinking (Jackson, 2005). Although teachers may have indicated they were not sure how to help

their culturally different students learn, those same teachers may not easily concede that deficit thinking is an area of concern to them. However, a principal has a unique opportunity to find ways to both identify and address the concept of deficit thinking and all the other practices related to race. Indeed, it seems that without considering these factors, changes in student achievement may be hard to implement.

Vogler (1996) in his discussion of how teacher perceptions impact student motivation stated that both student and instructor perceptions are based on past experiences and are unique to the set of circumstances that created them. He believed that "change could occur as a result of new experiences" (Vogler, 1996, pp. 122-123). Sautter (1994) further charged that deficit model thinking has dominated urban education for poor and non-White children and teenagers over the last 30 years. He, like Jackson's (2011) challenge to the educational community highlighted the need for more attention to be given toward recognizing student strengths.

Whereas most of the White teachers have attended schools of education in predominantly White institutions, African American students attending historically Black institutions have also had to prepare to meet the needs of diverse students. B. S. Heath (1983) documented how African American teachers she interviewed looked at students through different eyes than mainstream researchers and other White staff members. They shared a cultural lens with their students that allowed them to see the potential in children because they understood some of the students' behaviors based on their own cultural experiences. They spoke up for the children and their parents when White teachers said the parents did not care about the children because they did not come to school meetings, understanding that their jobs did not allow them to take off from work. One defended students and entreated others to raise their expectations for what the children could do. One teacher did not look at student records until she had a chance to find out

about her students' potential for herself. B. S. Heath argued that this eye, although frequently missing in too many schools, is crucial in helping students achieve.

Kea, Trent, and Davis (2002) conducted a study of 43 African American student teachers at a historically Black college or university (HBCU) to assess students' perceptions within a racial-ethnic group about how prepared they felt to teach students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. After analyzing three self-report survey instruments, the findings indicated over 80% of the students felt highly competent to teach CLD students. Participants believed that they understood the culture of their own racial group, had more interaction with them, felt most prepared to teach them, and knew more about their contributions. However, no participants indicated their teacher education training had adequately prepared them as *very much prepared* (the highest rating) to teach students from any group of CLD students, including those with disabilities.

Kea et al.'s (2002) findings further suggested a need to include more content on human growth and its cross-cultural perspectives, historical knowledge about diverse cultures, and how to access family and community resources. Kea et al. concluded that African American preservice teachers attending an HBCU should not be considered to be culturally competent by virtue of them being Black. They also believed that the call for more predominantly White institutions to include more multicultural content applied to HBCU schools of education as well. Artiles and Trent (1997) surveyed 40-50 studies and indicated that multicultural education in most teacher education programs has not been consistently persistent and overt as requirements in either general or special education programs. Contrasted with the Kea et al. study, Solomon and Levine-Rasky (1996) focused mainly on White teachers trained at traditionally White institutions.

It appears that teachers of all races need additional cultural competency training to create relevant learning environments. Landsman (2006), a White professor who had chosen to become culturally proficient, as described in her book *White Teachers/Diverse Classrooms: A Guide to Building Inclusive Schools, Promoting High Expectations, and Eliminating Racism*, used terminology from Joseph White, a professor emeritus from the University of California. She acknowledged that changing practices and thinking would require "no quick fixes, please" (Landsman, 2006, p. 26). Instead she reiterated White's remedy of urging White teachers to become "engaged conceptually" by reaching out intellectually and reading and using other forms of meaningful media to become informed. Secondly, he suggested that becoming "engaged in dialogue" with others from different races and cultures would open up crucial insights on how they really viewed the dominant culture. And then, going a step further, White suggested that teachers become engaged in meaningful "behavioral interactions" by deliberately getting involved in experiences and activities that required them to move out of their comfort zone and interact in situations where most others were from a different culture, ethnicity, religion or race (as cited in Landsman, 2006).

With all these principles and cultural understandings in mind about what influences in-school practices as outlined in this literature review thus far, the principal can use this arsenal of background information to understand the factors that helped fuel the achievement gap and what factors could help reduce them. When principals are armed with accurate facts, knowledgeable background information, and strong convictions based on a moral imperative that all children deserve the best education possible, no matter what their cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic background, it appears that principals have a clear role in helping to define, develop, and plan

what cultural proficiency will look like for the teachers they monitor, evaluate, and work with within their schools.

Monitoring the Cultural Competency Movement

Agencies and organizations in the business and medical sectors continually develop knowledge sets related to organizational structure, leadership principles, and teambuilding that transfer over into other fields. In the education arena, understandings about developing organizational cultures drive leadership training programs in most higher education institutions and programs (Hanson, 2002; Schein, 1992). This mutual exchange of knowledge could be beneficial to all parties concerned about helping improve interactions and relationships among the employees and clients they service. Two descriptions will be presented in the review of other fields beyond education that can provide insights about cultural competency. The first one is from the health profession, and the second is from the military.

An example of this knowledge transfer from one field to another is embodied in understanding cultural competency and its origin and connection to current organizational expectations. Studies related to the health community's commitment to delivering quality services represent a growing awareness and body of knowledge about the need for culturally competent practices. These studies could benefit the way training programs in the educational community operate for pre-service teachers and practicing professionals. Terminology originating from, or closely connected to the medical community, has filtered into the vocabulary of the educational community. Such terms as *deficit based thinking, deficit model thinking,* and *cultural competency* come from that mode. Their connotations are very similar to the ones proposed by Valencia (1997) and Pearl (1997) and their work on deficit thinking in the educational arena.

A keen awareness in the medical field has led to finding ways to change the quality of health care to better service an increasingly diverse population who disproportionately fall below the poverty line and are often underserved. Medical practitioners have begun training workers to limit their focus from what they may have perceived as their clients' deficits, fueled by media stereotypes and the views of the broader culture, and instead, shifted to develop models that help build client resiliency related to prevalent issues found in non-White communities (Walsh, 2006).

Based on data that supported a compelling need for cultural competency, the medical field developed a massive effort to ensure quality care for all patients. Issues such as how a culture perceives illness and disease, what a culture believes about health and mental health, preferences between traditional treatment remedies and primary care systems, and the under-representation of primary care providers coming from the diverse groups being serviced all loomed as cultural problems that must be addressed. Health care delivery disparities of services are sharply marked by quantifiable differences by race, ethnicity, gender, and culture (Goode & Dunne, 2003). In 2008, according to estimates from the U. S. Census Bureau (2009) nearly half (47%) of the children in the United States under five were from non-White populations. Overall, they also estimated that the non-White population represented about 34% of the whole population (104.6 million people).

Between 1999 and 2003, little changed to eliminate the six targeted major diseases health providers identified. Additionally, "a recent review of literature reveals that many health and social services lack the values, policies, planning processes and organizational structures that support culturally competent practices" (Goode & Dunn, 2003, p. 6). Federal legislation such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and accreditation from healthcare associations are now

instrumental in moving health care providers toward utilizing cultural competency practices when delivering services.

Various state legislations, including Oregon and Indiana, have also instituted cultural competency mandates for medical practitioners and teachers, respectively. This legislative charge is a relatively new endeavor, so although standards for cultural competency exist on paper in the medical community, educators and school district leaders are just beginning to search for ways to implement effective professional development that addresses the challenge that teachers face related to cultural competency. There is a need for considerable research to verify implementation practices and progress.

As the medical community, the armed services, and other corporations lead the way in reversing deficit model trends, their research and designs may benefit the educational arena. If and when cultural competency initiatives comply with their legislative intents, new staff development opportunities may become standard protocol to retool staff members' skills and produce or maintain effective, high quality teachers whose thinking, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations shift from a deficit-based model to a more strength-based model in working with students. The effectiveness of connecting the law to training opportunities, school climate, and teacher perspectives and expectations still remain open to more study.

Addressing Legislative Initiatives and Cultural Competence

Indiana has become proactive in addressing issues of disproportionality (Indiana Disproportionality Committee, 2009). In 2004, Indiana legislators passed House Bill No. 1308 (Cultural Competency in Education Act, 2004), which defined the terminology of cultural competency and set forth teacher training, professional development, and school plan requirements for achieving cultural competency through guidelines from the Indiana Department

of Education, teacher training institutions, and school units throughout the state. The intent appeared to ensure that educators would be equipped to respond to the growing diversity of students in the state's population and address different ways to increase student performance from those groups.

As a follow up to strengthen the intent of the bill, Representative Gregory Porter, the chairman of the House Education Committee and principle author of the original legislation, tried to modify the bill in both 2008 and 2009. The newer proposed measures, H.B. 1107 and Cultural Competency in Education Act, proposed during the 115th and 116th Sessions, respectively, sought stronger expectations through developed standards and increased accountability measures for the Indiana Department of Education, teacher training institutions, school districts, and schools throughout the state. Although both bills passed out of the House of Representatives, neither passed Senate hurdles.

Simultaneously, earlier recommendations coming from a 2004 legislative study on child welfare looked at over-representation of children of color in governmental systems. In December of the same year, with the efforts of a grassroots movement, the Indiana Disproportionality Committee called for another study authorized by the legislature to examine and assess practices that might lead to disproportionality issues in the child welfare system. In 2005, the Indiana Supreme Court Commission held a summit on race and gender fairness while the Indiana Department of Education Center for Exceptional Learners established a monitoring system through the Equity Project, which identified school corporations with disproportionality in special education populations.

In 2006 the Indiana Civil Rights Commission's Education Steering Committee began identifying ways to reduce inequities related to discipline referrals, suspension and expulsion of

youth of color, and there was also a subsequent study published in 2007 by the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy on inequities in the juvenile justice system. This prior work served as a foundational springboard for the Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services that was established by state legislation in 2007 (Indiana Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services, 2009).

Thirty-three commissioners, appointed by legislators from both houses and the governor, were charged with studying and presenting recommendations to eliminate disproportionality found in services related to mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, and education. Commissioners and extended subcommittee members sent a final report to the legislature, governor, and other concerned agencies that contained several overarching recommendations. The report encompassed eight broad overarching categories of findings from all four of the research areas—mental health, juvenile justice, mental health, and education (Indiana Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services, 2008). Those recommendations included using data to make and reflect culturally competent decisions about youth services; standardizing and disaggregating race-specific data to instill systemic accountability; increasing cultural competency training for all service providers; promoting diversity in the workforce; providing timely, evidence-based services to youth of color in home and school settings and avoiding more restrictive settings; using best/promising practices to eliminate disparities in services; coordination and collaboration to implement recommendations; and providing sufficient resources to implement and sustain programming.

Of the 75 recommendations from the total report, 25 came from the education section. Several of those recommendations specifically addressed requiring mandatory cultural competency training (inclusive of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status) and monitoring the

services and outcomes for individuals working with children of color and their families to reduce

bias, prejudice and racism for all administrators and service providers (Indiana Commission on

Disproportionality in Youth Services, 2008). Although six of the education recommendations

became law in July 2009, attempts to strengthen the current cultural competency law failed in the

session, as mentioned earlier. The original Indiana Disproportionality Committee (IDC)

remained intact, although the commission dissolved. IDC continued in its role of advocacy for

implementation of the remaining recommendations that required legislative action and those that

could be implemented without law. Additionally, the IDC continued as a place where discussion

on disproportionality topics could be aired and advocacy for related issues ensued.

Another outcome from the work of the IDC was a document entitled *Cultural Assessment
and Training Project Report* (IDC, 2009). A study was conducted by a cross-system

collaboration of agencies in the mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, education, health

care, and government sector to produce a way to understand and, consequently, make

recommendations to reduce disproportionate non-White contact within the four identified

systems of mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, and education in the state of Indiana.

The committee developed questionnaires and surveys to assess competency training in the four

system areas, developed training standards for service providers in all four areas, and identified

cultural competency training curricula that met the standard requirements identified from best-

practice research. They acknowledged the discovery of inconsistencies in all three areas of

training, data collection on disproportionality issues, and variations in the training that was

offered. The training standards that were developed as a result of this work will be discussed in

a later section (IDC, 2009).

An online survey was conducted from February 2007 through December 2008 (IDC, 2009) results were based on 196 responses from over 1,000 surveys that were sent, but only 942 actually delivered. A total of 196 (*n* = 196) surveys were completed for a 21% response rate. Although the largest return came from education system respondents, it is not surprising because they also received the most copies. The following number of respondents and the percentage of the survey results they represented are as follows: Child Welfare: 27 respondents, representing 13.7%; Criminal/Juvenile Justice: 52 respondents, representing 26.5%; Educational Institutions/School Corporations: 54 respondents, representing 27.5%; Mental Health: 28 respondents, representing 14.3%; and Others: 40 respondents, representing 20%. The education surveys were sent to charter schools and all Indiana school superintendents. In response to the question, "Does your agency offer competency training to staff and organizational officers?" for the education responses 60% answered *yes*, 31% answered *no*, and 8% answered *I don't know.* Of the other three system categories all other responses for *I don't know* were 0.

The survey also showed that the majority of training occurred annually or sporadically. Although the initial data had a low turnout rate, IDC members realized that the results are not generalizeable, but they did provide a baseline snapshot for policymakers and administrators to address the challenges children and families face. Additionally, the survey generated six key findings that confirmed the serious needs that still exist for quality cultural competency training and the need for standards to be adopted to help remove some of the ambiguity that exists (IDC, 2009). The findings were as follows:

Key Finding 1: Two-thirds (64.3%) of youth-serving agencies in Indiana provide some form of cultural competency training to staff and most (88%) expected all staff to participate in this training (82% of those who provided training reported that the training was required).

Key Finding 2: Of those providing cultural competence training, only about 1 in 10 (11%) received eight or more hours of cultural competence training. (This represented about 5% of the total sample.)

Key Finding 3: The training provided is much more likely to be conceptual (general knowledge) than applied (practice knowledge).

- 98% of respondents who offered cultural competency training addressed awareness and acceptance of difference.

- 62% of respondents who offered cultural competency training addressed ability to adapt practice to fit the cultural context of the family.

Key Finding 4: There is considerable variety as to what curriculum was used and who was providing the training on cultural competency, raising further questions about the quality of the current training provided.

Key Finding 5: There are statistically significant differences as to whether cultural competency training was provided, based upon the type of agency. Workers in child welfare and mental health appeared more likely to receive this training than those in education or criminal/juvenile justice.

Key Finding 6: Fewer than half (40%) of responding agencies had policies in place regarding cultural competency training for their staff. Few agencies (5%) involved board members, who set the policy for the agency, in the training provided.

Basically, until the state develops a consistent way to monitor agency plans, in particular each school's cultural competency plan, or produces standards from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) that serve as guidelines to help districts and schools write their required plans, it still remains up to individual school corporations and school leaders to work on interpreting

and translating the 2004 legislation into a plan that included best/promising practices to develop a school climate and culture that welcomes and successfully educates all students and effectively partners their parents.

Creating Effective School Climate, Culture, and Leadership

A strong, supportive principal's role in understanding and orchestrating an effective culture and climate in a school does impacts student achievement. Indeed, Learning First Alliance (2005) argued that it was troubling that it was so difficult to attract and retain effective principals to high need schools because of the close relationship of an effective principal's vital importance to school effectiveness. The accumulated research by Waters et al. (2003) documented that an effective leader can raise a school's overall achievement by as much as 10 points out of 100 when other factors are equal. Barton and Coley (2009) also cited Waters et al. and stated, "There are differences in school cultures that are associated with differences in student achievement, such as high standards with rigorous curriculum, qualified teachers, and orderly classrooms" (p. 33).

Waters et al. (2003) conducted a systematic meta-analysis of over 5,000 studies and selected 70 that met their criteria for design, controls, data analysis, and rigor. They also applied their collective experiences and insights and completed an exhaustive literature review in areas related to leadership. They found a substantial relationship between leadership and student achievement, with an average effect size of .25. This translated into an average increase in student achievement from the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile.

In addition, they identified 21 key leadership responsibilities that also correlated with student achievement. These responsibilities included culture, order, discipline, resources, curriculum, instruction and assessment, focus, knowledge of curriculum, instruction assessment,

visibility, contingent awards, communication, outreach, input, affirmation, relationship, change agent, optimizer, ideas/beliefs, monitors/evaluates, flexibility, situational awareness, and intellectual stimulation. They cautioned principals that one of their central problems was in identifying and knowing what was the right focus of change to increase student learning and also understand how to prioritize the magnitude or order of change (Elmore, 2003).

Lyman and Villani (2004) studied two principals in high-poverty, high-performing elementary schools whose profiles touched on ways the women fulfilled responsibilities matching all 21 qualities identified in the study by Waters et al. (2003). Lyman and Villani acknowledged that stereotypes about minorities and deficit thinking about children who live in poverty have been used as "currency among scholars, educators and policymakers" (p. 5) to relieve themselves of the blame for school failure (Valencia, 1997). However, the researchers demonstrated these two principals defied the odds and accepted the challenge to excel.

Both women exhibited strong relational skills with staff, family, and community members. They both were highly visible in their buildings and spent sizable amounts of time in classrooms. They also held high expectations, were dedicated, and exhibited a clear vision that exemplified their beliefs that both the teachers and the parents of the children in the school had a responsibility to help children reach their capacity and promise. Their staffs described them as caring and supportive of students, teachers, and parents. One principal was described as caring yet firm. Both exhibited a strong passion and commitment to the whole child and addressed some of needs of their families by providing support services and, at Harrison, parenting classes.

The teachers at Harrison and Newfield both described the principals with similar terminology when they were interviewed on how the principal supported their work. Lyman and Villani (2004) described how Perkins and Perez-Dickson, the principals in their study, exhibited

several themes identified from the study. One group of teachers discussed their principal's relational approach with staff and parents, while the other group talked about her creating a family because of her support and caring. Although both principals were described as women who were willing to take charge or to get things done, they, also, both worked to empower their teachers in a collaborative, facilitative style that valued teacher input. There had been minimal turnover at Harrison school, as has so often characterized in many high-poverty schools. Teachers reported even though they had to work hard, they are committed to the mission and the care and support they received from the principal who made them enjoy being part of the school family.

According to Ingersoll (2004), when teachers were surveyed about why they left high-poverty rural schools, they gave answers including retirement, school staffing action, family circumstances, personal reasons, job dissatisfaction, and pursuit of other jobs. Those who left because of job dissatisfaction cited poor leadership as a close second to low salary as the leading reasons why they left. Along with other workplace-related reasons for leaving, lack of input also was an important cause. Ingersoll also found that principals with the attribute of allowing teachers to share distributed leadership of responsibilities and decision-making powers were more likely to be high-performing schools versus low-performing. He concluded that overwhelmingly in both urban and rural communities, principals must not underestimate their influence in providing support to their staff, and secondly, they must consider influential in involving their faculty in making decisions (Ingersoll, 2004).

Waters et al. (2003) ascertained that when principals fostered shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation, they helped fulfill the responsibility of culture. The researchers listed "first order changes" to impact cultural changes that included promoting cooperation

among staff, a sense of well-being, and cohesion among the staff. They warned however, that "second order changes" may produce discomfort among the staff as principals "work more deeply with staff and community" (Waters et al., 2003, p. 8) to develop a "shared understanding of purpose and a shared vision of what the school could be like" (Waters et al., 2003, p. 8-9). It is noteworthy to mention that rather than concentrating on developing an effective school by fixing the students, Waters et al. (2003) focused all of their attention on understanding 30 years of research on the role of balanced leadership between principal and teacher leaders working together to effect improved student achievement.

When asked about what educators needed to do to assist children in poverty to succeed academically and to describe best practices in working with these children, teachers on both staffs of the schools in Lyman and Villani's (2004) study described four themes that allowed teachers to follow the mission and values espoused by the two principals. The first theme was that it is important to know the children and to show an understanding of their home situation and, while starting there, still expect them to learn. One teacher commented, "Show an understanding for what they deal with outside of the school environment, but teach them it cannot be an excuse" (Lyman & Villani, 2004, p. 86). The second theme was that it is important to believe that the children have the potential to succeed and to demonstrate you care through supportive words, hugs, encouragement, and love. The third theme was that it is crucial to use instructional practices that work, as evidenced by each teacher being armed with many strategies that were used throughout the buildings. Finally, the fourth theme that emerged was that it is important to partner with parents in productive ways and provide them with programs and resources they need—going above and beyond what is traditionally expected.

Principals, according to Waters et al. (2003), must recognize the key responsibilities and correlated practices connected to four types of knowledge bases. First, they must know why a change is important; next, know what to do about it; then, know how to do it; and finally, know when to do it. These knowledge types fall under the following categories, respectively: experiential, declarative, procedural, and contextual. Using this information to better understand school climate and culture may produce the best environment possible to improve achievement for all students.

Lindahl (2006) compiled findings on school climate, school culture, and their connection to school improvement. He wrote, "As far back as 1932, Waller noted that schools have a culture that is definitely their own" (p. 4). Reaffirming this early construct Lindahl reported that Owens recognized that organizational culture "may often be the most powerful determinant of the course of change in an organization" (Lindahl, 2006, p. 4). Lindahl concluded similarly, that to attempt change interventions in any environment, it is first necessary to understand the complex nature of an organization's climate and culture.

Scheurich (1998) and Lomoty (1989) posed an interesting thought after they each, independently, studied three African American principals. They agreed that the common commitment, passion, compassion, understanding, and confidence in African American children and their ability to learn described by the researchers mirrored the picture painted by Lyman and Villani (2004). Although the two sets of schools Scheurich (1998) and Lomoty (1989) studied represented a more diverse population of students, that same tenacity was present. Another study by Riester, Pursch, and Skiria (2002) of a more diverse set of principals in Texas looked at the practices of four women and two men. Of that number two were Hispanic, one was African American, and three were White. The study demonstrated three major themes: (a) a democratic

culture existed that allowed teacher input and empowerment to the staff, (b) a prescriptive approach was used to present literacy skills and other academic subjects, and (c) a stubborn determination and perseverance prevailed with the goal in mind "to get there" (Riester et al., 2002, p. 292). These characteristics demonstrated by all nine principals transcended race and contained two sets of commonalities. They all held in common the determination, perseverance, and stubbornness to reach the clear vision and mission that they passionately pursued, and they also demonstrated the willingness to empower their teachers to share in leadership roles in their schools.

Some early researchers did not regard the study of climate and culture in the same light. Bernard (1938) questioned the existence of organizational culture and attributed the notion to social fiction and implied this was not a worthy study; Quinn (1980) challenged the extent planning can actually produce cultural change; and others (Sathe, 1985; Wilkins & Patterson, 1985) questioned the extent and value of investing resources, such as, time, costs and risk into the cultural change process (Lindahl, 2006). However, other researchers have challenged those findings.

As they studied teacher-principal relationships, Happel and Croft (1963) provided the foundational definition of climate as *morale*. Gonder (1994) posed that climate and culture are intangible but observable and are closely linked to the characteristics of an effective school program, high staff productivity, and the quality of student achievement. He stated that climate reflects how students and staff feel about being at school, whereas culture reflects deeply embedded beliefs, attitudes, and practices, so much a part of the tapestry of the school that they are usually taken for granted. Steller (1988) also believed that much larger than the scope of a

physical facility, teaching practices and the relationships among administrators, teachers, parents, and students added to a school's climate.

Although the two terms are often used interchangeably, school climate refers mostly to the school's effects on students, and school culture refers more to the way teachers and other staff members work together (McBrien & Brandt, 1997). Gruenert (2008) also made a clear distinction between school culture and climate. He maintained that climate, based on perceptions, pertains to the ethos or spirit of an organization and also represents the attitude of an organization, encompassing the morale or collective mood of the organization. Culture, based on values and beliefs, represents the personality of the organization and dictates how new teachers conform to the unwritten rules that have been passed on over time.

Hanson (2002) referenced Deal and Kennedy's view that organizational culture is composed of the shared beliefs, expectations, and values and norms of conduct by its members. He stated that culture is based on a core of common experiences, shared backgrounds, and sufficient shared history (Schein, 1999) that a corporation owned often an unspoken expectation of what is right for a particular organization Adding to that understanding, Peters & Waterman, (1982) also believed that leaders must give careful attention to culture or they will fail.. A new teacher or administrator with aspirations to change things in the organization can attest to the invisible web of significance spun by those in the organization who resist changes to "the way things are done around here" (Hanson, 2002, p. 60).

Researchers in the 1970s and the 1980s from the United States, Great Britain, and Australia connected school climate and culture to the excellent school movement and new trends in educational administrative training. Beare, Caldwell, and Millikan (1989) documented the international shift in research that showcased a new approach to determine what makes an

effective school and also account for variances in student achievement. Early work documented by Weber (1971), Brookover (1978), Edmonds (1981), and Austin and Garber (1985) presented credible documentation that confronted the 1966 Coleman report entitled *Equality of Educational Opportunity.* Coleman (1966) concluded that home variables and parental support and expectations were the most important factors for explaining variances in the academic success of students from various races and regional groups. Furthermore, this report and others concluded that what happened in schools played only a small role in determining outcomes. Subsequent studies by Jencks (1992) connected the importance of family background to student learning. The Australian project called *The Generation Study* conducted in the 1960s through 1970s also looked at sociological variables (Beare et al., 1989; Raptis & Fleming, 2003). When most other studies were conducted on schools, they usually reviewed programs rather than the actual schools and what happened in them (Raptis & Fleming, 2003).

Raptis and Fleming (2003) acknowledged the work of Edmonds, that took a different approach and identified the characteristics of effective urban schools, often considered outliers because of their unexpected high achievement, six key traits emerged, five of which are still accepted by many. He found that effective schools need strong administrative leadership, high expectations, an orderly atmosphere or climate, basic skills acquisition as the school's primary purpose, capacity to divert school energy and resources from other activities to advance the school's basic purpose (this one later dropped by many), and frequent monitoring of instruction (Raptis & Fleming, 2003). As researchers and school leaders embraced these correlates, Edmonds concluded, "Educators have become increasingly convinced that characteristics of schools are important determinants of academic achievement" (as cited in Beare et al., 1989, p. 1-2). Additionally, Raptis and Fleming (2003) also acknowledged research by Scheerens and

Bosker Hill et al. and Wang, Haertel, and Walberg that recognized the importance of classroom-level teacher instruction as a variable to explain variances in student achievement beyond what happens in the school as a whole (Raptis & Fleming, 2003).

There are several ways to assess school climate and culture. Lindahl (2006) believed that, because the definition of climate is connected to feelings and perceptions about an organization, quantitative surveys provide appropriate tools to gather climate data. Questionnaires like those provided by Halpin and Croft and the National Study of School Evaluations (as cited in Lindahl, 2006) were readily available and provide interpretive data back to the organization.

Conversely, authorities such as Schein (1999) categorically asserted that school culture could not be measured the same way. Quantitative surveys may not address questions the assessor needed to explore or insure the reliability or validity of responses. Schein (1984) contended that in assessing culture, although quantitative survey instruments are available, they may misrepresent the true views of those surveyed because the instruments do not capture the participants actual words, but instead, summarize and aggregate their responses (Lindahl, 2006). Lindahl (2006) also asserted that observation of behaviors and interactions, listening to stories, participating in rituals, and examining artifacts and written communication provide a view of the shallowest levels of school culture. Rousseau (1990) and Schein (1999) agreed that structured small group interviews and intensive individual interviews provide the most valid ways to gather culture data. Although small group interviews seem more efficient, individual interviews provide a more strategic portrait of deep-level shared culture, assumptions, beliefs, and subconscious areas that drive both shared and common values, understandings, and patterns of

expectations (Lindahl, 2006). In looking at the school leader's role in understanding culture, Lindahl posited,

> As with all qualitative research, it is essential that organizational leaders set aside their own conceptions and values as they attempt to discern the shared values and beliefs of others in the organization (Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 1999). However, the leader's observations of behaviors and artifacts can legitimately provide the initial entry point that leads to a deeper investigation of the underlying shared values, norms, beliefs, and assumptions. (p. 6)

Lindahl (2006) noted that one long-term school improvement process model identified by several researchers included (a) the planning stage–pre-planning and planning readiness; (b) the implementation stage–change, motivation, and staff development; and (c) the institutionalization stage–diffusion. Additionally, numerous researchers have documented models for change such as those presented by Ellsworth (2000), Fullan (1993), Prochaska, Redding, and Evers (1997), and Rogers (1995). They found some initial factors that must be assessed at each phase of any identified change process or plan. Some of the reviews presented by Ellsworth (2000) contained key concepts from other disciplines that informed educational practices. Among others, they included (a) the school's capacity for change, (b) its willingness to change and (c) its readiness for change. They also found that these three factors are determined by the school's prevailing climate and culture; and those schools with cultures and climates compatible for change were most likely to succeed in their efforts to work through their improvement process. Lindahl further reflected on the principal's role in creating change through staff development while developing skill over time in learning strategic strategies that helped create the climate and culture supporting the desired change:

Some school leaders have attempted to change their school's culture and climate directly

through staff development; this is unlikely to be successful other than for the most

insignificant of changes. Over a long period of time, though, culture and climate may be

shaped, as an indirect consequence of staff development. As teachers build the new skills

to implement the planned improvements, they can gain the self-confidence and success

motivation to change the climate. As enough teachers have success with new behaviors,

this may change related underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions, i.e., the

organizational culture. (p. 9)

Lyman and Villani (2004) reported several studies that stressed the importance of being a

relational leader who demonstrates a lack of tolerance for deficit model thinking about children

from low-income homes and children of color and their capacity to learn (Reyes, Scribner, &

Scribner, 1999; Riester et al., 2002; Scheurich, 1998). In his challenge to principals, DuFour

(1991) urged principals to be discontented with the routine and to constantly search for a better

way to renew their schools and ensure increased learning opportunities for both teachers and

students. He believed that the investment in people and the effort to establish a culture where

teachers believe in themselves and their capacity to produce positive results, along with the

optimism and confidence to know that when challenges come, bring teachers the opportunity to

"strengthen their resolve" (DuFour, 1991, p. 96) to make a difference.

According to Finn (1983) principals must be prepared to understand the components of

effective schools and how to evaluate and monitor effective instruction. He proposed these areas

should take priority over the managerial and administration practices that have been emphasized

by most principal training programs. Stringfield and Teddlie (1988) noted the main difference

between principals in effective schools and those in ineffective schools was their outlook on their

roles. Lack of focus, bureaucracy, passivity, and ambiguity about student learning characterized less effective programs. Levine and Lezotte (1990) contrasted the two types of program by their inward versus outward views. Principals in identified effective schools were more concerned about inner workings of the school such as monitoring activities, supporting teachers, and reducing pressure on staff and students. Their counterparts were move likely to cite external reasons for in-school problems. The Educational Research Service (2000) found similar findings in their study of effective schools and effective principals.

Heifetz and Laurie (1997) discussed a balcony view that allowed a leader to make accurate, objective assessments about what is really happening in an organization without being consumed with the day-to-day events. Heifetz and Laurie discussed how effective leaders must have a perspective that sees patterns and trends from a balcony perspective without being caught up in the everyday action. Taking the balcony view allows the leader an opportunity for self-reflection and introspection about his or her own personal qualities and shortcomings along with any other obstacles that may keep the organization from moving toward its goal.

DuFour (1991) believed that, because principals play such a major role in increasing student achievement as a key determinant in developing teacher capacity, principals must be purposeful in working with staff members to design relevant professional development. He asserted those learning opportunities should influence teachers' thinking about teaching and learning (Glickman, 1986). DuFour wrote that organizational cultures and their inherent nature of "shared beliefs, expectation and values" are related to a complex system of "multilevel variables, internal and external to the school" (as cited in Hanson, 2003, p. 63). As principals continue to be the "head learner" (Rooney, 2008, p. 90) in a school of learners, their belief

systems about leadership will translate into actions that may greatly influence the shared culture that teachers help create for optimal student learning.

Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), summarized, in findings from their literature review, two main things that successful principals do. They concluded these principals used their position, first, to influence other people and to influence components of their organization and, second, to modify school practices. They further found that the three practices they must cultivate were to (a) develop people to be effective, by supporting and stimulating them to improve; (b) set directions for the organization through shared goals, monitoring progress, and communicating effectively; and (c) redesign the organization by developing a productive culture, eliminating structures that undermine the work, and fostering collaboration.

It appears that the principal's role in influencing teacher thinking is important and well documented. What remains for further study however, is determining how principals can best incorporate cultural competency lessons into effective professional development that supports teachers' responses and provides motivation to make positive changes to create effective cultures that will enhance building a high-performing school. The discussion presented in this section related to school climate, culture, and leadership are germane to this study because they highlight how a principal can change the focus of a school and bring change that leads to increased student achievement and culturally relevant practices.

Establishing Effective Professional Development

With all that has been presented about the tangled connections of racism, poverty, and stereotypic perceptions, the ideas raised by Saiger (2005) early in the discussion of legislative mandates lead to the thought, "Can you legislate change and accountability and expect it to

happen?" Additionally, the question should be asked, "Can professional development, led by insightful principals, really lead to increased student achievement?"

As America's face has changed in both urban and rural communities, schools encounter the challenge of recruiting, retaining, and retooling high-quality teachers to work in an educational system that has not effectively or equitably educated all of its diverse student populations. It appears that educational practices could change, if teachers have the courage to address whether or not deficit thinking about cultures, individuals, and groups differ from their own experiences and realize that these differences may actually influence student achievement. That training must begin at the pre-service level and continue with currently employed teachers.

As other fields prepare their workers to service an increasingly diverse clientele, they may provide important definitions, understandings, and key concepts to help education face its challenges. In addition to the standards set by educational groups, educators also need to continue refreshing themselves with educational literature, as well as borrow from the original work on professional development done in the business, medical, and military fields to find out what really makes a difference. As best-practices are developed, researched, and implemented in education, this may not be enough because of a silo effect. It seems that each field stands separately. Education, however, borrows terminology and practices from other fields at a slow pace. Additionally, it does not appear to add the research practices from those other fields to its database of findings to help facilitate improvement of all educational practices. Schools seem to lag behind in making changes based on research from their own field. So unless the district leadership or its innovative principals push for change, it happens slowly, again underscoring the importance of the role of principals as leaders.

Summary of professional development findings. One study by Laine (2000) reviewed the history of professional development strategies over the last 30 years and examined how two organizations, with reputations for being exemplary in both the private and educational sectors, respectively, approached professional development. Both entities were chosen because they had succeeded in producing an environment where their employees desired and sustained a work culture that valued continuous education. Laine examined commonalities and differences in their practices.

Laine (2000) studied how professional development had evolved since the 1970s. Lieberman and Miller (1978) saw the need to translate new learning gleaned from continuing education into actual practice and noted how ineffective some teacher institutions seemed to be in providing presentations that altered teaching methods or use of different materials. During the 1980s, Hawley and Rosenholtz (1984) found that many teachers questioned the effectiveness of professional development's impact on student learning. A later survey by Sandholtz (1999) documented 70% of respondents who described unpleasant associations with school or district in-service sessions.

Laine (2000) asserted that throughout the 30 years of research on in-service opportunities in the workplace setting, most activities still seem irrelevant to improving teacher and student learning. She did, however, note four findings about qualities inherent in quality in-service programs: (a) programs are lengthy, not brief, but over a period of time; (b) teacher input defines the content rather than imposed topics; (c) learning is not done in one setting but integrated with classroom practice; and (d) teachers move from working in isolation to forming learning communities (Kennedy, 1998).

Stout (1996) asserted finding that state and federal policy often imposed regulations on professional development through certification requirements and school improvement plan requirements with mandated hours of training through a proven model. However, it seemed that state and federal officials often failed to provide and monitor content and pedagogy of those in-services chosen by districts. Hirsch, Koppich, and Knapp (1998) noted that even in states that provided guidelines, concerns such as access to quality professional development, adequate time for professional development, and the use of substitute teachers to relieve teachers remain obstacles. Added to these issues are teacher motivation factors. Hirsch et al. (1998) found that teachers might be motivated to participate in professional development because of opportunities to increase their salary, keep certification current, improve career mobility, and increase their skill and knowledge levels. But Laine (2000) asserted that, although the last stated factor is the most desirable, it is the hardest to monitor.

Contrasted in the private sector, early work at the beginning of the century by Taylor (1915) ushered in theories about managing human resources to help employees learn and become proficient at completing basic tasks. Weisbord (1987) proposed that Gantt, who developed flow charts, thought an alternative approach to training was more feasible. Rather than trying to overcome skepticism when change occurred, he believed it was better to use human nature by having people experiment with new methods until they discovered how to produce high performance that would earn them a bonus. Gantt contended that instead of driving people, it was better to direct their development (Weisbord, 1987).

Another shift came in the 1940s when Kurt Lewin's popularity grew as others embraced his ideas and techniques on organizational learning, even though little research was done to prove the effectiveness of his ideas in practice (Laine, 2000). Weisbord (1987) reported Lewin

found (a) behavior was modified when workers participated in problem-solving and implementing solutions and (b) people carried out decisions they helped make. This approach supported group learning and analyzing organizational forces that blocked change, such as authoritarian leadership. Later in the 1940s, McGehee as cited in Laine (2000) did an extensive review of research on training and reported three key elements that we continue to address today. They are (a) trainee needs assessment, (b) trainer training, and (c) evaluation of training effectiveness (Laine, 2000).

Tannenbaum and Yuki (1992) completed another review of corporate training literature. Their review found a shift from Lewin's early ideas to training for isolated skills to a refined system based on research, organizational theory, and practice that integrated individual differences. The changes from the 1970s to the 1990s transformed organizations to embrace a continuous learning process that values team-based problem solving to improve quality management and customer satisfaction.

How the private sector views adult learning, modern organizational change theory on training managers, and the integration of technology into production differs significantly from how the education sector addresses professional development. Because products changed rapidly in the business sector, employee education remains mandatory to keep up with product designs (Eurich, 1990).

Both the private and education sectors struggle to develop courses and materials from a central source that provides consistent, standardized training that fit the needs of all locales. Kofman and Senge presented three cultural dysfunctions that either hinder or prevent organizational learning. According to Laine, they reported that most organizations' responses to challenges were (a) fragmented and provided insufficient solutions, (b) driven by competition

between parties that should have been in collaboration and was too focused on short-term professional development, howbeit measurable results, and (c) often reactive in response to an outside pressure that took the focus off of systematic improvements (Laine, 2000).

Woods (1995) gave three beliefs that must be shattered to move educators away from disconnected, fragmented, and noncumulative learning and training that does not relate to curriculum and learning, as implied from findings by Cohen and Ball (1999). He contended too many educational organizations operated on the beliefs that (a) people are expendable and replaceable, capable of limited learning in a separate place, role and job; (b) others must comply to the dominant power with superior knowledge and authority to punish and reward; and (c) the organization takes own a life of its own and meets demands according to its best interests (Woods, 1995).

Smylie (1996) further maintained that although an abundance of good professional development criteria and materials exist, only a few schools and states have successfully implemented these best practices. Much of what occurrs has a reputation for being "pedagogically unsound, economically inefficient, and of little value to teachers" (Smylie, 1996, p. 10). Findings from Laine's (2000) study noted the importance of leadership being convincing about its commitment to the value of professional education, the need to coordinate professional development with ever-changing organizational goals, and the challenge for employees to connect with how professional development helps in achieving evolving organizational goals. Laine offered that another key to developing a learning and growth culture is to plan for teachers to receive professional development during the school day.

A. F. Peters (2004) found that most current professional development models may be ineffective because they focus on changing teachers' beliefs and attitudes first, thus hoping this

will change classroom instructions and ultimately lead to improved student learning. However, she stated, new trends show we may need to rethink that model and reverse it. When professional development begins with changing classroom practices first, changes in learning outcomes occur and then changes in teachers' beliefs and attitudes follow (A. F. Peters, 2004).

Best practices for professional development implementation. A study by Yoon et al. (2007) reviewed more than 1,300 studies that addressed the effect of professional development on student achievement and found only a few studies that supported this claim. Of that original number reviewed, only nine of the initial studies could be used. All focused on elementary school teachers and their students and met the What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards. The small number of applicable studies "attests to the paucity of rigorous studies that directly assess the effect of in-service teacher professional development on student achievement in mathematics, science, and reading and English/language arts" (Yoon et al., 2007, p. iii).

The results of the nine studies, however, did show increases in the control group's achievement, which indicated that providing professional development to teachers had a moderate effect on student achievement. A positive and significant effect occurred when teachers had 14 hours or more professional development. Three studies that documented 5-14 hours total showed no significant effect on student achievement. All nine studies involved trainings presented in workshops or summer institutes delivered by authors or affiliated researchers directly to teachers rather than through a "train-the-trainer" approach.

Because of the small number of rigorous studies and the lack of variability in duration and intensity of the nine studies, Yoon et al. (2007) hesitated to draw conclusions about "whether intensive, sustained, and content-focused professional development is more effective" (p. iv). Their findings, however, did caution researchers to "avoid methodological pitfalls, especially

with quasi-experimental designs, and offered that additional studies would be particularly useful in addressing the direct effect of professional development on teachers and its indirect effect on students" (Yoon et al., 2007, p. iv).

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has as its mission to provide effective professional development for principals and teachers that leads to all students achieving. Since I began this literature review, NSDC changed its name to Learning Forward, and it still maintains a key role in understanding the dynamics of professional development for principals and teachers. The organization, in conjunction with other professional organizations, has created standards for educators. They include standards for learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning designs, implementation, and outcomes (National Staff Development Council [NSDC], (2001). These standards have been reduced from their previous list that also included all of the current standards plus evaluation: research-based design, learning, collaboration, equity, quality teaching, and family involvement. Now the older list has been absorbed into the newest set of standards. The shift involved renaming them to "Standards for Professional Learning" and created a pathway for teachers to actively take part in their learning to insure student growth, the ultimate aim of teaching (Learning Forward, 2011).

Additionally, Learning Forward (2011) has published findings on professional development practices in three phases. The first report in Phase 1 found that, in comparison to other high achieving nations abroad, U.S. teachers had much more limited opportunities for sustained, collegial professional development opportunities that produce changes in practice and improved student outcomes (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Using the Schools and Staffing Survey 2003-2004, Wei et al. (2009) began with a sample size of 40,520 teachers. Additionally, they used data from the NSDC Standards Assessment Inventory,

representing about 50,000 teachers from four states that had the highest return rate. By comparing the results, the following key findings emerged that revealed teachers in the United States are still working in isolation and are predominantly presented workshops, and, although they indicated they wanted more help, they receive too few opportunities to develop expertise in how to work effectively with students with disabilities and English language learner (ELL) students. The overarching finding was that significant gaps in professional development are still occurring. The results further showed the following findings:

- Sustained and intensive professional development for teachers is related to student achievement gains.

- Collaborative approaches to professional learning can promote school change that extends beyond individual classrooms.

- Effective professional development is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on his teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong working relationships among teachers.

- Public schools in the United States have begun to recognize and respond to the need to provide support for new teachers.

- More than nine out of 10 U.S. teachers have participated in professional learning consisting primarily of short-term conferences or workshops.

- While teachers typically need substantial professional development in a given area (close to 50 hours) to improve their skills and their students' learning, most professional development opportunities in the U.S. are much shorter. The results show when sustained, high-quality professional development occurs, student test scores rise by an average of 21 percentage points.

- Significant variation in both support and opportunity for professional learning exists among schools and states.

- U.S. teachers report little professional collaboration in designing curriculum and sharing practices, and the collaboration that occurs tends to be weak and not focused on strengthening teaching and learning.

- American teachers say that much of the professional development available to them is not useful. Teachers say that their top priorities for further professional development are learning more about the content they teach (23%), classroom management (18%), teaching students with special needs (15%), and using technology in the classroom (14%).

- Teachers are not getting adequate training in teaching special education or limited English proficiency students.

- U.S. teachers, unlike many of their colleagues around the world, bear much of the cost of their professional development.

- U.S. teachers participate in workshops and short-term professional development events at similar levels as teachers in other nations. But the United States is far behind in providing public school teachers with opportunities to participate in extended learning opportunities and productive collaborative communities

- Other nations that outperform the United States on international assessments invest heavily in professional learning and build time for ongoing, sustained teacher development and collaboration into teachers' work hours

- American teachers spend much more time teaching students and have significantly less time to plan and learn together, and to develop high quality curriculum and instruction than teachers in other nations.

- U.S. teachers have limited influence in crucial areas of school decision-making. (Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2010)

The team of writers for the second publication in Phase 2 analyzed professional development trends and challenges in the United States (Jaquith et al, 2010). Also using data from three Schools and Staffing Surveys from 2000, 2004, and 2008 disclosed areas where there has been progress, such as increases in induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers. However, teachers continue to have opportunities for sustained professional development that is ongoing, and there seemed to be a decline in access to intensive professional development and the number of topics as in the past. They also found a variance across the nation in opportunity, support and intensity (Jaquith et al., 2010).

The third report in Phase 3 of this study looked at the link between policy and practice frameworks that support professional development and their impact on student achievement. Jaquith et al., 2010) stated this area is relatively unexplored through research. They examined promising practices of four states—Colorado, Missouri, New Jersey and Vermont—by examining their National Assessment of Educational Progress scores and professional development data from sources such as the 2008 National Schools and Staffing Survey. The study revealed that the states all had professional development standards, induction and mentoring programs, and state-level organizations or boards that oversaw teacher licensure, teaching standards, and professional development. Most required teachers to have professional development plans connected to license renewal. Jaquith et al. (2010) believed that states must

develop policies and systems that monitor and support professional development accountability. Furthermore, Bellanca (2010) reported that Learning First found from the reports that when states and districts partner with other professional organizations it helped to ensure quality professional development

Recently, Bellanca (2009) also gathered data on new practices, research, ideas, and foci and updated information on professional development completed in 1995. Building on experience of training teachers he stated that beginning in the 1960s, while working with colleagues who started presenting week-long workshops, he stated that he and others moved toward presenting more effective workshop models to help teachers sustain their new learning in the classroom. Aware of the push by NSDC to move professional developers from reliance on workshop format to more emphasis on learning communities, he acknowledged, regretfully, that one-shot workshops still are very commonly used by school districts and conference presentations.

During the 1990s however, associates introduced Bellanca to the work of Reuven Feuerstein, an Israeli educator and clinical psychologist born in 1921 who brought remarkable progress to children with Downs' Syndrome and other seemingly incurable intellectual learning needs. Feuerstein had studied under Piaget, but began to broaden his approach on cognitive development believing that intelligence is not fixed (Bellanca, 2009; Jackson, 2010) His work is often associated with Lev Vygotski and a later theory on "scaffolding" (Pea, 2004). According to Dickinson (1991), despite years of study, trainings, and acceptance in over 25 countries, implementation of Feuerstein's model in working with children who had serious learning challenges, and numerous awards in other countries, many still have never heard of or accepted Feuerstein's work in the United States. Dickinson (1991) wrote,

Intelligence is not a static structure, but an open, dynamic system that can continue to develop throughout life! Dr. Reuven Feuerstein's revolutionary words, not yet widely accepted by the psychological and educational establishments, make an enormous difference in how we perceive the role of education. If intelligence is modifiable, and if indeed intelligence can be taught and learned, education has a much greater role than might have been previously imagined. (Dickson, 1991, para. 16)

Bellanca (2009) stated that Hilliard, "a long-time advocate of Feuerstein's work being applied to children of poverty and color" (p. vii), began studying his work on using cognitive skills to increase student achievement. Hilliard presented at conferences and shared Feuerstein's work. Eventually, Bellanca became familiar with both Hilliard and Feuerstein's work and he began to share what he learned from them. During that same period, Bellanca asserted that while collaborating with other leaders in the professional development field such as Madeline Hunter, Roger Johnson, David Johnson, Art Costa, Howard Gardner, Ron Brandt, Carolyn Chapman, and Robin Fogarty, he presented and published additional materials that incorporated Feuerstein's theories about student cognitive development and mediated learning and instruction that led to changes in both teacher and student perceptions. Bellanca's (2009) discussion on professional development incorporated a review of hundreds of research and evaluation studies on how cognition impacted teaching and learning for both children and adults. The push to create professional learning communities is relatively new, so what follows is to build understanding of DuFour's (2004) work and Bellanca's (2009) contribution.

Like DuFour (2004), Bellanca (2009) acknowledged that using the new paradigm shift suggested by Learning Forward would not be easily accepted because it required a new way of thinking about transferring information gathering, making sense of new concepts, and integrating

new understandings into classroom practice. He warned that staff development based on teacher "wants" is a trap, but that "student learning needs" (Bellanca, 2009, p. 16) should be the priority. He also asserted that the science of learning, based on over 2,000 studies including brain research, must have a higher priority over an individual's personal development as a teacher. Rather than deficit thinking about students and their ability to learn, Bellanca argued that training teachers to assess cognitive deficiencies and view them as something not fixed but subject to change is more productive than blaming either the teacher or the student when students have difficulty learning. Feuerstein's model (as cited in Bellanca, 2009) offered strategies and programs that allow students to reduce cognitive deficiencies and move toward efficiencies, reduce impulsivity in speech and action, and reduce disorganized thinking as evidenced by what students do and say.

Bellanca (2009) also contended that in order to change the learning dispositions for underperforming students, teachers must examine and redefine their own belief systems. Helping students overcome learning plateaus necessitates getting rid of those negative beliefs about learning that block students from acquiring other knowledge and skills. He advocated that helping teachers and students transfer learning requires building communities of practice or learning communities that ultimately change the culture and environment of the school. As teachers gather information and begin to apply it and then test their results, continue with what works, and discard what does not, the change process begins.

DuFour (2004) cited three schools that went from poor to high performing while becoming true professional learning communities that utilized the three core principles of the model. He argued that, too often, when educators do not get the immediate results they seek from a reform model they have tried, they are too quick to abandon the effort. Instead, he named

the key elements that must be in place to sustain the shift from a "focus on teaching to a focus on learning" (DuFour, 2004, para. 4). DuFour named three big ideas that defined the professional learning community movement. They included (a) ensuring that students learn, (b) developing a culture of collaboration, and (c) focusing on results. He asserted that, by ensuring that each student learns, educators must move past the cliché and ask questions about what students should learn, how they recognize when mastery comes, and how they respond when students experience difficulty in learning. DuFour contended that how schools address the needs of students who do not respond to what teachers have presented the first time around separates effective learning communities from traditional programs. When staff members work together collectively to add additional time and support for students who experience difficulty, there is a systematic, school-wide effort to address all student needs so that instruction is timely, based on intervention, and directed toward targeted learning.

Furthermore, DuFour (2004) contended that, despite compelling best-practice evidence that collaboration is a best practice, teachers in too many schools still work in isolation and offer excuses about why they are unable to collaborate to analyze individual and grade-level data and use time for professional development to research and discuss new strategies. Citing lack of time, lack of support by everyone, and the need for more training on how to collaborate, schools have dodged the main issue of answering the following critical questions. Are students learning what they need to learn? Who did and did not learn what was intended? Who needs extra time and support? What strategies and supports will the school implement to ensure learning, no matter who the child's teacher is? DuFour believed that when teachers met and systematically questioned outcomes, analyzed data, examined pacing, prepared materials, addressed concerns,

and developed strategies for improvement, a team approach shed light on information that was once private.

Using a professional learning community (PLC) model, DuFour (2004) suggested that effectiveness must be judged solely on results. He maintained that having data is not the same as using data as a catalyst to help teachers improve their practice. He warned that this often requires teachers to change traditional practice based on faulty assumptions and embrace data as evidence of effectiveness. Furthermore, by moving from using group averages to judge effectiveness and looking at individual students, teachers could better judge their results. He asserted, moreover, that building a professional learning community that is effective required hard work that, instead of diminishing the concept as just another "this too shall pass," (DuFour (2004, p. 6) required commitment and persistence of educators inside each individual school. He proposed that professional development set in the context of shared planning time is something that all schools should consider implementing (DuFour, 2004).

Bellanca (2009), building on DuFour's work, further claimed that coaching, in its many forms, should also be used to sustain the process. He cited Joyce and Showers' finding that "whether in a preschool or a community college, professional development that just dumps information about a better way to help students learn has less than a 10% chance of making change" (Bellanca, 2009, p. 78). He suggested that sustained change only happens when the leadership in the learning environment ensures that the change process is intentional and managed with close attention over time with long-term incentives, multiple data sources, and selectively abandoning what proves not to work. Bellanca proposed setting school-wide targets for improving student achievement for basic skills, concept understanding, cognitive function, and transformed beliefs. By establishing working teams and programs based on coordinated

efforts, shared goals, collaboration, and ongoing assessment, he believed that site leadership teams can monitor professional development through grade-level meetings, peer coaching, and support teams.

Understanding what works in effective professional development is key to helping teachers change any negative perceptions or biases they may hold about why students are not performing at their maximum potential. By helping educators realize what researchers have discovered how sustained change comes when the whole learning community is involved, it seems fitting, then, to end this section on professional development with discussion on Bellanca's (2009) guide, *Designing Professional Development for Change.*

Although his method is not the only way found to bring sustained changes, its process of innovation and its system of refinement and sustainability presented a clear research-based foundation linking school culture, leadership, collaboration, and belief systems to both teacher and student achievement and the learning process. By reporting the value found in using cognition training and mediation skills, Bellanca (2009) offered a new model for professional development that may prove beneficial in the future to a wider range of America's urban and rural school educators.

Implementing Cultural Competency Training

What is most striking from the discussion on professional development is that, of the specific topics that teachers wanted help with, none specifically addressed cultural competency or diversity training. Yes, teachers indicated they needed more help to work effectively with ELL students and student with disabilities. They also wanted more help with content-specific information, classroom management, and using technology (Wei et al., 2009). Thus, it appears that until professional development on cultural competency can be closely linked to and infused

into existing trainings that teacher feel they need to discuss, it may be difficult for principals to find time to make the trainings happen.

Based on the findings from the literature review thus far, developing the best solutions for fulfilling legislative mandates or state and district expectations requirements logically leads to further examination of several other factors that a principal must consider that are connected to the field of cultural competency. It seems reasonable to assume that principals must become familiar with the preparation and readiness of the newest teachers who come to their staffs and the various types of training options offered for educators already on staff. They also need to know who offers cultural competency training and how to choose trainers who best meet the needs of the school. In addition, they should look at availability and accessibility to trainings that provide a reasonable number of opportunities for teachers to participate in trainings over a determined amount of time. Finally, as mentioned before, the trainings need to connect to topics that teachers and principals consider useful to help improve student behavior and learning.

Principals must also be able to gauge their own personal receptivity and that of their teachers to embracing the need for training, especially as they become aware of where they fall on various continuums that measure competency levels. They must be able to analyze how schools build a climate and culture that willingly implements the principles and strategies presented through staff development, and they must be able to evaluate and analyze what constitutes successful training when measured against student outcomes, self-assessments, and/or cultural audit findings provided by an outside evaluator.

Harewood and Smiley (2007), who work in a predominantly White institution, looked at ways to prepare future teacher candidates to meet Standard 4, Diversity, in the NCATE guidelines and to also show evidence their teacher education department fulfilled those

expectations before the candidates become practitioners. They stated the greatest struggle their department faced was not always how to define and measure cultural competency dispositions but to find candidates who are amenable to moving toward being culturally competent. Beyond that factor however, the goal of their departments remained consistent to make sure that all of their preservice teacher candidates were ready to work with diverse children and be equipped with strategies to help the students succeed (Harewood & Smiley, 2007).

Sleeter (2001) looked at 80 studies on preservice programs that examined initial attitudes of White students and their lack of understanding about cultural competency and located strategies for training, recruiting, providing field experiences in cross-cultural settings, while identifying coursework and structures connected to them. Schmidt (2005) found several reasons for the challenges educators found in connecting home, school, and community to effectively impact learning in urban settings. Although culturally competency programs in relatively successful education programs require self-awareness and reflection on diversity issues, many White teachers may have not have been exposed to this sort of self-examination and may feel uncomfortable.

Schmidt's (2005) research on teachers who completed self-awareness inventories found many White teachers believed they have no culture, and it is hard for them to conceive that culture could be so important in instructing urban students. Many had not developed sustained relationships with people from different ethnic, cultural, and lower socioeconomic backgrounds and they relied on media stereotypes to create their views of diversity. Instructional materials, books and curricula often reflected European-American/White culture and, for the most part, may ignore the experiences of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Finally, Schmidt argued, teacher-training programs have not

put enough emphasis on preparing educators to demonstrate culturally relevant pedagogy (Sleeter, 2001). Schmidt also noted limited fiscal resources in some high-poverty districts prevented in-depth training for staff members and necessitated educators to create their own professional development based on their limited understanding of cultural competency definitions, concepts, and principles.

The following questions remain for principals to answer. Specifically, what does informed research say about how cultural competency training relates to eliminating deficit model thinking? If cultural competency training does not provide a remedy, what other solutions, models, or examples can be offered that modify teacher attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and expectations? How can cultural competence training improve students' academic progress? What should that training look like? Whereas the research discussed in most of the review has come from the education field itself, it may be wise to look at what research says about diversity training beyond the educational arena to add credibility in helping teachers see the importance of culturally responsive practices in the midst of all they have to do. The true test of whether or not cultural competency training is on the agenda will be the effectiveness of how it blends with the other topics that teachers see as important.

What is cultural competence training? Looking at the words culture and competence provides a better understanding of the actual meaning of cultural competency. The American Psychological Association (APA; 2002) developed guidelines for psychologists and included definitions for culture, race, ethnicity, multicultural diversity, and culture-centered. Culture is defined as "the belief systems and value orientations that influence customs, norms, practices, and social institutions, including psychological processes (language, care-taking practices, media, educational systems)" (APA, 2002, p. 8). This definition recognizes that everyone has a

cultural, ethnic, and racial heritage, embodied "through learned and transmitted beliefs, values and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions . . . and informed by the historical, economic, ecological, and political forces on a group" (APA, 2002, p. 8).

The APA had taken the position that the term *race* seems to have no consensus definition but is a socially constructed phenomenon rather than a biological determinant, such as when people are treated or studied as though skin color or hair type defines a group. That group usually results in creating generalizations and stereotypes (Helms & Cook, 1999). Furthermore, the term *ethnicity* also has no common definition. Ethnicity is referred to, however, "as the acceptance of the group mores and practices of one's culture of origin and the concomitant sense of belonging" (Helms & Cook, 1999, p. 380). The description also notes that individuals may have multiple ethnic identities that vary in importance at different times (Brewer, 1999). So it appears that diversity training, cultural competency, and multicultural training seem to have similar meanings. Thus, the terms *multiculturalism* and *diversity* have been used interchangeably to recognize a broad understanding of several cultural dimensions, as listed above in the definitions for culture, race, and ethnicity, that impact each unique individual's concerns and issues related to the multiple identities within and between other individuals. Whereas at first the focus on diversity was on workplace experiences, it has grown to encompass the identities of "race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, class status, education, religious/spiritual orientation, and other cultural dimensions" (APA, 2002, pp. 9-10) such as work and family concerns.

M. A. King, Sims, and Osher (2001) compiled information for the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice and defined cultural competence using some of the characteristics often attributed to Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) in their early work with health care

reform. As they explored ways to improve the quality of care to non-White children who were emotionally disturbed, they developed a framework of foundational principles and guidelines for modifying how policy, administrative decisions, and practice could improve care. Subsequently, their definitions and findings have been translated into educational practices.

Cross et al. (1989) defined cultural competence as a set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that fit together in a system, agency, or among individuals / professionals to enable them all to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. These behaviors can be described on a continuum that gave six potential behavioral ranges beginning at a negative level and moving to proficiency. The possibilities include (a) cultural destructiveness, (b) cultural incapacity, (c) cultural blindness, (d) cultural pre–competence, (e) cultural competency, and (f) cultural proficiency. Cross et al. suggested that most youth service providers most often probably fall between Levels 2 and 3 (Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991). This continuum can be compared to ones presented by Banks (1997), Hammer (2011), and Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003).

Also taken from the health care setting is an operational definition involving the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes (Davis, 1997). Researchers M. A. King et al. (2001) noted five essential elements that helped increase a system's ability to be considered culturally competent if the following elements were seen at every level in the delivery of services. Systems were considered competent when they demonstrated that they (a) valued diversity, (b) had the capacity for cultural self–assessment, (c) were conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact, (d) institutionalized cultural knowledge, and (e) developed adaptations to service

delivery reflecting an understanding of diversity between and within cultures (M. A. King et al., 2001).

Based on the concepts and definition of Cross et al. (1989), the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) cited Goode & Dunne (2003), "Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period. Both individuals and organizations are at various levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills along the cultural competency continuum" (p. 6). They contended that cultural competence required organizations and individuals to

- have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.

- have the capacity to (a) value diversity, (b) conduct self-assessment, (c) manage the dynamics of difference, (d) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and (e) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve.

- incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice/service delivery and involve systematically consumers/families. (Goode & Dunne, 2003, p. 6)

The Child Welfare League of American reported it modified information from the 2000 U.S. Commerce Department and offered the following definition for cultural competence:

The ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or religions-in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities, and protects and preserves the dignity of each. Cultural competence is a continuous process of learning about the cultural strengths of others and integrating their unique abilities and perspectives into our lives. Cultural

competence is a vehicle used to broaden knowledge and understanding of individuals and communities. Cultural competence or the lack of it will be reflected in how communities relate to and/or interact with service providers and their representatives. (as cited in Indiana Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services, 2008, p. 73).

The Indiana Disproportionality Committee (2009) report defined cultural competence as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or among professionals and enable the system, agency, or professional to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. The report's authors also stated that cultural bias occurred when people of a culture make assumptions about another culture's conventions, including language conventions, notation, behaviors, and norms, based on their own culture or what they perceived to be true about the culture in question. As a relatively new study, the report has not been peer reviewed, but it offers insight into some interesting findings that have not been provided in the past about Indiana's current status on cultural competency training for youth service providers.

The American Institutes for Research (2002) included several definitions for cultural competency in its review of concepts, policies, and practices in the health community. The study noted cultural competence goes beyond "race, ethnicity, and religion but also includes gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and socio-economic status" (American Institutes for Research, 2002, p. 7). The work also distinguished between different types of linguistic differences exemplified by limited English speakers and also by people possessing low literacy skills and who were hearing impaired. But it also noted that Fortier (1999) recognized that language and culture are inseparable. The report further documented that Epstein and Hundert approached cultural competence as "the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical

skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values, and reflections in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and the community being served" (American Institutes for Research, p. 8).

In a health care review, Harwood was quoted as saying that because ethnicity and social status are so closely connected, social issues such as "stereotyping, institutionalized racism, and dominant group privilege are as real in the examining room as they are in society at large" (American Institutes for Research, 2002, p. 8). The American Institutes for Research report also noted Tervalon and Murray-Garcia's position that cultural competence must consider the power dynamic of a physician-patient relationship and the effort it takes to "bring that power imbalance in check" (as cited in American Institutes for Research, 2002, p. 8). This process involved ongoing self-reflection, self-critiquing, and humility. Tervalon and Murray-Garcia liked the term "cultural humility" better than "cultural competency" (as cited in American Institutes for Research, 2002, p. 8).

As an example of cross-field implementation of culturally relevant practices, like the medical field the military is also concerned about cultural competence practices. The Department of Defense released a study prepared by the Institute of Simulation and Training (Ross, 2008) on several trainings processes it used to foster Cross Cultural Competence (CCC; 2008). They wanted to define how well military personnel were performing in other cultures to achieve the organization's goals (Ross, 2008). The goal of the study was to identify measures related to culture, complete a literature review to gain understanding on how to operationalize the definition of CCC, identify and review candidates for critical incident interviews, and examine the role of cultural competence within the context of mission success. Their reviewed literature revealed a two-tier approach that defined psychological variables based on theory and,

secondly, recognized performance outcome challenges and competencies required to complete a successful mission that resulted in the following operational definition:

> Cross-cultural competence is the development of knowledge and skill through experience and training that results in a complex schema of cultural difference, perspective-taking skill, and interpersonal skills, all of which an individual can flexibly (or adaptively) apply through the willingness to engage in new environments even in the face of considerable ambiguity, through self-monitoring and self-regulation to support mission success in a dynamic context. (Ross, 2008, p. 3)

After creating a measurement tool, Ross (2008) provided 11 factors from existing theory and measurement that provided a framework for gathering information on how the military approached cultural competency trainings. Although no other sources were found that connected military practices to educational practices, because the military institutions remain committed to successfully equipping their personnel for cross-cultural assignments, their success and concerns may relate to the education field. The factors they found involved in building effective cross-cultural competency practices included

1. Ethnocultural empathy: The feeling and expression of emotional feelings and cognitive ability to take another's perspective and overcome stereotyping.

2. Experience: The level of interaction with people in other cultures, not necessarily founded on expertise based on motivation, but actual interaction that causes expertise to grow.

3. Flexibility: The ability to switch easily from one strategy to another without making people from other cultures do things the way you would and being willing to try different ways to reach a goal.

4. Interpersonal skills and communication: Ability to display respect and maintain a non-judgmental stance in interaction displayed through the ability to negotiate, persuade or establish rapport.

5. Mental model/perspective-taking: Developing perspective-taking, frame shifting and code switching skills to relate to understanding the mental models of differing cultures and then to predict and reflect on what does and does not work.

6. Metacognition/self-monitoring: Concern for and the ability to meet the demands of a situation by identifying appropriate behavior, being sensitive to cues in the environment, and the ability to change to fit the environment as needed.

7. Willingness to engage; openness to experience; orientation to action: The tendency to eagerly search for and explore new situations and consider them as a challenge that can be overcome while engaging in cross cultural interactions.

8. Low need for cognitive closure and tolerance for ambiguity: A willingness to postpone immediate answers and look for alternate ways to view a situation without becoming overly frustrated. On continuum ranges, high degrees wanting closure, predictability, decisiveness, order and structure may provide discomfort in the opposite situations where ambiguity, indecisiveness, and close-mindedness exist.

9. Relationship building: A primary component skill of cross-cultural competency, includes building trust.

10. Self-efficacy: Belief in one's ability to succeed and belief that success is possible even though it may require many tries to make something work

11. Self-regulation or emotional regulation: The ability to control one's behavior while performing a task. (Ross, 2008, pp. 3-5)

Ross's (2008) study involved participants from different branches of the service who had served in different locations. Originally, there were five participants, but the number was extended by four to develop a richer background and overall insights. The identified military trainings that were studied included several different types of training processes. They included a 40-hour session with interaction among people from another culture; a three-hour session on culture and language with CDs and handbooks not completely covered but left behind for individuals to read on their own; and a training session on topics such as introducing basic words, mannerisms, customs, religions, history, overcoming stereotypes and previous misconceptions, and use of first impressions. Participants reported that some sessions were poorly executed and lacked an opportunity for participants to provide adequate feedback.

One interesting finding uncovered from the military study was that focus should not be solely directed on the competency levels of individuals, but it also must consider how the leaders were trained to recognize the cultural levels of those they supervised and how reactions to those competency levels based on information learned through training or with "on-the-spot correction" (Ross, 2008, p. 15) was so crucial. This study provided several areas of focus that can be explored and modified to inform staff development training for educators (Ross, 2008).

From the business sector, Martin and Vaughn (2004) discussed the importance of developing a common vocabulary and not being sidetracked with disputes by people who oppose a given diversity program. They stated that, even if attitudes changed, that alone would not lead to knowledge about other people's cultures. They also cautioned that awareness or sensitivity training is not enough to produce acceptance of cultural differences. From their study, teachers can learn that they must also be aware that individual differences in people are important even before learning about cultural differences or developing cross-cultural skills. Work by social

psychologist Patricia Devine (1996) showed that many people often have inconsistent behaviors that do not line up with what they indicated as their values, beliefs, and attitudes. Ironically, they may be unaware there was a disconnect. Cross-cultural training helps members of a group attempt to bring inclusion within an organization with the bottom line being to increase productivity.

Martin and Vaughn (2004) acknowledged foundational work done by Judith Katz and Fred Miller in designing their stages of cultural competence development. Their linear model provided a continuum of five categories with descriptors from the lowest to highest levels: Conventional, Defensive, Ambivalent, Integrative, and Inclusive. Although presenting a linear model, they also acknowledged organizations go through a change process that occurs in stages that sometimes appeared more spiral than linear. This happens when organizations and individuals experience valley and mountains moving through the stages along with backlash, economic changes, business unit capacity differences, and other factors also that eventually lead to greater collaboration and inclusion. Although numerous methods were found to present diversity training, a common feature seemed to be that many had a linear continuum that allowed people to reflect where they are and commit to where they would like to be.

Ladson-Billings (2001) contended that, although teacher education programs purported to prepare their students to meet the challenges of teaching racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students, scholars have documented such efforts are usually uneven and unproven. She acknowledged the term, "star teachers," coined by Haberman (1995) as he showcased outstanding teachers in his study. She, however, personally called the star teachers she identified as "dreamkeepers." She proposed that this vanishing breed of teachers who teach well in difficult situations by ensuring that students achieve develop a sense of themselves and a

commitment to larger social and community concerns. Ladson-Billings called for new teachers to receive nurturing and support when they enter the profession by implementing well-planned staff development.

Cultural competency transcends appreciation of cultures and must also combine skill sets, knowledge, and experiences with the ability to implement strategies, services, and practices that ensure quality instruction that produces high achievement. Ritter and Skiba (2006) challenged, becoming culturally competent requires asking difficult questions about why all children do not succeed when others do. They suggested that in order to address disproportionality, educators must engage in dialogue about race, equity, and cultural competence and their connection to student achievement. Specific suggestions included having facilitated conversations about race; creating cultural competence rubrics based on instruction, policies and practices; creating study groups using materials that lead to discussions on race, equity, and applying what was learned; examining data patterns in relation to race and issues of equitable learning; and developing questions that address concerns of race and equity in planning, practice and policy. Ritter and Skiba (2006) summarized important lessons gained from field experience that promote cultural competence: Data drives accountable instruction, staff members benefit from facilitated courageous conversations, staff members must take ownership of the process, sustainability must be deliberately designed in action plans, and collaboration must exist between special education and general education staff members.

What are researched best practices related to cultural competency? Lasagna (2009) reviewed key issues in preparing teachers to work effectively in at-risk schools. She found that improving teacher preparation creates stability and growth and leads to greater teacher retention. For pre-service teachers, field placement in urban schools, training in multicultural awareness,

and examination of deeply held beliefs also lead to stability in the teacher forces in at-risk schools and "teacher candidates more comfortable and confident in their ability" (Lasagna, 2009, p. 2) to work in an at-risk school.

Schmidt (2005) defined culturally responsive teaching as using instruction that "makes connections with students' backgrounds, interests, and experiences to teach the standards-based curriculum . . . [and] draws upon students' prior knowledge" (p. 1). Ritter (n.d.) suggested that characteristics of cultural responsive teaching included validating student's cultural identities during instructional time, acknowledging differences and similarities, becoming aware of how one's own cultural values and views influence instructional practices, helping students process multiple decision-making strategies, and communicating with families in meaningful ways.

Among characteristics of culturally responsive teachers, several main themes have emerged from the work of Ladson-Billings (1994). In her seminal study with eight teachers, as mentioned before, she found that educators must have a positive perspective on parents and their families and the hopes and dreams that families had for their children. Educators must communicate consistent, high expectations for learning. They must also understand that learning occurs within the context of culture so that students do not have to give up their culture by totally assimilating into the dominant culture's mold for them. Furthermore, she believed that learning must be student-centered and engaging and offer opportunities for collaboration, include interaction with others, and encourage an environment that promotes a community of learners rather than individual competitiveness. Instruction must be culturally mediated so that students meet success because a variety of learning activities and options are presented through a curriculum that has been reshaped as teachers move beyond the textbook and use other resources to teach concepts.

Ladson-Billings (1994) also presented the concept that culturally responsive teaching requires the teacher to act as facilitators, coaches, or conductors of learning who vary approaches to meet students' strengths. Culturally responsive teachers assume responsibility for students to excel but also share and shift responsibility to students and use resources from the community to validate the teachers' acceptance of students and their communities' strengths. Additionally, teachers have a passion for what they teach and believe that all students can and must succeed (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

R. Lee (2007) completed a study of three principals in Georgia schools that she identified as 70/70/70 schools. These schools represented the highest performing schools meeting the criteria and had a student population with at least 70% non-White population, 70% free and reduced lunch students, and 70% of the students meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) proficiency requirements. After completing interviews with the principals and spending time observing in the school, she found that principals were inconsistent in implementing strategic practices related to culturally responsive practices although they believed cultural competency training was needed and they wanted to see their teachers use culturally relevant practices.

R. Lee's (2007) study, entitled "How Principals Promote a Culturally Relevant Learning Environment to Improve Black Student Achievement in Urban Elementary Schools," was closely related to the premise of this study, and it stood out like a jewel among the sparse offerings related to this topic. She began her discourse on culturally relevant teaching by stating,

> Traditional educational practices are not helping most students in urban schools reach their optimal level of academic success (Gay, 2000; Haberman, 1995; Ladson- Billings, 2001; Kunjufu, 1984; Mahiri, 1998; Murrell, 2002). The learning environment of the traditional schools tends to be conservative where the knowledge is transmitted passively

from the teacher to the student (Freire, 1996; Mahiri, 1998; Murrell, 2002). The learning environment in the traditional schools emphasizes control, rigidity, and conformity (Freire, 1996). Researchers explain that culturally responsive teaching provides the urban students with learning environments that educate more students than the traditional schools (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Freire, 1996; Mahiri, 1998; Murrell, 2002). (R. Lee, 2007, p. 36)

R. Lee (2007) further identified several traits linked to cultural responsive teaching that she hoped to see as she observed lessons and gathered interview data from the three principals she studied. She added summaries from several leading cultural competency theorists and also listed nine cultural themes identified as important to the academic achievement of Black students (Boykin, 1983). The nine cultural themes included spirituality, harmony, verve, movement, oral tradition, affect, expressive individualism, social time perspective, and communalism. Some of her findings were included in the following summary:

Culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory (Gay, 2000). Students are validated when the teachers use the cultural knowledge and prior experiences of the students as tools to achieve mastery of the new knowledge and skills (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Black students need teachers who espouse knowledge of the achievement legacy of Black people so Black students know that high expectations and academic achievement are part of their educational legacy (Murrell, 2002). (R. Lee, 2007, p. 37)

A study completed by Ellison, Boykin, Towns, and Stokes (2004) used the nine cultural themes as a lens to study 21 elementary teachers in Grades 1-6 and their practices during 52 observations that yielded 150 hours of direct instruction. Additionally 37 students participated in

focus groups to answer questions about their learning experience at the school. The purpose of the study was to gain understanding about the classroom routines, practices, perceptions, and interactions that occurred in classrooms serving African American students from low-income backgrounds. The research team used five dimensions of classroom life to categorize their results that included (a) social/psychological relations, (b) technical core of instruction, (c) physical structure and organizational routines, (d) discipline and classroom management, and (e) attitudes, perceptions, and expectations.

The study found that teacher personality and morning demeanor set the tone for the day; group instructional activities led to less disciplinary problems than individual learning activities; students not familiar with the routines, rules, and rituals in the classroom and/or did not obey them were disciplined (Ellison et al., 2004). They noted that teachers used different tones of voice that they labeled as indirect, cooperative forms of commands or as tones that were not as pleasant, giving orders in a more direct and authoritative fashion; additionally, there were non-verbal modes of discipline and management that were observed such as lights on and off, silence until students settled down, and time-out routines. Students generally enjoyed coming to school and perceived their teachers as helpful and caring.

Ellison et al. (2004) further noted that there was incongruence in teacher-initiated practices related to the nine cultural themes and student-initiated practice. They stated that teachers often experienced conflict or friction with students when teachers were unable to strike a balance between activities that African American children participated in that could be explained through the nine cultural themes and their own more mainstream cultural themes. Coming from African origins, traits such as communalism, cooperation, and movement had been maintained and transmitted throughout generations within the communities. Mainstream cultural

themes coming from a European and North American origin, such as individualism, competition, and bureaucracy orientation, were often in conflict with those traits from African origin. Ellison et al. suggested that further discussion of these themes would be an excellent topic for educators of African American children to address and capitalize upon. A goal they suggested would be for teachers to find a balance in drawing from student inclinations and also using the opportunity to help them find success in the school culture's expectation. They stated:

> One of the challenges that this poses to educators involves striking a balance between demonstrating respect and understanding for culturally divergent students and preparing these students to participate successfully in formal school settings. The starting point for addressing this dilemma involves understanding how children's cultural backgrounds affect the skills, knowledge and expectations that they bring in the classroom. (Ellison et al., 2004, p. 3)

According to Byrd-Blake and Olvieri (2009) there are 10 underlying assumptions about culturally responsive teachers that schools must consider. The assumptions are based on how well teachers can analyze and implement the self-awareness theory, critical race theory, and the culturally responsive theories outlined by cultural theorists like Gay (2000) that Byrd-Blake and Olvieri (2009) described in their model. The following 10 principles are adapted directly from the characteristics that Byrd-Blake and Olvieri (2009) outlined in their findings. They found that culturally competent teachers

1. Are able to engage in self-reflection, and thus step outside of their worldview, to discern how their experiences and cultural backgrounds affect what they perceive and interpret about the race, culture and ethnicity of students in their classrooms.

2. Understand, acknowledge and appreciate the historical impact of race and class in U. S. education and its legacies. Instead of ignoring or denying our history as a country in terms of intolerance, it should be acknowledged, described and analyzed. The culture of their professional development sessions promotes teacher participation in non-threatening settings as they explore the historical impact of race, privilege and power in America.

3. Manage the dynamics of difference within the classroom. They are at the forefront of understanding the dynamics of the differences among their students and the differences between their students and their personal lives. Acknowledging, understanding, and managing the differences assist in eliminating misconceptions and unconstructive interactions that may occur in the classroom.

4. Are aware of the impact that teacher expectations have on the ability of students of all races and classes to achieve academic success and begin to facilitate instruction based on high expectations that all children can learn. They demonstrate high positive expectations with abundant praise rather than criticism, without reducing expectations for low-achieving students, but by providing student centered activities that are engaging and that help students construct their own knowledge.

5. Acquire and model skills in positive behavior management that instill positive self-concept, character, and leadership in children from all races and cultures by developing positive relationships that are steady and consistent. The end goal is to empower the students to develop into decision makers.

6. Initiate and facilitate parental involvement programs that encourage parent/guardian participation in learning. They develop a respect for and understand the culture of the

community they serve through an objective analysis of the historical prejudiced

practices many generations have endured.

7. Collaborate with colleagues to work together to meet the needs of students and

families from various races, ethnicities and cultures. The underlying purpose of

collaboration is to increase student achievement through formal and focused

collaboration involving curriculum and assessment planning and reflecting, problem

solving, analysis of data and detailed intervention discussions on particular students.

8. Engage in self-management techniques that reduce stress and improve

professionalism and interpersonal skills. Self-management techniques better prepares

teachers to deal with the added stresses of teaching at high poverty, high risk,

culturally diverse schools, while increasing their ability to professionally manage

students and communicate with parents and colleagues without taking things

personally and making assumptions.

9. Accelerate student learning and develop instructional strategies to motivate students

to become proficient lifelong readers and writers. Culturally informed teaching uses

students' culture and selected texts as a frame of reference to facilitate learning

literacy achievement.

10. Engage in instructional strategies that engage students in higher order critical

thinking. They use these strategies to empower students to apply these skills to real

life problems as well as their math and science classes. (Byrd-Blake & Olvieri, 2009,

pp. 10-16)

The last culturally responsive practice presented comes from Jackson (2011), affiliated

with the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA) founded at the Teachers

College of Columbia University. Her theory of culturally responsive learning is based on her years of work and research with urban schools districts throughout the United States that had contracted their organization to work with thousands of teachers in a systematic professional development program to equip their teachers, principals, and administrators with strategies and practices that would improve student achievement across their districts. The premise of Jackson's theory, entitled the *Pedagogy of Confidence,* was that as teachers gained confidence in their ability to connect and reach students of color, the students would in turn begin to see that confidence and believe that they actually could engage in "high intellectual performances" (Jackson, 2011, p. 13) in return.

Jackson (2011) believed that many children come to school ready for the school to help them learn. She and Eric Cooper, NUA founder, called these students "school-dependent children" (Jackson, 2011, p. 26). They are dependent on the school to help them learn and, when the school fails, they lose hope because they may see no other source of help. By turning the attention away from remediation, drill and practice, and rote worksheets, this philosophy presented a new emphasis on the skills associated with gifted and talented programs for all students, such as identifying and amplifying student strengths. Using those strengths, educators could accelerate instruction and use higher-order thinking questions, activities, and projects that engage students in learning. The main argument she proposed was that all students are capable of high intellectual performance (Jackson, 2011).

Feuerstein (1980), a student of Piaget, presented a theory called structural cognitive modification. His work expanded what psychologists had originally believed about cognition and learning. He demonstrated that intelligence is not stagnant. It can change based on intervention. Jackson (2011) built upon this work and established four principles. The first one

is threefold, including (a) intelligence is modifiable; (b) all students benefit from high-level instructions; and (c) learning is influenced by the interaction of culture, language, and cognition. The following two principles added how this intervention could transpire. Secondly, teachers should recognize that out-of-school functions may contribute to cognitive dysfunction; next however, because the brain is modifiable, enriching mediating can correct cognitive dysfunction. And finally, she proposed that mediation could be facilitated through the principles of high operational practices focused on improving cognition functions (Jackson, 2011)

The principles of *high operational practices* include identifying and activating student strengths, building relationships, eliciting high intellectual performance, providing enrichment, integrating prerequisites for academic learning, situational learning, situating the lives of students, and amplifying student voices (Jackson, 2011). These ideas have many similar aspects to the work others discussed previously. What makes this theory different from the others, however, is the requirement to understand how cognition, brain research, and learning interact with culture and language.

In closing, K. D. Peterson and Deal (1998) stated it takes time, leadership, and focus to rebuild schools that need to change. Creating cultural patterns that serve both staff and students will require staffs to have a shared vision, norms of hard work, traditions for celebrating student success, teacher innovation, and committed parents. They added, schools with positive climate share a sense of what is important. These schools shared a concern, caring, and commitment to student learning. Principals are the key to shaping that culture as they communicate core values to teachers, students, and parents (K. D. Peterson & Deal, 1998). In shaping that culture, the principal's leadership role of using data from self-reflective and/or school-wide cultural audits

can be beneficial in spotlighting strengths and areas of weakness and concern to make the school

a place where teachers and students benefit from a culturally relevant learning environment.

These studies have implications for the principals in that they prescribe that teachers must

be able to define, recognize, and determine culturally relevant practices. Principals have the

responsibility to guide them in that direction. They also must have the wisdom to determine how

to incorporate cultural competency training so that it is relevant and infuses practices that

enhance content and instructional strategies that teachers find useful.

A sampling of various cultural competence training providers and options.

Principals need an arsenal of information about where to find effective and assessable cultural

competency training programs. Trumbull and Pacheco (2005) did a comprehensive review of

documents, initiatives, and research completed by numerous national organizations that provided

guidance and support for implementing teacher standards and professional development related

to cultural competence. This review was published by The Education Alliance at Brown

University, which offers cultural competency training and materials. Trumbull and Pacheco's

work provided a comprehensive list of competencies that could help teachers and teacher trainers

better understand the components of cultural competency. Presented in three overarching areas,

the leading themes were factors related to culture, language, and race and ethnicity. Several sub-

competencies provided a framework to describe each leading themes. Under each of them were

further clarifications that included strategies, actions, and dispositions that supported each sub-

competency.

Trumbull and Pacheco (2005) stated that the theme of culture included four general

overarching sub-competencies for teachers to consider. They were (a) developing cultural

awareness; (b) providing high-level, challenging, culturally relevant curriculum and instruction;

(c) collaborating with parents and family; and (d) making classroom assessment equitable and valid for all students. They further defined language into three sub-competencies that included (a) building on and expanding language proficiency and literacy skills of native English speakers, (b) addressing oral language needs of English language learners, and (c) building the literacy skill of English language learners.

Included under the theme of race and ethnicity were six sub-categories that Trumbull and Pacheco (2005) identified. They included (a) maintaining high expectations of all students, (b) supporting students' identity development, (c) recognizing and preventing institutional racism within the school, (d) recognizing and preventing cultural racism within the school, (e) recognizing and preventing individual racism, and (f) recognizing and addressing unequal power relationships in the school community.

Additionally, Hite (2001) gathered an extensive list of organizations and initiatives with brief descriptions of their approaches to gathering and distributing resources that increased cultural competence in the workplace. His listing has grown along with others and could prove helpful to readers who may be unaware of the wealth of organizations and their acronyms and the services and information dedicated to improving cultural competency for educators. It included the types of services offered by agencies, higher education, and other entities to educate people in the workplace about culture and becoming competent.

Cultural audits and assessments provide another tool for educators to determine where they fall on a rubric or continuum to analyze where they are, where they need to be, and how they are progressing toward becoming culturally proficient. Examples of self-assessments and school-wide assessments and inventories can be found in the materials prepared for school leaders by Lindsey et al. (2003) and Lindsay, Martinez, and Lindsay (2007). Another example

of an inventory that has been used across many arenas including business, government, and now education is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). This instrument, designed by Mitchell Hammer and Milton Bennett in 1998, has been designed and modified as thousands have used it. It has the capability of providing districts, schools and/or individual educators with personalized or group profiles that can present their overall worldview on a continuum of where they fall on intercultural sensitivity. It is a statistically reliable cross-culturally valid measure of intercultural competence adapted from Bennett's (as cited in MDB Group, 2012) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Its continuum ranges from lowest to highest with the descriptors of denial, polarization (defense/reversal), minimization, acceptance, and adaptation (MDB Group, 2012).

L. T. Smith (2011) completed a study of 20 public schools: nine elementary schools, nine middle schools, and two high schools in suburban, urban, and rural settings. Schools were sorted into three categories based on federal data into higher-, mid-, and lower-performing categories. With a diverse student population being greater than 50% non-White students on average, her team collected perception surveys, observation data, and interviews to determine school culture, climate, and equity commonalities and differences within the three categories of schools. The information was used to prepare a more accurate instrument for valid cultural audits. Using the five dimensions of (a) cultural leadership/organizational culture, (b) physical environment, (c) psychosocial environment, (d) academic [teaching and learning environment], and (e) equity/ cultural competence, the team connected 29 culture and climate indicators. They found that higher-performing schools scored significantly higher in all areas than did mid- and lower-performing schools. They also found that schools that scored higher on the equity/cultural competence dimension also had smaller achievement gaps than their counterparts.

Accessibility and effectiveness. One concern raised about all of resources that are available is how practitioners could gauge the effectiveness and efficiency of any of their services. According to the IDC findings in 2009, few organizations appeared to objectively gauge how they chose their service providers to deliver culturally competency in-services. Because of this, the IDC's (2009) report on cultural competency produced16 training standards and interpretations on what each standard entailed.

From their research and study, the IDC (2009) adopted the standards hoping they would be implemented by service providers in the state working with children, youth, and their families in the four areas of child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice, and education. As the project team continued their work of developing a professional development curriculum that would correlate with each standard, their goal remained to create a working document that promised to be a cutting edge tool to fulfill the state's need for service providers to meet their cultural competency requirements for agencies in all the areas of education, mental health, juvenile justice, and child welfare (IDC, 2009).

Another state also questioned how their expectations for cultural training have been met. In 2003, legislature called for a study because, despite cultural competency legislation, it found the educational system of the state continued to fail in meeting the needs of all student populations and that there was no accountability system to evaluate the effectiveness, availability, and quality of cultural competency training programs (B. P. Farr et al., 2005). The Commission on Teacher Credentialing, with the State Department of Education, studied 10 culturally diverse districts to assess the training provided to teachers and administrators, to evaluate the cultural competence of those schools, and to access the appropriateness and the trainings. The defined cultural proficiency follows:

The term cultural competence—or ("cultural proficiency" as is sometimes used)—refers to the teacher's ability to respond to differences positively and interact effectively with students from a variety of backgrounds. This was often elaborated as the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills to interact with and support the development of students from all backgrounds" (B. P. Farr et al., 2005, p. 4).

B. P. Farr et al,,(2005) reviewed demographic data, teacher training and experience, hiring practices, school plans, and the commitment, effectiveness, and responsiveness of each site to cultural competency training programs.

Answers about the perceived quantity and quality of training received by personnel in California ranged from very well-prepared to enter the classroom to the opposite end of the spectrum: not prepared because training had not focused on key issues relevant to teaching in the classroom. The study yielded inconclusive finding about availability for training in that so few new teachers who had gone through the recently required pre-service training because they had been hired in the schools since the study was conducted (B. P. Farr et al., 2005) Training for teachers with at least three years' experience also provided a range of experiences. However, their trainings ranged from initial topics on multiculturalism to more intense experiences related to issues of racism, power dynamics, and poverty. Whether and when these trainings were provided by outside consultants or by the district, attendance was usually voluntary. The study recognized that several key factors influenced professional development. These included availability, other district curriculum and instruction mandates, and competing professional development, time, resources, and priorities (B. P. Farr et al., 2005).

Recommendations in the California study by B. P. Farr et al. (2005) commended the state for creating credentialing and induction requirements for new teachers, but they also called for

policy to create a system for the majority of veteran teachers and administrators, with three or more years of service, who had "not had cultural competency training appropriate to their local needs" (p. 6). The researchers suggested that districts and schools provide staff members with self-assessments to determine their local needs, review literature about effective training programs, understand effective professional development models, and continue with ongoing assessments on the effectiveness of legislation, state policies, and individual schools' training programs. In addition, they recommended that the state take the lead in reviewing literature in other fields for guidance on building a compendium of available programs, resources, and practices and then forward this information throughout the state.

Although Oregon commissioned a study to determine what legislative actions or requirements were already enacted for various states (Duncan & Zanville, 2001), no new updated list was found. The 2001 study collected data from each state on what state licensing boards required related to culture competence. Duncan and Zanville (2001) obtained copies of the states' definitions of cultural competency and reviewed the fiscal commitments to implement their state requirements. The study was done for state legislators to see what lessons other states learned before Oregon voted on their own law. The California study was the only one found that assessed the extent and results of statewide implementation of its cultural competency law. After 10 years, there appears to be a need for additional studies to determine what is really working.

According to Ladson-Billings (2001), most new "teachers have little or no genuine experience with cultures different from their own" (p. 78). As they develop cultural competence, teachers could help their students grow in understanding and respecting their own culture. Lyman and Villani (2004) proposed that in schools where the majority of students are students of color, principals must remain knowledgeable about research that promotes culturally relevant

practices that support student learning and share this information with their staff. White-Clark (2005) asserted that effective training must do more than give information or instructional strategies; "it must be systematic and continual" (p. 42). Lyman and Vallani (2004) cited the Reflection-Instruction-Collaboration-Supportive (RICS) model that included a framework for professional development on diversity. This model requires teachers to begin a reflection process and look within themselves to do a self-assessment that will lead them to explore and realign assumptions and perceptions. Indeed, reflective practices open the door to all teachers to consider, change, modify, and rethink preconceived assumptions about themselves and the students they teach.

Summary

As long as the academic achievement gaps continue to exist, every factor related to the causes for low performance by any group of students must be studied and shared with the educational community to improve learning for all. Some cynics have questioned and resisted the need for cultural competency or multicultural training and tend to put the greatest responsibility for student performance back on community, family, or individual student shortcomings. These questions came in a 2009 presentation on "*Latinos in America*" from CNN news concerned about the dropout rate: "Who failed? Was it the students, or was it the system?" (O'Brien & Nelson, 2009). The debate on who holds the greatest responsibility for not meeting expected progress is likely to continue as long as both conservative and progressive factions fail to find common ground in their understandings about diversity. Undoubtedly, parents and students have responsibilities, but their role does not negate the school's role.

Aligned with the research on professional development models, educators must design better models to deliver cultural competency training to educators. It appears that legal and

legislative actions represent only one remedy for eliminating the academic achievement gap and improving student learning. Other internal and external factors related to the school environment must also be examined more closely. Factors such as teacher quality and preparation, alignment of lesson planning to curriculum standards, and motivating instructional strategies have been discussed earlier. Whether falling under the differing, but often interchangeable, terms of equity, diversity, multiculturalism, cultural competency, or cultural proficiency, training is expected to be an important element in a school's professional development plan. Based on requirements by national certification organizations and state legislative initiatives, working to modify teacher dispositions and values requires a unique understanding and commitment from building leadership.

There appears to be a large body of literature to verify the need for incorporating some form of cultural competency training as a part of an overall professional development plan for any school. Teacher thinking, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and expectations are crucial in influencing teacher behaviors and how they impact student learning in either negative or positive ways. Choosing priorities for professional growth depends on the leadership's vision within each school. Principals must be knowledgeable about what constitutes quality professional development related to cultural competency.

Understanding how to become culturally proficient may seem as easy as "just doing what's right for each child," but the literature proves that it really goes much deeper than that. (See Figure 1 to see the relationship of topics covered in the literature review). All children bring their cultures to school with them. Teachers, likewise, bring their own sets of cultural biases, stereotypes, and values with them also. When the two are not the same, friction arises and inadvertently, and sometimes very subtlety, impacts the learning environment. Ultimately,

principals have a sobering responsibility to facilitate how changes in perceptions, attitudes, thinking, and beliefs, along with instructional practices, must evolve to create a learning environment where all children succeed because teachers are able to validate their students' cultures and look for the strengths that students bring, rather than being blinded by their needs.

Figure 1 contains a model of how the topics in the literature review connect and are contained in bringing and understanding related to becoming culturally proficient. It is based on a model of learning identified by Kamena (1998).

A Circle of Learning for Understanding about Facets of Cultural Proficiency

About this Model

The topics explored in the literature review of this study were varied, but they all brought clarity and understanding to components of what being culturally proficient means.

This model is based on a design presented by John Henrik Clark and Kaba Kamene (Kamene, 1998), who believed in teaching and learning in a circle. In a circular pattern of thinking, speaking or learning, one begins by looking at a key premise and then explores aspects of it, but always returning to the key idea.

Rather than a linear approach, which is a more European way of developing an argument, this method is very similar to a wheel with a hub at the center with spokes that connect to the outer frames.

Cultural Competency Training

Effective Professional Development

Socio-Political Landscape

Effective Schools, Climate, Culture and Leadership

Teacher Quality

Culturally Relevant Practice

Principals

Teachers

Students

Legislative Initiatives and Cultural Competency

Factors Impacting Student Achievement

The Cultural Competency Movement

Challenging the Role of Poverty

Theories about the Achievement Gap

Cultural Deficit Model	Racially Integrated Schools	Stereotype Threat	Cultural Mismatch	Nature of Curriculum and School
Pedagogical Practices of Teachers	Language Acquisition	Cognitive Dissonance	The Reality of Racial Issues	Whiteness, Power, and Privileges, and Implication for Educators
Dominance	Micro-aggression	Equity Traps		

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Figure 1. Circle of learning: Factors related to understanding cultural proficiency.

Against the backdrop of all that teachers are expected to do to prepare students to meet national and state requirements on mandated testing, adding cultural competence as another factor has not been well received by teachers who do not see the connection of content and culture. This is evident by the continuing achievement gap that is still prevalent in many urban settings. With the increase in diversity among students and the increase of White teachers who

come from different cultures than their students, there remains a need to convince all teachers

that cultural competency is important. Becoming culturally proficient is more than data analysis

and instructional strategies. It deals with an individual or group's readiness and ability to assess,

acquire knowledge, value, understand, accept, adapt, institutionalize, and build meaningful

relationships. Because there seems to be scarce research directed at determining the

effectiveness of professional development focused on mandated cultural competence training and

its correlation to student achievement, the proposed study on how principals help develop an

effective, culturally relevant learning community was appropriate and needed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore how principals' behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally relevant learning community. Two research questions guided the study: "How do principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning community?" and "What is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community?"

This chapter examines procedures used to conduct the study. This includes the characteristics of qualitative studies, the data collection process information about the participants, the data analysis procedure, the interview questions, the validation process, and the method of reporting the findings. Additionally, this chapter examines the expected outcomes of the study. Included in Chapter 1 was a personal statement that contains an explanation about my examination of past events in my life that are related to this study and how I have tried to control those understandings so they do not bring undue bias to the study.

Characteristics of Qualitative Study

Qualitative studies allow researchers to use a constructivist approach for inquiring about various issues. Researchers can use their newly developed knowledge claims and put them into a social or historical context. From these, a researcher can develop theories or patterns. Qualitative studies often use inquiry through case studies or interviews where the researcher

collects open-ended, emerging data from participants. The researcher's primary intent is to allow themes and patterns to emerge related to the concept of the study (Creswell, 2003).

Maxwell (1996) believes that the strength of a qualitative study is its inductive approach of focusing on specific people. He pointed out that rather than numbers, as in a quantitative study, the emphasis is on words. He listed five primary goals important in choosing a qualitative study. They are

1. To understand meaning, intent, and the perspective of how the person interviewed understands their own behavior;

2. To understand the context and influences of events, and actions;

3. To identify unanticipated phenomena and influences that lead to new grounded theories;

4. To understand the process that led to outcomes; and

5. To begin to develop local causal explanations of specific outcomes.

Much of the disagreement in the past over the merit of qualitative research is based on the type of data each study seeks. However, researchers have conceded that the two methods of research are asking different kinds of questions, and consequently, producing different types of answers. Quantitative research looks for correlations and the extent of variance among variables; qualitative research looks at the process that connects events to one another. Thus, quantitative study is sometimes referred to as variance-oriented or using a variance theory and qualitative studies are case-oriented and using a process theory (Britan, 1978; Mohr, 1982; Ragin, 1987).

Maxwell (1996) further noted that deriving causal explanations is not easy or straightforward. An advantage of qualitative research is its nature of being open-ended and

inductive that allows it to address three practical purposes as attributed by Maxwell to those included:

1. To generate theories that are easily understood and prove credible (Patton) and connect realistic experiences to the research topic (Bolster);

2. To conduct formative evaluations that help improve existing practices rather than just assess the value of a program, issue or product being evaluated (Scriven);

3. To engage in action research with participants for future collaborations (Bolster, Patton, Reason) (Maxwell as cited in Creswell, 2003)

Some other characteristics of qualitative research identified by Wolcott (1994) match what is planned for this study. Qualitative research takes place in a natural setting that allows the researcher to develop details as they share involvement in the experience (Wolcott, 1994). It uses multiple interactive, humanistic methods to build rapport and credibility with the participants. Rather than prefigured data, it produces emergent data presented by the participants and it opens new doors leading to previously uncoded theories.

Furthermore, it is interpretive because it allows the researcher to share lessons that were learned from the interviews and offer further questions (Wolcott, 1994). This research also views social phenomena holistically by producing broad, panoramic views instead of micro-analysis (Creswell, 2003).

This study lent itself to a qualitative study because it fit the criteria discussed above. It focused on documenting the principals' perceptions of how principals and teachers conduct and encourage culturally relevant practices within their schools' environments. It also looked at the principals' perceptions of how parents and others in the community perceive the schools and

their practices. This narrative report of the findings captured details that a qualitative study could not.

Data Collection Procedure

A literature review was conducted on several interconnected themes related to understanding culture and its relationship to establishing a culturally relevant learning environment to provide background information to prepare to conduct a qualitative study. Based on information discovered during the literature review, 12 primary questions were developed to ask principals in the study. Permission was granted by the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) board to proceed with the study.

Using qualitative methods, 12 principals were purposefully chosen and given the option of where they would like to be interviewed. The principals all chose to have the interviews in school settings in a Midwestern state during the spring semester from January through May 2011. The interview questions were formulated to lead the principals into discussing their understanding of cultural competency and how their staff development and other practices have shaped the culture and climate within each building. The actual terminology of *cultural competency* was not mentioned until the later part of the interview. Instead, there were questions using terms related to *diverse student populations* and s*tudents of color.* This was done to minimize the likelihood of principals offering preconceived answers about cultural competency that would be politically correct or expected from a leader.

Field notes were taken describing surroundings observed in the lobby and office areas of each school. No formal requests were made to any of the district administrations to tour the building and talk to students or teachers. Some principals offered tours of their schools, so notes were also taken on what was observed throughout those building, hallways, and classrooms.

Eight principals either conducted a walkthrough and commented on the school setting or provided time before or after school when no children were present for a building tour without supervision. However, four of the principals did not extend an invitation to tour their buildings.

The principals were all informed about confidentiality and how their anonymity will be maintained in the study. Before the interviews began, each principal received two copies of the informed consent form (Appendix A). The principals kept a copy for their files and signed the other and returned it to me. During the interviews, two audio recording devices captured the audio. After the interviews were completed, the recordings were downloaded as audio files to a secure computer file. The files will be secured for a minimum of five years. The audio files were transcribed verbatim. When all of the interviews were finalized, a transcribed paper copy of each principal's text was mailed to them,. I sought to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions and to allow the principals to add any other additional thoughts they may have not addressed during the original interviews.

A review of the field notes and other observation data also yielded a few other tentative emerging themes, categories, and relationships. Combining the three sources of the transcriptions, observations, and the field notes provided a general backdrop for understanding what participants had shared about various emerging themes and added to a general overall impression about the scope of the project, the data collected, and the credibility of the participants (Creswell, 2003).

The 12 interview transcriptions were coded using an open coding process. Codes were recorded, grouped, and analyzed using the aid of HyperResearch (2009) software. As the codes were analyzed, themes emerged and yielded the basis for reporting the findings of the study

through a grounded research approach. Principals were sent a copy of the initial findings to verify the accuracy of what was discovered.

Participants

In January 2011, schools were identified from a list that merged information about schools that evidenced steady improvement in their academic accountability and strong growth model data for various ethnic groups attending the schools according to a Midwestern state's Department of Education (DOE) website. A second list was generated from education specialists throughout the state who recommended schools that would be good potential candidates for the study. These two lists were combined to produce a final list of possible choices.

The 12 principals who were chosen to be part of this study all possessed a minimum of two specific criteria. Each principal's school had to have a 50% or greater non-White population and each principal had to have served as the school leader for a minimum of three years, which could have included the current school year when the interview took place. Additionally, it was decided to eliminate schools that were identified as magnet programs and to use schools that primarily served neighborhood boundary areas or open choice schools.

A DOE list was generated from a database inquiry using 2010 data that included schools that fit a 50% or greater non-White population criteria. All original reports were found through inquiries from the Indiana Department of Education (2008) and were also collected for 2009, 20010 and 2011. The initial 2008 report yielded 316 public and non-public schools and included 30 charter schools, 22 non-public schools, and 264 traditional public schools. Further queries on the state database compared the 316 schools to determine what percentages of their students passed both the language arts and math portions of the state assessment given in the spring of 2010. Of the 316 schools in the query, when measuring both English/language arts and math

combined, Table 1 displays the overlapping data sets. Note that because of the overlap with some

schools falling into two categories, the sum of the fourth column is greater than the total of

participants.

Table 1

Proficiency Data for 2010 Comparing 316 Schools with a 50% or Greater Non-White

Population in Tested State

Number of Schools in Each Category of the Original 316 Schools (Some overlap)	Percentage of Students Reaching Proficiency in Both English/Language Arts and Math	Percentage of the Original 316 Schools	Principals and their Schools in the Study
3	90% or more	Less than 1%	0
8	80% or more	Less than 1%	0
16	70% or more	Less than 1%	4
57	60-80%	Approx 18%	9
41	55-59%	Approx 13%	0
146	40-60%	Approx 46%	3
60	40% or less	Approx 19%	0

In addition, another report from the state website also listed all state schools based on

their median growth model data as calculated after their 2010 assessment. The growth model

data are presented in terms of both academic achievement and overall student growth. It

compares individual students' overall growth student-to-student rather than cohort-to-cohort. It

compares measures on test outcomes from one year to the next to determine if students are

making a year or more growth each year. Scores are grouped into four quadrants that represent

high achieving/high growth, high achieving/low growth, low achieving/high growth and low

achieving/low growth. From the 2010 report, another list was generated and reviewed that

contained all of the schools that had a 50% or greater non-White population in their testing number.

The schools with the highest growth model data for math and English/language arts were studied and compared to the other two lists. The tables below contain data about the percentage of tested students who passed at the proficiency level in both English/language arts (ELA) and math. Table 2 displays the statewide testing data for 2009-2011 for the schools chosen for the study. This data set represents the total passing rates of students in the school who took the state mandated tests and passed at proficiency level for both English/language arts and math. The final column in the table provides a descriptor given by the state to designate how the schools are categorized based upon their progress, improvement, and performance in meeting the proficiency requirements from one year to the next (Indiana Department of Education, 2008).

Table 2

State Testing Data for 2009-2011 (Total Passing Rate of Both ELA and Math Combined)

School	2009 Both ELA and Math Pass %	2010 Both ELA and Math Pass %	2011 Both ELA and Math Pass %	2011 PL 221 Category
1	55.80%	63.60%	62.30%	A
2	37.80%	43.20%	37.60%	C
3	64.80%	77.60%	69.20%	A
4	57.20%	74.50%	67.30%	A
5	71.40%	65.50%	64.00%	A
6	59.80%	73.70%	69.90%	A
7	30.60%	50.00%	53.70%	C
8	49.40%	72.80%	71.20%	A
9	66.70%	67.40%	74.30%	A
10	64.40%	67.00%	69.00%	A
11	55.20%	63.50%	62.10%	A
12	42.20%	48.80%	50.60%	A

Table 3 gives a more in-depth focus on the data trends for each school over a 3-year period. It shows the percentage of students passing the annual state test at the proficiency level for English/language arts and math presented separately. It should be noted that the percentages in each area of English/language arts and math are significantly higher than the combined scores shown above, and they paint a picture of consistent and/or steady improvement in student achievement growth throughout the years for most of the schools.

Table 3

State Testing Data for 2009 – 2011 (Total Passing Rate for ELA and Math Separately)

School	2009 Percent of Students Passing ELA	2010 Percent of Students Passing ELA	2011 Total Pass % ELA	2009 Percent of Students Passing Math	2010 Percent of Students Passing Math	2011 Total Pass % Math
1	66.37%	72.97%	72.8%	70.80%	76.30%	75.8%
2	46.75%	49.68%	45.5%	49.19%	57.37%	55.2%
3	80.22%	79.12%	80.8%	68.13%	80.22%	80.0%
4	70.35%	81.08%	75.9%	67.34%	83.78%	76.5%
5	80.90%	75.70%	76.3%	79.90%	75.70%	75.5%
6	73.64%	81.10%	80.0%	74.90%	78.69%	83.5%
7	41.75%	56.72%	60.4%	46.60%	67.91%	75.2%
8	55.70%	73.83%	80.0%	68.35%	81.21%	81.1%
9	72.48%	73.95%	84.0%	74.77%	79.83%	82.6%
10	71.23%	76.77%	78.0%	78.08%	75.76%	82.0%
11	67.71%	72.13%	78.1%	64.58%	69.40%	67.3%
12	53.33%	60.92%	65.7%	52.59%	59.20%	61.6%

Tables 4 and 5 present 2010 growth model data for the schools participating in the study. They show a composite growth of individual students and compare growth over a period of time

based on previous tests and the data from 2010. The data are displayed using student ethnicity as

an accountability variable. Table 4 displays math results; Table 5 displays English/language arts

results.

Table 4

State Growth Model Data for 2010 Math Disaggregated by Race

School	Math Median Student Growth % 2010	Math Black Median Growth % 2010	Math Hispanic Median Growth % 2010	Math White Median Growth % 2010	Math Multi-racial Median Growth % 2010	Math Asian Median Growth % 2010
1	58.50	53.00	58.00	58.00	63.00	64.50
2	53.50	48.00	59.00	63.00	60.00	-
3	59.00	51.00	-	62.00	-	-
4	60.00	54.00	73.00	56.00	29.00	-
5	52.00	51.00	-	51.00	53.00	-
6	52.50	53.50	56.00	54.00	35.00	-
7	73.50	72.50	-	74.00	-	-
8	51.00	51.00	53.50	48.50	45.00	-
9	53.00	54.50	-	51.00	56.50	-
10	52.00	51.00	-	54.00	-	-
11	76.00	76.00	64.50	92.00	72.50	-
12	64.00	62.00	76.00	-	-	-

Table 5

State Growth Model Data for 2010 English/Language Arts Disaggregated by Race

School	ELA Median Student Growth % 2010	ELA Black Median Growth % 2010	ELA Hispanic Median Growth % 2010	ELA White Median Growth % 2010	ELA Multi-racial Median Growth % 2010	ELA Asian Median Growth % 2010
1	53.00%	55.50%	53.00%	50.50%	60.00%	51.50%
2	52.50%	43.00%	60.00%	34.00%	61.00%	-
3	51.00%	35.00%	-	35.00%	-	-
4	53.00%	56.00%	50.00%	44.00%	61.00%	-
5	48.00%	44.00%	-	53.00%	53.00%	-
6	71.00%	71.00%	73.00%	70.00%	60.00%	-
7	55.00%	56.00%	-	55.00%	-	-
8	63.00%	58.00%	72.00%	38.50%	84.00%	-
9	47.00%	48.00%	-	41.00%	56.50%	-
10	48.00%	32.00%	-	63.00%	-	-
11	58.00%	58.00%	53.00%	62.00%	82.00%	-
12	56.00%	55.00%	59.50%	-	-	-

After making several inquiries to sources that included employees who worked for the state DOE, educational consultants, diversity specialists who worked in some of the urban districts throughout the state, and several university professors, a second list of schools was compiled with their recommendations. The 39 schools on this list were identified as making steady progress in the areas of academic improvement and/or in establishing culturally responsive learning environments. Of those, only 12 had a 50% or greater non-White population.

Although test data had a heavy weight in the final decision, other considerations may have reduced the weight of the test data as the primary selection elements. After combining all the lists, 30 schools emerged as good prospects for the study. Looking at the state test data trends for the last three years and the growth model data for all non-White students enrolled in those schools along with reviewing the three lists, further consideration was given to the principals' ethnicity, gender, experience, the grade-level configuration of the schools, and the locations of the schools throughout the state. Using purposeful criteria, the goal was to identify a maximum of 12 and a minimum of 10 principals to be interviewed that provided a cross-section of experiences and backgrounds.

Using a pre-approved script (Appendix B) as the basis for setting up the interviews, telephone calls were made to the 30 schools beginning those with the highest performing academic trend data to the lowest in various parts of the state. Some principals were not eligible because they had been at the school less than three years. Some principals were no longer serving as principals because they had moved to the administrative office as district leaders or to other buildings that needed their expertise. Some principals did not respond to the phone messages that were left. The final set of 12 principals who agreed to be interviewed, and their schools, all met the two main criteria established for the study. Both principals and schools for the sample were chosen based on a purposeful, stratified random selection process (Maxwell, 1996).

The 12 principals selected came from 10 different school districts representing the northern, central, and southern parts of the state. Two of those districts employed two each of the selected principals and the other principals all came from different school corporations. The majority, representing nine of the principals, had 55% or more of their student populations

passing the state measurement at proficiency level in both English/language arts and math.

Three of the schools had less than 55% passing; however, their growth model data indicated a

trend toward steady growth over the last three years. One charter school principal was selected.

The other 11 principals were administrators of traditional school programs that were not

specifically designed as magnet programs but were, for the most part, considered to be

neighborhood schools. Four of the selected principals had been included on the original 39

schools suggested by colleagues. The remaining eight were selected based on their academic

trend data, growth model performance data as reported from queries on the state database, and/or

their location in various corporations throughout the state.

 After receiving a telephone call, guided by a prepared script as the basis of the invitation,

each principal agreed to be interviewed at a place he or she chose. All of them opted to use their

schools as the place for the interview. In addition to interview notes, if principals extended an

offer to tour the building, additional notes were taken on what was observed. If no invitation

was extended, observations were based solely on what the general public would see as they

entered the building and interacted with the secretaries and principals in their office areas.

 To protect the confidentiality of the principals, all participants and their schools were

given pseudonyms. Quotations were altered only to the extent needed to increase readability and

to insure the anonymity of the participants and their schools. The interview questions explored

factors the principals considered relevant about how to develop an optimum climate and culture

for maximized student and teacher learning and the role of professional development in

equipping teachers to work with a diverse school population. Understanding why, how, and if

cultural competence relates to school climate may be one of the key elements that a principal

must recognize and work on to implement a successful staff development model that promotes relevant practices for working with African Americans, Hispanics, and other non-White students.

With these ideas in mind, the principals were interviewed based on pre-designated questions. The interviews lasted for approximately one hour on the average, ranging from 45 minutes to 2 hours and 50 minutes. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to determine what processes principals used to identify factors impacting improved student achievement, teacher staff development, and culturally relevant practices within their buildings. Along with open coding of the text, categories based on the literature review also helped to analyze, compare, and organize data into the patterns and themes that emerged. After the interviews were transcribed, participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts and make any needed corrections. They also provided feedback on the initial themes that emerged and validated their accuracy.

Data Analysis Procedure

A qualitative approach was used to collect and analyze data from the interviews following a process proposed by Creswell (2003). First, the data were organized and prepared for analysis before transcribing the interview. Next, the tapes were transcribed and then read to obtain an overall sense of the transcribed information. Initial reflections were noted about each interview. Then a detailed analysis was undertaken by using an open coding process that generated codes for each interview. Finally, analyzing the resulting codes helped to generate emerging themes and subthemes.

An introductory profile was prepared on each participant using the coded information, field notes, and passages from the interviews. Information was organized and presented in a narrative passage along with some visual representation of tables and models that helped to

clarify and demonstrate the findings. The final step was to make meaning of the data by providing an interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2003). The analysis of the data focused heavily on the emergent themes coming from the voices of the study participants, the literature, and the observations and thoughts about experiences at the school, with a special emphasis on considering the meaning of the principals' experiences, their beliefs expressed, and the attitudes they presented. The interpretations compared the findings to information obtained from the literature review and past theory, raised new questions, and presented recommendations and implications for future consideration as suggested by Creswell (2003).

Instrumentation

From the perspective of qualitative research, the researcher becomes the instrument from which the participants will be engaged (Creswell, 2003). Information gained from the literature review was used to develop interview questions for this study. The questions presented below were adapted from a instrument entitled *Professional Development Interview/Survey Questions* developed by Cook (1991) and modified by Cook and Bailey, S. (1995). This questionnaire was later used for interview questions by Lyman and Villani (2004) in their study on leadership practices. The following interview questions guided the interviews with each participating principal.

1. Tell me about your background and why and how you became an administrator.

2. Tell me about your school.

3. What factors do you think are the most influential in improving student achievement that lie outside of the school's power?

4. What factors do you think are most influential in improving student achievement that fall within the school's oversight?

5. Tell me about your school's professional development activities.

6. How do you assess the effectiveness of staff development activities at your school?

7. What types of things do you as a principal do for teachers whom you think may need help in effectively instructing students from diverse cultures?

8. How does the culture and climate of the school support your staff to be a community of learners?

9. How have teacher thinking, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations about student learning been impacted by professional development activities?

10. What differences, if any, do you notice between teachers from different ethnic backgrounds in what they expect from students and how they teach students of color?

11. What specific ideas or strategies would you like to see changed about professional development in your building that would lead to improving student learning and achievement?

12. How does your ethnicity and gender help or hinder you in moving teachers to be more culturally competent in engaging both students and parents from diverse backgrounds?

Validation of the Study

Interviews were conducted with the principals and notes were taken and also saved using audio devices. Field notes based on observations in the building on the day of the interviews were also recorded. Following the interviews, and after the audio was transcribed, each principal was mailed a copy of his or her initial transcript. Their input was solicited as a means for ensuring content validity. When the transcripts were coded and themes began to emerge, an outline of the initial findings was sent to each participant. Other colleagues also reviewed the

codes, themes, subthemes and the evidence supporting the findings to provide additional insight about the key themes and findings.

Creswell and Miller (2000) believed that the way researchers checked for validity in qualitative work is one of its strengths. The researcher must check for accuracy from the viewpoint of the researcher, the participants, and other readers of the study. Terms such as *trustworthiness, authenticity,* and *credibility* reinforce this concept (Creswell, 2003).

Some of the other strategies for validating the findings of this study (Creswell, 2003) are as follows:

- *Triangulation of data* occurred by using different data sources such as interviews, observations, and document analysis to examine and build cohesive rationalizations for the generated themes.

- *Member-checking* occurred when the transcripts, initial findings, descriptors, and themes were shared with the participants and checked for accuracy. Additionally, data supplied by the schools to the Department of Education were discussed and interpreted with the principals.

- Use of *rich, thick description* occurred by using quotes from the principals related to the various themes that helped connect the readers to each setting.

- *Clarifying bias* was addressed in the section entitled "A Personal Statement" in Chapter 1 of this document.

- *Peer briefing* occurred when peers and committee members were chosen to review and ask questions about the study so the account would resonate with others beyond me as the researcher.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS AND THEMES

The purpose of this study was to explore how principals' behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally relevant learning community. Two research questions guided the study: "How do principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning community?" and "What is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community?"

Based on a literature review, interview questions were designed to identify key understandings about how a purposefully selected set of 12 principals in a Midwestern state led their staffs of teachers to help meet the academic needs of their diverse student populations. Each principal's school had to have a 50% or greater non-White population and each principal had to have served as the school leader for a minimum of at least three years, which could have included the current school year when the interview took place. An added criterion was that the school's academic achievement growth data showed an upward trend.

Profiles of the participants provide a backdrop about the principals and the schools in this study. The profiles were based on interview data combined with field observations and data collected from the state's student data collection system accessed through its website (Table 6).

Table 6

Characteristics of the Schools and Participants Chosen for the Study

School	School Description	School Location	School Enrollment 2009-10	Principal Ethnicity and Gender	Years as Principal of School	Total Years in Education
1	Traditional PK-06	Urban Fringe	849	Black Woman	3	11
2	Traditional PK-06	Large City	676	Black Man	3	11
3	Traditional K-08	Urban Fringe	208	White Man	7	21
4	Traditional K-04	Large City	382	White Woman	25	31
5	Traditional K-06	Large City	576	White Woman	3	13
6	Charter K-09	Large City	456	White Man	5	17
7	Traditional PK-06	Large City	541	Black Woman	4	37
8	Traditional PK-06	Mid-sized City	330	White Woman	7	20
9	Traditional K-04	Large City	489	White Man	6	17
10	Traditional PK-06	Urban Fringe	261	Black Woman	10	33
11	Traditional K-04	Urban Fringe	415	White Woman	17	38
12	Traditional PK-06	Urban Fringe	524	White Woman	6	10

Included in the participants were eight female principals: three African American and five White. Of the four men in the study, one was African American and three were White. The combined experience as administrators in their current buildings ranged from three to 25 years, representing a total of 96 years, with a median of eight years serving in their respective buildings.

The size of the 12 schools represented ranged from 261 to 849 students enrolled during the 2009-10 academic year. The schools had the following state designations associated with their locations: six were in large cities, one was in a mid-sized city, and five were in urban fringe communities. The schools' configurations of student grade levels ranged from pre-kindergarten to ninth-grade students.

The principals provided insights about their backgrounds, their schools, and what they believed were out-of-school and in-school factors that impacted student learning. In addition, principals also described their schools' current and future professional development plans, how they judged the effectiveness of staff development, and what happened to teachers who were ineffective in working with diverse student populations.

Moreover, principals discussed how they perceived the climate and culture of their schools and what made their schools unique places that supported a community of learners. In trying to clarify the role principals served in changing teaching practices, principals were asked to describe how professional development impacted teacher thinking, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations. Finally, questions were also posed regarding gender and ethnicity issues facing the principals and their staffs and the impact that these two factors may have on working with students and parents from diverse backgrounds.

Thus, the goal of this study was to take a cursory look at some of the patterns, common connections, and themes running throughout the findings that could impact learning for students of color and what principals were doing to build a culturally relevant learning environment. At the same time, hopefully, this study shared additional light on the principal's role in impacting teacher thinking, perception, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations and how to increase student achievement of previously low-performing non-White students.

Overview of Principals and School Profiles

Audrey Lawson

Audrey Lawson worked in a traditional pre-kindergarten–Grade 6 program. BelleAire West Elementary School #1 was located in an urban fringe setting on the outskirts of a large city in a neighborhood with mostly single-family homes. Although there were no apartment dwellings in the area, the principal identified a hidden homeless problem where families were living with other families in the community. She stated this new class of homelessness represented families that had been evicted from their former homes. The seven-year old school sat on a large plot of land with a driveway that wound around to the front of the building. The school was built in 2004 as the district grew and added more buildings to accommodate the diverse population of students moving into the area that had been predominantly White for many years. At the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 849 students. At the time of the interview, Audrey, who is an African American woman, was serving in her third year as the principal of the building. She had worked in the building as an assistant principal for four years prior to becoming principal. Coming into education as a second career, she had since spent 15 years in education. She currently was working on a Ph.D. program at one of the universities in the state.

Upon entering the building at the end of the school day and coming through two sets of security doors, I saw signs that greeted visitors in both English and Spanish. In the lobby area test data were posted alongside of student writing samples, captioned "Exemplary Work." Television screens played announcements on the opposite wall and in the office area. A sign on the office door contained a message about HOSTS, Help Our Students Succeed, and inside the office area a very cordial secretary, one of two, answered telephone calls and questions. There

was a warm exchange among three women in the office about coming back that evening for the book drive and the awards night later that evening.

Looking around the office, I noticed a cozy environment with live plants, family pictures on the receptionists' desks, other greenery on top of the cabinet, a coat rack, and two statues of the school mascot, a knight. A stair step next to the counter made it easy for children to sign in next to the check-in log for all adult visitors. An American flag, a banner written in Chinese, a large poster with President Barack Obama's picture stating, "This is our Moment," and a framed newspaper reporting President Obama's election with the headline, "HISTORY," hung in the office.

A father came in to pick up homework that his son had forgotten, several parents called to confirm the time of the evening program and the book fair, and one mother came in with three children whom she cautioned to sit quietly as she asked for help to send a fax. Although the secretary said she could not honor her request, both secretaries did give her some other options where she could possibly get this done.

Inside Audrey's office were her desk, a conference table, and a large fish tank on one wall, along with many shelves of books and binders of documentation on the others. Labels on the binders included Walkthrough, Cluster Teacher, 1st Grade Indiana Reading Assessment, and Writing Anchor Papers. Other messages were illustrated with captions: "Teach Us and We Will Not Forget You," and the "Power of One" by Gandhi.

The BelleAire West Elementary School #1 student population was diverse: 47.0% White, 27.4% Black, 13.2% Hispanic, 7.9% multiracial, and 3.4% Asian or Pacific Islander. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 47.1% paid, 40.2% free, and 17.7% reduced, for a total of 57.9% combined free and reduced lunch. The

special education population was 11.3% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was 14.7%. BelleAire West Elementary School #1 had an attendance rate of 96.7%.

Based on the 2011 state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at BelleAire West Elementary School #1 who passed both English/language arts and math was 55.8% in 2009, 63.6% in 2010, and 62.3% in 2011. For the 2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–yes, 2008–yes, 2011–no. Looking at English/language arts separately, 66.3% passed in 2009, 73.6% passed in 2010, and 72.8% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods were generally higher: 70.8% passed in 2009, 76.8% passed in 2010, and 75.8% passed in 2011.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 58.0%, for Black students 53.0%, for Hispanic students 58.0%, for White students 58.0%, for Multi-racial students 63.0% and for Asian students 64.0%. For English/language arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was 53.0%, for Black students 55.0%, for Hispanic students 53.0%, for White students 50.0%, for Multi-racial students 60.0%, and for Asian students 51.0%.

The teaching roster at the school had slight diversity. It had 45 teachers with an ethnicity count of 94.2% White and 5.8% Black. Looking at their teaching experience, 27.1% had 0-5 years' experience, 18.6% had 6-10 years, 16.9% had 11-15 years, 8.4% had 16-20 years, and 28.8% had 20+ years. Audrey described this as a "seasoned staff."

At the close of the interview, teachers and students were ending after-school activities and others were preparing for the event later on that evening. No invitation was extended to tour the building.

Jason Howard

Jason Howard worked in a traditional pre-kindergarten–Grade 6 program. Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 was located in a large city in a community with modest homes in an area known to have a fairly high crime rate. At the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 676 students. When the interview took place, Jason, who is an African American man, was serving in his third year as the principal of the building. Beginning as a fourth and fifth grade teacher, he worked as a student services coordinator and assistant principal in another district and earned a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction and child and youth services. He also had a superintendent's license. He was recruited to the district to serve in a newly renovated building that had a very clean and modern feel mixed with some older conventional features.

Passing the parked cars on the street and walking up to the front door, I found a buzzer to enter the secure building. Once inside, two sets of doors led to the main office and a third set was visible that led to the hallway lobby area where students passed to their classes. At the end of the day, a program was planned for Women's History Month and all of the students came to the lobby area to enter into the gymnasium located near the office.

The office reception area had a high counter that wrapped around the secretaries' workspace that allowed adults to stand and interact comfortably with the staff. Chairs were lined up along one wall for guests to wait until they were served. An old school desk with an old school lamp decorating the desk sat next to the seating area. On the afternoon of my visit, a new student was enrolling for kindergarten in the fall semester. Three adults accompanied the Hispanic child. As the father spoke in Spanish, one of the other adults interpreted what the receptionist told him about an open house that would be held before school opened. The

secretary asked to see the child's birth certificate and checked over it. She also acknowledged people as they entered the office, but continued giving information about the school to the parents.

The receptionist, a middle-aged African American woman, was very warm and friendly as she handled event after event that unfolded. The reception area had bare essentials. On the wall behind the desk was mounted the telephone and sound system for the building. There was a bookcase with trophies inside it. Three artificial plants were placed around the office, a large TV screen mounted on the wall was tuned to CNN news, and another large TV monitor showed images from four security cameras scanning the building and outside grounds. Hanging on the wall was a large banner with Chinese symbols and paper lanterns decorated a tree in the office area. Another welcome sign also had Chinese symbols on it. A St. Patrick's Day floral arrangement was in the area with a sign stating, "Happy St. Patrick's Day." Also on the wall was a list of the district's "10 Cultural Imperatives" that every school was to post in a prominent place.

Two staff members, a man and woman, came into the office and announced, "Shaq is missing." They conveyed to the secretary that he was roaming the halls after being sent from one teacher to the other and had not shown up where he was supposed to be. The secretary questioned, "How did he get out?" Apparently, Shaq had told one teacher, "I need to take my medicine." So instead of coming back immediately, as another child had done, he continued to roam the halls. The secretary responded after they finished telling what happened by giving them a message for Shaq when he returned, "Tell Shaq to get here quickly. He'll know what I mean."

Shortly after the teachers left, the secretary told the other clerk, "This happens too often. We've got to do something about this." She continued by stating that the teacher knew better, and if something happened there would be consequences for everyone. A few minutes later, Shaq came to the office and the secretary spoke firmly, but kindly, to Shaq, and the following exchange occurred. "Shaq, how old are you?" Shaq responded, "Twelve." "You told your teachers what?" "Nothing." "You're a little boy. It gets on my nerves that you are walking the halls. It is too dangerous. Stop walking out. You ask. We have to know where you are." "Okay." Just then one of the teachers who reported him missing walked in and began scolding Shaq again. The two of them went out of the office together. The secretary just shook her head. It was not apparent if the disapproval was for the behavior of Shaq or his teacher. Jason later shared that he had brought the secretary with him from a former position.

A parent arrived shortly before the program was to begin. Her child wanted her to come to the program. However, she had to show a picture ID to enter into the building where the children were and she had forgotten to bring hers. The secretary had her sign in and told her she had seen her there before in the office, but her ID was not on file, "I'll let you go into the gym to watch the program when it starts, but you cannot go into the classrooms." The parent agreed and was seated until the program began, after being told to bring the ID so that, from that point on, her information would be stored and then she could sign in and just flash her ID instead of having to go through the longer protocol.

As Jason entered the office area, he looked very distinguished, dressed in a suit and tie. After a warm greeting, he extended an invitation to watch part of the student program in the gym. He intended to open the program and then leave because this was the second performance

for the older students. An announcement was made, and students began to come to the main hall in orderly, quiet lines.

The Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 student population was diverse: 42.9% Hispanic, 31.1% Black, 19.1% White, and 6.2% multi-racial. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 9.9% paid, 87.9% free, and 2.2% reduced, for a total of 90.1% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was 17.8% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was 38.2%. Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 had an attendance rate of 96.1%.

The students entered the auditorium and were seated an orderly manner. The program began promptly with everyone quickly and quietly focused on Jason talking about the important role that women had played in all of our lives. In the midst of the crowd, Shaq sat calmly. The program opened with the school motto and song. After the opening, Jason left the program in the hands of a teacher as he exited to begin the interview.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 who passed both English/language arts and math was 37.8% in 2009, 43.2% in 2010, and 37.6% in 2011. For the 2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the C category, formerly called Academic Progress. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–no, 2008–no, 2011–no. Looking at English/language arts separately, 46.7% passed in 2009, 51.3% passed in 2010, and 45.5% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods were generally higher: 49.2% passed in 2009, 58.9% passed in 2010 and 55.2% passed in 2011. Three years prior, the school had been reconstituted and was on academic probation for several years before Jason came to the school.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median

student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 53.0%, for Black

students 48.0%, for Hispanic students 59.0%, White students 63.0%, and for multiracial students

60.0%. For English/Language Arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in

2010 was 52.0%, for Black students 43.0%, for Hispanic students 60.0%, for White students

34.0%, and for multiracial students 61.0%. Jason reported there was a 46% mobility rate at the

school.

When the interview ended, the school day was over and teachers and students left the

auditorium, preparing to begin their spring break. Jason extended an invitation to walk through

the building and see some of the work and artifacts that were posted in classrooms and along the

hallways. The front halls were brightly lit and showcased portraits of all of the previous

presidents. There was a large picture of President Barack Obama at the end of the row. The

other halls and classrooms had light sensors. The lights were out until someone walked into the

area. Throughout the building were hallways that promoted colleges that students could attend

in the future. There were several exhibits of projects and writing samples that showcased

Women's History Month and people that students had researched. Most doors were locked, so

very few classrooms could be viewed.

One bulletin board in the hallway featured writings the students completed for Principal

Appreciation Month. One primary student wrote about Jason, "I like how he keeps us safe. I

like how he leads the school. He does a great job. I am new to the school. I like it here." Every

display of student work had a small sign attached on the board that included the state standard

and the indicators the assignment addressed. The attractive bulletin boards displayed published

written works that were consistently labeled throughout the building and showed a heavy focus

on cross-curricular writing projects. There were displays that featured the solar system, graphic organizers comparing and contrasting Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt, posters from around the world, displays on the water cycle, a fraction quilt, and examples of artwork that recognized different cultures and countries. Posted on all doors were teacher schedules for math, reading, and Shurley English skills. The building was neat, clean, and attractive.

The teaching staff of Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 was somewhat diverse. It had 54 teachers with an ethnicity count of 80.7% White, 15.80% Black, 1.7% Hispanic, and 1.7% Asian and Pacific Islander. Looking at their teaching experience, the largest number of teachers fell into the lesser experienced category: 43.3% had worked 0-5 years, 16.6% had worked 6-10 years, 10.0% had worked 11-15 years, 16.6% had worked 16-20 years, and 13.3% had worked 20+ years.

The school had been chosen to have an independent school culture and climate audit that was conducted in a few pilot schools in the district in September 2010. The audit included analyzing surveys from all staff members, a desk audit, structured group interviews, classroom observations, observation of common areas, and a checklist of evidence-based documents that were reviewed. While Jason shared the results of the survey for awareness and clarity about how the audit had happened, he cautioned that even his immediate supervisors had not seen the confidential report and asked that all the contents not be divulged. However, he assured that the staff had taken the results seriously, and steps had already begun to address and rectify the gaps the audit revealed. The report revealed strengths and weaknesses related to creating a culturally competent professional learning community and acknowledged the challenges of making this happen when the school had the second-highest teacher turnover rate in the district over an extended four-year period of time.

One special event the principal shared was an exchange program the school had participated in with a city in Taiwan. The principal and district administrators had traveled to Taiwan and students and their chaperones had come to visit School #2. This was one of the highlights of last year at the school.

John Bradford

John Bradford worked in a traditional kindergarten–Grade 6 program. Heritage Elementary School #3 was located in the urban fringe of a large city in a neighborhood where all students either walked to school or were dropped off and picked up because the district had no buses. The school was built in the 1950s and did not appear to have had any additional upgrades since that time. Within the school neighborhood were mostly single-family homes along with two apartment complexes. Some of the homes have become rental properties over the last few years. Residency in those homes and local apartment complexes had caused the demographics of the neighborhood and school to shift. At the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 208 students. At the time of the interview, John, who is a White man, was serving in his seventh year as the principal of the building. He has been in education for 23 years and credited a great role model for setting a good foundation for his administrative experiences.

A large welcome banner located outside the main office door greeted visitors as they entered through the security doors into the lobby area of the school. Immediately inside the lobby area, before the counter, a table with chairs sat in front of the window overlooking the front lawn. The secretary, who had been working at the school for nine years, was very welcoming and delighted in telling about the principal and the uniqueness of the school. The

sign hanging in the front had been presented to the school. The secretary reported that the district was very proud of the school's recurring Exemplary 4-Star School status.

Surveying the lobby, the history of outstanding academic achievement was immediately observable. On the wall behind the large office area's counter were 17 plaques showcasing outstanding performance on the statewide assessments. Pictures showed the transformative history of a school that was predominantly White a few decades ago to one that now housed a portrait of the shifting demographics of the entire 2007-08 student population and faculty, framed and mounted, hanging in the front lobby. Other items located in the lobby area included a letter from Laura Bush about a reading program she promoted, a "Ticket to Read" bulletin board, and a Japanese windsock from Motegi, Japan, hanging from the ceiling and wrapped around the reception area.

The Heritage Elementary School #3 student population was diverse: 46.6% White, 28.8% Black, 11.5% Hispanic, 5.8% multiracial, and 7.2% Asian or Pacific Islander. This school had the largest non-White population in the district. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 34.2% paid, 56.3% free, and 9.6% reduced, for a total of 65.7% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was 9.7% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was at 19.2%. Heritage Elementary School #3 had an attendance rate of 97.9%. The largest bulletin board in the front lobby contained perfect attendance pictures of students from each room for each month of the current school year as an incentive to maintain their high attendance trends.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at Heritage Elementary School #3 who passed both English/language arts and math was 64.8% in 2009, 77.6% in 2010, and 69.2% in 2011. For the

2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–yes, 2008–yes, 2011–yes. Looking at English/language arts separately, 80.2% passed in 2009, 84.7% passed in 2010, and 80.8% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods showed 68.1% passed in 2009, 87.2% passed in 2010, and 80.0% passed in 2011.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 59.0%, for Black students 51.00%, and for White students 62.0%. For English/language arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was 51.0%, for Black students 35.0%, and for White students 50.0%.

The teaching staff had no racial diversity. It had 15 teachers with an ethnicity count of 100% White teachers. However, one African American worked on the staff as a guidance counselor. The largest grouping of teachers, representing 46.7% of them, had 6-10 years' experience. The second largest group, representing 33.3%, had taught 20+ years. The youngest group, with 0-5 years' experience, represented 13.30%. The 11-14 and the 16-10 year groups each had 6.7%.

The secretary, who was working at the school during the spring break, extended an invitation to walk with her through the building. She cautioned that teachers had taken down some materials and were getting ready to start new units when they returned from the break. Signs hung in the halls in both the kindergarten–Grade 2 wing and the Grade 3–6 wing that shared the school's character development themes. The individual signs read Effort, Focus, Common Sense, Motivation, Caring, Responsibility, Inclusion, Perseverance, and Confidence. These same themes were displayed in the school gym. Most of the rooms were closed; however,

the classroom and hallway bulletin boards evidenced units that had been taught before the break. The primary wing bulletin boards showed a collaborative focus in reading, using a circus theme. The displays up and down the hall included a carousel theme of *Reading Makes the World Go Round*, along with *A Ferris Wheel of Favorite Books*, *Flying High with Reading*, *A Crystal Ball Reader–You Will Succeed If You Read, Dr. Seuss Ticket to Read Booth,* and a *Reading Roller Coaster* board.

Finally, the secretary shared before the interview began, John sets the expectations for the school the first week. His presence was very important to how the routines of the school operated from the gym to the classroom. A new student would be coming in during the break to see him, and the student would find out about the school before coming. She closed by saying,

> He has lots of incentives for the kids. He has the Cool Kids Awards, the Spirit Awards, and once a month a Pizza Party with four to eight students who come to talk to him. All of the kids love Mr. Bradford.

Karen Hanover

Karen Hanover worked in a traditional kindergarten–Grade 4 program. Stately Manor Elementary School #4 was located in a school district on the outskirts of a larger school district in a large city. At the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 382 students. The school's boundary included a small neighborhood community from which all children were bused to the school because there are no sidewalks in the area. At the time of the interview, Karen, who is a White woman, was serving in her 25th year as the principal in a building that she and her staff helped to design in prior years. Although there had been an earlier redistricting three years prior when the district moved to a year-round schedule, at the beginning

of the school year, there was another "major redistricting" that brought many new students to the building.

Buzzed in to enter through a set of locked doors before school began, I saw the grand foyer with its large geometric pattern in the middle of the circular lobby floor, which did not resemble a typical school entrance, greeted visitors who came to the school. The lobby, with its neutral colors, added to the fresh new feel the building reflected, although the building was 18 years old. On the perimeter of the lobby area were four sets of closed doors that provided another level of security to each wing of the building. Walking to the reception desk, which was the main feature in the lobby, I could see a long, low, child-sized counter that was inviting for student interaction and a higher section that invited adults to come there to sign in. Along the walls there were built-in benches where visitors could sit and wait to be served, and a bookstore built into the wall that opened for easy access to students. Away from the central part of the lobby inside the reception area was a table with adult-sized chairs in the area. This was where teachers signed in each morning. As teachers arrived, dressed in casual business attire, they greeted each other warmly.

After a welcoming exchange, the assistant principal extended an invitation to share a guided walk through the halls with her. Through the four sets of doors facing different directions leading from the lobby area were hallways and classrooms that displayed an abundant print-rich environment that reflected neat, attractive student work related to cross-curricular subjects that they studied. And also prominent were the pod areas outside a cluster of rooms where grade levels could meet. Included in the plentiful display of posted work were stories completed by one class on Rosa Parks.

The Stately Manor Elementary School #4 student population was very diverse: 41.4% Black, 24.1% Hispanic, 23.00% White, 9.4% multiracial, and 2.1% Asian or Pacific Islander. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 42.2% paid, 43.5% free, and 14.4% reduced, for a total of 57.9% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was 9.2% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was at 19.6%. Stately Manor Elementary School #4 had an attendance rate of 96.7%.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at Stately Manor Elementary School #4 who passed both English/language arts and math was 57.2% in 2009, 74.5% in 2010, and 67.30% in 2011. For the 2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–yes, 2008–yes, 2011–yes. Looking at English/language arts separately, 70.3% passed in 2009, 82.3% passed in 2010, and 75.9% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods were sometimes slightly higher, 67.3% passed in 2009, 85.0% passed in 2010, and 76.5% passed in 2011.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 60.0%, for Black students 54.0%, for Hispanic students 73.0%, White students 56.0%, and for multiracial students 29.0%. For English/language arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was 53.0%, for Black students 56.0%, for Hispanic students 50.0%, for White students 44.0%, and for multiracial students 61.0%.

The teaching staff had slight diversity. It had 25 teachers with an ethnicity count of 95.4% White, 2.3% Black, and 2.3% multiracial. Looking at their teaching experience, the

largest group of teachers, 47.7%, had worked 0-5 years, 6.8% had worked 6-10 years, 6.8% had

worked 11-15 years, 6.8% had worked 16-20 years, and the second largest group, 31.8% had

worked 20+ years.

Martha Bridgeforth

Martha Bridgeforth worked in a traditional kindergarten–Grade 6 program. Global

World Elementary School #5 was located in a large city. At the beginning of the 2010-2011

school year, the school had an enrollment of 576 students. At the time of the interview, Martha,

who is a White woman, was serving in her third year as the principal of the building. Before

coming to this urban school, she had worked in a mid-sized city and headed an early childhood

program and eventually also served as a principal of a kindergarten–Grade 6 program in that city

for three years. One of her mentors, an administrator in Global World Elementary School #5's

district, told her about the position and she was recruited to come to the school. She accepted the

challenge because she felt she would enjoy working with a diverse student population and their

parents whom she heard where very involved. Additionally, the location of the school was

convenient for her travel back and forth to a nearby town.

As I passed by the shaded lawn of the school, the entrance to the school was partially

accessible. I still had to be buzzed into the first set of doors that opened to one side of the

reception area. After stating the purpose for the visit, a second set of doors was unlocked facing

a long wall that rose above a long carpeted area that had four sets of chairs grouped together by

two's with a table between each set. Prominently posted on that wall were the words, "We aim

to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who create a better and more

peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect." Also on that same wall was an

announcement about the school book fair dates and a display about the Intermediate

Baccalaureate Primary Years program. It revealed that the school was in the first phase of participation and that the program of inquiry asked students to answer questions such as, "Who are we?" "Where are we in place and in time?" "How are expressing ourselves?" On the opposite side of the hall was the reception area counter. No invitation was extended to tour the building.

The Global World Elementary School #5 student population was diverse, having 46.9% Black, 40.8% White, 3.5% Hispanic, 6.6% multi-racial, and 1.9% Asian or Pacific Islander. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 52.4% paid, 36.5% free, and 11.3% reduced, for a total of 47.8% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was 11.6% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was at 4.3%. Global World Elementary School #5 had an attendance rate of 97.1%.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at Global World Elementary School #5 who passed both English/language arts and math was 71.4% in 2009, 65.5% in 2010, and 64.0% in 2011. For the 2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–no, 2008–no, 2010–no. Looking at English/language arts separately, 80.9% passed in 2009, 76.3% passed in 2010, and 76.3% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods were relatively close: 79.9% passed in 2009, 76.0% passed in 2010, and 75.5% passed in 2011.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 52.0%, for Black students 51.0%, White students 51.0%, and for multi-racial students 53.0%. For English/Language Arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was

48.0%, for Black students 44.00%, for White students 53.0%, and for multi-racial students 53.0%.

The teaching staff was somewhat diverse. It had 30 teachers with an ethnicity count of 87.3% White and 12.7% Black. Looking at their teaching experience, 1.8% had worked 0-5 years, 27.2% had worked 6-10 years, 20.0% had worked 11-15 years, 27.3% had worked 16-20 years, and 23.6% had worked for 20+ years. This appeared to be a seasoned staff.

Clayton Drummer

Clayton Drummer worked in a charter school program for students in kindergarten–Grade 9. Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6 was located in a large city. At the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 456 students. At the time of the interview, Clayton, who is a White man was serving in his fifth year as the principal of the building.

As I approached the school from the parking lot, I saw a garden area with benches where visitors could sit and wait for students or just rest and enjoy the scenery. After entering the secured building, I could see a sign that stated, "Rated Exemplary Public School by the State Department of Education." The main entrance lobby had a desk in the center where a friendly receptionist greeted and directed visitors to the office area as quiet music played in the hallway. Inside the glassed-in office area was a place for visitors to sit.

Upon surveying the lobby area, I could see several wall hangings that included a sign listing hall behavior with an acrostic for HALLS providing the rules, a poster stating "Never Settle for Less than Your Best," a list of teacher awards for 4-Star and 3-Star Award Winners for citizenship and perfect attendance, and Student of the Month awards. Other motivational pictures included a photograph reflecting "Tolerance, Citizenship, and Responsibility" and a

Maya Angelou poster urging the students to "Dream in Color." Down each hallway leading from the main lobby area were college banners and posters. Down the hall from the main lobby, but still slightly in view, was a display of clocks and flags from other countries that interacted with the school.

Clayton had served as a principal in another larger district and had worked in other school corporations before accepting the job at Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6. He was enticed to the charter school, partly, by the opportunity to have the freedom to make innovative decisions, which he did not feel he was allowed to do in his previous position. Since his first experience of working with children from low socioeconomic families in England, he enjoyed working with a diverse student population, and he enjoyed the challenge of ensuring that they would receive a quality education. The charter school did not have a handpicked population of students. Students were chosen on the basis of a lottery; however, part of their mission was to educate students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. These were the students that the school welcomed.

The Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6 student population was diverse: 37.7% White, 30.9% Hispanic, 20.7% Black, and 10.10% multi-racial. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 11.0% paid, 72.1% free, and 16.9% reduced, for a total of 89.0% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was 12.7% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was at 24.6%. Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6 had an attendance rate of 96.0%.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6 who passed both English/language arts and math was 59.8% in 2009, 73.7% in 2010, and 69.9% in 2011. For the

2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–yes, 2008–yes, 2011–yes. Looking at English/language arts separately, 73.6% passed in 2009, 84.6% passed in 2010, and 80.0% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods reflected similar trends: 74.9% passed in 2009, 80.6% passed in 2010, and 83.5% passed in 2011. Their test score data has brought attention to the school as others throughout the state are looking for ways to replicate some of their successes.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 52.0%, for Black students 53.0%, for Hispanic students 56.0%, White students 54.0%, and for multi-racial students 35.0%. For English/language arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was 71.0%, for Black students 71.0%, for Hispanic students 73.0%, for White students 70.0%, and for multi-racial students 60.0%.

The teaching staff was somewhat diverse. There were 26 teachers with an ethnicity count of 70.7% White, 21.9% American Indian, 4.8% Black, and 2.4% Asian and Pacific Islander. Looking at their teaching experience, 70.2% have worked 0-5 years, 25.5% have 6-10 years, 2.1% had worked 11-15 years, 2.1% had worked 16-20 years, None were listed with 20+ years. This is a relatively young staff. The interview ended with no invitation to tour the building.

Marilyn Jenkins

Marilyn Jenkins worked in a traditional pre-kindergarten–Grade 6 program. Restoration Elementary School #7 was located in a large city on an expansive plot of land that had a football field at the end of the lot. The building had been converted from a middle school to an elementary building and sat across the street from a large church that partnered with Restoration

Elementary School #7 on several projects. The neighborhood around the school had some modest homes, but also, there were a number of apartment complexes in the area where many of the school's population lives. At the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 541 students. At the time of the interview, Marilyn, who is an African American woman, was serving in her fourth year as the principal of the building.

The Restoration Elementary School #7 student population did not have as much diversity as some other schools in the study; however, it had the highest African American population of any school visited. The demographics for the student body were 87.6% Black, 7.4% White, and 3.5% multiracial. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 11.6% paid, 84.8% free, and 3.5% reduced, for a total of 88.3% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was 16.8% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was at 0.04%. Restoration Elementary School #7 had an attendance rate of 96.3%.

After I was buzzed into a small lobby area, I could see he reception area and a suite of offices were positioned on the right side of the hall. The reception area was enclosed with a glass wall, which revealed a small waiting area for students and visitors. The school secretary's desk was also in this area, and she warmly greeted visitors and talked to students about why they were in the office area. The students were waiting for their daycare bus, which was late picking them up. Inside the reception area were plants and numerous signs that stated school expectations. The district motto and cultural imperatives were hanging on the wall along with the school's two instructional goals. Goal 1 stated, "All students at Restoration Elementary School #7 will improve in reading comprehension across the curriculum." A second goal read, "All students at Restoration Elementary School #7 will improve in math problem-solving

through using writing and computation." Outside the glassed-in wall, a bulletin board displayed a tree that contained pictures of the staff members attached to the limbs. A list of the faculty hung on the left side of the entry hall. That wall wrapped around the corner leading to Marilyn's office door.

A poster also stood in the lobby area that reminded parents that they are their children's first teachers and across the hall and around the corner of the reception area was a very large display, showcasing student pictures and class averages from a special math and reading test, and writing prompts that were given weekly. Teachers in the building had created the program and fought for special district permission to keep the program in place because of its success in engaging the students. Although the dismissal bell rang and students were dismissed as walkers and bus riders, the building was still alive with sounds of children involved in after-school activities. In the cafeteria was a scout meeting and there were also other voices of children and adults talking from different parts of the building.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at Restoration Elementary School #7 who passed both English/language arts and math was 30.6% in 2009, 50.0% in 2010, and 53.7% in 2011. For the 2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the C category, formerly called Academic Progress. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years were 2007–yes, 2008–no, 2011–no. Although the overall scores for the school did not place the school as passing in its AYP status, the steady growth seen in their data trends were encouraging to district leaders, state administrators, and the community as a whole. Looking at English/language arts separately, 41.7% passed in 2009, 58.6% passed in 2010, and 60.4% passed in 2011. Math scores were generally higher: 46.6% passed in 2009, 70.4% passed in 2010, and 75.2% passed in 2011.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 73.5%, for Black students 72.5%, and for White students 74.0%. For English/language arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was 55.0%, for Black students 56.0%, and for White students 55.0%. Based on the growth model data for the school, an area newspaper wrote three major feature articles on the school and shared how they had been able to make such tremendous individual growth with their student population. Those large sets of newspaper articles were displayed in the halls outside Marilyn's office with the caption "Breaking News."

A visit by the state superintendent of education earlier in the year prompted another hall display on the upper floor of the building that recognized his remarks about the school's improvement that he called, "An Island of Excellence." When an invitation was extended to walk the halls after the interview was over, the trip around the school revealed numerous displays that captured a print-rich environment found on every hallway. In addition, the bulletin boards that lined the halls held an overflowing treasure chest of student writing and other work samples. Motivational captions and other posters and signs were in abundance all around the school. They read: "Pay it Forward," "I pledge to respect everyone," Life's Most Urgent Question-"What are you doing for others?" "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," "Best Foot Forward to Success," "The Next Michelle Obama: Who is this Woman?" And along one wall painted in bold letters next to a large lion mascot was, "Feel the Pride." Artwork contributed by each class was displayed along one long hall with cutouts representing people from around the world circling several globes.

Large prominent banners replicated in strategic places in the building spelled out the school's discipline plan and point system: 10 Points–Suspension, 5 Points–BAC Action, 2

Points–Bus Suspension, and 1 Point–Cafeteria Detention. Other large prominent banners

displayed on other strategic walls at the top of the stairs spelled out student rewards and the

benefits for following the school's expectations. The list included Awards, Treats, Grocery Cart,

Trips, Spin The Wheel, and Recognition. There was no way to miss messages found on the huge

banners that hung throughout the building. Nor was there any way to miss the grade-specific

learning materials strategically placed outside each restroom door with math facts for teachers to

use with students as they waited in line.

The teaching staff was somewhat diverse. It had 32 teachers with an ethnicity count of

76.2% White and 23.8% Black. Looking at their teaching experience, 30.2% had worked 0-5

years, 22.2% had worked 6-10 years, 14.2% had worked 11-15 years, 7.9% had worked 16-20

years, and 25.4% have worked for 20+ years.

Judy Grantland

Judy Grantland worked in a traditional pre-kindergarten–Grade 6 program.

Independence Elementary School #8 was located in a mid-sized city. The school sat in a

neighborhood with modest homes. There was a 200-unit housing project built in the school's

boundary area. At the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of

330 students. At the time of the interview, Judy, who is a White woman, was serving in her

seventh year as the principal of the building.

The Independence Elementary School #8 student population was diverse: 33.00% White,

26.7% Black, 22.40% Hispanic, and 13.3% multiracial. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for

the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 6.4% paid, 86.10% free, and 7.6% reduced,

for a total of 93.7% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was

14.2% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was at 13.3%. Independence

Elementary School #8 had an attendance rate of 96.9%.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the

percentage of total students tested at Independence Elementary School #8 who passed both

English/language arts and math was 49.40% in 2009, 72.8% in 2010, and 71.20% in 2011. For

the 2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary.

The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–no, 2008–yes, 2011–yes. Looking

at English/language arts separately, 55.7% passed in 2009, 75.5% passed in 2010, and 80.0%

passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods were generally higher: 68.3% passed in 2009,

82.4% passed in 2010, and 81.1% passed in 2011.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median

student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 51.0%, for Black

students 51.0%, for Hispanic students 53.0%, White students 48.0%, and for multiracial students

45.0%. For English/language arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010

was 63.0%, for Black students 58.0%, for Hispanic students 72.0%, for White students 38.0%,

and for multiracial students 84.0%.

The teaching staff had no diversity, however; Judy brought in assistants and volunteers

who helped create a more diverse adult presence for the students. Independence Elementary

School #8 has 24 teachers with an ethnicity count of 100% White. Looking at their teaching

experience, 48.1% have worked 0-5 years, 9.6% have worked 6-10 years, 3.8% have worked 11-

15 years, 26.9% have worked 16-20 years, and 11.5% have worked for 20+ years.

After entering the secure building and having a brief meeting with Judy, a staff meeting,

led by one of the teachers, began in the media center. As Judy observed, teachers were divided

into four groups composed of cross-grade-level teams along with special area teachers and all other certified staff. At each table teachers from different grade levels served as presenters who brought a case study and a data folder on a particular child that the teacher needed help to address concerns related to that child's learning. Other members of each group were selected to fill the roles of table facilitator, timekeeper, and key question monitor. Based on the Critical Friends Model designed by DuFour (2004), the teachers were practicing a new technique that would be used regularly during the next school year. The exercise included several steps that were timed in 5-minute intervals. First the presenter teachers told what they had done to meet their student's needs as they presented data and asked for more help. Then the group responded with "I'm wondering if . . ." statements, as they offered suggestions that the teacher might consider. All the ideas were recorded. The presenter teacher responded to the ideas they presented and responded with "I like that idea because . . ." and then proceeded to tell some of the ways the suggestions could work.

Following the staff meeting, participants in another meeting gathered in a conference room to discuss plans for the upcoming fifth grade field trip that would be held the last week of school. Getting enough chaperones, organizing a fundraiser candy sale, and planning how to cover the cost of the bus with the least expense to students were all discussed. The plan included giving all students a chance to go on the trip by wiping the slate clean and urging the students to have no referrals for behavior problems in the whole month of May. The community liaison, an African American woman, took the lead in organizing the event and other details related to monitoring student behavior.

Before and during the interview that followed, several other events occurred. Surveying Judy's office revealed a wall bookcase filled with binders of numerous reports, including student

data on each child in the school, information on each teacher, and stacks of books, many with multiple copies. Hanging on the wall were multiple awards presented to Judy along with all of her diplomas and a certificate showing she had board certification. Judy played a short video that featured the school as a model for Learning Forward, a national organization which promoted collaboration in professional learning. The staff members had been taped earlier and interviewed about how the school evolved into a community of learners. On the tape they discussed the role of teacher collaboration in improving student achievement. This training began when Judy, who was a national trainer for Leaning Forward, came to the school. The books on the shelf played a large part in the way that professional development occurred in the school.

During the interview, Judy met with the bus driver and a student who had had several problems on the bus. In addition, a parent came in for a meeting with a teacher, and Judy wanted to sit in on the meeting. The interview stopped and started as these events unfolded. When the interview ended, a tour of the building revealed a print-rich environment with students engaged in learning in all classrooms and in the hallways as children worked with tutors.

Peter Atkins

Peter Atkins worked in a traditional kindergarten–Grade 4 program. Winding Creek School #9 was located in a large city. At the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 489 students. At the time of the interview, Peter, who is a White man, was serving in his sixth year as the principal of the building.

Hanging on the side of the school was a large banner that was very prominent to any visitor coming down the sidewalk to the front door. The banner announced that Winding Creek

School #9 was a "Ben Carson Think Big School." The school had received a grant the year before and now had a cozy nook in the media center that invited students to relax and read.

At the entrance of the lobby area on the floor was a large rug that welcomed all visitors with Winding Creek School #9 Panthers written on it. In addition to a table with chairs and a sign announcing the next state testing date, there was a large board showing all kinds of ocean life swimming. In the office area were two other posters stating, "Be Flexible" and "Success is always a possibility." There was also a sign promoting the first annual Winding Creek School #9 run/walk-a-thon to be held at the school over the Memorial Day weekend. All proceeds would be used to support buying equipment for a community playground near the school.

After the interview, a walk through the halls revealed large blown-up pictures, mounted on the walls, reflecting the diverse student groups engaged in learning at the school. An abundance of student work displaying writing skills taught across subject areas also covered the walls. The displays were neat and attractive and revealed a portrait of the Winding Creek School #9 motto "Excellence every day; that's the Winding Creek School #9 way." Students moved down the hall in orderly lines and smiled at Peter as he spoke to them and called many by their names. One of the areas that created a great deal of pride for the school was the Ben Carson reading "diner area" that was created like an old-fashioned diner with a checkered floor, an old "jukebox," replica, bar stools, benches, counters with artificial sandwiches and sodas, and a statue of the Cat in the Hat that greeted everyone who came to the nook with lots of books.

The Winding Creek School #9 student population was diverse: 46.0% Black, 40.5% White, 1.8% Hispanic, and 11.0% multiracial. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 47.1% paid, 40.2% free, and 17.7% reduced, for a total of 57.9% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was 14.5%

of the student body. The English Language Learner count was at 0.4%. Winding Creek School #9 had an attendance rate of 95.8%.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at Winding Creek School #9 who passed both English/language arts and math was 66.7% in 2009, 67.4% in 2010, and 74.3% in 2011. For the 2010-11 school year, the school is classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–yes, 2008–no, 2011–yes. Looking at English/language arts separately, 72.5% passed in 2009, 76.4% passed in 2010, and 84.0% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods were generally higher: 74.8% passed in 2009, 81.1% passed in 2010, and 82.6% passed in 2011.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 53.0%, for Black students 54.5%, White students 51.00%, and for multiracial students 56.0%. For English/Language Arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was 47.0%, for Black students 48.00%, for White students 41.0%, and for multiracial students 56.0%.

The teaching staff had no diversity. Its count of 24 teachers listed on the state site gave an ethnicity count that was 100% White. Looking at their teaching experience, 58.5% had worked 0-5 years, 7.3% had worked 6-10 years, 19.50% had worked 11-15 years, 7.3% had worked 16-20 years, and 7.3% had worked for 20+ years. Well over half of the teachers had less than 10 years' experience.

Viola Cooper-Latimore

Viola Cooper-Latimore worked in a traditional inner city pre-kindergarten–Grade 6 program. Winter Ridge Elementary School #10 was located near the small downtown area of an

urban fringe city that juxtaposes itself near a larger neighboring city whose distant skyline could be seen from the school grounds. The school's neighborhood contained a combination of modest single-family homes and public housing units. There was also a homeless shelter in the school's boundary area. At the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 261 students. At the time of the interview, Viola, who is an African American woman, was serving in her 10th year as the principal of the building.

As I entered the building through a secured door, I saw the lobby area with its linoleum flooring had several chairs for visitors to sit and wait. On the wall behind the long counter in front of the receptionist area stretched doors that could be accessed behind the counter. A second set of doors facing the entrance led past the lobby area and provided a second barrier of protection for students in the building. Viola's office was down the hall in the opposite direction past the counter and had a window that overlooked the front of the school. When the interview ended, an invitation was not extended to tour the building, so the only view of the school available was the lobby, reception area, and principal's office.

There was no recess scheduled on the day of the interview, so children were lined up after lunch to take a walk around the school and then come back inside to go to work for the afternoon. As the primary classes strolled by during their outdoor walk, the diversity of the students enrolled at the school was very apparent. The Winter Ridge Elementary School #10 student population was 44.1% White, 42.5% Black, 6.5% Hispanic, and 6.2% multiracial. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 16.5% paid, 71.6% free, and 11.9% reduced, for a total of 83.5% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was 21.8% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was at 0.4%. Winter Ridge Elementary School #10 had an attendance rate of 96.3%.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at Winter Ridge Elementary School #10 who passed both English/language arts and math was 64.4% in 2009, 67.0% in 2010, and 69.0% in 2011. For the 2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–yes, 2008–yes, 2011–yes. Looking at English/language arts separately, 71.2% passed in 2009, 78.4% passed in 2010, and 78.0% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods were generally higher: 78.1% passed in 2009, 77.3% passed in 2010, and 82.0% passed in 2011.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 52.0%, for Black students 51.0%, and for White students 54.0%. For English/language arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was 48.0%, for Black students 32.0%, for Hispanic students 53.0%, and for White students 63.0%.

The teaching staff of the school had slight diversity. It had 17 teachers with an ethnicity count of 96.8% White and 3.2% Black. Looking at their teaching experience, 16.1% had worked 0-5 years, 67.7% had worked 6-10 years, 3.3% had worked 11-15 years, 3.3% had worked 16-20 years, and 9.7% had worked for 20+ years. The school had a predominantly young teacher staff, with only about one-third beyond 6 years' experience.

Katrina Marsh

Katrina Marsh worked in a traditional kindergarten–Grade 4 program. New Suburbia Elementary School #11 was located at the end of a cul-de-sac in an urban fringe just outside a large city. Adding additional classrooms in 1996 accounted for the most recent remodeling of

the school. The configuration of the school changed from a kindergarten–Grade 6 program to kindergarten–Grade 4 in 2003.

The neighborhood community surrounding the school had middle-class homes, most of which had well-maintained lawns. When the school opened in 1966, the student population was predominantly White and came from homes with mostly professional parents who had middle to upper-middle incomes. As African American parents, in particular, chose to move from the nearby city and live in the less crowded school community, the demographics of the school changed significantly over the years. In addition to the single-family homes in the community, two apartment complexes were constructed; the school improvement plan chronicled how those residents had contributed to a growing mobility rate.

Katrina shared, during a walkthrough of the building after the interview, that 150 new students had come to the school throughout the year and the current end-of-year enrollment was 425 students. Beginning the 2010–2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 415 students. Katrina shared that while the numbers stayed fairly consistent, the faces in front of the teacher changed frequently, as children transferred in and out of the school. At the time of the interview, Katrina, who is a White woman, was serving in her 17th year as the principal of the building and had experienced much of the population shift, the remodeling, and the school reconfiguration.

The New Suburbia Elementary School #11 student population was diverse: 64.6% Black, 21.4% Hispanic, 6.3% multiracial, and 6.0% White, and 1.40% Asian or Pacific Islander. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 36.6% paid, 52.8% free, and 10.6% reduced, for a total of 63.4% combined free and reduced lunch. The

special education population was 7.0% of the student body. The English Language Learner

count was at 9.9%. New Suburbia Elementary School #11 had an attendance rate of 96.3%.

As I entered the secure building through two sets of doors that lead to the office area, I

heard one secretary extend a greeting while the other one continued working on a computer. A

child came into the office, waited at the child-sized counter to be recognized and finally said,

"Excuse me" before she was acknowledged. A female parent came in a few minutes later and

stood at the adult-sized end of the counter and also waited for a small amount of time to be

recognized in any manner. Finally, one of secretaries came over and, without a word, took a

paper from the parent and said, "Thank you." No other words were exchanged.

On the wall in the office was a poster that read, "Cultivate Inclusion." There were curtain

valences across the windows of the office area with several copy machines located beneath them

in front of the outside window, and two distinct workspaces were positioned for each of the

workers. On the side of the room where visitors sat there was a table with flowers, and live

plants were placed throughout the office reception area where the secretaries worked. All around

the room were birdhouses and pictures of birds on the wall. A Hispanic gentleman came in and

greeted everyone, including the secretaries, with a warm "good morning" and both of them

acknowledged him with the same greeting. He was signing in to accompany the kindergarten

class on a field trip tour of a candy factory. One secretary shared that both Grades 1 and 4 also

had end-of-year field trips scheduled for that day, when they would be leaving to go to two

separate area parks.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the

percentage of total students tested at New Suburbia Elementary School #11 who passed both

English/language arts and math was 55.2% in 2009, 63.5% in 2010, and 62.1% in 2011. For the

2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–no, 2008–no, 2011–no. Looking at English/language arts separately, 67.7% passed in 2009, 74.7% passed in 2010, and 78.1% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods were slightly lower: 64.6% passed in 2009, 71.5% passed in 2010, and 67.3% passed in 2011.

Shelves in Katrina's office were lined with binders that contained up-to-date test data results on every child in the school. Teachers were using information they had obtained from all their data collections and other observations to determine who would pass on to the next grade or who needed to be retained. That was one of the end-of-year decisions that teachers were challenged with at the time of the interview.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 76.0%, for Black students 76.0%, for Hispanic students 64.5%, White students 92.0%, and for multiracial students 72.5%. For English/Language Arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was 58.0%, for Black students 58.0%, for Hispanic students 53.0%, for White students 62.0%, and for multiracial students 82.0%.

The teaching staff of the school was somewhat diverse. It had 26 teachers with an ethnicity count of 79.4% White, 12.8% Black, and 8.2% Hispanic. Looking at their teaching experience, 34.0% had worked 0-5 years, 25.3% had 6-10 years, 26.8% had worked 11-15 years, 8.2% had worked 16-20 years, and 5.1% had worked for 20+ years.

Walking through the building after the interview revealed walls full of writing samples and other student work. Other walls displayed pictures of African American role models mounted on the walls. A quick visit through some classrooms revealed students and teachers

who were fully engaged in print rich-environments with work samples that were neatly and creatively displayed throughout the building, reflecting cross-curricular work samples. The work samples and other displays also presented evidence of a strong emphasis on writing skills and reading strategies the students were learning. Katrina talked about having "no wasted time" and showed how the schedule and school design allowed students to move to and from a weekly morning meeting, breakfast, and special classes with a minimum of lost time.

The morning of the interview, a consultant had worked with the staff on their reading program, which was in its second year. The school used the Fountas and Pinnell reading and benchmark assessments. In the "data room," the school's instructional coaches and the consultant addressed some concerns beyond the meeting time. On one full wall of the room, a large display contained a pocket for every child in the school with either green cards that contained the names of every kindergarten–Grade 2 student or blue cards for every child in Grades 3 and 4. The cards gave a visual display of every child's reading scores on various tests and his or her reading level at that current time. The color-coding system made it easy to see who was at grade level, who excelled beyond grade level, and who was falling behind. Teachers used that information and training to meet the needs of individual students.

Carolyn Williamson

Carolyn Williamson worked in a traditional pre-kindergarten–Grade 6 program. Bookman Station Elementary School #12 was located in an urban fringe just outside a large city. This neighborhood school was located in an area with modest single-family homes and several small businesses on a nearby major street. The school was built in 1956, remodeled in 1971, and was undergoing some renovations on the day of the interview. At the beginning of the 2010-

2011 school year, the school had an enrollment of 524 students. At the time of the interview, Carolyn, who is a White woman, was serving in her 6th year as the principal of the building.

The interview occurred on a Friday afternoon at dismissal time, toward the end of the semester at the beginning of a long holiday weekend. Getting into Bookman Station Elementary School #12 was a bit tricky. Renovation and security offered only one set of doors accessible to visitors, and it was located around the corner from the parking lot doors. After walking around the building past a large group of children, where teachers and parents gathered on the playground, I found the access to the building at the right set of doors. After being buzzed into a small entrance lobby, I could see that the office area of this older building held a certain amount of charm. Teachers came in from the school's large concrete playground area, where students had been gathered and released to their parents waiting in cars or walking, and entered the office to check their mailboxes wearing jeans and sweatshirts with the school logo imprinted on them. Carolyn, also wearing the same sweatshirt, was the last one to enter from the outside dismissal.

The office area had a counter that separated the secretaries' reception area and the waiting area. In the waiting area, was a large poster of President Barack Obama that stated, "This is our Moment." There was a set of dioramas sitting on top of cabinets that exhibited favorite authors and books ranging from titles about President Obama, cats, and Chicago. There was a child-sized table with four children sitting playing a word game. In the area hung a wreath with the school logo incorporated into it, and a Chinese symbol hung over the door. Another sign was posted that stated: "Please respect our instructional time. Morning Reading 8:00-8:15, Teacher Pick-up 8:15, Classroom Instruction 8:30-3:05. No early dismissal without a doctor's note." Also displayed was the school motto: "Success is our only option."

A Spanish-speaking student and parent exchanged dialogue with a Hispanic staff member. Another staff member greeted visitors and pointed out the sign-in sheet. A young African American male student in the fifth grade sat in the office after school, waiting for someone to pick him up. Seeing the interview was about to start, he spoke up on his own and said, "Mrs. Williamson, she's a great principal. You're going to enjoy talking to her." A bit taken back by the comment, after saying, "Thank you for sharing," to the young man, I began the interview.

The Bookman Station Elementary School #12 student population was diverse: 54.8% Black, 32.8% Hispanic, 7.4% multiracial, 5.2% White, and 1.4% Asian or Pacific Islander. The 2010 socioeconomic indicators for the school, as shown in its lunch count status, were 4.6% paid, 91.4% free, and 4.0% reduced, for a total of 95.4% combined free and reduced lunch. The special education population was 9.5% of the student body. The English Language Learner count was at 17.6%. Bookman Station Elementary School #12 had an attendance rate of 94.3%.

Based on the state spring assessment data found on the state's database website, the percentage of total students tested at Bookman Station Elementary School #12 who passed both English/language arts and math was 42.2% in 2009, 48.8% in 2010, and 50.6% in 2011. For the 2010-11 school year, the school was classified in the A category, formerly called Exemplary. The school's AYP status for the last recorded years was 2007–no, 2008–yes, 2011–no. Looking at English/language arts separately, 53.3% passed in 2009, 62.4% passed in 2010, and 65.7% passed in 2011. Math scores for the same periods were slightly lower, but showed upward gains: 52.6% passed in 2009, 60.2% passed in 2010, and 61.6% passed in 2011.

Using information found on the state's 2010 report for growth model data, the median student growth percentage for all students counted in the math calculation was 64.0%, for Black

students 62.0%, and for Hispanic students 76.0%. For English/language arts, the median student growth percentage for all students in 2010 was 56.0%, for Black students 55.0%, for Hispanic students 59.0%, and for White students 50.0%.

The teaching staff was somewhat diverse. It had 35 teachers with an ethnicity count of 80.7% White, 4.8% Black, and 2.4% American Indian. Looking at their teaching experience, 65.1% had worked 0-5 years, none are reported with 6-10 years, 2.3% had worked 11-15 years, 11.6% had worked 16-20 years, and 20.9% had worked for 20+ years. This is a predominantly young staff.

When the interview ended, Carolyn offered a quick tour of the building that revealed a print-rich environment that demonstrated the importance of reading strategies, writing instruction, and student work displayed in an attractive, neat, creative manner. The tour ended at the place that could be considered the heartbeat of the reading program. A book collection room had been created that was separate from the media center's regular book collection.

The room housed hundreds of book sets that were meticulously organized in individual metal crates on rows like those found in a college library. Placed on racks by subject, interests, grade level, and reading level, the staff had used the maximum amount of their Title I money, grant money, and materials that accompanied individual textbooks to compile sets of books that could be checked out from the Reading Room. The books had been sorted by fiction and non-fiction titles that included shorter texts on core subject material. Carolyn shared that the e goal of the staff was to find more books that interested boys, especially African Americans. The room was a precious jewel, tucked away in a school that cared about meeting the needs of its diverse student population, and it marked a pleasant end to my interviews and observations.

Major Overarching Themes of the Study

Mindful of the literature review related to building an understanding about what principals needs to know and do in order to effectively create a culturally relevant learning environment, several important ideas became apparent. These ideas evolved into interview questions that provided the structure to collect data from 12 principals who were interviewed on their school sites about their schools' practices. The interview questions related to factors in and out of school that impacted student achievement, professional development activities and how they impacted instruction and teacher thinking, and the culture and climate of their buildings related to building a culturally relevant learning environment.

After I completed the interviews and coding, grouped, analyzed, and compared the data, the following five major themes emerged, not necessarily in the order with the greatest frequency, but listed in a manner that showed how the themes and subthemes were interrelated. Additionally, other colleagues confirmed the findings as representative of information that seemed feasible. Furthermore, returning to the original information found in the literature review also helped bring clarity in analyzing the themes and subthemes that emerged.

Also noteworthy is that, although the themes emanating from the interviews were based on the principals' perceptions and judgments, they were not verified based on actual evidence of implementation over an extended period of time with measures such as additional observations, interviews of other constituents in the school, or the collection of artifacts to substantiate the consistency or quality of implementation related to what the principals shared. Finding that information requires another lengthy study conducted by a team of researchers. What the findings do show, however, are patterns and themes that emerged as descriptors based on what the principals referenced individually and collectively.

A summary of the initial findings was sent to the participants for member checking and feedback. Parts of their feedback were incorporated into the findings. Principals in the study demonstrated five overarching themes that characterized their strong leadership abilities:

- having high expectations for all,

- developing a sense of community,

- using analysis of data and monitoring/evaluation of staff,

- providing professional development that addressed cultural competency issues, and

- promoting awareness and knowledge about cultural competence.

These five themes were linked to several other subthemes that also emerged. Depending on the theme, there could be a range of five to 11 subthemes associated with each one. The discussion below provides a framework for referencing the findings from the study and answering the two questions: How do principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning environment? and What is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community? The following summary highlights the key findings of these five overarching themes and their related subthemes demonstrated in varying degrees by the 12 principals.

Having High Expectations for All

Principals in the study demonstrated a sense of efficacy and passionately owned what happened in their buildings. They were reflective in their practice and set the vision and mission of the schools. They came to their buildings seeing the need to improve the academic performance of their non-White students and served as change agents. Principals recognized that out-of-school factors were real but did not dwell on them as excuses not to expect teachers to teach. They acknowledged the need for parental involvement and parental support. They also

acknowledged the need for community involvement. Each school had varied degrees of participation of both parental and community involvement.

Developing a Sense of Community Among Staff and Students

Principals rallied staff members to the vision and mission of using effective instructional practices that produced measurable results as a primary focus. They began to develop cultures and climates in the schools that fostered building relationships based on trust and respect among staff members and, in turn, with students and parents. Principals also established cultures and climates where students began to understand the expectations that were set for behavioral and academic achievement. Their high expectations involved everyone in the school community. They supported teachers to become highly qualified in delivering effective, engaging instructional strategies. Principals valued the role of instructional coaches to help teach and model effective practices based on data-driven information.

Using Analysis of Data and Monitoring and Evaluation of Staff

Principals used data to drive instructional practices. They monitored and evaluated teacher performance. Principals provided support to teachers who struggled with effective instructional practices. They had input on hiring their staff and took a hands-on approach. When a principal decided a teacher was not a good fit for working in the school's program to increase student learning, the principal worked to have the teacher resign, retire, or go to another building.

Using Professional Development That Addressed Cultural Competency Issues

Principals established professional learning communities (PLCs) and they were resourceful in how they scheduled time for professional development through grade-level meetings by team or in cross-grade-level groupings. They focused on collaboration and developed leadership teams to provide feedback and lead the charge for implementing

professional development. They also relied on book studies as one way to help teachers become more culturally competent. Along with study circles, principals used a variety of other methods to provide professional development for their staff.

Promoting Awareness and Knowledge About Cultural Competence

Principals were all aware of the need to address cultural competence. Principals promoted some best practices known about culturally relevant learning environments. Principals cared about the total well-being of their students, teachers, and parents. They were willing to have frank conversations and address issues surrounding diversity, race, and culture when they were presented. Although the principals expressed awareness of needing to implement culturally relevant practices, they all admitted that their staffs required additional support in reaching cultural proficiency.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: MAJOR THEMES AND THEIR RELATED SUBTHEMES

After analyzing the coded data from the interviews of the 12 principals in the study, five

major themes emerged. Closely connected to each theme were subthemes that were aligned to

the five overarching themes. The common subthemes that were found helped clarify the

principals' perceptions of how they and their staff members worked to provide an equitable

education for all of their students, including the school's 50% or greater non-White population of

students. Moreover, these common subthemes painted a detailed portrait of the principals who

had served in leadership roles for three or more years at their current school. The rich dialogue

presented in this chapter provides a vivid description of how principals viewed their roles of

meeting the needs of their schools' constituency of diverse students and parents, and the needs of

their teachers, support staff, and community stakeholders.

Key Findings of the Study

The 12 principals in this study began their roles in unique situations as they accepted the

challenge to create change in the buildings where they served. Based on findings from the

state's standardized testing instrument, all of the principals, except for one, came to their schools

at a time when the school was facing serious challenges in how their diverse populations of

students were performing academically. The one principal mentioned previously had the longest

years of service in one building of all the participants and, although seeing a change in the shifting population, seemed able to make adjustments to ensure sustained student success.

Most of the student populations in the schools had shifted over a period of time, in some instances from housing a predominantly White student population to housing a community representing a 50% or greater non-White student population. The teaching force, on the other hand, remained staffed predominantly by White teachers, some of whom initially had struggled to find a range of strategies and skill sets to meet the challenges presented by the students who appeared to be systematically underserved in areas dealing with their physical, social, mental, emotional, and academic needs. Thus, the findings and the support for the conclusions reached about the themes that emerged are offered.

Having High Expectations for All

BelleAire West Elementary School #1 opened as a new facility where Audrey Lawson served as assistant principal for four years before becoming the principal during the last three years. The corporation had redistricted all of the schools so that students and teachers were coming from quite a few different feeder schools. The challenge she identified was how to create a set of expectations what would be the new "BelleAire West Elementary School #1 Way." She had reminded her staff from the beginning that they would not follow the way of some other schools in the district who had blamed the students for disappointing academic achievement when the population shift began. Audrey shared,

> We are the newest elementary school in our district. There is another school that was
>
> built a few years before us and their demographics changed, and the teachers soon began
>
> to blame the kids or think that the kids were the cause of their problem. And the
>
> demographics did change. I mean, that school 12 years ago was considered the crème-

de-la-crème. They were the newest school. They had all of the newest things. However, as the demographics changed, it was like, "These kids . . . these kids came to our school and this is why are scores are struggling. These kids came to our school and this is why things are like they are." And I've said to our staff, and I've said to my assistant principal, and I've used that school as an example, "This was their plight."

Announcing her expectations, she declared,

This is not going to be the road we travel. You know it's not about the kids. . . . Yes, it is about the kids! Our parents send us the best kids they have, so with that, we are going to educate them. This is why we got into this. So I think with having those conversations and keeping that in front of them, you know what. All of our kids are great. Even on a bad day, our kids are great.

Equipped with a range of experiences while serving as principals of their buildings from three to 25 years, each principal had the opportunity to set their expectations in place. As an example, over the last seven years, Katrina Marsh had developed a positive relationship with her staff based on her expectations for them. She reported,

They know my expectations. I have a teacher that has a son at another school and sometimes things will happen and she will say, "Well that would never happen in this school," and I say, "You're right." I don't walk around with a club, but the teachers know what's expected. And I've no problem saying, "This would have been a better way to take care of it, and the next time I expect you to handle it this way." You just can't go to battle, but you have to find a common ground and work with people.

Viola Cooper-Latimore served in a school where the number of students passing both English/language arts and math had increased steadily each year since she came 10 years ago.

She referred to the principal's role in creating a climate in the building where expectations are known, executed, and monitored. Her statement summed up what many of other principals said. Viola shared,

> I think the climate of the school is really based around the principal and your expectations of the teachers and what they will do if we monitor that expectation— expectation for the students; and students and their parents, as well, know my expectations. By getting through to them, talking to them about what we expect, those students should be able to do well when they leave Winter Ridge Elementary School #10. So I think if you put your expectations out there—you let it be known you have high expectations—you would expect through communication with teachers and parents, then your students will achieve.

Although unique in their approaches, the principals shared a strong connection for implementing the subthemes listed in Table 7.

Table 7

Subthemes Linked to Having High Expectations for All

No.	Six Subthemes Related to Demonstrating High Expectations
1	Principals demonstrated a sense of efficacy and passionately owned what happened in their buildings.
2	Principals were reflective in their practice and set the vision and mission of the schools.
3	Principals came to their buildings seeing the need to improve the academic performance of the non-White students and served as change agents.
4	Principals acknowledged the need for parental involvement and parental support.
5	Principals acknowledged the need for community involvement. Each school had varied degrees of participation.
6	Principals recognized that out-of-school factors were real but did not dwell on them as an excuse not to expect teachers to teach.

Subtheme 1.1: Principals demonstrated a sense of efficacy and passionately owned what happened in their buildings. John Bradford demonstrated a great sense of efficacy and believed that he would make a difference as an administrator even before he became a principal. With 23 years of experience in education, he taught mainly in fifth and sixth grades. He moved into an administrative role as a teacher/assistant principal, and he served as a full-time assistant principal time under a "great mentor." He worked a few years as a principal in another district before coming to his current district seven years ago. Concerning his reasons for becoming an administrator, John said,

So, I just thought I want to stay in education. What can I do? So, I became an

administrator and I had great success with my classroom students while I was a teacher.

. . . You know good performance and those kinds of things, and I thought by moving and being able to inspire and see the growth in 25 students year after year, I felt that I probably could inspire and see some huge growth in a building full of students and teachers, so that's kind of why I wanted to, went to administration.

Karen Hanover grew up in an urban environment, and because of the great teachers she had experienced, she wanted to give back to that community. After becoming a teacher in a large urban district and serving under two principals with distinctively different leadership styles, she was encouraged to consider becoming an administrator. One principal was an example of what not to do, and the other one became a lifelong friend and mentor whom she admired and respected and on whom she modeled her philosophy. Because of budget cuts, even though she left the first urban district, her mentor still encouraged her to enroll in a leadership program for principals. Coming to a new district as a teacher and moving into administration in that same building after 25 years, Karen had developed a new allegiance to the Stately Manor Elementary School #4 community and was empowered to operate a school that had maintained steady academic progress over a number of years. She shared the rich history of the district and expressed the close ties between the community, its schools, and its children. Karen shared about their unique building,

> Yes we worked with the architects and the staff, and I worked on developing . . . really the looks of this building. Having taught my last three years under my mentor, I saw some advantages of open concept because that was an open concept facility for group learning and change. But I also know that kids also need, in my opinion, some of their own space and in a contained area. So when we developed this building, I had some of

that in my mind, a large group area, but yet classrooms and that's how we came up with our open pod concept.

Although far from being a new facility when Carolyn Williamson arrived, Bookman Station Elementary School #12 was newly reconstituted by the state and also offered a challenge to a new principal who inherited half of a staff of teachers who had chosen to stay, with the option of being able to leave in two years if they decided to, and the other half who left voluntary, up front. Along with student academic achievement and discipline issues, the school was in need of considerable repair. She displayed her passion, commitment, and determination after she was recruited to become the principal of one of the original restructured schools in the state. Sharing her belief that she could make a difference, Carolyn found many challenges at the beginning of the journey, and she recalled,

> Discipline was basically out of control: teachers did not feel safe; students did not feel safe. Attendance was a big problem. There was really no follow-up system for attendance. Family involvement was very limited. So the first thing we did was get the building under control, put the expectations out to the students, my expectations to the staff, and each year progressively got better with discipline and behavior, referrals have gone down, our suspensions are down.

Marilyn Jenkins talked about how her early experiences and how her staff changed and began to believe in the students,

> I think that when I first came to the school, teachers were saying: "These poor kids they come from this home, they can't do it. They never have; we don't make AYP. " It was always can't, the negative part. Now they were saying that "our children can learn. They can be successful," that "our parents want just as much for these children as we want for

our children," and we've been thinking the positive part. "What can we do to make this happen? We can't do anything with their home life, but we can do something when they get here." And, and what can we do? And I think that staff members have to be willing to share, and to open up.

Embracing her background, growing up in poverty as a White child in a community of African American and Hispanic children on the west coast, Judy Grantland believed that what she was able to do in her school was highly unusual.

Yeah, I'm an anomaly. I mean . . . I'm not normal and, even within the district, people have a hard time understanding me. . . . And my bosses . . . I'm highly effective but I think they really don't understand—well as I have been told. . . . But I don't do things like the model says you should, you know. It's more just my background knowledge and my belief system, and relevant experience, life experiences. Nobody in this building has lived them but me, except maybe my case manager, who was a sharecropper's daughter in Alabama, and worked and walked with Dr. Martin Luther King.

These principals' statements were representative of all the participants who willingly accepted the challenge to lead schools that were undeniably struggling to meet the needs of their diverse student populations, many of whom were underperforming in academic achievement. Every principal discussed the high expectations they held for those around them.

Subtheme 1.2: Principals were reflective in their practice and helped set and secure the vision and mission of the school. Coming into new positions, all of the principals voiced ideas and principles about the call they had to set and keep the mission and vision of the schools they lead. Six of those principals made direct references to the value they placed on executing the mission and vision of the school. Reflecting on their practice helped shape how they

implemented the schools' vision and mission relative to nurturing, educating, and producing life-long learners who would be able to make good choices and be prepared to work in a global society. They also evaluated and demonstrated their own drive and determination for excellence in preparing their teachers to meet the challenges they faced to become vision and mission keepers, too.

Carolyn commented on her school's mission and focus and summed up her philosophy, very simply, about bringing success to a reconstituted school. She stated, "Success is the only option, and that we do business only in what's best for kids, and we all believe that. It's not about teacher convenience. It's about what's best for kids."

Karen shared the thinking that drove the design of a building that has remained functional close to two decades of providing a nurturing place for children. She acknowledged the deliberateness of her vision,

Our philosophy was to try to develop a school that was like a home away from home because the kids, outside their home, they are at school, the greatest amount of time. And I really thought to have an open office area that was child centered . . . low counters . . . not the high counters in the past where you come in, you can't even see the little kids. . . . No formal seating right inside the office area. We have the benches outside, with our cushions and our pillows, and even I thought at that time, "Are we going to have those, are those going to last?" And you know what? Eighteen years later, those things are sitting right out there and it's just maintained and there is just. . . it's understood, and I, we wanted the students to be able to feel comfortable and not military, but no havoc.

In describing Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6's mission, Clayton Drummer recounted the school's purpose and focus at each grade-level division, as the school planned

ways to intentionally provide strategies for student success. Although many believed that he had handpicked students because of its charter school status, Clayton debunked that assertion by sharing the school's mission and his charge:

> The school's mission, because our relationship with our parent organization is to work with low-income students, and so we have a marketing strategy where we try to market the school to low-income families and work with churches, community centers, daycares, that tend to cater to low-income households. So, with that, 90% of our kids are on free and reduced lunch. We have almost 30% of our students who don't speak English as a first language. We've got about a 17% special ed population. . . . In the early grades, we are focused on acquisition of early literacy and early numeracy, . . . then transfer them into our intermediate program which tends to be hands-on in nature and then into middle school which began the transition to project-based learning with the emphasis in technology, and then on to our high school, which right now is just ninth grade and growing.

Clayton reflected on the school's role in setting a tone that would impact the overall outlook for its students and their future. His charter school program systematically sought out low-income students to bring positive changes into their lives. With a kindergarten through high school program, he constantly thought about how to provide experiences that would prepare students for real life success. As he discussed how one simple expectation created a change in the climate of the building, he recalled when middle school students had problems passing in the hall and how he moved from having lock downs with teachers rotating from class to class, to students taking responsibility for their own actions.

As a charter school leader, Clayton was able to make innovative decisions and cause teachers and his board to move in totally new directions. An innovative salary package and a change to the traditional student grading system caused Clayton to reflect on why change is important. He reflected on how best to equip both students and staff members for changes that fit the school's mission:

So we shifted this year to helping students, helping teachers understand the philosophy behind assessment if you are doing standards base grading. It's simply not about a humiliation of war, but it's about acquisition, and the acquisition of skills over time. So do you really want to punish kids for not knowing something before you taught it, and I hold that . . . and these are there some big concepts that challenges people's personal beliefs, that's what we are doing right now.

Independence Elementary School #8 was led by a principal who, like Clayton Drummer, had been recruited to come to the school. Judy Grantland reflected on programs that supported her expectation that everyone on the staff should be moving toward the school's mission.

Then because every person's got to be supporting the main mission—which is success for all students—they will push the Hope Foundation model that failure here is not an option. That is it here. No child, any child failing here is not an option. And that's why I know every child, what's going on with them, and, yes, it does take a tremendous amount of time with the families and the kid's parents and the teachers.

When Judy came to Independence Elementary School #8, many of the teachers were very upset about the changes that were being made. She recalled,

I may have them still who might not care for me that much, but they know the expectations. They know that everyone will be held to the same expectations. They

know that everyone will be treated fairly. They know they would be held to the high

standards. When I first came here, the first two years, some might have said I was pretty

dictatorial, but then again I was taking a school that was out of control and flipping it,

and it wasn't "wait for tomorrow." It was the start of the day I walked in the building.

Explaining the expectations she had for the staff at the beginning of her work seven years ago,

Judy divulged,

> The day I walked in, I went through a whole list of expectations with every staff member,
>
> and some staff members chose to leave right then, which was a good thing for them. . . .
>
> But the people that were hired into this school now had to make the commitment and sign
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> that they were willing to support the mission and the vision and the goals, which is
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> different than me coming, and so that's good though. I mean it's good that . . . because it
>
> saved a whole lot of heartache and a whole lot of time.

As Judy told about how she viewed the change process that lay ahead of her, what the

district expected from her, and her thoughts about the teachers' perceptions of her leadership

style, she, like Clayton, emphasized the importance of being given freedom to lead the schools.

She noted,

> But at that point, it was just, this was their job; and I was a stranger coming in. And so I
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> think part of it—we have a cordial relationship now—but I also, I believe in empowering
>
> people. I'm a leader that believes everyone has their own learning style. I have my own
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> leading style. For me to be effective, my supervisors have to give me freedom . . . and
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> that was given to me, within the parameters of what the district expects, but that's how I
>
> handled this here.

Being reflective seems to involve more than just thinking about what happened within a building, but also what motivated a principal to take on a leadership role. Just as John stated he knew he could make a difference, Jason Howard also expressed that same thought. He began his interview by disclosing a desire to make an impact on students and how his vision as a principal allowed that to happen. Jason reflected,

I became a principal in an effort to have a greater holistic impact on academic and social achievement for students. Seeing oftentimes what was needed, but not having the influence or venues to bring about that holistic change. I came into it to be a servant leader—to serve those who had the least amount of academic and social power so they could become world changers who are able to sit at the table of a technological global society.

As a new member of a large urban community and coming from a smaller city, although Martha Bridgeforth had worked with a diverse student population in the past, she acknowledged that additional preparation to enter into this practice would have been beneficial. Global World Elementary School #5 had a community partnership with a local university that allowed pre-service juniors to come to the school, hold classes, and observe. So it is no wonder that Martha reflected on the responsibility of principals, comparing the training she thought was needed for more practical application to be included in principal training at the university level. Martha noted,

I think it's a huge task—a huge task—that if you think about the courses that you took in your administrative program for your master's in administration, and I think about your people from different universities, I know they do a fabulous job, but there are some things that they just . . . you can't be prepared for it. It's on the job training. It's like

becoming a first year teacher. So as a principal, I think you have to develop that . . .

professional development that you get as a principal that trains . . . how to offer that with

your staff needs, and how to really deploy that with your staff, and be that instructional

leader with professional development.

These seven principals demonstrated how reflective practices helped keep the vision and

mission of their schools at the forefront of their decision-making. By stating how they defined

success, and keeping the focus on nurturing children's needs instead of adult needs, the stances

some of these principals took at first were not welcomed. However, they pressed ahead,

reflecting on why they became leaders and what skills they brought with them to complete their

charge.

Subtheme 1.3: Principals came to their buildings seeing the need to improve the

academic performance of their non-White students and served as change agents. Another

leading subtheme was the principals' awareness of where their programs were when they came

to the school and their drive and motivation to bring measurable improvement in both behavioral

and academic learning. A shifting demographic population precipitated most of the changes

principals initiated. As the number of African American and Hispanic students increased in

schools that had previously served a predominantly White student population, many of the

teachers struggled to meet the needs of the new learners. It appeared that the instructional

practices were not adequate and that if change did not occur the schools would continue to

produce less than mediocre performances.

Thus, another leading idea emerged around the principals' perceptions of teacher and

parent thinking and how, as the leaders of the buildings, the principals felt the responsibility of

helping to shape those perceptions in order to anticipate and offset adverse reaction to new

initiatives and the changes they produced. For some principals the changes came easily but for others, it was an uphill battle. Making meaning of each principal's perception of the change process revealed their solutions for effectively working with a student population that were too often underperforming academically, were school-dependent for learning skills, were more mobile than desired, and were faced with the challenges their families had living in low-income situations. The principals' perceptions on change brought new clarity to what transpired to create a culturally relevant learning environment.

All 12 of these principals could be classified as change agents. Two had served over 17 years and had continually adjusted to the needs of their students, six were recruited to bring drastic change to their school's program, and the other four stepped into the challenge on their own to begin bringing change for their underserved, non-White population of students who were not performing as well. The principals recounted their experiences about what their schools were like upon their arrival and how change occurred over a three-year period and beyond.

Karen, who had opened the new building, and Katrina, who had served in her school for 17 years, did not seem to experience the growing pains that some of the other school leaders recounted. They both were able to make adjustments over the years with their population shifts. Katrina stated,

> There has been a great change in the population of New Suburbia Elementary School #11 since I started. Over a period of about 10 years it changed very drastically. But then it hasn't really been a problem, I mean we have just moved with it, and learned with it, and have been open to ideas about how to best meet the needs of our student.

Viola, also, brought about change, but, unlike Judy and Katrina, there did not seem to be great pushback. Although she was the first African American principal at her school, she did not

express feeling any adversity because of it. She reflected, "I might be the first minority principal that teachers began to work with, so that's something that they had to get used to, but they adjusted. If there were any problems, I didn't know it. I just went on and did my job."

Audrey Lawson was also the first African American principal with whom many of the BelleAire West Elementary School #1 teachers had worked. Having served as the assistant principal for four years prior to becoming the principal of BelleAire West Elementary School #1, her staff was familiar with her leadership style. The district had supported cultural competency training, and she continued to share how teachers could infuse it into activities and their practice of teaching their growing diverse student population. However, as she reflected on how her "seasoned staff" of teachers perceived her and the changes she presented, she revealed the thinking process she experienced:

> Hum . . . I think, as an assistant principal, their perceptions were one way, because there was still ultimately someone else who had the final authority. But now, as a building leader, I think that many times when it comes to cultural competency, they feel like I'm biased, and/or my perception is skewed because I am Black, or that I am on a crusade to condone inappropriate behavior of children or to condone inappropriate behavior of parents, which is not the case. In helping them see that sometimes their perception is misguided or skewed, or they have their own biases, or them having their own biases, has been a challenge.

When John came to Heritage Elementary School #3, the school that had received statewide acclaim for academic achievement 15-20 years prior, he faced parents who were very unhappy with the school's changing status and performance. The small urban district's student demographics gradually changed as new non-White families, who mostly likely were not

homeowners in the neighborhood, moved into rented homes and nearby apartments. Heritage Elementary School #3 had the largest non-White population in the district. John recounted the condition of the school's program when he came and the immediate changes that had to be addressed:

> Well, to be honest with you seven years ago it wasn't so wonderful. It was a low-performing school. A lot of parents withdrawing their students because the district has a transfer policy where they can move them to another school, and we were having parents that would take the students—this is prior, before me—taking student's power and transferring into another one of the elementary schools here in the district. So that's kind of when we started the whole culture of change and we had a philosophy of how we are going to do things here, and it's took about three years to start seeing a great change.

As the teachers faced growing pains and adapted what they were doing, he described the behavioral and learning shift that occurred when he came to Heritage Elementary School #3:

> By second semester, I had a teacher come to me and say, "Oh it's nice to come and just work every day. You know, I love the way that school is." And I looked at her, and I said, "Well this is not to my expectations." But it was to what they were used to. It was so much better; so in the last seven years, we've gone from a low-performing school to, in the year 2009, we became a four-star school. And last year we were, out of our county and all the donut [surrounding] county schools, we were ranked as the ninth best school in the area, and that's elementary, junior high, and high school. And then this year, we were, by AYP standards, we were listed as an exemplary school for AYP adequate yearly progress.

Carolyn also remembered the adjustments that happened beginning with a longer school day, offset by smaller class sizes that it seemed like the staff would have welcomed. Instead, she recounted,

> Well, when I came over, this school had a lot of issues going on. With the restructuring the staff was not real happy, because they didn't like the requirements of what the state expected them to do. The building was in need of much repair, which the district supported: painting, making sure it was clean; over the past six years we've gotten new ceilings, new lights, and so they're helping to update it. We receive technology where every classroom has four student computers and a teacher's station. We do have a lab.

However, citing the lack of collaborative practices when she came to the school, Carolyn continued sharing,

> Teachers did not collaborate. Teachers were not always willing to change their instructional practices to research-based. We did have an outside consultant, through our Title I funding, and the consultant was taking us through the school "Why Change?" process. And she's been absolutely wonderful. In fact, she's been here these past three days working with us still, and she helped us organize our plan. She helped us research best practices for kids and what we needed to change in our instruction.

Reflecting on the changes that occurred since she came to the school three years ago, Martha believed that one of the greatest changes came in professional development and how it occurred. She shared how she prioritized "non-negotiables" and helped teachers balance the rest of their responsibilities.

> When I first came, they were not engaging in professional learning communities. There wasn't a systematic way that they were using their student data to drive their instruction.

There wasn't, I don't think, a systematic way of deployment of things, and that accountability piece. So, I've seen a lot of change. And I felt the frustration for my staff as well. It's been a bit frustrating for them at times because teachers are overwhelmed for all the tasks that they are expected to take on, so I have tried to be sensitive to the fact that I brought a lot of new things when I came, and I have asked them to do a lot. And tried to find things that we could get rid of, like what we can go let go of, although we know in education there is not very often anything you can let go of, so . . . But I did try to prioritize with my teachers. These are the non-negotiables.

Clayton discussed change from the perspective of meeting a new challenge but also the risk of leaving behind the security of a successful program and key relationships with district administrators to come to a school where rebuilding was inevitable. Like Judy, the promise of freedom was compelling, and he admitted,

But they promised me a lot of freedom and latitude, which was something I wasn't getting in the other district. And there was a movement to standardize schools and practices throughout the district. So it was uncomfortable for me to have to operate that way. So I'm not quite sure what it was that convinced me, but I finally got convinced that I would give it a shot.

In an interesting contrast to Clayton, Peter Atkins welcomed the direction from the district. Peter believed the district expectation helped to set the roadmap for the direction to lead the school. Like John, Peter also shared parental concerns as the neighborhood changed and how the school staff worked to rebuild school pride. The school population changed because of the ESL program, and it moved toward having around 90% of its students on free and reduced lunch. He shared that he inherited a disconnected staff:

It was really in that first year that there was a lot of just team-building with the staff, getting everybody in the right direction, and following the eight-step process that we follow in the district. And that's what drives over instruction, and then, we just started building from there.

Four years ago, Marilyn Jenkins came to the Restoration Elementary School #7 that had the highest percentage of African American students in the study. She was recruited from her prior school, where she was admired for the successful program she built over a number of years. After receiving several attempts to persuade her to move to other schools that were struggling academically, she ended up accepting the challenge at Restoration Elementary School #7. She chose the school partly because of its location that was so close to her home and church. The church soon became one of the school's staunchest supporters. She recalled her first year at Restoration Elementary School #7 when she came and brought part of her former staff with her. Those who came included a regular classroom teacher, the Title I teacher, the behavior adjustment person that every school had on staff, and her librarian assistant, who became her secretary. Marilyn shared,

> When I came here, I inherited a staff, and I have to admit that it was not a well-functioning staff. The school had been labeled as an unsuccessful school. It had been a haven for teachers that were non-performing and they just put them here. They had never had a principal that had been here two consecutive years. So there was no one to really follow through to get rid of ineffective teachers. So when I came, some retired, some could not work under my leadership style, and as we became more successful, people started talking about the school. Then people started asking. When I first came here we could not get subs, and subs would not come to this school because it had such a bad

reputation. And when I had vacancies, I was calling and begging people to come in for an interview. Within the last two years, everyone that's come here has called me, and has asked for an interview, and said that they wanted come here, so we are happy about that.

Of all the participants in the study, Judy probably had one of the most turbulent reactions from teachers because of the changes she advanced. She recalled,

From when I came here, and it's hard to believe that this is my seventh year, and only—I have three staff members left that are from the original when I came here. The goal of the staff was to get rid of me, and for them to stay. I was just speaking to my old boss, and they even told her that. It was a very, very tough couple of years because I was doing something that had never been done before in the district, and it's basically turning the place upside down, and then starting over with existing staff. Therefore I had to deal with the union a lot.

Recounting her weekly meetings with the union president, Judy recalled,

It was really, really tough because it was not just the teachers learning what I was doing, but also the district was learning, too. What we did when I came here now has become known as the model for what they call their "lead schools," and because of what we did, they have gotten kind of a model or pilot that they have to work with, and it's not copyrighted. If they use it, it might be about how to turn around other schools, too. Now we've got six other elementary schools that are doing some of what we did.

Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 had a professional development program that brought changes based on establishing PLCs. However, as a school that was restructured, Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 had one of the newest sets of teachers, with the least amount of seniority in the district. The young teachers on Jason's staff were among the first ones released

from their contracts. So, probably the most troubling challenge for the Aspire Academy

Elementary School #2's plan to incorporate changes came when a large percentage of teachers

who wanted to be at the school experienced a *reduction in force* and were "RIFed" because of

budget cuts. Jason reported a tremendous turnover that occurred not just one year but every year

for the last three years that he has led the school. He recounted the challenge he faced:

> The first year, before we had to release them because of budget cuts, they came from
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> outside the district and the majority of them were White teachers. We lost some of them
>
> because of budget cuts. The second year, I was able to hire maybe a third of them from
>
> outside and a third of them from within. I lost two-thirds of them because of budget cuts.
>
> The third year, now we're in, I was able to hire one or two from the outside and the
>
> majority from within the district. We will have a reduction in force including this year
>
> . . . Maybe 15 or 20% have stayed through all three years.

When asked about his reflections about starting over at the beginning of every year, Jason

replied, "But that's alright. I like the challenge. I get to mold it all over again. At this point, for

next year, it looks like I'm only losing one."

Subtheme 1.4: Principals acknowledged the need for parental involvement and

parental support. Another leading subtheme under high expectations was the principals'

interpretation of what parental support meant and how parental involvement was cultivated.

There were a significant number of occasions when all of the principals made references about

the type of home life students came from, the need for parent involvement and support, and ways

that schools could encourage that support. The following list of principals, ranked from the top

six down, talked frequently about home/parent and school connections, Audrey, Karen, Marilyn,

Peter, and Katrina, by far, placed the most emphasis on the importance of this connection. In

fact, this section, probably the longest in its content, provided a great deal of insight and offers a rich narrative into principal perceptions about their expectations of their parents and what they perceived the parent's role to be in supporting their students. Their perceptions of their parents were formulated into two basic thrusts: understanding ways to work successfully with parents from diverse backgrounds and cultivating trust and respect from them.

Eleven principals named parental involvement as the most important out-of-school factor in increasing student achievement. Next to building relationships, trust, and respect, the most frequently referenced topic by the principals centered on parental involvement and support. Included under this broad umbrella was the way some principals reversed the equation and talked about the schools' role in providing support to parents. Principals also shared they had experienced varying degrees of success with parental involvement efforts. Some reached very few, but a few had hundreds who attended family activities connected to the parent gatherings. Many of the principals also discussed conditions in which some of their students lived, such as those associated with poverty, homelessness, incarcerated parents, what many at the school considered dysfunctional parenting skills, living with grandparents or in foster care, a seeming lack of interest in their child's education, and the attitudes of parents who may come to school with issues about the school, but they still recognized the importance of parental involvement.

In the midst of an initial short-lived turbulence Katrina experienced when she first came to the school and met her new parents, she saw how parental attitudes changed toward her after they realized her expectations and motivation for having the students as the central focus of the school. This idea resonated with all of the principals, who voiced similar ideas about working with parents. Katrina shared the importance of parental and school personnel working together

toward the same goal of helping children reach their full potential. Regarding the role of parents, she stated,

> I think the number one influence are parents, and I try to understand where students are coming from—not every family is the same, many times there are single parents, sometimes it's grandparents, sometimes it's foster parents, and we still set the high expectations. We expect students to reach their potential, but we also try to provide supports, whether it would be through the social worker, through a [Response to Intervention] process, or through a mentoring program that will allow them to focus on their education when they are here. It would be beneficial to the child if the parents were supportive, were involved in at the school activities, oversaw homework and that type of thing, but it doesn't always happen. And so we have after school tutoring programs, and we have a very full Title I reading program in our efforts to support the student learning.

Regarding her expectations of teachers, Katrina explained,

> I think when you lead that way, then teachers know what's expected of them. Teachers here know parents should not be surprised about anything. I don't want to hear parents say, "If I had known this two weeks ago." No, you tell the parent right away. Your job is to communicate to the parents; you're working as a team. You need to build that rapport. If you have to mail a letter, you mail the letter. If you can't get that, there's not a working phone number, if there's no email, you need to make that connection because you're not going to be as effective if you're not working with the parent.

> Concerning the status of her parent–teacher organization (PTO), Katrina admitted they

had tried to find programs that interested the parents. They had had sessions on finances, nutrition, and even Zumba exercise, which the parents really responded well to. There were 10

committed families who came for the nutrition program and about 40 parents came for the Zumba night. Carolyn also confessed to having low parental involvement even though the school presented events similar to New Suburbia Elementary School #11's agenda.

Throughout the years, even before Marilyn came to Restoration Elementary School #7, she had been highly successful in involving parents in school activities. Parents flocked to her school for programs served with dinner. At her former school, she shared how she had always had 100% contact with every parent in the school for the "Parents In Touch" day that her district sponsored for every school. If parents did not come to the school, teachers went on home visits to meet the parents and got their signatures to indicate they had met with them. She challenged her new teachers when she came to Restoration Elementary School #7, and they, too, had begun to accept this expectation. Marilyn shared how much the parents appreciated the care and concern they demonstrated:

> And you see how they live, and then you would have a different respect with what they went through to get here, and so especially on PIT day, Parents in Touch, I'm telling this, you know, they will say why I can't get it, and I'll say, "There is no excuse; everybody should have a 100%, so that, that if you've got to go, do it; walk across the street." So they go with their girlfriends, they go as teams, and they go to the houses, and they get their signatures. They have, they have come here in the morning before a parent goes to work and met them, but they know that I expect that everybody is to have 100%. Do they? No, but I won't have over three that don't have 100%. And when I first came here, it was like, "Oh no, we can't get it." And I said, "At my other school everyone did. I don't believe that it can't be done." And I tell them that when you go out of the way to do some nice things, like for their parents, they appreciate it.

Although most of the principals struggled with finding activities that attracted parents to come to the school, Audrey reflected on the changing role of what parent involvement really encompassed beyond coming to school. Karen, Martha, and Katrina agreed with this interpretation. When asked about out-of-school factors that impact student learning, Audrey set the tone for understanding culturally relevant thinking about parenting. She cautioned,

> Well I definitely think that parental involvement is important. And one of the things we have had to do here is help teachers adjust their thinking, in that many times people think parental involvement means having parents come into the school. And I am not necessarily saying that parents have to come in the school to be involved, but I am saying that they need to be active and supportive participants at home and support education, and encourage education, and help children understand the value of education. So it doesn't necessarily mean coming into the school walls, but being an active voice or an active supporter of education at home and making the home a place where education is valued. Having reading materials. Having conversations with children at home, even if it's about whatever they are watching on TV, and still having those conversations and forcing children to articulate their thoughts on a certain topic or subject.

Karen talked about the importance of teachers not making judgments about parents, but knowing that all parents are concerned about their children.

> I just think that, when we look at the culture and the climate, as parents come to school it really starts with the teacher in the classroom. That's why it's so very important that we do have staff development for teachers, so that when we are working with individual students and their parents, that we make sure that we plan and communicate as we are meeting individual needs, because sometimes you know—just to say parents—they just

say they don't care, and it's like every parent cares, and loves their child as much as they

can. They do. They may have a lot of things in the way, but if we recognize that with

that in mind, as my teachers have met with the parents, gaining the support of those

parents that has been . . . that's a real blessing,

About the importance of parental support, Martha stated what a huge factor it was:

I know all parents have a different capacity for that. And so we work really hard on

parent involvement, kind of trying to think outside the box. How do you get those

parents involved? You know, both parents may be working at night, the kids are coming

home, the fifth grader is babysitting the second grader and the kindergartener and getting

them ready—and helping parents—taking on their responsibility. [Addressed to the

parents] "How do you use that strength of those children, that independence they have?"

But also to pull the parent in to somehow still be involved in [their] child's education?

"We understand that you're probably not helping them with their homework every night,

and that's okay, but here's how you can help your child at another time that you can do

it."

Karen, Clayton, Marilyn, Judy, and Carolyn discussed some of the ways they provided

resources and training for parents. Karen added that a key part of being an administrator deals

with knowing how to help parents work with the schools. Her 25 years of experience working in

the same community had shown her the need for this.

I found over time that some of my job that you don't really learn about—becoming an

administrator—is sometimes raising parents, you know, developing and raising parents.

And in order to do that, though, you really do have to gain trust with that parent. And so

as the team—you work together on those sorts of things. . . . I think it's the administrator setting the tone.

Carolyn expressed an appreciation for how parents love their children in the best way they know how.

> Parents, I think, parents of children of poverty love their children, help their children but they help them in a way that they know, and I think many times our parents are intimidated by the institution. So I think what we have to do is get them to come in, talk to them, develop a relationship with them, and provide them with support, and show them how to help their children with something that they are comfortable with. Our neighborhood is very transient. Many of the homes here are rentals, so there is not that community buy-in. They don't see it as a community because many times it's the place that they come for a little bit, stay, and then they are up and leaving again. So they don't have that strong foundation. And I think in our area, a third of our population lives in the projects. Their lives are often just disrupted. I think that they are in the survival mode, where it's about "Am I going to get through the next day? Am I going to eat? Do I have clothes to wear?" And there's violence and drugs.

When asked how many of her students she thought lived in these conditions, she answered, "I could be wrong, but I would say a third to half." With a similar response, Carolyn also shared how they tried to find services for parents with needs and how they impacted what they could that was out of the school's control. Carolyn described what happened:

> We do have a mental health therapist in our building who services kids. We often try to find the parents resources, such as if they need help with a utility provider, if they get evicted, if they are in an abusive relationship, or getting them to a shelter. We also have

a homeless coordinator on staff that's also our family involvement liaison. So it's helping, getting to know parents and students, and then finding out what resources they have, and what resources we could provide for them. So their children can be successful, and so they can be successful. So I would say that's out of our control—a lot of the neighborhood and everything else.

Although all of the principals discussed the importance of building relationships between parents, teachers, and the principal, Audrey, Karen, Clayton, Marilyn, Judy, and Carolyn also shared some key observations about making parents feel comfortable when they visited their schools. Clayton, Marilyn, and Peter stressed the importance of developing respect and trust from the parents. One way all three of them accomplished this was through home visits from both parent liaisons and teachers. Clayton emphasized the importance of showing respect to parents and valuing their opinions.

One of the things we try to do a lot of is respecting parental opinion and trying to get teachers to listen. We are having this problem, "So what do you think?"—as opposed to bring the parent in and say, "Here is what you are doing wrong," because that doesn't always comes across well. What I like from that is, if it's reasonable, whatever the parent is suggesting to do, try that first, and if it doesn't work—we can know it's not going to work, you know—give it a short time, and then circle back around and the parents feel like they were guided and instructed.

Marilyn has developed a unique relationship with her parents at Restoration Elementary School #7. It is not surprising that the parents at her former school went to the school board and protested her moving to another building. Under her leadership, parents have specific expectations from which the school does not waiver. When she came to the school, she and her

staff implemented a strict set of guidelines with rewards and consequences that some parents tried to circumvent. When new students came to the school, they and their parents learned about the expectations in an uncommon manner. After the state's Average Daily Membership count, any new students and their parents have to attend a conference with staff members. Marilyn remarked,

> Ms. Cummings, our counselor, goes over the intake form and asks parents questions and information about their child, because we need to know for when we are placing him in a class, which class is best to place them in. Then they meet with our discipline team, and our discipline team explains our point system, explains our expectations—explains what we expect. We let them know that we love your children, we would treat them like our own, but children don't run over here, and they will not hit anybody. So they kind of know, you know, that we mean it.

When asked about some new children who had come that week in April, Marilyn answered matter-of-factly,

> Everybody goes, you don't come in until you go through that. Then they go to our parent liaison, and she talks about the different programs we have and asks them to be involved. So they have to go to all three of them before their child goes to class. So, if they come and say, "Oh I'm in a hurry" and "I ain't got no time" or "I've got to go," we'll say, "Well you know, you may want to just stay, then we will get you a ride home, but if not, you've got to come back tomorrow after 9:30, after we get to school, because this is the way that we get to know you." We make sure we put it to them. "We're meeting your child's need." So they kind of like that, because then, they take a tour of the school. They know our expectations so it's no surprises. And then we give them a little brochure

about our special program called Project Restore that we have going on in the school and we go over that.

Marilyn added how important it was to develop a relationship and create a sense of teamwork with the parents. She shared, "When the parents feel comfortable with you, and your decisions and your suggestions, and it's not a fighting or bickering between you, then you can get more accomplished. They have to learn to trust us."

Like Marilyn Jenkins, Judy Grantland also was very direct in letting parents know her expectations.

I'm very upfront and real. My case manager is also. My administrative assistant is also. I mean the parents know they can trust us, and they know they can come here, and they know that I will be very straight with them. I don't play games and they appreciate that, It's hard to hear when you bring a kid here that's been going to another school where they have being getting straight As that you tell them this child's a D student because we are measuring them on what the state standards are.

Judy added another dimension to developing trust from her parents when she discussed her relationship with the Hispanic community and how things occurred outside of school control that became her concern. She shared one recent event when she had to drive over an hour from her hometown in another city over the weekend:

The fact that we have very, very strong relationships with our families says they trust us. They come to us with their needs. Like, we had a Hispanic family. We have a lot of illegals here too. In that they trust us, and where they are fearful because of their status with dealing authorities, they come to us like, we had a child that had his appendix burst this Saturday. They called us. They knew we would be there and take them to the

hospital and help them. It's that trust and that knowing that we are here for them that build strong relationships.

In discussing an upcoming parent meeting, Judy was confident the school would have great parent attendance.

I'm going to be having a parent event coming up, a math night. It's going to be followed by a Cinco de Mayo celebration, so we are going to have our Mexican fiesta, too. I'm anticipating we will have 700 people there. I have probably the best parent involvement in the district, and it's all based on the relationship—the trust, the fact that we are here to help, that we honor them for who they are. It doesn't matter if they speak English or Swahili or whatever it is—they are honored.

She gave another example of an African family who had come from a predominantly Muslim country. The family had endured some very hard times before they came and the mother had some emotional problems. Before they came to America, some siblings had died of starvation and the father had been killed in war. One of her children was going to be retained in kindergarten. Judy reported how she worked with the mother:

Through investigation, and that's one of the things where administrators sometimes don't take the time. They have got to know the family's link. They've got to get to the backgrounds to uncover what's really going on. The relationship was such now, finally, that I can talk to her now about it during the parent–teacher conference through the son. I therefore strongly suspect the mother probably was malnourished when she was pregnant because they were eating grass, and they had no food. And when he was born, he is very, very tiny. He is very small for his age, and he just can't retain things. I mean it's just not there.

Judy had developed an understanding of cultures beyond knowing about her American-born students. She talked about making connections with all of her students. She gave an account by telling how she convinced the older brother in the African family that he needed to follow her advice about the kindergarten child:

> And you have to know what their culture is like. I spoke to him and this is not degrading because this is how he understood. I let him know because also in the cultures many times the males have a lot more freedom than the female, like basically some of them can get away of anything, and some Hispanic families, the more traditional ones, you would see that as well. I let the brother know that I was the chief in the school, and that's the terminology he used. I was a chief, but he understood that, and this is what I expected. In their cultures, they also do corporal punishment a lot, and I also let him know that I did not want him to go home and beat his brother. I wanted him to talk to him and let him know that I was a chief, and that he was to behave here. Ever since we had that conversation, we've had minimal behavior problems with this kid, and he was a terror at a school that he was at two years before he came here.

When asked about out-of-school factors that impact student achievement, Jason mentioned two main concerns about out-of-school factors that impact learning and perhaps sum up why parental involvement is so crucial. He imparted that schools support parents in helping to prepare students to function effectively in society: "Parental involvement and community partnerships are the backbone of any civilized and academically advanced country. It's the backbone of the home and the community. You've got to have one or the other that helps foster and rally behind education."

Subtheme 1.5: Principals acknowledged the need for community involvement. Each school had varied degrees of participation. Whereas some principals discussed ways the community had supported the schools, some principals noted their desire for the community to trust that they were doing a good job educating the children who attended their schools. Conversely, other principals shared how the school served as a community hub, and some talked about how they had meetings and events that were outreaches into the community itself. Principals shared varying levels of partnerships with community members, agencies, churches, and businesses.

Although signs on the school's office door encouraged volunteers to work in the school, Audrey admitted that her school had limited community partnerships because of their location. However, there were volunteer parents and others who came in to help with their reading focus. Likewise, Martha did not share a great deal about outside partnerships beyond her connection with a local university and the school's neighborhood association. Peter and Carolyn observed the increasing student and family support being provided by service providers such as CPS (Child Protective Services) and mental health agencies.

Seven of the principals acknowledged the support churches in the community provided to their school and others in their districts. Although some principals gave reasons why they had little community involvement, three of the principals talked about the crucial role that local churches played in tutoring and supporting school initiatives. In particular, two went to great lengths to share what they did to gather partnerships with community groups.

Viola shared their connections with local churches, senior tutors, and the Boys and Girls Club located near the school. She also shared the role community businesses, colleges, and vocational schools played in helping the school when they came for the annual Career Day. She

told about how a nearby church provided tutoring in their Power Hour and helped with their homework club through a community program.

In addition to an after school tutoring program provided by a local neighborhood church that was staffed by retired teachers, a church worked with Winding Creek School #9 and provided food baskets for families at the school. Peter also shared about the grants and community outreach in which his school engaged. Winding Creek School #9 received a Ben Carson reading grant to revamp its library to help excite students to read. Furthermore, his staff had been to three of the largest apartment complexes in his boundary area to meet with parents.

> We talk to our parents. We will go to our apartment complexes and talk about what you can do to help your child be successful in the school—home discipline, working with the school, child behavior in home—and we have a child psychologist to do that for us, and he came in for four nights, different nights, and we would have pizza, provide daycare for kids, and parents can just learn.

Carolyn discussed the programs she has brought into the school. Because of transportation issues, most of the programs are integrated into the daily schedule. Carolyn, like Peter, who along with her staff, instead of always expecting services and parents to come to the school, developed a community outreach summer reading program in collaboration with the city library's program where the students could walk with their parents to the area library. She shared how staff members volunteered throughout the summer and in the fall gave students who participated a book bag full of supplies.

> We know that our children have summer reading loss so the last year school, every child goes home with three to five books, new books to read during the summer. Every
> Wednesday teachers and staff members are at the public library where kids can walk

from 9:00 to 11:00, and if children come up there, we give them more books for their at-home library collection. We just go to the main one that's like in our neighborhood, and it's the main library. And so teachers are there to read with them, to give them their free books. We put them on computers to play math games, so we try to support them during this summer the best that we can. Last year we had about 100 per week.

Probably the most encompassing account of community/school partnerships unfolded as Marilyn and Judy, respectively, shared rich dialogue about how they worked to gather comprehensive community support. Located in a densely populated area with several churches near the school, Marilyn was a real "go-getter" and had one of the most extensive community involvement plans that were comparable only to the aggressive plan executed by Judy.

Marilyn worked extensively with her church, which is considered to be one of the largest churches in the city. The church provided a place for the teachers to hold a retreat before school began. They, along with other area churches, helped to fund sporting activities for the students. Her church had also given shirts, monetary prizes, and a dinner for the parents and their children who passed the state assessment. Because of community support, many students also went on two outings to a nearby water park and an amusement park in another city. Students who passed the state assessment at the plus level were able to go to a nice restaurant in a nearby suburban community. A local bank helped underwrite the cost. In addition, teachers also volunteered and supported activities. In recounting how she rewarded students for good behavior and academic success, Marilyn told about some of her community partners.

I work with my community. I believe the second year I was here, we had a soccer team. One of my teachers and her husband coached soccer, and we bought the portable goals and used them. This year we are working with two churches to have baseball over there,

and we are working with a local area church to have flag football out there. One, we've got a local bank that helps us. Two, we've got the church that gives us money to help us, and three, we've got teachers that will support. Like we want to go to King's Island, and the cost was $25, and we would underwrite the rest for the children. Some parents say they couldn't pay $25, so teachers sponsored them. They gave money so that the kids could go. So they [students] see that if they made the honor roll, they got a polo shirt. So, we tie in doing nice things for them, and more children want to be on the side of rewards than punishment.

She added while sharing about a recent event that brought special recognition to the school, and divulged how the school's systems of consistent rewards and consequences had made a great difference in student behavior and in shaping the public's perception of their continuing upward growth. Marilyn also demonstrated the theme of spirituality that R. Lee (2007) identified as a principle often found in culturally responsive schools.

That's why I say, I believe in prayer. The things that have just been happening—nice things, just nice things like a national restaurant with a local location called and said, "We have someone that donated money and they do it every year." They have this big thing where they have taken them to lunch, they have the coats, they give him sweatshirts, they buy free uniforms, pair of shoes, belts, and underclothes for 200 children. And they have been working with another school, and the school they were working with couldn't go on the 10th, so they thought they'd call and asked us, out of the blue. Wasn't that nothing but God? And so I don't have 200 children because some of my children have acted up in Grades 4, 5, and 6, so I said I'm only taking 159 because I'm not rewarding bad behavior. Those other children will see they missed out by acting

up. "You fought; uh-uh, you can't go." It's like this, "Ms. Jenkins, can I . . . ?" "Uh-uh, I love you, but you can't go."

Judy boasted about her role in developing powerful partnerships through relationships she built in the community and through her years of successful grant-writing efforts to bring programs into her schools. Indeed, the magnitude of her community partnerships would be worthy of a study based on its own merits. She began sharing about Independence Elementary School #8's relationship with local universities and her expectation of their students who came to the school.

> We have tremendous amount of community involvement. We have a college that's a partner and at the holidays they make a shoebox full of gifts for every single child in this building. If the child is Muslim or Jehovah Witness any of those types of things, we contact the parents, and often times they will allow them to give them the box without wrapping, but it's honoring their belief system. We have a partnership with a program from a local university. We have people here from another college. I'm trying to think who else has been here lately. I mean we just have lots of colleges that have their students come here too, because of what we are doing, and who we are. And so that's an asset for them. The kids were learning, as well as it's additional support for our students because they can get more one-on-one attention.

Judy added an incident that showed the high expectations she expected from her community partners:

> I'm not saying it's always effective because, for instance, I just had two students show up from one university program this semester, and they were dressed inappropriately. Their behavior that they exhibited with the teacher was inappropriate, and therefore they were

not allowed to come back. I mean one chance is all they get. If they are not going to be respectful in the environment, they are not coming, because our children . . . We have to demonstrate for our children what we expect. And if you are going to have a substandard behavior from an adult, then how can you hold children accountable to a double standard—that's my philosophy.

Judy shared about the numerous grants that had come to the school and how they benefited children through reading, parenting classes, the arts, and a science program.

I have written a tremendous amount of grants. We got . . . Actually I wrote a Ready School grant. It was my second year here, I think it was. And it funded parent literacy times for each grade level and field trips; and it was a family involvement with literacy; and they had breakfast in classrooms; and they did activities, and they gave the kids materials; and they bought lots of literature —infused this place with literature and gave tremendous amount of literature to families. We have gotten a [Reading is Fundamental] grant every year, so we provided books in that way. But it's not just anybody, but if they are not quality instruction, I don't want them.

Excited about sharing other community connections, she continued and also told about an event targeting her Hispanic community, which reached about 50-60 parents. Although the program was a success in her school, she reflected that it was not effective for other schools when they tried to replicate it. Before moving to another topic, she interrupted,

I'm not done yet. [Laughter] We have one of the city's energy providers as a partner and every fall. They bring a pickup truck full of school supplies that are donated to our school. I mean, I'm talking about a pickup truck. I mean I have a tremendous amount of partnership including one I created for the city, with the associated churches this year—a

parenting program. And I did the pilot and now of course they are implementing in other schools—where I had parenting classes going on during the school day as well as after school. Childcare was provided. I had an Hispanic minister come in as a teacher and people came and were taught and, at the same time, Hispanic classes as well as English-speaking class. I had this going on two sessions in one day for six weeks, totally effective. We had a graduation for the parents on a Saturday. It was in the evening, we just had snacks and they got certificates and everything.

Additionally, she shared about a six-week ballet program that combined literacy skills for all grade levels, a performance and, at the end, a dinner with the students and their parents. One student was so excited, she told the community partner, "I've been waiting for this my whole life." Probably the most recent grant that excited Judy was one that had just concluded the day before the interview. It involved her second grade classes with a science and technology grant in partnership with a local university. They had received a $500,000 grant from a foundation and an $8,000 grant with another university partner. The program involved 3-D technology connecting science, computer programs, and 3-D vision glasses.

We got $500,000 and I then I got $8,000 from one program and, through that, I bought all the pieces for the computers, so they can build the computers and we bought the 3-D vision glasses. They are $300 a pair. And so in second grade, with the hypothesis that kids will have 21st century skills, they are learning through technology and all that type of thing, you know, and all the video things, that they would be able to capture these abstract concepts more effectively through using 3D video that they could manipulate.

Judy marveled at the depth of understanding her second graders gained about the earth and its rotation patterns.

You should have been here. I mean yesterday, amazing things they are doing. I mean the pre- and post-test stuff is amazing and the terminology and the facts they know—everything and even some that some adults don't even know, and they grasp it because they were actually manipulating this computer with these 3D images, and they were seeing the axis rotate. They will tell you things like, "In winter time the earth is the closest to the sun due to the tip of the axis." One of the girls even said, a second grader told us, what degree the sun was [tilted] yesterday.

Although the level of community involvement at each school varied according to the principal's skill in cultivating and funding opportunities, the other 10 principals expressed their belief that community support and involvement could benefit their schools. Marilyn and Judy went a step further than hoping; they worked tirelessly to bring in unique enrichment opportunities for their students.

Subtheme 1.6: Principals recognized that out-of-school factors were real, but did not dwell on them as an excuse not to expect teachers to teach. When principals were asked to name the out-of-school factors that impacted students' learning and achievement, overwhelmingly, their answers revolved around the parental involvement and community partnerships. The most remarkable observation, however, was that although all of the principals talked about the need for parental support, not one of the principals blamed or used the parents as an excuse for what they and their staff could or could not do to advance the school's academic focus.

They also showed awareness of other factors that impacted student learning. Among the other factors offered by either one or two principals, not necessarily in any rank order, were the state standards and their ability to provide a framework for instruction, the school's reading

focus, the lack of student motivation to learn, mentoring programs, social workers, CPS workers, mental health service agencies, the role of society, and technology and its role in having children come to school with ideas that were not age appropriate.

Audrey added two factors she thought were important:

So, some of the other variables, I would say, are obviously political variables and funding—things that are truly out of our control. There's never enough money or never enough time. So, you know, you take the hand that you are dealt and make it work for you.

Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6 staff members worked hard to overcome a great challenge related to student motivation. Despite their growth in student achievement, Clayton made the following confession:

So we are the most challenged by the fact that, and it sounds terrible, that students didn't want to learn. They are not very motivated to do the academic work, so you have to address it over something else, and create that need to know so that it becomes appealing to them. There are so many distractions for kids that they are not hungry to learn.

Ironically, four of the principals expressed disappointment and referenced receiving new students who lagged behind their students who had been at the school for extended periods of time. Karen, Marilyn, Judy, and Peter all spoke about students who came from neighboring districts or charter schools who were behind where they were expected to be at their school at the time of the year they arrived. Marilyn represented the other principals who spoke about the challenge of parents moving their children to charter schools and then bringing them back because their students did not adjust well to the program. She stated,

And there are sometimes, when they leave, because they think we are too strict with our rules, and they don't like it, because they have children that won't comply. Then we are not changing our rules for them, so we're an inconvenience to parents to keep coming up here, to keep trying different things, and so on, they want to leave. And then they end up coming back because they see the problem goes with the child—if it's the problem. But I'm happy because we have gotten some children that other schools couldn't handle, and they have been all right for us.

Peter typified the five principals who discussed changes in the neighborhood and the school boundary areas and equated the number of apartments, project housing, rental homes, and Section 8 housing to a more transient population. Judy, Audrey, Viola, Carolyn, and Karen discussed the economic impact the foreclosure rates had on student mobility and the increase in homelessness, children living in shelters, or even out of their families' cars. Peter shared,

> Our population—we have a lot of apartments in our area, so we have a lot of movement in and out. Now it's kind of nice when they do move within the district since we are 8-Step school. In our district, we follow the district calendar so we know if we get a student from one of our other elementary buildings, they are going to be in the same place we are, and we can just keep going ahead. But it's when students come in from outside the district catching them up, and with being high poverty, we know that we are going to have that turnover rate. And that's not as bad as it was when I first came here. You see it when you are around a third grade classroom teacher; she started the year with 22 students, and she ended the year, probably she had six or seven of her original 22 that started the year with her.

In looking at the school's past history, the demographics and the neighboring community where children live, Jason recognized the out-of-school factors his school faced. However he remained optimistic about the improvements the students have made during the last three years, despite high teacher turnover and a high student mobility rate. He shared,

> We have a third Hispanic, a third Caucasian, and a third African American. We are sitting in a pocket of high crime. We are sitting in the highest crime area in the county. We have one of the highest mobility rates of students. We are a universal feeding school. We are a Title I school. Now I said all that to say how sweet it is that we are making academic progress. Philosophically, it's not supposed to happen, but what we're showing here is that if you infuse practices—best practices—with unequivocal determination, success is possible. Student achievement is attainable.

Noting changes as African American and Hispanic enrollment increased in a former White suburban area, Katrina acknowledged, as did Winding Creek School #9 and Bookman Station Elementary School #12, that her school was the original hub for the Hispanic students in the district. She told how, as the numbers grew, change evolved with staffing. They have an ESL teacher, a full-time aide, and a part-time aide. Katrina shared about New Suburbia Elementary School #11,

> We have a population of Hispanic students as a result of an English as a Second Language program, and then there is just a small percentage of White students. At one point we were the home base for that program for all our elementary schools, but as the program expanded they started programs at Colonial Elementary, which is a good half hour away. The students were on the buses for 30 minutes, and that was not in their best interest. So there is another program at Allentown Elementary because they have such a

large population that could support two other teachers and the aide there. But we do accept students from Dover Elementary and from Ellison Elementary who need to apply for the English language program.

Viola perhaps gave the best summation of why, although out-of-school factors are a concern, what happens in school sets the tone and reputation of how the community perceives the school. She observed,

> The parents, the community had to trust the teachers and trust that we are doing our job, so whether it's outside of the school or inside the school even the students had to be able to feel that you care about them, that you feel the trust that you are going to be there for them, that you will protect them, and care for them,. So I think that's the biggest factor right there, and there has to be a trust within the community. Then of course you got to be able to communicate with the parents, so that communication would be second. We would be able to communicate with parents as well as the community leaders that work in here. We are surrounded by the five churches, so for some time we have been communicating with the churches as well to see if they can help with programs that will help us improve student learning here. So we've got trust, communication, and cooperation.

Summary of having high expectations for all. The six subthemes linked to the theme of having high expectations for all demonstrated the leadership role that principals in the study adopted to influence expectations for themselves, their staff, their students, parents, and the community. The principals were all aware that they set the tone of the building and helped develop the mission and vision of their schools. There was a greater focus on in-school practices

and what could be controlled and maximized rather than using out-of-school factors as limitations to teacher expectations.

Developing a Sense of Community Among Staff and Students

Each of the participants discussed strategies they used to create a climate and culture in their buildings that optimized student learning. They revealed the importance of developing trusting and respectful relationships with staff members, students, their parents, and the community. Their primary goal was to have everyone embrace the culture of high expectations spoken of in the previous section. Principals valued collaboration and created team members who worked together to improve student behavior and academic achievement and who also helped students become more responsible for their own conduct and learning. Teachers were equipped to meet the needs of students with effective, engaging instructional strategies. By building a trusting community, instructional coaches were welcomed into classrooms to assist teachers with data analysis and instructional practices. The climate and culture of their schools shifted as the principals guided the process.

Although unique in their approaches, the principals shared a strong connection for implementing the subthemes listed in Table 8. These subthemes relate to how principals developed a community of learners.

Table 8

Subthemes Linked to Developing a Community of Learners

No.	Seven Subthemes Related to Building a Culture and Climate of Learners
1	Principals rallied staff members to the vision and mission of using effective instructional practices that produced measurable results as a primary focus.
2	Principals began to develop a culture and climate in the school that fostered building relationships, trust, and respect among staff members and, in turn, their relationships with students and parents.
3	Principals established a culture and climate where students began to understand the expectations that were set for behavior and academic achievement.
4	Principals developed high expectations that influenced the culture and climate of the building.
5	Principals supported teachers to become highly qualified in delivering effective, engaging instructional strategies.
6	Principals valued collaboration.
7	Principals valued the role of instructional coaches and other support staff to help teach and model effective practices based on data-driven information.

Subtheme 2.1: Principals rallied staff members to the vision and mission of using effective instructional practices that produced measurable results as a primary focus. Although only a few principals articulated their schools' mission statements or visions by quoting them, there was little doubt that there was a driving force that led the principals to expect that all students would thrive at their schools. Clayton was one of the principals who directly discussed his school's mission.

So we are a public charter. What that means is we have a focus, maybe not the same, but

different, like a magnet school in a larger district nearby. But unlike the magnet school,

there is no process other than a lottery, so we have no control over the type of student, whether it's race, physical background, their cognitive level or language background or any of that. So it's just luck of the draw.

Peter believed that the district's mission ensured success at Winding Creek School #9. He affirmed,

> Well it all comes down to what's our main purpose here, and that's to educate students, and do what's best for our students. That's driven all the way down to us from our superintendent. In the end, she is doing what's best for students. We follow the core values of the district, which are every child can learn and succeed, ethics, best practices, responsible steward, service to community, data, and pursuit of excellence. We follow that. It's the best practice; we've got to do it.

Katrina Marsh agreed with the other responses about the school's mission as she shared her primary goal, "We have to be working together with the parents, and we may not always agree, but we all have the same goal to help that child reach his or her full potential."

Subtheme 2.2: Principals began to develop a culture and climate in the school that fostered building relationships, trust, and respect among staff members and, in turn, their relationships with students and parents. Every principal responded strongly and clearly about how important the climate and culture of a school was in supporting student learning. The number one thread that permeated the entire study was the importance of building relationships among staff members, and in turn, between staff members and students and parents. This was demonstrated through team building activities, collaborative sharing, and activities that built a cohesive school community.

Katrina stressed the importance she placed on staff members having a team approach and working together as a family unit.

I feel that New Suburbia Elementary School #11 works well because there is a team attitude, not to say that everyone is on the same page, but that people enjoy coming here. They enjoy working here. When we hire new personnel, we hire them as a team. It's not just my selection. I'm obviously part of the team. But the grade level has input as to which candidate they feel will work best with them and will add maybe some strengths that the team doesn't have at that point. They have input into it and so they buy in—they have some say into who they are working with. So I think that has a big impact on our progress. Teachers stay; they don't transfer. Currently, actually all the teachers are five years or more. Teachers who work well together; some staff bring their children. My secretary's children went to school here. She started out as a resource aide as recently as last year with the technology aide and then was chosen to be the secretary just before Christmas of this year. And so she has a real feel for New Suburbia Elementary School #11 and a dedication to New Suburbia Elementary School #11. The clerk has been here . . . her children attended this school. There is any number of people that work here who have had children to come through New Suburbia Elementary School #11. And so there it is; just a sense of family.

Similar to Karen Hanover's philosophy of making the school an inviting environment, staff members at New Suburbia Elementary School #11 were involved in a program, initiated by the state, that was no longer in operation, but it also helped schools develop a climate that made school feel more home-like. Katrina recalled,

One of the pieces was to deinstitutionalize the building so as you look around, you will

see plants, you will see valences, you will see chairs, lamps to make it more comfortable

and less threatening area or a place to come. The training is also kind of played on that

thing; you know this is a good place to come. It's a place you can enjoy; you can feel

challenged, but not threatened

Carolyn Williamson discussed ways she built relationship with her students. She also

gave an example of how the staff was supportive of one another when there had been illnesses or

death in their families.

Sometimes, what I've been doing is I eat in the cafeteria so I will pick a table to sit at it,

and I will sit with the kids and have lunch, usually with fourth and fifth grade because

they are sometimes a little bit challenging. And plus too, I think what's important about

the school, the teachers know, the custodians know, my office staff knows that if I'm

short of a cafeteria person, I will be in there helping. You know, if there is a spill on the

floor, and the custodian is busy, I will take care of the spill on the cafeteria.

Carolyn talked about the events her staff planned and hosted to build morale for teachers

and students.

We celebrate. We work together, and now we celebrate with the staff, we celebrate with

the kids. We try to . . . I think everyone works so hard, and we are so stressed out, but I

think that we all need to be proud of our accomplishments. And if you go from an ice-

cream social to . . . we do, we do ISTEP parades and we made AYP, we did AYP

parades. We had a celebration for the kids, celebration for the teachers, so we just - we

have to honor each other.

She added about developing a climate of shared ownership,

I think our climate and culture is very positive, very supportive of each other. We don't play the blame game. We don't make excuses. And I think we are very trusting. We trust each other because I think you have to have that trust in order to allow someone to come into your classroom or to say to one of your colleagues, "Wow, my data really doesn't look that great, yours looks great. What are you doing differently than I'm doing? Can I come into your room, can I watch you?" But I think it has taken time to develop, I would say we didn't really get a staff that was stable until about three years ago, and I think team building, the way we plan, grade levels plan together; and we do Saturdays. We work together on Saturdays. And I also think it's giving them the permission to take ownership of what they do. We have created pacing guides, curriculum maps, now we are aligning those maps to the Indiana state maps where we would be dropping in the core standards. So it's allowing them to create like working documents, so that we are going to work on them for their grade level, and then understanding that it's okay to disagree.

In comparing the change in climate the school has experienced over the last six years, Carolyn commented about the dedication of the staff. She talked about the transformation,

Total turn-around. I mean I believe that the staff is . . . I'm not going to say that the other staff wasn't committed, but the staff who is here now wants to be here. The staff who is here knows what it takes to teach at a Title I school with high poverty. The staff here is willing to take a risk and say, "Yes this worked, no this didn't work; let's go back to the drawing table"—because the staff here is not tied to contractual time. I have teachers who are coming at 6:30 in the morning and leave 7-8 o'clock at night.

Regarding in-school factors that influenced student learning, Martha reflected on the importance of the teachers being the single most important factor as they build relationships with their students. Often they must move students up to grade-level expectations who may be two years below where they should be working. She believed that excellent teachers mattered:

> You have heard this in the media so much recently, if you put the best teacher in front of the kids, the best teacher that you can find in front of the kids, makes all, it can make the biggest impact; it can make a difference. That relationship that that teacher has—that teacher knowing the children, that teacher knowing the student's ability level in everything, exactly where they are working, and taking them from that point, not just the standards for that grade level which are required, but beyond.

Throughout the school year, BelleAire West Elementary School #1 had been working on an activity that had a baseball theme. The project involved the students, parents, teachers, and community partners in a collective reading goal that supported their school improvement plan. In discussing the event, Audrey noted the cohesive effect it had on the school climate while focusing on the school's main priority of reading. She explained,

> We've involved our kids and we involved our community in it. So what we realize is that, in order to have better readers, our kids have to know what the goal is. We have a two million page challenge as a school. Our kids have to read two million pages by the first of May and then we're going to . . . If we meet our goal, all of our kids, our entire staff, custodians everybody, we're going to go to our hometown's baseball game.

Like Jason, during whole group staff development activities, Audrey presented strategies she believed were important to continue building community among the staff. She expected them, in turn, to do similar activities with their classes and with each other when small groups of

teachers meet. She suggested they were not a waste of time but important in building

cohesiveness among the staff. She stated,

> Building a community is based on relationships and finding things that we have in
>
> common, and it takes shared experiences. So, at one time we had gotten away from "the
>
> fluff,"—you know, the mixers, the HDA, the human development activities, and those
>
> kinds of things. But we spend a great deal of time doing those kinds of things. At the
>
> beginning of the meeting, we may do an HDA, human development activity, I guess that
>
> would be an energizer or one of those getting-to-know-you activities. Many times . . .
>
> We are very intentional with them and anytime we have professional development that is
>
> delivered from administration or whatever adult, our professional development mirrors
>
> what we want teachers to do in the classroom.

Regarding the small group activities, Audrey added,

> I expect the teachers to do community builders. I expect for teachers to do team builders.
>
> So the community builder will involve the entire staff and the team builder is an activity
>
> that involves just that small intimate group of team members that are working together.
>
> And so, with that, we understand and realize that in order to have a community of
>
> learners we have to have a sense of trust. You have to have a sense of interconnectivity,
>
> interdependence—I'm dependent on you; you're dependent on me; and together, if one of
>
> us fails, we're not successful unless all of us are successful.

> Clayton shared how his teachers worked together to get financial bonuses at the charter

school. While acknowledging the pressure that his teachers felt to perform in a culture where

data drove all decisions, he shared some fun ways he tried to relieve stress in the building by

designating staff members with one being a "minister of fun," to plan informal social activities for staff members. He reflected,

> We put a whole lot of pressure on teachers to perform. We have a culture that is very focused on data. I don't know. I would be hard pressed to go a meeting or not have somebody, well, presenting data on something. And it may just sort of the culture of the building, so people know that if you are collecting data, and you've been held accountable for that data. People are in many cases, judging your effectiveness based on that data, it's a lot of pressure on the teachers, and so we recognize that trying to find other ways beyond financial rewards, bonuses are a nice end of the year perk that you get.

Marilyn shared about the retreats her staff had at the beginning of the school year that helped to build trust among the staff members. While acknowledging that problems still existed, the retreat helped to bring needed cohesiveness to the staff.

> Well, one of the things that we had to do was we did some retreats. When I first came here, we did a mini-retreat that was just one day, and the church had some meeting rooms over there, and we did activities that you had to work together to be successful. That was just to break the ice because when we came, and we didn't know everybody. Then when we got ready to start our new program, we had to take it farther, so we went to a local wooded area retreat, and we had a whole day where we had to go outside and you had to go in the woods, and you had to do things. And I think it wasn't so much that they learned any new strategies, but they learned each other as individuals, and they learned to be friends, and they learned to trust each other. And I think they learned the camaraderie and kind of learned how to be a family.

Describing the culture of the building, Judy stressed the teachers' understanding of accountability and the major transformation that occurred because of collaboration.

But it's holding them accountable to those standards, and I think that fairness is what really helps with the culture. We have a very strong positive with the culture here now. When I came it couldn't have been worse. There was segregation among the staff; some of them shut their doors, staff did not talk with each other. There was great division among the staff. There was a lot of animosity among the staff. If they could have shoved me out of here in a bag, they would have. For two years I mean it was really tough coming in here. But now the culture obviously has changed, we are a model, you know.

Carolyn agreed with the family connection and acknowledged the importance of teacher effectiveness in creating a climate and culture based on a team concept.

Teacher effectiveness. I believe the teachers are variable. I believe in, I guess that you need a strong leader, but I see myself, I'm the principal, but I work together with everyone. I roll up my sleeves; we work as a team, as a family, and to have that family climate within your building among your staff, treating them with respect. And I think teachers need, we all need to care about our children, show them that we care, and if we do that, they do rise to the occasion. I think it's also in our control with providing them quality instruction, and quality professional development. And to look at . . . we kind of talk about the family as first your classroom, then your grade level, and then the school. So we really a part of three families and explaining that to the students as well, that we are a family and if another teacher sees you are doing something great, she's going to tell you, "Hey, that's awesome," or if you are doing something inappropriately, they are going to let you know that too.

Subtheme 2.3: Principals established a culture and climate where students began to understand the expectations that were set for behavior and academic achievement. Student behavior impacted learning in each school. Nine of the principals faced major challenges when they came to their schools because of student behavioral issues and academic performance. Although all 12 principals accepted responsibility for holding students and teachers accountable for their performances, three of the principals specifically discussed the principal's role in setting the tone for student behavior and academic achievement in the building. All of the principals, likewise, revealed that once students became acclimated to the embedded climate and culture of high expectations, learning interruptions were minimized. Four specifically referenced character development. Six principals discussed tangible rewards and consequence for student behavior and reaching various learning goals.

Clayton shared how group meetings with the students relieved a lot of tension and discipline problems before they grew into explosive situations. At all grade levels students had designated times for morning meetings to discuss common concerns. It was an expectation that proved well worth the effort to develop positive relationships, trust, and mutual respect among students. When teachers tried to eliminate the time so they could begin instruction sooner, there was a noticeable difference in the climate of those classrooms. When asked about building a culture and climate that supported a community of learners, Clayton started with the students:

> So we have, I think, there are some additional layers built. We work at being very intentional and trying to create an atmosphere for students that cause them to relax and feel safe. You know that's not by, you know, and it's certainly a little bit, but you have secure doors and stuff like, but you have really more social issues. So, we have in lower grades Community Circle that happens every morning with students, and it's an

opportunity for us to do some lessons on, on values, and helping kids to understand the

reason for rules as well as for an opportunity for the teachers reflect on maybe what

didn't go right yesterday, and to set some goals as far as what she hopes that students

might accomplish, or maybe celebrate things that were right with students, and set the

goals for how we want to see more of that in the classroom. It also gives the opportunity

for the students to say, "You know I had a problem yesterday. I don't think things were

well because . . ." So they have a voice in that, too.

At the high school and middle school levels the focus varied. The high school CREW

(an acronym for their community meeting) time allowed students to meet with their advisors and

have weekly community meetings. Clayton insisted that his middle school teachers use their

time daily, during the 30-40 minutes designated time. From his experience over the years, he

had seen this as a very effective model to build teamwork and connect students with one another,

and it also strengthened the academic day. Clayton maintained that the middle school students

met for their Circle of Power (CPR) team meetings and it cut down on student referrals. He gave

an example of how his conviction about setting this time aside was validated.

We had, last year, one of those big "aha moments" in the middle school because they are

feeling the crunch of needing to get the stuff accomplished, and they internally made the

decision to cut back on the amount of CPR time. (Chuckle) And so that was happening

two days a week, instead of five days a week. And back to where I was, when I sat down

with them to go over their referral data, and I was just talking about what a spike we've

seen coming through and how things have changed, and they sheepishly, they admitted

that they weren't doing CPR like they always used to do, and that they did recognize that

was probably one of the reasons more issues were coming from them, and they start

talking about the amount of lost instructional time. It was one of the "aha moments" that sometimes you have to take time away to do something else so that you can have more time in the end.

Peter addressed how their daily morning TV program helped set the climate in the building and reinforced building expectations. He used the programs as a way to share common character values that were expected throughout the building. He shared, "We have a morning news show with kids, too. All of our kids stand up and do the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence, and we all say our school motto together—that's just part of that community building."

Peter, like four other principals, valued how uniforms had influenced the climate of the building.

We look good; we have our shirts tucked in; we are wearing belts; we don't sag pants. This is how we are coming to work and your job is to just do your best. Our school motto is "Excellence every day, that's the Panther Way." We talked to kids about that. We are sharing excellence. What does that mean? Well that's going to mean a lot.

Karen described an incident when a student was able to talk about the expectations of the school with another new student and she described the way substitute teachers talked about Stately Manor Elementary School #4. The school had a character development program funded by money that had long since disappeared. The program has been refined to help children resolve their conflicts. She proudly shared how a student demonstrated that he understood the "Stately Manor Way" and tried to pass it on,

About three years ago we became a "year-round" school and so everything got switched, we had some kids coming new, and there is one particular kid who said, "Mrs. Hanover,

he just didn't understand the Stately Manor School Way." And I said, "Well, you know what? We all are going to have to help him. You know it takes all of us to do that." He said, "Well, I gave him an 'I message.' He is just not getting it." (Chuckle) And so I turned over to this child and I said, "What else do you think you can do?" Then I'm thinking you know what? This is sweet when you get a kid talking to you about the "Stately Manor School Way." I know we were accomplishing the "Stately Manor Way" when you have substitutes that come in, and that they can see that learning is going on, polite students are occurring, not perfect because you know my kids are not going to be perfect.

Martha shared how students showed they understood the culture of the building. Using the Positive Behavior Support model, every adult in the building could reward students by giving them "Tag" rewards for meeting expectations throughout the building and doing what's good for the community.

> And we tie it to whatever the character value is that that goes with, so you see someone picking up trash in the hallway, or just, as you see three kids walking in the hallway going to the rest room, and there is no adult with them.

She also talked about the few children, probably no more than 3-4%, who continually are sent to the office. Martha noted,

> Those boys and girls have to have a relationship with somebody, and they have to feel connected to what they were doing. It has to have relevance to them. So building that sense of pride and honor in their school that, "You matter here. This is your school and what you do, what every person here does make the school what it is." So we do have the "Global World Elementary School #5 Way."

John also shared some other things that occurred in the building that helped set the climate and tone of the building. During morning announcements, a sixth grader served as co-anchor with the principal, and they went over the life skill of the month, beginning procedures and expectations, and good attendance. They also celebrated birthdays and discussed the Debug System. Every day, the entire school said the school pledge, "Have a great learning day and make it count." He explained the Debug program, where students have procedures to use if someone is bothering them. He also told about another activity that helped to build the school's culture and climate. John revealed,

> So team time, what we do is the first Friday of every month we get together—the whole school gets together for about 15-20 minutes, and we celebrate everything that happened in the previous month. All the good things like, the student pledge, attendance awards for the whole month, for the classroom or spirit awards—What those are, if you get caught, your class is caught being good, doing something right in the hallway or in the classroom, then your classroom is awarded the Spirit Award. And then we do Cool Kids—the same thing with that. We assume being caught being good in the classroom, in hallway, or the cafeteria are something—doing the right thing, they are awarded. And those things are announced. But so we do a lot of celebration, the whole team philosophy here is, we celebrate students, and we're focusing on students that are doing the right thing, and not the wrong thing.

John also discussed how the students have heard consistent language throughout the building to describe student actions from classroom to classroom.

> This teacher uses this verbiage, and the next teacher uses this verbiage. It's all used the same. Is that are you in what register—are you in the correct register, are you in the

frozen register, are you in the formal register—so that the students are hearing that same vocabulary over and over, again back to the procedures and expectations.

Carolyn shared that the number of suspensions, at 57 for the end of the year, was down considerably from seven years ago. She attributed the lower numbers to the expectations that were consistently reinforced. She explained,

> Consistency, common language, everyone working towards appropriate behavior, I mean teachers, you know, not letting them get away with it. The kids know the expectation, what we expect, and they do it. We have a weekly school-wide assembly first thing in the morning, and we learn about our lifeline guidelines. We learn about life skills. We learn about bullying where every grade level takes a life skill, and they tie it to literature. So we do a read aloud, and then the teachers talk about what that looks like in the classroom, what that looks like at home, and so to help the kids in make a connection. And I think those have been very beneficial, because we can always say, "Well, do you remember when?"

Carolyn also discussed the reward system the school used for good behavior and the importance of communicating with parents:

> Well it could be just as easy as a high five, or it could be, "Hey I notice you; you've been doing really great." I will give them a book for their at-home library collection. It could be a teacher recognizing them with a certificate, or a good call home versus a bad call. You know letting the parent know, hey, that we had a great week. All teachers participate. Our communication is really, really good with our parents.

When asked about discipline in the building, Viola Cooper-Latimore reported they kept track of reports on student behavior as well as notes that both the teacher and she had to sign.

The kids know their routines. The kids know their expectations. We have a program that

we call "Choice." It's your choice, your kids; you have a choice to do what is right or do

what is wrong. And if you choose to do what is wrong then you know there are

consequences. And your consequences may be that you will not be with your friends for

that day—you still get your learning, but you may be isolated from your friends in

another classroom, doing your studies by yourself.

Somewhat like Carolyn, Viola had also seen an even greater drop in the number of

suspensions in her building. She explained what caused the change:

When I first came there were many suspensions, but now I think I have one or two this

year that I've had to suspend. And we placed him into an [emotionally handicapped]

classroom. So pretty much we do . . . the kids know. I think when they know their

principal, they know that the person cares about them is business, I think they come up to

that level. I think the suspensions have been reduced, and I think achievement has

improved.

In explaining the reward systems used at Winter Ridge Elementary School #10, Viola

shared,

They get a little competitive especially in reading; we have a Reading Counts program.

Then I have made announcements as to who is in the 100-point group, 200- and 300-

point group. They want their names up there because they know they get rewarded at the

end of the school year. We have the BUGS program (Bringing Up Grades), and if you

bring your grades up in each grading period, then you will get rewarded with the special

lunch or something, and they want to participate in that.

Peter set a plan in place where he met individually with every fourth grader and in groups with every third grader to stress the importance of doing well in school. He believed this helped students focus in a non-threatening way on what is expected from them regarding state testing and doing excellent work.

> Now for our fourth graders, we lost a lot of those students during redistricting. These are the kids we have. So we are just going to do the best you can. I do "test talks" with kids. I met with all of our fourth graders individually. We talked about last year's state test and asked what they can do this year to do the best, and then Monday we are just going to do a practice state test.

On the day of the interview, staff members at Independence Elementary School #8 were planning a field trip to the state capital. The fifth grade team of teachers met with office personnel to discuss the details of the trip, which included which students would or would not be going on the trip. Throughout the year, behavioral interventions had been put into place, and at the end of the year, students had to face their consequences. Judy shared,

> In the fifth grade meeting today you heard them say about how a student had his behavior plan. There was also the rewards thing that we have instituted with the two kids who have tried it this year, and it's been very successful. So, now these kids that are on the question mark—Is their behavior going to be such that they can be trusted to be semi-responsible to go on this field trip by themselves to do this exploration in the museum? So we are talking about using with all these kids, a visual guide where they are getting immediate reinforcement to hopefully help their behavior so it would be such that they earn that trip by showing they can be responsible for their behavior.

Of all the principals, Marilyn described the most elaborate reward and consequences program for recognizing behavior and academic performance. She discussed the importance of developing relationship with the students and stated that when that happened, the students wanted to please the teachers and do their best. Regarding rewards for behavior Marilyn shared,

What we did with rewards was that we let the students know that if they follow the rules and do what was expected that they would be rewarded, and so we did a point system. We did field trips. We did weekly rewards, like spinning that wheel right there [points to wheel with prizes listed]. We did a grocery cart full of goodies, and each teacher was supposed to put their behavior chart in their classrooms, so when the person [with the cart] came, they could look on the chart and see who was the top student as far as behavior, so they would reward them. And so students look forward to being rewarded. And those that got into trouble were assessed point. Students with 20 points—your parents came in, had to have a behavior plan; suspensions—parents had to come in and reinstate you. There was no longer, "I'm going to send my child back to school." Because we developed a discipline team, and then it was not the principal or the teacher, against the parent and child. It was a team of people that investigated and stood united that this is what happened and said, "This is what we found out."

Subtheme 2.4: Principals developed high expectations that influenced the climate and culture of the building. As reported before in the first section, high expectations for all was a pillar of each principal's philosophy. All of the principals worked to create a culture of high expectations. For their schools, the elements discussed below were everyday expectations—a matter of how they operated daily. This expectation extended to teachers, students, staff members, parents, and community partners. That culture of high expectations is

mentioned again because this factor set the tone for the climate and culture of everything that happened in their schools.

When given a question about in-school factors that are most influential in improving student achievement, John named factors related to expectations.

I think the think the thing that makes and I was going to go with what our experience here is consistency, procedures, and high expectations. I think once they started seeing the change because we, you know, that these students are capable of high performance. I think high performance actually breeds high performance, so I think that once the students and the teachers started believing in themselves, that's where when we started seeing that whole cultural change and again it's that procedures and expectations. And you know, seven years later, we are still talking about those procedures, and we have not stopped that.

When asked about creating a culture and climate that produces a community of learners, Jason Howard again shared the importance of research/best practices. He said,

But it is the expectation of Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 that we must be engaged academically—that we are academicians. We are not just simple teachers, but academicians, teachers are scholars themselves so embracing that ownership: "As I expect my children to rise, so must I."

When asked if all teachers bought into that philosophy and what was the evidence, he stated he believed they did embrace this idea. He added that it was an expectation that he would not back away from. If teachers did not buy in soon enough, he took direct action to get them "on the boat." Jason stressed the school motto: "These children cannot fail."

That's how the school was started when I came. That's how the school was reconstituted. So I didn't say, "If they are staying," to be condescending or insulting. It is the expectation and the norm that if you are at Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 and this is what is happening. And the teachers come and tell me, "Well, I talked to their colleagues at other schools and they don't have to do this." I say, "What! That's the norm at Aspire Academy Elementary School #2." So, you have teachers who came to Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 because, "I like the structure." Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 was restructured and actually called Aspire Academy Best Practices Elementary School. It is the best practices in order to do best practices; we've got to know. We embrace the seven correlates of highly effective schools by Lawrence Lazette. So it was the expectation that when I interviewed them that this is what we will do. This is who we are. We must be the best.

Katrina shared how her high expectations of the staff were met by the staff who believed in what the principal was asking them to do. Feeling a strong attachment to New Suburbia Elementary School #11, she admitted that she would probably not leave the school until she retired.

I enjoy working with the staff. They are just good people, and that's not to say we don't have our disagreements. I'm not "That doesn't exist," I don't think. But when I ask for something—and I don't ask for a lot—and that being said, when I ask for something people jump on board because I don't ask for a lot, so when I do they know it's important.

She continued to share how their tutoring sessions have been so successful because teachers were on board, and she told about the pride she had in her staff that the school had the highest student attendance and results.

> Our tutoring program is, you know, I have to recruit people. They are paid, of course, but it's still an extra hour and a half at the end of the day and then their planning time and stuff being after that. Some schools aren't able to get enough people to support the program. I had all I needed. When the program was extended four weeks, those people said, "We'll stay on board."

Marilyn recounted how she and her staff established discipline guidelines that brought order to the school. Using a team approach and a rewards and consequences system, a consistent policy was initiated. By maintaining high expectations, everyone understood the policies and the processes to implement them and, as a result, instructional class time increased.

> What we did was we made sure that the discipline was consistent. We had a team, and they developed a list of things. If you do these things you'll be sent to the behavior adjusted center and if you do these things, than you will be suspended. If they are not on this list, then this is what the teacher should be dealing with in the classroom. We gave it to teachers; we gave it to the parents and the children . And so, everybody knew what the discipline was—and how many points you got for this [infraction]. It also took out sending them to the principal and some teachers who would say, "I want this child suspended." I already know what's suspendable, so you don't need to be doing that.

Judy concluded that building-wide expectations for quality work and performance resulted from goals and standards that she had set. She reported that she looked beyond the obvious and asked students to explain what they were learning. She also expected students to be

aware of and responsible for their own performance data and to express their goals for where they needed to be to ensure success.

> My philosophy is you can't hold somebody accountable for something if you haven't provided them the background knowledge. So, when I first came, professional development was very intense, I mean a lot and lot of professional development. As a staff, we created building-wide expectations, like for instance, the standards, like they are expected to do quality work at all times. They [students] were expected to talk in complete sentences here. They have to write their name and date on the page and you got to have cohesion across the building. You can't have one teacher with one set of expectations and the other one with another; it's very confusing to kids. So it's got to be that cohesiveness. For instance, right now I have a teacher and a new teacher here that is having difficulty adhering to those things, and we'll be having a conversation. And it might seem trivial because when you walk in, if you don't know what you're really looking for, it's going deeper than just the surface layer.

Judy, Karen, and Katrina also talked about the importance of establishing a climate and culture where excellence is the expectation in every aspect of the school's operation. As an example, Judy shared,

> Every minute has to count. You have to have high standards expecting. You have to have to have excellence—demand, no exceptions—excellence. It's not negotiable; excellence from all staff that work in the building. When people come to our building, when substitutes come to our building, you won't even believe the crap they wear. I mean flip-flops—whatever, not in this building, I've sent people home. When other people that come from within the district come into this building, they have to sign in the

office, everybody, I don't care who they are. The standards are for everyone who walks

in this building, but then that helps keep the culture going.

Subtheme 2.5: Principals supported teachers to become highly qualified in

delivering effective, engaging instructional strategies. Being a highly qualified teacher

usually refers to the educational accreditation and certification held by teachers in the field in

which they were teaching. However, looking at the 12 schools in the study and using the lens of

teacher preparedness to meet the academic needs of their ethnically diverse student populations,

a new definition of what it means to be a highly qualified teacher emerged. Principals realized

the importance of professional development to transform the climate and culture of the schools

with a greater than 50% non-White population. With a majority White teacher population, the

question arose about what principals and teachers felt they needed to know or do differently to

understand the culture of the students in order to meet the academic needs of the students.

Additionally, all principals referenced the need to find innovative ways to work with African

American and Hispanic students.

A general trend found in each school was that when principals and teachers deliberately

evaluated instructional practices, positive changes occurred. The cycle of professional

development, pacing instruction, providing engaging instruction, differentiating instruction, and

focusing on student interventions based on feedback from student data allowed teachers to

address and support student needs more effectively. All of the principals described a variety of

extra supports for math and reading that were built into each day in 30- to 60-minute time blocks,

mostly through Title I intervention, Response to Intervention time, and other flexible scheduling

times the various staffs created to give students special attention.

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When asked about the in-school factors that contributed most to student learning, Karen's answer was concise and direct. She responded,

> I think the in-school factors are ensuring time-on-task with meaningful instruction, engaging instruction, differentiation, breaking down and having as much small group instruction as you possibly can have, and maximizing the use of any support staff that you have in order to accomplish small group instruction or individualization.

Four principals, including Karen, talked about the importance of differentiating instruction. Carolyn acknowledged,

> That has helped tremendously, and I think just meeting, differentiating our instruction to their level, so we have had a lot of training on differentiation. And meeting the needs of the kids, and sort of trying to get these kids to our needs, we are coming down to their level and we are building them up that way.

Jason noted the need to understand the students' cultures, but he was also concerned about how teachers planned to include instructional practices that looked at how individual students learn. He motivated teachers to include higher-order thinking activities and questions. He shared,

> An understanding of the culture comes first. You've got to understand the culture in which you are working—the culture, the curriculum, Balanced Literacy. We came out with a very tight scheduling process of various lessons plan formats using multiple intelligences as well as differentiated instruction. Not only multiple intelligences and differentiated instruction, but also then taking that Bloom's taxonomy and higher-level thinking questions—synthesis and analysis-type questions—and getting away from the recall questions on the depth of knowledge.

Jason was also concerned about ensuring that students not only understood information at a rote level but also were able to apply it beyond mundane recall. He stated,

I don't want worksheets. I want production. I want authentic work. I don't want rote writing. I want authentic writing. I don't want just you understanding certain vocabulary. I want you to be able to use that vocabulary and understanding across the curriculum and having those words, not only as words on word walls in the room. But how do we take those words and make sure we infuse them not only in mathematics? But as you look at great orators, like Dr. King and the others, words can be used across content areas.

Martha was also concerned about learning being engaging, so that is one reason their school was moving to a new program.

And then the other thing was the inquiry methodology of teaching is just really best practices, and so why not go through the International Baccalaureate program and all that training for teachers, because it brings in that diversity and that social and cultural awareness and world awareness for our kids, along with the inquiry teaching for kids, which is so much more engaging for them.

Likewise, Clayton discussed the importance of moving beyond test preparation to the next level of applying the information so that students remembered it for the tests and beyond. The teachers provided engaging activities, project-based learning, and field trips so that learning would be more meaningful and memorable.

And kids don't naturally know how to transfer their knowledge, and there is a process that's going to be what the teachers have to do. I think that teachers have an obligation to do that so that kids can perform at those tests. so we're pretty intentional about that. So

what we don't do is, we don't narrow the curriculum so that kids are only doing one thing. They think that it's important for kids to have an opportunity to apply that learning in a variety of ways and that's how it's retained in long-term memory. If all you do is worksheets, and you do math for six weeks, and then you go on to new project and you never talk about it again, kids don't comprehend that, and in the end they won't do well on tests.

Seven of the principals stressed the importance of providing interventions and having an interventionalist who helped to identify and work with students who needed extra support. Judy shared how her school provided services to one student and involved the parent in every step of the process. Their intensive intervention system reflected the sense of urgency she felt was necessary to meet student needs. She described their general intervention program for new students.

So, we work very hard. We have a very intensive intervention program here. As soon as the child enters our school, we assess their language development, their reading level, and their math levels. Then we put them in intervention right away, if needed. So, they enroll, the child gets assigned. Well, first of all of course we check to see if they've got any special learning needs. If so, of course we get them within those support services right away. We assign them to the classroom once they come to school life depending on . . . I look at if there is any type of history within their behavior or anything of that nature. If it looks like there might be some issues, academic behavior, whatever, and I immediately before they even come to our school, I sit down with the parents and the child and lay out how it's going to be.

Principals at Restoration Elementary School #7, Independence Elementary School #8, and Winding Creek Elementary School #9 discussed their intake process focused on setting expectations. Judy met with parents and spelled out the behavioral and learning expectations to them before the student enrolled. She discussed their documentation process and demonstrated what happened with a child who recently came to the school.

> Kids that have been allowed not to apply themselves to do their best—as in real faster—have to do that here. What you've got to do here is just like with the new child that we are talking about in the fifth grade meeting. He's a child who just recently came here from another school—very recently, within the last week or so. So now, I've heard that he has a second grade reading level and he's in the fifth grade. He is going to sixth grade next year, okay, well that's setting him up for failure right there. So, immediately we have already got interventions in place. We've got a reading intervention, a math intervention, which means that he'll get an additional 30 minutes, small group, pull-out support with an interventionalist for math and then another one for language arts every day in addition to the additional support with the teacher and assistance in their classroom. We tried to triple dip it if we can, so to speak, if not double dip. When we get the ones that are like this, which is, in my opinion, a severe case, we are triple dipping and we have been trying to get him with the new model for the response to intervention.

Concerned about not making a stereotypic remark, but recognizing that too many African American boys, "slipped through the cracks," Judy was irritated that this student had been able to get this far without the proper help he needed. Because this child would be going to sixth grade, perhaps his best chance of success would be to see if he qualified for special education services to get the additional support he would need in middle school. Judy was decisive and determined

that she would do as much for him as she could in the month of school that was left. It bothered her that all this was not documented and had not been dealt with before. She mentioned how hard it was to get students tested in the district, but believed she could make it happen before school ended, based on her reputation for correct diagnostic efforts in the past. She was very confident that all this would take place within the next week, because she would not allow it to go past that time.

Judy had trained her teachers to look at each child individually and provide interventions as needed. Additionally, she monitored what happened in the intervention groups and during Response to Intervention time. She described herself as being serious about getting results:

I'm a person that needs to say, "We do it now." I don't wait until, you know, oh, Wednesday. No, it's now. I see a parent, I've got an issue, I pull him in, and they are used to it, and so are my teachers. That's what they say about going to another school, but learn how it works over there—but they also know we are going to get results.

Subtheme 2.6: Principals valued collaboration. One key subtheme that emerged and was evidenced by every principal was the need for collaboration and teamwork among staff members. All principals desired to create a supportive staff that worked in a collaborative manner to target student needs rather than focus on teacher personalities. With a focus on practice and individual teacher strengths in delivering effective practices, other teachers could receive support from their team members. Principals sought to reduce competition and isolation among teachers to develop a healthy climate and culture that valued teamwork. Many of the principals shared that creating an environment for collaboration among staff members was a crucial element they struggled to set in place when they first came to their schools.

Jason stated that each year, as teachers have worked through the first grading period, they are able to begin assimilating to the culture of expectations in the building. His third grade teachers were pretty much on board and had some of the best test scores thus far, even though they lost half of their team from the year before. He called the teachers who remained "taskmasters" who helped their new team members deliberately understand the expectations of teamwork. He spoke about his staff's determination as follows:

> They're working together with, "We can. We shall. We will." Basically, it's an expectation. We are under threat of constantly being reconstituted, a constant threat of feeling that we are inadequate. And so, there is no great motivator like a feeling of inept. And when a school has been in the dire straits that we have been in, once you feel that, and everybody knows that your school is, you are going to get there or die trying or something is badly wrong with you. Dr. King said, "Human progress is never rolled in on the wheels of inevitability." And that's a fact. Human progress, academic progress, academic achievement does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability. You've got to make it happen.

Audrey described how grade levels worked together to discuss topics related to meeting the needs of their students.

> We'll work with grade levels, so what may happen in our PD cycle—we may introduce a topic to a certain group of teachers if that is their individualized or group PD focus. So we may have a small group session. We'll pull in research-based articles—whatever reference materials—have discussions as a group. The instructional coach or myself or the assistant principal may model it. Then with that there may be some follow-up activities where the teacher has to do something; the coach may come in and model it,

and then the coach may come in and watch the teacher as she or he teaches it and gives follow-up. And then from there, depending on which avenue is going, the teacher may also go to other classrooms where teachers are using that particular strategy.

Judy prided her staff on the collaborative model from the NSDC they used that has brought them national recognition. She played a video at the beginning of the interview that featured Independence Elementary School #8 as a model school for the organization, implementing how collaboration and teamwork impacted student learning. Among many other activities, Judy shared about peer observation and how having trust in one another made this work so well.

Every teacher, every quarter is required to do peer observation—some type of peer professional development in math and language arts, once a quarter. They have a form they fill out, put in the binder, and I look at it, and that's not just for me, but it's so other people can see if they have topic they need help on where to go. And that can be within the internal capacity of our building, because we have identified the strengths of our staff. Our staff works very well together. I mean, they had to build a trust among each other and, quite frankly, I recently had someone that they didn't trust, and they ran them out the building. My staff is a very strong staff. I would say intellectually they are very strong, which in my opinion intellect and strong will go together. Hard working, but they don't, I don't want to say, play fools. . . you know what I mean, but you've got to earn your respect and your place here.

Marilyn told about an example of how one teacher, in particular, helped others with math strategies:

Mr. Newman is like our math guru, and he comes in early every day, and if you come in

there, he will work with the teacher about the strategies they can use. And he will even

go in the room and teach for them and model. So, just opening up and working together

is important, and that's the key, that everybody doesn't go in their room, shut their door,

and worry about their grades. Because it's not one class, it's the whole school that makes

AYP.

Karen ended her interview with a few thoughts related to her beginning statement about

the importance of principals setting the tone in the building. Her experience with the two

principals she worked under had stayed with her all these years.

It was night and day and the difference was the principal. The principal absolutely sets

the tone of the building, and with setting a tone that makes all the difference in the world

with the people that you work with, the teachers that you hire, the relationship with

parents.

Based on her 25 years of experience and track record, her former boss asked her about

her ability to pick a quality staff, and she noted the qualities that reflected a good teacher who

demonstrated good relational skills in working with the total staff. Karen shared,

In fact, my former boss came and said before he retired. He said, "I've just got to ask

you, how do you find your teachers?" And I said, I told him, "When I'm looking for

teachers, I look for a basketball player as opposed to a tennis player. I'm looking for a

team player, as opposed to a singles player, because it's the team that's going to make the

difference. And that is what creates a better opportunity for kids that we all are working

together as a team." And he said, and he did tell me, he said, "That's unique and we

recognize that over here." But it's something that as I look—is the teacher in it for

themselves, are they going to be a team player, or do they just want to go in and close the door and have their own kids, because it's not going to be the richness that they need if they do.

Clayton also wanted teachers who could work well as team members.

But what I think when I hire people who are . . . are not self-centered, and we have that outlook where they sort of seek to understand . . . that's their nature. They tend to be somewhat more effective teachers and willing to pause and think about their practice and their interactions and they tend to be more special people in general. I'm not saying you couldn't be a very dynamic teacher and have a lot of good skills, but it you don't have that relationship, it's hard to get that across. You've got to have a relationship with your students.

Katrina fostered collaboration and expressed her concerns about individual merit pay, which differed sharply with Clayton's view. She questioned how merit pay could work:

I don't like individual recognition. I like team. I like to team. I learned that from one of my first teachers, an outstanding first grade teacher, and she was nominated for something and she said, "No." She said, "It's the team," and I have always remembered that. I think we need to work together. We are all working hard, and I don't separate . . . I'm really concerned about merit pay because what will that do to that interaction between colleagues? I think that's important. "You've got some great ideas. I will share mine with you. You share yours with me, and both of our classes will benefit." But if it's whether I get a raise, or it concerns me, I'm not sure how that's going to be structured. If we could take whatever that amount is and just equally distribute it among everyone in the school because School 11 made exemplary progress, that could work.

Contrasted to Katrina's concerns, Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6, with its charter model, had moved to a merit pay system with part of everyone's salary based on how well the overall student population performed on the state's standardized tests. Clayton expressed how improved teamwork has resulted in greater collaborative practices at Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6.

> And what we wanted to do was to incentivize teachers to want to pay attention to how their students are doing, but also encourage and pay attention to how the students in the classroom across the hall are doing, so teachers know that it's important that my kids do well, and that your kids do well, and so it's in my best interest to share my best practices.

> Every principal believed that teamwork was valuable and worked to strengthen ties among leadership, grade levels, and support staff to provide the best environment for all students. Viola and Carolyn summarized their schools' efforts related to collaboration. Viola shared,

> Well, I think teachers working together, collaborating, the professional development, care about the kids, wanting the children to achieve, wanting the school to be good, having a good name. . . . Because we used to . . . we didn't . . . and now we want to come together, and we want them to have . . . no matter what. . . . If it's sports . . . whatever, we want them to be the best behaved and achieve, do their best, and if they do their best, that's all we ask—even in sports—and people see them, we might have not won the game, but we are best-behaved team.

Carolyn admonished,

> It's no longer, "Well, he's no longer my child, or he's not my student" and turn the other way. We're always learning from each other, classrooms are always open. If teachers

want to go and observe another teacher in the grade level, they have that flexibility to do

that. I think collaboration is extremely important; collaboration at your grade level, at

cross grade level.

After offering a story about her custodian who happened to graduate from her same inner

school high school, Karen shared her thoughts on the worth of each employee at Stately Manor

Elementary School #4. Karen revealed the important role that the custodian and her staff played

in making the school run well by providing an immaculate environment for teachers and students

to work and learn. As an example of thinking about a team, Karen shared how on a snowy, icy

day when school had been closed, she had come over to the school to help chip away the ice.

I think it's important that they know I'm here for them; I'm here for the school. We are

here together as a team, and together as a team working to get the job done. And so that

is it really, but it really will come back and as the tone is set, it really is set by the

principal and that's why I, most of the time . . . I like the job, most of the time.

Subtheme 2.7: Principals valued the role of instructional coaches and other support

staff to help teach and model effective practices based on data-driven information. Nine of

the principals discussed the role of their literacy and math instructional coaches in providing

professional development to staff members and implementing focused instruction defined by

individual student data. John stated how much he valued his instructional coaches, and Clayton

considered them to be a great investment. Carolyn commented on how instructional coaches

modeled instruction for identified teachers and supported teachers who needed help. Peter shared

that his literacy and math coaches helped plan professional development and were present at

some of the grade-level meetings. Although some schools had had instructional coaches in the

past, budget cuts eliminated some positions and Title I teachers did some of their previous jobs.

Judy used her coaches as interventionalists. Katrina described the literacy coach's importance in picking out books, resources, and materials that met the needs of all students, especially their African American boys. Carolyn represented the other principals by sharing the confidence and authority she placed in her coaches as she discussed teachers who needed extra support and deciding what the coaches should do to assist them. A few of the other comments on the role of instructional coaches are given below, and they provide a summary of the overwhelmingly positive valued the principals found in the having instructional coaches.

Martha praised her literacy and math coaches for the expertise they brought to the staff while helping her fulfill her primary role as instructional leader of the building. She was thankful for the expertise and time the highly qualified and trained coaches could devote to being great resources for the teachers. She also recognized her Title I math and Title I literacy teachers who shared a co-teaching role where they went into the classrooms. In addition, during leadership meetings Martha shared that they all worked together to decide what data would be discussed at grade-level team meetings.

> Okay, so let's talk about small groups in math, how's that going to look in our grade level, and then using my math coach and my math impact teacher to co-plan with those teachers, or those grade levels, and then also my coaches go into the classrooms. They will model a lesson; they will come in and help you figure out. So you have to have that support for the staff or the professional development goes nowhere. Again, 10 to 25% of those people are going to go back, and they are going to do it just because you asked them to do it. This is the nature of any business. Some people are just going to be onboard because you asked them to do it, and they are conscientious, and they are going to do it. Another group are going to want to do it, but they are not sure how to. So I just

think you have to put that support in place; that's why I think that coaching role is so critical.

Martha noted that instructional coaches must have great communication and people skills to support the principal.

They almost have to have those administrative skills of being able to get people to buy in to what you are selling, what you want—to believe you, so they've got to trust you. But also they've got to have that great skill set of helping people with classroom management and organization and things like that because, a lot of times, teaching math and literacy comes down to classroom management and organization for some people as well, so they've got to also be able to have that, but then that's something where I also can come in and be a coach in those areas as well.

Audrey noted the role of the instructional coaches, the leadership team, the assistant principal, and how they worked with the principal in order to plan for the year and provide modeling, coaching, and individual help to all teachers. Recalling how it was seven years ago, John described the shift that occurred as the instructional coach position was added to the staff. Heritage Elementary School #3's staff development agenda focused on instructional practices. There was a shift from the principal leading all meetings with mini-workshops to collective planning with an instructional coach, chosen from the staff, who modeled and helped teachers prepare and use those strategies. John recounted the changes that were put into place when the math instructional coach began supporting teachers. He also spoke about their reading interventions and the instructional coach's role in that program.

The other thing, too, that we do use that helps with data and where, who, what the students seem to need for intervention, those kinds of things, is Fauntas and Pinnell, our

reading assessment. And so once it's kind of like, a running record kind of thing, and those students who are assessed would be three times a year and again, those . . . that student data how well they are doing . . . is analyzed. And if she sits down with the teacher and says, "Okay, Suzie is doing great with comprehension, but vocabulary—well here are some tools that we need to work on with that."

John also expressed appreciation for the work done by his instructional coach and how she was always on top of things. He revealed,

I mean she is phenomenal on bringing scientific-based research for assessments and interventions and those kinds of things. She is always right there and we don't get something and waste our money. She's really good about doing research—you know, is this the best tool for our students and those kinds of things—and she just does a phenomenal job. And when she implements it, we talk to our staff about professional development, they understand it, and they don't know how to use it, and so it's utilized very well.

In describing the important role she had assigned to the instructional coaches at her school, Katrina shared,

Now we have plans that we are going to be working on in the study circles. And with the Balanced Literacy program, the coach goes in and models lessons for the teachers. Then she will observe them doing those lessons, and then I go in. And I'm monitoring how well it's being implemented. You know, what is monitored gets done. So if they know I'm going to be around, I want to see guided reading. I want to see how your centers are working. The literacy coach helps me out a great deal. She will set up these the times

where they are doing certain lessons, and she actually has contact with the teachers, and

so I know when they will be doing different things.

Summary on developing a sense of community among staff and students. The seven

subthemes linked to the theme of how a principal developed a culture and climate that fostered a

sense of community among staff and students demonstrated the principals' leadership skills and

ability to create a cohesive unit. All of the principals in the study came to their schools and

influenced the climate and culture of their schools. With different personalities and different

degrees of acceptance, principals worked to create a focus on student achievement driven by

collaborative practices. All of them acknowledged that the culture had shifted and been

influenced by their leadership styles.

Student behavior and learning evidenced an upward growth trend based on how well the

staff had formed a cohesive vision where students and teachers believed the school's goals based

on teacher collaboration practices. The climates and cultures created in the schools were

conducive for learning based on collaborative practices.

Using Analysis of Data and Monitoring and Evaluation of Staff

The majority of the participants based many of the changes that occurred in instructional

practices in their building on their use of the data they collected, analyzed, and utilized to

improve student performances. After analyzing each student's assessment results from varying

sources, the staff was able to determine their focus for instruction and professional development

needs to help gain additional skills and understandings. In like manner, principals divulged

various methods they used to monitor and evaluate instruction, observe and support teachers on

their staff, and ensure that teachers in the building were able to embrace the team concepts that

were expected. Although unique in their approaches, the principals shared a strong connection

for implementing the subthemes listed in Table 9.

Table 9

Subthemes Linked to Data Analysis and Monitoring and Evaluation of Staff

No.	Five Subthemes Related to Analyzing Data and Evaluating Staff
1	Principals used data to drive instructional practices.
2	Principals monitored and evaluated teacher performance.
3	Principals provided support to teachers who struggled with effective instructional practices.
4	Principals took a hands-on approach and had input on hiring their staff.
5	When principals decided a teacher was not a good fit for working in the school's program that focused on increasing student learning, the principal worked to have the teacher retire, go to another building, or leave the district.

Subtheme 3.1: Principals used data to drive instructional practices. One of the

leading themes of the study was the principals' knowledge and implementation of a systematic

use of data. All 12 of the principals in the study, overwhelmingly stressed the importance of

using data to drive instruction, plan professional development, and evaluate teacher performance.

Explaining the importance of monitoring and evaluating student and teacher performance in their

schools, principals used two main approaches. The first level of evaluation focused on

monitoring the outcomes of student performance throughout the year based on assessments

required by the school, the district, and the state. The second approach was closely integrated

with the first one but emphasized delivery of curriculum and effective instructional practices by

teachers.

As discussed previously by Martha, a variety of assessment tools and strategies provided an abundance of information to help teachers identify targeted areas of instruction. Although all of the principals reported using similar methods for evaluating teacher performance, their diligence and consistency in compiling, analyzing, and then applying student data beyond looking at large groupings of students varied but helped them all focus on each student's academic needs. The vast majority of principals emphasized monitoring data on individual students. Equally important was the principals' empathy for the pressure teachers felt in administering the assessments and scoring them. Several principals shared that they had helped in the testing cycles because the teachers needed help, but the principals also wanted to know what the teachers and the students were experiencing during the testing process.

Some of assessments were required as state and district expectations. Others were designed by the school or the district as initiatives to help students meet the state standards. Although many of the principals listed the same assessments as resources to collect on students, there was variance in who analyzed the findings and how the information was disseminated to their staffs for discussion. Some of the tests referenced included the state assessments for Grades 3-8 and the end-of-course assessment (ECA) given to qualifying students in Grade 9 at the charter school. Others included assessments given three times a year, such as Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), DIBELS, and an Acuity test that some schools were piloting. The state made some of the tests available online and allowed schools access to the tests during three windows of time. Those tests were either predictive or diagnostic. Principals remarked that having a systematic way to look at data was extremely important to supporting student learning.

Karen Hanover referenced how she perceived the role of the state, district, and school in

collecting data.

> The state is kind of the general framework. So it may be the yard, the perimeter. But this
>
> district has developed the house, like how we go about doing it: developing calendars,
>
> developing assessments as a team. I mean what goes on at Stately Manor Elementary
>
> School #4 instructionally, every three weeks, is the same as every other school. So, in
>
> terms of the house, that's a district plan. Now, how it looks and how it feels is developed
>
> in every building. And so, it is my charge to make sure that we provide the finest of
>
> education given the three week, the nine week, the year, the state, and what they come
>
> from, bringing up the gaps, to develop a program that's going to meet the needs of each
>
> child.

Martha Bridgeforth recalled the changes she put in place at Global World Elementary

School #5 when she came and there was not consistent way of looking at data. She reflected on

the benefits of having a systematic way to review data.

> There wasn't, I don't think, a systematic way of deployment of things, and that
>
> accountability piece. . . . I think we are so fortunate in education now that we have so
>
> much information about kids, I mean just from when I first was teaching we didn't have
>
> all these assessments that you could do with kids.

She described the pre- and post-test given in the past but acknowledged the need for

diagnostic assessments that helped teachers target interventions. She described the writing

prompts that are given three times a year and some other interventions that were monitored every

two weeks. She shared how each team leader used this information; purposefully, during each

PLC meeting. John also shared how their innovative practices in math spread throughout their

district. He told how they decided to give quarterly assessments based on a pacing guide Heritage Elementary School #3 created, and when others in the district saw their pre-test and post-test results, they wanted to use it too. Using the data caused them to focus on what students needed to know rather than repeating skills they already had mastered.

Carolyn Williamson was pleased that the school used data more effectively than in the past, which led to more students performing at grade level and also helped them give specific information to parents.

> I think that all ties back to the data, because we were just looking at data, like I said, the past three days, and when we think back six years ago, three years ago, what the end of the year results were, and where they are today. . . . It's phenomenal the growth the kids are making. And I think when teachers see that growth, it reinforces why we are in education, and it reinforces that we are doing what's right for kids, and it makes us hunger for more because we want more kids rating at their grade level.

Audrey Lawson, like most of the other principals, used results of several student assessments to help teachers build skills that targeted student weaknesses. Using several sources of data to triangulate and monitor student performance, teacher performance, and teacher reflections had strengthened their outcomes and helped them differentiate professional development for individual teachers. She noted,

> The district coach came to the school at the beginning of the year and met with the school's leadership team. They looked over data from benchmark tests, state test data, NWEA data and any other data the district required. They used that data to help plan professional development for the year. . . . We triangulate all of that, and we look at where our weaknesses are and we develop a way to look at our weaknesses. And then

from there, we look at the teaching implications, along with walkthroughs and observational data that myself and the assistant principal collect, and then self-reflections and surveys that teachers fill out. So we look at all that data and we try to differentiate our PD, because we realize that one size doesn't fit all.

Looking at student data, five of the principals discussed their highly organized methods of tracking both student performance and discussions during teacher meetings that always centered on student data. Audrey, Karen, Marilyn, Judy, and Katrina displayed binders and/or folders of updated test data reports given over the course of the year for each child and spreadsheets documenting attendance and/or mobility reports that tracked which students were transferring in and out of the building. As an example, Judy explained a portion of her system:

> I have a book here. [She began to show binders with various materials included in them.] I meet with every single teacher. This is my book of meeting with teachers. The week of conferences, and like I have a page for every teacher about student concerns, things we need to be watching, parent meetings I need to hold, I look at the data with them. That is not just a "come-and-talk-to-me-about-what-you-think" meeting. They bring me the data. We look at the data. We look at the beginning of the year, middle of the year, where they are now. We look at their fluency scores. We look at their retell scores. We look at comprehension. We look at math, and I have this book that I keep on the kids. I also meet with the interventionist, and I have another binder around here somewhere. It's exactly like this, but a different color and it's used strictly for my intervention meetings and I talk—we talk about every child in interventions . . . every week: how they are doing, what areas are they struggling with. And in the same philosophy, I've got my

record, we were talking about any overlap, and we are hitting them hard . . . If they are

not getting something. . . . Are they in the right group?

Five of the principals shared about their school's "data walls," which monitored student

progress but also indicated what teachers needed to focus on to improve student achievement.

The data walls were strategically placed so that teachers and/or students could see a visual, color-

coded representation of every child's reading level in the school. The color-coded display at

Stately Manor Elementary School #4 was located on a corridor wall with plastic pockets holding

cards representing every child in the building. Anyone in the school, including students,

teachers, and visitors could see the number of students at, above, or below grade level based on

assessments given three times a year. Names were coded, so it was not obvious how specific

students scored. Another set of data displays at Restoration Elementary School #7 were also

strategically located in the corridors, and they showed both math and reading scores from

specifically designed teacher assessments. The results portrayed both the class averages and

pictures of individual students who passed the weekly assessments.

Three other data walls at Aspire Academy Elementary School #2, Winter Ridge

Elementary School #10, and New Suburbia Elementary School #11 were located in data rooms

where teachers met to plan instruction. The walls showed how student performances overlapped

grade levels and spotlighted the students' range of reading skills from the struggling to the highly

successful readers. Jason referred to the data room as their "war room." Most displays were

massive and covered a full wall from corner to corner, or they were mounted on large sections of

walls. In most cases, the instructional coaches helped compile the data.

Katrina Marsh explained how their staff decided to track reading performance based on various assessments they gave. Their data wall was available for teachers to see the tracked data held by different colored magnets for each grade level.

Let's say, for example, fourth grade is all purple. Every child is on a purple magnet, and their reading levels from last year and this year is on that magnet for the running records. And then this board is divided into A to Z [representing reading levels], and we can look at a glance to see how all the purples' magnets towards the end, or do we have some purple magnets in the lower levels that we need to be working on. Generally those are going to be your special education students, but if they are not, then we need to target those students or maybe additional student support through RTI or, you know, the Title I or whatever.

When asked about her role in keeping track of these data, she responded that she had given all of the tests herself when the teachers needed help. Consequently, she understood what the teachers were experiencing.

Now the teachers who are becoming more comfortable with those, they are able to get through them, but initially I was . . . When it was the last year, I was right in there with them. And I also wanted to know what it's all about, I'm curious. What am I asking a teacher to do and how did children respond to this? I needed to know how this works.

Marilyn Jenkins addressed a key element of her school's turnaround in academic achievement that focused on how her staff worked together to develop school-wide assessments for each grade level based on curriculum pacing guides for each week. Every teacher in the building was involved in scoring each other's tests and getting results back the next day for the class whose assessments they scored. At first, data boards were kept in the principal's office, but

Marilyn shared how they moved the results into the hallway as a massive display. The tests and their results generated so much excitement that they increased parent involvement and captured media attention from an area newspaper. Even when students were absent, they wanted to take make-up tests.

> Now our data is up in the hall, so that anyone that comes will see it, and the children's pictures are in the hall when they do well. So, they want to get their pictures up there. I mean their parents have come here, when their pictures make that board, they come and show the relatives. They will be taking pictures of the picture. They say, "But you better get on that board." "When you are going to get on that board?" I mean I have some parents that come and say, "I don't know why she can't do well, I'm coming in, and I'm sitting next to her while she takes this test," They [parents] want them to do good, and it's kind of amazing. But I will say, "Okay, you can sit with them, but you can't give them answers.". . . But they will come every week, and sit there right next to them, where they make sure they focus. They see. Some will call and ask, "What did they do on their test?" You know, so they have really bought into it. . . . We give the tests on Thursday, and they call on Friday. . . . They will call us to say, "How did they do?" Or if they had to be out, "Can they take their test later?"

In addition to having their pictures displayed, students at Restoration Elementary School #7 also received other rewards for passing the weekly assessments. Likewise, Viola also discussed her school's data walls that were only accessible to the staff. However, another reading project created excitement at her school. The school-wide project was more open as announcements were made about the tracked points students earned as incentives for reading.

And when you have a data board where you basically put your kids' names up there on that data board, and you can see where your kids are performing. Teachers are competitive like kids. They are going to teach those kids so they want their students to be at benchmark. On the data board, we have three areas: you have your benchmark kids, which is the green area . . . then you have the yellow, strategic kids, and then the bottom are the at-risk kids and they are in red. And no one wants their kids down at the bottom at red. They keep pushing them up and working with them.

While these two schools monitored and tracked students' performance for incentives, Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6 had a plan in place to monitor teacher performance for incentives. Clayton Drummer shared how they used student test scores as an incentive in determining teacher evaluations and salary increases. Teachers' salaries were based on the overall performance of students on the state's assessment. An additional new bonus incentive was being offered during the school year when the interview occurred for increasing the overall number of students who scored in the highest category—the "plus" range—on the state's assessment. Clayton remarked that this system required all teachers to work collaboratively for the mutual benefits that they all would receive. Teachers willingly went to one another to get help or to help those who were struggling. He said,

Student achievement is measured by all state assessment scores . . . and I think there are a lot of other ways we can measure kids, and how much they are learning, but the public holds us accountable for this, and in the end you have to have good state test scores— nobody cares about the other measures.

He shared the benefits charter schools had of not being bound by union negotiations or district requirements and allowed for innovative decision-making. Instead, both the board and

the teachers worked together to factor student performance into their teacher salary package, believing that decision would produce overall student growth.

> So we pay a bonus to our teachers based on students' performance and it's not just student performance. That is a heavy factor in it, so they can earn up to 8% on their base salary using a combination of factors. So it's also looking at the whole school, if everyone does well—it's not just individual teachers. There are different slices of it and so of the 8%, 30% is on the work on the non-student data, 30% is on school-wide goals, and 40% is on your personal classroom goals, and that's strictly in student outcomes. Part of that is how their students progressed based on internal and external assessments, and then also how well the school does as a part of the state assessment.

Clayton Drummer also discussed a problem he had discovered in monitoring test data and teacher performance. The students who performed at the highest levels were not being challenged enough because their scores remained flat, and so additional incentives were offered for moving students into the "pass plus" category. He emphasized,

> What we were wanting to do is push kids at all levels, so we changed our bonus structure this year, so now, we are paying $200 per head for any student that the teacher can take from pass or do not pass . . . looking at the pass plus, wanting to put a lot of attention on moving those kids, and teachers will get a small bonus if they can keep the kid in pass plus range.

Clayton shared his philosophy that he wanted his school to be thought of like those in the community that were highly esteemed and located in other surrounding districts in the area. His desire was to be thought of as a school with the same rigor and expectations, and have students who were competitive with them. He contended,

You know, to go to a local private school, they don't even talk about how many kids are passing their test, they talk about how many kids were in pass plus range. . . . And what we are trying to do here is get to the college, and not just schools like Ivy Tech, but four-year universities.

Jason Howard also wanted to ensure that teachers understood that every child at Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 was entitled to the same education that a student in one of the more prestigious districts would receive. Jason added, "If it's good enough for them, it's good enough for our students, too."

As a final thought on assessment and monitoring student data, Clayton reported the difficulties he has encountered implementing a shift in philosophy with grading. Following a two-year training, the staff was moving towards using a standards-based grading system. He believed that, in the end, the transition would benefit everyone. The grading would shift from the traditional A, B, C system, which he stated was subjective, and move to one based on mastery of the standards. Clayton's leadership in prioritizing the importance of data was representative of the new measures all of the principals in the study set in place to help their staffs use data to monitor, record, track, and report student progress. Additionally, those same data helped principals as they planned professional development to improve teacher performance.

Subtheme 3.2: Principals monitored and evaluated teacher performance. The second level of evaluation focused on how principals monitored their teachers' daily and ongoing instructional practices and the implementation of strategies and practices that emanated from professional development sessions. Two principals discussed how they specifically monitored the culture and climate of the building and considered how well teachers worked

within their schools' environment. Principal interactions with teachers, individually, and during

collaborative sharing times, provided informal feedback on strategies, materials, and resources

that teachers used to improve their instructional practices.

Moreover, the role principals assigned to the schools' instructional coaches for reading

and math were also crucial in monitoring and supporting teacher performance. Principals relied

on the results of student data, teacher feedback, and observation feedback from the instructional

coaches, but overwhelmingly they used their own insights and expertise while conducting

walkthroughs at unannounced and specified times. Professional development was planned based

on student data results and the specific needs identified by the principal, coaches, and the

teachers during their PLC planning meetings

Completing the formal evaluation instruments at the end of the year served as a

culminating activity. Five of the principals discussed the teacher evaluation process at the end of

the spring semester. Karen shared that although instructional coaches helped to monitor

instruction, ultimately, only the assistant principal and she, in particular, were responsible for

evaluating teacher effectiveness. Peter was working on evaluations and he shared that because

he had so many young teachers, he had to complete a large number of evaluations during the

month. However, new state regulations have positioned principals to plan how they will

complete official annual evaluations on all teachers in the upcoming years.

Both Judy and Marilyn shared how teacher evaluations helped them weed out ineffective

teachers. Carolyn used a pilot evaluation the state was preparing for districts across the state to

use in the future. She also shared how she used a teacher self-reflection tool for some of her

teachers who needed extra support. Clayton at Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6 was

the only principal who directly linked teacher evaluation to student data as a formal evaluation piece that impacted teacher increments in salary.

Karen Hanover also shared how she monitored teachers who needed extra support.

Sometimes it's just one thing, then, and if it's a reading thing, I can go to my reading coach and indicate I would like for her to go to into a particular classroom or help somebody on something. But I'm the only one, my assistant can help me, but I focus on the evaluation piece. I'm not asking anyone else. I know what they need, I want them to be the best teacher, I want every teacher in my building to be a teacher that I would be proud to have my son have as a teacher, and that's been my focus for many years.

Carolyn Williamson discussed how she used the new state evaluation rubric to have teachers become more self-reflective about their practice, acknowledge their need for improvement, and take ownership in their own professional development focus.

What we do is, I might do an observation and then I'll meet with the teacher. I'll discuss some things—always positives and then areas that I feel need support—and then I recommend that they meet with the literacy coach regarding my concern, and not really sharing my concern with the literacy coach, but having them say, "I need some support, and maybe my literacy work stations, can you help me with that?" And this year I did something different with my evaluations. I use the teacher effectiveness rubric from the state that they have just come out with.

Additionally, included in the evaluation of teachers was how teachers adjusted within the culture and climate of the building. Three principals in the study noted their role in monitoring the climate and the expectations they set. Four principals also voiced agreement that monitoring instruction and instructional time was also crucial. Audrey observed, "I think the climate can

change more from day to day. I think it is constantly monitoring what the climate is and constantly working to keep the morale high."

Based on teacher evaluations, two principals shared their plans to move teachers to different grade levels to provide some of them with additional support and to find the best combination for teacher collaboration. Audrey noticed a change in the school climate when she announced she would be making changes; some were excited, but some were very upset. Marilyn shared,

> I think the key is that putting teachers together that work good together, that can work as a team. And I move people around, and they say, "Where am I going to be next year? Where am I going to be next year?" But you know, you really have to move people around, and get the right chemical combination, and when they enjoy each other, they plan their lessons together. One might be strong in one area, say for instance, and they will say, well, I will teach the math, and you teach the language art, and I'll let them think outside the box, and do that. But everyone knows they are responsible for their children's score because the scores are going to be posted on the data boards.

Judy, Clayton, Peter, and Katrina all stressed the importance of monitoring the effective use of instructional time. Karen's comments provided clarity and mirrored the other three:

> Whether or not, you set the expectation—our job is to meet the individual needs of all learners, regardless of what's going on, that's our job. We're going to maximize our time. And with that in mind, there are certain things that you don't mess with, like instructional time. . . . Instructional time will always be a priority.

All of the principals stressed the importance of observation as a way to monitor instruction and student work. Seven principals specifically mentioned the importance of

walkthroughs as observational tools to monitor teacher practices, teacher lesson plans, "treasure hunts" when looking for specific criteria, and student progress, comprehension, and learning based on student work and interaction with their teachers. Three principals spoke directly about the importance of principal visibility as a way of letting both teachers and students see that the principals were aware of what transpired in the classrooms. Three of the principals from two different corporations shared their districts' expectations that walkthrough data be turned in at specified intervals. Karen shared what she expected to see during her formal walkthroughs every three weeks.

> Well, what I do is my classroom walks. I do classroom walkthroughs, and those are really formative data for me. So when I'm in there, what have they learned? Have I seen that put in place because it's instructionally sound and interactive? Is that what I'm working for? So if we did an in-service on differentiation, then when I go in, and I see what's going on and I see how literacy stations have been developed. I'm going to expect to be seeing the differentiation that we've talked about. When I see that they are grouping students in the different activities, and the choices that students may have, is it meeting the needs of all learners?

Martha also talked about how her observation skills extend beyond the classroom. She stated that she used times beyond the classroom, such as in the hallway, by the copier, or at lunch, to let teachers know she was pleased with something she observed as she did her walkthroughs. She shared,

> So they know that I'm aware of what's going on. And so what I value is what I'm talking about, and what our initiatives are, or what we have focused on, and we are not adding a bunch of other stuff in there.

Peter Atkins described his walkthrough activities that were similar to others who not only focused on the teacher, but also on student learning as he asked students about what they were learning. He clarified that the walkthrough report had to be written up and completed every three weeks for every teacher and turned in to the district office on a regular basis,

> And you know when I'm doing walkthroughs, I will just take a quick look at lesson plans to make sure that they are there, and you know they are up-to-date, or where teachers are at because I can go by the objectives that they have written up on the board. You have to have their standards posted that are being taught, and then we asked our kids what standard are we working on, and they should be able to tell me the standard they are working on for that class. I have to be in every classroom every three weeks, but it's usually more than that. Sometimes I would just walk around, walk in the classroom and see what the kids are up to.

Jason and Viola checked student test data and also checked the progress made on student work samples as they observed how teachers monitored students' progress. Jason expected to see student work that matched the standards and their indicators. Additionally, Viola asked her teachers to compare their growth to their students' growth.

Principal visibility was very important to Carolyn. When she first came to the school, she followed a Hispanic principal who was well respected. By developing a relationship with both teachers and parents, she earned both of their support and respect. She described how she works alongside teachers,

> I think that showing them that I'm willing to work with them—you know that I will roll up my sleeves. When they are frustrated I will look for ways to help them with the frustration of what we are trying to accomplish. Just . . . I don't sit in my office. I'm just

actively, I'm very visible throughout the building, and I think showing that you care about your staff. Last night we recognized nine teachers from here who just received tenure, so that was exciting. And eight out of nine were present; one just had a baby, so she couldn't make it.

Carolyn shared that her parents also think it is important for her to be visible. She reported,

> And I'm visible—my parents will say, "We never see principals outside crossing children, releasing kids every day, you are there." Cafeteria in the morning, I'm there. You know supervising breakfast, lunchtime when the parents come in. I go up to them, and I talk to them. And not necessarily about their child who . . . just about how is everything going? You know do you have any concerns, so I think it hindered me in the beginning [following a Hispanic principal], but I think it also made me reach out to them.

Judy stressed the importance of principals not being misled by outside appearances and "cake icing" teaching and techniques that looked good on the outside, but when closely discerned, they were nothing more than a show with no in-depth teaching occurring. With a keen awareness of identifying effective and ineffective teaching, she cautioned that principals must be skilled enough in their walkthroughs to discern when this was happening. She explained what the façade of cake icing teaching looked like and asserted,

> So it's got to be that cohesiveness. For instance, right now I have a teacher and a new teacher here that is having difficulty adhering to those things, and we'll be having a conversation. And it might seem trivial because when you walk in, if you don't know what you're really looking for, it's going deeper than just the surface layer. You've got to as an administrator, you've got to look beyond what's just the immediate obvious.

You've got to ask kids questions about what they are learning. You will have to ask kids questions about what are their goals. Where are they with their oral reading fluency? What is their goal, are they making progress? The kids need to be responsible for their own data also. They need to know where they are, and what their goals are, so individual goal settings are going for kids, but the kids have to know it.

She elaborated on what "cake icing" teaching looks like,

And when an administrator walks in the classroom, you can have the most visually amazing classroom, and I call that the icing on the cake. You can have the icing on the cake, but if you start getting in and looking, you've got to make sure they have the ingredients to have a good cake because your icing isn't everything, and that is a way that many people are not as effective as they should be or could be. They get by because administrators for some reasons don't look pass the icing. And that's the situation I'm dealing with right now with a new teacher.

Judy went on to explain how the district's evaluation system contributed to keeping poor teachers. She revealed,

One of the challenges that I've had is that the district, because of "RIFing" and reduction of force and surplus . . . things like that . . . I have . . . Every year I've been here I've had some possibly major turnover in staff. This year, because of all that, my first grade and second grade teachers are all new. So we had to do the PD, and all that I have been . . . I mean it's been highly effective, I've got two that are very strong, and I've got one that was placed here that is not so effective, but she's coming along, and I've got one that's got a lot of icing, and isn't quite grasping the ingredient concept just yet, so there are continual challenges.

Subtheme 3.3: Principals provided support to teachers who struggled with effective instructional practices. All principals were asked, "What types of things do you, as a principal, do for teachers whom you think may need extra help in effectively instructing students from diverse cultures?" Among the variety of responses, most began with using observations and monitoring the effectiveness of what individual teachers did, especially following professional development. Included among the ideas presented as ways to provide support for teachers Table 10 represents a listing of strategies principals discussed.

Jason checked to make sure teachers were following up by using materials and strategies presented through professional development sessions. When asked how he provided assistance to teachers who needed additional help teaching children from diverse cultures, he asserted,

It is my job to give them the assistance they need. I don't believe teachers fail principals, I believe that principals fail them. . . . I don't believe that teachers fail students, I think that administrators and districts fail teachers many times. Not all the time, let me clarify, not all the time . . . but many times. I think that the failure rests in the hands of the administrators and the districts—more so the building administrator.

Carolyn suggested the following ideas that she used to support teachers:

What we do is, I might do an observation and then I'll meet with the teacher. I'll discuss some always positives and then areas that I feel need support, and then I recommend that they meet with the literacy coach regarding my concern, and not really sharing my concern with the literacy coach, but having them say "I need some support, and maybe my literacy work stations, can you help me with that?"

Table 10 presents a summary of some of the strategies that other principals offered as initiatives they used to help support teachers who struggled in working effectively with their schools' diverse student populations.

Table 10

Strategies for How Principals Helped Teachers Work with Students and Parents from Diverse Populations

No.	Principals' Initiatives to Support Struggling Teachers
1	Allowing teachers to visit other classrooms (in and out of the building).
2	Attending grade level planning time.
3	Cautioning teachers to be careful about how they express certain concepts to parents.
4	Changing grade levels for teachers who are frustrated with a certain age grouping.
5	Conducting role-playing situations and helping teachers see how they could have been handled a situation differently.
6	Conducting a (before school) prayer group to pray for the school, its teachers and students.
7	Creating an Individual Improvement Plan.
8	Discussing frankly the number of students tracked that have been sent to the office.
9	Discussing the relationship between middle-class values and student expectations.
10	Encouraging teachers to attend conferences.
11	Engaging in book studies on culture and brain-based research.
12	Getting teachers to embrace research-based information and preconceived notions.
13	Having courageous conversations about parent concerns.
14	Having frank conversations about teaching concerns (Meeting, talking, counseling, conferencing).

No.	Principals Initiatives to Support Struggling Teachers
15	Having frank discussions about valuing student culture.
16	Helping teachers in building relationships and deliberately getting to know families.
17	Increasing the number of non-White teachers.
18	Isolating resisters from the rest of the staff who have bought into expectations.
19	Mandating and closely monitoring what must change when collaborative efforts have failed.
20	Participating in a study circles (literacy circles, book studies).
21	Providing staff development focused on students' needs.
22	Scheduling 3-week data assessments to monitor changes in student success.
23	Scheduling home visits to help teachers understand culture better.
24	Using data to show the instructional areas that need to be addressed.
25	Using observation and evaluation procedures.
26	Watching others present effective lessons that include modeling and coaching support.
27	Working with reading and math instructional coach supports.
28	Working with school social worker and counselor for gaining greater insight.

Viola stated some of the support that she provided to her teachers who were struggling with working with students from diverse backgrounds:

What do I to help teachers? . . . So other than counseling with . . . meeting with them and conferencing and talking to them, okay? But also this is why we, this book was on brain research, but the book prior to this was on Ruby Payne, and I'm familiar with Ruby Payne working with children of poverty. I studied that as well so, and the teachers that

are here have been with me for a while, so we've gone through and studied that book and

know how to work and talk with students of poverty and we revisit that book from time-

to-time as well in that brain research book, *Shouting* . . . we used that book too. So, I

guess you would say do I have the teachers to work with kids of poverty is through book

studies, through counseling them, through talking to them.

Clayton shared the importance of professional development, grade-level meetings,

modeling lessons and being aware of how middle-class perceptions can be deceptive in helping

teachers understand how students should act and think. He also stressed the need for home

visits.

So we—t depends on the issue I guess you could say—so we put a lot of emphasis on

developing effective practice through the PD. We do in-house meetings, the model

lessons our instruction coaches will do . . . sending people to conferences and some

things like that. In some cases it's not necessarily the practice, instructional practice, but

maybe a teacher's perception since we have a lot of teachers who come from middle-

class, White backgrounds where everybody plays by the rules.

Clayton had worked with children from diverse backgrounds in this country and in

England. He further stressed the need for teachers to develop cultural awareness about mistaken

perceptions they may have based on middle-class values and lenses.

And so is oftentimes very different from where our kids come from, so encouraging those

teachers to do home visits, so we can understand the dynamics in some of the situations

where our students are in and helping them to understand that and it may look like a

student who is challenging authority. It may not really be the best students trying to do

that, but it may really be that you have made a misread on that and getting teachers to

believe this is more than one way to look at things. We have done a fair bit of professional development at helping our teachers understand Hispanic culture, and so that's probably been our biggest gaps right now, and understanding the barriers that exist on how to structure so that we are a little more sympathetic, no . . . empathic to what the issues are.

Clayton also shared that some teachers have unrealistic views of how to improve situations that arise with their students. He believed that teachers need a great deal of support to understand children from diverse cultures.

A lot of the times teachers will offer up suggestions on how to improve things, and they are so-o-o unrealistic. It will not work in the family's environment or in this family's situation . . . so helping them to kind of think this thing through. And we have a social worker and a counselor who also do a lot of coaching with teachers particularly when there are issues, also issues of conflict or and in what families feel like they are not connecting with the teacher.

Karen, like a few others, stated that she was aware that some things that happen are not cultural problems, but perhaps personality characteristics or discipline issues. She cautioned that teachers must know the differences.

What we do, I like my teachers and all my grade level teachers do plan together, and so as they plan, and they look at activities and we have, I could say, we always want to be careful about cultures and sometimes though it's just the discipline of a child, a personality of a child regardless of culture, but what's the best thing that's going to work for that particular child.

Katrina shared how her staff was looking for answers to become more effective in reaching their diverse student population's needs. They had done book studies and attended conferences to improve their skill sets. Six or seven teachers volunteered to attend an evening meeting in another district to hear Dr. Juwanza Kunjufu speak on working with African American boys.

> The study circles were one thing that we did as a team. I also, I look for strong minority candidates to become part of the faculty. I look for the role models for students. I wish I could find a number of men because so many other boys don't have those role models, but we do have some of our custodian staff that are excellent with the students, serve as role models for them. We have some really open conversations and when I have questions, I have certain staff members that would say, "Can you talk to me about this, tell me about this? Why is this happening?"

In discussing how she provided support for teachers who may need extra help in effectively instructing students from diverse cultures, Audrey responded more candidly than any other principal about the perception she had about her predominantly White staff,

> One of the things we did as a staff, because we recognized that most of our teachers were struggling in dealing with kiddos from diverse cultures, we've done some book studies. We continue to keep our school data in front of them and have courageous conversations about what we're feeling, what we're thinking, and what we're seeing. This is what the data shows us. We've also done some role-playing where we've actually shown teachers, given a situation, how their behaviors can exacerbate a problem. So we've done these in staff meeting where we've taken a referral, an office referral for negative behavior, and we may role-play how this Level 4 office referral played out so that the staff can see it.

What was the teacher's action? What was the student's action and how could the outcome have changed if the teacher would have responded differently? How could things have ended up differently had the teacher responded in such a way?

Audrey added,

When we have individual teachers that are really struggling, I try to keep as much data as possible. So, for example, parent complaints or parent concerns. If I see a trend in the fact that it seems to be all African American children or all Hispanic or Latino children. I may just call the teacher in and say, "I've been going over your data and this is what I'm seeing." And it looks like that coupled with observation leads me to have a very frank conversation with a teacher.

She also continued,

Now, if there is resistance, I can point out some specifics, and suggest that. "Let's have come cultural conversations," and so on and so forth. I have yet to have teachers that are so resistant; however, on occasion, I have changed grade levels, made some changes. Because it is very hard to change adults—especially their beliefs and their belief systems to help them to see something different. And I refuse to sacrifice a child and their well-being to try and prove to a teacher that they are wrong.

Marilyn shared that not all ineffective teaching in an urban district demonstrated by teachers who under-perform was based on cultural issues. She asserted some of it is about teacher decisions. She provided an example of a frank conversation she had with one teacher who was performing unsatisfactorily and refused to take any work home beyond the school day.

And so I just think it's their mannerism, how comfortable they are, and how they feel, and if they are not comfortable it's because they are not used to it, and that is up to us as

staff to educate them and in-service them, and give them help. For example, if I have

staff member that's not comfortable walking and they need to meet a parent, then I will

say, "I'll walk with you or my parent liaison or my counselor can go." But I tell them to

go in twos anyway when they make a home visit . . . two people go. And usually when

they can go with someone, then they feel a little more comfortable doing that. Now there

are some would never do it. But I don't think it's because of race, I think it's because of

them, you know. They don't want that—I have one teacher that tells me that she doesn't

do anything at home. Her time at home is her time at home. And I said, "What?" Have

you heard of anything like that? So I had my director to come and listen to her. She told

my director the same thing when she came. And my director couldn't believe it, either.

Marilyn shared a conversation she had with another teacher whom she was unable to

terminate, even though she consistently underperformed. She recounted, "I asked her, 'Why stay

here?' And one girl said, 'Everybody deserves a job.' And I said, 'This is not a job. This is a

career.' Teaching is a career. It's not something you go for certain hours and you leave."

Peter talked about teachers who may not really be meeting the needs of the students but

may want him to believe they are. He believed he was discerning enough to know the difference

between what effective and ineffective teachers do. He shared how the intensity and seriousness

of his conversations with teachers rose when he had talked to teachers previously about an issue.

When he asked for changes, he expected to see evidence of that change immediately.

They do the talk and it's—and I don't know sometimes they do it for show for me, but I

think after a while you are going to find out, who's just talking it, and not doing it, and

they can find out real quickly and that's why I'm going to have a discussion with

someone. "Hey I was in your classroom, I want to see, have that anchor charts up, you

know we've been working on this. What's going on? What can I do to help you because

we need to have them up? Do I need to have literacy coach come down and help you

with those? Do you want me to help you with those?" And I'm not going to go down

there if there is a second or third time . . . this can be a little more intense. It's like, once

there is an expectation . . . when I'm in there tomorrow, I expect it.

Judy also discussed some of the challenges related to teachers applying middle-class

values and how they related to the culture of children different from their own. When asked,

"What types of things do you as a principal do to support teachers whom you think may need

help in effectively instructing students from diverse cultures?" she responded,

That has really been one of the biggest challenges here, even more than academics

because our staff is predominantly White middle-class. My assistants, I have, I have a

nice diversity of African American and Hispanic, but in terms of the actual certified staff,

they all are White. Unfortunately the vast majority thinks they know it all, when it comes

to culture, and that has really been the biggest challenge.

Judy went on to recall several incidents when problems arose because teachers did not

understand the child's culture and the implication for why students behaved in a certain way. An

example of one of those incidents involved toilet paper on the bathroom floor. Judy discovered

that in parts of Mexico, they don't put the toilet paper down the toilets because it plugs up the

plumbing. They were taught that you throw it in the trash. So after a meeting with the students,

and a discussion on the proper way to dispose of tissue in the United States, the problem was

resolved. After sharing story after story with implications related to cultural awareness, when

asked how she learned so much about other culture, she responded,

Experience with people of poverty. Being open to hearing what's really going on,

building that trust that they share, that's how it happened. I think they've learned from

just sitting in meetings. With me, I have a Hispanic staff member who shares. I always

have Hispanic people in the building. I'm really big on believing that you should have

racial representation in the instructional staff, so my assistants are predominantly

minorities, quite frankly.

Subtheme 3.4: Principals took a hands-on approach and had input on hiring their

staff. All of the principals in the study were delighted to have input when new staff members

came and they were given the opportunity to interview new employees before they joined their

staff. Some were able to hire people from outside of the corporation, and some had to choose

from a pool of teachers within the district who were being transferred for various reasons.

Because the staffs were predominantly White, the principals acknowledged the desire to

diversify their staff's ethnicity. Some, like Judy, looked for ways to hire more non-White staff

members as support staff. In deciding on new staff members coming to their schools, they all

acknowledged the distinction of their role and the district's role in the hiring process.

In describing the interview process for teachers, Katrina replied,

I always sit down with them. There is a contract. Well, see, it's all contractual. So if

I'm involuntarily transferred, then I can opt to choose a position in another building. And

obviously I want to know who is coming into the building, so I sit down and talk to those

individuals. In most case that has worked; in one case, it did not. And we went through

the steps and had the improvement plans and that person did leave and is no longer

teaching to my knowledge. Currently, I'm not going to have any openings next year. In

fact, I had to battle to maintain the teachers I have right now. They don't know that.

When asked what made Bookman Station Elementary School #12 distinctive, Carolyn offered,

> I don't really know how to answer that. I think that probably having the opportunity to hire just about my whole staff, and to bring them in with analyzing data with the changing instructional practices, with not following the basal makes a difference. My teachers, this is what they know, this is what they have grown up within their sense versus if you go into other schools that have some veteran teachers, some are willing to change, and some are not still willing to change, so I think that I don't have to deal with that because of who my staff is.

Carolyn continued sharing that the biggest reason for the change was related to hiring practices.

> Well I think it was having the opportunity to hire teachers. The majority of our teachers have six or less years' experience. Now I have had some veteran teachers, but they have since retired, but they do come back and volunteer now.

John had hired three new teachers during the first year, and that change impacted the overall mindset and climate of the school. Like John, Peter gave a similar response when asked if he thought changes in the staff made a difference. Peter responded,

> I think it has, because I have a certain attitude that I'm looking forward to hiring, and I also want them to be as positive, because with all those kids, if you are positive, and for the most part, if you don't love kids—especially kids of high poverty, Black students, White students, or Hispanic—if you don't have a love for those students, then this district is not the place for you, anyway.

In describing his teaching staff, Peter shared that he had hired over half of them.

It's very steady, and my staff, when you look at it on paper, I have people who are either

ending up for careers or just beginning. It's evaluation time right now, and I have a lot of

them . . . one- to five-year teachers, and you know it's been kind of nice when I have

been the one to hire them. It's nice when you kind of hire your own people.

Explaining what he looked for in new staff members, he observed,

I hire them if they have experience in multicultural schools. One of my main questions

on my interview is, "What does diversity mean to you in the school setting?" And from

that question, I can usually figure out if they will have respect for diversity here, now.

Karen spoke about her aggressive search for African American teachers to add diversity

to her staff. She asserted,

I mean I'm looking. I was just like—and I've even gone on missions to seek them, even

when I didn't have an opening. It's hard, and so I've been able to help our sister schools

in the district to bring in teachers of color when the opportunity presented itself. And it's

really tough because sometimes they don't let me know until August that there is an

opening. Well you know at that point in time there are teachers of color who have been

selected and they already have jobs in place. And so it's like—don't wait until August—

so let me hire. Let me find someone and let me get him on staff, or hire them in the

district, and let's get them placed because I think it's possible—I have been frustrated in

the past.

She shared her desire to be more proactive, but her role as a principal does not always

allow that.

Until I get the green light to do hiring I just can't do it. But it's what I do believe. It's a

disservice not to have an equal or near equal amount of teachers. . . . I do have a half-

time—my math teacher who comes to us in every afternoon is a teacher of color—and I've got my workings. . . . You know that I have someone that I think is not coming back next year, so I have it in my head. It's like, I'm going to get one of those math coaches over here, that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to fight because I need one of them. And I have to go to my teachers and try to count on . . . finding teachers. But I just don't want any teacher; I want good teachers. That's what I want.

Although most principals, like Karen, shared the need for a more diversified staff, Audrey, who is an African American, reflected how she had to proceed with caution in hiring African American teachers. She shared the following insightful perception:

And I see that when we think about discipline, and I think, as an African American, I feel for me, color, my color, my ethnicity affects everything that I do. And I look, when I see things, I look at them as being . . . you know, for example, I realize that we need more African Americans. We need more minorities on our staff. I don't think the Caucasian principal would ever give it a second thought if she hired two White people in a row. As an African American principal, I realize we need diversity on our staff, but the very fact that I have two very qualified, African American teachers that I want to hire, I know that I'll probably hear some pushback, or receive some pushback that "She only hired them because they were Black."

Viola Cooper-Latimore recognized that her hiring opportunity had been limited in the 10 years she served as principal, and she remarked, "Some of them were here before I came. I may have been able to select maybe six of the teachers, but the office staff has rotated since I have been here; I got to select them."

When asked about the adjustment process for the teachers and principal, she responded that at the beginning there was a lot of adjustment: "I think it was a learning process for both. They have to learn what you expect, and what you are looking for, I have to learn what their teaching style is, and how I can help them."

Contrasted with Viola who has had a steady and fairly consistent staff, as she shared earlier, Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 had been on a roller coaster ride of changes regarding hiring practices. Jason's turnovers appeared to be even greater than the one Judy experienced because of RIFs in her city. When asked if the turnover was discouraging, Jason responded that he enjoyed the challenge of getting to mold it all over again. So, the question arose, how does having to hire new staff members on a continual basis give the staff a chance to bond and build a community of learners in the midst of continual change? Jason shared that new teachers often know what is expected before they come about teachers on the staff being involved in book studies and the emphasis on cultural competency.

> The word gets out before they get here. And what you have is people who want to come, because people actually want to be better. People want to be challenged to grow in themselves and not to settle for mediocrity, but to strive for greatness. So that may sound crazy, but it is the truth. So I only get those teachers to apply that really want to return. So when they come in, you'll be amazed at how one-third can influence two-thirds.

After the initial turbulence experienced by Marilyn in trying to stabilize her staff, she reported that at the end of her fourth year at the school, she had a positive outlook for the upcoming year. More about the road Marilyn's traveled will be revealed in the next section; however, she, like her colleagues, saw the benefit of being able to have input on hiring her staff

and finding teachers who liked working with students from diverse cultures who needed appropriate practices and strategies to motivate them to achieve.

> I think that this is probably my best year. Is it a perfect year? No, but it's not like a back-end program. Did I handpick each one of my staff? No. But even the people who are not at 100% with all the things that we have to do, they are doing some of it. They might not be doing it at the level that I want them to do, but they are playing the game and doing it.

Subtheme 3.5: When principals decided a teacher was not a good fit for working in the school's program that focused on increasing student learning, the principal worked to have the teacher retire, go to another building, or leave the district. All of the principals in the study were challenged with building the best staff to meet the needs of their diverse student population. Eight of the principals faced the challenge of revamping their staffs. Four of the principals worked with the staffs they inherited and made a few minor changes. The vast majority of the teachers who remained on those staffs wanted to work with students from diverse populations and continued learning new techniques to impact student achievement.

Principals worked to create a cohesive, talented pool of teachers and other staff members by providing professional development and support for them. Over time, with coaching and modeling, the vast majority of teachers moved beyond mere compliance and bought into the principals' expectations. In some cases however, as noted above, those who are unable to adapt either left or went to other buildings or another district, or they may have decided to retire, if the timing was right for them.

However, some who lingered still had to be motivated until they adapted or left the school. One principal told about a teacher who left after admitting having trouble working with

African American boys. Another principal told that, although she had not been able to completely remove every marginal teacher, she found ways to nudge the teachers into improved practices. Other principals shared that some teachers finally left because they did not like the principal's leadership style. Closely linked to the principals' decisions to terminate teachers was the district's role in intervening on hiring and termination decisions.

Several principals shared the importance of removing resistant teachers and replacing them with teachers willing to work on a collaborative team. John, Peter, and Judy documented their perceptions about building a strong team, and Marilyn provided the most vivid narrative of her struggle for change. John shared how removing just three teachers changed the climate of the building. It was like removing "one bad apple that spoiled the whole basket." Peter relayed how unpleasant it was to remove teachers who are not performing effectively. He was very upbeat about working with struggling teachers, but when it came to the final analysis, he typified the hard conversations that principals must have at times. He talked about how his coaching background helped him with difficult situations. He enjoyed encouraging and acknowledging when teachers did well, but he didn't back away from difficult conversations when teachers were not doing their best, even to the point of sending them "on their way" if necessary.

Judy described her experience during the first year at Independence Elementary School #8 when, although some teachers left, she provided them support until they relocated in other buildings. Because of union contracts, the ineffective teachers were put on "monitor assistance plans."

> I have a strong staff. If you are not strong, you are not here. I have three people left from when I came here, and that's either because they didn't have those skills. At one time there was a group of them that it was their evaluation year the next year, so they decided

it was time to leave, and that's probably a good thing. It made my life easier because I knew it wasn't going to be a good year for them.

Carolyn and Marilyn described how district policy impacted the rare occasions when they had to recommend that someone be removed from the position. Carolyn shared,

Well, I mean we have a policy in place at the district and with the union; you have to do three observations and two evaluations in order to release a teacher. And basically, I do the recommendations, but the district is the one who releases the teacher from that contract. For me, it's a hard thing, but I think you always have to keep in mind what's best for the kids.

Marilyn narrated probably the most revealing account of how she tenaciously worked around an evaluation system based on seniority that required her to provide an overwhelming proof of incompetence to get rid of marginal teachers. Working in a system that she considered a difficult place to get rid of ineffective teachers created a lot of inefficiency. Even with poor evaluations, teachers were able to retain their jobs and continue because of the union stipulations in place at the time of the study, along with conflicting internal district policy. Although the district office administrators said they wanted to get rid of ineffective teachers, principals found it hard to actually make that happen. Her candid insights revealed,

We can't get rid of them because they are . . . I mean I'll give you an example. I had to lose some people, so I asked and asked and asked who would like to volunteer, even the ones that don't want to work, don't want to leave. I mean I was like, "If my leadership style doesn't fit you, now is the time to go." I mean I put out a weekly agenda, and I said before spring break, "This is the time to relax, rejuvenate and come back eager with the last stretch of the school year. It's a time to reflect about your accomplishments and

whether or not you are effective. If you are not effective then you need to look at new strategies, or you need to consider retirement." I'm blunt, you know, but some just sit there, and say, "I don't care; I'm going to be here." And those who are, we just have to keep on moving around them and work on, trying to get them out if they are really, really ineffective.

Marilyn disclosed that before she came to the school four years ago, there had been a continuous change in leadership. Even though she began to hold teachers accountable, she admitted that there were still a few teachers who are not totally effective.

It's like, we have a group that's all about kids that want everything to go well, and then we have a group—just a few, about three or four—and I think they are not as successful academically with the children, but instead of looking inward to their selves, they are looking for blame from somewhere else. But I think as a whole, the staff is not buying into that blame game, and they are saying, "There's too much work to do," so they are going to work. And I think they learned camaraderie and kind of learned how to be a family. Are we perfect? No. Do we have ineffective teachers? Yes. Do we have people, staff that do not pull their weight? Yes.

Recalling the challenges Restoration Elementary School #7 faced with the highest African American population of any school in the study, the following account offers a glimpse into the frustration that loitered, as Marilyn lamented,

It's amazing. You probably don't want to hear this, but my four most ineffective teachers are African American, and I as an African American, I am very disappointed in them. I say to them, "How can you miseducate someone that looks like you?" For example, I compiled scores every week, so when you have pitiful scores, I call you in, and I say,

"Your scores are horrible. Would you like to share why your scores are so bad with me?" I don't do it in the whole group, and I will call them one-on-one. And one teacher said, "Well I don't know, I have taught it, and they don't take their education seriously." And I say, "Teaching and someone learning—it is two different things." I said, "As an administrator I thought I would give you the opportunity to explain to me, because I can draw my own conclusion why your children are not learning."

She went on to explain the reason for her passion as a principal stemmed from growing up in segregated schools where teachers did not accept failure.

And we are in a profession that everyone chose. One of the things I do at the beginning of the year is I ask people to think about their most favorite teacher, staff members, and then I say, "Why did you become a teacher?" I have them to write it down, and I have everybody to share with everyone else the characteristics of their best teacher and why they became a teacher. And I say to them, "You need to keep that fire going." I don't know, I asked one teacher, "Are you mad at the system, are you mad at me, or what are you mad at? Because I just don't see how you could come to work every day and not try to do your best."

Marilyn clarified her statement about African American teachers, reassuring that some of her best teachers were African Americans, but also coming back to her concern about those who did not put forth their best effort. She shared with one teacher, "But I'm just shocked that you would be in a school that is just about all African American. You know how hard life is for some of them, so why would you not do everything that you can to make them successful and to reach them?"

Marilyn noted the district's procedures that counteracted their instructions to principals. Explaining a recent district meeting that challenged principals to put ineffective teachers on assistance plans and move them out of the system, she recounted the obstacles principals faced in her district:

If you have a teacher, and they are not doing well, then you have to put them on this assistance plan. And then if they . . . usually, nobody is just insubordinate. So they might improve, but it might not be enough, and it might not be consistent. So then you put them on an intervention plan. But the problem is they can improve, but it's not substantial. Most people, if you are watching them for a little while, it's not substantial, so you keep writing them up, you give them written reprimands, you give them this, and you send it downtown. Well, who is really monitoring that? Who is looking at it? So it's a lot harder than it looks. You know you keep writing them up; you keep doing this; but it's really hard, then you know, you've got to put them on a PIP [Performance Improvement Plan] . . . then sometimes the district says they'll move them. So they move them to another school, and then usually, what the teacher does is get an FML [family medical leave]. And then they go out, then the process starts out all over again.

Continuing with her frustration, she added,

So they [the district] get mad, and say we are not getting rid of bad teachers, but obviously, some of it is that most of them can do better, but are lazy and don't do better. There is a difference between being incompetent and being lazy. And the lazy ones, who are the marginal ones that—I don't know if they just burned out and because the health insurance reasons, they are still working or whatever—but they don't have the drive to do. I always tell my people we are a low performing school. So just doing the minimum

isn't going to make it here. I expect above and beyond. I expect 110% if we are going to

get up here to our expectations. If we expect a lot from the kids, we had to expect a lot

from the teachers.

Explaining how she had to circumvent those teachers who were underperforming, she

maintained,

But we have so many other people . . . What we did is, we started going into their rooms

of the ineffective teachers and teaching over there. I mean you've got to do what you've

got to do. I went in there, my assistant principal went in there, and we just started to

teach reading. Somebody else started teaching writing, and when you are in there. They

can say these children can't learn, and somebody else comes in there, and they bring the

scores up, they start jumping up. And then you start looking, you know, then you've got

to look and say, "Is it really the children?"

Summary of strategic data analysis and monitoring and evaluation of staff. The five

subthemes linked to the overarching theme of how principals used data analysis and also

monitored and evaluated staff effectiveness showcased the principals' leadership role in

promoting changes in instructional practices. All of the principals in the study expressed the

urgency of using data as the key determinant in deciding what would happen with staff

development, instructional focus, and teacher support. They also discussed a systematic way of

tracking data. Some of the principals produced current student data that was at their fingertips.

Some relied heavily on the role of the instructional coaches who helped augment how the staff

used their data, modeled instruction, and supported teachers with new resources. The principals

shared how they utilized the data for each of their subgroups and individuals in their school.

This may be one of the reasons why they all had experienced measures of success in student

growth. It should be noted that the charter school in the study had financial incentives for teacher evaluation connected to student achievement and an emphasis was placed on teacher input in curriculum decisions.

Principals used various methods to monitor effective instructional practices and provided support to teachers who experienced difficulty working with diverse student populations. Although principals all had a desire for their teachers to use culturally relevant practices, few mentioned specific practices, instructional materials, or other evidences of what teachers were actually implementing with students once teachers completed their book studies or other workshops on cultural practices. Because there was no time for extended periods of observation, there still remains a need for another study where teachers are monitored and observed over a period of time to determine what specific things teachers were actually doing that would be considered culturally relevant practices specifically related to instructional practices.

Moreover, it also appeared that most of the principals needed help to codify the specific practices their teachers were actually using relative to cultural practices, so that they, the principals, could provide more deliberate and intentional dialogue related to using culturally responsive pedagogy and help their teachers build their knowledge base and reach higher levels of proficiency. This finding is based on the relatively few principals who used specific terminology or provided specific practices that teachers did as noted in the literature review.

Providing Professional Development That Addressed Cultural Competency Issues

Principals were all aware of the need for strong professional development. As they established their learning communities, a few formally adapted the terminology of becoming a professional learning community (PLC). However, they all developed creative ways for teachers to meet and learn in a whole group, in grade levels, and in other configurations as needed. Some

of the principals were very creative in scheduling times for professional development to occur.

They developed school leadership teams who helped with implementing practices discussed in

training sessions. Another key method of disseminating information related to cultural issues

was through book studies and study circles. The principals' leadership role in ensuring effective

staff development helped teachers grow personally and professionally. Although unique in their

approaches, the principals shared a strong connection for implementing the subthemes listed in

Table 11.

Table 11

Subthemes Linked to Providing Professional Development That Addressed Cultural Competency

Issues

No.	Six Subthemes Related to Professional Development
1	Principals established professional communities of learners.
2	Principals were resourceful in how they scheduled time for professional development through grade-level collaboration and other PLC time.
3	Principals developed leadership teams to provide feedback and help lead the charge for implementing professional development.
4	Principals used book studies as one way to help teachers become more culturally competent.
5	Principals used various other methods to provide professional development.
6	Principals were reflective about enhancing their professional development.

Subtheme 4.1: Principals established professional communities of learners.

Although the term *professional learning community* has appeared in educational literature during

the last decade, only two of the principals, Jason and Martha, referenced the content of their staff

meetings with that specific terminology or a form of it. Both principals also used the acronym

PLC interchangeably for the term. Despite not codifying their practices using the PLC

terminology, all of principals verbalized many elements of what professional learning

communities are and what they do, as described by DuFour (2004). The emphasis in schools that

used this model was (a) ensuring that all students learn, (b) developing a culture of systematic

collaboration, and (c) establishing a focus on results (DuFour, 2004).

Professional development activities in all 12 schools valued collecting and analyzing data

to determine which strategies best helped students improve future performance. All of the

principals had accepted the challenge to look beyond perceived student deficits and accepted

responsibility for finding students' strengths and building on those to increase student learning.

Only the degree of implementation varied from school to school. The schools all adhered to

elements found in DuFour's (2004) discussion on professional learning communities. His

philosophy provided a background for findings in this study. DuFour stated,

> Educators who focus on results must also stop limiting improvement goals to factors
>
> outside the classroom, such as student discipline and staff morale, and shift their attention
>
> to goals that focus on student learning. They must stop assessing their own effectiveness
>
> on the basis of how busy they are or how many new initiatives they have launched and
>
> begin instead to ask, "Have we made progress on the goals that are most important to
>
> us?" Educators must stop working in isolation and hoarding their ideas, materials, and
>
> strategies and begin to work together to meet the needs of all students (DuFour, 2004,
>
> para. 36)

Martha discussed the importance of teachers working together in professional learning

communities to analyze their data and focus instruction. Earlier, she addressed how the team

leader used the data at each grade-level meeting. Audrey also had a great deal to share on

professional development and the intentional approach the school had to tie professional

development to district imperatives and student and teacher needs. Nine principals discussed the

influence that the district had on professional development. When asked about her school's

professional learning environment, Audrey described several layers of activities with the

following comments:

> This year, our professional development focus is to, well, I'm trying to think of the best
>
> way to phrase it. One of our two prongs is to increase student engagement and two, our
>
> teachers are going to become better teachers of reading—hence being able to diagnose
>
> reading problems, thus being able to correctly administer interventions and different
>
> things to help make up that deficit.

Audrey described how intentional she was in making sure that professional development

was relevant to the staff.

> At one time when we would seat people together, people would be seated by grade level.
>
> But you know what, I realized that in a grade level, people would establish their roles.
>
> There's kind of a little hierarchy, who's this and who's that. But moving them outside of
>
> their comfort zone to another team of people so that they can build and establish
>
> relationships with people outside of their grade level.

When asked how professional development changed teacher perceptions and thinking

about working with students from diverse populations, she noted,

> It has been a slow change. I guess, so, I'll say, when I first got into administration, you
>
> think you're going to change the world and you think it's going to be immediate. And
>
> what I've found about changing beliefs and attitudes is probably one of the most

challenging things to know is that it does happen over time. It's kind of like water on a rock. It has to wear away over time. So, being consistent with the professional development, and continuing to deliver again and again, and again and again. Over time, perceptions and attitudes change, over time.

Martha stated she had seen differences also and believed that the consistency of staff development, follow-up with instructional coaches, discussions during PLC time, and district expectations in all schools aligned so that teachers knew they most deploy what had been presented. She referred to the districts' extensive staff development opportunities presented in the summer. Additionally, Martha mentioned how district-supported instructional coaches also helped to implement professional development practices. She shared,

> It's about providing that support that I mentioned with the coaches and the fact that I am—it has to be—you have to be involved with them. I have to be involved in the professional development. I have to know how to walk the walk, and talk the talk, and they have to know, and believe that I really believe it. "She is providing professional development. We have the coaches who are on board, and they are going to help us, and they are going to come in, and we are going to get all the support that we need, and then if we don't . . . If we need more support, we are going to get more support, and then she is going to offer more professional development. And then she is going to have our team leaders talking about it. And then we are going to talk in our professional learning communities." And so, it has to be that consistency. You can't just throw it out there and say, "Do it." And then every three years when someone is on an observation cycle, then say, "Oh I see that you are implementing this that we did three years ago."

Martha noted that when staff members did not see the need for some forms of staff development, she remained consistent in dealing with resisters. She believed her personal involvement demonstrated her resolve to her staff.

> While some people are going to be naysayers, because they think, "This is so silly. I don't know why we were doing this? This is just one more thing I have to do, and blah, blah." While they may start with that, if I'm consistent about my vision, and my building leadership's vision—that's why I have that building leadership team that's also there to support that vision, and to get that vision out—then they see it, "Okay, she is not kidding. We need to do this."

Subtheme 4.2: Principals were resourceful in how they scheduled time for professional development through grade-level collaboration and other PLC time. Nine principals mentioned some of the unique ways they planned and provided time for professional development. Clayton arranged the schedule so each teacher had a personal daily preparation period for professional development and a grade-level meeting time. When asked about professional development activities for her staff, Karen responded with a very detailed, strategic, and intentional plan that incorporated three main ways of presenting information. The first strategy used three scheduled meeting times that included whole staff meetings. Another strategy used staff development days built into the yearlong calendar, and a third one used designated prep time for teachers to work together throughout the week by grade level.

Of all three strategies, the second design was most inventive. It involved scheduling "in-school flex time" at the end of every day. During the last period of the day, grade-level teams met on a regular basis while students attended enrichment classes to study different cultures that had been chosen for the year. The children in each grade level rotated on a weekly basis and

attended classes with the special area teachers on Monday through Thursday. On Friday all of the students came together to present a mini-program, and parents were invited to come. Karen described it as a win–win situation for teachers and students because they did not have to plan for a substitute to relieve them during their training session. During a six-week cycle, Karen could meet with all grade levels for one week and the special area teachers on weeks that may not have had a full five days. She explained that she brought in outside facilitators as needed to meet with grade-level teams and instructional coaches. Karen continued remarking about the valuable instructional time that was saved by planning flex time at the end of the day;

> It's a win–win and then when our kids go to art, gym, and music and media, at the end of the day, they can take their coats, and they take their backpacks and those staff walk them out to the buses. So you lose so much valuable time at the end of the day, when you're packing kids up, and getting ready to go, it's like, no, send them on out, teachers just can go on to contract time, or after contract time, if they so choose because once it's contract time it's up to them if they want to remain in that activity, so it really is a win–win.

Karen also noted the importance of including a cultural component into the scheduling that helped the students have global perspective.

> I really felt that it was important that we go back to brass tacks, and take a look at culture, and the appreciation of culture, and understanding the differences of culture. And I contacted a consultant and asked her to come over and provide a staff development on staff development day for my teachers as a whole, so that we always remain open-minded to understand where the child's coming from. Well you know what? That activity was important for every teacher—the gym teacher, the media specialist, first grade,

kindergarten—it was open, and that I want to reserve those days for what is important to all.

Katrina described New Suburbia Elementary School #11's professional development schedule that differed from other schools in the district. She shared,

We have professional development every Thursday afternoon. At 1:25 the students will go home, and we have from that point until 3:20. We work on a variety of topics, Balanced Literacy being a big one this year. The study circle is being another big issue.

When asked how this squared with the state superintendent's plan that no professional development would be held during the day, she responded they had gained time when they eliminated morning recess and shortened the lunch period. Additionally, with the new plan, they did not have to prepare for substitute teachers. More importantly, they needed more time to accommodate training for their Balanced Literacy program, which required 40 hours the first year and 20 hours for the next two years after that.

Viola conducted professional development in the morning.

So, all professional developments were in the morning, starting at 8:10 to about 9:55. Now teachers collaborate at grade level, and then that's based on student work, so it could be around interventions after looking at our test scores. We meet with the staff's intervention groups, so it could be around intervention, the reading, the English language arts, the math, the writing. We develop our professional development around those tests, so that, too, helped us. We have what is called "Period Zero" twice a week. . . . That's before school. At 8:10, teachers report to school. The school doesn't start until 9:55. So for two days a week, we are in professional development—whether, whichever topic we need to be, we rotate those. We have a planned schedule at the beginning of the school

year that we give teachers, so that they know what the professional development is for the year.

Peter shared the frequency of his staff meetings and the union backing for the before-school meetings.

We have a team meeting and a staff meeting every month. We will usually meet two to three times a month and as an entire staff. This is before school. We begin at 7:30. There is still until 8:20. We have so many hours we are allowed to use for each nine weeks, and our union—this is a very heavy union building. When I first came here, it was not working together well with previous administration, and now we are trying to work that out.

Judy mentioned several ways that she insured joint staff planning time based on collaboration.

I make my master schedule so that my goal is that every grade level can have a collaboration time every single day. I sit down with the interventionalists every Tuesday morning. We have a meeting, and we go over every student that is in interventions. And I talk about how, what kind of progress they are making, what kind of concerns there are.

Martha discussed how she provided a daily common planning time for her staff that allowed them to meet together at a minimum of at least once a week. Furthermore, she noted, there is time scheduled for PLC meetings to discuss data, how they may need the help of the instructional coaches, and other concerns.

We also have a scheduled PLC where you are just looking at student data during that time which is identified, and you have a support person that works at your team. So, we all meet in the media center, so we will do like the primary grades one day, so the K, 1, and

2 teams are working at different tables, and I can be in there, and the coaches are in there, and the Title I teachers, and the special ed teachers that work with that grade level, and so they all have a team that they meet with. I meet with the different teams or I try to be in on and part of a different team.

Subtheme 4.3: Principals developed leadership teams to provide feedback and help lead the charge for implementing professional development. All of the principals revealed that although they took responsibility for the direction of the school's professional development, they each worked at developing a sense of shared ownership and leadership with professional development implementation. Principals mentioned varied combinations of shared leadership in implementing professional development through leadership team meetings, staff meetings, and grade-level meetings. When asked how the culture and climate of the school supported the staff to become a community of learners, Martha discussed her vision of creating a shared team approach, led by a leadership group that helped solve problems and build acceptance of ideas that she presented and who also helped modify them as needed.

> My vision—and since I have been here the way that I have set up our culture in the building is a team approach—so I meet with all of the team. First of all, I have a leadership team so there is a team leader on every grade level, as well as the instructional coaches, and those Title I people as peripheral people, someone from special ed, someone from the special areas, so that we all are solving the problems in the school or coming up with the plans for the school. I want to perhaps direct them in this way, so I have got that input from other people that might either (a) change what I was thinking, or (b) I'm getting them on board, and having them help deploy that vision for what needs to happen.

Plus I'm getting info because they know what is going on in their grade level, and their

individual kids. I don't know that like they do, they are the experts.

Audrey emphasized that she was not the only one who planned professional development

ideas. As teachers met, they were able to discuss concerns and share strategies with one another.

She further offered that professional development had to align with their school improvement

goals and included carefully selected research that provided evidence that all children can

succeed. She stated,

> I think that many of our teachers, they were skewed in their perceptions about some
>
> subgroups and some kids and what they could do and what they were capable of doing.
>
> So reading the research and celebrating the successes that we had in our building,
>
> because there were some pockets of success. So if this teacher could do it, then what are
>
> you doing in your classrooms? Our professional development wasn't always top down.
>
> It may be colleague to colleague with teachers sharing their successes and having some
>
> very frank conversations, and having teachers go in and walkthrough and watch—"Wow,
>
> what is this teacher doing?"—going in and visiting the classroom in a very systematic
>
> way.

Judy discussed how putting a leadership team in place to approve ideas, forms, and other

things that she initiated had helped bridge the concerns the union presented, built trust among the

staff, and empowered teachers to ensure that everything they did had a definite purpose.

> So anyway, so you have the quality improvement team, and I have representation from
>
> every grade level, we meet. When I had forms, I gave them a paper to fill out, they
>
> would take it to the union because there was a change in working positions, that's how
>
> bad it was here. I mean, I said I had to get permission to blow my nose. It was really that

bad when I came here. But they had been able. . . . They ran this; teachers ran the school. Some didn't work at all, and they ran out the previous ineffective principals. So I had a lot to overcome, I thank God that I didn't know that's what I was walking into. But it worked because I'm a person that, you know, coming in, you do what you got to do, you know. So building that trust is essential and that collaboration is what does it, so sitting and working in those meetings, having hard conversations. I mean before any form, even to this date—before any form that I want the staff to fill out, it has to go through the quality improvement team.

Clayton described what was different about how he structured his school leadership team beginning with their biweekly meetings.

I don't know if it's really that different, but we are very much a teacher-led organization. I have the benefit here of having a board which is appointed, so I don't have people on the board who don't believe in the mission. Anybody who comes on board is strictly to help. They believe what we are doing, so I give a lot of latitude to them, and everything from staffing to curriculum choices to social programs just you name it, so I have my grades divided up into houses, so kindergarten-first grade is a house, second and third grade is a house, and so on. And each of the houses has a lead teacher, so I have a biweekly leadership meeting with this lead teacher. It is an opportunity to hear the voice in the classroom, to have an opportunity to have ideas and concern shared at a level which we can make decisions. Oftentimes, like, I want to give you a good example.

Then Clayton shared how being a charter school enabled them to make a quick decision that changed their reading program to more closely meet the needs of the students.

It was first, actually, first grade that came up with the idea that maybe we should be thinking about our reading series. So in the charter school, you don't have a cycle when you have to adopt. You can adopt wherever you feel like it, so we had a meeting one night where we were talking about test data. We saw the lack of student progress in comprehension. Teachers in kindergarten and in first grade, they were expressing a lot of concern about the lack of resources to help students develop solid comprehension skills. So we made a decision that night we would look at adopting a new reading series. They formed a committee to do that, and by the end of the month, by the end of the second month, we pretty much knew what are we going to adopt and it went to the board for recommendation, and they approved it and that was that.

Subtheme 4.4: Principals used book studies as one way to help teachers become more culturally competent. Nine of the principals directly mentioned book studies or study circles as a way their schools provided professional development. Although most did not give the authors' names, the book titles mentioned covered topics such as improving student behavior, increasing teaching strategies, understanding brain-based research, and increasing cultural awareness. Ruby Payne's (2003) book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty,* which has been updated several times, was the document most frequently referenced by principals that helped their staff to better understand their students. As was noted in the literature review, some researchers (Gorski, 2005; Kunjufu, 2006) believe that her approach presented a deficit model of looking at students and their families; however, the principals reported the material was beneficial to them.

Judy, in particular, had an extensive library with several copies of various titles that teachers had read. Although Marilyn did not share all of the titles, she reported that her staff

members read a book a month. Her teachers divided the books they read and shared them in a "jigsaw" format with different teachers reporting on different parts of each book. Other principals also added to the list of books they shared with their staff members. For the book titles cited by all of the principals as books they had read together recently, a list appears in Appendix D.

When asked about their plans for professional development, Martha, like Audrey, shared how the plan was linked to the School Improvement Plan and student needs. Recent trend data for a three to five year period had helped them focus what professional development would include next year. Martha recounted,

> For instance, right now, one of our goals that we are revising for next school year is to focus on our achievement and gap we have between Black and White students. It's a trend over the last 10 years, that we are seeing an increasing gap between our Black and White students. So we have planned our professional development partly around that, so we are doing a lot with cultural competence. We have a book, called *The Global Achievement Gap*, that we are going to kind of jigsaw, and if teachers want to read it—I don't like to do a book club, where we are all going to read this book, and we are going to discuss it at the staff meeting because that about 10% of people want to do that, or not really going to do it. But if we really want to make something happen, then I'll give it to people who want to read it, and then those of us team leaders who are going to read it, then we bring information to the meeting, and we jigsaw those important points that we want to make sure everybody knows, so that everybody is getting the information. Some people are getting the Cliff Notes version of it, but others are—who are more interested and have more stake in it—are going to really read it.

In addition to the book study, there will be an increased focus on cultural competency and creating student workstations. She told why this was important and how their professional development focus would shift for the next year.

> We have several things that are coming, that we are doing next year around cultural competency. A couple of other things that we are doing are "making the most of small group instruction" with Debbie Diller and math workstations and literacy workstations because that's good for all kids. But we also know that many of our African American males are not. . . it's not that they don't have the ability to do it. They are not passing the test because we feel like they are not engaged. How are we going to engage students? But it's not just our African-African males—all kids—you know what I mean. We need to do what's best for all kids. But how we are going to also, in the process of that, target these specific kids that are having concerns.

When asked about what professional development activities his staff had participated in, Jason shared about the role of the district in offering best-practice instruction in math and language arts. Additionally, he discussed how staff members had to continually go over some of the same material each year because new staff members needed that same information.

> I have trainings on Marzano, dealing with him and his work, dealing with Balanced Literacy, dealing with Scott Foresman's training, dealing with training on technology and how to infuse technology into class for Word, dealing with making sure we have a 90-minute block. So all those things come together, but the most important piece is understanding the culture in which we're working—dealing with the literature, such as *Other People's Children*. We did a book study on that, a PLC on that.

Jason cautioned that professional development was not enough. He was also looking for examples of how what staff members learned as they worked in the classroom through higher-order questioning, using multiple intelligence activities, operationalizing Bloom's taxonomy, and understanding the students' cultures. He shared,

I'll have IDIs done through the district cultural diversity office. I'll provide them with professional development, in-house literature. And I'm not necessarily talking about current literature like, *What About Me You Can't Teach?*—because there were some great things written, like *The Mis-education of the Negro,* by Carter G. Woodson, and W.E.B DuBois's work. In looking at that and pulling out some pieces and having discussions about, especially, Carter G. Woodson's work on looking at our own biases, seeing how we can move on past that. So, using the multicultural office, current and past literature, book studies, discussions—all those things. And also, allowing them to bring in . . . and allowing them to go to . . . and present on a book study. Because I can't expect what I don't inspect.

When asked how staff development had been responsible for changing any teacher perceptions or beliefs, Jason shared that teachers were able to see their shortcomings and began to make changes.

What About Me You Can't Teach? That book says it all right there by itself, because we come in with biases, hidden biases and perceptions, ideologies, beliefs about certain people or peoples—and professional development at Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 has shown, especially, after that audit . . . and after working with the director—what it has shown is that we all are in need of some growth if we are going to make children move. So, I think professional development around culture and encouraging

conversations and using conversations to observe each other through TESA [Teacher Expectation and Student Achievement] . . . all of those things. . . it starts with a conversation in moving. . . "Where am I?" Being honest with oneself. No one has to be in a room with you when say, "I've got these bigot issues." Or, "I have these hidden issues" or "I really don't understand how to teach 6 + 1 Traits of Writing." But once you admit to yourself that "I really don't know how to teach Balanced Literacy. I really don't know how to teach Balanced Literacy to a group of Hispanic/Latino or African American students. I just don't know how."

Judy discussed professional development activities at Independence Elementary School #8 when money was available. At one time she was able to bring in consultants like Carolyn Thompson, who specialized in differentiated instruction, to work with the staff, but as money dried up, they began using book studies as a fiscally prudent way to stay current on important strategies for improving instruction.

Because I have a very knowledgeable staff, we have, I mean we are at the point right now we have a difficulty finding people, quite frankly within the district, but we have difficulty finding people that can provide what we need because we have advanced to a stage where we're actually beyond the other schools.

She recalled how that change came when the staff began to buy in to using book studies when the focus was on improving vocabulary and comprehension.

And we've always kind of have been there, but it's . . . So it's more of a challenge with the funds being cut. So then we are fortunate that we uncovered them. I had the staff last summer. . . because when I first came, they would read nothing unless they were getting paid. They would do nothing unless they were getting paid. . . . But this last summer I

gave them the book. . . last year they did *Comprehension Connections* because comprehension continues to be an area with our kids. So we studied the book *Comprehension Connections* and then over the summer time I was delighted for the first time, for them to be willing to read something, and that was *The Café Book* and *The Daily Five*. Since then, every summer I typically was able to come up with money where I could pay the staff, just the class certified. I couldn't pay. . . well in the beginning, I could pay classified. See when I first came here the school was in trouble so I had all this extra money for one year, and then we started making progress and the state took it away.

Marilyn shared her strategy for implementing professional development on a limited budget. She revealed,

Well, what I did was, I don't have any money this year, but last year, I did a survey before the end of the year about what areas they would like additional training in and I bought some books. And what we did was we passed them out, and then we have books studies, and the very best book I have was *50 Ways to Improve Student Behavior*. It was the book in the workbook sample, and did everybody use it, no, but everybody enjoyed it. . . . So, we do books and we report out on them . . . or RTI, Response to Intervention. We did a Behavior Intervention. We hit most of the interventions—discipline was the main thing that we have here, so that's all we do. We got books; teachers got the books. Each one got a chapter, and we bought those critical thinking cards, each person has a type of card, does a strategy in the classroom, and then reports how it worked and what didn't work.

When asked about her school's professional development activities, Carolyn Williamson offered somewhat similar remarks:

Okay professional development. We do a lot of book studies. This year we've done three book studies. *How Is It Going,* that was one. We did *Next Steps in Guided Reading,* and we did a third one—I'm looking for that, one specific for kindergarten, *Kindergarten Literacy,* so that was kind of our focus for this year. Because what we found is when our kindergarten teachers came to us to say their students are making great gains, and they started guided-reading groups in kindergarten, and they needed more support, and they wanted to improve their small-group guided-reading instruction. So our literacy coach and myself and the team of five teachers were reading that book. We also tried to go to like the IRA, the Indiana State Reading Conference, so we do some conferences like that, but most of it is done at school, and it's embedded. We look at our data—we have a grade level who's struggling with something. We provide them with professional development where it's needed. If it's an individual teacher, we meet with that teacher and provide that teacher specific support. Since the teacher is the variable in the classroom, if the kids aren't getting it, it's the teacher who needs to change, not the kids because the kids are not going to change, but we need to change our approach.

Subtheme 4.5: Principals used various other methods to provide professional development. Several principals shared other forms of professional development beyond book studies and study circles. Peter reflected that in addition to using new strategies, the staff still referenced the TESA training that occurred a few years back. Based on a district-wide calendar determined at the beginning of the year, additional assessments, such as a district writing assessment, were also evaluated and discussed. Furthermore, beyond grade-level meetings used for professional development, at designated times teachers met with Peter individually to discuss learning logs that documented their students' progress.

Peter also used "flex time," as referenced by Karen earlier, and revealed the importance of the math and literacy coaches in leading professional development. Regarding his instructional coach, he shared,

> She meets with students and she meets with grade levels to discuss data that she receives, progress-monitoring data on the students aren't making improvements, and she checks to see what she needs to do. We also have a math coach half-time, and each day we have a flex period of 30 minutes, and each grade level gets that one day a week, and that's where we can do professional development and it depends on the week if it's going to be language arts, reading, or math, and then some weeks, I will take those to do my own.

When asked about the in-school factors that were most influential to improving student achievement, Jason named professional development for teachers. His statement also showed the importance of relational learning. Jason had a strong background in cultural competency practices and literature connected to making changes in practices of working with a diverse student population. In describing professional development meetings, Jason took responsibility to lead most of the sessions, as the "chief academic facilitator." He tried to include ice-breakers, HDA, activities to build relational ties among staff members, but the meetings always had an instructional focus. As he learned teacher strengths, Jason had other teachers who excelled in different areas to share during professional development sessions and at other times beyond the meetings.

> So I try to . . . in-house, after I do walkthroughs, I encourage teachers to do, to lead, and to assist and to encourage their colleagues. So, we bring the best of what every teacher brings to the table. Every teacher is excellent in some area, and whatever area that is in,

we want to capitalize on that. We want to encourage the use of that. We want to spread that throughout the building.

Carolyn referenced how her staff prepared to teach their children from low-income families, after they read professional development materials.

Well I think we realized that children of poverty we had to learn how to teach them. We did a lot of Ruby Payne, so what does it mean to live in poverty—and children of poverty—like learning how to talk to them, because one thing is for as sure, if you yell at them, they are going to engage in combative dialogue, versus if you talk calmly to them, they will tell you what's going on, tell you what happened. You know, so, that has helped tremendously, and I think just meeting, differentiating our instruction to their level, so we have had a lot of training on differentiation, and meeting the needs of the kids, and sort of trying to get these kids to see our needs. We are coming down to their level, and we are building them up that way.

Katrina shared that beyond book studies, they were also participants in Baldrige Training and developed skills in differentiated instruction. She, again, touted the significance of Ruby Payne's (2003) work in helping staff members connect with student needs. The staff was also involved in study circles sponsored by the Race Relations Council in the city and Katrina shared her appreciation for the training, but also her concern.

We have done what are called the study circles, and I don't want to give you the wrong information. Those were sponsored by the Race Relations Council in our region of the state. Teachers were divided into three groups, each with a member of this council, and went through the series of sessions to make them more aware of probably how they respond to students and what we could do to be a better—you know just making us aware

of what we need to do. There were some plans that were developed as a result of that, and we are going to be talking about that today for the implementation of next year.

When asked to explain more about the study circles on race relations, Katrina gave a surprising answer:

> Well I'm kind of at a disadvantage because they wouldn't let me attend. I have been part of a committee on the corporation level, but it was set up in such a way what they said was having an administrator in a group might intimidate. And so although I'm not sure that that would be an issue here, I honored that request, and it wasn't until the last meeting when we were talking about their plans that I was invited to join. I have served on the corporation committee, and have enjoyed the different speakers, the activities we've done, I find—it's a very rewarding experience, and we are all here for the same purpose.

When asked about changes in attitude that have been impacted by professional development, Judy discussed how individualized professional development had equipped each teacher with the tools they needed and addressed ownership and accountability from all staff members.

> For the positive because that goes along with the philosophy that every child will achieve, you have to have . . . I mean that's every child in this building will achieve. No child is going to come in this building and not show progress. And I will hold them accountable for that. The professional development helps provide them with the tools to make that possible. The individualized PD that we have now, by that, they are accountable for. It's gotten to the point that we have gone through using the data, through the PD, people have learned what their personal strengths and weaknesses are.

They have learned, like we said, you know, that they can go to someone else and they are

not going to be ridiculed for it because we are all in this together. It's become through

the PD and learning together, through learning together they become stronger as a unit

and they build trust among themselves. And it's transformed to the point now because

failure is not an option here.

Commenting on how professional development could improve, Clayton reflected in a

manner similar to Judy. Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6 is moving toward

individualized professional development in the next school year. He described the investment

made for what was currently in place with analyzing data and adding two 40-minute, carefully

scheduled, daily personal- and team-preparation times with instructional coaches and lead

teachers. Subsequently, Clayton shared how the staff was investigating a new model, the

Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), to begin individualizing professional development with

training conducted by a local university, and they would receive intensive training during the

summer and throughout the year.

The program actually empowered more people to do instructional coaching and put more

emphasis on looking at student data, and turning that live data into modifying their

professional development needs, so you don't look at last year's data to make decisions

about today's professional development. You look at last week's data to make decisions

about professional development for about a week, and we haven't done yet, so it's still

brand new.

When asked how he judged the effectiveness of professional development, he, like most

of the other principals, looked at student outcomes. He wanted teachers to move beyond

compliance to actually assuring student learning. Clayton shared his measures for student success:

> Student outcomes ultimately . . . and that's a little rub where I have with my instructional coaches, so let's say they tend to be pretty compliant driven, and I really want them to be student outcome driven you know. Yeah, because if I come in, one of our issues right now is writer's workshop, transferring from process-based writing, to writer's workshop approach for the students, and there are a lot of things going in with a check off sheet . . . and yes, this is in place or that's not in place. . . and these are all compliance issues. And so what I'm more interested in is based on . . . I do want them to look to make sure there is evidence of students using the program, but not how our teachers implementing the program, but more importantly I want to know if the students are learning

Finally, he added that teachers' opinions were appreciated because they came up with valuable suggestions.

> And if that teacher can take a different path and can get the right outcome, I want to give them some latitude to continue to do that. I'm not with the belief that there is only way to take with students . . . there are multiple paths to take, some more effective than others, and in cases where teachers are not effective at moving teachers, and I think that we need to have a good vision of the school to help support. Then in cases where teachers have a program which is highly effective, and it doesn't match any of our programs, and then we should be paying more attention to it. This is . . . if there is something we can learn from that . . . rather than just forcing compliance issues on people.

When asked how teacher attitudes had changed based on professional development, Peter shared the improvements he saw when teachers were provided with relevant information they

could implement on topics such as improving their classroom management skills. John said he gauged the effectiveness of staff development in several ways. Those included classroom modeling and then observation of instructional strategies that had been provided, and also using teachers who may have gone to special trainings to serve in a train-the-trainer role to use the information in their classrooms and be available to answer questions for teachers with implementation concerns. When asked what types of things he did for teachers who struggled with effectively instructing students from diverse backgrounds, he responded that the two main cultural competency activities they promoted were understanding Ruby Payne's (2003) material and using monthly life skills.

> Instead of doing like African American month, we celebrate as cultural diversity month, so we celebrate those kinds of things. And we talk about, you know, everybody is different in their way, and she gives you a great lesson in going into the classrooms, and talking to students, and talking to the staff about cultural diversity is just not, you know, Hispanic or African American or Caucasian, it's just . . .we are talking about all of us so . . . It's one month we'll have anti-bullying month. Then we will have cultural diversity month, or honesty month, those kinds of things. But those lessons, even though she teaches them once a month, there is a topic throughout the entire year. There are many life skills that we talk about every single day, during a week.

Subtheme 4.6: Principals were reflective about enhancing their professional development. Most of the principals were fairly satisfied with the content of their professional development as it was currently being implemented. When asked what they would like to see changed about it, only one responded that teachers needed more understanding about the effects of culture on learning. What they did seem most concerned about was having more time for

sharing and more money to bring in highly qualified presenters. They also wanted to provide more opportunities for staff members to attend conferences and bring back pertinent information to the staff.

Jason's answer paralleled the majority of principals who were asked about how they would change their professional development if they could make changes. He, too, longed for more money and the opportunity to bring in outside speakers that lend credibility to what he and local district personnel presented. Jason faced the reality of improving student performance in the midst of great challenges, including reconstitution three years ago and a constantly changing staff. Although he was in a newly remodeled facility, the staff rotation due to economic cuts had created the need for yearly retraining and helping teachers acclimate to a new culture and set of expectations. Those few teachers who have remained with him throughout the changes that occurred are what he termed *taskmasters,* and they helped keep the school's culture and philosophy intact.

Audrey shared what she would do if she had an opportunity to change her strategies for professional development.

> I have to say that I think for right now, we're okay as we are. I love that the fact that we have multiple layers of professional development. Our instructional coach, our embedded job, professional development, our professional development that happens through the course of our professional—we call them instructional conversations—our data teams, our grade-level data team meetings.

John was also very satisfied with his professional development plan. He felt the instructional coach had added to the level of instruction and professional experiences of the staff. Martha, however, wanted a school schedule that lent itself to regular professional development

without losing instructional time from students. Earlier she had begun planning to implement more training to help her staff work with their Black male students. So her plans would include a couple of hours each month to help with deployment of the strategies and skills discussed. The other thing she wished for was more money to help bring in "fabulous" people to assist with the trainings. She added with laughter, "We need endless amounts of money for all of it—but money can't be the answer—but it might make it better."

When asked about changes, Carolyn responded that she wanted more time in the school day devoted to professional development. She supported year-round schooling to provide time for teacher training during the breaks and time to provide training for individual target areas in problem-solving, math, reading, and writing,

> If I had my wish list, I would have days built into our contract where teachers could focus on professional development. Well, I guess what I'm trying to say is you are tired at the end of the day. It's hard to attend professional development after school. So, it would be nice to have days built in where you can spend the whole day, and you can really focus on whatever area you feel you need support.

Viola and Katrina also reflected that more money and time were on her wish list, too. Although the book studies are working for now, she wanted more teachers to be able to attend conferences or trainings and report back with what they learned. Katrina relied heavily on teacher input from the continuous improvement council to help design professional development.

> I would like to be able to provide inquiry math, one of the schools received a grant for Title I, and they are able to provide complete support for the teachers as they are going through this process. I don't have that kind of funding, so we are doing a kind of piecemeal and there are two teachers going to a workshop this summer to do it, which

I'm paying for, but there's three on our waiting list. They want to be there and, if I could

get them in, I could have one grade level totally involved in that, and as those students

then involved, we could add on to that. It's just I'm disappointed in the way things are

done piecemeal. We can't commit. And funding is a big issue. I asked about a

presenter—that would work—maybe do a workshop for New Suburbia Elementary

School #11 teachers; it was like $800 a person. I don't have that kind of funding.

Marilyn was also concerned about the time allotted for professional development and

voiced her thoughts:

Well, I don't know. I think the biggest problem with staff development is that when the

district gives it to us, they pull you out of school, and our children have a hard time with

subs, and so instruction is lost in your classroom. And some teachers will say it's not

worth me out of the classroom with my children, and then when you give it on the

weekends, some people don't want to do it on the weekends because they have families

. . . so just—I don't think it will happen, but you know some—we don't have PBA days

[Performance Based Accreditation Planning days].

While some wanted time during the school day, others who had experienced that did not

like the missed instructional time for their students. If instructional time was not shortchanged,

in-service planned during the day made sense to most principals. Both Peter and Marilyn were

unhappy about getting rid of professional development strategies that had worked in the past.

Peter was very concerned about the changes made by the state DOE, as he reflected on how they

eliminated some built-in professional development time that principals were once able to count

on for planning time. His irritation was obvious as he talked about the frustration of having to

find time for professional development. He shared,

My greatest wish would be more time, and they took away our half days, and we have to get our full school days not counted because we used to have whole afternoons to do our professional development, and it was great because you could get two solid hours, and here we are now—I get 45 minutes, then I have to wait until the next meeting or flex time to do it again. But it takes a long time until you are able to get the professional development completed. Teachers were able to talk about it, and then plan for how they are going to implement it in their classroom. But now we don't have that time. We just had to condense everything, so my wish should be that we could have half-days, or more days in the contract, so I could have teacher professional development. I don't know what the DOE is looking at right now. It's not good at all. It's not—and it's hard—our teachers, they are beat up right now. They are just beat up, and they don't feel like they are being valued as educators. So one of the coaching things I do right here lately, I say, "Guys, we are doing good; we've just got to keep focused; we can only control in our building and what we can control in your classrooms; we can't worry about that stuff outside. When we get off at 3:40, then we can worry about it. But when our kids are here, we got to focus on our kids." And some of the superintendent mail that I get on Fridays, you know, it's like, "Come on."

Peter commented about the accountability movement and the financial outlook for schools. He also admonished the treatment the public gives educators:

We made AYP. We have high growth, high achievement, and in a high-poverty school. If you give us the resources we can do it, but if you keep cutting us, we are not going to be able to do it. And you know the focus this year—it's been talking with the teachers about part of the professional developments, how are we going to continue the programs

we are doing right now with less help, doing more with less, and still meeting the needs

of our students with less money, less assistance. [Agitated voice]

Only Judy voiced how she looked beyond changing professional development with

money and time. She shared her concern about the importance of the staff at Independence

Elementary School #8 being culturally aware. In questioning if her staff really understood what

it meant to be culturally competent, she disclosed,

> If I had a magic wand, I would like to see them be more open-minded to the effects of
>
> culture with learning. My staff can, I mean again you have to be careful with this, but
>
> they can have a know-it-all attitude, but then again . . . I hired these people. This people
>
> were strong-willed people like I am, but they are also very knowledgeable people . . . the
>
> majority of them, and I'm—for some reason that just seems to go hand-in-hand, or it's
>
> just I hire real people. I don't know how to explain it. But so they can, some people can
>
> have a kind of a little bit of an arrogant attitude, and that's the most frustrating for me I
>
> guess . . . because nobody knows it all. I don't know it all. I would be the first to admit
>
> it. One of the challenges that I have with professional development is that people that
>
> don't understand shared leadership and that transformation could look as not knowing,
>
> not leading, but it's not all that type of thing. I honestly don't even think some of the
>
> staff really understands how I lead. They might perceive that I'm not really a strong
>
> instructional leader, when in fact I have empowered them to lead, which is much more
>
> powerful than just, I did it.

Judy was also pondering what would happen to her staff in the years to come, because

she was being transferred next year to a new building. When asked how long she thought things

would stay intact based on what had happened since she came, Judy shared that the new

principal should be open to learn from the staff. She contended,

> As long as . . . I know staff will not leave here on their own willingness unless they are
>
> retiring. And I have one that might retire who is very strong . . . Man, in terms of the
>
> teaching ranks, and the assistant ranks . . . When people come here, once they are
>
> engrained, they want to stay . . . and actually they don't how good they have it, frankly,
>
> with the academic freedom we have. They don't realize how much academic freedom
>
> they are allowed compared to other schools because of my style. I'm hopeful that it will
>
> sustain itself. As long as the key players are here they will. I know that this is a school
>
> where, most likely, somebody will come in where they can learn from my staff because
>
> of where they are, and who they are. The leader is going to have to continue to hope . . .
>
> number one, you got to have very strong discipline in this building, and number two,
>
> you've got to hold people accountable.

Summary on providing professional development that addressed cultural competency issues   The following six subthemes are linked to how principals guided

professional development in the schools and used professional learning communities to

strengthen teacher skills and collaboration. Through various scheduling options, the principals

found different, creative ways to provide professional development, despite the displeasure of

some who are still agitated by the decision made a few years ago by the DOE that eliminated an

embedded monthly afternoon for professional development and planning. As money dwindled,

principals found alternatives to sending teachers to outside workshops and conferences. Most

have been pleased with how they have handled the changes and still have been able to find

limited time for trainings.

Although very few principals specifically wished for more cultural competency training for teachers as a wish list item, the concerns that still lingered over how to reach and engage the total student population remained a priority because of the academic achievement gap that many of the principals acknowledged. There was still a need for additional professional development on culturally responsive pedagogy. Although all of the schools in the study have begun to implement practices, such as book studies, related to cultural competency, no school provided consistent, deliberate implementation of the wide range of practices listed in the literature review or evidence of having a total staff that was culturally proficient.

Promoting Awareness and Knowledge about Cultural Competence

The 11 subthemes in this section were linked to building awareness and knowledge about cultural competency. This final section includes an analysis of an overview of principal comments specifically related to how the principals had implemented culturally relevant practices. Although principals were asked about practices in creating a community of learners, they were aware that the schools chosen for the study had to have a 50% or greater non-White population. As the initial questions were asked, they were posed in terms of successfully educating their "diverse students"; however, it was not until near the end of the interview that the terms *cultural competence* and *culturally relevant* were mentioned in the questions.

All principals were asked interview questions about being an administrator, how they described their schools, what out-of-school and in-school practices impacted student achievement, descriptions of their professional development, teacher supports, school culture and climate, teacher attitudes, and issues related to teacher ethnicity and student/parent/community relationships. The subthemes that emerged about cultural awareness and knowledge included

findings about the principals' commitment to incorporating cultural practices and strategies without being prompted.

Other subthemes included reflective practices of the 12 principals in the study on their staff demographics, self-awareness, and knowledge about having and using various resources, materials, and strategies. Additionally, subthemes emerged related to the non-traditional strategies the staffs had to use to support learning for their African American and Hispanic male students and ELL students. The final area the subthemes revealed was the principals' ability to deal frankly with conversations about diversity, race, culture, and poverty and how teacher attitudes and perceptions about these topics impacted student learning. Although unique in their approaches, the principals shared a strong connection in implementing the following common subthemes listed in Table 12.

Table 12

Subthemes Linked to Promoting Awareness and Knowledge about Cultural Competence

No.	11 Subthemes Related to Awareness and Knowledge About Cultural Competence
1	Principals were aware of the need to address cultural competence.
2	Principals were concerned about the demographics of their staffs.
3	Principals were reflective about how to create a culturally relevant learning environment.
4	Principals promoted using the best practices that they knew about to begin creating culturally relevant learning environments.
5	Principals acknowledged the need to provide culturally relevant materials, resources, and cultural competency professional development for teachers.
6	Principals acknowledged they had to address the learning needs of male students in non-traditional ways.
7	Principals acknowledged they had to address the learning needs of English Language Learners in non-traditional ways.
8	Principals cared about the total well-being of their students, teachers, and parents and believed their staffs should do the same.
9	Principals, especially some female principals, exhibited "othermothering" traits.
10	Principals were willing to have frank conversations and address issues surrounding diversity.
11	Principals had different levels of understanding about how to create a culturally relevant learning environment.

Subtheme 5.1: Principals were aware of the need to address cultural competence.

Rather than asking principals directly about cultural competency practices, findings related to

this topic were extracted from the principals' answers to the interview questions. Because of the

way the questions were structured, the principals described practices that could be directly linked

to the literature review on what makes an effective school and what elements exist in a culturally relevant learning environment.

One principal was aware that the interview was looking to examine culturally responsive practices and most of his answers were slanted in that direction. However, he was able to provide more information about his school through additional feedback following the interview. The other principals did not hear the words *culturally responsive* or *culturally competent* until the final questions were asked. The responses given by the principal who was most aware of the direct purpose of the study confirmed the wisdom of the original design of the study to ask the principals' about their role in creating a "community of learners." Consequently, all of the other principals gave broader details about their schools and how they and their staff members functioned to meet the needs of their diverse learners.

Moreover, very evident from all of the interviews was the care and concern that all of the principals had for the total well-being of all of their students, teachers, and other staff members and the parents and families of the students. Principals were concerned about making all students and parents feel welcomed in the school as they worked to develop positive relationships with them. Principals described many instances of how they supported their diverse student populations and their families through counseling, providing information about resources, and being there for parents in times of family crisis. There was a keen awareness of being sensitive to student and parent needs so that, ultimately, students would have successful academic outcomes.

Subtheme 5.2: Principals were concerned about the demographics of their staffs. All of the principals expressed concerns about the difficulty of finding more non-White teachers, especially African Americans, to add to their staff. As Karen reported earlier, they agreed that

students benefited from seeing teachers who looked like them to serve as role models; most acknowledged that non-White teachers probably understood the culture the students came from better than their White teachers did. However, recalling prior comments in the section on hiring practices, Marilyn and Jason, both African American principals, stated that they had worked with many dedicated African American and White teachers who were successful, and conversely, they had found some teachers from both ethnicities who did not perform as expected. So they agreed with all the other principals who believed that White teachers could be very effective in teaching non-White students if the teachers had the right mindsets, training, and skills to cultivate genuine relationships with both students and their parents and also if they were equipped with a variety of effective strategies for teaching students of color.

Probably most revealing about the shortage of African American teachers and the ability to hire them were the poignant comments by Audrey and Marilyn, both African Americans. Audrey, in the discussion on hiring practices, was concerned about people's reactions if she hired two African Americans in a row. Compared to that revelation however, Marilyn was actively on a determined quest to find effective African American teachers. Indeed, she admitted they were calling her asking about openings. With the largest African American student population, she also had the largest percentage of African American teachers, a few of whom she was totally dissatisfied with. However, that did not deter her from looking for others who were willing to work hard and who believed in the children.

Because most principals experienced difficulties in finding non-White candidates, many of the principals had gone to great lengths to find non-White paraprofessionals and other support staff to work in their schools. While walking through Independence Elementary School #8, Judy commented that she deliberately looked for people in the community who could fill tutoring and

assistant teaching slots so that the adults would reflect the student population more accurately. Additionally, Katrina's efforts were an example of how she and other principals strategically hired support staff to mirror the student population. She shared her districts' efforts to support non-White teacher recruitment and how she diversified the demographics of her staff when teachers were unavailable. She responded when asked, "How did you get this rich mixture of staff members?"

> I looked for that. I think that's important for the students and I have to say, too, that the corporation promotes that. It's not just a New Suburbia Elementary School #11 idea. The superintendent is looking for diversity; he's looking for a variety of teacher, of staff members. I look for that, too.

Katrina added in a note that she returned with feedback about the initial findings of the study that one of the African American teachers on her staff, who had been highly regarded through the years, had been reassigned to work as an "assistant" to the principal in handling discipline issues on a half-day basis. The superintendent recognized the need to provide more time for principals to focus on instruction. Katrina had high expectations that the new position would improve parent communications because of the assistant's "insight into difficult or confusing situations" that sometimes occurred.

When asked about the differences in teachers from different ethnic backgrounds, Jason stated that, based on ethnicity, he found no differences in teachers who had the skills to reach all children effectively. He shared,

> I've noticed no major differences between teachers of color and those from the majority. What I have noticed is there are differences among people, period, and their expectations. I've seen African American teachers who don't give two beans about educating children,

and Caucasian teachers who won't take, "No," for an answer. I've seen Latino teachers who won't take, "No," for an answer. So, I've seen it all, all across the board. And everything we think would happen doesn't always happen. But what I have found is that it is the heart and character that has been forged through the personal fires of teachers that makes their character . . . personal and professional fire in their own lives that give them the passion and determination to make this things happen for these children.

Jason continued, stating that professional experiences and character were more important than race and ethnicity.

So it is not culture so much as it is personal experiences and professional experiences— not that culture doesn't have a play in it, but I do believe that when life gets through with you, in the final analysis, it will make you into who you are going to be. And those are the experiences that I have found at this school, and I have some excellent teachers. I have had teachers from African descent that I have had to put on [improvement] plans; and I've had teachers of European descent that I've had to put on the system's plans. I've had teachers of African American descent that have gotten awards, and I've recommended to be "Teacher of the Year," as well, European teachers or teachers from European descent.

Clayton agreed and shared that ineffective practices are not necessarily the result of the racial makeup of the teachers, but that having a diverse teaching staff could impact the relationship among staff members.

But I do think in the classroom, of situations where, whether it be Hispanic, or African American, or White, there is just terribly ineffective practice going on, and the fact that they happened to be of a particular racial background didn't necessary mean anything

else, as far as the effectiveness goes with teaching students. But I do think there's a big factor involved in how do the adults interact with each other.

Clayton discussed the lack of both men and non-White teachers in education. Compounding the problem, he described the risk involved when teachers come to a charter school to work. He went on to describe teachers who came as "adjunct" staff and they taught specified courses, especially in the secondary program at Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6.

It's hard to find minority teachers who will accept an offer here because we're a single school. There is very limited growth that can exist here. Charter schools are still perceived by most people to be a risky place to go and work. And so at least here in this state, minority teachers are pretty sought after by districts, and so it is very, very likely that they will get offers from districts, as well as us, and most of the time they choose to go to district schools that seemed to offer a better career path for them.

Clayton, like Jason, remained cautious about hiring someone strictly based on their ethnicity.

I can't say I have any sense that just because you hire a Hispanic teacher means we are going to get a better teacher for our Hispanic kids. I mean it really helps in diversifying your staff and having a staff which understands different points of view and some other benefits too as far as actual effectiveness goes, I don't think, I have not and never closely engaged in the data to that effect.

When asked if he noticed a difference in how teachers from different ethnic backgrounds interacted with students, with a 100% White teaching staff, John shared that he only had a small

framework for comparison. He did, however, reference his African American guidance

counselor and teacher assistant and the positive reaction the students had to them.

> I would almost say, like my guidance counselor, she plays, she has to play a different role
>
> because I don't want her being anywhere near discipline or anything like that, so I don't
>
> see her. She is here for helping the students cope with crisis or teaching life skills, so I
>
> have never, ever used her on a disciplinary level. What's interesting is that my teacher's
>
> assistant that's African American. She would . . . I would say is almost harder on the
>
> African American kids then some of the classroom teachers, you know . . . about
>
> expectations and those kinds of things. And I have heard her say, "My son does not act
>
> that way." You know, and those kinds of things.

When asked about teachers who needed help working effectively with students from

diverse cultures, John reflected that past staff members had had problems but that this was no

longer a concern at the school because they had accepted and embraced their diverse population.

So in addition to the school's African American assistant and the school counselor, another

assistant was married to an African American, and she, too, had a biracial son who attended the

school. Also, one of the fifth grade teachers also had a biracial son, and John, himself, was part

of a biracial family. Martha, also, discussed her sensitivity to cultural awareness because she had

a biracial family member.

Some of the principals, like John, did recognize that sometimes African American staff

members, in particular, had a unique way of communicating with African American students and

their parents. However, they were all quick to note that some of their White staff members were

also able to establish trustworthy relationships. Moreover, most of the principals believed that

the key to communicating with all parents was based on building trusting relationships.

Martha acknowledged there was little diversity on her staff, but there were three African American teachers, including the Title I teacher. She also had another teacher with an Asian background, and she was very excited about hiring a Hispanic male teacher and an African American special education classroom assistant. Describing how African American teachers communicated with students and parents, Martha admitted that she could see a slight difference in communication skills:

> I think that an African American teacher can often have discussions with parents because they have a different understanding and background of that parent, and so can have different conversations with parents, and sometimes can reach them differently than a White teacher. That's not to say that there are no White teachers that reach many Black parents too, but I think that it's wonderful if you can have staff members in the building that are working in all different areas, not just the teachers who look like the children— who they look like and they can identify with. So I think that's important, I think that there can be differences. I see a couple of my African American teachers; they are all female. I see them. They approach sometimes, both of them. It just so happens, both of them, one of them is a mother and has two sons. And the other one is . . . she is a young mother, but she has three brothers. I see them approach young males, African American males differently sometimes than my White teachers do because they have a different perspective of it.

Furthermore, Karen suggested that having diversity benefited all staff members. She described an African American teacher who tried to instill excellence in African American students. However, Karen shared some reservations she held that sometimes the African

American teachers may have been too hard on the students, especially the African American male students. Karen shared,

> I think it's important and the more that we have diversity in here, the more understanding. It's helpful. It's helpful with other staff members, although I'm pretty close to my teachers of color. And there were times that, by having the staff development that we had with understanding and appreciating cultures, and how do we meet their needs . . . How do we reach out? It's a never-ending battle with our teachers of color. . . to make sure that they are doing the right thing. They . . . I find that they set their standards even higher. They. . . it's like. . . because they must . . . and one of my particular teachers . . . and she has two young boys at home. It's like she does, she absolutely wants . . . well, every and all my teachers, I know, generally feel that way. . . but it's embedded in her as a result of how she had grown up, that she grew up knowing from her parents that you always must . . . always must do your best. In fact, it's kind of it's like . . . got a kind of, give a little slack sometimes . . . little slack, and it's okay . . . you know. And because she, it's very, she is very driven that way. And my other one is a little less, but yet I think it's important, and I think we can learn from each other.

Viola reinforced the idea that teachers from the same ethnicity as the students may be able to relate to those students in positive ways, but also that other teachers can also make those same connections based on their economic backgrounds. She added the following reflection:

> I think if you will say that African American teachers tend to understand African American students because they live there, they know their culture. Low-income-teachers—those who might have lived in low-income areas—will tend to identify with low-income kids, whether they are African American or White, because they've been

there and they've been raised around them. Sometimes if you have middle-class teachers, they have to learn them [the students]; they have to see because they were not exposed to it. And so they have to learn to see the difference in the culture, so that just because they [the students] are poor, it doesn't mean they are dumb, you still have the same expectations for them.

Katrina also acknowledged that there was a difference in how some African American teachers related to parents and she believed that the other teachers also noticed the differences, too. Furthermore, she thought those differences presented an opportunity for teachers to learn from one another.

I think I would say that the African American teachers generally have more . . . a better rapport with parents. . . . They are able to discuss things that maybe the other teachers don't feel as comfortable discussing . . . or even able to say things. And I've had conversations with teachers, you know. How about this is? You can say things . . and sometimes, they are better accepted than when I say them. We are on the same page but somehow it's received differently. I would say that the teams that work together learn from each other. And so, following the example of a teacher that has solid rapport with parents, you can learn from that. "What are you doing that you are making this connection?" Or "How are you talking with parents?" "What are you saying to them? How can I be as effective as you are?"

In addition, Clayton also shared thoughts about the diversity of his staff and how having a diverse staff could also improve how staff members talked to one another about the students and help them have more balanced conversations.

Well, I do think that when staffs have significant numbers of diverse people that it helps to change some of the adult conversation. It is very easy for adults to . . . for example, they are out of their classrooms, sort of off the stage, and they have more informal conversations with each other that they wouldn't have in the classroom with kids present. And if the situation is where everyone is from the same background and same belief and same, same, same, then it breeds conversations which tend to go one direction, whichever direction that might be. So, in having some diverse thought, people with diverse backgrounds and both, some may think from their racial makeup, and maybe, not so much from their current economic background, but the background in which they grew up.

Although the number of African American, Hispanic, and Asian teachers was underrepresented in all of the schools in the study, the value they could add to the staff was documented by all of the principals' responses. Furthermore, the fact that they looked for non-White assistants and paraprofessionals attested to their belief that students of color needed to see positive role models on a daily basis.

A few of the principals stated that some of their African American and Hispanic teachers did interact with students and their parents in a unique, positive manner, with higher expectations and more rigorous demands for positive behavior than their White counterparts expected. A few expressed that perhaps the exchanges could have been too severe. However, most also expressed their belief that their White staff members could also make those meaningful connections with parents and students. Principals acknowledged and accepted their current situation of having few non-White teachers on their staffs and shared how their current teachers were working effectively.

For the masses of the teachers at the schools, the statements the principals made about their efforts to reach non-White students were positive, and they believed that teachers were making connections with their students. However, because most of their examples appeared to be general, most failed to provide evidence to confirm the ideas the principals shared about whether the majority of their staff members were actually culturally competent. Only a few principals admitted they still had teachers who were not using engaging instructional methods that met the needs of the students. All of the principals had worked to get rid of teachers who showed the most blatant cultural biases or poor teaching skills. All believed most of their teachers had made good progress over the last three years, but still needed more professional development.

Subtheme 5.3: Principals were reflective about how to create a culturally relevant learning environment. Principals acknowledged the struggle some teachers had in understanding the influence of poverty on student learning and the effect stereotypic thinking about students from low-income homes had on teacher perceptions of those students. Contradicting those beliefs about children who received free and reduced lunch, those same teachers were also expected to move beyond that thinking and balance how to value, appreciate, and celebrate the cultures those same students brought to the classroom that differed from many of their teachers' understandings and backgrounds. All of the principals tried to bridge that gap of understanding through professional development, book studies, and the principals' expectations that all children would find success in their schools.

A few of the principals discussed disconnects between teacher, student, and parent perceptions regarding some behavioral issues that arose. Those principals recognized that teachers should examine if student behaviors were deliberately defiant or if teachers were

reading more into the incidents than they really should. They questioned if a difference in cultural perceptions, such as a cultural dissonance discussed in the literature would produce, could be at the root of perceived problems. With that thought came the question of how teachers could help students bridge from the way they dealt with situations in their home culture to becoming successful in adapting to the cultural mismatch of school that is often different from home and community expectations.

Karen provided an example: "We always want to be careful about cultures and sometimes though it's just the discipline of a child, a personality of a child regardless of culture. But what's the best thing that's going to work for that particular child."

While being questioned about supports they put in place to help teachers work with students from diverse backgrounds, without any prompting several principals' conversations frequently shifted to a discussion on poverty. Five principals, including John, Judy, Viola, Katrina, and Carolyn shared that their staff relied heavily on training based on Ruby Payne's (2003) *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* to help teachers work with children from low-income families. As reported in the literature review, despite the popularity of Payne's work, not everyone was in agreement with its premise. Some researchers, such as Kunjufu (2006) and Gorski (2005) believed that her work was based on a deficit model of thinking about children and reinforced stereotyping of children from low-income families. Four of the five principals were aware of the two camps of thought and stated they made their staffs aware of the discussion surrounding Payne's work.

Carolyn, like Judy, distinguished the difference in looking at the cultural backgrounds children brought to their schools versus the influence of poverty on students' lives. Eight principals discussed the growing poverty rate and four addressed the effect of homelessness on

students. Six principals, Audrey, Clayton, Judy, Viola, Katrina, and Carolyn, shared the impact of middle-class values on teacher beliefs and perceptions. Explaining the dissonance as an economic problem seemed to satisfy most concerns.

Audrey, Jason, and Marilyn, all African Americans, shared how their ethnicity provided conviction for the choices they made about working on behalf of children in their buildings. Other principals reflected on how they had to think beyond their backgrounds as middle-class White principals and ensure that teachers were providing effective instruction for their diverse school populations. However, no mention was made about specific attempts to help teachers understand the effects of racism and its footprint on school systems and practices. The concepts of entitlement, White privilege, and meritocracy were all unspoken ingredients as ways of addressing and solving equity issues that very few of the principals discussed. Although book studies and study circles may have addressed some of these issues, few details, artifacts, or evidence were presented about specific in-service topics and the perceived need to address those particular areas.

The most prevalent links to how principals helped teachers connect to understanding their students' cultures were the verbalized, recurring statements that teachers should know, respect, appreciate, accept, embrace, and relate to their students' cultures. There was also a focus on understanding socioeconomic conditions that impacted their students' learning. Transcending all of this, however, was the focus on data analysis and differentiation in instructional practices.

Carolyn implied that a middle-class value system skewed some teachers' perceptions and shared that sometime teachers take things for granted. She shared three instances that teachers had to pause and think about.

I think sometimes it is . . . some of it is cultural, and I also think some of it is middle-class versus poverty. And sometimes things that we take for granted being in the middle-class, our kids haven't been exposed to it, so we have to expose them to it. A lot of our kids don't sit around the table at night and eat dinner. You know many sit in different areas of the house. So when we—we just received round tables in our cafeteria, moving from the benches—and teaching them, how do you sit at the table? How do you converse at the table? We take the fifth grade camping every year, and they get to stay in a cabin. And many of them will say—we take for granted that everyone has a bed and everyone has a bedroom. And some kids will say, "This is really nice, I never had my own bed before." And you know it's bunk beds, but it's their own bed. So you know, you learn through them. We learn through each other, and sometimes things we take for granted like sometimes children don't flush the toilet, and this is weird. But they don't flush the toilet because if they are from Mexico, In Mexico they don't know always flush the toilet right away. You know, so teachers will say, "Well, they don't know how to flush the toilet?" Well no, it's just they don't do that; you have to teach them how to do that.

Without a doubt, Judy and Audrey were the most open when asked if they noticed a difference in what teachers from different ethnic background expected from students of color. Judy answered candidly about her 100% White teaching staff,

The first biggest challenge is for people to acknowledge, and it's a continual battle here even to acknowledge that children from different ethnic groups learn differently. And so until they are willing to accept that . . . they are not willing, really, to address different methods of teaching. I would say even though if we've made lots of progress—but that's probably the area we have the farthest to go. And it's . . . I guess people don't

consciously say, "I'm not going to teach this child just because, you know, it's not relevant," but subconsciously or consciously they are not yet . . . We are not really ready to accept that next level because it's different, because it's not within their realm of comfort. You know it's . . . they have got to be open and be willing to try different things, to learn new things. I mean it's uncomfortable. Let's talk it about this—Honestly it's not that something that's readily talked about in schools. You know, I mean that we've made lots and lots of progress, and I think because we talk with parents, we meet about the kids, we look very carefully at each individual child, look at what they need for learning, and look at their strengths and weaknesses. Because we are so much into the individual child we might inadvertently address some of that. But when it comes to across the board recognition of the culture of the child and addressing their leanings styles because of it, we're not there.

Six principals, Audrey, Viola, Katrina, Carolyn, Clayton, and Judy spoke about the middle-class value system. Some referred to the shift in student population and how teachers still expected their students to act in the same way as the previous group of students in past decades. When asked about the demographics of her staff, Audrey shared that there was a definite need for more non-White teachers who could understand the home life of their students. After identifying two African American certified staff members, another teacher and herself, she talked about the importance of changing the beliefs that some people on her staff had about non-White students. Audrey spoke about changing mindsets:

Ah, dispelling some of the myths that people have about certain cultures, certain minority groups—dispelling the myth and helping teachers understand that even though teachers come from various socioeconomic backgrounds, be it poverty, be it homelessness,

whatever, you still have to (a) not feel sorry for the child, but (b) be empathetic for the child and help them understand that even in spite of their situation, you can have high expectations and the kids can still succeed. I definitely think there is something to be said about background and how it impacts expectations and what teachers think and believe kids can do.

When asked if she had seen examples, she added,

I have. Yes, I think some of it is a lack of understanding. I think, going back to parental involvement and middle-class families, middle-class value. You think that, case in point: I have some teachers who are up in arms because little Sally, second grader, goes home by herself. She gets off the bus. She lets herself in. Goes in. Snacks may be available. Does her homework. Mom may not get home. Well, teachers may want to say, "Oh my goodness, that's just horrible. She has to go home by herself. No, that parent can't possibly love that child leaving her home by herself."

Earlier, Clayton spoke about how middle-class values and the lens that caused teachers to "have a misread" on student behaviors, when the problem is really a lack of understanding of culture. Audrey had a response for teachers who did not always understand how their parents supported their students' learning. She conceded that some of her teachers had skewed perceptions of their students' and parents' realities.

But I say to them all the time, "That parent does indeed love that child." The fact that they are going out, trying to work, and trying to send them to school, and trying to make the best life possible. We've got several parents that are working and going to school trying to better themselves. Yes, it's a trade-off. If Mom and Dad are in school, then the parent may not be home every night to help them with homework. That does not mean

that the parent does not love the child. It means that the parent is trying to do and make a better life for the child. So again, sometimes our middle-class values and our middle-class views skew what we think. Our reality is not everyone's reality.

Audrey continued and gave insights that often teachers make assumptions and decisions without understanding the consequences of doing things for their convenience rather than for the students' best interests. Her illustration showed that teachers often are totally unaware that the consequences of their actions may produce unintended racial overtones or implications. The following exchange between Audrey and a staff member emphasized how seemingly harmless decisions may adversely impact one group over the other.

When I, when we talk about dealing with families, and we talk about looking at families and giving families an opportunity to do different things, or our children having opportunities for field trips, for example. . . . No, here we go, here's a good example: summer school. We were having a conversation about summer school and someone said, "Are we going to exclude children who have been behavior problems, who have demonstrated behavior problems in the classroom during the school year?' And I said, "Well let's think about that. Historically in our district, African American children lead the way when it comes to out-of-school suspensions and behavior infractions, so if we immediately say that these kids will not be allowed to participate, how are we going to ever address the gap that we say we continue to have when it comes to achievement with African American children." We are already putting them at a disadvantage because we're saying, "You can't come because you were bad." But I think sometimes those conversations, and then putting it out there so that it challenges people's thinking on certain things.

Principals in the study appeared to take a "balcony view" (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997), in looking at what was really happening with respect to how their teachers were working with students and parents of color. The links between the influence of poverty, middle-class values, high expectations, and teacher beliefs were strong. Each of their discussion points could be analyzed in more detail and linked to the literature review in a much more thorough and in-depth treatment to show how their comments align with the research from the literature review and other sources. Perhaps that can be done at a later time. But for the sake of these findings, it is sufficient to say these principals showed their willingness to help teachers understand the need to becoming more proficient at addressing, analyzing, and implementing culturally sound policies and practices. However, the unintended consequences that race, power, and privilege bring were not thoroughly discussed as part of the equation the schools used to measure cultural proficiency.

All of the answers given by the principals were observed through the self-reflective lens of the literature review topics. Beyond attributing cultural problems mainly to poverty, home circumstances, and instructional practices, for the 12 schools in the study the litmus test of reaching cultural proficiency did not address many of the perspectives and concerns included in the literature review.

Subtheme 5.4: Principals promoted using the best practices that they knew about to begin creating culturally relevant learning environments. Although principals had varying backgrounds of personal experience that they brought to their roles of leadership, by promoting professional learning communities they opened themselves and their staffs to finding new ways of identifying what constitutes a culturally relevant learning environment. Despite the expression by all of the principals of moving toward having culturally competent staffs, the interviews with the principals revealed only a few aspects about culturally relevant practices.

Many of the examples they provided were related to surface-level training that the staff members had experienced. Some of the activities that were conducted school-wide were "heroes and holiday" events that Banks (2007) identified as one of the early levels of cultural competence. Principals discussed wanting staff members to understand and respect their students' cultures, yet few demonstrated how teachers were actually doing this with regards to the African American and Hispanic/Latino students in the general classroom setting. To their credit however, the attention they gave to finding effective practices to work with African American male students and the ELL program used to address concerns about Hispanic/Latino student needs were notable. Their ELL staffs provided support to students who were learning English as a second language, and principals also discussed the instructional support provided to students who needed intervention strategies. It appeared that the instructional practices of utilizing individual students' data and differentiating instruction played a key role in generating improved student performance.

All of the principals were highly cognizant of needing to vary instructional practices for meeting the learning needs of non-White students. Driven by data, they worked diligently at finding a variety of ways to present language arts and math strategies, skills, practices, and information to help teachers engage students in meaningful ways. One principal discussed an engaging, interactive science program that had impacted her second graders. Most of the principals had provided trainings on differentiated and small group instruction. All of the principals relied on book studies and/or study circles and the resulting discussions as a basis for becoming culturally proficient. About half of the books described dealt with instructional practices and the other half cultural issues. The exposure to these materials offered a level of understanding that teachers may not otherwise have had.

However, considering the descriptors of culturally relevant pedagogy that were mentioned in the literature review as best practices, although it is evident that some practices had been implemented, many of the traits and assumptions about understanding what culturally proficient teachers do were not fully addressed by the principals as consistent, ongoing practices that teachers were deliberately implementing, nor was there evidence that all teachers were actually aware of some of the descriptors either.

Subtheme 5.5: Principals acknowledged the need to provide culturally relevant materials, resources, and cultural competency professional development for teachers. Some principals discussed using culturally relevant materials and resources for both their teachers and students. Eight principals noted that their teachers received cultural competency training through professional development activities that were usually initiated and supported by their districts. Two principals from the same district mentioned their district's diversity or multicultural office. They discussed a video and teacher materials on African American history that their district had authorized teachers to use with all students. Monthly cadre meetings were held for teams of representatives from each school in that district to attend. Those teachers were expected to return back to their schools to share information with other staff members. Scant evidence was provided about how effectively the information was being transmitted and implemented by staff members in those schools. Two other principals from another corporation also discussed the Project REACH training their teachers received when they were hired into the district. Karen had a speaker come to her school to address staff members, and John discussed his district's initiative that had been in practice for about three years.

In addition, Katrina reported that her district had just created a diversity team, and representatives from the school attended the district-wide team meetings, of which she was a

member. However, principals were not allowed to attend some of the training sessions sponsored through the district. Perhaps the assumption was that teachers could be more open in expressing themselves without threat of reprisal as they shared their true feelings. Katrina was unsure of why the practice was implemented and concerned that she could not attend, because she felt her staff was unique and there was good rapport with them.

When asked how professional development had impacted teacher thinking or attitudes, John shared what his school and district did relative to cultural competency. He explained that the district had cultural competency as an initiative for the last two to three years. Although other schools in the district may have had a few non-White students, Heritage Elementary School #3 had the highest enrollment of students of color. Heritage Elementary School #3 had a higher African American population because it was a neighborhood school, and another school had a higher Hispanic population for the same reason. Both of these schools, along with the other elementary schools, fed into the district's one middle school; so at every level, the district recognized the need to prepare teachers to engage all students. John described how his school fulfilled the district cultural competency initiative. He stated,

> As a district, one of our initiatives was cultural competency, and a lot of times what I do, or not, we don't spend the whole in-service on it, but I will say to them, "Okay, can you give me an example of last month what you did to talk about cultural competency in the classroom?" So we talk about that. So then, they might give you an example maybe they taught a math lesson on Arabic numbers, those kinds of thing so . . . Or something that was brought up during social studies, like how . . . the sixth grade talked about, you know, another type of culture. So I think that what is real nice is I do classroom walkthroughs, because when I'm in there in that four minute snapshot, I can say, okay,

well, they did touch on this because it was only four minutes and from 8 o'clock until

2:30, I'm going to miss it. So that's why we . . . I would say, "Hey, at our staff meeting

bring a piece of information that you have talked about with cultural competency."

A few principals stated that students were exposed to culturally relevant materials that

were incorporated into core subjects, especially language arts, social studies, and art. A few

others reported that teachers included materials during February for Black History Month or

Cultural Diversity Month. Two schools, Independence Elementary School #8 and Winding

Creek Elementary School #9, reported they had Cinco de Mayo celebrations planned for May.

Others specifically noted that they wanted teachers to infuse information into their lessons all

throughout the school year. However, some reported that they included diversity lessons for

students by teaching character values through monthly themes.

Karen expected teachers to work in teams to plan and design the best instruction for each

child regardless of their cultural backgrounds. She cautioned teachers to look beyond behavior

and reflect on cultural differences that could be at the root of behavioral issues. She also guided

teachers to use materials all year long that reflected the students' cultures, especially through

social studies.

And I work on having the ownership from the team, from the school, so that all of the

students are our children. But I think that it's important as we are working with

instruction that we incorporate, and I do talk about that, that we utilize materials that

reflect that, like, Martin Luther King is in January . . . and so you say, okay so we're

going to say, Martin Luther King. Okay . . .well that's January, but when you look at

culture, what are we doing throughout the year that will embrace all of our cultures, and

what can we do to integrate that into the learning atmosphere during reading, during

social studies? What are those things that we can do to enhance and support what's going on through materials that provide enrichment for the diverse population that we have?

Additionally, Karen discussed plans for ensuring that culturally relevant materials would be used to support the core subjects. However, validating the extent to which Karen or any of the other principals ensured that resources, materials ,and professional development activities were actually embedded into lessons goes beyond the scope of this study. Although eight of the principals extended a brief tour of their buildings, even in those schools teachers were not questioned about what and how frequently cultural materials were infused into their plans, and no artifacts were collected. Nor was there time to take extensive notes about the variety of displays in the hallways and classrooms. Little was shared about studying the students' ethnic heritages and history beyond traditional personalities such as Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Black History Month, Cinco de Mayo, and the curriculum guide on African American history that one district provided.

With that noted, a relatively quick walkthrough in those eight buildings did, however, reveal a few displays of culturally relevant materials as evidenced in varying degrees through professional and student artwork, sets of books provided to either teachers or students, and student writing samples posted on display and written about a few African Americans and/or their experiences. Although there may have been samples, no displays on Latino heritage were obvious or noted in field notes beyond signs written in both Spanish and English that were posted in the entrances and office areas of all the schools. There were, however, displays of a few African Americans, posters of President Barack Obama, and photos of students who attended three of the schools showcased in the school lobby and corridors.

During the quick tours, no teachers were observed presenting any lessons that seemed specifically related to identifiable culturally relevant learning materials. However, displays about developing positive character traits were observed in most buildings. Furthermore, the walkthroughs in every school revealed orderly classrooms with no students noticeably disengaged. The vast majority of all the children seemed engaged in the lessons and no overly disruptive behavior was observed in any school. In addition, in every building where students were in the corridors, all students were observed walking orderly through the hallways going to the restrooms, passing to special classes, entering an auditorium for a program, moving outside to recess, and catching the bus for a field trip.

Subtheme 5.6: Principals acknowledged they had to address the learning needs of male students in non-traditional ways. Above every other subgroup in their schools, principals made more references to finding solutions for working with African American children, boys in particular, and their distinct needs for innovative ways of acquiring reading and math skills. Five principals referenced what they were already doing, and two others stated they were developing plans for the next school year. Those five principals talked about their efforts to interest, motivate, challenge, and equip African American boys for successful school experiences and eliminate the achievement gap that existed between African American students and their counterparts. The gender test score gaps were troubling and principals openly discussed some of the measures they had taken to close both the race and gender gaps. A few of their comments are included below. Judy shared her concern about reaching the African American boys in her school.

> I can't address other ethnic backgrounds in this building because all my teachers are
> White. I can address the fact that what I call my core team, which is here in the office

with me, and I. I guess really, I guess really a lot of it is me . . . because I have been the one that's taught the staff, they are not allowed to dummy down work here. They are not allowed to dummy down. We have a reverse gap in achievement between Hispanic and Whites here, African American once again, that's the biggest challenge. And why? A middle-class population is teaching them, and having them accept that ownership that they have got African American boys in particular, and we have to help them find a relevance to their learning.

In thinking about how to meet the needs of specific students, Audrey, like Karen, shared how the school's course of action changed when they aligned professional development to the school improvement goals that monitored how well subgroups were performing.

I think one of our things that our school improvement goals, again focusing on reading and what we did two years ago, we had a broad goal where we said, "We're going to be way more specific and we're going to identify certain subgroups that are struggling and we're going to write this in our plan that African American children, ENL children, and special ed students, these are the three subgroups who we are really struggling with and depending on which focus area determined which subgroup was struggling the most." So what we saw was that our African American children, particularly our African American boys, were struggling the most with in reading, specifically reading comprehension.

Most of the principals mentioned the gap that existed between the test scores of African American, Hispanic, and White children and shared their schools' efforts to provide practices, materials, and interventions that would eliminate those gaps. Every school used a 90-minute period for reading. Many also used a Balanced Literacy model. Most principals described the literacy centers and literature circles that have engaged students with small group activity.

Katrina shared one of their key strategies for reading. Of all the schools, New Suburbia Elementary School #11 appeared to have the most aggressive and extensive reading training program for its teachers. On the day of the interview, the school's reading consultant was working with the instructional assistant and Title I teachers. Additionally, Katrina had shared how teachers went to other trainings to obtain more strategies for working with Black male students.

Bookman Station Elementary School #12 housed a unique room filled with leveled readers that were organized for all teachers to use. Carolyn discussed how they broadened their reading collection using every dollar that became available add to their collection. They wanted students to have more non-fiction books to help students apply what they have learned to real life. They also were strategizing to add more materials that Black boys could enjoy. She stated,

> The point of that was obviously closing achievement gaps, but it was focusing on Black males. And why aren't they as successful in the schools as they could be. . . . We're working on that. We use the literacy coach; we have a book room where we provide sets of like six books that can be used in a small group instruction. They are all at the same level if this group of students had, say, Level K, then this book room has a variety to sets of books at Level K. We are moving more towards books that are supposed to be targeting the boys they are more of interest to the boys. Some of the ones we have just recently ordered have more of a comic book look to them, and from what I'm hearing the boys are really enjoying those, it's different you know. It's not just a textbook. As long as they are reading it's a good thing. We're also moving more to informational text, so it's not just the fiction . . . trying to incorporate social studies and science into the reading block, so that the students see that what they are learning here also applies in other areas.

That's a difficult thing, that application piece. They do the spelling test, to do those of words, transfer of word into their writing. They learn vocabulary, but does it become part of the everyday speech and conversation?

Martha revealed that the focus for professional development would shift during the next year to address African American male students specifically.

But we also know that many of our African American males are not—it's not that they don't have the ability to do it. They are not passing the test because we feel like they are not engaged. How are we going to engage students? But it's not just our African-African males—all kids—you know what I mean. We need to do what's best for all kids. But how we are going to also in the process of that—target these specific kids that are having concerns. So that's what our professional development is going to be focused on for next school year.

Although some of the comments included above remained focused on what the staffs were doing to reach African American boys academically, many of the conversations effortlessly attached themselves to the poverty issues. It would seem that is hard for educators to separate African American boys and a linkage to poverty. Judy seemed to have a good grasp of understanding how to help non-White students excel; even as she discussed an incentive plan for attendance, she cautioned about how teachers linked African American male students and poverty. She set up an attendance incentive that had proven to be very successful and she created it so students would relate to it. Based on BMXers' bikes and ramps, she shared how the program worked.

The bikes, what they do—the ramps and things help because our kids function better if they have something tangible. And the practice can't be "out of their room," and it's got

to be out of the mindset of those in poverty. And so it's something tangible that they can identify with, and you probably know, especially with African American boys, they need to see the relevance of what they are doing with their lives.

Carolyn shared a story of one African American male student who made remarkable progress during the time he was at Bookman Station Elementary School #12. She used him as an example because he was in the office area at the time the interview was about to begin. He was waiting for someone to pick him up. Seeing the interview was about to start, he spoke up on his own and shared what a great principal she was and pronounced that it would be enjoyable talking to her. When asked about how teachers from different ethnicities related to the students, she answered, including more information about the young man in the office area,

> But I think or what I believe is that if the teacher has a good relationship with that child, that child can learn, and my good example would be the young man who was on the bench. He is an awesome young man. He has been here since pre-school. He had been a behavioral problem for the first three years that I was here. In third grade he had an African American teacher, and he began to make some gains. In fourth grade he had a veteran Caucasian teacher and he made more gains. And this whole time, now let me preface, he was reading way below grade level. Fifth grade he has a Caucasian teacher; he is actually almost at a fifth grade reading level. So I think it depends on, you know, the effectiveness in the teacher, and everyone is amazed at his success. I wish I could keep him in another year because I think another year he would be ready to go on to middle school, but I have no reason to keep him except selfish reasons. When he leaves, I will cry.

Continuing on to share more about this student and the importance of relationships,

Carolyn added,

> And you know what he said to his teacher this year? He said, you know, "No teacher has
> ever given me their phone number before." And she goes, "Well, I gave it to you because
> I want you to use it. Even problems with math or reading, call me; I will help you." And
> he does call. So going with that extra mile with those kids works. His behavior started
> getting out of control and now at the end of the year, he is a wonderful boy who has had
> very few infractions. He went from many infractions in the years past to like zero
> infractions this year.

Table 13 represents some specific, practical interventions for working with African
American male students that principals shared as strategies used in their schools. These
strategies were compiled from all the principals' remarks.

Table 13

Interventions Identified in the Study for Working with African American Male Students

No.	Practices to Help African American Male Students Succeed
1	Do not dumb down the curriculum.
2	Provide books that interest boys.
3	Have a large selection of reading materials at different levels.
4	Offer instruction that is relevant to them.
5	Provide incentives that have meaning for them.
6	Move beyond stereotyping them.
7	Believe they have the ability to learn.
8	Provide them with effective teachers.
9	Build strong, genuine relationships with them.
10	Use data to focus on their learning needs.
11	Provide role models within the school or from outside sources when possible.
12	Provide informational text, not just fiction.
13	Use leveled readers that incorporate social studies and science
14	Develop strategies to build vocabulary
15	Provide engaging activities

Subtheme 5.7: Principals acknowledged they had to address the learning needs of English Language Learners in non-traditional ways. Because of the growing Hispanic/Latino student population at most of the schools, principals had begun to implement professional development on how to best relate to the students and their families. Some of the districts clustered Hispanic students in particular schools in order to provide directed support. Some

schools serviced all of the students in their boundary areas and included Hispanic/Latino students in whatever schools were in their home areas. Six of the schools fell in a range with up to 20% of its population being Hispanic. The Hispanic population in the other six schools ranged from 21% to 43%. Comparatively, the African American populations in the 12 schools ranged from 21% to 88%, while the Hispanic populations in these schools ranged from fewer than 10 students to 43%.

At Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 and Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6, the Hispanic students out-numbered the African American students. All of the schools had to seriously address the needs of the Hispanic students. Four schools had less than 10% of their students in ELL program. Five schools had 11% to 20% of their students enrolled, and two schools had over 21% of their total population enrolled in the ELL program. All schools that serviced ELL students had teachers and/or assistants to help support students in learning English and completing other schoolwork. Principals also worked with their staffs to provide support for the parents of the students. As an example, Judy presented a six-week English speaking class for parents, with a Saturday graduation. She described the program as "totally effective."

As principals discussed their Hispanic populations, their references to poverty were not as prevalent as they had been when they discussed their African American students. Although the needs were noted, there was more of an emphasis on language acquisition and providing support rather than an emphasis on the poverty of the students. Katrina shared that her school had an ELL program housed in it. She described how the population shifted and the resulting programs that emerged in their small district as they located ELL teachers in strategic locations.

> When I first came to New Suburbia Elementary School #11, it was kind of upper middle-
>
> class, White—and then over that 10-year period there was a shift in population to the

point where now we are . . . the majority probably goes to about 75%. . . . I don't have the exact number that is Africa-American. We have a population of Hispanic students as a result of an English as a second language program, and then there is just a small percentage of White students.

When asked if the Hispanic students were bused in from the whole district, she responded,

At one point they were. We were the home base for that program for all of the elementary schools, but as the program expanded they started programs at Albright Elementary, which is a good half-hour away. The students were on the buses for 30 minutes, and that wasn't in their best interest. So there is a program there now, and there is another program at Baylor Elementary, because they have such a large population that could support a teacher and the aide there. But we do accept students from Calhoun Elementary and from Davison Elementary who need to apply for the English language program.

Clayton discussed how Crossroads Preparatory Charter School #6 had worked with their Hispanic population of students and parents. He described a staff member who addressed this.

So we tried the whole group thing, which cut across the buildings, so they tend to be things about raising awareness, or helping to understand the situation. We just brought in someone from Esparanza, which is a group that works with Hispanic families, and helping them, helping us to understand the issues that we have with recent immigrants and just helping us to frame our thinking so that we are maybe a little more responsive to those families' needs.

As stated before, Karen stressed how teachers used what they learned about ELL students to help them work with other students of color. She along with Audrey discussed their deliberate focus on specifically targeting strategies to support struggling ELL students and other subgroups. Judy used her prior knowledge of growing up in California and living in a diverse neighborhood, as well as other experiences, to share some of her insights in working with the school's Hispanic population. Earlier, she had shared about the Cinco de Mayo celebration that Independence Elementary School #8 would be hosting, but she also shared how she had developed relationships with the community that led to the big turnout she was expecting. She discussed building trust and respect with the Hispanic/Latino community.

> Okay and the cultural diversity. Another Hispanic situation—we used to go swimming, but it's just with all the demands now and it just can't fit it in. A little girl didn't bring a bathing suit, she brought shorts and a shirt, well once again we have a lot of illegals, and of course, the physical ed teacher wanted to reprimand her for this, well in their culture because they have outside showers, they shower in bathing suits, and that's like underwear to them. So in a conservative Hispanic culture, you would be telling her to go swim in her underwear. And it's just those things, when you have something tangible like that, it's a good lesson and it's easy to teach.

Clayton, like Martha, was excited about hiring a Hispanic teacher who would be teaching all students Spanish as a foreign language at specified grades. Clayton also addressed hiring underrepresented teachers and reiterated what Karen and Judy shared in the section on hiring practices. He believed that teachers who worked as a team were the best teachers. He also reiterated the perspective that hiring teachers of the same ethnicity as the students did not

guarantee student success; however, he did believe that diversity was a good way to help staff members become exposed to different points of view.

Reporting an example of a frank conversation she had with a teacher who unconsciously acted out of suspicions she had about a Hispanic parent who came to visit the school, Audrey shared the following account. She tried to use teachable moments to share with teachers so they would stop and actually think about how their actions impacted the children and their parents. She explained,

> Just last week there was a Hispanic gentleman who checked in at the office and a teacher saw him walking around. He had on his nametag and I guess he couldn't find the classroom. And he was pacing and looking in the classrooms. And a teacher sent him back to the office and called and said, "I have a gentleman who was acting suspicious." And, you know, I said to her, "Was he acting suspicious or what was he doing?" "Well he was looking in all the doors." Well, I said, "Well, why didn't you just ask him?" "Oh, I didn't think about that." "Well you know what? If he got past the office, as we do with any adult, we take the time and find out what it is they're about before we send him to the back. So you sent him to the office on a wild goose chase." So again, gently nudging them and bringing things to the forefront and questioning.

Audrey concluded,

> Why do you do things like that? Do you think that it could be? Even their treatment of children . . . You know, it's not okay to talk to kids crazy. We talk about respect. We want respect. We have to treat our kids with respect.

Although principals mentioned some concrete actions they had taken with improving instructional practices for their African American male students, fewer specific actions were

noted for the Hispanic populations. The main focus was on the students receiving support from the ELL teacher and aides. Because there was a focus on looking at individual student data for all students, Hispanic/Latino students received focused instruction because of how the school used their data. Seven of the schools had enough Hispanic/Latino students taking the state tests that their growth model data could be analyzed. In five of those schools, Hispanic students had a greater median growth percentage than either Black or White students. This would seem to indicate that teachers had begun adapting instructional practices to meet the needs of those students. However because a gap persisted in comparison to White students, more attention was still needed to help teachers become even more culturally competent.

Subtheme 5.8: Principals cared about the total well-being of their students, teachers, and parents and believed their staffs should do the same. They consistently expressed their desire and recognized their calling and commitment to lead a school with a high percentage of diversity present. Audrey shared that she left another job field to become an educator because she wanted to make a greater difference in the lives of children. Marilyn, although involved in education at the state level, believed that her skills would benefit students at the district level as a principal. Of the four African Americans in the study, three referenced their spiritual belief that God sustained them for the work they did. Other principals spoke of their commitments to make a difference with a diverse population also. Only one of the White principals openly referenced his Christian upbringing that caused him to respect and work with people from all ethnicities.

Clayton wanted teachers to develop strong ties and relationships with families of students. He believed that home visits were important to understanding the students' cultures. Judy had many, many interesting examples of how building trust with parents was so important. In another incident, she described how she faced some gang members. She recounted incidents

where parents confided in her about home situations and how she was able to help them. She
was vigilant in determining if situations arose out of the influences that poverty had on families
or if there were cultural issues involved. She stated that she had created an environment where
parents trusted her and a few other office staff members she strategically hired. Judy explained
how she gained parent confidence:

> In the office, you need to have that representation to build that staff, so therefore we've
> had lot of conversations. I mean in the real world, when people are being abused . . . you
> know I mean we had a parent came here crying yesterday, and when people took him in
> the room, there's other people . . . but there's like three of us here that they really will
> talk to, and they know who to talk to for the acceptance factor because not everybody
> accepts them. . . . Not everybody here is compassionate or understanding.

Katrina discussed the commitment her staff had for the vision she had laid out for the
school. Some teachers who believed in the mission and had to leave involuntarily still come to
social gatherings the school had.

> Oh yeah, I really do believe that. And the teachers are not new here, the teachers, like
> I'm telling you; they are all over five years here. They choose to stay, which I consider a
> real plus. There are always openings in other schools; teachers retire, this staff stays.
> That says to me they like what they are doing. They are not looking for greener pastures
> or an easier position; they are here because they think this is important work, they want to
> stay. I had a teacher that had a transfer last year because I didn't have a spot for her, and
> she still comes.

Katrina was one of the two principals with a long term of service to her school. She had
worked through many issues her colleagues were still facing. She commented,

I hear my colleagues talk about situations of their experience saying that, we don't have

the problem, but maybe we're further along in the process than they are. There are

meeting some other challenges that we've already gone through. But I can't tell you that

I hear the word "discrimination." That's not something . . . I try to let parents know, and

I've been here 17 years, and word gets out. I've high expectations for all students, and

know that what I'm doing is in the best interest of your child.

All of the principals made it clear that, although they focused attention on improving

academic achievement in their school, they were supportive of parents and students and helped

where they could with non-academic issues that impacted their students' quality of life. When

asked the things staff members did at school that helped meet the needs of the students and their

families, Viola shared about how the school worked with outreach community groups. They

gave Christmas gifts, worked on an Angel Tree project, provided breakfast and lunch in the

summer months, and helped families recover from fires, traumas, and disasters. In discussing the

mobility of the student population, she added,

> Yes. We have transient students. So we have about two housing projects to see, and that
>
> tends to be, and then a lot of Section 8 homes around here in the areas, so yes, we do
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> have the coming and going of students. We also have a homeless shelter close by . . . I
>
> tell them that all the time . . . I think one, they have to learn to understand that the kids
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> tend to bring what they have gone on at home to school, but two, we have to be
>
> compassionate about it. Sometimes we have to feed them, clothe them, nourish them,
>
> nurture them, before we can get to them.

Judy had made it clear to her staff that they had to very observant and look for ways to

assess student needs. She wanted teachers to stay alert to any changes in student behavior and

for them to listen to student conversations so they could help support both the students and their families. She shared several incidents where teacher vigilance allowed a family to get extra support. Regarding one situation she revealed,

> Basically I tell our new teachers and the one that I'm frustrated with right now; you need to know the size of their underwear. You know really you need to know the size of their underwear because you need to know that child so well because . . . I've got one child for instance in third grade that she found her baby brother dead. She has got emotional issues. Mother won't agree to get her any help, so she is dealing with these issues. Her moods, you know, so you've got to work with them, I mean it's not just boom, and you are coming in, and you got to do this, and this and this. You've got to work with what they are living with. I'm not saying make excuses. I'm not into enabling. I'm into helping them learn to live.

When asked about additional strategies for professional development she would like to see changed, Karen talked about the skyrocketing impact that poverty is having on her children. With the new population of students that have come, she was hopeful that there would be good academic growth this year and even more in the future. She also acknowledged that the staff must recognize the increasing number of children who are classified as living in poverty and who come to the school hungry and sometimes homeless children. She told about her "hard core" gym teacher, "Mr. Eat and Leave," who was usually pretty tough on the kids, and how he melted one day on breakfast duty when he saw how hungry some of the children were. With the longest experience as a principal in one of the schools in the study, she warned that her teachers must embrace, appreciate, understand, and develop procedures and ideas that support those students. Peter also told about the compassion of his cafeteria manager and how the school worked to

make sure children were not hungry at school. He shared, "And I am thankful I have a cafeteria manager. She is like, 'As long as they eat it, I would give it to them.' We have this fruit and salad bar that our kids, they devour that every day."

Concerning one homeless family that is going from home to home between relatives, Judy acknowledged the child is caught in the middle of the mother's inability to get along with people who offer her a place to stay. Also recalling some other situations at her school, she shared,

> But it's tough and we have others that, yeah, right now they are doubling up. They are doubling, you know. But I don't have any sleeping out in the car that I know of right now. That one girl is as close as anyone. I have had when you have arguments and they have to get out of the house, and then they end up driving around and that sort of thing, and then they bring him to school, and then they will stay at the hotel. Well, you know that's going to last only one night because they don't have the money, and so it's one of those . . . it's increased.

Earlier Carolyn and Audrey shared, like Karen, the staff's need to recognize how hard it is for some parents. Karen wanted to place a little more emphasis on adapting to meet student needs; she stated,

> Our society has changed as a whole, and that's where we are. And so I tell my teachers, I'm right up-front. This is not suburbia. This is city, and we have to adapt to meet the needs of the kids that come to us with situations that we didn't see 20 years ago. It's a different population. America is different, but our kids come with such baggage. That percentage of our kids that have incarcerated parents is absolutely amazing.

Peter also shared how he viewed every discipline problem separately and tried to make the best decision that supported the needs of each child. In considering the parents' reactions to his decisions, he commented,

> Our kids they just get along well. And I think that has to come from the administrator—just treating people fairly and equally; and if they see me doing that, well . . . well that's my expectation of what a teacher does. And it's . . . I'm not going to deal; you have to deal with every discipline situation individually. You have to look at all sides of it and I have some students that I won't call home on because I know if I call home, when they get home, they are going to get beaten, so I will just, I will take care of it here. When I do see their parent, you know, I will just try to give some positives about their kid, and say that you know I need your help on something. You know, he's not been staying in his seat on the bus, I know that you don't have a car to get him here to school, so I don't want to have to put him off, could you just talk to him about how important it is that he stays in his seat. . . . And I think parents are going to be more open to that instead of me calling and say, "Look, I'm putting your kid off the bus because he won't stay in his seat. I have told you before." You just have to work with them.

He shared another incident when he worked with parents to let them know how much he valued their children being present at school. He noted how the parents took responsibility for the students' attendance and persistent tardiness when the school offered special help to get the children to school on time.

> Then we had a real tardy issue . . . just working with the parents. I asked, "What can I do to help you to get them here on time." We had one parent . . . I just told her, I said, "Look." And she goes, "Well I work all night. I don't get up to get them on the bus on

time." I said, "I want you to just give me a call. I will come pick him up, or my dean can come pick him up." I even have a secretary, she even said, "I will go and get him." I don't let her do it because of the insurance. But it's like, "Just call me, I will come, pick them up because they need to be here at school." And parents will be like, "Okay." And, usually, I never have to go pick them up because they have their kid here on time, but they know they can give me a call. And I have a call once in a while, "Could you come pick him up? We missed the bus this morning."

Marilyn shared a unique way that her staff dealt with many of the challenges they faced. They began a prayer group at the school that met every morning before school began. Teachers could come to the session if they chose to attend. Marilyn and some other teachers were concerned about the teachers who were not providing the best education for all of their students. She had talked to some of the teachers candidly and was frustrated by their lack of commitment. She shared how she and some other staff members became frustrated with the lack of concern that some of her teachers exhibited, and it led to the beginning of a prayer group,

> So what we do now is, we have a prayer group. . . . It's a group of us and we pray. Every morning we start out, and we have a book. I have it here. My minister puts out a book for 365 days, and it's a scripture a day, and it's a story, and it's a prayer, and we start out every morning with that, and then we take prayer requests, and we pray.

When asked about more details, she shared that about 10 teachers were involved in the group. Additionally, she believed that the prayers were an important part of the school's success. There was even a before-school club that met once a week and they joined the teachers for prayer.

8:30 every morning we pray. Different persons lead us in prayer and on Friday kids join us. We have a "Pay it Forward" club, which one of our teachers leads. They learn Bible verses; they learn how they can contribute to the community and do something good. They meet every Friday morning, and when . . . they meet at 8 o'clock, and their parents drop them off, and then they come to the prayer meeting and they pray. So, they get to learn that they have teachers that pray, too. They bring their prayer requests, too, as a group, and it's kind of funny, because we have parents to come with the "Pay it Forward" club with their children, and they come to the prayer group with us. . . . It's just 10 or 15 minutes. The school starts at 8:30, so everybody's got to be on their post at 8:45.

Marilyn was thankful for so many of the community support activities that were mentioned earlier in the section under community involvement. She attributed the school's increasing academic success and broad community support to both prayer and hard work. Among Rachel Lee's (2007) list of qualities she searched for in culturally relevant school environments, she found that spirituality was one trait that often manifested. Although eight of the principals did not reference God directly, many of their acts of kindness, mothering, and compassion did emerge. Five other principals stated they wanted their schools to be perceived as a place of caring and compassion toward students and parents.

As an ending note, only one principal actually put a percentage on the number of students who seemed to need the most consideration because of poverty, housing, and other social issues. She stated that perhaps up to one-half of the students might have needed that support. In reflection, most of the principals were insistent about helping their teachers view their students as individuals and not as a whole group and warned them not to make assumptions about all of the students based on those who have the most urgent needs. There was little discussion from

most of principals about how they or their teachers made that distinction. Patterns such as those outlined in Payne's (2003) work on understanding people in poverty could tend to lead teachers to stereotype students. Consequently, understanding her premise may need to be addressed more closely in future cultural competency training.

Subtheme 5.9: Principals, especially some female principals, exhibited "othermothering" traits. Another element of the principal's role in developing cultural competency practices within a school of predominantly non-White students involved the concept of "othermothering" (Foster, 1996). Although this attribute had been linked to African American principals and teachers in past research, some of the White female principals in this study also displayed a few of the mothering characteristics evident in some African American principals who had extended their support to their students and parents in a mother-like manner and helped them excel.

Almost half of the principals, particularly five women, demonstrated a mother's caring for the school community of students and parents. Their motherly responsibilities did not overshadow their focus on instruction, but rather it complemented the other concerns that students and their families experienced that interfered with student learning. Karen, Martha, Marilyn, Judy, and Viola talked about the care and concern they had for their students and parents through the eyes of a mother. As a Black woman, Marilyn shared how her strong feelings about her race and other circumstances in her life worked to her advantage in relating to parents and students. However, she cautioned that one of her White teachers exhibited the same mothering skill as she worked with her adopted Black son and her other students and their parents.

Judy, a White female principal, discussed her view of the matriarchal role women have in the African American culture. She and Marilyn most closely demonstrated the traits associated with othermothering that Lyman and Villani (2004) described about the two principals they studied. Both principals acted in the role of a mother to students and their parents. Judy candidly revealed,

> And one thing I have experienced my whole life is, and my biggest Achilles heel I feel, is through how I grew up. I have developed a unique personality, and actually in many ways it's more of a matriarchal Black personality. And frankly, I'm White; so it's not always accepted. I'm very direct; I don't play. I'm to the point. But then that's also from a culture of poverty. And I don't give a crap about someone's. . . what color carpet you are buying; that's middle-class stuff. We're going to deal with about how you are going to get food on the table and all that type of thing, and . . . but social skills. I lack in some social skills. For people who meet me casually, they wouldn't know that.

Judy was not alone in referring to the principal acting in the role of a mother or a father to the students. The concept of othermothering also placed female principals, Karen and Viola, in the role of helping and supporting younger parents with some of their personal issues. Viola also referred to how the students and parents perceived her because she is a mother. Viola stated,

> Well, I think being a female has helped the students' communities because they all know I am a mother, so they see that side of me. Also my background . . . and I see my teaching experience. That helps because I've taught, what? Second grade? Third grade? I've taught fourth grade, sixth grade, and kindergarten. So obviously I have various experiences, and so my educational background, my teaching experiences, my home experiences, and they see that. I think it helps them see if she can do it, then I can do it.

And same with the children, if she could do it, I can do it, and also the kids kind of see me as a mom, and they know they are not going to play with moms.

Karen discussed the school's role in helping students to develop character and caring for others. She also talked about the principal's role in bridging the relationship between home and school with monthly activities bringing in families and doing community service projects.

And so in between, as a parent at home, as long as life is happy, everyone's happy, they are doing something wrong, mom is not happy, and that's what we work with here. Establish and develop the child because, especially at elementary, we have to work on developing the child in order to make those good choices.

Martha shared about her relationship with her adopted biracial daughter and how that relationship has made her more aware of the importance of culture.

I have an adopted child, so that brings with it a different understanding because we have a lot of adopted kids, and kids who are in foster case, and so I have a background and understanding of how those parents are feeling, maybe how those kids are, and my adopted child is multiracial. So you know as a parent then, I understand the importance of my child seeing people who look like her in her life. I have to be very purposeful about that because her entire family is Caucasian, so I kind of understand that. I think that helps me because I'm working with kids. It is also important trying to see people who live like that.

The traits that the principals exposed related to othermothering, may not have all shown the depth of commitment, connection, and involvement with students and their parents characterized in Foster's (1996) or Lyman and Villani's (2004) work that described dedicated African American teachers and principals; however, these principals provided enough examples

that displayed the concern they shared of being placed in a mother's role to advise and caution students and parents in times of need. The othermothering trait is an extension of the caring and concern mentioned in the previous section.

Subthemes 5.10: Principals were willing to have frank conversations and address issues surrounding diversity. As reported earlier, most of the principals came to their schools as change agents. Describing the methods principals used to bring change could be interpreted differently. While some looking in might view a number of their methods as harsh, blunt, aggressive, and authoritative, others might identify those same actions as motivational, convincing, compelling, and assertive. As principals reflected on teacher perceptions and other changes they had seen since they began serving as the leaders of their schools, they shared some of the concerns with implementing cultural competency practices. Nevertheless, all of the principals demonstrated confidence and pride that the changes that occurred had helped improve discipline and instruction and that other changes they were planning for the next year would continue to make a positive difference.

Both Marilyn and Judy described themselves as blunt. Judy spoke about her will power and self-determination. Audrey acknowledged the frank conversations she had with some staff members, and John described courageous conversations that caused teachers to reflect on what they were doing and usually led to changes in behavior or instructional practices. Clayton, Judy, Peter, and Katrina identified conversations that were hard, critical, or open. All principals spoke about the process of change that eventually evoked a difference in teacher attitudes and perceptions that translated into changed instructional practices.

Additionally, principals were self-reflective about how their race and gender impacted their teachers' receptivity of them promoting culturally responsive practices to their

predominantly White staff of teachers. For nine of the 12 principals, gender was a non-issue that did not generate much discussion. Viola, a woman, saw gender as a benefit in developing communication skills and in how the students and parents respected her as a mom as well as a principal. Martha elaborated that as a woman, her gender also helped her develop positive relationships and allowed her to use the communication skills she had developed through the years.

Clayton, although he had not considered the impact of his gender on working with parents and students, admitted that his gender did help him communicate to his predominantly female staff because he had no problems having critical conversations in a non-threatening way. He also acknowledged he was a role model for many of his male students who may have lived in homes with no father. Jason acknowledged that both his gender and race were things he considered often. As a man, he didn't want to come off as a bully with his predominantly female staff; furthermore, as a Black man, he was very cognizant of his race and the culture that he represented.

Three of the African American principals, Audrey, Jason and Marilyn, openly talked about their race and their thoughts on how it impacted leadership. The other African American, Viola, recognized that teachers may have been concerned about her race, but it was not something she dwelled upon; she was determined to do her job and, as far as she was aware of, there had never been any friction because of her race. Of all the African American principals, Audrey provided the most insight about her reflections as a Black woman leading an all-White teaching staff, with the exception of one other African American teacher.

Of the eight White principals, three men and five woman, the three White men did not see either race or gender as a hindrance to their leadership styles or their discussion on culturally

competence with their staff. The five White female principals, however, seemed more reflective and did recognize that from contrasting viewpoints, aspects of race did impact their leadership related to culturally relevant practices.

This topic of being able to have frank conversations about cultural diversity was probably one of the most revealing areas that showcased the complex role that principals must execute. While trying to establish the best environment for student learning, they also were dealing with personal perspectives and perceptions about their own race and gender and how they will be received in discussing issues like race, ethnicity, and bias. While they addressed concerns that arose, there were questions that remained about how best to carry out their mandates. Their candid comments continued to show the need for more skillful training, dialogue, and open communication about race and its impact on student achievement.

Subtheme 5.11: Principals had different levels of understanding about how to create a culturally relevant learning environment. As they shared examples of how they were providing culturally responsive practices in their buildings, the principals offered a glimpse into how they approached policy and practices related to helping their staffs become more culturally competent. Peter believed that cultural competency and respect for diversity was embedded into everything his staff did. He believed the evaluation instrument the district used ensured that teachers took cultural competency seriously.

> And I will always tell teachers, if I would mark this below to three, then this isn't the place for you, because a three—it's the top. We have to respect all cultures. I just wanted an open door for parents with any nationality. I feel like . . . Welcome, come on in, because now, we are so mixed.

Peter shared how an older teacher who had been in the district for 40 years struggled with teaching Black boys when the demographics of the school changed, but he also expressed that part of their professional development related to understanding cultures.

> This one teacher, she has been here through all the changes. She was here when we were . . . it was kind of the elite lived out here. This is where some major businesses and all the execs kids went to school here and they were here for the deseg . . . when that all came through. And like I said earlier, if you are going to teach in our school, you can't have hang ups about racial anything. . . . You just can't, because I will find about it, I can tell. And I had a teacher, she didn't deal with African American boys . . . so we discussed it, and it just didn't work out, and I didn't renew our contract. She was a special education teacher. And we're just working in the way we have, of respecting ethnic culture heritage, and we have different professional developments that we do.

Peter added thoughts about teacher and student interaction and demonstrated how easy it was to become comfortable with not deliberately discerning that children coming from different cultures may need special strategies offered to meet their learning needs.

> You know when I was in the classroom yesterday and I just counted real quickly. I had four White students, seven African American students, and I believe 14 ESL students, Hispanic, and you would look around everybody is being treated the same. There is no. . . and people say, "Oh, that can't be true." It's like you don't notice it. I mean when you are in that environment, you are teaching, it doesn't matter who the kids are. You just teach and you accept them.

In another incident, unlike Audrey, who earlier shared how she had to call a teacher to the office to discuss her data which showed a disproportionate number of referrals sent to the office

of Black and Hispanic students, Peter recounted an example when he discovered that racial issues were probably not the key problem that precipitated a parent meeting. It seems it turned out there was something else that led to a misunderstanding. Peter contended that educators must be careful not to rush to judgment on deciding if something is racial or a part of everyday human relations concerns. He shared,

> I had one parent this year who came to me and said, "Well, I think she has a problem with Black boys." And I'm like, "Really? Well tell me a little about that." And I'm like, "That's interesting. Do you know why?" And the parent is like, "Why?" I said, "Well, her grandchildren are mixed." And the parents were like . . . "I didn't know that." And that tells me the problem and usually it comes down to . . . it's not a problem because of their color, it's because of their behavior in class, and just trying to figure out . . . let's get to the real problem here because I don't see that there is a problem. And then the teacher came down, and the parent talked to him. It wasn't about that at all. And the parent said, "Well, I just need to talk to him about being quiet in class. That's what the problem is." And you have to let them talk. And they are not going to listen to me until I listen to them.

Principals, also, shared how their own ethnicities and gender helped or hindered them from moving teachers to be more culturally competent in engaging students and parents from diverse backgrounds. Audrey, from an African American perspective, offered a very self-reflective answer about her ethnicity. She realized that being the first African American principal at the school presented some challenges. Although it seemed, at times, that some teachers might have tried to undermine her authority, Audrey found ways to cope with this.

At the end of the day, there are some powers I know I have. I don't have to flaunt it. I

don't have to throw it up in people's faces that I am the boss. I have to be very careful in

how I operate, because I still realize that there are some things that even I can't control.

Or there are some things that could happen to make my life pretty uncomfortable. I'm

very conscientious of how they [the staff] view me. Even standing up delivering

professional development, I know that when I'm standing in front of the teachers, I make

sure I have every "i" dotted and every "t" crossed, that there is no room for questions, or

if they have questions, I have an answer or I know where to go find it, because I know

they, many times, are looking for a way to say, "Oh, she didn't know what she was

talking about." Oh, my goodness. And even some of the stereotypes that tend to follow

African American people that we are always late. Well, they know that, by golly, unless

the building burns down, that the meeting will start at 3:45. It's going to start at whatever

time we say it's going to start. Or even some things that they have as perceptions about

African Americans. And I'll try to show them that it's not all African Americans.

Jason, an African American man, responded further about both his ethnicity and gender

and how they both impacted how he approached his leadership role.

I'm always cognizant of my culture and my gender because I take it very personal. I take

it that my actions are often . . . how I act and how I talk and how I'm perceived often

reflect a whole race of people. So every dialogue, every conversation I have, I am always

cognizant. How I walk in the building, how I address the parents, how I greet the

teachers . . . has consequences, positive or negative. So I think that with my gender . . . I

just have to be very careful, because I don't want to come off as a bully. I don't want to

come off as a radical. I have to be seen as a professional who loves children

unequivocally, and willing to move anybody in order to ensure their success.

Martha, a White woman, was not so much concerned about race. She believed that being

a woman helped her relate to students and parents because women were conditioned to be

relationship builders and also good communicators. Having grown up with parents who were in

education, she heard the talk at the dinner table and education was part of her life's culture. One

advantage of being female also helped her with relationship-building for a mostly female staff of

teachers. She commented,

> For me, it's not race, it would be gender where I have many times, where I'm talking to a
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> father, or a grandfather, and probably the conversation . . . or I might have gotten
>
> different results, had I just, for the fact that if I had been a man. You know, that can
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> happen, but at the same thing that could happen . . . There are probably times when I get
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> things accomplished because I was a woman, so I do see that gender plays a role. It can
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> be a pro. It can be a con. I mean, I only have the women's perspective.

Clayton added his perspective as he talked about the importance of relationships

regardless of race or gender.

> I work on building relationships, and when I think about that again. If you have a
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> relationship with someone you can have a conversation that you couldn't otherwise have,
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> if you didn't have a relationship with them, and people are, I think are less apt to
>
> misinterpret something you might say, or not say, if they believe in you, too.

Carolyn also believed that by building relationships, parents began to trust her. She

recalled,

Well I think when I first came here, my ethnicity hindered me with parents because prior to me being here was a Hispanic principal who spoke Spanish, and they weren't willing to accept the change, you know. But I think as time has progressed I have developed wonderful relationships with my African American parents, and with my Hispanic parents. I speak a little Spanish, so I try to . . . I think they know that I have heard many times that . . . they can see how much I really care about these kids in this school.

Concerned about not damaging her relationship with the African American teachers in her building or putting them on the spot to become the voices of cultural advocacy for the students, Karen, with 17 years of experience in the same building, provided staff development from outside consultants. She revealed her reluctance to put her African American teachers on the spot to be the authority on cultural competency skills. Instead, she reminded the teachers of the gap in test scores as a motivator for why learning about culturally relevant practices are essential.

I think that that's been . . . it's a greater battle I believe when you have a White principal with White teachers, and you are talking the need. It's a greater challenge for you to . . . for the principal to make them see the importance of incorporating a richness of diversity within the lessons and I think that if we were it to have teachers of color, they can't get enough, they want more, and I mean, and yet I could—as much as you would want to use them as facilitators to help other staff members—they don't feel comfortable as much with that, not the teachers that I have, feeling comfortable because they don't want to thought of as telling . . . or that they are having any Caucasian teacher feel that what they might be doing is not as effective as what the African American teacher is doing. And I . . . it's just that not the teachers that I have right now, and so that's where I have gone to

the outside resources to gain a better understanding and then from there, work then with

my reading and math coaches. And the coach and myself have been taught that way;

because I would never want to put any teachers on the spot . . . But one of the things that

as we are working on in our plan, that we always take a look at, is that gap—as we look

at it—when you look at reading and when you look at math, we look at cultural diversity.

And so that it's a conscious part of thinking and planning throughout the year, and then

having representation on that with minority staff in addition to my White staff, but

always being conscious and sensitive about the feelings of my minority staff.

Karen and Viola documented the variance in how staff members demonstrated their

levels of cultural competency. Karen asserted that as new children came into the school, the staff

had embraced them by wanting to know how to be as effective as possible in teaching them.

They were interested in learning about culture, appreciation of culture, and understanding

differences. Viola, on the other hand, remained optimistic that her staff members were

beginning to gain the cultural competency skills they needed to work with a diverse student

population although she admitted they still needed help. She explained,

Some of them are yes. And with more time, a lot of them will. I won't say that all of

them were, but then I would say the majority of them will get there. And then, also,

when you get to interview teachers, you get to learn their backgrounds . . . who they are;

so you select the teachers you think will work best within the school.

Jason did his best to equip his teachers to work with children from diverse backgrounds.

However, every year after he trained staff members, many of them were RIFed and went to other

districts or schools when teachers were called back as needed. He believed that the teachers who

came to Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 were well trained while they were there. He stated how new teachers had to adapt quickly,

> The ones who haven't often find themselves in isolation from their colleagues, because we are progressive and not regressive. And I'll tell you this—you can quote this—that people across the district want my teachers. They work and say that they work very hard over there. They are stressed and that may very well be true, but many of my teachers are often recruited to go to other buildings, and principals, my colleagues, have told me that they know my teachers are awesome teachers, and they are. When they leave Aspire Academy Elementary School #2 they know what they are doing. They know how to embrace research. They know how to accept culture and embrace it and use culture as an asset and not as a liability. They know how to have courageous conversations with themselves about their own biases, and looking at their biases as hindrances to meeting student achievement. We're not always out there, but we're making progress in the right direction.

Judy also had provided her staff with strategic professional development. It was based on her work with Learning Forward, a national staff development organization where she had been a trainer for a number of years. She acknowledged the intellectual capacity of her teachers and how much they had developed since she came. Although Judy was very confident that her staff had received a great deal of training in using effective instructional strategies, analyzing and incorporating data, and cultural competency training, she still worried that her White staff had become too comfortable in what they thought they knew.

> That has really been one of the biggest challenges here, even more than academics because our staff is predominantly White middle-class. My assistants—I have, I have a

nice diversity of African American and Hispanic, but in terms of the actual certified staff, they all are White. Unfortunately the vast majority think they know it all, when it comes to culture, and that has really been the biggest challenge.

When asked what differences she noticed between teachers from different ethnic backgrounds, and what they expected from students, and how they teach students of color, she responded that despite the training they already had, there was still a need for more growth. When asked what was the answer to solving this dilemma she shared the need from more dialogue. As Judy reflected that more diverse voices needed to be at the discussion table, she confided,

> This might sound terrible, but I really don't have much opportunity to talk with people
>
> that have a different educated outlook, and that sounds terrible, but you know that it's
>
> true, can you understand that?

Both White and Black principals highlighted the tensions and decisions they faced in presenting information related to race and culture. Those principals were concerned about teacher perceptions and were reflective about not creating discomfort or knowing how to proceed to equip all of their staffs with the awareness and knowledge needed to meet the needs of a diverse student population. The examples the principals provided indicated that principals need more training to develop a broader understanding of cultural factors that impact learning so they can explain with more comfort, certainty, clarity, and boldness the importance of their staff becoming more culturally proficient.

One thing consistent among all the principals was their use of books and study circles to help teachers begin to understand culturally relevant practices, pedagogy, and principles. However, in comparing the literature review and how cultural audits, inventories, assessment,

self-reflective tools, and practices can be used to gauge the progress and level of culturally competency teachers and principals display, there is still much more for all of the principals to learn and model for their staff members.

Only one principal mentioned their school had completed a cultural audit, although several principals mentioned district trainings offered at varying times and intervals for administrators or for staff members. Despite the statements about district expectations for implementing culturally responsive practices, only three principals mentioned sustained monthly follow-ups and ongoing training. Even then, it was not evident the fidelity or consistency in how those three schools implemented the information. As mentioned before, because teachers were using some practices such as looking at individual data, academic progress was occurring, although a gap still existed for African American students, Hispanic students, and their White counterparts. This alone is enough reason to argue that new information on cultural competency is needed. In varying degrees, principals and their staffs demonstrated their understanding of what it meant to be moving toward becoming culturally proficient; however, for the majority of the schools there was not clear evidence that there was ongoing training in a deliberate and systematic manner.

Summary of building awareness and knowledge about cultural competency. Eleven subthemes were linked to how principals built awareness and knowledge about cultural competency. Having such diverse student populations, the principals were very much attuned to finding the best ways to help all of their students have a successful learning experience because of the persistent gap and a desire that all children feel valued in their schools. So the need to investigate culturally relevant practices seemed like a viable solution for staff members to aggressively explore. Principals' concerns about the under-representation of non-White teachers

were evident. Although principals shared how they tried to build effective learning environments, questions remained about what were the most effective culturally relevant practices they were using and how they ensured that all teachers were implementing them effectively.

Numerous principals described the necessity of including materials that were relevant to the students, especially their male students and ELL students. Although there was acknowledgement that students needed to become knowledgeable about global awareness and their own heritages, there was little evidence to support how teachers helped students understand their own heritages. During the quick walkthroughs of the building, when an invitation was extended to see the school, some school displays showed evidence of art and written expressions that showcased a few African Americans and, in one school, women. It appeared that principals had different levels of expressing how teachers incorporated cultural lessons that included their students' heritage in their instruction.

Moreover, although it appeared from analyzing the state student performance data that all 12 principals were leading their staff members in a positive direction toward creating a culturally relevant learning environment, no one school in the study could be singled out as evidencing that both the principal and staff members were culturally proficient, as evidenced by the few references made in comparison to the wide range of information found in the literature review. Because of their upward academic assessment data trends and growth model data, it could be assumed that all of the principals had led their schools in implementing some practices that could be attributed to using culturally responsive practices.

Furthermore, only one school had participated in a cultural audit and received concrete data from a reliable assessment instrument to determine how they ranked as a school and as

individuals on a cultural proficiency continuum. In order to be deliberately purposeful, each

staff needed concrete data to determine where they actually stand in an analysis of their thinking

and perceptions. It would take another study to determine what practices teachers were using

that could actually be analyzed and classified as being closely related to culturally relevant

pedagogy. Until these schools participate in objective, outside cultural audits or use self-

reflective materials to help them determine where they are with culturally relevant practices used

in their programs, they cannot be sure what the results would be to convince them about the

urgency of continuing to work on developing additional culturally relevant practices.

Summary of Key Findings of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how principals' behaviors facilitate or inhibit

the development of a culturally relevant learning community. The two research questions that

guided the study were "How do principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a

culturally responsive learning community?" and "What is the principal's role in developing a

culturally relevant learning community?" After reviewing the results of the leading five themes

that emerged and the five to 11 subthemes closely linked to each theme, sets of behaviors that

either facilitated or inhibited the development of a culturally responsive school environment

were identified based on the principals' interviews.

As documented above in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, the five overarching themes of (a)

having high expectations for all, (b) developing a sense of community, (c) using analysis of data

and monitoring and evaluation of staff, (d) providing professional development that addressed

cultural competency issues, and (e) promoting awareness and knowledge about cultural

competence were all woven together in a tapestry threaded together by how principals were able

to develop and help others create positive and effective relationships, trust, and respect with students, parents, and other teachers.

Behaviors That Facilitate Building a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment

Principals in the study exhibited a collective set of behaviors, in varying degrees, that were representative of the combined skill sets that these principals implemented to help their staffs move toward becoming more culturally proficient. These factors for building a culturally responsive environment were either spoken about or inferred from the interviews and their resulting coded information. All of the principals were reflective about how to create change and demonstrated the boldness to cause change to happen. They had high expectations for all, including themselves, as they worked to build a culture and climate based on respectful relationships with everyone in the school community and they encouraged collaborative leadership.

Principals recognized the importance of parent and community partnerships, and although they provided support for students and parents in need, they still held high expectations for students and teachers as learners. They "owned" the in-school factors related to teachers responsibility to work with all students, while principals were also well aware of out-of-school factors that many of their students and parents faced.

Principals worked to build a staff of highly qualified teachers who are open to cultural competency training. Principals also ensured that their staffs received relevant professional development that supported cultural competency practices. Because budgets were limited, they often used book studies and study circles to build staff awareness about cultural competence.

All of the principals had a strong focus on data-driven instruction. They encouraged effective instruction that was modeled, monitored, and evaluated. They valued the importance of

instructional coaches who supported the principals' visions and helped both the principal and the teachers by modeling lessons, recommending resources, providing professional development, and preparing data for teachers to use. Principals expected teachers to present a rigorous, relevant curriculum with an emphasis on reading and math programs that focused on individual student needs as determined by student data reports. All of the principals also expected to see engaging instruction that was differentiated to meet the needs of all students.

Principals expected teachers to capitalize on the cultures of students in the classroom and school by integrating elements of the students' cultures into classroom learning and lessons for the core subjects. The principals also wanted their students to gain an appreciation for being part of a global community. Principals were open to frank dialogue about diversity. They realized that racial prejudice did exist but would not tolerate an open display of such practices when they knew it occurred. They recognized that both Black and White teachers could effectively teach students of color when they practiced culturally relevant pedagogy. They also felt empowered when their districts addressed and monitored a process to support how school personnel became culturally proficient.

Behaviors That Inhibit Building a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment

The following narrative includes some of the key behaviors that principals had to address and overcome in order to eliminate inverted practices and hindrances to implementing best practices that moved their entire staff toward becoming more culturally proficient. This collective list of behaviors was determined in three ways. Behaviors were either (a) revealed from the coded data that were derived from the interviews of the principals in the study, (b) addressed by the principals themselves as undesirable factors or (c) inferred as behaviors that were the antithesis of what the principals in the study set as meeting high expectations.

These inhibiting behaviors often occurred under previous principals who had lacked the stamina and the ability to fulfill their mandate to bring and sustain change. This included the failure of leaders to empower teachers to collaborate with each other and not allow out-of-school factors to diminish responsibility for in-school achievement, the failure to eliminate low expectations for children of poverty and children of color, and the failure of staff members to eliminate a toxic environment where teachers worked on their own and did not engage in building positive relationships and collaboration with students, parents, and families.

Schools were further inhibited when school leaders are unable to provide an understanding on how to most effectively use data to improve instruction. Also noted was a lack of knowledge about what a culturally relevant school should look like and a lack of reference or perspective about what culturally competent teachers do. Principals also demonstrated that they must work to eliminate a lack of knowledge about the rationale for intentionality about using culturally relevant pedagogy. It also appeared to be the need to reduce the uncertainty in how to dialogue about diversity, racism, and power issues. Along with those ideas come the resulting problems that occur when there is a lack of ability to separate poverty and its influence from the cultural strengths that students bring with them to the school setting. However, the overriding culprit that inhibits all principals was knowing what to do with "resister teachers" who practiced deficit model thinking and how that influence permeated the thinking of other staff members.

Other hindrances included the continuous turnover in staff members—the lack of a stable, consistent staff—requiring retraining for new staff members each year and the perception of a lack of time and money for teachers to receive professional development that brings experts to the staff to present on topics related to culturally relevant pedagogy. Redistricting of students to new schools and the challenges of helping those new students adapt to a culture and climate of

high expectations that has already been established presented challenges. Also challenging was balancing the difference between global cultural competency and cultural competency within the school that addressed the needs of all students in the local classroom. If there was not a district focus in identifying, implementing, and monitoring cultural competency as a critical element in improving student academic achievement, principals had to use their own fortitude and belief system to make cultural competence a priority.

In considering how principals create a culturally relevant learning environment, the findings of the study spotlighted the importance of how principals balanced the authority that they had to influence their staff members based on their role as the principal, the passion and conviction they demonstrated toward keeping the vision and mission of the school, and their ability to use their leadership skills to guide a team of qualified teachers to work collaboratively to effectively educate a diverse student population. All of the principals interviewed demonstrated strong convictions and determination to ensure that all children under their watch succeeded academically, socially, and emotionally. These principals were empowered to make a difference and did not look for excuses about why children could not learn. Instead, they provided the support and opportunity for teachers to become equipped with the skills they needed to help their "school dependent children" (Jackson, 2011, p. 26) find success, and they equipped themselves with research-based information to guide their decisions and discussions with staff members.

The 12 principals in the study provided profiles of what they believed was necessary to implement the policies, practices, strategies, and belief system to create a successfully functioning, culturally relevant community of teacher and student learners. As they began to set the expectations for all teachers becoming culturally proficient, their staff members began to

move in that direction. They acknowledged the crucial role that effective principals have in setting the tone for what happens or does not happen in the buildings where they served as leaders.

They all admitted that there was a need to continue moving in this direction. Because a gap continued to be present in the academic performance of non-White students and their White counterparts and their male students, in particular, the principals understood the importance in investing time and resources to help teachers become more culturally proficient.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore how principals' behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally relevant learning community. Two research questions guided the study. They were "How do principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning community?" and "What is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community?"

The schools chosen for the study all had a 50% or greater non-White population. The principals leading those schools had a minimum of three years' experience serving as the leader of that particular school. An added criterion was that their academic growth data showed an upward trend. Additionally, schools that served as magnet programs were eliminated and a focus was placed on traditional school programs across the state that served a designated boundary area.

In January 2011, schools were identified that eventually were narrowed down to the best possible choices to study. A database inquiry made from the state DOE school data website included all schools that fit the 50% or greater non-White population criteria. This first initial list yielded 316 public and non-public schools with a student enrollment of 50% or greater non-White population. It included 30 charter schools, 22 non-public schools, and 264 traditional

public schools. Other queries of the state database compared the 316 schools to determine what percentages of students from each school passed both the language arts and math portions of the state assessment given in the spring of 2010. Schools on this first list were narrowed to a second list based on those evidencing (a) steady improvement in their academic accountability over a three year period, (b) strong growth model data for various ethnic groups attending the schools, and (c) other general information about each school found on the state's DOE school data website. Using this information, a second list identified 37 schools that surfaced from the initial inquiry.

Next, after making several inquiries to sources that included employees working at the state DOE, educational consultants, diversity specialists who worked in urban districts throughout the state, and selected university professors, a third list of schools was compiled. Colleagues identified the schools on this list as schools that had made steady progress in the areas of academic improvement and/or in establishing culturally responsive learning environments. There were 39 schools compiled from their suggestions.

After comparing the second list to the third one, only 12 schools on the third list had a 50% or greater non-White population. It was further determined not to use magnet programs with high achievement grade requirements but to identify schools from varied regions in the state that were traditional programs serving students in their boundary areas. Thus, the resulting initial calling list consisted of 30 schools, including the 12 schools presented from the third list.

This final list of 30 schools appeared to fit all specifications, except for determining if the principal had served in the building for three years or more. As calls were made to schedule appointments, schools were eliminated if the principals had not served in the buildings for three years or more. Several of the principals were no longer in their positions. Some had moved to

another building as the administrator or to central office positions. Some did not return the initial call.

The 12 principals who were eventually selected came from 10 different school districts representing the northern, central, and southern parts of the state. Two of those districts employed two of the selected principals, and other principals came from ten different corporations. In 2010, the majority, representing nine of the schools, had 60% to 77% or more of their student populations passing both math and English/language arts of the state measurement at proficiency level. Three of the schools had less than 55% passing both sections, however, their growth model data indicated a trend toward steady improvement over the last three years.

Broken down individually by subject areas, however, the scores yielded higher results for each school. In 2010 for English/language arts only, three of the schools had less than 65% of their students performing at the proficiency level within a range of 51–62.4%. Nine of the schools fell in a range above 70%, with the highest proficiency rate being 84.7%. For Math only, two schools fell below a 65% passing rate. Ten of the schools fell in a range above 70%, with the highest proficiency rate being 87.2%.

The principals represented a diverse cross-section of administrators. One charter school principal was selected. The other 11 principals were administrators of traditional elementary school programs that were not specifically designed as magnet programs, but were, for the most part, considered to be neighborhood schools. Included in the group were eight female principals; three were African American and five were White. Of the four men in the study, one was an African American and three were White. The combined experiences as administrators in their current building ranged from three to 25 years, representing a total of 96 years, with an average

number of eight years in their respective buildings. Furthermore, according to DOE records, the range of years in education for this set of principals was 10-37 years, with an average of 22 years of experience.

The size of the 12 schools' student populations ranged from 261 to 849 students enrolled during the 2009-10 semester. The schools had the following state designations associated with their locations: six were in large cities, one was in a mid-sized city, and five were in urban fringe communities. The schools' grade-level configurations ranged from pre-kindergarten to ninth grade students.

Principals were contacted by phone using a pre-approved telephone script as the basis for the invitation to participate in the study. Structured interviews were arranged at each principal's choice of location. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the principals' offices with each principal. Twelve questions provided a foundation for discussion about how principals had created a community of learners that met the needs of their ethnically diverse student populations. The interviews were recorded and discussions lasted 45 minutes to two hours and fifty minutes. Upon completion of the interviews, the audio files of the interviews were transcribed. Copies of the initial transcripts were sent to each principal to ensure the data were representative of their answers to the interview questions and to add additional clarification of anything they said. Audio files and transcripts have been digitally stored in password-protected files.

After interviewing 12 principals located in different regions of a Midwestern state, transcribing the data, and coding the information, the data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach. Using a software management system called *HyperResearch* allowed for easy assignment and retrieval of codes. As codes were grouped, five key themes and numerous other

subthemes emerged. The initial subthemes were aligned under the over-arching key themes. A summary of the initial findings was generated, and a copy was sent to each principal for feedback. The participants provided feedback through member checking to ensure that the findings were representative of their general input.

All 12 principals exhibited a clear vision of where their schools were headed. They all offered insightful answers for each question that was posed to them. However, the differences in the student populations, the ratio of White to non-White teachers, and the test data all indicated that each had a unique story and outcomes. The principals' key focus in all the schools was the expectation for quality student learning. In the highest performing schools, however, even by their own admission, the achievement gaps still exist. So it is imperative that cultural competency be an addressed as an element of overall concern in every building. State test scores listed for 2010-2011 were compiled after the principals were chosen. Had these scores been available and used in the original equation for who was selected, some of the schools may not have been chosen because of dips in the some of their data. So the principals chosen provide an interesting mix of personalities, achievement levels, and experiences within their schools to provide a particular snapshot in time, dissected to find common elements in how this set of principals developed culturally relevant learning environments.

A notable feature in all the schools was the high level of safety measures taken to protect the students and workers in the building. The way guests were greeted in the buildings also told another story about the schools. Although most schools were inviting with warm greetings and a warm environment, some office personnel and actual office areas needed a few adjustments to become more invitational to parents and other guests. All of the schools had elements of cultural

artifacts in the common lobby areas that indicated personnel in the school were beginning to move toward creating a culturally relevant learning environment.

Moving to the emerging themes and key findings of the study, however, revealed another general picture of the principals' perceptions about the learning environments they helped to create. Without building a background of what factors evidenced a culturally relevant environment, an observer would not know what to look for, so things "looked and sounded" fine. Although all the schools were generally making good academic progress, my lens as an outside observer evidenced areas where schools were on the right track and should be commended. Additionally, that same lens of an outside perspective also discovered areas of concern based on information found in the literature review that evidenced ways to make the schools more culturally inviting and relevant.

In looking at the behaviors that facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally relevant learning community, the interviewees revealed two types of subthemes that were specifically tied to (a) what effective principals do and (b) how effective professional development incorporated cultural competency practices in schools with a 50% or greater non-White population. Subsequently, five major overarching themes emerged with five to 11 subthemes aligned under them. These descriptors were representative of the ingrained beliefs and leadership practices shared by the principals. The five themes are

- having high expectations for all,
- developing a sense of community,
- using analysis of data and monitoring/evaluation of staff,
- providing professional development that included cultural competency issues, and

- promoting awareness, knowledge, and implementation of practices related to cultural competence.

The following summary highlights the key findings of these five themes and their subthemes demonstrated in varying degrees by the 12 principals.

Having High Expectations for All

Principals in the study demonstrated a sense of efficacy and passionately owned what happened in their buildings. They were reflective in their practice and set the vision and mission of the school. They came to their buildings seeing the need to improve the academic performance of their non-White students and served as change agents. Principals recognized that out-of-school factors were real but did not dwell on them as excuses not to expect teachers to teach. They acknowledged the need for parental involvement and parental support. They also acknowledged the need for community involvement. Each school had varied degrees of participation of both parental and community involvement. What is also an interesting finding from the study is that, although most people in leadership tend to justify what is happening in their schools, and they say they have high expectations for their students, these principals possessed some key ingredient to move verbiage into practice and were able to give tangible examples that demonstrated what they meant by high expectations.

Developing a Sense of Community Among Staff and Students

Principals rallied staff members to the vision and mission of using effective instructional practices that produced measurable results as a primary focus. They began to develop a culture and climate in the school that fostered building relationships based on trust and respect among staff members and, in turn, their relationships with students and parents. Principals also established a culture and climate where students began to understand the expectations that were

set for behavioral and academic achievement. Their high expectations involved everyone in the school community. Principals supported teachers to become highly qualified in delivering effective, engaging instructional strategies. They valued the role of instructional coaches to help teach and model effective practices based on data-driven information.

Using Analysis of Data and Monitoring and Evaluation of Staff

Principals used data to drive instructional practices. Principals monitored and evaluated teacher performance. Principals provided support to teachers who struggled with effective instructional practices. Principals had input on hiring their staffs and took a hands-on approach. When principals decided a teacher was not a good fit for working in the school's program to increase student learning, the principal worked to either have the teacher resign, retire, or go to another building.

Providing Professional Development That Addressed Cultural Competency Issues

Principals established professional learning communities and they were resourceful in how they scheduled time for professional development through grade-level meetings by team or in cross-grade-level groupings. Principals focused on collaboration and developed leadership teams to provide feedback and lead the charge for implementing professional development. They also relied on book studies as one way to help teachers become more culturally competent. Along with study circles, principals used a variety of other methods to provide professional development for their staff.

Promoting Awareness and Knowledge About Cultural Competence

Principals were all aware of the need to address cultural competence. Principals promoted some best practices known about culturally relevant learning environments. Principals cared about the total well-being of their students, teachers, and parents. Principals were willing

to have frank conversations and address issues surrounding diversity, race, and culture when they were presented. Although the principals expressed awareness of needing to implement culturally relevant practices, they all admitted that their staffs required additional support in reaching cultural proficiency.

Other Findings

Based on what the principals shared, and recalling the literature review and its discussion on cultural competency, there was a need to consider what the principals did not share. Thus the conclusion drawn is that principals in the study exhibited varying levels of understanding on how to create a culturally relevant environment. Filtering the findings through the work of Lindsey et al. (2003) and Lindsay et al. (2007), there still remains much more to be done to reach a level of cultural proficiency in working with a diverse student population.

All principals spoke about appreciating the diversity of their students and wanting to make the students feel welcomed and nurtured as they learned. Some gave examples of how they had adapted their practices to look beyond the students' ethnicity, but to focus on providing instruction that fit the needs of individual students. As principals followed the lead of their districts and received support from them, most of their corporations' administrators had also begun to acknowledge the need to institutionalize policy, practices, and knowledge about cultural competency and expected schools to include action steps for implementing cultural competency in their school improvement plans, as written about by Lindsey et al. (2003).

What can be further appreciated was the principals' openness and willingness to address how they and their predominantly White staff of teachers related to the students of color in their schools and classrooms. Although a few of the principals did acknowledge past examples of open racial bias that caused these principals to work with teachers or to work toward moving

those teachers out of the school. They resolved these issues either by not offering contract

extensions or by having the teachers terminated by the district. All principals were very clear

and resolute that they would not stand for open racism, overt racial slurs, or blatant humiliating

demonstrations.

However, this is not what the principals needed to guard against given these days and

times. Rather, it is the principal's role to remain vigilant and mindful of the subtle biases and

stereotyping that remains in our society. Judy Grantland, as did the other principals in the study,

had begun providing professional development for all staff members. She stood out among the

other participants because of her expertise as a diversity trainer for a national organization.

Additionally, because of her background of growing up in a low-income district in

California with African Americans and Hispanic/Latino families, she warned that it was possible

for White teachers to become too comfortable in the perceptions they formed about their students

of color and for them to assume that they knew things they really did not know. Judy discussed

this when she revealed that her predominantly White staff had been provided with intensive

cultural competency trainings since she came to the school seven years ago. She shared very

forthrightly, "Unfortunately the vast majority think they know it all, when it comes to culture,

and that has really been the biggest challenge."

Furthermore, principals and teachers in the study were eager to shed the spotlight on

global cultures of which students do need to be more aware, but few principals gave clear

indications of what specific actions, lessons, or practices teachers were using in relation to

helping students develop a consciousness about who they were and why the students should

appreciate their own heritage. Coupled with that, it seemed that offering character development

seemed to be a major way that school personnel helped students try to make sense of navigating

their way into the larger, majority White culture. As teachers introduced students to view themselves as global citizens and how to realize the impact their lives could have on the world, the principals enumerated several examples. However, there seemed to be a disconnect between how teachers were expected to deliberately infuse culturally relevant materials to the children sitting in front of them in their classrooms.

Although some teachers displayed student work samples that indicated students were learning about their heritage, this was infrequently noted. It remained up to the principals to ensure that all teachers validated the cultures of all their children beyond rhetoric and calendar events, such as Black History Month and Cinco de Mayo celebrations, which Banks (2007) described as the Stage 2-Heroes and Holiday level of a five-stage continuum. Yet, although these two occasions provided an opportunity for students to learn about their heritage, not all schools used the month exclusively for one heritage but brought in others and other themes during this time. Few expressed what teachers did to infuse ethnic materials into the classroom all year long.

Because of their influence, principals and their expectations could have helped guide what happened in preparing teachers to go beyond just being nurturing and caring but also to help students move toward becoming self-actualized and concerned about social action in the world around them. Few principals mentioned about how staff members worked to help students become self-assured and able to analyze and make decisions about issues important to them. Again, using Banks's model (2007) of multicultural curriculum transformation, overall principals did not present concrete evidence of their awareness of the five levels that Banks outlined, which include (a) curriculum in the mainstream, (b) heroes and holidays, (c) integration, (d) structured reform and (e) multicultural, social action, and awareness.

By advocating and promoting the use of culturally relevant materials, curriculum, and practices throughout the entire instructional year, principals had the distinct opportunity to help teachers validate the culture of the students who sat in their schools. Furthermore, the teachers had an opportunity to demonstrate to both students and parents that they appreciated the students' cultures also. According to Klem and Connell (2004), teacher validation and support helped students build their self-esteem and sense of worth. This was especially true for African American students in their study. Although teachers may have been doing this to some extent, little clear evidence presented that substantiated how, when, and how frequently this occurred.

As these principals exercised their responsibility to support the development of a culturally proficient teaching staff, the ultimate goal would be to move toward a step-by-step approach to cultural competence and beyond to proficiency. All of the principals and, consequently, their staffs appeared to need further assistance in comprehending the full aspects of implementing culturally relevant pedagogy and all it encompassed. As each of these schools moved toward increased academic test performance for the school as a whole, data broken down by ethnic categories indicated there were still disproportionate gaps in how students of color, especially Black male students, were performing academically in relation to the state standards and their White cohorts. This indicated a need to continue striving for solutions to eliminate those gaps that they acknowledged.

Cultural proficiency training offered one viable possibility to help teachers and principals close the undeniable gaps. However, because of limited in-depth training, it appeared that many of the principals had no idea about what it might take to help them and their staffs reach the top levels of cultural proficiency described by scholars who have developed continuums and tools to

help schools (Banks, 2007; Lindsey et al., 2003; Lindsay et al., 2007; Hammer, 2011; L. T. Smith, 2011).

How real is the need for White teachers and middle-class educators to become culturally competent? Subtle bias, stereotyping, and racism exist (Sue, 2003; Wise, 2005). Because we all say and do things based on stereotypic thinking at some time in our lives, being open to learning more about becoming culturally proficient could prepare educators to meet the needs of the diverse students they teach who may be different from themselves in many ways. The predominantly White staffs of teachers fell into four groupings ranging from 70% to 100% of their total staff being White. Three had a 100% White staff of teachers. There were four that ranged between 90-99% White; two fell within an 80-89% range, and three fell within a 70-79% range. So inherently, the question then becomes: How do teachers overcome preconceived biases and beliefs so that the phrase "All students can or will learn" becomes more than just catchy, feel-good words?

In a real-world, political system that continues to grapple with how best to assist all of its citizens to overcome political, financial, sociological, and psychological obstacles, cultural competency practices, although growing in importance as a solution, still has its naysayers. Although it appeared that all of the audible naysayers were gone from these schools, there still remained the academic achievement gap. There still remained the sensitivity connected with discussing issues of ethnicity, race, and poverty. Although some may see the need to not stir up problems where they do not seem to exist, based on the principals' lack of addressing this topic, the continuum of where educators actually fall on a cultural proficiency continuum have not been fully explored in any of the schools. Only one school experienced a cultural audit and the staff at that school had changed dramatically since the audit and individual inventories were given.

In moving toward the summary of the findings, it should not be assumed that the themes, subthemes, indicators, and descriptors located in the findings are a "Pollyanna view" of what happened in the schools included in this study. Despite the upward trend of their data growth patterns, principals admitted there was room for improvement for all students. Disproportionate performance remains between ethnic and gender groups in the school. One school, in particular, with the lowest proficiency level of student achievement had experienced a significant turnover of staff each of the last three years. This resulted in only one-third of the original staff still in place from the time when the principal came to the school. That school, as well as any school in existence, needed a stable staff to support their principal's efforts to implement culturally relevant pedagogy.

Although the principals shared valuable information that provided a glimpse into how their schools operated, it was very difficult to determine if teachers' hearts and minds were actually changed by staff development about how they perceived their students of color. However, all of the principals expressed a belief that professional development was important in changing staff perceptions about effective strategies for working with all the students in the school. So, as each staff continued to collaborate and focus on building individual relationships based on trust and respect, there is no doubt this contributed to their continuing success.

Schools across the nation have been documented with successful track records of educating non-White students from varying economic backgrounds. Indeed, as several principals mentioned, middle-class teachers from all ethnicities can develop relationships, trust, respect, and appreciation of and for the cultures of their students of color. It takes the decision and will to do things differently and consider the untapped potential that each child brings from his or her culture. Furthermore, there must be a willingness to face some truths about race,

power, privilege, and voice. These schools were moving in the right direction to explore these topics because the principals have acknowledged their need to continue working with their staff members in improving the opportunities for all students to learn and excel. For certain, more work lies ahead.

Summary of Study Findings

Looking at the first question, the study explored how principals' behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning community. The principals in the study exhibited many behaviors that were considered effective practices in leading their buildings. Although all principals acknowledged the need for having a culturally proficient staff, they all also recognized that their staff members needed more training. Practices related to cultural competency were present, but not consistently addressed in every building. Nor was there evidence that the majority of staff members were aware of the many aspects related to understanding cultural competence. That lack of understanding restrained both students and staff members from moving to their highest level of performance. The extent of principal knowledge either facilitated or inhibited that direction the school took in putting practices into place.

The second question explored the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community. The findings from the study indicate that the principal is the primary force in promoting culturally relevant practices in the school. As the principals developed their agendas for professional development, they used regularly scheduled book studies and grade-level discussions to discuss instructional practices and culturally relevant, engaging activities. When school districts had cultural competency as a high priority, this supported the principal's role in addressing cultural practices. All of the schools had a relatively positive upward trend in student assessment data; however, a disproportionate gap persisted as the staffs worked

collaboratively to solve the problem. This gap is indicative of the need to put more culturally

relevant practices into place. The principal's experience, knowledge level, influence and

expectation will determine the direction and urgency of what will happen to build culturally

proficiency among all staff members in each school.

Limitations

Some additional limitations to this study must be noted. Because of the time constraints

of having only one interview with each of the 12 principals, I was limited in getting the most

accurate information that could have been verified from multiple sources. If it were possible to

go back and spend more time following up on the results of the findings, observing in

classrooms, examining artifacts, and interviewing teachers, parents, and students, there would

have been more definitive information to both enhance and draw more accurate conclusions

about how culturally relevant the school environments in the study actually were.

An additional concern that may have influenced the results of the study was my own

ethnicity. I believe that principals responded overall to me, an African American, with

politically correct answers and they wanted their schools and their leadership style to be seen in

the best possible light. This is totally understandable. Three of the four African American

principals were very candid about their perceptions of how culture impacted their students'

learning. Although all of the White principals revealed their acknowledgement of the

importance of relating to the cultural backgrounds of their students and shared their efforts to

address the learning needs of their students, they also all seemed comfortable enough to share

how they worked to create a culture that was accepting of all students. However, five of the

eight White principals opened up in greater detail to reveal some information that uncovered

some sensitive issues they had faced.

I acknowledge that what all the principals shared could have been a result of my own ethnicity as well as my demeanor in listening to their responses. Without additional sources to corroborate what the principals shared, the accuracy of the principals' statements stand alone as accurate perceptions of how they identified how they were working to create culturally relevant learning environments.

Connections With the Literature Review

Chapter 2 provided a cursory review of the literature related to issues that built a foundation for understanding components of cultural competency. Although it was hard to narrow the focus of this study given the many aspects to understanding cultural competency and its influences, it seems the method used to develop each topic included in the literature review was necessary. The first section of the literature review looked at the socio-political landscape that helped to shape the need for cultural competency training as one way to improve academic achievement for all students. The teachers who serve in urban communities bring their backgrounds with them. Those same teachers must become aware that they too have their own cultural gap that must be bridged as they work with children who think and respond differently when compared to the learning styles that the teachers themselves may find most compatible to themselves and how they learn and think. Some of the principals did discuss how they were working to help teachers diversify their instructional strategies and take into account student learning styles. Some principals also validated the need for teachers to assess how their backgrounds and perspectives could cause them to view things differently than their parents and students from diverse backgrounds.

Then the review sought to clarify how several factors needed to converge to sustain changes in principal and teacher training that could help shapes behaviors and practices that

impact delivering effective instruction to diverse students. Based on the work done by Sue (2003), no matter how hard teachers may want to say that they have no biases, the teachers deceive themselves. It is an ever-growing process to move toward being interculturally sensitive. This additionally exposes the need for teachers to experience cultural competency training even if they feel there is no need for such a discussion.

The review further examined the definition of teacher quality and its relationship to cultural competency. Being qualified to teach urban students requires more than credentials. The lowest performing school in this study was plagued with high staff turnover of young teachers. This poses a need for another study about the link between teacher preparation, turnover, and stability and their impact on student academic performance. It also calls into question how much preparation pre-teachers and practicing teachers are receiving on culturally relevant pedagogy that trains teachers to look for student strengths and assets rather than perceived problems. Current credentialing systems may still not require the level of culturally relevant pedagogy needed to prepare teachers coming into an urban setting.

As one of the assumptions discussed earlier about what culturally competent teachers do, it was stated that teachers must be self-reflective about their practice and learn how not to take everything that happens in their classroom personally. Because principals need mature people working in their schools who have learned how to be empathetic but also maintain high expectations for their students, understanding and relating to out-of-school factors that impact students' lives is important.

Thus, discussions about how to balance information about out-of-school and in-school factors that influence the achievement gap are important to help principals in guiding their staffs to separate myths and faulty mindsets from facts that could help shape teacher perceptions about

their students' abilities (Milner, 2010). Several principals revealed that this was an area of concern for them. All of the schools had achievement gaps. All of the schools needed to continue improving on what they were doing. Understanding cultural theories about the lingering academic gap could make a difference in what teachers know about their students, and they could be instrumental in changing White and middle-class teacher perceptions about student behaviors, learning styles, and abilities beyond current levels of expectation.

Probably one of the most alarming things I found about teaching at a predominantly White institution was the students' seeming passive acceptance of discussing diversity during class, contrasted to several comments on class evaluations about "too much talk about diversity." As Harewood and Smiley (2007) noted in their study, universities are working to help prepare students to be culturally competent because they have guidelines they are following, too, but students must exhibit genuine acceptance of what is being shared and see it as a value. If pre-service teachers plan to work in urban areas and urban fringe communities, such as the ones in this study, they must be equipped to work with diverse students. As they hire new staff, it is crucial for principals to ask the right questions to determine who is a "good fit." The problem still remains, however, that people know the rhetoric, because the universities are giving them a few fundamental pieces of it. However, if hearts and minds aren't aligned to expecting students to learn despite the cultural differences between teachers and students, deficit-model thinking, with its subtle tentacles, acts as a footprint that overshadows teaching and learning in any classroom.

As many of the principals noted, many White teachers are making a difference in teaching their students of color and producing positive gains in student academic achievement. However, this is not an idealistic view that everything will be "coming up roses" in a school if

they all follow some magical steps, because becoming culturally proficient is a process. There are subtle factors at work, which too often are not exposed, regarding the reality of inequities caused by past institutional discrimination based on race, power, and privilege. Until they are faced, discomfort arises when the dominant population is challenged about their good intentions and messengers become silenced by those who do not want to be challenged. Although individuals see themselves as having no problems, often they fail to grasp the systemic factors at work.

Karp and Harris (2011) noted that in Chicago with its recent reform, the number of African American teachers has dropped sharply. They reported in the *Catalyst Chicago* a shift in the number of White pre-service teachers versus African American and Hispanic students. Illinois State University, with federal support, as have other schools across the nation, began placing their education students into classrooms much earlier than before, exposing them to the reality of urban schools and how to work effectively with urban students. They found that principals in urban schools reported they often struggled to find teachers who could relate to their students.

Karp and Harris (2011) also noted that the African American teachers who were hired were being aggressively sought after and transferred into the principal pipeline much earlier than ever before. They acknowledged the charter school movement in Chicago and across the nation preferred young leaders of color. They further noted that schools of education are beginning to offer urban education majors where students receive more extensive preparation to help teachers become culturally competent. Although they stated these programs are scarce, the numbers are growing, even in some schools of education in Indiana.

Programs such as the one discussed at University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), offer courses in race, class, and culture. Additionally, students are required to serve internships with community organizations where they receive a greater focus on classroom management, which many of the White teachers have traditionally struggled with in the past. However, Vicki Chou, dean of the College of Education at UIC stated, "The vast majority of the teaching force is White women who don't know the communities, so there is a potential for cultural mismatch or misreading [of student behaviors] that happens early on and unravels from there" (as cited in Karp & Harris, 2011,para. 24). Accordingly, this new trend is a positive development.

In considering current teachers and analyzing how the role of race and deficit-model thinking could easily influence teacher thinking, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations, it should be remembered that these topics are not easily approached. In fact, many teachers may not even see the need to bring up such topics. They want to only focus on instructional skills. However, it appears that pedagogy alone is not enough. If it were, why does the gap persist? It takes a skillful leader to broach these courageous conversations and help teachers gain a perspective on the role of past discrimination and its lingering effects. It takes a skillfully trained coach or leader to present and discuss these topics without the weight of guilt and denial that occurs too often (Lindsey et al., 2003). The goal is to understand the forces that have shaped the lives of students and develop strategies to improve students' circumstances, find value in their community and heritage, and teach rigorous content using skillful, diverse, and engaging strategic pedagogy (DuFour, 2004).

External forces have driven the move for cultural competency training in the educational arena. Legislative initiatives in Indiana, as well as a few other states, have connected competency training to eliminating disproportionality. Even with what is written, whether a

principal considers the written expectations important enough to implement is another story. Despite the law, there remains opposition to clarifying and improving the laws and regulations, as discussed in the literature review. Cultural competency is viewed as a soft skill that is somewhat elusive to some. When people are able to remain anonymous, as with the course evaluations mentioned earlier, many see no need for discussing it. The burden is placed totally on the student and their parents to just "do better." Although parents and students do bear responsibility in student learning practices, teachers must also be willing to improve factors that are in their control. They cannot rule out the positive effects on student achievement that could come from developing culturally relevant pedagogy.

The principals' role of shaping the climate and culture of their buildings is linked to the transformational leadership style they display. What strong principals value will happen; if there is strong leadership in professional development connected to cultural proficiency skills, student achievement will continue to climb.

Further Discussion on the Findings

Before beginning the literature review, my focus was on how to eliminate deficit-model thinking from teaching practices. Then the question shifted to the role of principals in facilitating changes in teacher thinking, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions. From there the research questions were developed about the principal's role in creating a culturally relevant learning environment. At the end of the study the goal has shifted again to help determine what a principal needed to know and do to (a) be culturally proficient themselves, (b) determine how to help others gauge where they are on their own personal continuum, and (c) move the whole staff toward proficiency with new mindsets as discussed by Milner (2010).

There have been numerous studies done on the qualities and characteristics of effective principals, and principals in this study exhibited many of the traits related to those qualities mentioned during the literature review. Consequently, one of the key findings in the study was that principals who help facilitate developing culturally relevant learning environments are successful because they do what effective principals do. This was not surprising. However, the second premise, based on the idea that principals must go a step further when predominantly White teachers are teaching non-White students, is not something that everyone has bought into. How to get educators to deliberately be mindful of best practices for infusing cultural components, curriculum, and resources into a school's daily instructional program, and understanding why and how this could happen, still remains a crucial question that needs more study.

As one principal spoke about her expectations, it is the deployment of practices that are so important and the lack of a systematic plan is a reason that many things are not done. How to implement this best practice, to include culturally relevant materials in everyday instruction, is not easy when the sole focus of most teachers is to teach the standards so that students will do well on tests. Principals are charged with the responsibility to help teachers began to merge the two things together—standards-based instruction and culturally relevant practices and resources—with skills and strategies implemented with consistency, fidelity, rigor, and stamina.

Waters et al. (2003) identified 21 key leadership responsibilities that correlated with student achievement. These responsibilities included culture; order; discipline; resources; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; focus; knowledge of curriculum, instruction assessment; visibility; contingent awards; communication; outreach; input; affirmation; relationship; change agent; optimizer; ideals/beliefs, monitors/evaluates; flexibility; situational awareness; and

intellectual stimulation (Waters et al., 2003, p. 4). They cautioned principals that one of the central problems they faced was in identifying and knowing what was the right focus of change to increase student learning and also understand how to prioritize the magnitude or order of change (Elmore, 2003).

When most of the principals in the study came to their schools as change agents, one of their first concerns was how to establish a culture that was orderly. However, they also worked simultaneously to balance how they would make immediate changes that would improve instructional practices. A few principals made radical changes at the beginning. Others brought changes in more gradually, but by the end of their first three years serving as principal, all of them demonstrated most of the skills and attributes noted by Waters et al. (2003).

Riester et al. (2002) found three other major themes in their study on nine effective principals and their schools: (a) a democratic culture existed that allowed teacher input and empowerment to the staff, (b) a prescriptive approach was used to present literacy skills and other academic subjects, (c) a stubborn determination and perseverance prevailed with the goal in mind "to get there" (p. 292). All of the principals possessed these characteristics which transcended race, school location, and student population size. Additionally, principals possessed two other sets of commonalities. They all held in common the determination, perseverance, and stubbornness to reach the clear vision and mission they passionately pursued. They also demonstrated the willingness to empower their teachers to share in leadership roles in their schools. All of the principals in this current study strongly embodied these characteristics with varying degrees of similarities and differences.

Heifetz and Laurie (1997) used the terminology "the balcony view." They discussed how effective leaders must have a perspective that sees patterns and trends from a balcony perspective

without being caught up in the everyday action. A balcony view allows a leader to make accurate, objective assessments about what is really happening in an organization. Taking the balcony view allows the leader an opportunity for self-reflection and introspection about their own personal qualities and any other obstacles or situations that may support or hinder the organization from moving toward the vision and charge of the group. Taking a balcony view and assessing the need to increase the implementation of culturally relevant practices is crucial for any principal. Gauging when and how is essential.

Levine and Lezotte (1990) posed a similar idea about principals who have an inward rather than outward view about what it takes to create an effective program. Thus, principals concerned about the "inner workings" of a school, rather than focus on the external reasons for in-school failures, are more likely to be successful. Probably the most compelling finding of the study was the way principals took ownership for what happened in their schools despite the out-of-school factors that many of the students faced.

Principals in this study constantly spoke about their perceptions of how teachers, students, and parents might react to new policies or practices they wanted to implement. They were also reflective about what worked well and what needed to be modified. Rather than lamenting out-of-school factors that students faced, all of the principals discussed the broad view they had of helping their teachers plan effective instruction. They were always a step ahead of the teachers in making sure that the vision and goals of the school were achieved.

In urban America there are still too many teachers not willing to "own" how their students perform in their classrooms. While the naysayers put the total responsibility for the student's performance on the students themselves and their parents and their home life, they must reckon with a change on the horizon. As the concept of value-added evaluation spreads,

teachers' names will be linked to their students' performance data. The Race to the Top initiative is speeding up this movement. Students who are performing at low levels are causing more concern than ever. Now it is touching home, as Saiger (2005) noted in the literature review about teaching the students who are harder to educate in schools that once were perceived to be excellent schools. Teachers' reputations, pay increases, and jobs are being linked to teacher evaluation and accountability. Although many argue this is not fair, it remains, nonetheless, a growing reality.

Saiger (2005) asked the question about whether one could legislate accountability. Whether or not we ever find the answer to this question, principals have the awesome responsibility to create an environment where relationships flourish as teachers become more refined in understanding how to maximize the achievement of students who come from all cultures not because the law says so. Moving beyond what is politically correct to discuss or disclose, teachers face a new era of coming to grips with multicultural education and becoming culturally proficient as they face classrooms with growing numbers of diverse cultures.

All the principals described in this study, in varying degrees, were acutely aware of needing to know more about cultural competency, culturally responsive teaching practices, and culturally relevant learning materials and how to implement all of these components effectively. However, the body language of the principals demonstrated different levels of comfort in having frank conversations about diversity challenges and how they addressed ineffective teaching practices that demonstrated a lack of cultural competency in meeting the needs of a diverse student population. The subtle difference of using the term "diverse learners" seemed to be an easy topic for principals to address. All of the principals were intolerant of any outright bigotry or open stereotyping targeted toward the students or their parents. Although some principals

seemed very astute in discussing this, others seemed to have a more general knowledge that seemed to lack an in-depth understanding of when and how subtle biases demonstrate themselves.

Several principals discussed diversity issues within their schools. A few principals discussed having diverse family members in their own families or those of their staff members. Some discussed how their staff members also had racially mixed families. Although interracial families are becoming more commonplace, this still does not indicate that the whole staff has embraced cultural competency because a few people have integrated families and are embracing new family members and moving toward competency. Nor does having a racially mixed family ensure that one is culturally competent, just as being a member of a non-White population does not ensure cultural proficiency toward all cultures.

All of the principals addressed poverty and its impact on their students. The fact that principals themselves often easily and unwittingly interchanged the terminology of ethnicity and poverty in their own conversations was telling. It indicated there is a greater need for sensitivity to this point. If principals need help with this, so do teachers. One's ethnicity does not automatically equate to one's socioeconomic status. Lindsey et al. (2003) stated that often teachers were quick to point out the effects of poverty and student home life or blame poor language acquisition skills for the problems that students have with learning. It is undeniable that these two factors do impact student learning (Lindsey et al., 2003). However, as the principals in the study acknowledged, poverty is not an indication that students cannot perform at high levels. So, by owning individual student data, the solution turns from fixing the child to intervening and mediating learning deficits where they are identified. It also minimizes the

danger of holding on to mindsets that fail to separate ethnicity, poverty, and performance abilities.

Some of the principals stated they saw no differences in how White teachers and non-White teachers worked with students and their families, but others admitted that there were noticeable differences in how the teachers related to students and parents. The range of ideas about the need for non-White teachers, the role non-White staff members play in the school, and the intensity of their searches for non-White paraprofessionals in the absence of non-White teachers varied widely. Even the insights the principals shared about how their own race and gender impacted their role as principal indicated the degrees of sophistication and understanding the principals possessed on these subjects. Probably the most telling support for believing that there were varying levels of understanding that the principals possessed was the degree to which they discussed culturally relevant practices and principles. Although all of the principals offered credible answers to all questions related to diversity and cultural competency, there was a glaring discrepancy. Without the literature review as a backdrop for analyzing the findings, it would be more difficult to determine what factors facilitate or hinder the development of a culturally relevant learning environment.

However, using the literature review as a lens, very few of the principals displayed a strong foundational descriptive knowledge about many of the principles related to mastery of culturally relevant pedagogy. Based on the improved culture and climate of each school and the increased student performance, some things were going relatively well. But because the gap persists in scores between students of color and their White counterparts, other options must help explain why underperforming academic achievement remains. Consequently, this provides a

strong argument for the need of all educators to expand their understanding of the role of culture in student learning.

Much of the information principals shared revolved around how they worked to build a safe culture in their respective schools based on high expectations, using data effectively, providing professional development, and implementing instructional practices that paralleled results from the data. However, because all of these schools produced strong growth-model data for their students of color, compared to the other schools in the state with the same student demographics, the goal was to discern what these principals had implemented to cause their majority non-White population of students to show positive gains. What did the principals and their staffs know about their students that assisted them in building effective learning communities for them?

The connection to how effective schools operated based on known research found in the learning school model introduced by Edmonds (1981) included strong administrative leadership, high expectations, an orderly atmosphere or climate, basic skills acquisition as the school's primary purpose, capacity to divert school energy and resources from other activities to advance the school's basic purpose (this one later dropped by many), and frequent monitoring of instruction. All of these elements were present in all of the schools in this study.

Thus, the answer to one of our primary questions about the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning environment lies in their understanding of how to add the filter of cultural competency to all the changes they implemented. Cultural proficiency provides another lens to help explain how differences could exist between the schools in the study and those that still had not made the same noticeable gains in closing the academic achievement gap. Furthermore, all of the principals acknowledged the need to consider how cultural competency

training could continue to help equip their teachers, who were mostly White and middle-class, to develop cross-cultural skills that ultimately would lead to even greater improved student learning.

As an overall conclusion, it appeared that although most of the principals talked about how important cultural competence training was, it did not appear to be the leading priority of professional development focus for these principals. When asked what they would do to improve their professional development, few mentioned increasing cultural competency training. Rather, cultural competency appeared to be an overarching item that was discussed regularly, in general terms, and something that was supposed to be infused into everything. It appeared to be an expectation that was discussed along with all of the other requirements of professional development topics that staff members needed to consider. Furthermore, although principals told their staff members to use culturally relevant practices and materials, less than half gave concrete examples of how their teachers were consistently and deliberately implementing specific practices.

Only one principal had experienced a cultural audit and received feedback about himself and his staff as a whole. The results for that school showed a discrepancy in how teachers thought they were and what the inventory actually revealed. The other principals, who were working with their staff based solely on perceptions of where they thought teachers would actually fall on a cultural competence continuum, could be surprised where their staff members would actually score when formally questioned about working in a cross-cultural setting. The findings from a school's cultural audit and individual inventories would provide another source of data for teachers to analyze and include in professional development discussion that, if valued, could improve relational and instructional practices.

There appears to be a need for more cultural competence training in all these schools to build, maintain, and sustain a greater awareness and knowledge base about working with a diverse student population. That training needs to be focused, ongoing, and linked to instructional practices. Until principals set it as a priority to assess where their staffs really are in becoming culturally proficient, and their staffs work together to move along the continuums already discussed, teachers will lack a complete set of skills to fully connect with their students. The end goal reaches beyond improved test scores, but it is to build students who are empowered by academic excellence to voice and act upon their beliefs in themselves, their heritage, their community, and their future.

Recommendations

Based on findings from the study, the following recommendations could prove helpful to any school district and principals in any school if they are heeded. The study revealed the importance of developing positive relationships as a crucial factor for every staff member, parent, student, and community stakeholder in the school community. All constituents and stakeholders must remain vigilant and work toward developing positive relationships with each other. When school personnel work collaboratively together, they all begin to assume responsibility for every child in the school to succeed. Additionally, the study indicated that these relationships provided a key to developing a learning environment where cultural differences are acknowledged, appreciated, and incorporated into practical experiences. Principals with the vision and passion to lead the way can bring changes to their buildings and establish a culture of excellence and help their staff members improve both relationships and instructional practices.

The following recommendations, also based on the findings of the study, provide ways for school districts to support principals and their staffs in becoming more culturally proficient. Every school district must implement and monitor effective policy, strategies, and practices that ensure all students in every school receive equitable educational opportunities, resources, and outcomes from teachers who are highly qualified and culturally proficient. As principals evaluate their teachers' performance in delivering instructional practices, their evaluations must contain indicators on a rubric scale that describes levels of cultural proficiency. Additionally, principals must receive training and support from their districts on how best to implement and monitor culturally relevant policies, procedures, and practices. When districts are willing to invest in both internal and external cultural audits using valid assessment tools, this could help teachers, schools, and districts monitor their progress on a continuum. Self-reflective instruments and other accurate measures can help determine the growth of teachers and principals as they continue growing through increased exposure to what it means to be culturally proficient. This support empowers principals and teachers to make a difference.

Based on the study's findings, principals must also take personal responsibility to develop a frame of reference to determine how culturally aware and knowledgeable they are and begin to reflect on how to increase their own level of cultural proficiency. They must stay current on literature and research that helps them to develop understandings about cultural proficiency. Probably one of the most important outgrowths of them understanding the research connected to cultural competency is their increased ability to understand what deficit-model thinking is and how it impacts teacher expectations and impedes student learning.

Principals must lead the charge for their schools to operate as effective schools that utilize research on what effective principals do and how effective schools operate. Principals

and teachers must receive practical strategies to implement and monitor how best to use culturally relevant instructional strategies, materials, and practices that are tied to state standards and data results of individual students in the school. Because of time constraints for teachers and principals, the study clearly indicates the value of every school having designated curriculum specialists, such as the instructional coaches that many principals mentioned. These coaches support the principal and teachers and help analyze data and plan specific interventions and resources that provide assistance for each subgroup, individual student, and teacher in the school. The coaches' responsibilities may also include helping to shape professional development that is tailored to each teacher's need.

Principals must ensure that students learn about people from their own heritage who serve as role models of achievement and demonstrate their ability to overcome challenges. Also as important is to move a step beyond that. Principals must ensure that teachers balance instruction about global cultures with instruction about the cultures of the students in their classrooms, because both are important. Coaches could help gather this information.

Finally, as one principal stated, they must passionately "talk the talk" and "walk the walk" of cultural proficiency as a role model before their staff. As principals plan professional development for teachers, they must become skillful in deliberately designing sessions that do not produce feelings of guilt but provide understandings and background knowledge that help all teachers and school personnel acknowledge and gain insights, first of all, about their own culture and then the culture, heritage, and history of the students in their classrooms. They must help teachers see how this information fits into their designated curriculums. If principals are uncomfortable doing this, they must seek outside help from cultural coaches who are able to lead teachers in the process of becoming more culturally proficient.

Implications for Future Research

The findings in this study point to several ideas for additional research that could prove useful to other educators. This study found that effective principals are not stymied by outside influences beyond the school's influence, but rather, they lead their staff with strong convictions and high expectations as they worked, collaboratively, to meet the learning needs of their students. Promoting data analysis, accountability, and engaging instructional strategies, these principals created cultures that were producing positive growth in student achievement. Additionally, the role of data analysis and professional development supported teachers in gaining new understandings about how best to engage their diverse student population. Furthermore, the principals' awareness of the need to promote culturally responsive learning practices was also considered important to these principals along with their acknowledgement that they and their staff needed additional support. Additional research could include the ideas listed below.

1. Relatively few studies were located on the principal's role in creating a culturally relevant learning environment. More studies could be undertaken that would provide additional information about this topic and to see if additional studies confirmed the same findings.

2. Because this study only focused on the answers to responses from principals who fit the criteria of the study, additional understandings could be generated from interviewing focus groups of teachers, students, parents, and community stakeholders at each school asking similar questions of each group. Then the answers could be compared and contrasted to see if there were similarities or variances in perceptions

about the principal's role in creating a learning community for a diverse student population with a predominantly White staff.

3. A larger additional study could be undertaken with a larger number of subjects from all schools in the 50% or greater non-White category to confirm or refute the findings about what helps or hinders principals from creating a culturally relevant learning environment. Schools could be distributed into three groupings according to academic achievement outcomes from the statewide spring testing instrument, and a continuum could be established to determine where principals and their leadership styles fell on a continuum.

4. Furthermore, because of the parameters of the study, if more time could be designated to observe classroom interactions for a specified period of time, this could provide greater clarity and evidence of how culturally responsive practices were actually being implemented in the schools and in individual classrooms.

5. Taking a fewer number of schools and analyzing them more thoroughly could also prove beneficial. A more thorough view of one to three carefully selected schools that have been identified as effectively moving toward implementing culturally relevant practices could benefit others in understanding how to replicate the pattern.

6. Likewise, very limited studies were located on what schools in various states are doing to comply with state legislation that mandated cultural competency training. A research topic could identify practices, policies, and programs used in schools across each district of a given state, and/or state-by-state data could be updated to determine national trends that are emerging based on compliance with mandated legislation for cultural competency training.

7. As districts and schools begin to conduct more cultural audits, the feedback from those reports could produce a mine of new understandings. A team of researchers could follow the principal, teachers, and students from the beginning of a cultural auditing process, through the reporting process, to the planning process for implementing the recommendations, and then, through the documentation of how the recommendations were implemented over the next school year. A study such as this would help other principals and district administrators understand the process of how to evidence accountability for all staff members in establishing cultural proficiency among staff members.

8. Finally, the themes and subthemes generated from this study relevant to creating a culturally relevant learning environment could be used to develop an inventory for individual principals to use. The resulting feedback could be further analyzed in a quantitative study to check the validity of the findings and provide administrators with a deeper understanding of what factors impact developing cultural competency in a school setting.

Conclusions

The cultural proficiency continuum offered by Lindsey et al. (2003) provided only one model for principals and teachers to assess how and where they are in replacing unproductive practices with ones that could help their students thrive. There are numerous other similar models available. However, the Lindsey et al. (2003) continuum provides a range from the lowest level identified to the more optimal levels. It moves from cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, and cultural competence to cultural proficiency at the highest level of performance. Although most of the literature review connected to this study

leaned toward how change could occur in working mainly with African American students, other references by Hispanic/Latino scholars used some of that same literature as a foundation for their additional research. Using principles from all the literature on effective practices presents an initial approach for educators to cross the bridge of home and school cultures for all students of color.

Because the findings clearly indicated the essential role of parents in their students' lives, one thing made the findings in this study unique. The role of the principals was crucial in how they skillfully influenced their remaining staff members to move beyond old patterns of deficit thinking which blamed the students, their parents, and their home life for academic failure and, conversely, equipped them to follow the policies, strategies, and practices that met the needs of their greater than 50% non-White student populations. Principals helped develop learning communities focused on building relationships, trust, and respect between other staff members, students, and parents.

Many common threads connected the principals' discussions of their practices to elements of what effective schools and effective principals do in any school setting. However, there were several aspects that went beyond those factors. The deliberate attention paid to individual students, based on the analyzed and strategic use of data, made a difference in how teachers perceived their students. While becoming aware of the relevance of ethnicity and gender bias, viewing students as individuals caused teachers in most of the schools to focus their discussions about specific children in terms of data. Therefore, the focus moved from possible stereotypic preconceptions about a group of students to being attentive to needs according to data findings. The data revealed where students were currently performing and what they needed to work on to reach proficiency.

The next vital step was how the educators in these schools collaboratively prescribed and implemented ways to move student outcomes to where they needed to be for optimal academic performance. The principals systematically monitored how teachers and teams provided effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Principals gave numerous examples of how teachers worked together during their staff development time to solve problems that individual teachers could not do on their own. Without adding the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy enumerated by scholars such as Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1994) that helps teachers engage student learning, academic progress will be stymied. Teachers must include such strategies in their arsenal against underachievement and develop a pedagogy of confidence based on theories, such as those introduced by Jackson (2011) as she urged teachers to look at student strengths and use cognitive practices designated for the gifted learner. This element was noted by very few of the principals but is worthy of further exploration.

Awareness and openness about the vital role of professional development and cultural proficiency added the final layer that made these schools unique. As the demographics of the schools shifted and included more students of color, eventually these students populated over half of the student bodies. Principals motivated their staffs to find effective ways to reach the academic goals imposed by their districts and their state.

They persuaded their teachers to resist the temptation to keep things as they were and moved them from demanding students conform to how instruction had always worked in the past. Principals and staff members began to acknowledge the necessity of connecting with their students' learning styles and providing instruction that was varied, relevant, and engaging. However, none of this would have mattered without teachers who knew how to use culturally

relevant classroom management skills that help maintain an orderly school so learning could take place. All of the schools had worked to build and maintain a safe learning environment.

Furthermore, principals recognized that teachers had to build genuine relationships with the students and their parents. Because cultural disconnects existed between teachers and their students, principals provided varying levels of cultural competency training for their staff members. Coupled with best practices for effective schools and principal performance, implementing elements of culturally relevant practices seems to have made a distinct difference in how educators in these schools interacted with their students. Although the principals in the study acknowledged the need for more cultural competency training, no school operated at the highest proficiency levels described by Lindsey et al. (2003) or Banks (2007). However, all of the principals, with their varied backgrounds with knowledge about working with students of color, seemed to be moving forward along a continuum, perhaps faster than their teachers. None of them were working at the lowest level of the continuum.

Until educators come into awareness that they may need help to become culturally proficient, they will remain limited by their own unintentional biases, perhaps conditioned by media and society. They will continue to ignore the socio-political realities of inequity and the separation of distinct diverse cultures that seldom meet—except in the classroom. In their efforts to be politically correct, they will continue to look beyond differences between cultures that are real, and dismissively state, "The goal is to treat all children the same." Or say, "I see all children as the same; race and color don't matter." Or add, "I don't see the need to talk about all this; it makes me uncomfortable."

Because White teachers and other White people in the United States hold a position of power (Howard, 2006), race is a non-issue for most of them (Milner, 2010). Educators from

middle-class backgrounds, whether Black or White, may also harbor biases (Kunjufu, 2002). So until all educators who work with students of color are ready to tackle the "elephant" of racism and poverty that sits in every room of our society and begin a process of change that faces the racial issues, the economic gap, and the opportunity gap that their African American, Hispanic/Latino, and low-income White students must face daily in some form ((Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2007a; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Schott Foundation For Public Education, 2009), even the most well-intentioned middle-class teachers will have problems believing and actually doing all they could do to ensure that all students reach their full potential.

Lindsay et al. (2007) cautioned about leading and coaching others to reach cultural proficiency as it requires a foundational skill set built on the awareness of "the volatile and sensitive environment of racism, exclusion, pain, guilt, anger, and the emotions that arise when these feelings are revealed" (p. 71). They further believed that a leader must have "an in-depth knowledge of systems of oppression and exclusion and how these elements impact the context of coaching and the environments in which the person being coached lives and works" (Lindsey et al., 2007, p. 71). They reiterated the unintended negative consequences that could result in this delicate work of personal transformation as teachers, led by principals who are on the same journey, begin to assume responsibility for how they address the needs of their diverse students (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Beginning to understand what motivates and stimulates children of color to find value in their classroom experience could open the door to helping those students take ownership of their learning. Then, as those students are guided into forming opinions, taking action on real life issues, and formulating questions that help them set their own future goals and direction, education becomes more meaningful. This kind of social action is the apex of both Banks's

(2007) and Ladson-Billings's (1994) conclusions about the results of having a culturally relevant pedagogy.

All principals must discover what Ladson-Billings (1995) declared over the past two decades in her article, "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy." Principals must define what "good teaching" means not only to themselves, but from both teacher and student perspectives. Principals must also ensure that culturally relevant pedagogy occurs on their watch. They must be grounded in theories and practices about how the political, social, economic, spiritual, emotional, psychological, cognitive, linguistic, and cultural realities impact their teachers, students, parents, and school community. Moreover, they must develop the wisdom and skills to incorporate that knowledge into effective practice that is easier said than done.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM

EXHIBIT D: Informed Consent Template for Research involving Greater than Minimal Risk or in which Subjects Are Not Anonymous

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The Principals' Role in Developing a Professional Learning Community

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Gwendolyn J. Kelley, from the Education and Leadership and Foundations Department at Indiana State University. This study is being conducted as part of a dissertation project. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because someone has recommended you as a potential participant in this study. Beyond the recommendation, I believe you have been the principal of this particular building for a minimum of two years prior to this school year and you have a 50% or greater minority population.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The study is designed to examine the principals' role in developing a professional learning environment that helps teachers meet the needs of all students. It will explore how professional development and other interventions equip teachers to develop the skills and strategies they need to meet student needs. It will describe the principals' perceptions of how this is occurring in their particular school.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

You will be asked to agree to be interviewed in a place that is mutually decided that affords a degree of privacy. I will ask a set of eleven questions and record the answers with an audio device. The interview will be transcribed and you will be given the opportunity to review it for accuracy. I will store the audio files in a locked file on my computer. I will add the transcribed notes to the dissertation without identifying your name or school.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no known reasonable foreseeable risks or discomforts if you decide to participate in the study.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

The information collected in this study may not benefit you directly. However, the study will provide general benefits to the field of education as we seek ways to effectively educate a diverse population of students.

IRB Number: 192587   Page 1 of 3
Date of IRB Approval: 2.19.11
Project Expiration Date: Upon IRB approval

- **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

There is no payment for participating in this study.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of storing participant informed consent agreements that will be kept in a locked file located in the researcher's office that only designated university personnel and the Institutional Review Board may inspect. The interview will be coded using descriptors that will not identify the principal or the school studied.

The audio- taped digital recordings will be stored in locked files on the researcher's computer. They will be used to transcribe the interviews with accuracy. The files will be stored for a minimum of three years. After that time, the audio files will be erased. However, the transcribed notes of the interview will have become a part of the written dissertation.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Gwendolyn J. Kelley, 2727 Orlando Street, Indianapolis, IN 46228 at 317 313-4128. Other contact options include sending an email to gwenkelley@comcast.net, or, Dr. Steve Gruenert, in the Department of Education Leadership, Administration, and Foundations, Bayh College of Education, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, 47809, at (812) 237-2906 or by email at steve.gruenert@indstate.edu.

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or e-mail the IRB at irb@indstate.edu. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Printed Name of Subject

_____   _____
Signature of Subject   **Date**

Leave this amount of space
for IRB approval stamp (unless
you plan to include the approval
information in the text of the ICD)

APPENDIX B: TELEPHONE SCRIPT

Telephone Interview Scheduling Script

Good Morning/Afternoon _____.

Thank you for taking my call. I realize how busy you are. Let me get right to the point. I am Gwendolyn Kelley, a doctoral student at Indiana State University. I am working on a dissertation. The purpose of the study is to examine the principals' role in developing a professional learning environment. You have been recommended as someone who could be an excellent potential participant in this study. Beyond the recommendation, I believe you have been the principal of this particular building for a minimum of 2 years prior to this school year and you have a 50% or greater minority population.

Is this correct? Have you been the school leader in this building for 2 or more years with this being your third year or longer, and your student population has a greater than 50% minority population?
(Wait for response.)

A maximum of 12 principals in the state have been identified to participate in the study. I want to assure you that should you agree to participate, the information shared by you and other principals will not be reported in the findings so that any individual principal can be identified. The interview has eleven questions and will last approximately one hour. It will be tape recorded to insure accuracy in transcribing the interview. Those notes will be stored in a locked space with limited access. You will also have the opportunity to review the interview when it is transcribed.

Should you consent to the interview, I will mail you a consent letter ahead of the interview so you can read it and ask questions at the time of the interview or before. The letter will include among other things: the purpose of the study, the precautions that will be taken to insure your anonymity, risks and benefits of participating in the study and other vital information protecting you and your involvement in the study. I will get your signature at the time of the interview. I can conduct the interview any place that you suggest. The location needs to insure that you have reasonable privacy as you answer the questions.

Do you have any questions about the study on the principals' role in creating a professional learning environment?
    (Wait for a response.)
Will you allow me to interview you?
    (Wait for a response.)
If the answer is yes, continue:
- Let's see how we can coordinate our schedules. When will you be available during the next 2-3 weeks?
- You may contact me at any time by phone at (317) 313-4128.
- Again, thank you for allowing me to schedule this interview with you. I look forward to meeting with you.

If the answer is no, continue:
    Thank you for taking the time to listen to my request. I wish you well in your schools' endeavor to educate our children.

APPENDIX C: BOOKS USED FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY PRINCIPALS IN

THIS STUDY

Books Related to Instructional Practices

Anderson, C. (2000). How's it going? A practical guide to conferencing with student writers. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Boushey, G., & Moser, J. (2006). The daily five: Fostering literacy independence in the elementary grades. Portland, MA: Stenhouse Publishers.

Boushey, G., & Moser, J. (2009). The CAFE book: Engaging all students in daily literacy assessment and instruction. Portland, MA: Stenhouse Publishers.

Breaux, A. L., & Whitaker, T. (2010). 50 ways to improve student behavior: Simple solutions to complex challenges. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education, Inc.

DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement.. Bloomington, IA: National Education Service

DuFour, R. & et al.2004. Whatever it takes: How professional learning communities respond when kids don't learn. Bloomington, In. National Educational Service.

Jensen, E. (2004). Brain compatible strategies. San Diego, CA: The Brain Store.

McGill-Franzen, A. (2006). Kindergarten Literacy: Matching Assessment and Instruction. New York: Scholastic, Inc.

McGregor, T. (2007). Comprehension connections: Bridges to strategic reading. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Richardson, J. (2009). The next step in guided reading: Focused assessments and targeted lessons for helping every student become a better reader. New York: Scholastic Professional.

Tate, M. L. (2007). Shouting won't grow dendrites: 20 techniques for managing a brain-compatible. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Books relate to Cultural Understandings

Clark, R. (2003). The essential 55. New York, NY: Hyperion.

Clark, R. (2004). The excellent 11. New York, NY: Hyperion.

Delpit, L. (1995). Other people's children. New York, NY: Free Press.

Dubois, W. E. B. (1897, August). Strivings of the Negro people. The Atlantic Monthly. Retrieved April 18, 2010, from The Atlantic Online: http://www.theatlantic.com/past/unbound/flashbks/black/dubstriv.htm

Howard, G. R. (2006). We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools (2nd ed., Rev.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Milliken, Bill (2007). The last dropout: Stop the epidemic! Carlsbad, CA: Hay House.

Payne, R. (1996). A framework for understanding poverty (4th ed.). Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.

Raybon, P. (1996). My first white friend. New York, NY: Penquin Books.

Rodriquez, R R. & Bellanca, J. (2007). What is it about me you can't teach?: An instructional guide for the urban educator. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Tough, P. (2008). Whatever it takes: Geoffrey Canada's quest to change Harlem and America. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Books Company.

Wagner, T. (2008). The global achievement gap. New York, NY: Basic Books.

APPENDIX D: CHAPTER 4 OUTLINE OF FINDINGS

Chapter 4 – Outline of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore two research questions.
1. How do principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning community?
2. What is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community?

The schools chosen for the study had a 50% or greater minority population. The principals leading those schools had a minimum of 3 years serving as the leader of that particular school. An added criterion was that their academic growth data showed an upward trend. After interviewing 12 principals from different parts of a Midwest state, coding the information and analyzing the results, the following themes emerged.

Research Question: What is the principal's role in developing a culturally relevant learning community?

Having High Expectations for All
- Principals demonstrated a sense of efficacy and passionately owned what happened in their building
- Principals were reflective in their practice and set the vision and mission of the school
- Principals came to their building seeing the need to improve the academic performance of their minority students and served as change agents
- Principals acknowledged the need for parental involvement and parental support.
- Principals acknowledged the need for community involvement. Each school had varied degrees of participation.
- Principals recognized that out-of-school factors were real, but did not dwell on them as an excuse not to expect teachers to teach.

Developing a sense of community among staff and students
- Principals rallied staff members to the vision and mission of using effective instructional practices that produced measurable results as a primary focus
- Principals began to develop a culture and climate in the school that fostered building relationships, trust, and respect among staff members in turn, and their relationships with students and parents.
- Principals established a culture and climate where students began to understand the expectations that were set for behavior and academic achievement.
- Principals developed high expectations that influenced the culture and climate of the building
- Principals supported teachers to become highly qualified in delivering effective, engaging instructional strategies.
- Principals valued collaboration
- Principals valued the role of instructional coaches and other support staff to help teach and model effective practices based on data-driven information

Using Strategic Analysis of Data and Monitoring/Evaluation of Staff
- Principals used data to drive instructional practices.

- Principals monitored and evaluated teacher performance
- Principals provided support to teachers who struggled with effective instructional practices.
- Principals took a hands-on approach and had input on hiring their staff.
- When principals decided a teacher was not a good fit for working in the school's program that focused on increasing student learning, the principal worked to either have them retire, go to another building, or leave the district.

Providing Professional Development that Includes Cultural Diversity Training
- Principals established professional communities of learners.
- Principals were resourceful in how they scheduled time for professional development through grade level collaboration and other professional learning community (PLC) time.
- Principals developed leadership teams to provide feedback and help lead the charge for implementing professional development.
- Principals used book studies as one way to help teachers become more culturally competent.
- Principals used various other methods to provide professional development.
- Principals were reflective about enhancing their professional development.

Building Awareness and Knowledge about Cultural Competency
- Principals were all aware of the need to address cultural competence.
- Principals were concerned about the demographics of their staffs.
- Principals were reflective about how to create a culturally relevant learning environment.
- Principals promoted using the best practices that they knew about to begin creating culturally relevant learning environments.
- Principals acknowledged the need to provide culturally relevant materials, resources, and cultural competency professional development for teachers.
- Principals acknowledged they had to address the learning needs of male students in non-traditional ways.
- Principals acknowledged they had to address the learning needs of English Language Learners in non-traditional ways.
- Principals cared about the total well-being of their students, teachers and parents and believed their staffs should do the same.
- Principals, especially some female principals, exhibited "other-mothering" traits
- Principals were willing to have frank conversations and address issues surrounding diversity.
- Principals had different levels of understanding about how to create a culturally relevant learning environment.

Summary of Key Findings

Research Question: How do principal behaviors facilitate or inhibit the development of a culturally responsive learning community?

Behaviors that Facilitate Building a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment
These key behaviors were representative of skills that principals revealed to help their

staffs become more culturally proficient. Moreover, the factors for building a culturally responsive environment were either spoken about or inferred from the interviews and coded information. The behaviors are:

- Principal reflection on how to create change
- Boldness in creating change
- High expectations for all, including themselves
- Building a culture and climate based on respectful relationships with everyone in the school community
- Collaborative leadership
- Recognition of parent and community partnerships
- Support for students and parents in need, but still holding high expectations for student and teachers as learners
- Owning in-school factors
- Qualified teachers who are open to cultural competency training
- Relevant professional development that supports cultural competency practices
- Use of book studies and study circles to build staff awareness about cultural competence
- A focus on data-driven instruction
- Effective instruction that is monitored and evaluated
- A rigorous, relevant curriculum
- A reading and math program that focuses on individual student needs
- Engaging instruction that is differentiated to meet the needs of all students
- Capitalizing on the cultures of students in the classroom and school
- Integrating elements of the student's cultures into classroom learning for the core subjects.
- Appreciating the connection students have to a global community.
- Using instructional coaches who model and support teachers and the principal's vision
- Open and frank dialogue about diversity, racism, and power
- Recognizing that both black and white teachers can effectively teach students of color when they practice culturally relevant pedagogy
- District expectation and monitoring how cultural competency is addressed

Key Behaviors that Inhibit Building a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment

This collective list of behaviors was determined in two ways. They were either revealed from the coded interviews of the principals in the study who addressed the factors as undesirable; or they were inferred as behaviors that were the antithesis of what the principals in the study set as expectations. The behaviors are:

- Lack of a strong leader who can fulfill a mandate for change
- Failure of the leader to empower teachers to collaborate with each other
- Low expectations for "children of poverty"
- Low expectations for children of color
- Allowing out-of-school factors to diminish responsibility for in-school achievement
- Failure of staff to build true relationships and collaboration with students, parents and families
- Lack of understanding on how to most effectively use data to improve instruction
- Lack of knowledge about what a culturally relevant school should look like

- Lack of knowledge about what culturally competent teachers do
- Lack of knowledge about rationale for intentionality about using culturally relevant pedagogy
- Principal and teacher uncertainty about what are the right things to "do and say" regarding cultural issues
- Uncertainty in how to dialogue about diversity, racism and power issues
- Lack of ability to separate poverty and its influence from cultural strengths
- Resister teachers; deficit model thinking
- Continuous turnover in staff; lack of a stable, consistent staff – requiring retraining for new staff members each year
- Perception of lack of time and money for professional development that brings experts to the staff to present on topics related to cultural relevant pedagogy
- Redistricting and the challenges of helping new students adapt to a culture and climate of high expectations that has already been established
- Balancing the difference between global cultural competency and cultural competency within the school that addressed the needs of all students in the local classroom
- Lack of district focus in identifying, implementing, and monitoring culturally competency as a critical element in improving student academic achievement
- Failure of staff to build true relationships and collaboration with students, parents and families
- Lack of understanding on how to most effectively use data to improve instruction
- Lack of knowledge about what a culturally relevant school should look like
- Lack of knowledge about what culturally competent teachers do
- Lack of knowledge about rationale for intentionality about using culturally relevant pedagogy
- Principal and teacher uncertainty about what are the right things to "do and say" regarding cultural issues
- Uncertainty in how to dialogue about diversity, racism and power issues
- Lack of ability to separate poverty and its influence from cultural strengths
- Resister teachers, deficit model thinking
- Continuous turnover in staff; lack of a stable, consistent staff – requiring retraining for new staff members each year
- Perception of lack of time and money for professional development that brings experts to the staff to present on topics related to cultural relevant pedagogy
- District redistricting and the challenges of helping new students adapt to a culture and climate of high expectations that has already been established
- Balancing the difference between global cultural competency and cultural competency within the school that addressed the needs of all students in the local classroom
- Lack of district focus in identifying, promoting, implementing, and monitoring culturally competency as a critical element in improving student academic achievement
  In considering the role of the principal in creating a culturally relevant learning

APPENDIX E: EXTENDED THANKS

I want to thank my committee members for not giving up on me. Thanks go to Dr. Steve

Gruenert, who helped me focus and clarify my goals as we continued the process to the end. To

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when dealing with policy—you must have facts and clear reasoning to cause change; to Dr. Alan

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perspectives as they searched for truth. He awoke my inner voice that had been cut off by a

"culture of silence" that I had never heard codified until I found my voice through *The Pedagogy*

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true for my oldest daughter, Natalie, and her husband, Larry, and my grandchildren, Larry II, Nye, and Jude. My youngest daughter, Nichole, has also encouraged me. So has my stepson, Myles, and his children, Mylon and Myla. My parents, J.D. and Gwendolyn Solomon, would be proud. My mother taught in a one-room schoolhouse in Georgia for several years before coming to Indiana. I am thankful for her legacy of always learning new things and staying up on the news as she advanced in years. My pastor, Bryan Hudson, and New Covenant church members prayed with me and continually professed their belief that I would endure to the end.

Countless other friends and family members, too numerous to mention, have also spoken words of encouragement during the last few years. I know some names may be inadvertently omitted; however, I hope all who read this will still take delight in knowing that I am extremely appreciative of every word or prayer that spurred me on, and I, in turn, offer prayers of thanksgiving for all who encouraged me to finish. Special thanks to go to family and a circle of constant friends throughout the years who will probably never see their names listed here: Beverly, Arlee and Joe, Nellie, Karen, Susan, Mary, Shelby, Jean, Joy, Betty, Alvin, Stacy, Eric, Sanadra, Annie, Lettie, Dorothy, Evelyn, Marie, Judy, Judith, Daniele, Ophelia, Marriam, Candace, Patricia, Pat, Anna, Paula, Bertha, Brenda, Joycell, Joanne, Michelle, Cassandra, Henri, Marlene, Juanita, Gwen, Glendalyn, Jana, Emma, Mary Janet, Florine, Marg, Pat, Kathy, Zoretta, Dave, and Larry. To my role models and mentors through the years, both living and deceased, I salute Christella Kelley, Mae G. Bradley, Elizabeth Young, Helen Williams, Phyllis Outlaw, Linda Jones, Nadine Hayes, Nancy Minter, Mamie Peters, Juanita Foree, Anna Mae Jones, Martha White, Edith and David Holt, Luima Burris, Elizabeth Shepherd Porter, and Glennie Hodges—I acknowledge the elders who poured into my life and upon whose shoulders I stand.

From the time I entered school, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I salute all of the teachers who impacted my life from kindergarten to high school—those whom I remember by name and deeds and those who are a faint memory. They helped write this document and gave me a unique lens through which to view life. Beginning in an all-Black school, segregated by policy but integrated with love, from Mrs. Shelton in kindergarten, to Mrs. Riley-Davis, Mrs. Hill, Mrs. King, Mrs. Solomon, Mrs. Means, Mrs. O'Neal through Miss Janet Butler, my third grade teacher, school was a warm, inviting place that was filled with people who I knew cared about me. Mrs. Solomon was my second teacher and Blue Bird leader.

Mrs. Janet Butler Broadnax ignited a special light in me by showing us that learning could be fun. As a new graduate from college, she was the most beautiful teacher that anyone could ever want and she found a way to let us work on projects for social studies in a room that had bolted down desks. These teachers taught me the school song, which I still remember, that immediately ties me back to pleasant memories at the school. I believed they all were genuinely concerned about my classmates and me, even the principal, Mrs. Hazel B. Johnson. I have not forgotten them, and acknowledge and thank them all for my primary foundational years.

When I moved to an integrated school in the fourth grade, as one of a handful of Black students in each class and a sparse number of Black teachers, I realized that things were not the same. Though the teachers were kind, it was a lonely feeling being in a predominately White class and school. However, by the time I reached junior high in that same school, the classes were filled with predominantly Black students and staff members. My one remaining White sixth-grade science teacher was fun, but he had trouble controlling the class; but that was not the case for the other Black teachers. Al Finnell created a love for social studies, Mattie Moore, our music teacher and Mrs. Washington, our art teacher, both of whom saw something special in me.

Mrs. Loretta Radcliff, one of our eighth-grade teachers, not only polished our language arts and writing skills, but also inspired us in many other ways. The image of her beautiful handwriting and the way she dressed, her stern, stately, yet friendly manner, along with her weekly wise words that she wrote on the board remained with me throughout my life. I have recalled throughout the years my favorite quote that she wrote, "Right is still right if all are doing wrong, and wrong is still wrong if none are doing right."

I, pleasantly, remember a few high school teachers by name—Mr. Julian Coleman, my first freshman teacher in summer school and one of only two African American teachers I had in high school; Mr. Hankins, my history teacher and counselor; Mrs. Ocker, who made me love homework and algebra; Mr. Gibson who helped me struggle through geometry; Miss Richards, my biology teacher; and Miss Van Horn, my chemistry and homeroom teacher. Most of the rest of my high school teachers are a semi-blur. High school was a bittersweet time.

As more African Americans came to our school in the 1960s—a school that most perceived as an academic preparatory school for the city—concerns arose as, we, the African American students representing almost 60% of the student population, were perceived in the school board minutes as the "problem" the school had to deal with. Despite the undercurrent racial tension, and although friends have shared incidents that happened to them that were hurtful, I became the first African American Junior Prom Queen and I had no idea of the significance of being chosen or the stir the event caused in the White community until later years. I have some pleasant memories of high school and am appreciative of how well all of my teachers prepared me for college.

I acknowledge my teachers because the challenges they faced in the past were similar to the ones that persist even today. Just as then, the changing demographics of many of today's

schools challenge principals, teachers, and their communities. Knowing there is help for those who decide to move toward becoming culturally proficient, I acknowledge and salute those educators who are open to finding solutions to affirm and value all students.

When I began teaching in an African American community, the staff and community had a special bond. Under the leadership of my former principals Mr. Ted Randall, Mrs. Beatrice Bowles, and Mr. James Mahan, I grew as a teacher who expected all children to excel. Mentored by teachers like Hazel Moore, Jean English, Juanita Ewing, Marlene Potter, and Sondra Oldham, who took me under their wings, I in turn tried to help others who were new to the teaching ranks. Without a doubt, the greatest impact on my teaching career came under the leadership of Mr. John Airola.

When I shared with others what we did at our school, everyone thought Mr. Airola must have been an African American man who cared so deeply about meeting the needs of all students. However, that was not the case. As my last principal—for almost 20 years—his expectations for the staff and the students we taught transcended race and shaped my outlook on how an excellent school should operate. He expected us to teach and reach all children with positive outcomes—and we did. He either made believers or created enemies. But he remained resolute in what he believed should be happening to improve instruction for all students.

At first, I did not truly understand the impact of his leadership style that helped create the success we experienced. Nor did I know how different it was from what many other teachers were experiencing throughout our urban district in some of the schools that were producing poor academic performance. When I began working at the district office and visited those schools, I realized the difference. Thank you, John Airola, for your scholarship and keeping us on the

cutting edge with best practices, accompanied by your boldness, courage, forward thinking, and commitment.

When I moved to a position in the district's central office curriculum division, I worked with Mr. Airola, Willie Giles, June Rimmer, Douglas Ann Kincade, David Armstrong, Renee Jones and Diana Daniels who helped me see how district-wide planning could change the course of what happened on a larger scale. I am grateful for the trust they placed in me, and the vision they had about making a difference for principals, teachers, and students. My co-workers, Mary Hill, Teresa Baker, and Ann Jackson worked with our team and shared in that same vision.

I cannot forget the encouragement I received since beginning this journey from others in the higher education community who believe in the importance of scholarship and research. It began with George Davidson in the Butler University administrative certification program. Additionally, I appreciate the support from colleagues at Anderson University, including Diana Ross, Dan Jaran, and Treva Bostic. Others whom I have worked with in the community who are champions for African American children and concerned about issues related to disproportionality, equity, and curriculum development that support improved education for African American students include Pat Payne, Carole Craig, Diana Daniels, Clara Anderson, Cathi Cornelius, Frankie Cooper, Sharon Wilkins, Regina Turner, Larry Barclay, Rosiline Floyd, Cassandra Gray, James Cornett, and Garry Holland. Lastly, I am grateful to acknowledge my friend, Dr. Gwendolyn Battles Lavert, who has remained a constant and true source of inspiration and encouragement since the beginning of our doctoral cohort.

Most of all, I want to acknowledge all the children still in my life—my grandchildren, my great-nieces, -nephews and -cousins, my godchildren's children, my young neighbors, the young people we mentor at the Juvenile Center, and the children who attend my church. My prayer for

them all is that they will have the best teachers and principals possible and that they have the opportunity to share in the "American dream."

I salute over a thousand children whom I taught during my teaching career and who now are teaching me about my impact on them as I see them in the community as adults with families of their own. I also acknowledge those children sitting in classrooms across the nation who can't afford to wait until we figure out what to do to improve their opportunities to excel, and those to come who will continue to need teachers and principals who will respect them and their cultures, so they in turn will leave a rich legacy for their own children in the future.

A final special acknowledgement goes to the principals who took the time out of their busy schedules to participate in this study. Although this special set of principals will never be known by name, their practices can serve as a model for principals who want to become change agents in schools with African American and Hispanic/Latino students who need strategic interventions and skills from their teachers to succeed. It is my hope that the information shared by the principals on the philosophies, practices, and policies they implemented in their schools will help others understand and value the vital role that principals play every day in setting a tone that allows a whole school to move toward being a culturally relevant learning environment. Thank you for your leadership and commitment.

May all who read this, like the warriors of the African Masai tribe, when asked about how things fare in our community, be able to respond well to the traditional greeting they gave of, "How are the children?" As we gauge our community's health by our children's welfare, I acknowledge all who cause the children to thrive in our schools and hope that one day soon, we can truthfully answer, as the Masai warriors did in times of peace, "All the children are well."