

2016

Exploring an African American Principal's Cultural Leadership Effects on Closing the Achievement Gap

Doristine Cornelius
Walden University

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2016

Abstract

Exploring an African American Principal's Cultural Leadership Effects on
Closing the Achievement Gap

by

Doristine Cornelius

MA, Belhaven University, 2007

BS, Jackson State University, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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October 2016

Abstract

Closing the achievement gap is a key concern for educational leaders. Research has indicated that principals' actions directly and indirectly influence student learning. The purpose of this case study was to explore cultural leadership in an urban Mississippi high school from an African American's racialized perspective. The cultural competency/proficiency theory provided the conceptual framework for this study. Successful leadership practices of this African American principal were examined through the principal and through the perceptions of teachers and the assistant administrator. A researcher-developed questionnaire was content validated and given to a purposeful sample of 17 individuals: the principal, assistant principal, and the 15 full-time teachers at the study site. Nine individuals—the school's principal, assistant principal, and 7 teachers—returned the questionnaire. Using Stake's framework for data analysis, data were organized, coded, and categorized to develop themes regarding the principal's cultural leadership practices. Results showed that the principal used 6 practices to help a diverse student body succeed: double-dosing of subject-area test courses, pull-out tutorials, after-school tutorials, differentiated instruction, scaffolded learning, and coteaching. Based on the study findings, a professional development program was created to provide cultural leadership training for all district leaders. The findings can positively affect social change by improving principals' cultural awareness and equipping educators with proven practices to meet the needs of a diverse student body, thus increasing students' opportunities for academic success.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the ALL MIGHTY GOD. It was only by His grace and His mercy that this study was completed. Next, I give thanks to Herman, my loving and supporting husband who encouraged me every step of the way. Thank you, Herman, for cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children as I strived to complete this degree. May God have a crown of righteousness stored in heaven awaiting you. To both of my girls, Latasha and Vanessa, who always took time out of their busy schedules to proofread drafts of my proposal, I love you both and I appreciate all you have done for me. Finally, to Vivian, Gloria, Sybil, and Phyllis, my dearest friends, you were always there to support me and for this, I truly thank you.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

The achievement gap is the systematic difference in educational achievement due to inequalities in educational opportunities between most nonminority children and minority children (McFeeters, 2016; Wagner, 2010). More precisely, Adekile (2012) described the achievement gap as disparities in educational outcomes from low and high vantage points. On the low end of the spectrum are African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and some Asian Americans (Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians; Adekile, 2012). Those on the upper ends of educational attainment are mainly European Americans and other Asian Americans (Korean, Chinese, and Japanese Americans; Adekile, 2012).

The 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was developed in large part to address the achievement gap. NCLB brought about new challenges, responsibilities, and stressors for leaders of schools in Mississippi. As a result of NCLB, principals in Mississippi now view their accountability as the most critical issue they face daily (Styron & Styron, 2011). Education concerns have also caught the attention of Philip Bryant, Mississippi's newly elected governor. Bryant remarked that school systems must change because over two thirds of the state's third graders and one fourth of the state's fourth graders are not reading at grade level, a key goal of NCLB (WAPT News, 2012). Bryant further stated that math attainments are just as dismal as reading attainments (WAPT News, 2012).

In the following sections, I (a) define and describe the local problem, (b) offer a rationale for the problem chosen, (c) define special terms associated with the problem, (d) identify the significance of addressing the issue, (e) provide the research question that prompted the study, (f) state the importance of the problem, (g) outline the literature review addressing the problem, and (h) discuss the implications of a possible project, based on the potential findings of the data collection and analysis.

Definition of the Problem

The present study reflects data from the 2012–2013 fiscal year (FY). Wilson Public Schools (WPS, the pseudonym used throughout this doctoral study) located in central Mississippi, serves more than 30,000 students. (To preserve anonymity, citations and references to information related to the study school are not provided). The WPS enrollment status by subgroup for FY 2012–2013 was comprised of 97.5% African American, 0.97% Hispanic American, 1.41% European American, and 0.03% Native American students (Mississippi Department of Education [MDE], 2015). The total number of students enrolled in WPS for the fiscal year was 29,898, of which 89.22% received free or reduced lunch (MDE, 2015).

All students in the district enrolled in Algebra I, Biology I, U.S. History, and English II are required to take tests in these subject areas (MDE, 2015). For FY 2012–2013, 71% of African American students were proficient in Algebra I while 83% of European American students demonstrated proficiency. In Biology I, European American students showed 83% proficiency compared to 44% of their African American peers (MDE, 2015). A somewhat similar discrepancy in U.S. History outcomes was present as

70% of European American students demonstrated proficiency while only 51% of their African American peers performed at the proficiency level (MDE, 2015). According to English II results, 49% of the total number of students tested scored proficiency or above.

The results of the subject area tests represent a growing problem in the school district. Prior to FY 2012–2013, these scores indicated the extent to which students had met state-defined content standards based on seven performance levels: star, high performing, successful, academic watch, in need of improvement, at risk of failing, and failing. However, the MDE replaced these rankings with letter grades such as A, B, C, D, and F (MDE, 2015). Therefore, WPS has 60 school sites with these school performance ratings/grades: A—six schools, B—4 schools, C—13 schools, D—18 schools, and F—17 schools. Two schools were not assigned rankings. Only schools in WPS that serve Grades 4 or higher are assigned accountability rankings.

In 2012, WPS employed 1,340 core teachers, of which 94.7% were highly qualified (MDE, 2015). According to the MDE (2015), the teachers and course counts reflect NCLB core academic subjects only. Wan (2010) defined highly qualified teachers as individuals who (a) have a bachelor's degree, (b) have completed all criteria for state certification, and (c) have obtained a level of proficiency in the subject they teach.

WPS receives Title 1 funding, which is financial assistance provided to local educational agencies and schools with high percentages of children from low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Title 1 funds ensure that all children meet state academic standards based on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Title 1 funds allocated to WPS have

made it possible for district schools to purchase computers, smart boards, and other technological equipment for classroom use. This funding helps to level the playing field for minority students.

The local problem that prompted this study was WPS's inability to successfully narrow the achievement gap between African American and European American students in mathematics and reading as set forth by NCLB. According to the results, 48.5% of all WPS pupils in adequate yearly progress (AYP) grade levels performed at the *proficient or above* level in English. AYP (as defined by the U.S. Department of Education, 2003), is a measure of the yearly progress that students achieve on statewide testing. According to math results, 52.5% of students performed at the proficient or above level on the Mississippi Curriculum Test, 2nd Edition (MCT2) in 2013 (MDE, 2015).

In English language achievement, 47.6% of African American students scored proficient or above compared to 64.1% of their European American peers (MDE, 2015). In mathematics, 50.5% of African Americans performed at the proficient or above level compared to 73.3% of their European American peers (MDE, 2015). Although the FY 2010–2011 federal designations were based on AYP, beginning with FY 2011–2012, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015), the newest NCLB version, introduced annual measurable objectives (AMOs; MDE, 2015). AMOs are goals set yearly to determine the minimum percentage of students who must meet or exceed state standards on state assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). These objectives are used to decide whether a school makes AYP (U.S. Department of Education (2003). In order for a school to make AYP, the school's total population and any student subgroup that meets

the state's minimum group size for proficiency must encompass a percentage of students scoring proficient or above or exceeding the AMO (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Districts and schools are responsible for meeting AMOs. The U.S Department of Education (2015) identified three areas for AMOs: (a) reading/language arts, (b) math, and (c) another academic indicator such as graduation rate or attendance rate. For schools without Grade 12 the other indicator is the attendance rate; for schools with Grade 12 the other indicator is the graduation rate. WPS's third indicator is the graduation rate. WPS did not meet its annual measurable goals for FY 2012–2013 in reading, in mathematics, or by using the graduation rate. Consequently, WPS did not meet AYP.

Data from the MCT2, administered to students in Spring 2013, reflected a disparity between African American and European American students, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Subject Area Test Program Data for Students Scoring Proficient or Above

Subject	Grade level	Black (%)	White (%)
Language Arts	4	50	81
	8	38	65
Mathematics	4	55	83
	8	57	82

From 2011 to 2013, WPS did not meet AYP (MDE, 2015). Many factors can inhibit student achievement and ultimately decide the fate of students and educators across the nation as they are all held accountable for student academic success. Accountability has caused great concern for teachers, students, and principals.

Narrowing the school curriculum to only cover only what is on the MCT2 is a potential harmful result of high-stakes testing (Dee & Jacob, 2011). Other consequences of high-stakes testing include higher levels of test anxiety and increased pressure on teachers (Blazer, 2011). High stakes tests have caused many unintended negative consequences (Blazer, 2011). Failure to meet AYP has incited many districts to look for ways to decrease the achievement gap between high- and low-achieving students (Pepper, 2010).

In 2011, the total percentage of U.S. public schools that did not make AYP was revised from 48% to 49% (Usher, 2012). Mississippi's math scores were lower than 48 states, higher than one state, and not significantly different from two states in the nation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). During the televised broadcast of

Mississippi's state of the state address, Governor Bryant emphasized the need for genuine education reform (WAPT News, 2012). He also mentioned the importance of increasing educational achievements and the urgent need to develop the future workforce of Mississippians (WAPT News, 2012).

Educators should understand that students' cultural identities affect academic content (Akiba & Alkins, 2010; Au 2012). Individual differences and contextual diversity are factors linked to learning (Akiba & Alkins, 2010). These factors indicate the presence of cultural diversity. Franco, Ott, and Robles (2011) stated that cultural proficiency is valuable when (a) understanding barriers to education and equity, (b) providing conditions that promote academic success for the underserved, (c) suggesting ways to level culture as an asset, and (d) applying connections between a high-quality education for some and excellence for everyone.

Successful principals must be able to foster effective learning environments for a diverse student body and address the needs of diverse learners. A diverse group of pupils requires administrators to be socially competent in areas such as providing equity and social justice to all students (Bakken & Smith, 2011). Educators who promote cultural diversity in schools will enhance the learning process (Bakken & Smith, 2011). Enhancing student learning by promoting cultural competency/proficiency leadership may help narrow the achievement gap.

There are many contributing factors for the achievement gap. Among these factors are excessive absenteeism, sometimes caused by health problems, and unemployment, which sometimes leads to families moving because of rent and mortgage

and results in loss of instructional continuity (Rothstein & Santow, 2012). Additionally, Rothstein and Santow (2012) argued that communities where crime is rampant leads to an increased amount of time spent on school discipline and less time devoted to instruction. Losing instructional time, according to Rothstein and Santow (2012) can lead to stress and reduced academic achievement.

There is a dearth of literature on closing the achievement gap from various perspectives. However, based on past and current studies, the underlying cause cannot be contributed to just one thing. Therefore, no single solution exists. My goal was to add to the body of knowledge by exploring an African American principal's use of cultural leadership practices in a successful urban school in Mississippi as an avenue of closing the achievement gap. I contributed to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by exploring the culturally proficient leadership practices perceived by the school's assistant principal and its teachers believed to be most effective in impacting student achievement.

Ambtman, Hudson, Harty, and MacKay-Chiddenton (2010) investigated cultural differences and their impact on student achievement from a particular, racialized leadership perspective. A finding of Ambtman et al.'s study revealed the need for establishing cultural competence initiatives, specifically for systems and organizations, that should be made accountable for providing culturally competent services. In 2008, Hines indicated that because more and more Hispanics and African Americans are now principals of diverse school districts, perceptions of their cultural leadership practices should be examined.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

According to WPS's district report card for FY 2012–2013, the district did not meet its yearly goals and earned an academic letter grade equivalent to a D (MDE, 2015). AYP is met when at least 95% of the students in each major subgroup take the assessments and demonstrate proficiency in reading and mathematics that meets or exceeds the state minimum requirements (Randolph & Wilson-Younger, 2012). Subgroups are inclusive of students with limited English proficiency diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, disabilities, and low income (Randolph & Wilson-Younger, 2012).

Recent data from specific subgroups were not particularly promising. For FY 2012–2013, only 47.6% of African Americans, 35.8% of English language learners (ELLs), 48.5% of Hispanic Americans, 73.3% of European Americans, 45.6% of economically disadvantaged, 50% of Native American, and 14.6% of students with disabilities met or exceeded the English state standards in Mississippi in AYP grade levels (MDE, 2015). The data for math attainment by subgroup showed that showed that 51.6% of African American students, 55.1% of ELLs, 65% of Hispanic American students, 77.8% of European American students, 49.8% of economically disadvantaged students, 96% of Native American students, and 20% of students with disabilities met or exceeded math state standards in AYP grade levels as mandated by the state model (MDE, 2015).

Because NCLB legislation does not regulate the state model for accountability, some indicators of success at the state level are different from those in NCLB. For

instance, according to the state component, if a district or school fails to meet even one of the three AMOs, then the district or school has failed to meet its AMOs. The three measurable objectives are (a) reading/language arts, (b) mathematics, and (c) another academic indicator. For FY 2012–2013, WPS did not meet any of the measurable annual goals as mandated by NCLB (MDE, 2015).

Students in Grades 3–8 completed the Mississippi Curriculum Test, 2nd Edition (MCT2; MDE, 2015). According to the MCT2, among all third-grade students in 2013, 70% of European American students were proficient or above in language arts while 49% of African Americans demonstrated proficiency or above. Similarly, 72% of third grade European American students demonstrated proficiency or above in math while 47% of their African American peers performed at the proficiency or above level. Overall, 48.5% of all students in AYP grade levels in WPS demonstrated proficiency or above in the English assessment (MDE, 2015). On the other hand, 52.5% demonstrated proficiency or above on the math portion of the MCT2 in 2013 (MDE, 2015). Table 2 shows the results of the English assessment. Table 3 shows student math scores.

Table 2

Percentages of Students Scoring Proficient and Above in Language Arts on the Mississippi Curriculum Test, Second Edition

Student group	Grade					
	3	4	5	6	7	8
All students	50	51	56	43	52	38
Disabled	26	18	21	9	7	7
Limited English	36	63	50	7	30	29
Economically disadvantaged	47	48	54	39	50	26
Asian	50	96	33			
Black	49	50	55	42	52	38
Hispanic	50	58	61	26	40	56
Native American	96		4	50		
White	70	81	81	70	73	65
Female	55	58	63	49	61	47
Male	44	44	48	36	44	30

Table 3

Percentages of Students Scoring Proficient and Above in Mathematics on the 2013 Mississippi Curriculum Test, 2nd Edition

Student group	Grade					
	3	4	5	6	7	8
All students	48	56	54	48	52	57
Disabled	31	28	20	10	8	23
Limited English	73	63	51	45	49	55
Economically disadvantaged	46	53	51	45	49	55
Asian	96	96	96			
Black	47	55	53	47	51	57
Hispanic	75	61	77	58	50	69
Native American	96		96			
White	72	83	88	78	64	82
Female	50	59	58	52	60	43
Male	46	54	49	45	43	51

High school students enrolled in Algebra I, English II, U.S. History, and Biology I and middle school students enrolled in Algebra I were required to take these subject area tests in the spring of each academic school year (MDE, 2015). The overall percentages of students scoring proficient or above by subject area were 72% (Algebra I), 45% (English II), 51% (U.S. History), and 44% (Biology; MDE, 2015). Overall percentages of African American students scoring proficient or above by subject area were 71% (Algebra I), 45% (English II), 51% (U.S. History), and 44% (Biology) compared to 83% (Algebra I), 70% (U.S. History), and 83% (Biology) of European American students (MDE, 2015). All subjects except English II showed a deficit in the educational attainment between African American and European American students. A comparison of African American

and European American students continues to display a gap in achievement, which indicates that a problem exists in the district.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

During the peak of educational reform, the demand for educational equity in the United States became a global issue of great concern. Providing students the education necessary for competing in a global economy has increased the need for the federal government to ensure that states provide their young citizens the tools required for productive futures (Pinder, 2010). NCLB legislation ensures that no child is left behind (McFeeters, 2016). Major components of the law include educational accountability at state, district, and local levels. However, researchers have found mixed results on NCLB's implementation. Au (2012) found that the NCLB has negatively affected teachers and teaching. Al-Fadhli and Singh (2010) found that teachers felt NCLB had impacted their schools for the better in terms of academic rigor, interpersonal relationships, and increased student achievement. However, Au argued that teachers are now forced to standardize the way they teach due to the adoption of teacher-centered forms of instructing in the classroom (e.g., lectures). Furthermore, teacher-centered instruction limits the diversity in instructional methods teachers use and also restricts the teachers themselves (Au, 2012). Au gave as an example an African American teacher, a recent graduate from a teacher education program, desiring to teach multicultural content in her classes using teaching styles that would help her students (African Americans) be successful. However, with the constant pressures of NCLB the young African American

teacher will give up her aspirations (multicultural and equity minded) in order to teach to the test, thereby relinquishing some of her cultural identity (Au, 2012).

Not meeting AYP has prompted nationwide concerns. If school districts do not meet NCLB mandates, the districts will endure consequences. Punishments include (a) having to provide parents with school choice, (b) not receiving federal funding, and (c) having to experience corrective actions and restructuring (Dee & Jacob, 2011; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011). More stringent punishments would follow each year thereafter (Dee & Jacob, 2011; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011). Some believe these consequences have transformed education into a market system for financial gains (Koyama, 2011). According to Koyama (2011), this market system was formed through the grouping of public schools, district administrators, for-profit educational support businesses, and government officials, which lead many school districts to produce, manage, and sometimes fabricate their data to comply with federal policy requirements. Additionally, Terry (2010) found that some states lowered their proficiency standards to meet mandates. Some school districts have been found to use unethical practices to avoid sanctions. These unethical practices, such as falsifying school accountability results and misrepresenting student testing data, are used to comply with federal regulations and undermine NCLB's goals (Koyama, 2011).

Closing the learning gap cannot be achieved if WPS students do not have the skills needed for academic success (Pinder, 2010). There are successful school leaders in this urban community who are meeting their students' needs, thereby decreasing the

achievement gap. Researchers need to explore the cultural leadership practices and procedures of successful African American principals as a means of narrowing the achievement gap.

Therefore, my first goal in the present study was to identify the practices that a successful African American principal uses to (a) value diversity, (b) adapt to diversity, (c) access culture, (d) manage the dynamics of difference, and (e) institute cultural knowledge in order to narrow the achievement gap in an urban high school. The second purpose was to identify the culturally competent/proficient practices of an African American principal perceived by the assistant principal and the teachers to impact student achievement in a successful urban high school in Mississippi. This study's results may prove beneficial for administrators, teachers, and students. Research of this nature may lead to (a) new culturally proficient strategies, (b) insights on culturally proficient leadership styles, and (c) changes in teaching practices. They may also hold value for addressing the problem of low achievement among diverse student populations. Section 2 consists of a discussion of cultural competency/proficiency in greater detail.

Definitions

Achievement/learning gap: The achievement/learning gap is the gap between the quality of education that most nonminority children receive in the United States and the quality of education available for the poor and minority children receive that result in disparity (Wagner, 2010).

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): AYP includes measures taken by each state to determine which schools and local agencies meet the minimum level of proficiency

toward the goal of all students obtaining academic success in math and reading (Johnson, Peck, & Wise, 2007).

Annual measurable objective (AMO): AMO is a yearly goal that each state sets to determine the percentage of students who will be required to score proficiency or above on its academic testing (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Culture: Culture is a shared set of beliefs and practices between members of a particular group that are distinguishable from others (D. B. Lindsey, Jungwirth, Pahl, & Lindsey, 2009).

Cultural competence: Cultural competence is a state in which individuals see and understand the differences and have an understanding of the difference that difference makes (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2006)

Cultural proficiency: Cultural proficiency is the honoring of differences among cultures, viewing diversity as an added benefit, and interacting with cultural groups with knowledge and respect by working with others to make a similar commitment to honoring diversity (R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2005).

Culturally proficient leadership: Cultural proficient leadership is leadership that influences the shared beliefs, values, and customs of those members of organizations who express themselves in various cultural forms (Karakose, 2008).

Failing schools: Failing schools are schools that have not made AYP for at least 5 consecutive years in reading and/or mathematics and are in restructuring as mandated by NCLB (Wakelyn, 2011).

High-stakes testing: High-stakes testing is testing used to determine whether students, teachers, principals, schools, and district are accountable (Hidden Curriculum, 2014).

Subgroups: Subgroups are defined as low-income students, ELLs, students with disabilities, and students in major racial or ethnic groups (Johnson et al., 2007).

Significance

There is a need to prepare leaders as culturally competent practitioners to further close the achievement gap (Fine & McNamara, 2011). Closing the learning gap by exploring cultural leadership practices could lead to information that may prepare leaders to become culturally competent in their practice. Closing the achievement gap addresses the educational needs of a growing diverse student population (R. B. Lindsey, Graham, Westphal, & Jew, 2008; National Education Association [NEA], 2014). The implications for positive social change resulting from closing the achievement gap could include the resolution of equity issues, which will help ensure that all students are successful and have the same opportunities. Additionally, social change could occur by promoting a positive school culture, which could increase academic school performance. Furthermore, this study may prove beneficial in training educators to understand the cultural differences of the students they teach. All stakeholders may benefit from this study as education can transform communities by helping youth to become productive citizens, thus ensuring productive futures and future leaders.

Guiding/Research Question

The present study had one open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional question (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), which was: What are the culturally competent/proficient leadership practices that a successful African American principal in an urban high school uses to (a) value diversity, (b) adapt to diversity, (c) access culture, (d) manage the dynamics of difference, and (e) institute cultural knowledge that are most effective in closing the achievement gap? Data from this study were gathered to answer the following related questions, referred to as the research questions for the reader's ease:

- Research Question 1: What are the assistant administrator's and the teachers' perceptions of their principal's culturally competent/proficient leadership practices as they relate to (a) valuing diversity, (b) adapting to diversity, (c) accessing culture, (d) managing the dynamics of difference, and (e) instituting cultural knowledge in a successful urban high school in Mississippi?
- Research Question 2: What are the assistant administrator's and the teachers' perceptions of their principal's culturally competent/proficient leadership practices believed to impact student achievement in a successful urban high school in Mississippi?
- Research Question 3: What are the principal's culturally competent/proficient leadership practices believed to impact student achievement in a successful urban high school in Mississippi?"
- Research Question 4: What is the importance of identifying a successful principal's cultural leadership practices?

Effective principals promote positive school climates and cultures that motivate students and teachers, which ultimately leads to student academic success. There is no doubt that principals interact daily with staff, teachers, parents, students, and community members. However, to adequately project a school's mission and goals, a principal's perceptions of his or her leadership abilities are important because principals' practices reflect their perceptions of their abilities. Just as teachers should be reflective practitioners, administrators should reflect on their daily activities as well.

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Researchers have offered many solutions to closing the achievement gap between high and low achievers. Terry (2010) found that mandated policies from the federal government impact school change. Terry also noted that NCLB has been the government's most ambitious learning policy and suggested that even though educational leaders have scrambled to find ways to close the achievement gap, their responses to reform mandates have not produced profound results in educational practice. Therefore, I hoped to identify ways for improving academic achievement by exploring how an African American principal in an urban high school successfully closed the achievement gap, as well as the principal's cultural leadership practices through the theoretical and conceptual lens of cultural competency/proficiency.

Organization of the Literature Review

The literature review for the present study consisted of a comprehensive search based on key words related to the following: *achievement gap*, *AYP*, *educational/school*

reform, NCLB, student achievement, and education as they relate to school leadership and school culture. I reviewed books as part of the literature search, and I used the Internet as well as the ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and ERIC databases to search for dissertations, educational periodicals, journals, and reports.

Conceptual Framework

Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) stated that theoretical and conceptual frameworks are sets of ideas. The difference between them is that the theoretical framework is a structure that holds a study together (Lodico et al., 2010). A theoretical framework presents the theory behind a study and explains why the problem is under investigation. The conceptual framework gives direction to the study (Lodico et al., 2010). I used cultural competency/proficiency as the foundation for both the theoretical and conceptual frameworks in the present study.

History of Cultural Competency

The cultural competence model was first introduced in the medical profession by Terry L. Cross and colleagues (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs (1989). Cross et al.'s cultural competence model consists of systems, organizations, and individuals with the wherewithal to respond to the diverse needs of populations whose cultures differ from that of mainstream Americans. Cross et al. (1989) explained that culture entwines behavioral patterns inclusive of individuals' thoughts, communications, actions, beliefs, values, and customs. Cultural behavioral patterns also include race, ethnicity, religious, and social constructs (Cross et al., 1989).

There is no one definition of cultural competence (The National Center for Cultural Competence (n.d.). Cross et al. (1989) defined cultural competence as similar actions, attitudes, and policies that are combined for working effectively with members of an organization, an entity, or a group of professionals in a cross-cultural context. Cross et al. further stated that cultural competence is a process that develops over time that encompasses individuals and organizations at various stages of awareness where there is increasing knowledge and skills along the cultural competence continuum. The core concepts and principles adopted in the cultural competence framework remain the same (Cross et al., 1989). Cross et al. used the word competence because of its implication that a person would have the skills to function in a specific way or would have the mindset to operate appropriately in the entwined cultural behavioral patterns of a particular group.

R. B. Lindsey et al. (2005) and R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, Lindsey, and Terrell (2009) described the theoretical underpinnings and elements of a culturally proficient school culture as procedures and processes individuals use that showcase their values. A culturally proficient school culture enables an individual or entity to operate effectively when dealing with staff, students, parents, and community members. The National Center for Cultural (n.d.) further concluded that cultural competence requires that organizations have a defined set of values and principles and that they demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross culturally. A culturally competent organization should also possess the capacity to value diversity, conduct self-assessment, and manage the dynamics of difference (Cross et al., 1989). These

organizations should acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of communities they serve (Cross et al., 1989).

For the present study, a preliminary conceptual frame (see Figure 1) was developed. The framework bounded the territory of the study's constructs and relationships between them and was derived from R. B. Lindsey et al.'s (2005) and R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell's (2009) studies to measure principals' use of culturally competent practices. Culturally competent/proficient administrators use five elements to ensure the development of experiences in culturally diverse learning communities (R. B. Lindsey et al., 2005; R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009). These elements are (a) valuing diversity, (b) accessing culture, (c) managing the dynamics of difference, (d) adapting to diversity, and (e) instituting cultural knowledge (R. B. Lindsey et al., 2005; R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009). These constructs are essential to cultural leadership, which will ultimately enhance the lives of a growingly diverse student body.

The present study evolved from the R. B. Lindsey et al.'s (2005) and R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell's (2009) work on cultural competence/proficiency. Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework for the present study. It also represents how culturally competent/proficient principals should respond to diversity in the face of a continually growing global society.

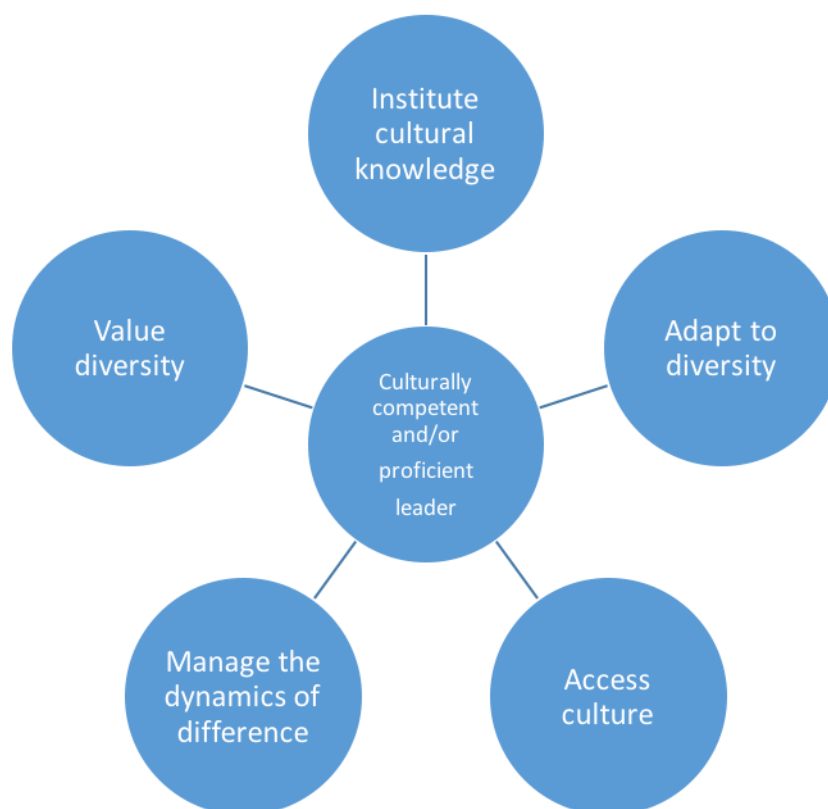


Figure 1. Conceptual model for cultural leadership. Based on concepts presented in R. B. Lindsey, K. Nuri Robins, and T. Terrell (2005), *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (2nd ed.), copyright 2005 by Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins and Raymond D. Terrell; and R. Lindsey, K. Nuri Robins, and R. D. Terrell, 2009, *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (3rd ed.), copyright 2009 by Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Raymond D. Terrell.

The conceptual model shown in Figure 1 may be of vital significance as it symbolizes the five elements that are the very essence of active, culturally oriented leadership: accessing culture, valuing diversity, adapting to diversity, instituting cultural knowledge, and managing the dynamics of difference. Effective, culturally competent/proficient leaders should apply these five elements when making decisions.

By doing so, transformation can occur, schools can move forward, and students will succeed, thereby ultimately closing the achievement gap.

Current Research Literature Related to the Problem

The literature review for the present study consisted of a comprehensive search based on key words related to the following: *achievement gap*, *AYP*, *educational/school reform*, *NCLB*, *student achievement*, and *education* as they relate to school leadership and school culture. I reviewed books as part of the literature search, and I used the Internet as well as the ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and ERIC databases to search for dissertations, educational periodicals, journals, and reports.

The selected literature is essential to understanding principal's actions and perceived leadership practices, how principals' leadership practices affect teachers, and how principals' actions directly and indirectly impact student achievement. In an effort to improve the academic achievement of diverse student populations and to address the challenges faced by principals and teachers due to NCLB's increased demands, I identified the following topics for inclusion in the literature review (a) the achievement gap, (b) NCLB, (c) leadership and accountability, (d) principal leadership, (e) teacher leadership, and (f) leadership preparation programs. The following discussion is organized by these topics.

The Achievement Gap

The NCES (2013) stated that "The achievement gap occurs when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant" (p. 210). Likewise, Webb and Thomas (2015) found the

gap to include inequalities that occur in the academic performance between groups of students categorized by socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and gender. Notable are the definitions for the achievement gap offered by Adekile (2012) and Howard (2010), who both described the achievement gap as a discrepancy in educational opportunities among African Americans, Native Americans, certain Asian Americans, and Latino students all on the low end of the performance scale. Most European American students and some Asian American students are at the high end of the performance spectrum (Adekile, 2012; Howard, 2010).

Causes for the inequalities in educational attainment between minority and nonminority students have been the focus of research since *Equality of Educational Opportunity* was published in 1966 (Webb & Thomas, 2015). This publication, also known as the Coleman Study or the Coleman Report, was commissioned by the NCES to document the availability of equal educational opportunities for minority students or children labeled historically underserved (Webb & Thomas, 2015). Results from the Coleman Study indicated that 85% of African American children who remained in school until their senior year scored below the national average when compared to their European American peers (Viadero, 2014). Simply put, the existence of a learning or achievement gap between minority and nonminority students has clearly been evident since the mid 1960s.

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) has shown a consistent gap in the educational achievement of African Americans, Latinos, and European Americans since the 1960s (Cowan-Pitre, 2014). In 2013, 46% of European American

students in the fourth grade were proficient in reading compared to 18% of African American students (NCES, 2013). The gap continued to the 12th grade where only 16% of African American students demonstrated proficiency in reading compared to 46% of their European American peers (NCES, 2013).

Math scores have been equally dismal. In 2011, 34% of African American fourth graders and 49% of African American eighth graders scored below basic in math (NCES, 2012). At the same time, 9% of European American students in the fourth grade and 16% in the eighth grade scored below basic in math (NCES, 2012). These data reflect the historic achievement gap between African American and European American students in the United States over the last 30 years (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Although African Americans have made some small gains in achievement, the education gap persists (Cowan-Pitre, 2014).

Not only does the learning gap still exist, it is growing. Hemphill, Vanneman, and Rahman (2011) noted that the achievement gap was steadily increasing between European American and Hispanic American students in public schools nationwide. according to the Institute of Education Sciences. Hispanic American students are the fastest growing student population in the United States, with a vast number of them being ELLs (Hemphill et al., 2011). NAEP results have shown increases in fourth- and eighth - grade scores from 1992 to 2009 in reading and math assessments for both groups (Hemphill et al., 2011). However, NAEP results also showed significantly higher increases in scores for European American students across all evaluations (Hemphill et al., 2011). NAEP results also showed that European American students outperformed

their Hispanic American peers by 21 points in mathematics in the fourth grade and by 26 points in the eighth grade. In English, European American students exceeded their Hispanic American peers by 25 points in the fourth grade and by 24 points in the eighth grade (Hemphill et al., 2011). Such results indicate that the learning gap is not decreasing but is instead increasing between European American and Hispanic American students.

Contributing factors. White (2009) argued that three socioeconomic factors—poverty, self-esteem, and nutrition—impact the academic achievement of African American males. However, while poverty has been identified as a socioeconomic factor, Delpit (2012) claimed that poverty does not affect African American student achievement. Delpit's research involved visiting schools with low-income students who were almost entirely African American. African American students at the study schools outperformed students who lived in affluent neighborhoods on standardized tests (Delpit, 2012).

At home/at school risk factors. Webb and Thomas (2015) argued that poor children have weaker language skills as a result of lack of exposure to reading supplies and lack of a better vocabulary. Webb and Thomas further noted that poverty has a negative impact on children emotionally, academically, and socially. Prager (2011) found that media has a profound effect on African American males and argued that some media portrayals of men, such as being violent, disrespectful, threatening, and possessing an overbearing sexuality, can hinder achievement. As Prager (2011) noted, violence is a significant cause of the achievement gap.

Leon, Villares, Brigman, Webb, and Peluso (2011) found that risk factors at home such as being raised in a single-parent household and being born to teenage mothers hindered Latino/Latina student achievement. Leon et al. identified at-school risk factors for Latino/Latina students as inadequate early childhood literacy opportunities, low teacher expectations, and a shortage of qualified teachers to teach ELLs.

Beatty (2013) argued that teacher efficacy is the single most important element affecting student achievement and that it is important that teachers believe they are capable of educating students. Beatty added that schools with unqualified teachers, few resources, high teacher turnover, high teacher absences, and large class overloads negatively impact achievement. Negative factors can and do impact children born into poverty on three levels: emotionally, academically, and socially. Palardy (2015) showed the degree to which inequalities in three general classroom types contributed to the achievement gap of students during the first grade. Classroom inequalities identified were access to qualified teachers, access to effective teachers, and contextual aspects of the class (Palardy, 2015). Palardy revealed that classroom inequality in and between schools affected the achievement gap. Additionally, contextual aspects found to be the most prominent school-based factors started from classes in different schools as opposed to those in the same school (Palardy, 2015). African American students usually are in classrooms with more negative contextual characteristics and less capable instructors (Palardy, 2015). African Americans and Hispanic Americans were slightly less likely to be taught by a highly qualified teacher, although Palardy (2015) indicated that this inequality did not contribute to the achievement gap.

Basch (2011a) found that aggression also hurts academic achievement. Basch cited recent national data showing that students ages 12–18 years are involved in approximately 628,200 violent crimes. Physical fighting is more prevalent among African American and Hispanic students (Basch, 2011a). Basch concluded that violence and aggressive behavior have a negative impact on academic achievement by adversely affecting cognition, school connectedness, and absenteeism. Findings such as these support the premise that negative behaviors have a deteriorating impact on student achievement.

Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) and Losen and Gillespie (2012) argued that the unequal distribution of school discipline suspensions toward minority students negatively affected academic achievement. Likewise, Skiba et al. (2011) found that African American students were 2.19% more likely to receive a referral for disciplinary action than their European American peers. Skiba et al. added that African American and Latino students were more likely to be expelled or suspended from school as a result of problem behaviors. Possible reasons why African American students are differentially selected for disciplinary referral may include societal stereotypes, bias, or cultural mismatch between African American students and teachers (Skiba et al., 2011). Losen and Gillespie further acknowledged that suspensions are leading indicators of student dropout rates and future incarcerations. Suspensions lead to absenteeism, and excessive absenteeism can lead to increased dropouts, future incarcerations, and low academic achievement. Regardless of the result, absences of any nature will affect student achievement.

Solutions both proven and promising. Policymakers and educators have been firm in their efforts to provide theories, strategies, and programs for closing the achievement gap. Researchers have suggested many ways to close the achievement gap between minority and nonminority students. I next discuss research strategies, activities, programs, and theories found to be successful in narrowing the learning gap.

Match at-home and at-school strategies. Logic dictates that developing strategies at school that match those in the home and the community is beneficial to the learning process. Teaching diversity is essential to the academic success of a diverse student body (Au, 2012, Cady, 2011). Smith (2009) stated the importance of teachers being able to relate learning to situations occurring in their students' homes. For example, struggles occurring in the lives of immigrant families influence student motivation and ability to succeed in the classroom (Smith, 2009). Teachers who become aware of students' cultures are more apt to be able to help them in their classrooms.

It is important to recognize that student cultural makeup can affect academic performance. Ballenger and Niness (2013) emphasized the importance of culturally responsive teachers making the connection of pupils' past experiences with their home and community to establish and incorporate students' experiences in the teaching and learning process. Findings from several studies indicated the importance of culture and its impact on learning (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Hutchinson & Hadjioannou, 2011; D. B. Lindsey et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2007; Winterman, 2008). Making the connection between students' home lives and the cultural background of their communities will help enhance academic achievement.

Addressing stereotypes. Addressing stereotypes should be a goal of school improvement. R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell (2009) and Ward (2013) argued the importance of students feeling respected and their school attendance being free from harm. Teachers must understand the impact of stereotyping to move to a higher and greater understanding of culture (Ward, 2013). Educators can enhance parent participation by developing a relationship with their students' families (Ramirez & Soto-Hinman, 2009).

Parental involvement. Building relationships and abandoning stereotyping are critical factors for increasing family participation in schools (Ramirez & Soto-Hinman, 2009). Ramirez and Soto-Hinman (2009) offered strategies for building relationships with the parents of ELLs that included (a) exploring the community, (b) learning from parents, (c) opening the doors to the schools, (d) seeking solutions, and (e) possessing the right attitude. D. B. Lindsey et al. (2009) stressed the importance of school leaders engaging in ongoing activities and dialogue about the danger of stereotypes and hate. According to these researchers, family involvement and open dialogue can improve student success and can also help establish working relationships with parents.

LaRoque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011) established that involving parents in their children's education will help close the achievement gap. In line with parental involvement, Prager (2011) argued that parents who expose their children to multiple experiences will help them become more familiar with the curriculum. Prager added that nurturing would be very beneficial for children and would increase their confidence in their academic abilities. LaRoque et al. outlined common barriers to parental involvement

such as cultural and language differences, lack of transportation, and work schedule conflicts. LaRoque et al. suggested that schools establish parental involvement committees, provide professional development to teachers concerning communication skills needed to work with families, and create support networks for establishing parental collaboration. LaRoque et al. found these strategies to be useful in combating obstacles to parental involvement. These researchers' findings suggest that parental involvement is beneficial in closing the achievement gap.

Embracing differences. Teachers need skills to support and manage intergroup relationships. Green (2010) found that teachers who work with diverse students in the classroom need skills to help foster positive intergroup relationships and respect for student differences. Bifulco, Buerger, and Cobb (2012) conducted a survey analysis of 10 interdistrict magnet schools in Connecticut and found that students who reported higher quality intergroup interactions at their schools also reported more positive attitudes toward group members and a more positive learning environment. Engaging and managing students in intergroup activities promotes positive relationships and positive learning environments (Bifulco et al., 2012).

Early school attendance. Webb and Thomas (2015) noted three groundbreaking long-term studies (Perry Preschool, Abecedarian, and the Chicago Longitudinal Study) conducted on children in Chicago's poorest neighborhoods. Findings from each study showed the importance of early education for closing the achievement gap among African Americans (Webb & Thomas, 2015). Kirp (2010) found that African American children and children of poverty who attended high-quality early education programs

made significant gains from their first school attendance. Furthermore, Kirp found that African American children who attended Head Start were less likely to be retained or placed in special education classes, less likely to be involved in crimes, less likely to depend on welfare, and more likely to graduate from high school.

Using effective practices. Delpit (2012) found certain features to be prevalent in high-performing schools where African American children showed outstanding academic achievement. These schools were characterized by being places where meaningful learning was taking place, academic rigor existed, cultural connections were evident, and teachers had a profound belief in their students' capabilities. The right stimulus coupled with the right circumstances can produce positive results.

Investing in health/counselor-led intervention programs. Basch (2011b) argued that building a priority for adolescent health programs is necessary for closing the achievement gap. Basch conducted a literature review on adolescent health and concluded that integrating school health efforts into accountability measures and policy mandates contributes to student academic success. Leon et al. (2011) found that using a counselor-led intervention program, the Spanish Cultural Translation of the Student Skills Success, significantly improved math and reading on standardized test scores of ELLs in Grades 4–9. Riegle-Crumb and Grodsky (2010) suggested that math scores could be improved by increasing minority student access to demanding math classes. Establishing programs for intervention or remediation, as indicated by research findings, constitutes efforts to improve the achievement gap.

Healthcare impacts the academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Manscoske (2013) addressed children's mental health problems to determine students' school performance and how caregivers perceived their care providers' cultural competence. Manscoske found that children's school performance improved when care providers used family-driven and culturally and linguistically competent individualized services. Manscoske also found that providing culturally competent services can improve children's competency levels at school.

Providing a socially accepting environment. Butler, Shillingford, and Alexander-Snow (2011) claimed that African American students who feel a sense of belonging to their school community are likely to improve academically. Butler et al. added that academic achievement will also increase for African American students who feel more accepted in an environment where their differences are respected and seen as an attribute rather than a hindrance. Basch (2011a) found that implementing evidence-based school policies and programs will increase achievement and help close the achievement gap. Such programs and policies could include establishing a social environment that promotes safety, providing a physical environment that promotes safety, implementing curricula and instruction that help students learn, providing safe physical education and extracurricular physical activity programs, and providing health, counseling, psychological, and social services to reduce aggression and violence (Basch, 2011a).

Organized activities and their link to success are said to be understudied (Morris, 2015). Dumais (2006) found that several activities in which elementary students participated increased reading results. Covay and Carbonaro (2010) found that focusing

on types of organized activities had a positive effect on third grade reading and math test scores. Morris (2015) also found that increased time spent in organized activities showed a positive correlation with academic achievement for disadvantaged students, which means that greater participation is influential in helping to close the social class achievement gap.

Differentiated instructional tools. Using media is another pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. Tisdell and Thompson (2007) found that U.S. educators use the media to teach issues relating to diversity. Hammer and Swaffar (2012) used a video channel to teach about German culture to 69 students at the University of Texas. Students were requested to write about the cultural features and patterns of behavior, indicating cultural similarities and differences, after reviewing the German television program (Hammer & Swaffar, 2012). Study results showed that students' perceptions of another culture can be more sophisticated when exposed to genuine film materials (Hammer & Swaffar, 2012).

Moore and Lemmer (2010) found that live theatrical performances (ethno drama) can be used as an instructional tool to teach about diversity. The literature insinuates that educators should consider their students' cultural identities and creativity by using differentiated instructional tools for teaching diversity (Moore & Lemmer, 2010). Paradoxically, addressing diversity and equity in education is changing the way students are educated.

Zhang, Trussell, Gallegos, and Asam (2015) focused on technology by using math apps for working with decimals and multiplication to help students with learning

disabilities and the regular education students. According to Segal (2011), math apps offer excellent opportunities for learning math, especially when the app can run on a portable tablet. A benefit of using a math app is that it can provide rapid feedback (Zhang et al., 2015). Baker, Gersten, and Lee (2002) stated the importance of providing prompt feedback for special education students. Hattie and Timperley (2007) also confirmed the importance of rapid feedback for special education students. Yeh (2010) found that rapid feedback is the most cost-effective approach for raising student achievement. Zhang et al. found that using math apps improved student learning and closed the achievement gap between students who were struggling and students who were considered typical.

School choice. Charter schools are a potential solution for closing the achievement gap. As defined by Hays (2013), charter schools are schools that are independently managed. They are schools of choice that are entirely supported by federal and state funds (Hays, 2013). Charter school teachers and administrators do not have to be licensed and are free to choose their mission and area of focus and establish their school's values (Hays, 2013). The intent of charter schools is to combine four reform concepts by providing (a) a choice of public schooling for families, (b) a venture for citizens to create and operate a school believed to be best for children, (c) explicit accountability for improved student academic outcomes by standardized tests and other measures, and (d) a careful design for competition in public education (Hays, 2013).

Hays (2013) proposed that leadership at individual schools is the key to raising the academic achievement of African Americans and Hispanic Americans. Hays identified three dimensions of effective leadership found in Boston charter high schools

attended by predominantly African American and Hispanic American students of low-income status: high expectations for student learning as measured by college completion, an environment conducive to safe and orderly learning, and having an all-school adherence to leadership's vision in alignment with the school's mission. Additionally, Hays noted that each dimension can be interpreted and implemented differently based on the school's mission. Leadership dimensions can be achieved through a school leader's vision, years of experience, and personality, with the end results providing a distinct organizational school culture (Hays, 2013).

School exemplifiers. Mourshed and Whelan (2010) noted that the world's best schools offer four lessons on closing the achievement gap. First, children should start school early and meet rigorous standards. Finland ensures that every child should complete primary education by meeting standards that are deemed to have rigor (Mourshed & Whelan, 2010). Second, students should spend more time in school (Mourshed & Whelan, 2010). Mourshed and Whelan noted that students in charter schools that used the Knowledge Is Power Program spent 60% more time in school than the average U.S. student.

Third, it is important to put more efforts into training teachers (Mourshed & Whelan, 2010). Singapore's schools are known for also investing in recruiting, teacher training, continuing education, regular teacher evaluations, and awarding bonuses for teachers designated as top performers (Mourshed & Whelan, 2010). Lastly, schools should see the value in giving students individual attention (Mourshed & Whelan, 2010).

Finland's teachers provide one-on-one support as soon as they see students struggling (Mourshed & Whelan, 2010).

Opposing research. The following section contains a discussion on several researchers who believe that there are gaps other than the achievement gap that inhibit progress. They believe that these gaps are more important and should be the focal points of research to improve academic achievement. Their findings suggest that these other gaps should be addressed instead of just focusing on performance.

Education debt. Ladson-Billings (2006) remarked that although disparities such as race/ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status do exist, highlighting gaps in achievement may be misleading. Ladson-Billings further stated that an “education debt” is owed to students poorly served. This debt has historic, economic, sociopolitical, and moral features according to Ladson-Billings (2006). Ladson-Billings implored educational researchers to bypass the achievement discourse and to use these features as aspects of research and analysis while pursuing myriad layers of debt.

Closing other gaps. Gutiérrez and Dixon-Román (2011) found that talking and framing the achievement gap has been ineffective and has perpetuated and reaffirmed a divided and dominant relationship between European Americans and minorities. Irvine (2010) compelled researchers to focus on other underlying issues and stressed the need to close other gaps contributing to the achievement gap, including gaps in teacher quality and training, challenging curriculum, school funding, health care, wealth and income, and school integration. Irvine further stated that these gaps are more pervasive and have contributed to inequitable school outcomes. Other researchers (i.e., Boykin & Noguera,

2011; Milner, 2010) have also affirmed the need to discuss opportunity gaps believed to plague marginalized students.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

NCLB is a 2001 Congressional act that focuses on standards-based education reform to improve educational outcomes for all students (McFeeters, 2016). Two essential purposes of NCLB are improving student achievement and eliminating the achievement gap between high and low achievers (McFeeters, 2016). NCLB mandates that all schools make annual gains in test scores (McFeeters, 2016). The purpose of testing as mandated by NCLB is to measure student achievement to ensure that all students meet minimum scores as designated by their state.

The NCLB Act has impacted principals, teachers, students, parents, schools, and states. Researchers have noted NCLB's positive and negative effects. Proponents of NCLB agree that there have been many positive effects that have led to schools and school leaders being made accountable for student learning. Opponents of NCLB predict that most public schools will not be successful at making AYP and thus would be dubbed as failing schools. NCLB's impacts are discussed next.

Principals. Because of the current spotlight on accountability, a principal's job regarding moving a school forward has never before been so important and so difficult (Pepper, 2010). Simply put, administrators face challenges of how best to meet NCLB mandates and maintain high expectations for teacher quality and student learning (Clifford, Hansen, & Wraight, 2012; Pepper, 2010). NCLB mandates for increasing educational achievement are reshaping policies and practices in schools that serve a

diverse student body (Larson, 2010). Principals are responsible for teacher quality and ensuring student academic success. NCLB legislation has made both principals and teachers accountable for student success.

Teachers. NCLB mandates have had positive and negative effects for teachers. Teachers now must be deemed highly qualified to teach in their discipline (McFeeters, 2016). Additionally, teachers are experiencing increased pressure to ensure that students pass high-stakes testing (Blazer, 2011). On a positive note, NCLB has resulted in increased professional development and better instructional alignment with state content standards (Blazer, 2011). Additionally, NCLB seems to have started a coteaching trend (Nichols, Dowdy, & Nichols, 2010). McFeeters (2016) found coteaching to be instrumental in helping students with special needs and essential for lowering student-to-teacher ratios in classrooms.

Students. Since NCLB enactment, students have been encouraged to work harder while low achievers have had better access to more efficient remediation (Blazer, 2011). Each year, students attending public schools receiving Title 1 funds are mandated to make AYP (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). These students must demonstrate knowledge in reading and mathematics that meets or exceeds the requirement as set by the state (Hemelt, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Parents. According to McFeeters (2016), NCLB's most instrumental effect on families is the fact that states, districts, and schools now have to issue a report card on their testing results and the progress made in meeting federal mandates. This legislation has made it possible for parents to compare their children's performance on each level.

NCLB has improved access to student attainment. In sum, parents are now better informed about their children's education and how their achievement is rated at the local, district, and state levels.

Schools. Schools are required to make AYP in reading/language arts and mathematics as mandated by NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, 2012). Ninety-five percent of students in each major subgroup (students with limited English proficiency, with diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, with disabilities, and those from low-income families; Randolph & Wilson-Younger, 2012) meet AYP when they take the required assessments and demonstrate proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). If a school does not make AYP for 2 consecutive years, it is labeled in need of improvement (Randolph & Wilson-Younger, 2012). Additionally, the failing schools are provided technical assistance, parents can choose to send their child to another school, and the schools must devise a plan for improvement (U. S. Department of Education, 2009, 2012). If schools continue to fail, they may endure other disciplinary actions such as being taken over and controlled by the state (U. S. Department of Education, 2009, 2012).

States. NCLB's effects on the states have been mixed. Some states meeting the demands of high-stakes testing are rewarded while other states are punished. Failure to meet AYP can cause states to lose federal funding (McFeeters, 2016). Since NCLB inception, many parents, educators, and lawmakers have asked that it be modified (Randolph & Younger, 2012).

President Barak Obama asked Congress to reform NCLB by 2012–2013 (Slack, 2012). Although the hope was that all schools would reach proficiency by 2014 (Randolph & Younger, 2012), this did not happen. However, the government granted NCLB waivers that allow the states to change their accountability formulas (Slack, 2012). In order to qualify for these waivers according to Slack (2012), states have to set performance target for student success and prove their commitment to student success by developing a plan to address three vital areas: (a) preparing students to ensure their college readiness in reading and math, (b) establishing an accountability system that recognizes schools that are making significant gains in improving student achievement and that rewards high-performing schools, and (c) building guidelines for principal and teacher evaluation and support.

Leadership and Accountability

Abbate (2010) argued for a balance between leadership and accountability standards that will provide leaders the freedom to be risk takers without the constant fear of punishment when moving school systems forward. Leadership, for both principals and teachers, is crucial for meeting the educational demands of an increasingly diverse student body. Exploring whether leaders' practices will prove beneficial for a diverse student body should be a primary consideration in every school district. Leadership is a vital area of concern simply because every school district's mission should be to increase all students' academic achievement, which will decrease the achievement gap.

Staying cognizant of current research. The present movement of U.S. public schools toward accountability and instruction illustrates the need for administrators and

teachers to stay abreast of current research and practices. Flores and Roberts (2008) found that school leaders should rely on published research, share successful practices, and develop strong leaders who support leadership and empower teachers for continued educational improvement. Conducting research is necessary for principals who are required to move to a new location (Clayton & Johnson, 2011). Administrators are sometimes transferred to new schools. Clayton and Johnson (2011) suggested that a new principal should methodically investigate a school's cultural background before mandating change.

The principal's influence. Principals' actions directly and indirectly influence student learning (Clifford, Hansen, & Wraight, 2012). According to Clifford et al. (2012), principals directly influence student learning through school conditions, district and community contexts, teacher quality and distribution, and instructional quality. Finnigan (2012), Fullan (2007), and Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) declared that principals' actions indirectly effect student achievement through activities that improve teachers' practices. Principals influence teacher practices as they are active in (a) building vision, (b) setting direction, (c) understanding and developing employees, (d) redesigning the organization, and (e) directing the teaching and learning process (Leithwood et al. 2008). As teachers' practices develop, student learning outcomes increase (Finnigan, 2012).

Fullan (2007) argued that principals are vital to successful school activities and that as schools are restructured, teachers' practices improved. As a result, principals can directly and indirectly impact teacher leadership, with the end result being positive

effects on student academic success. Findings such as these suggest that proper education and practices of teachers and administrators are essential for ensuring the academic success of all pupils.

Principal Leadership

Clifford et al. (2012) defined effective principals as individuals who make intentional or purposeful efforts to accomplish goals. However, the U.S. Department of Education (2010) described an efficient principal as one whose students' growth after 1 academic year has increased by acceptable rates. Other measures of effective principal leadership include (a) high school graduation rates, (b) college enrollment rates, (c) evidence providing supportive teaching and learning conditions, (d) solid instructional leadership, and (e) positive family and community involvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Therefore, principals who are effective leaders should establish and maintain a working relationship with teachers, students and their family members, and members of the community to increase school effectiveness (Budge, 2010; Gerhart, Harris, & Mixon, 2011).

Leadership significantly influences organizational culture (Shipp & Kim, 2014). Karakose (2008) proposed that school improvement depends on establishing a strong relationship between leadership and culture. Cultural change, according to Winterman (2008), is the real issue when making plans to improve academic achievement. Since principals are now responsible for leading their schools to success, they must be able to create a positive school culture.

Promoting a positive school culture. Wildy and Clark (2012) found that novice principals of small remote schools had low expectations for student learning, were overseeing schools with staff profiles that likely limited student achievement on a national age-equivalent level, and saw a few involved parents who were willing to challenge the culture of acceptance of low student achievement. It is important to pay attention to forming professional school leaders who promote a culture of inquiry and who flee from a culture of accepting low student success when establishing school improvement. In sum, learning, acknowledging, and addressing culture seem to be vital for school improvement and efficient leadership.

MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) found that school principals believe that developing school culture as the foundation for learning will improve teacher morale and student academic success. Becoming advocates for social justice is a sure way to ensure equality for students (Theoharis, 2007). Egbo (2008), Theoharis (2007), and Zembylas and Iasonos (2010) argued the importance of principals' values regarding social justice in transforming school culture and making the culture of the school beneficial for marginalized students.

Administrators are responsible for establishing a positive school culture and maintaining effective relationships. Mayer and Ralph (2008) found that a school's environment influences school effectiveness, which can impact student learning. Shipp and Kim (2014) defined an organization's culture as the way it conducts its daily functions and activities. Likewise, R. B. Lindsey et al. (2005) and R. B. Lindsey, Nuri

Robins, and Terrell (2009) declared that a school's social organization determines the school's organizational structure.

A school's organizational culture establishes the framework to understand and harness the cultural behaviors and norms that influence its organization (Shipp & Kim, 2014). Gerhart et al. (2011) stated that principals should be passionate about their commitments toward students and should be passionate about change, high standards, and building relationships.

All stakeholders involved in education contribute to student success. Some researchers (e.g., Budge, 2010; Gerhart et al. 2011) have argued the need to establish community connections to achieve academic success. In other words, principals should take the lead in establishing a line of communication between students, parents, and community members. From these findings, it can be construed that there is a need to create collaborative relationships with all stakeholders. Simply put, building healthy relationships among all stakeholders is essential to student academic success.

Gender and culture impact leadership. Factors such as gender and culture can substantially impact leadership styles, behavior, development, and effectiveness (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Akiba and Alkins (2010) also argued that educators can establish classrooms and school climates that are conducive to the learning process when collaborative relationships are present and maintained. Effective leadership is conveyed in the way principals respect the customs, values, and beliefs of others.

Leadership styles are important. Gentilucci and Muto (2007) and Sahin (2011) suggested that a particular leadership style such as transformational or transactional

leadership could have a positive influence on culture and student achievement. However, Hackman and Wageman (2007) indicated that leaders who are different and conduct themselves in a unique manner can also be effective leaders. Given these findings, it is apparent that a relationship exists between leaders and their leadership styles, culture, and school reform.

Pepper (2010) supported the premise that a balance of transformational and transactional leadership styles is necessary to comply with accountability efforts while focusing on student academic needs. Sergiovanni (2007) defined transformational leadership as collaborating and sharing decision-making with all stakeholders while working toward a common goal or vision. Transformational leadership leads to positive changes in schools, which is the foundation for student success. Pepper also argued that a principal's ability to balance successfully both transformational and transactional leadership styles is the backbone of a positive school environment that promotes successful teaching and learning resulting in student academic success.

Leaders should possess good qualities. Researchers have identified certain essential qualities that effective leaders should have. Hollins (2013) noted that effective leaders should be (a) learners, (b) courageous, (c) inclusive and transparent, (d) sensitive to history and the impact of institutional racism, and (e) strategic. Hollins further stated that dealing with racism in an organization's structure can result in controversy but added that doing so will also likely increase knowledge and stimulate the courage necessary to evoke the actions needed to eliminate opportunity gaps. Reducing the disparities in student achievement will likely cause conflict, but it is necessary for achieving results

that can help close the learning gap (Hollins, 2013). Being in a leadership position means sometimes having to address conflict, but possessing the right qualities is essential for success.

To ensure student success, teachers need to teach various skills to their students. Burke, Johnson, and Kemp (2010), Cohen (2009), and Wagner (2010) found that students need skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration to be prepared and successful in the 21st century; therefore, teachers should be prepared to teach these skills. DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) and Walker (2007) argued the need for building a culture of collaboration to increase chances of success with the paradigm that teamwork empowers. DuFour et al. and Walker also argued the need to think in a global context and to upgrade continuously in today's economic society. Therefore, it is important to remember that student needs will change in a growing global society and educators need to be ready to deal with culture and community.

Michalak (2009) conducted a case study that involved four Polish urban school principals who presided over schools where the majority of the students were economically and socially disadvantaged. Michalak's findings identified strategies deemed essential for leadership success such as (a) setting the directions, (b) targeting visible and attainable goals, (c) developing people, and (d) redesigning the school's organization and changing its culture. This suggests that strategies can be used to help students who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

Principals presiding over 21st-century schools are now required to become motivators, energizers, and encouragers of students and teachers in order to create

effective learning communities that lead to school improvement (Gamage, 2009). Leaders must have two sets of skills (e.g., general and specialized) to demonstrate efficiency in the global economy (Blaess, Hollywood, & Grant (2012). Leininger and Javidan (2010) found that global leaders must possess a global mindset; a unique set of skills and traits. A global mindset is a set of attributes that help increase leaders' effectiveness relative to groups, organizations, and systems with characteristics different from their own (Leininger & Javidan, 2010).

Leadership Preparation Programs

Principals. Concerns about greater accountability are forcing changes in many educational leadership programs (Larson, 2010). Since the demands of high-stakes testing have resulted in a focus on principal leadership, researchers have suggested that organizational leaders should be properly educated to handle an increasingly diverse student body within this global society.

Keiser (2009) found that educational administration candidate skills, views, and community connections are needed factors for enhancing and building meaningful school-community relationships. Providing cultural competency education will help prepare leaders for dealing with diverse populations, which is vital for administration preparation programs (Keiser, 2009). Cultural competence practice in education administration will ultimately lead to leadership preparation for a richly diverse world (Keiser, 2009).

Teachers. In 2008, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education set standards for properly educating teachers. According to Dee (2012), Standard 4

requires preservice teachers to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work with a diverse student body. Additionally, the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium requires that preservice teachers create inclusive learning environments that allow diverse students to perform to their best abilities (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013).

In contrast, Smith (2009) suggested that European American and middle-class teachers do not have the knowledge, skills, or attitudes to teach for equity and excellence in a diverse environment due to lacking cross-cultural competency. Smith acknowledged the need for teacher education programs to (a) provide learning experiences to promote preservice teachers' knowledge of content and pedagogy and engage teachers in critical reflection; (b) provide preservice teachers authentic experiences in urban settings by using service learning; and (c) continue to instill objectives regarding change as it relates to beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and pedagogical skills to meet the challenges of a diverse student body. Teachers need to use research-based pedagogy to meet students' cultural needs (Ballenger & Ninness, 2013).

Smith's (2009) study focused on the importance of teachers learning about culture. Additionally, Smith suggested that teachers' knowledge of culture be expanded to deal effectively with the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings inclusive of learning new knowledge about the United States and the world. In essence, educators need special skills and knowledge to teach an increasingly diverse student body to achieve school academic success.

Au (2012) found that the NCLB has negatively affected teachers and teaching. Al-Fadhli and Singh's (2010) study revealed that teachers felt that NCLB had impacted their schools for the better in terms of (a) academic rigor, (b) interpersonal relationships, and (c) increased student achievement. However, Au argued that teachers are now forced to standardize the way they teach due to the adoption of teacher-centered forms of instructing in the classroom (e.g., lectures).

Teacher-centered instruction limits the diversity in instructional methods teachers use and also restricts the variety of the teachers themselves (Au, 2012). Example, an African American, a recent graduate from the teacher education program, desiring to teach multicultural content in her classes using teaching styles that would help her student (African Americans) be successful. However, with the constant pressures of NCLB the young African American teacher will give up her aspirations (multicultural and equity-minded) in order to teach to the test, relinquishing some of her cultural identity (Au, 2012).

Furthermore, the results of the Au's (2012) exploratory study indicated a variation in the academic achievement of three schools located in a district in the Mississippi Delta. Au found a difference in performance possibly resulting from NCLB. However, such differences could also be explained, in part, by the effects of other factors such as (a) parental and community support, (b) teachers' qualifications, (c) funding, (d) changes in leadership, (e) student population, and (f) issues that were not addressed in the study (Al-Fadhli & Singh, 2010). Although Al-Fadhli and Singh (2010) found that NCLB

legislation has made a significant impact, inequality in education quality still exists from nation to nation, across states, within districts, and among students.

Principals interact daily with staff, teachers, parents, students, and community members. However, to project adequately a school's mission and goals, principals' perceptions of their leadership abilities are important because the principals' practices presumably reflect their perceptions of their abilities. Just as teachers should be reflective practitioners, administrators should reflect on their daily activities as well. After an exhaustive search of the literature, studies on successful African American principals' perceptions of their cultural leadership practices and actions were not found. The literature selected for this review was relevant because it focused on (a) the achievement gap, its contributing factors, and solutions both proven and promising; (b) opposing research; (c) NCLB and its impact; (d) accountability demands that have highlighted leadership, (e) principal and teacher leadership; and (f) leadership preparation programs.

Implications

In the present study, I examined the culturally competent/proficient leadership practices that a successful African American principal in an urban high school uses to (a) value diversity, (b) adapt to diversity, (c) access culture, (d) manage the dynamics of difference, and (e) institute culture knowledge that are most effective in closing the achievement gap. I explored how the selected school's assistant administrator and teachers perceive how their principal's cultural leadership practices impact academic achievement as they relate to valuing diversity, adapting to diversity, accessing culture, managing the dynamics of difference, and instituting cultural knowledge. This in itself is

significant because after an exhaustive search of recent literature, I found no studies with a focus on examining the practices of a successful African American principal's cultural leadership abilities or how an assistant principal and teachers perceived these skills. Based on the findings from the literature review and data obtained from the participant questionnaires, I developed a PowerPoint presentation for my project (see Appendix A) as a professional development for administrators. The aim of the professional development presentation was to provide guidance for strengthening the outcomes of diverse learners' outcomes through teachers' and administrators' actions.

Summary

In this literature review, I provided a detailed analysis and discussion of topics directly related to the present study. In this section, I (a) discussed the achievement gap, the contributing factors, solutions both proven and promising, and opposing research; (b) provided a detailed description of NCLB legislation and those impacted by it; (c) explained accountability and its association with leadership; (d) explored leadership from the standpoint of principals, teachers, and social justice; (e) provided information on leadership preparation programs; and (f) previewed what the study project would be. In the next section, I provide a map of the process and procedures essential in planning, conducting, and evaluating qualitative research.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

As noted by Lodico et al. (2010), qualitative research, also called interpretive research, is an approach that has been adapted to fit educational settings. Topics investigated through qualitative research methods are those that are best understood in natural settings, those that involve studies of group activities over time, those that include the study of roles and behaviors, and those that involve studying an organization in its entirety (Lodico et al., 2010). Thus, answering qualitative questions can help clarify everyday life and provide details that further understanding of study interpretations and outline differences across settings (Lodico et al., 2010).

A qualitative design was chosen for the present study because I wished to focus on exploring ways to close the achievement gap by gaining a better understanding of the culturally competent/proficient leadership practices of an African American principal in a successful urban high school in Mississippi. Creswell (2012) identified a key characteristic of qualitative research as “exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon” (p. 16). The achievement gap was viewed as the problem that needed to be explored, and cultural leadership was viewed as the primary phenomenon that required a detailed understanding (Creswell, 2012). The main phenomenon (e.g., culturally competent/proficient leadership), according to Lodico et al. (2010), should be investigated through qualitative research. Exploring an African American principal’s behaviors and cultural leadership practices and their effect on closing the learning gap would meet the criteria for a qualitative approach.

I sought to identify the culturally competent/proficient leadership practices that a successful African American principal in an urban high school uses to close the achievement gap at this school. These practices relate to (a) valuing diversity, (b) adapting to diversity, (c) accessing culture, (d) managing the dynamics of difference, and (e) instituting cultural knowledge. These practices are believed to be effective in closing the achievement gap. My secondary aim was to identify the impact of this principal's culturally competent/proficient practices, as perceived by an assistant principal and teachers, on student achievement in the high school.

The overall research question for this study was the following: What are the culturally competent/proficient leadership practices that a successful African American principal in an urban high school uses to (a) value diversity, (b) adapt to diversity, (c) access culture, (d) manage the dynamics of difference, and (e) institute cultural knowledge that are most effective in closing the achievement gap? Data from this study were gathered to answer the following related questions, referred to as the research questions for the reader's ease:

- Research Question 1: What are the assistant administrator's and the teachers' perceptions of their principal's culturally competent/proficient leadership practices as they relate to (a) valuing diversity, (b) adapting to diversity, (c) accessing culture, (d) managing the dynamics of difference, and (e) instituting cultural knowledge in a successful urban high school in Mississippi?
- Research Question 2: What are the assistant administrator's and the teachers' perceptions of their principal's culturally competent/proficient leadership

practices believed to impact student achievement in a successful urban high school in Mississippi?

- Research Question 3: What are the principal's culturally competent/proficient leadership practices believed to impact student achievement in a successful urban high school in Mississippi?"
- Research Question 4: What is the importance of identifying a successful principal's cultural leadership practices?

The topics discussed in this section are (a) design of the study, (b) participants, (c) ethical considerations, (d) data collection, (e) instrumentation, (f) data analysis, and (g) analysis results.

Study Design and Approach

Qualitative researchers believe in multiple perspectives and using reasoning that is associated with the inductive method (Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers also seek to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the whole picture rather than breaking it down into variables (Lodico et al., 2010). The end product of qualitative research is a richly descriptive meaning that convey what the researcher has learned about the phenomenon being explored (Merriam, 2009). Another characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary data instrument (Merriam, 2009). A qualitative approach was appropriate for the present study because I wished to provide a comprehensive and richly descriptive end product. A quantitative approach would not have been appropriate because it deals with numerical data (Merriam, 2009).

Case study, a form of qualitative research, was used for the present study in order to gain a better understanding of how to close the achievement gap between minority and nonminority students by exploring an African American principal's actions and cultural leadership practices in an urban high school. A case study is an exploration that entails an in-depth description of a bounded system (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) stated that a bounded system could refer to a "single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (p. 40). A case study can be an exploration of a single school (e.g., an urban high school) that is a case example of a phenomenon, in this case culturally competent/proficient leadership, being explored.

Qualitative case studies have three characteristics: they are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 2009). Particularistic means that the case study focuses on a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) acknowledged that this characteristic is important as it reveals information about the phenomenon and what it potentially represents. Description in case studies results in end products having a "rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study" (p. 43). Descriptive results from the phenomenon are clearly and thoroughly described. Precise description can be used to convey how the researcher understands the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Merriam (2009, p. 44) noted that case studies are heuristic as they bring about new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known. The case study in the present study had all the characteristics of being particularistic (e.g., particular phenomenon is cultural competent/proficient leaders), descriptive (the end results are written in narrative form), and heuristic (ability to enhance readers' understanding).

Using a case study research approach allows the researcher to focus on process, meaning, and understanding that cannot easily be identified using numerical data (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2009). With this in mind, a case study was appropriate for the present study. Specifically, I decided to use an instrumental case study approach. Stake (2005) noted that this approach is appropriate for divulging information about an issue or changing a generalization.

This study's problem hinged on WPS's continued failure to meet AYP (MDE, 2015). As a result, WPS failed to narrow the achievement gap as mandated by NCLB. The study was based on a problem rather than a purpose; therefore, an instrumental case study was the preferred selected approach (Ellis & Levy, 2008). Other qualitative methods such as phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative were not appropriate because they are purpose-driven approaches (Ellis & Levy, 2008).

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for the present study. Patton (2002) stated that purposeful sampling should be used when selecting participants in a qualitative case study. Purposeful or purposive sampling is a qualitative sampling technique used when the researcher intentionally selects an individual or entity to explore or to understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). I used extreme case sampling for the sampling strategy. Extreme case sampling, as defined by Creswell (2012), is a form of purposeful sampling in which those sampled tend to display extreme characteristics such as distinguishable characteristics or achievements.

Participant Selection Criteria

Merriam (2009) noted that two criteria are needed for selecting participants: choosing a case to study and setting rules for whom to interview, what to review, and which documents to analyze. For the present study, the sample was selected solely from one high school in the WPS district, located in central Mississippi. A high school (the case) was chosen based on the accountability rating the MDE assigned to the school during FY 2015–2016. The school must have an accountability grade of A, B, or C as designated by the MDE. Besides the school's accountability grade, the selected site received recognition for being one of the most improved schools, thus meeting the criterion for extreme case sampling mentioned by Creswell (2012). The second criterion for this study was the principal's race. To address a gap in the literature, the principal had to be of African American descent and a leader of a successful school. The principal's race was necessary for this study because very little research exists on African American administrators' cultural leadership (Hines, 2008).

The criteria for the assistant principal and the teachers were the following: (a) must have 3 years of teaching experience, (b) must be full-time employees at the school, (c) must be at least 25 years of age at the time of the study, and (d) must have worked at the study site for at least 2 years. While 17 individuals (one principal, one assistant principal, and 15 faculty members) at the high school were invited to participate, only nine did (one principal, one assistant principal, and seven teachers).

This sample size was sufficient for the present study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended continued sampling until investigators reach saturation or redundancy.

Saturation occurs when researchers determine that no new data will provide information or insight for the developing categories (Creswell, 2012). Redundancy occurs when collecting additional data will not result in new information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

After reviewing all of the data gathered from the participants, I determined that additional information would not add or take away from the study results.

Procedures Used for Establishing the Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

Establishing trust and rapport among study participants requires knowing about their social interactions (Glesne, 2011). To build an effective working relationship with study participants, researchers must acknowledge the participants' value (Glesne, 2011). Examples of showing value include (a) not engaging in politics at the site, (b) being aware of the loci of formal and informal power, (c) being aware of potentially controversial issues, and (c) learning the participants' current behavior (Glesne, 2011). I used Glesne's (2011) guidance to build an effective working relationship with my study participants. Glesne (2011) stated that rapport is established when researchers converse with participants and the participants can gain value from the conversation. Rapport does not always lead to trust, but establishing trust begins with rapport (Glesne, 2011).

My goal was to establish a meaningful connection with the participants to build a trusting, working relationship. Establishing a relationship involves (a) following the proper protocol for the integrity of the participants and the work site and (b) maintaining a level of professionalism throughout the study ensuring the integrity of the participants, facility, and infrastructure. Creswell (2009) noted that integrity among the people, the entity, and its infrastructure is important. Therefore, my interaction with each participant

included (a) respect in every aspect, (b) professionalism, and (c) engagement to ensure that each participant's response added value to the study.

Measures Followed to Protect Participants' Rights

Federal regulations provide participants protection from harm (Creswell, 2012). It is important for qualitative researchers to conduct research where the potential benefits outweigh the potential risks (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, as the researcher, I took appropriate measures to protect the rights of the participants, which included issues of confidentiality, informed consent, and protection from harm (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al, 2010).

Participant identities were masked by removing any identifying information from the questionnaires. The school's identity was also concealed by replacing its name with a pseudonym. All participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without question. They were also advised that there would be minimal risk associated with their study participation through this wording on the consent form: "There are minimal risks associated with the study; however, these risks are no greater than those you would encounter in daily life." All documents were kept under lock at my home, and only I could access them. All records will be securely maintained for 5 years after the study's completion and then destroyed.

Data Collection

Two data sources were used to explore the effects of an African American principal's actions and cultural leadership practices on closing the achievement gap. Written questionnaires were the primary method of data collection, and document

analysis was the secondary method. These are acceptable methods of data collection for qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Glatthorn, Joyner, & Glatthorn, 2005). Written surveys can also be less expensive and faster than oral interviews, which was another reason I chose this approach for the present study.

Questionnaires

Two qualitative questionnaires were created for the present study. Each included two open-ended questions and one semistructured question that reflected R. B. Lindsey et al.'s (2005) and R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell's (2009) five constructs of a culturally competent/proficient leader: (a) valuing diversity, (b) adapting to diversity, (c) accessing culture, (d) managing the dynamics of difference, and (e) instituting cultural knowledge. In the questionnaire administered to the assistant principal and the teachers, I asked them to provide their perceptions of their principal's cultural leadership practices as they relate to R. B. Lindsey et al.'s (2005) and R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell's (2009) five constructs listed above. In the questionnaire administered to the principal, I asked for the principal's perceptions on the same previously listed constructs. The principal was asked to provide a self-report on his/her cultural leadership abilities. As such, the questions were worded slightly differently to reflect the self-rating aspect.

Documents

Documents used in a qualitative study may be public or private (Creswell, 2012). Documents such as minutes of at least two faculty meetings, the principal's educational philosophy or the school's mission statement, and official school reports, along with any other public document such as recent newspaper editorials, formal policy statements, and

website information that would help identify and verify cultural leadership practices were deemed appropriate for the present study. Only the principal was asked to share documents, and I decided to only ask for the principal's philosophy of education or the school's mission statement and faculty meeting agendas/minutes. The only document received was the school's mission statement. The principal was extremely busy during my site visits. I was told that the principal was unable to meet with me due to previously scheduled onsite data meetings, unscheduled parental visits, and off-campus meetings. Therefore, I was unable to obtain other requested documents. In sum, the school's mission statement was used to supplement the questionnaire data.

Data Collection Process

My first objective in conducting the present study was to seek approval from WPS's research review committee (see Appendix B). Next, I submitted a letter of cooperation (see Appendix C) from the research site along with an institutional review board (IRB) application to Walden University. Upon IRB approval I complied with all the IRB ethics and procedures, including completing a web-based training course titled Protecting Human Research Participants. My certificate number was 1824213 (see Appendix D). Walden University IRB's approval number for this study is 10-12-15-0183890.

Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously in the present study. The steps I followed were as follows. First, I contacted the principal by email on October 13, 2015, but I did not receive a response. Therefore, 2 days later (October 15), I made an impromptu visit to the site. While at the site, I presented the approval letter for

conducting research that was received from WPS's research review committee, a copy of the approval email from Walden University's IRB, and a copy of my proposal to the principal. The principal also served as the community research partner and gatekeeper for this study. Qualitative researchers use a gatekeeper for gaining access and developing the trust necessary for their proposed studies (Hatch, 2002). Creswell (2009) described gatekeepers as individuals who provide entry to the site and give permission for conducting the research. I discussed the purpose of my study and pointed out reasons for choosing this particular site, the activities that would occur during the research process, information on disruptions, how the results would be disseminated, and the benefits of study participation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

During the conversation, permission was requested and granted for me to conduct an unofficial site visit to identify a pool of potential participants including full-time teachers and an administrator. At no time was the community research partner expected to assist in the recruiting process. I felt an unofficial site visit would help me become more familiar with the site, the study participants and their activities. I also requested permission to distribute the invitation letters (see Appendix E).

The unofficial site visit took place on October 19, 2015. After receiving permission from the principal, invitation letters were distributed to faculty and administration, and I personally invited potential respondents to participate in the research study. Personally inviting teachers and administrators afforded an opportunity to become familiar with the site, the individuals, and the ongoing activities at the site.

Under the principal's direction, I was granted three official visits for data collection—October 21, 29, and 30. The site's Career Center was made available for my use because the principal thought it would ensure all staff and faculty presence as open enrollment representatives would also be there. Teachers reported during their planning blocks on each day. It was then that I discussed in detail informed consent, distributed and collected consent forms (see Appendix F) and Participant Information Sheets (see Appendix G), and administered/collected participant questionnaires (see Appendix H). Signed consent forms and completed participant information sheets were obtained from each participant.

My purpose for using a consent form was to confirm that the participants agreed to the terms and conditions of the study, and the participant information sheet's purpose was to confirm that the criteria for participation were met. All participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without question and advised that there would be minimal risk associated with their participation. Two different consent forms were distributed; one for the principal and the other for the assistant principal and teachers. Only the principal was asked to share documents such as the principal's philosophy of education or the school's mission statement (see Appendix I for the school's mission statement) and the faculty meeting agendas/minutes.

Two questionnaires were distributed, one for the principal, which collected self-reported data, and the other for the teachers and the assistant administrator. The questionnaires were prenumbered 1–17. Initially, plans were made to place a secure drop

box in the library, but because most of the participants completed the questionnaires during onsite visits, the need for a drop box was eliminated.

I visited one of the assistant principals after meeting with the principal. The principal was given 2 weeks to submit the requested documents and complete the questionnaire. All participants who agreed to participate in the study were given 2 weeks to complete their questionnaires.

I made my last site visit November 16, 2015. It was then that I began the member checking process. I conducted individual follow-up meetings after having typed each participant's handwritten questionnaire responses to ensure accuracy, clarity, and validity. I hand delivered typed responses to each respondent. The participants' responses were presented to them in a sealed envelope with no identifying information. Two participants were absent on the day of the site visit, and I was instructed to place their envelopes in their mailboxes. The participants were thanked for participating in the study. All participants were asked to review the information and return the revisions. My contact information was distributed to all participants. The participants were given 5 days to respond during the member checking process.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary data-gathering instrument (Merriam, 2009). In a case study, the researcher is a centralized component in the study's site. Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2007) found the researcher's role to be an asset and positive rather than a hindrance. My role included handling, administering, and collecting the survey questionnaires and the school's mission statement.

Being an African American teacher, employed in education for the past 8 years and, at the time of this study, devoting my full attention to completing the requirements for my doctoral degree, I have experienced firsthand the changes that occurred in education because of NCLB mandates. This experience has provided insight and understanding that enhanced my ability to relate to the principal throughout this study. Although preconceived ideas exist as to what effective leadership is, I believe that to meet the needs of a diverse student body, our educational leaders should not just observe the similarities that are sometimes seen in the color of a person's skin but rather try to access what is happening on the inside. In other words, too often students are judged on how they dress, act, and speak and the material things they may or may not possess. Regardless of an individual's background, socioeconomic status, and race, there is more to why and how students learn best. Therefore, the whole student must be considered.

To control bias and potential problems because of my role as a teacher leader and the relationship I have established with my principal and colleagues, no principals or teachers were invited with whom prior acquaintance existed. Preventing a researcher's bias is achieved in several ways such as journaling, triangulating data, and member checking (Creswell, 2007). To eliminate bias, I used triangulation, which meant that data were collected from several sources; that is, the school's mission statement and questionnaires completed by the principal, an assistant principal, and seven teachers at the project site. I also used member checking, a process that involved checking for accuracy by allowing the participants access to the final report for verification.

Data Analysis

I used the constant comparative analysis approach as detailed by Lodico et al. (2010) to analyze the present study's data. This approach is a method in which data are simultaneously compared (Lodico et al., 2010). Even though the constant comparative analysis is usually associated with grounded theory, Merriam (2009) found that the majority of qualitative theses and dissertations use the constant comparative method. Additionally, Merriam (2009) and Stake (1995) stated that researchers should conduct data analysis simultaneously with data collection.

I used the constant comparative analysis by following these steps as suggested by Lodico et al. (2010): (a) preparing and organizing the data; (b) reviewing and exploring the data; (c) using codes to place data into categories; (d) providing a detailed description of the participants, site location, and activities; (e) building themes and testing hypotheses, and (f) reporting and interpreting the data (Lodico et al., 2010).

Data Analysis Procedures Followed

Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process, and qualitative researchers must employ specific steps in the data analysis process (Lodico et al., 2010). In the present study, the data were prepared, organized, reviewed, explored, coded, and categorized to construct detailed descriptions of the respondents, site, and activities and to provide a narrative with rich, thick descriptions. An analysis of the data, including participants' responses to the questionnaires and the school's mission statement, helped me develop themes, coding, tables, and discussion, which provided an in-depth picture of the study findings. Using triangulation, in keeping with Creswell's (2007) and Stake's (2005)

guidance, allowed me to formulate answers to the problem: the school district's continued failure to meet AYP for the past several years. Triangulation allowed me to build themes, which added validity to the study, and to test hypotheses and seek outliers or discrepancies, which helped create a more realistic account, before reporting and interpreting the data.

Stake (1995) defined data analysis as a way of making sense of first impressions and observations. Stake (1995), Merriam (2009) and Lodico et al. (2010) further added that researchers should conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously. NVivo software was used along with Stake's framework for data analysis, which includes two strategies: categorical aggregation and direct interpretation. Stake also acknowledged that researchers should use experience and reflection to find the analysis form that is right for them. Therefore, I used NVivo to systematize coding and to tabulate the themes, patterns, and relationships that emerged from data. The codes were combined and reduced to categories and then recoded with new codes. Additionally, the summarized data generated descriptions, organized by the codes, that led to major and minor themes and hypotheses testing. After this, final analysis and interpretation of the data were completed.

Procedures Followed to Assure Accuracy and Credibility of Findings

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four aspects of establishing validity in a research study (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. I used triangulation, negative case analysis, member checking, and rich, thick

descriptions to establish and satisfy the criteria for credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Triangulation. Stake (1995) discussed four strategies for triangulating data: (a) data-source triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation. Data-source triangulation was chosen for the present study. In addition to the triangulated data analysis, and as an added measure, I hired a consultant to ensure study findings accuracy. The analyst's role consisted of reading the survey responses, identifying themes and patterns, questioning my interpretation of the data, and ensuring the quality of my research (see Appendix J for the analyst's confidentiality statement).

Triangulation can be multiple data collection methods and multiple sources (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995). In this study, I triangulated data sources from three different aspects to build a coherent justification for the themes, which added validity to the study (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995). I used survey questionnaires administered to the principal and to the assistant principal and a group of teachers, a document, and member checking for triangulation.

Negative case analysis. Negative case analysis involves a conscious search for negative cases and unconfirmed evidence. Creswell (2003, 2009) stated that negative or discrepant information should be presented. Giving negative information that goes against a hypothesis, helps the account becomes more realistic and valid (Creswell, 2012). Lodico et al. (2010) suggested revising the theory or explaining why the case does not fit, particularly with unconfirmed evidence or negative cases. The present study was

conducted in real life. Real-life context means that there are many perspectives that do not always coincide; adding opposing views increases the study's validity (Creswell, 2012).

Member checking. Member checking is a process used to determine accuracy by allowing the participants access to the final report for verification (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). I used member checking to ensure the accuracy of this study's findings. The final draft was delivered to the participants to check for errors, which allowed me to make corrections if necessary.

Rich, thick description. Merriam (2009) referred to a rich, thick description as meaning that words and pictures adequately convey what the researcher has learned about the phenomenon being explored. Simply put, an investigator completely describes the phenomenon under study. Rich, thick descriptions of the data obtained from the present study's participants were used to convey the findings in a clear, detailed picture, which made the results seem viable.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the practices that a successful African American principal uses to (a) value diversity, (b) adapt to diversity, (c) access culture, (d) manage the dynamics of difference, (e) and institute cultural knowledge to narrow the achievement gap in an urban high school. Also, the purpose of this research was to pinpoint and categorize the culturally competent practices of an African American principal that were believed to influence student achievement in a successful urban high school in Mississippi from the perspectives of the assistant

principal, teachers, and the principal. I used these findings to answer each research question. Also included in this section are the conceptual/theoretical framework and outliers or discrepancies that emerged during analysis. Results of the analysis are provided next. In these results, the assistant principal's and the teachers' responses were combined into one group.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was: What are the assistant administrator and the in-service teachers' perceptions of their principal's culturally competent/proficient leadership practices as they relate to (a) valuing diversity, (b) adapting to diversity, (c) assessing culture, (d) managing the dynamics of difference, and (e) instituting cultural knowledge in a successful urban high school in Mississippi? Each aspect of Research Question 1 is discussed next.

Valuing diversity. Responses regarding valuing diversity yielded four themes: through hiring a diverse staff, respecting and embracing student differences, encouraging feedback, and professional development. Table 4 shows the number of group members who referenced each theme and the frequency with which each was mentioned.

Table 4

How Teachers and the Assistant Principal See Their Principal Valuing Diversity

Themes	Number of group members who referenced themes	Frequency of themes (%)
Respecting and embracing student differences	5	62
Encouraging feedback	4	50
Professional development	3	37
Hiring a diverse staff	3	37

All eight group members supported the idea that their principal valued diversity. However, their perceptions of how the principal did so varied. Three group members cited multiple ways the principal valued diversity. Participant 1 felt the principal valued diversity by hiring a diverse staff and respecting the student body's differences while Participants 3 and 7 cited professional development and respect for differing opinions. Of the participants, 50% agreed that such an open and accepting approach was important. Moreover, 50% of the respondents also saw feedback as a way in which their principal valued diversity. Participant 8 said, "[The principal] provides opportunities for students and staff to give feedback of the school and its environment. [The principal] also invites the feedback of the community such as parents or guardians." Six respondents felt their principal valued diversity by respecting, listening to, and considering many opinions. However, they primarily designated this feedback as coming from teachers. Of the four teachers who noted that the principal appreciated feedback, three mentioned feedback

from teachers only while one mentioned feedback from students, staff, and the community.

The implications of the responses regarding diversity are twofold. First, these results indicate that educators in this study seem to define diversity not in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, or religion but instead by difference of opinion. While these differences of opinions and values could be a function of diversity in race, ethnicity, or gender (R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009; Ward, 2013), respondents made no such distinctions. This could suggest a need to reconsider the way educators define diversity. In a system and society where race, class, and ethnicity biases are often institutionalized, and therefore invisible, diversity should be expanded to explicitly include vectors of identity difference (D. B. Lindsey et al., 2009). Two, educators are primarily providing these diverse opinions; they are not coming from students, parents, or the wider community. While this is an important aspect of creating a culture of acceptance within the school (Bustamante, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009; Ward, 2013), these answers do seem to overlook valuing the student population's diversity. This could simply be a case of selective perception by the teachers. The question did not specify how the principal valued diversity for the students, and the teachers' responses might simply reflect the perspectives they know the best—their own. However, it would be important to explore this issue further to see if the principal's use of feedback as way of valuing diversity is limited to only teachers or extends to students and staff as well.

Such openness to and respect for different values, backgrounds, and cultures suggest an understanding of acceptance as a key to student success in and outside of the classroom. If a student feels uncomfortable, unsafe, or not respected, then that student's chance of success dramatically decreases (R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009; Ward, 2013). In this way, the teachers in this study implied that the principal's acceptance of diversity allows for greater acknowledgement of and respect for students' differences, which can in turn lead to motivating and empowering each. Moreover, as society becomes more diverse, students who learn and value diversity may be able to effectively talk with one another, to reach mutual understanding, and to realize that in diversity there is strength. These responses also suggest that these educators believe, or at least they think their principal believes, that valuing diversity is a multifaceted process, one that requires respect for and acceptance of opinions and ideas from teachers and students who are different from one another.

The outlier was the assistant administrator, who said the school "does not have a well-diverse population." However, the assistant administrator also acknowledged that the principal and the school's population in general still celebrated "the few students that have different backgrounds." Such a comment seemed to reflect the school's majority African American population, and it implied that such a composition does not qualify as diverse. This assessment implied that while African Americans are typically considered a minority in the larger national population, it is the absence of other races and ethnicities that signifies a lack of diversity. However, it may be that this outlier simply reflected how the assistant principal defined diversity. The assistant administrator did not define or

demarcate diversity as class, religion, sexuality, or gender. Expanding, delineating, and diversifying the meaning of diversity could lead to more all-around inclusive practices (D. B. Lindsey et al., 2009).

Adapting to diversity. Responses regarding adapting to diversity reflected three themes: open environment for students, changing school policies, and school clubs and activities. There was little agreement between group members on the methods their principal uses to adapt to diversity. Table 5 shows the number of group members who referenced each theme and the frequency with which each theme was mentioned.

Table 5
Adapting to Diversity

Themes	Number of group members who referenced themes	Frequency of themes (%)
Changing school policies	3	37
Open environment for students	2	25
School clubs and activities	2	25
Not listed	1	13

There was no major consensus on how the assistant administrator and the teachers see their principal adapt to diversity. Even in the relevant themes, opinions differed. Regarding school policies, three group members agreed that their principal uses school policies to adapt to diversity as understanding individual differences and contextual diversity are factors linked to learning (Akiba & Alkins, 2010; Au, 2012), but they expressed this agreement in different ways. Participant 3 indicated that the principal's policy is "where each of us are responsible for various clubs/organizations," and Participant 8 noted the principal's "open door policy for everyone," but Participant 7 took a more formal approach, saying that the principal "review[s] school policy to make sure we are following the guidelines."

These discrepancies also occurred in the themes of openness and school clubs and activities. Participant 1 pointed out that the principal "allows students and faculty to express themselves in all aspects" while Participant 8 once again pointed to the "open

door policy for everyone.” The assistant administrator felt that the principal adapts to diversity through “sports, JROTC, music,” and Participant 3 referred to the school’s various clubs and organizations.

However, these themes reflected the only consistent comments about adaptability. Participant 4 pointed to the principal’s leadership in addressing individual needs while Participant 6 felt that professional development is how the principal adapts to diversity. On the other hand, Participant 5 said there is never a need to adapt to diversity given that “the school is predominately African American.”

Such inconsistencies in answers could point to the principal’s lack of a coherent and holistic plan for adaptation to diversity. Cross et al. (1989) stated that it is important for organizations to adapt to diversity in order to operate effectively in the communities they serve. Cross et al. further inferred that acquiring and instituting cultural knowledge and adapting to diversity is the way to respond to diverse populations. Therefore, it could be that the principal does not have specific set of guidelines or plan of action to adapt to diversity. Or, the principal might have a formalized plan for diversity adaptation but has not yet publicized or distributed it to others at the school. Moreover, these inconsistencies could be an outcome of more fluid or informal guidelines to adaptation that teachers are misinformed about or unaware of (Akiba & Alkins, 2010; Au, 2012).

Alternatively, the differences in these answers could merely be a product of definition. Group participants might define and understand adaptation to diversity differently, leading them to different answers as to how their principal addresses this concept. This implication would once again seem to relate to problems that can emerge

from a multidefinitional meaning of diversity (D. B. Lindsey et al., 2009). How one perceives diversity will shape how one adapts to it (Hines, 2008; Karakose, 2008). Finally, these variations in the perceptions of the principal's methods of adapting to diversity could also suggest that the principal is taking a complex and manifold approach to addressing students' changing needs according to research conducted by Akiba and Alkins (2010), who noted the necessity for educators to understanding that students' cultural identities have a unique effect on the academic content being taught. Viewed in this way, the principal is tackling diversity on multiple levels, including one on one (open door policy and individual needs), in groups through an assortment of activities (clubs and organizations), and through teacher training (professional development and using school policies). The variety of adaptation practices could be an outcome not of amorphous, ambiguous policy but instead of an adjustable, versatile policy, which is consistent with Basch (2011a), who stated that implementing evidence-based school policies and programs will increase achievement.

How these responses differed is important to note especially in the context of the school's mission statement, which states that students should receive a well-rounded education that reflects today's ever-changing society. This mission statement reflects the value that school administration places on adapting to diversity given today's shifting sociocultural landscape. However, the disparity in group members' responses to how adapting to diversity is accomplished at the school seemed to indicate the lack of a unified and delineated approach to students receiving a well-rounded education. Whether this is the case, or whether it is merely a case of a lack of awareness of a delineated

approach to achieving the goal of an all-inclusive education (R. B. Lindsey et al., 2005; Smith, 2009), it may be useful for teachers and administrators to recircumscribe the school's policies for adapting to diversity.

Assessing culture. Assessing culture generated two themes: survey and various other forms of feedback and data, and community interactions. Five of the eight group participants (62%) emphasized that their principal used surveys, questionnaires, and evaluations to assess culture. Participant 5 said,

Surveys are done annually to get our feedback on what we see in the classroom and also to evaluate what we see as far as student reaction. We have a committee, TST [Teacher Support Team], that monitor[s] student achievement.

Participant 5 noted that while achievement is measured not solely by race, it is the main focus of cultural assessment. Participant 6 agreed that surveys are frequently used to examine school diversity as well as periodically administered to faculty members but did not define diversity, which made it unclear as to whether these surveys were used to gauge race, class, gender, or other vectors of difference. However, Participant 7 said that the principal does specifically conduct cultural assessment through the lens of gender, giving teachers a “breakdown of our males/females as well as the similarities and differences.” The same assessment of gender was noted by Participant 8, who said the principal “gathers information on our students to see who needs help or those who are struggling the most” and that teachers were subsequently “informed how we were losing our boys more so than girls in the classroom.”

Three participants also noted that their principal used a more informal method of cultural assessment by interacting with the school community, both inside the school and outside in the larger community. Participant 3 shared,

Earlier this year, [the principal] arranged a trip to one of the neighborhoods that service our school and we canvassed the community speaking to the parents of our students. [The principal] also is very active with our community council where teachers and staff members work with community leaders and liaisons to better our school.

Participant 1 made a similar point but focused more specifically on the school's staff.

"My principal accepts and adjusts to the different cultural needs of all faculty, staff, and students." Participant 4 concurred and said the principal was "effective in awareness of diversity."

A majority of the participants detailed specific assessment instruments. This indicated that the principal uses established and consistent cultural assessment methods. Structured assessment methods points to two significant implications. First, this suggests that the principal believes cultural assessment is valuable for helping teachers discover students' specific needs, problems, opinions, and attitudes. More specifically, this suggests that the principal considers difference to be a factor in student academic performance. This belief is consistent with the current literature indicating that disparities in gender, class, and race based on cultural norms, socioeconomic factors, and home life are factors in student achievement (Basch, 2011a; Prager, 2011; Webb & Thomas, 2015). Moreover, this suggests that such an assessment is best achieved by allowing students

and teachers to speak for themselves through surveys and questionnaires in addition to compiling data regarding trends and tendencies. This gives agency to students, allowing their voices to be heard and giving value their ideas, which can consequently give students a sense of validation, control, and influence. Such an assessment can be a particularly empowering practice given the frequent societal constraints on minority teens of both genders. At the same time, the principal's actions also seem to suggest the need for collecting objective, quantitative data as a way of empirically and impartially evaluating student problems and successes. The combination of both methods denoted a balanced and inclusive cultural assessment method.

Secondly, these systemized assessment forms also indicate that considering students' needs, problems, and opinions can help teachers design specialized curriculum that will lead to overall improvements in student achievement. This is particularly evident given that three of the five participants who discussed surveys as a form of cultural assessment specifically linked this method to mentoring and individualized programming. By linking cultural assessment to student learning and achieving, comments from the principal, as well as from the group members, suggested that not only did study participants consider differences as an important variable of learning and achievement; they also thought that any academic disadvantages or problems could be overcome by the use of individual instruction. In this way, generalized cultural assessment led to individualized academic instruction; such a practice seems to undercut the problems of oversimplification that can arise in such overarching cultural assessments by focusing on

students' individual concerns and needs (Akiba & Alkins, 2010; R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009; Ward, 2013).

While the informal cultural assessment methods three group members noted would seem to present problems of reliability and validity, issues that structured surveys may not encounter to the same extent, informal cultural assessment also suggests a less subject-centered evaluation of the personal and school-wide cultural situation. Informal cultural assessment expands assessment criteria and can allow for a more multidimensional evaluation process, particularly given informal cultural assessment's wider reach in considering parents and the larger community (Epstein et al., 2002; LaRoque et al., 2011; Prager, 2011; Ramirez & Soto-Hinman, 2009). This suggests that the group members perceived the principal's cultural assessment methods in both a macro way (the parents and community) and in a micro way (the teachers, staff, and students). Moreover, the group members' perceptions of the principal's mixed assessment practices suggested a balance of quantitative and qualitative data. This could reflect the principal's emphasis on both reducing and restructuring a complex problem to a limited number of variables to explain phenomena while also valuing a more holistic in-depth look at students, teachers, and the community's lived experience.

Managing the dynamics of difference. Responses regarding managing the dynamics of difference yielded one notable theme—implementing programming and professional development activities to teach students and teachers how to deal with conflicts that may arise from difference. However, two group members had interesting opinions. One felt that no conflicts arose from differences at the school; the other thought

there was no training provided to faculty on how to manage difference. Table 6 shows the number of group members who referenced each theme and the frequency with which each theme was mentioned.

Table 6

Managing Difference

Themes	Number of group members who referenced themes	Frequency of themes (%)
Implementing programs and professional activities to address conflicts resulting from difference	5	50
Communication with parents	3	30
No need for/no training for managing difference	2	20

Participants pointed to a variety of school programs and professional development activities that their principal has implemented that work as either a direct or indirect method of managing difference, particularly as managing difference relates to conflict arising between students or as it affects academic achievement. Participant 3 specifically cited the Talk About Problems program “which helps students work out differences or disagreements that they may have as a results of problems” including peer student mediation. Two participants (25%) also noted academic interventions such as tutorials and academic pull-outs as effective ways of managing difference. Participant 1 said that such programming “deescalates the situation to minimize the need for security . . . and takes the appropriate steps to ensure a resolution is reached smoothly.” Two participants cited professional development for teachers. Participant 4 pointed to a teacher mentorship

program and the forthcoming student mentorship program, both offered to foster communication. Additionally, Participant 7 noted “PBIS [Positive Behavior Interventions and Support] sessions that stress conflict resolutions strategies/ideas” for teachers as being an effective approach to managing difference.

While not directly connected to academic and professional programs, other group members remarked on the consistent theme of communication. In addition to student-to-student and teacher-to-teacher communication, contact with parents was recognized as a method to manage difference. For Participant 1, this communication involves a calm and open conversation between the principal and an upset parent. Two participants (25%) also noted that if a student was in any sort of trouble, academic or otherwise, administrators would reach out to the parent. Participant 7 said the principal “communicate[s] any urgent concerns to the parents.” Participant 8 concurred and said, “We inform parents that has [sic] a student that struggles.”

These responses point to a number of significant implications. First, communication is consistently valued as a method for managing difference. The principal’s communication takes many forms: student-to-student, teacher-to-student, teacher-to-teacher, and teacher/administrator-to-parent. In each of these communication pairs, the common denominator is a calm and mediated discussion that allows both parties to express their opinion and feel that they are being heard. Acknowledgment and validation—of difference, of the conflicts and feelings that arise through difference, whether emotional or academic—act as a means of inter- and intrapersonal management (Bifulco et al., 2012). Bifulco et al. (2012) indicated that students who reported higher

quality intergroup interactions at their schools also reported more positive attitudes toward group members and a more positive learning environment. Additionally, teachers in Al-Fadhli and Singh's (2010) study reported that they felt NCLB had impacted their schools for the better in terms of improving interpersonal relationships. Consistent communication also offers transparency between parents, students, teachers, and administrators, and this modeling of transparency in communication can help set an expectation of transparency across the school (Hollins, 2013).

The configuration of these communication dialogues also points to a more fluid rather than hierarchal method of learning, knowledge, and guidance. Traditional models of learning have those in authority on top, disseminating their knowledge to those below them (Pepper, 2010). In the educational paradigm, educators are atop the chain while students are receptacles of their erudite experience and teaching (Pepper, 2010). While this structure still clearly exists at the study school, particularly related to academic interventions via tutorials and academic pull-outs, the principal also engages in a less tiered system. Highlighting the importance of peer-to-peer communication (Cooper, 2010) through the use of the Talk About Problems program and the forthcoming student mentoring program provides authority, and therefore validity, to the thoughts, opinions, and advice students already have. While these programs still remain firmly embedded in the traditional model of one-on-one mentorship, using student-to-student guidance provides a fresh twist on a conventional system (Cooper, 2010).

Finally, open communication with parents seems to bolster the claim that parental involvement is essential in student academic and emotional achievement and makes it

clear to families that they are a valued part of the school community. Epstein et al.'s (2002) model of parental involvement includes practicing school-to-parent communication. Epstein et al.'s model reinforces and delineates the relationship between families, schools, and communities as intersecting spheres of influence that share a concern about the child's success and contends that interpersonal relationships and patterns of influence are the most important aspect of a child's education. By creating a two-way, home-to-school communication channel regarding children's academic development, teachers and administrators can better assess parents' perceptions of and reactions to their child's academic and emotional development, which is frequently based on differences (Ballenger & Ninness, 2013; Epstein et al., 2002; Leon et al., 2011; Smith, 2009).

In addition to the implications of the principal's approach, it is important to explore the group members' characterizations and classifications of what managing the dynamics of difference means. For five group members (62%), their answers indicated that this term refers to conflict and disagreement. D. B. Lindsey et al. (2009) declared that differences are managed within an organizational culture and the cultural context of the community through the process of problem-solving and conflict resolution. While cultural destructiveness in the form of language and behavior that berates, negates, or disparages difference is indeed an existing and exigent problem (Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2007), the dynamics of difference are often defined much more broadly. This belief is consistent with current research findings suggesting that more affirmative ways of engaging in the dynamics of difference are creating core programs

that meet the needs of all students and help them interact with other cultural groups in ways that recognize and value their differences and that motivate them to assess their own skills and expand their knowledge and resources (CampbellJones, CampbellJones, & Lindsey 2010; R. B. Lindsey et al., 2008). The educators' emphasis on conflict and disagreement may suggest that it is a current school problem, or it may indicate a lens through which the educators view and understand the interaction of difference.

As noted, there were two outliers; both were from teachers. Participant 5 said, "Not much training is offered to increase awareness of conflict" while Participant 4 noted "There has not been any conflict that I am aware of that needed attending to." Both of these participants, however, did include caveats. Participant 5 noted that there is a professional platform in which to address any conflicts while Participant 4 cited the mentorship program in place for teachers. These responses seem to indicate two beliefs. It seems that Participant 5 referred to a lack of any formalized professional training as it relates to managing difference. Clearly, Participant 5 acknowledged the structures in place for dealing with conflict; the disparity seems to have arisen from a dearth of formalized training. Similarly, Participant 4 noted the established system for dealing with conflicts from difference—the mentorship problem—but did not see any need for it given a lack of conflict. This could be a case of circular reasoning as the scarcity of conflict could be a function of the programs already established to manage difference. Such a comment, however, seems to contradict or at least complicate the other respondents' definition of managing the dynamics of difference as conflict and discord.

Instituting cultural knowledge in a successful urban high school in

Mississippi. Group members' responses to instituting cultural knowledge in a successful urban high school in Mississippi reflected three themes: professional development, communication, and the everyday aspects of the school itself. Table 7 shows the number of group members who referenced each theme and the frequency with which themes were referenced.

Table 7

Institutionalization of Cultural Knowledge

Themes	Number of group members who referenced theme	Frequency of theme (%)
Professional development	7	64
Communication	2	18
Everyday aspects of the school itself	2	18

The majority of group members (87%) believe professional development activities are the primary way their principal institutionalizes cultural knowledge. However, teachers varied in the way they perceived the focus and content of this professional development. Participant 1 identified “leadership meetings where policies are produced and decided upon by a core group of veteran teachers” and said such policies “help us move forward as a culturally-aware group of teachers.” Participants 3 and 7 both pointed to professional learning communities as a major part of professional development and institutionalized cultural awareness. Two participants had slightly different interpretations of professional development. Participant 5 explained that while “professional development has been offered on addressing the culture of the school” there was no such development of

“culture based primarily on students.” In a different vein, Participant 4 implied that institutionalized culturally awareness was limited to faculty and said, “Professional development is given for faculty; however, I am not aware of staff professional development. Students probably need more programs or community involvements that will help in institutionalizing cultural knowledge.”

These mixed impressions can be understood in various ways. First is the definition of cultural awareness. As Participant 5 stated, the connotations of such a term are not necessarily rigid and demarcated. To some, culture is a more general term that refers to the atmosphere or ethos of a particular institution. This belief is consistent with other researchers who indicated that the principal is responsible for setting the culture and climate of a school (Karakose, 2008; MacNeil et al., 2009; Shipp & Kim, 2014). Additionally, Bustamante et al. (2009) stated that school culture and climate are instrumental in developing school-wide cultural competence. However, to others culture refers to the *mélange* of different ethnicities, races, social classes, and genders (R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009, p. 14). Moreover, these two definitions can be contextualized in a micro or macro framework: through the lens of this particular school, these particular students, and these particular faculty and staff, or through the lens of a more generalized sociocultural transnational culture (D. B. Lindsey et al., 2009). These differences in defining culture will alter how group members view the institutionalization of cultural knowledge.

Secondly, these responses suggest a more traditional hierarchal power paradigm. That is, according to all seven group members who referenced professional development,

cultural awareness is a function of teachers and administrators. While one would not expect students to fall into the category of professional development, as Participant 4 expressly stated, such a narrow delineation of the term excludes staff. Moreover, these responses suggest that institutionalization is a function of those with more authority—the teachers and administrators—rather than of those with less—the students (Pepper, 2010).

Despite the primary concentration on professional development as a mode of institutionalized knowledge, two respondents, a teacher and the assistant administrator, focused on how such knowledge is structured and entrenched for students. This same focus is reflected in the school's mission statement. While Participant 4 did not see any such institutionalization for students, Participant 7 pointed to student assemblies as a way to establish and maintain cultural awareness. Another participant also recognized the seemingly banal aspects of school life that work to institutionalize cultural awareness, including “textbooks, celebrations, and other activities.” These perceptions seem to dovetail with the school's mission statement, which reflects that students will be taught to creatively think and develop their potential by using diversified courses and activities to enable them to reach maturity and become life-long learners.

However, given the school's mission statement, it seems that there is a disparity between how group members perceive institutionalizing of cultural knowledge between faculty, staff, and students. While it is clear that professional development plays an essential role in this process, participants' recognition of the school's everyday activities suggests an alternative route for institutionalizing cultural knowledge for both teachers and students. Humanities-based disciplines like sociology, anthropology, American

studies, and critical studies have shifted their theoretically and ethnographically based research toward the culture of everyday life and now focus on how seemingly commonplace and ordinary aspects of how everyday life reflect and symbolize self and society.

Fiske (1989) one of the leaders of cultural studies, argued that looking at everyday life provides an emphasis on the meanings and uses people attribute to various objects and practices. It also acts as a disruptor of conventional power structures, sidelining the top-down model in favor of a bottom-up system. In this way, individuals can analyze how everyday people and their languages, activities, material goods, and behaviors enact differences and either reinforce or disrupt traditional modes of power (Pepper, 2010). Such a lens also seems appropriate for both understanding and subsequently institutionalizing cultural knowledge through the everyday in schools, including such seemingly mundane or innocuous activities and objects like assemblies, textbooks, courses, cafeteria food, school celebrations, and decorations. In this way, these everyday activities and objects can institutionalize cultural differences for students, teachers, and administrators.

While participant responses reflected no explicit recognition of the integration of a culture of everyday life into institutionalizing cultural awareness, two of the respondents' answers point to ways in which this theoretical viewpoint can be (and, to a certain extent, already is) transformed into a defined, practical way of establishing difference. These ways include books, courses and classes, staff and faculty, clubs,

organizations, sports teams, uniforms or clothing policies, disciplinary policies, school holidays, decorations, and cafeteria food, among others.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was: What are the assistant administrator's and the teachers' perceptions of their principal's culturally competent/proficient leadership practices believed to impact student achievement in a successful urban high school in Mississippi? Responses from group members regarding Research Question 2 resulted in two important themes: academic pull-outs and tutorials and academic programming. There were other responses, although less prevalent, in the area of student feedback as well as a variety of other practices. The breakdown of these responses can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8

Principal's Culturally Competent/Proficient Leadership Practices for Academic Achievement

Themes	Number of group member who references theme referencing theme	Frequency of themes (%)
Academic pull-outs and tutorials	5	33.3
Other practices	5	20.0
Academic programming	3	33.3
Student feedback	2	13.3

The first theme that came from group members' responses was academic pull-outs and tutorials. Many of the respondents identified the link between the testing and evaluation of student scores and the use of principal-implemented pull-outs and tutorials. Participant 5 shared,

We track students by test scores. They are basically double dosed daily in subject area. During our FIT meetings we look at data and determine if a student needs pull-out tutorial or needs to be moved to another class with a different teacher.

Participant 1 added that the principal “implements mandatory pull-out tutorial sessions for students who need extra assistance to pass SATP [Subject Area Testing Program] or PARCC [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers] tests” while Participant 8 noted that teachers were encouraged to “provide tutorial sessions for students during and after school.” Participant 3 listed the programs the principal has implemented: “screeners, tutorials, pull-out[s], after-school workshops.” Three group members (37%) ranked tutorials and pull-outs in their top three principal activities. Both Participant 1 and 3 ranked tutorials and pull-outs as first, and Participant 8 ranked them second.

The second theme was academic programming. In this theme, however, there was more variation as to what types of academic programming respondents found significant. Both Participant 1 and Participant 7 noted the principal’s implementation of literacy programming. Participant 7 said, “We involve our students in an activity called Word of the Day every block to increase their vocabulary” and ranked this activity as the second most important practice the principal has implemented (out of a top three ranking). This practice was similarly noted by Participant 1, who ranked this activity the third most important practice for student achievement. Participant 1 also added that students analyze five new vocabulary words weekly in addition to the school-wide Word of the Day and noted that the school has added a “flourishing book club.”

In addition to literacy-based activities, group members recognized academic programming in other disciplines and in other ways. Participant 4 observed that the principal “stresses differentiation for all students, individualize[d] plans” and ranked differentiated learning as the second most important practice for student achievement. Participant 4 also noted that collaboration between teachers acted as a way to further support the students. Participant 7 agreed and noted that “we have common planning on B-Day to collaborate with teachers who teach the same course to help our students achieve, which leads to academic success.” Both Participant 4 and 7 ranked collaborations among teachers as the number one practice their principal has implemented for student achievement. Participant 1 also pointed out the wide range of academic areas of academic programming. “Elective courses must have ‘Waging War’ activities in place for 30 minutes each block where students are reading and analyzing articles. We also have annual reading fairs and science fairs that are mandatory for students.” Participant 1 ranked this Waging War activity second in the top three principal practices while Participant 6 ranked the school’s academic programs in general the third most important practice for student success.

Taken together, these two themes suggest a skill-based, somewhat traditional paradigm of academic success insofar as the majority of respondents recognized academics, albeit in a myriad of forms, as the cornerstone of student success and the principal’s best practice. Reading, vocabulary, science, and critical thinking all remain in the established public school curriculum paradigm (MDE, 2015) and also seem to suggest a tendency toward the conventional barometers of success, mainly the standardized test.

Such statewide and federal benchmark exams focus on the same areas as the academic programming these teachers and the academic administrator see their principal concentrating on: reading, writing, math, and critical thinking. Whether this intersection is a result of these standardized tests (that is, the principal intentionally emphasizes these areas because of the standardized test scores) or the other way around (that students' success on such tests are the outcome of academic programming in these areas) is not clear. Yet, the overlap between the two areas is clear, making it apparent that students are being provided with the learning practices needed for academic success (Pinder, 2010).

These academic practices—individualized learning, the depth and breadth of academic programming, the use of in-school and after-school tutoring and pull-outs, and the collaboration of teachers to assist in student learning—implemented by the principal reflect Delpit's (2012) research, which identified four key characteristics of high-performing African American schools: (a) meaningful learning was taking place, (b) academic rigor existed, (c) cultural connections were evident, and (d) teachers had a profound belief in their students' capabilities.

As noted, group members' responses also suggested an emphasis on numbers as a form of accountability for both students and teachers. Teachers and administrators at the study school use SATP and PARCC exams as well as individual student grades to indicate student achievement and student need. In fact, Participant 3 ranked weekly meetings to discuss student data as the second most important principal activity while Participant 5 cited “consistency in data-driven decisions” as the first on the list of the top three practices used to improve student achievement. On the one hand, such an objective

measurement is a necessary part of analyzing and evaluating students' retention and application of knowledge they are learning in the classroom. Numbers provide a succinct, holistic, and easily comparative way of assessment (Abbate, 2010). On the other hand, stressing numerical assessment as a guiding light to academic programming and student learning assistance can also be seen as a concession to the vast state and federally mandated programs such as NCLB that link school dollars to scores (McFeeters, 2016). This suggests an emphasis on traditional evaluation modes rather than nontraditional methods of learning and assessment, which are frequently more beneficial for minority students (Usher & Kober, 2012).

Despite the apparent attention to grades and scores, group members seemed to stress the individualized nature of learning, promoting a less generic approach to one-size-fits-all education. While success at the study school seems to be measured, in part, by grades and standardized test scores, the educators' responses indicated that data serve not as an indication of teacher or administrative success but instead as a gauge to help identify students who are struggling and subsequently individualize academic learning plans for them. While such a process still seemed to follow a more traditional form of evaluation and assessment, its use as a starting point for individualized and differentiated learning plans points to a less traditional practice for learning. This suggests that the principal is separating the learning process from the learned outcome, using two separate approaches for each. In this way, learning is individualized but assessment is universalized.

In addition to these two themes, group members cited a variety of other practices that their principal used to obtain student achievement. One teacher pointed to discipline, another to motivating students inside and outside the school, yet another to the school climate and atmosphere as well as the expectations the principal sets for students, parents, and staff. Two participants (25%) recognized extracurricular activities as an additional source of student academic achievement, and one other teacher noted “learning walks” where teachers observe their colleagues at work in the classroom.

These responses indicated that while group members seem to greatly value academics as the primary avenue toward accomplishing student achievement, academics are not the only element of achieving student success. The diversity of the participants’ responses points to the diversity of realms that are essential to student achievement: the home, teachers, internal and external motivation, after-school activities, and the learning climate itself. Such recognition suggests that while innovative and consistent academic programming and assistance are crucial to student achievement, academics should be supplemented with other aspects of school and home life (Ballenger & Ninness, 2013; Smith, 2009). Moreover, the respondents’ answers also indicated the array of people who are vital to student achievement: the principal, the parents, the teachers, and the students themselves. By broadening the sphere of accountability and responsibility, group members acknowledged the multidimensional nature of learning and achieving.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was: What are the principal’s culturally competent/proficient leadership practices believed to impact student achievement in a successful urban high

school in Mississippi? Responses from the principal yielded one theme: academic assistance and programming. The principal listed seven practices used to help a diverse student population succeed: (a) double dosing of SATP courses, (b) pull-out tutorials, (c) after-school tutorials, (d) differentiated instructions/learning, (e) scaffolding, (f) coteaching, and (g) lessons that address diversity. As they relate to valuing, adapting, assessing, managing, and instituting diversity, the principal's views were less concrete and more theoretical. The principal also stated acceptance of responsibility reflected in the belief that a principal's "role [is] to ensure that all faculty, staff, and students value and respect all aspects of diversity . . . including racial, sexual (gender), economic, disabilities" and frequently noted that it is the principal's job to create a welcoming and accepting culture and environment. While the principal did not give many specifics on how this is done, the principal did state that these practices provided training for staff as well as professional development activities; encouraged feedback from parents, students, and staff; and created structures and opportunities for recognizing and celebrating differences.

While it is unclear if the principal's first list was created as an intentional hierarchy with what the principal believes are the most important practices first, all of the principal's answers fell squarely in the in-school academic paradigm. This concentration on academics can be understood in three ways. First, the principal's role is vital in the both the content of answers and the concurrence of those answers. Since principals are responsible for teacher quality and ensuring student academic success above all (Clifford, Hansen, et al., 2012; Pepper, 2010), a focus on academic programming and assistance

seems logical. Such practices as double dosing in subject areas that students have trouble with, in-school pull-out tutorials and after-school tutorials, and individualized instruction and learning as well as scaffolding learning all point to the principal enacting a balance between leadership and accountability standards that allows freedom (in the form of innovative academic assistance programs) while still providing a concentration on objective, numbers-based student achievement (Abbate, 2010).

Secondly, the principal's stress on diversity suggests two distinct although interrelated ideas on diversity. The first is that diversity is tantamount to understanding and subsequently individualizing how students learn. The principal's emphasis on diversity in the classroom points to a recognition that students' cultural identities have a unique effect on the academic content being taught as well as the idea that individual differences and contextual diversity are linked to learning (Akiba & Alkins, 2010; Au, 2012). As social scientists have argued, contextualization is key to understanding the construction of society. A shared language and typifying schemes are the basis for people's social interactions and their stock of knowledge, which is ultimately cemented by institutionalization; in this case, through education (Berger & Luckmann, 1972). In this way, the principal is conceptually and practically linking diversity to student achievement.

Academic assistance and academic programming is where the second implication arises—that diversity is a lesson that can be taught, at least in part. By linking academics to diversity and treating diversity as something that can be taught, the principal suggested that diversity is a concept that necessitates both cultural and traditional learning; that is,

habituation and institutionalization. Because difference is both a cultural phenomenon and an institutionalized, hierarchal system, the principal's view of lessons in diversity suggests that diversity must not just be acknowledged and welcomed (socially and culturally) but taught and analyzed (academically and institutionally), which is consistent with other research findings (Au, 2012; Cady, 2011; Moore & Lemmer, 2010).

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 was What is the importance of identifying a successful principal's cultural leadership practices? Data for Research Question 4 were derived from the three previous research questions and disclosed two themes: student achievement and a welcoming environment. The first theme was student achievement. While all the participants discussed the importance of the principal's methods for attaining student achievement, the teachers also linked the principal's cultural leadership to student achievement.

Participant 3 noted that when the principal manages difference in diversity, doing so comes in the form of "academic interventions through our staff for our students during and after school." Participant 8 also linked managing differences in diversity with student achievement and said, "We are provided training and feedback after and before testing. We offer tutorial for students that struggle with any subject." The school's mission statement also dovetails with the intersection between student achievement and managing diversity in stating that "The mission . . . is to provide a well-rounded educational foundation in an ever-changing society."

Cultural assessment skills are also linked to student achievement. Participant 5 said, “We have a committee, TST [Teacher Support Team] that monitors student achievement. Achievement is not specifically based on race but is designed to address that issue.” Participant 8 agreed, noting that the principal “gathers information on our students to see who needs help or those who are struggling the most” using cultural assessment skills as a way to assist in student achievement.

Participant 7 linked the institutionalization of cultural knowledge with student achievement and noted that “Assemblies with the students stress academics.” The school’s mission statement also incorporates the institutionalization of cultural knowledge with achievement by stating that “All students will be taught to think critically and creatively to develop their potential through a diverse program of courses and activities that will help them mature.”

The second theme was a welcoming environment. Teachers and the assistant principal consistently emphasized that the principal’s incorporation of cultural leadership practices led to a more inclusive school. The first way the principal creates a welcoming environment is through valuing diversity. Participant 1 noted that the principal “treats all students equally and fair.” Participant 4 said the principal’s valuing of diversity “encourages openness from everyone and values the ideas and opinions presented.” Participant 8 noted that this valuing of diversity extends beyond the students as the principal “invites the feedback of the community such as parents or guardians.”

Teachers also connected adapting to diversity with a warm and welcoming school environment. Participant 1 said, “My principal allows students and faculty to express

themselves in all aspects.” Participant 2 agreed and stated that the principal “create[s] an environment that is welcoming to all” by adapting to diversity. Participant 8 noted that the principal has “an open door policy for everyone by using the school policy and . . . also tries to address any issues that deals with the differences of teaches as well as students.”

Teachers and the assistant principal also cited other cultural leadership values that led to a welcoming school environment. Participant 2 and 9 connected the institutionalization of cultural knowledge with an inclusive environment. Participant 2 said the principal “create[s] structures where faculty, parents, and student can practice cultural expectations.” Participant 9 noted that students and teachers receive “cultural knowledge through textbooks, celebrations, and other activities.” Teachers and the assistant principal also linked cultural assessment with an open environment, primarily through the use of surveys. Participant 5 said, “Surveys are done annually to get our feedback on what we see in the classroom and also to evaluate what we see as far as student reaction.” Participant 9 agreed: “We have surveys, questionnaires, and evaluations that are design[ed] to tell administration what are teachers’/students’ needs, likes, and dislikes.” Participant 2 added that the principal “solicit[s] feedback on culture from parents, students, and staff,” which contributes to a welcoming environment for everyone at the school.

The assistant administrator and teachers agreed that they saw their principal as a culturally competent and proficient leader and that the principal exhibited the five key cultural practices identified by R. B. Lindsey et al. (2005) and R. B. Lindsey, Nuri

Robins, and Terrell (2009): (a) valuing diversity, (b) adapting to diversity, (c) assessing culture, (d) managing the dynamics of difference, and (e) instituting cultural knowledge.

While there were some differences of opinion as to how the principal enacted and implemented these facets of diversity, respondents all noted the principal's openness to feedback, creation of an approachable and respected school atmosphere, consistent professional development, and the use of in-school academic programming and after-school extracurricular activities as practices that promote and engage in diversity. In some of these areas, teachers and the assistant administrator indicated a clear, formalized policy that guides the valuation, adaptation, assessment, management, and institutionalization of diversity. In other areas the respondents' answers suggested a less official, less delineated policy. Frequently, the disparities in the respondents' replies seemed to emerge from a lack of a clear definition of diversity and a focus on teacher-specific practices. Despite these differences, teachers and the assistant administrator believe their principal implements a mixed-methods way of valuing, adapting, assessing, managing, and institutionalizing diversity, balancing quantitative data in the form of surveys, questionnaires, and data crunching and qualitative data through feedback and open communication.

When analyzing the perceptions of how the assistant administrator and the teachers viewed their principal's culturally competent/proficient leadership practices as impacting student achievement, there was much more consistency and cohesion in their responses. Overwhelmingly, teachers cited academic programming and assistance as the most important practices in student achievement. The respondents pointed to two main

forms of academics: pull-outs and tutorials and academic coursework. Many respondents identified the link between testing and evaluation of student scores and using principal-implemented pull-outs and tutorials and noted using varied academic programs in reading, writing, critical thinking, and science. These two major themes suggest that the respondents believe their principal engages in a somewhat conventional paradigm of academic success but they also see the principal's use of differentiated learning and individualized academic plans as an unconventional way to achieve this traditional, standardized measurement of academic success. In this way, respondents saw the principal as separating the process of learning (individualized tutorials, pull-outs, differentiated learning) from the outcome of learning (data based on standardized tests and grades).

Next, the principal's own view of how culturally competent/proficient leadership practices impact student achievement in this high school focused on academic practices to ensure student success. More specifically, the principal noted academic tutorials, pull-outs, and differentiated learning. Significantly noted was the principal's emphasis on diversity, particularly in the paradigm of academics and student achievement. The principal's view when related to valuing, adapting, assessing, managing, and institutionalizing diversity is unique as it relates to associating diversity with academic achievement as a best practice.

Finally, the importance of identifying a successful principal's cultural leadership practices was revealed through cross referencing the principal's, the assistant principal's, and the teachers' answers to the questionnaire. The importance of identifying the

principal's cultural leadership practice was reflected by the convergence of study findings into two themes: student achievement and a welcoming environment. Student academic success was linked to the principal's use of three cultural leadership practices: managing difference, cultural assessments, and institutionalization of cultural knowledge. More specifically, the teachers' views supported the premise that the principal's approach to managing difference are academic interventions provided during and after school. Also, the school's mission aligned with that of the teachers as it states that "The mission . . . is to offer a well-rounded educational foundation in an ever-changing society." Next, the teachers acknowledged cultural assessment through the principal inaugurating a TST committee whose purpose is to monitor student success. Last, the institutionalization of cultural knowledge was avowed through assemblies that stress academics. The school's mission statement reflects a commitment to student success with its affirmation that "students are taught to think critically and creatively." Creating a welcome environment was evident in comments about how the principal values and adapts to diversity; that is, valuing and adapting to diversity through the channels of equal and fair treatment, openness, soliciting feedback from stakeholders, allowing student expression, textbooks, celebrations, and other activities. In sum, all of these factors were said to contribute to the principal's establishing a welcoming environment.

One study finding suggested that the assistant principal has a narrow definition of diversity; therefore, it is likely that an expansion, delineation, and diversification of the meaning of diversity could lead to more inclusive practices. As administrators engage in a variety of activities, teachers' practices improve, which leads to improved student

learning outcomes (Finnigan, 2012). Professional development for educational leaders that focuses on diversity could greatly improve cultural leadership in failing schools. Another finding revealed by the data but not in the area of principal professional development was the need for teachers to have a clearer definition of diversity and the teachers' inability to link diversity to academic achievement. Based on these three findings, providing professional development for administrators could enhance school leadership, which could then directly benefit teachers. The present study's results may prove beneficial for administrators of failing schools and could be used as a template for schools that share the same or similar characteristics as the study school.

Conclusion

In Section 2 I provided the purpose of the study, which was to explore African American principal's cultural leadership effects on closing the achievement gap by conducting a case study. Subsections in Section 2 contained descriptions of the justifications for how the study was configured. I also explained how the research strategies I identified were used in this study. The setting and sample were described followed by an in-depth discussion of the data collection methods used. Finally, I provided a detailed narrative on the procedures for data analysis and the analysis results. I concluded that school leaders of all types may benefit from professional development that reflects a successful urban school principal's cultural leadership practices, beliefs, and actions as a template and a guide for school improvement. In the next section, I discuss in more detail how culturally competent/proficient principals should respond to diversity in the face of a continually growing global society.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

NCLB mandates have ensured that all schools be held accountable for the students they teach. In Section 1, I discussed WPS's inability to narrow the achievement gap between African American and European American students in math and reading as set forth by NCLB. Not complying with these directives has caused principals to examine measures for boosting the academic attainment of an increasingly diverse student body. I sought to examine the problem of leaders not meeting AYP by exploring the culturally competent/proficient leadership practices that an African American principal in a successful urban high school uses to (a) value diversity, (b) adapt to diversity, (c) access culture, (d) manage the dynamics of difference, and (e) institute cultural knowledge that are most effective in closing the achievement gap.

To establish how important successful cultural leadership practices are, I first had to decide on the best course of action. These decisions led me to seek assistance in identifying my project genre, so I uploaded my study findings to Walden University's classroom blackboard for discussion. I decided to provide a professional development program with a focus on diversity and cultural leadership based on a finding in Section 2, which disclosed that the assistant principal had a somewhat narrow perception of diversity. I sought my committee chair's approval for taking this approach as I felt it was the most appropriate project based on the findings. My committee chair suggested that I upload my study results to My Doctoral Research (MyDR) for my committee's consent. Finally, after revising, clarifying, and conversing via emails, the members of my doctoral

committee and I arrived at a consensus, which was to develop a professional development program on diversity and cultural leadership practices for both aspiring and practicing administrators.

Project Description and Goals

The project I chose to develop is a PowerPoint presentation that reflects the distinctive aspects of diversity and a successful principal's uses of culturally competent/proficient leadership practices. This approach was informed by a finding from my data analysis that showed the assistant administrator had a limited view of diversity, which also held implications for practice and future research. The project, a professional development program, was developed to help WPS administrators address issues of diversity and cultural competence as they relate to closing the performance gap between minority and nonminority students. Such issues have caused the district to not meet AYP in recent years. Because the district has not been successful in diminishing the performance difference between minority and nonminority students, I believed this professional development would be helpful.

The PowerPoint presentation I developed, Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership, reflects four goals:

- presenting a stronger view of diversity and promoting experiences that support culturally competent/proficient leadership,
- offering structure by showcasing an assortment of exercises with relevance to site, system, and participants,

- advancing collaborative learning experiences, and
- enhancing student learning.

Rationale

I developed this study project to help meet the needs of WPS administrators who lead failing schools. I chose this project study because WPS's accountability test results from 2006 to 2014 have shown the need to support principals who preside over failing schools by illuminating a successful leader's responsive cultural practices, policies, and processes. Revealing the core of successful leadership also exposes a means for increasing the academic achievement of all students. Several principals preside over successful schools in the WPS district. My passion for helping others was ignited each new school term when the principal would begin the first faculty meeting by analyzing the school's accountability test records. This annual process made me more impassioned about helping students make AYP and propelled me to probe deeper into identifying what is needed to foster and support successful principals.

Identifying a deficiency as indicated by a finding in Section 2, which highlighted the assistant principal's limited interpretation of diversity, guided me to selecting professional development as the genre for this project. Educators must consider student diversity because they educate students who differ in terms of race, ethnicity, language, cultural history, creed, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and talents (Figueiredo-Brown, Ringler, & James, 2015). Providing education on diversity and problem-solving would be constructive to administrators. I believed this project would be accepted and appreciated by all professional development participants in the WPS district.

I also found that the principal at the study site uses these academic practices to aid student success: (a) individualized learning, (b) deep and wide academic programming, (c) in-school and after-school tutoring and pull-outs, and (d) teacher collaboration. This is consistent with research conducted by Delpit (2012), who described several attributes of a high-performing African American school: (a) meaningful learning took place, (b) academic rigor existed, and (c) teachers had an in-depth belief in their pupils' proficiencies. Professional development that focuses on diversity and cultural leadership practices will help principals, both in service and in training, improve their leadership practices, which will impact student performance (Clifford, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Feters, 2012; Clifford, Hansen, et al., 2012; Finnigan, 2012).

Review of the Literature

In the literature reviewed for Section 3, I concentrated on aspects of producing professional development for administrators. I searched books, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, ERIC, and the Internet for educational periodicals, journals, and reports for my literature review. I conducted a comprehensive search for the literature based on key words related to cultural leadership: *professional development*, *diversity*, *principal leadership*, *multicultural education*, and *cultural proficiency/competency*. The phrases used in the literature review included improving principals' cultural leadership, professional development for principals, culturally competent leadership, and diversity and professional development for principals. While compiling resources, I also restricted searches to exclude peer-reviewed sources older than 5 years, which generated current literature from an array of viewpoints, entities, cultures, genders, and institutions. I then

measured saturation when the research sources used became repetitive. The information extracted from this literature review included models for the project.

Introduction

School administrators have the task of managing schools (Huber, 2010; Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012). Principals must also be instructional leaders (Duncan, Range, & Scherz, 2011; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Instructional leadership requires administrators to be team builders with a shared vision of success for all pupils (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Leaders who work with teachers can influence teachers' instructional practices, which works to boost student success (Duncan et al., 2011; Green, 2010; Matthews & Crow, 2010; Mentz, Webber, & van der Walt, 2010; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). Similarly, the principal's influence is important as involving this individual represents a robust approach to conserving instructional reform costs (Wallace Foundation, 2011). Administrators' duties include the responsibility for ensuring that teachers receive the education, support, and means needed to assist a diverse student population (Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012).

Aiding a diverse student body by focusing on diversity based on educators' needs is important as leaders cannot perform their duties with a limited view of diversity. Moreover, teaching diversity is fundamental to the academic success of a diverse student body (Au, 2012; Cady, 2011; Hernandez & Kose, 2012; Howard, 2010; Jackson, 2012). Au (2012) also noted that high-stakes testing affects teaching diversity in four ways: (a) high-stakes testing has caused subjects that are not tested to be pushed out of the curriculum; (b) student learning is affected because students learn best when they can

relate their identities, lives, and experiences to what they are being taught; (c) students of diverse population are under increased pressure to perform well, which will likely cause poor performance; and (d) teacher diversity, both personal and in teaching styles, is lessened when they teach to the test and are not allowed to individualize their instruction by using multicultural content.

Jackson (2012) stated that diversity must be adapted and accommodated for in a culturally diverse student population by using strategies that will bridge competencies learned at home with those taught at school. Cady (2011) also found three facets relevant to teaching diversity: (a) matching instructional strategies to children's and families' cultural experiences is instrumental to student success; (b) providing supportive positive intergroup relationships improves student motivational level, self-esteem, empathy, and academic achievement; and (c) allowing negative stereotypes can negatively impact student achievement. Hernandez and Kose (2012) offered a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity, a theoretical view of exemplary principal leadership and diversity that provided an interpretation of the issues of difference and diversity in schools. Howard (2010) found that student educational attainment can be improved by effectively teaching race and culture.

Having practices and policies in place related to teaching diversity has been shown to be paramount in successful principal leadership. According to the study findings, both the assistant administrator and the teachers saw their principal as a culturally competent leader. This is monumental in recognizing the successful attributes of their principal in response to diversity. Addressing administrators' needs by focusing

on diversity and cultural leadership may prove a valuable commodity in failing schools, and it is this belief that drove the development of the present study's project, Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership.

Professional Development

Retna (2015) defined professional development as engaging in activities to augment professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to promote individuals' future performance. In comparison, training encompasses changing or developing techniques and attitudes to further advance individual performance when taking part in a range of activities or a specific task (Retna, 2015). Jackson (2012) defined professional development as administering a steady sequence of training or coursework. Jackson further explained that training or taking courses is a way to help educators review, research, and revise competences pivotal for engaging and teaching students.

Building on the concept of professional development has brought forth professional development practices (Zepeda, Parylo, & Bengston, 2014). Professional development practices are tasks that focus on supporting principals in the spectrum of instructional leadership as they gain and refine essential skills (Zepeda et al., 2014). Such support can include capacity building and leading administrators into personal renewal (Zepeda et al., 2014). Zepeda et al. (2014) concentrated on filling the gap between principals' professional development for which administrators engage in learning to help close the achievement gap (a deficit model) and linking schools' overall success to principals' professional development.

Zepeda et al. (2014) defined professional development as an approach for conveying knowledge, revamping skills, and enhancing principal performance. Zepeda et al. defined professional development practices as an approach undertaken to inform, improve, or enhance principal effectiveness. Such practices can include mentoring, training sessions, and performing demonstrations in specialized areas identified as needing development.

Principals' Professional Development Needs

Professional development is beneficial for school operations and is also important for effectively implementing education reforms (Leung, 2014). Previous researchers have not provided information on improving the policies related to principals' professional development (Leung, 2014). Leung (2014) reviewed documents dating back 30 years to identify variations in policy objectives, strategies, and relationships among stakeholders and found three trends: (a) policy goals have shifted from passive to proactive and now focus on problem-solving in schools to prepare students for subsequent demands, (b) a variety of professional activities and school-based analysis are now integral components that extend beyond training programs, and (c) the professional community of principals have the role of instituting programs for preparing and developing both new and aspiring principal leaders. Leung concluded that principal professional development has undergone changes in both objectives and strategies and now can face potential challenges presented by rapidly changing educational environments.

Kanokorn, Pongtorn, and Ngang (2014) found that effective professional development takes place when principals have professional knowledge and a professional

mentality. Kanokorn et al.'s study was composed of two groups of principals, 29 in one group and 36 in the other group, who were involved in the implementation and evaluation stages of how professional development of school principals is put into action. Principals valued professional knowledge gained through networking with other principals (Kanokorn et al., 2014). Likewise, Hallinger and Heck's (2010) findings from a large sample of U.S. primary schools showed that collaborative school leadership can positively impact student learning. Both Hallinger and Heck and Kanokorn et al. noted that principals need to network to bring organizations learning through collaborative leadership.

A national sample from the Schools and Staffing Survey showed that principals who participate in mentoring and coaching opportunities were rated as more effective by the teachers in their schools (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Principals need ongoing, job-embedded opportunities for continuous professional growth (Fogarty & Pete, 2010; Zepeda et al., 2014). Job-embedded opportunities entail structured time spent with facilitators, support teams, or expert coaching staff (Fogarty & Pete, 2010; Zepeda et al., 2014). Ross (2011) proposed five aspects of professional development: a focus on growth, job-embedded participation, active learning, collaborative relations, and student learning. Each are essential aspects of effective professional development.

Zepeda et al. (2014) sought to identify principal professional development practices using principals of adult learning theory in four Georgia schools by collecting data from individual interviews and artifacts. Effective professional development was depicted as a form of continuous adult education; however, Zepeda et al. found no studies

that focused on principal professional development as an aspect of adult learning. Zepeda et al. identified nine practices as applicable to adult learning principles: (a) connecting professional and career development, (b) individualizing learning, (c) engaging multiple sources of learning, (d) adapting, not adopting external initiatives, (e) aligning professional development, (f) ensuring ongoing professional development, (g) encouraging mentoring, (h) providing data-informed and job-embedded learning, and (i) strategically planning professional development.

Zepeda et al.'s (2014) research on building successful principal leadership reflected five principals of adult learning theory, which hold that adult learning should be self-directed, motivational, problem centered, relevancy oriented, and goal oriented. Isenberg (2007) emphasized *andragogy*, a theory of adult learning pioneered by Knowles. Knowles (2005) identified six principals of adult learning: Adults are internally motivated and self-directed, they bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences, they are goal oriented, they are relevancy oriented, they are practical, and they like to be respected. As such, adult-oriented instruction should increase self-directedness, use earlier experiences as a resource base for learning, and reflect developmental tasks and social roles; then learning will occur immediately and be problem centered. Langer and Applebee (1986) found that principal professional development should encompass adult learners' needs by focusing on learning activities that relate to ownership, appropriateness, structure, collaboration, and reflection. These researchers all proclaimed the value of linking adult learning to the learners' needs.

In addition to adult learning theory, the theory of cultural competency/proficiency was also instrumental to my project. Cultural competency/proficiency in the classroom reflects the following elements: assessing culture, adapting to diversity, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, and instituting cultural knowledge (R. B. Lindsey et al., 2005; R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009). Culturally competent administrators use these five essential elements as the foundation for their behavior regarding their oversight of organizational policies and practices (R. B. Lindsey et al., 2005; R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009). These elements can be used to plan for change, assess change, and guide culturally proficient interactions (R. B. Lindsey et al., 2005; R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2009).

With the heightened pressures of NCLB, administrators are constantly seeking to raise student academic performance. Principals are burdened with how to best satisfy NCLB directives. The issue addressed in Section 1 is WPS's accountability data, which exhibit a sustained learning difference between minority and nonminority students. This difference in learning means that the district has not reached AYP from 2011 to 2013. A finding in Section 2 disclosed the principal's view of teaching diversity as a best practice for student achievement. In addition, Hernandez and Kose (2012) noted that a principal's insights diversity skills are helpful when leading a diverse student population to academic success.

Miller and Martin (2015) and Pfaller (2010) stated that principals need to develop skills and strategies to promote a positive learning environment for a diverse population to meet the challenges in the 21st century. Miller and Martin sought the perceptions of

principals in four urban schools in Missouri using semistructured interviews, observations, and document review. Study findings indicated the need for principal preparedness to address diversity issues related to culture, equity, and social justice (Miller & Martin, 2015). To exercise social justice, a leader must value the diversity of all stakeholders, as valuing diversity is a guiding element of culturally competent/proficient leadership.

Valuing diversity. According to Hines (2008), principals must be strong advocates of diversity as shown through engaging in a range of daily practices. Cultural leadership should focus on emphasizing the value of respect and acceptance of all cultures (Hines, 2008). Likewise, Pfaller (2010) found that principals perceived and frequently used practices that reflect valuing diversity by ensuring that schools' decision-making processes included different perspectives. Moreover, principals must affirm inequalities in race, gender, socioeconomic status, and many other cultural attributes by honoring the uniqueness of all people (Hines, 2008). Most notable among Hines's findings was that principals who are culturally competent/proficient must model the benefits of diversity in their schools' cultures.

Findings from Section 2 established that an administrator and teachers at the study school have diversity deficiencies. The data indicated that the teachers seem to define diversity not in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, or religion but instead by difference of opinion. The study project addresses how principals can promote cultural competency and proficiency in other school leaders. Hernandez and Kose (2012) and Samuels (2014) stated the need for culturally competent leadership. Findings from other researchers

support their claim about culturally proficient leadership and also suggest linking research that acknowledges the role that culture plays in education (Jackson, 2012; Xiong & Obiakor, 2013).

Anderson (2011) examined cultural proficiency from the perspectives of students and teachers. Anderson's study consisted of 195 teachers and 532 students of varying cultural backgrounds. The data from Anderson's study underscored the importance of understanding students' experiences and of parental support. These findings confirm the need for principals to value diversity as a principal's role is pivotal to developing and implementing culturally competent/proficient schools. They also confirm the importance of the project developed for the present study.

Principals also must serve a diverse student body, hire and manage staff and faculty, and form a collaborative relationship with families and communities (Gao & Mager, 2011). To fulfill these responsibilities, principals need to be culturally aware and responsive, and administrators need to develop the attitudes and natural abilities to be effective leaders and for successfully communicating with all stakeholders (Gao & Mager, 2011). Hernandez and Kose (2012) recommended that cultural competence be a significant feature of principals' preparation and practice. Characteristics of leaders who preside over schools with strong cultures include (a) raising standards for hiring teachers, (b) focusing on student learning, (c) embracing their role as an instructional leader, (d) offering opportunities for collaboration, and (e) giving teachers invaluable professional development opportunities (The New Teacher Project, 2012). Culturally proficient educators know the value of professional development, and not only do they engage their

teachers in professional development, they take part in such development as well (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

It is not surprising that principals value professional development; however, principals must begin with their own education to impact student achievement (Duncan, 2013; Duncan et al., 2011; Learning Forward Association, 2014). Administrators are the chief learners. As chief learners, principals are managers over learning in their schools (Green, 2010). Organizational learning is important in that professional development research stresses using adult learning theory principles to educate adults (Matthews & Crow, 2010; Zepeda, 2011; Zepeda et al., 2014). For this project, I used principles derived from andragogy throughout the development process (Knowles, Swanson, & Holton, 2005).

Principle 1 reflects the belief that adult learners need to know why they should learn. Duncan et al. (2011), Knowles et al. (2005), and Tough (1979) found when adults commit to learning they will take ownership of their learning, especially when they consider and discover learning advantages and the disadvantages of not learning. Helping people realize their need to know can be achieved in several ways. Knowles et al. offered several techniques for raising awareness (participants' need to know) such as job rotation, diagnostic performance, personnel appraisal systems, and performance assessments. The school's accountability results were used in this project study. I will ask the chief academic officer over all the high schools in the district to identify five failing schools who could improve by taking part in Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership.

Test scores in schools where the principals participate in Professional Development with a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership are likely to improve, particularly as a finding in Section 2 showed the principal had enacted a balance between leadership and accountability standards by listing seven practices used to help a diverse student population succeed: (a) double-dosing of SAPT courses, (b) pull-out tutorials, (c) after-school tutorials, (d) differentiated instruction, (e) scaffolding, (f) coteaching, and (g) lessons about diversity. These practices are vital for leaders because a balance between leadership and accountability allows freedom for teachers to innovate and still concentrate on goal- and number-based student achievement (Abbate, 2010). Principals achieving balance in their roles as instructional leaders is important for managing teacher quality and ensuring student academic success (Clifford et al., 2012; Pepper, 2010). Therefore, professional development focusing on culturally competent/proficient leadership practices and diversity will improve principals' instructional practices.

Principle 2 reflects the hypothesis that adult learners are self-directed. Self-directed means adults decide what they find desirable to learn. Principal professional development should be aligned to the needs of adult learners, which should promote key engagement in the learning process (Zepeda et al., 2014). Individualizing learning is a professional practice that aids adults in learning, especially when learning is their choice (Zepeda et al., 2014). Spanneut, Tobin, and Ayers (2012) studied principal's needs assessments. The study population consisted of 273 school principals in the 66 public school systems in the western central region of New York State (Spanneut et al., 2012).

Findings from Spanneut et al. and Duncan (2013) suggested using assessments to determine what building leaders need to operate effectively.

Principal's needs assessments should reflect their individual needs by focusing on topics of interest or concerns, by being school specific, and by supporting the school's vision and mission (Spanneut et al., 2012). Zepeda et al. (2014) stated that the importance of aligning the principal's needs and professional development with the district's mission, vision, and goals. Principal professional development should involve ways to dialogue about principals' developmental needs. For example, individual needs may be discussed during weekly or monthly meetings between building and central office leaders (Zepeda et al., 2014). In this way, central office leaders meet the school's and the principal's needs by creating and planning the professional development either in house or by outsourcing it (Zepeda et al., 2014). This approach to professional development reflects the second principle of adult learning as it has being motivated as its basis, it is problem focused, and it is self-directed (Zepeda et al., 2014). As it relates to the project developed for the present study, principal professional development provides solutions for increasing knowledge that will help administrators perform more effectively. Therefore, administrators can function properly to advance the school's mission, vision, and goals as indicated by Zepeda et al. (2014). Effective principal professional should address diversity deficiencies such as those discussed in Section 2.

Principals who participate in improving themselves and furthering their education are agents of change (Duncan, 2013; Learning Forward Association, 2014). Principal candidates will improve in their practice when experiences that afford opportunities to act

as agents of change are introduced (Anast-May, Buckiner, & Greer, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Howard, 2010). For example, principals who participate in any of the following activities are agents of change: (a) leading a standing committee, (b) sponsoring a school initiative (such as in math or literacy), (c) developing a new program for students or teachers, (d) being involved in an activity in which they plan a program for exceptional and/or diverse students, and (e) who take part in their learning (Anast-May et al., 2011; Duncan, 2013; Learning Forward Association, 2014).

Donaldson (2008) stated that principal professional development should begin with a question significant for adult learners and that the question should be reflective and self-directed. The 3-day Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership program has a “Question for Today” to begin daily activities. A typical question is “What is diversity?” Defining diversity is dominant for these reasons: the question is self-directed, and it is reflective. Principals must be critically reflective in developing schools to ensure quality learning for all students (Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Wisniewski, 2015; Zepeda et al., 2014).

Just as principals should be reflective in developing schools for student academic success, they should also reflect on diversity, as a finding in Section 2 indicated that the principal considers diversity a factor in student academic performance. This consideration is consistent with current research findings showing disparities in gender, class, and race based on cultural norms, socioeconomic factors, and home life (Basch, 2011a; Prager, 2011; Webb & Thomas, 2015). The principal in the present study viewed cultural assessment as a valuable form of measurement for helping teachers discover their

students' specific needs, problems, opinions, and attitudes. Such assessment is essential to culturally competent leadership.

Assessing the culture. Pfaller (2010) suggested using academic intervention programs as a form of assessing the needs of diverse students. Rhodes, Stevens, and Hemmings (2011) offered a model for accessing school culture through a project-based science, technology, engineering, and mathematics program. Hernandez and Kose (2012) offered a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) that provides insights on interpreting issues of difference and diversity in schools. DMIS reflects the assumption that principals (like other adults) fall along a spectrum of developmental orientations in practice and preparation (Hernandez & Kose, 2012). As such, DMIS's key components might highlight principals' understanding of diversity as the principals develop more complex levels of intercultural sensitivity. These tools, along with discussions ranging from stakeholders' views and attitudes about the school to biased curricula, are useful in determining whether a school adequately addresses cultural issues (Hines, 2008).

Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership focuses on gaining cultural knowledge, a necessary element to improving principals' practices. To further confirm my project, I chose an activity where the facilitator (see the manual in Appendix A) presents opportunities for the administrators to show ownership by encouraging them to design a diversity-driven outline for their teachers to use as a guide in constructing lesson plans for their students. Preparation for future leaders involves knowing about the change process, and those who implement change must

participate in its planning process in order to partake in its ownership (Anast-May et al., 2011; Knowles et al., 2005). The daily questions and lesson plans for teachers are not only self-directed but also reflective, a quality deemed important in principal professional development as noted by Zepeda et al. (2014). Zepeda et al. (2014) stated that principal professional development should encompass the needs of adult learners by focusing on reflection and ownership.

Principle 3 reflects the belief that adult learners use knowledge and life experiences. Adult learners must use their past knowledge, opinions, and experiences to help them process current information. Principals want their professional development to focus on building mentoring, coaching, and networking skills (Duncan et al., 2011). A professional development practice discussed by Zepeda et al. (2014) stressed encouraging mentoring; however, Zepeda et al. stated that mentoring should be offered as nonthreatening and nonevaluative as well as formally and informally. The approaches discussed in this section build on adult learners using knowledge and life experiences, a key premise of adult learning that Knowles et al. (2005) emphasized.

Managing the dynamics of difference. A guiding element of culturally competent/proficient leadership is managing the dynamics of difference. Pfaller (2010) confirmed that culturally proficient schools use conflict resolution programs for students to manage the dynamics of difference. On the other hand, the NEA (2008) noted that managing the dynamics of difference entails knowing past and present factors that can affect interactions among diverse individuals as these factors correspond to their experiences and relationships in their environment. My project dictates that the

facilitator must be able to tap into these learners' experiences. Miller and Martin (2015) stated that educators need to know the proper language for translating logical concepts in their practice and also for mastering experiential understandings. Aspiring leaders' coursework should be consumed in cultures and environments that provide experiential learning (Miller & Martin, 2015). Knowles et al. (2005) also emphasized experiential techniques; for instance, group discussions, simulation exercises, and problem-solving activities instead of electronic means to tap into adult learners' experiences.

As it relates to my project, participants are grouped, and a member from each group will draw a topic to discuss such as religion, nontraditional families, economic status, linguistics and dialects, and differently abled students. The groups will then present scenarios showing how they would solve their dilemmas. This experiential technique is important to adult learning and effective principal professional development.

A finding in Section 2 revealed that the assistant administrator has a somewhat narrow view of diversity, as reflected in this statement: "The school does not have a well-diverse population," meaning the assistant principal does not see the majority African American population at the school as diverse. The group activity discussed here addresses a need to understand the various aspects of diversity. Figueiredo-Brown et al. (2015) found focusing on diversity to be helpful for interns when they reflected on their learning experiences. Because Section 2 findings suggested that not only the assistant administrator but also the teachers lacked diversity knowledge, Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership will help leaders discuss the needs of diverse learners. Furthermore, professional development will help

solve the district's needs to improve student achievement as well as meet the learning outcomes as detailed in the project. The project's outcomes are relevant, goal oriented, problem centered, motivational, and collaborative, all elements that are required and pertinent to andragogy. (For all activities see Appendix A, which contains the complete project).

Principle 4 reflects the theory that adult learners are encouraged by collaboration. When collaboration occurs among peers and contributions are acknowledged, adult learners become more productive (Knowles et al., 2005). Adults try to do their best when their abilities are accepted (Knowles et al., 2005). Another aim of the present study's project is to improve collegiality among administrators by building a more cohesive professional learning community. Two modules comprise this project: leadership and communication (see Appendix A). Collegiality is the ideal format for these training modules. Fullan (2003) found that school leaders need to communicate well and build relationships to effectively deal with all stakeholders. Peterson (2002) found that principal professional development has structural and cultural elements.

Barnett, Shoho, and Oleszewski (2012) declared professional development that focuses on erecting structural skills for principals as extremely preferred. However, cultural elements hinge on interpersonal and collaborative skills, both important to successful instructional leadership (Duncan et al., 2011). Quinn (2004) compared professional development of principals between the United States and England and concluded that principal accountability had caused an intense focus on instructional leadership or structural skills in professional development programs.

Duncan et al. (2011) stated that professional development for principals should encompass adult learners' needs by focusing on learning activities to support collaboration. For principals, effective professional development must be ongoing and job embedded, employ active learning and collaboration, and result in improvement in student achievement (Ross, 2011). My project includes several components embedded in the professional development practices discussed by Zepeda et al. (2014). Knowles et al. (2005) further explained that adult learners possess banks of internal resources. Knowles et al. also highlighted experiential techniques for tapping into the experiences of adult learners, which relates to the present study's project regarding collegiality or peer-helping activities. This process is notable for helping develop a culture of collaboration and is a cost-effective way to augment formal professional development (Duncan & Stock, 2010). The project's training modules are located in Appendix A.

Principle 5 reflects the belief that adult learners are goal oriented. When an adult learner is goal oriented, an increased desire to learn is present, especially when relevance to a real-life situation is present. For example, the focus on principal accountability has led to professional development that concentrates on instructional leadership (Duncan et al., 2011). Principal leadership as advocated by Clifford (2013) is the catalyst in turning around failing schools. The present study's program projects are goal oriented. As an example, administrators are asked to identify challenges they may encounter that could impact their ability to lead, list challenges that their teachers have experienced that affected teacher practice, and identify challenges that teachers may experience that may impact teacher practice (relates to real-life situations). The administrators are then asked

to suggest alternatives for correcting deficiencies. This activity contributes to a larger activity because the administrators will focus on designing a school mission based on what they have learned about diversity and culturally competent/proficient leadership.

These activities are also pertinent as they reflect a finding in Section 2 that further highlighted diversity deficiencies in the assistant administrator's cultural awareness.

These deficiencies emphasize how cultural knowledge is typically introduced through textbooks, celebrations, and other activities. Although the school's mission states that all students should be taught to think critically and creatively to develop their potential through diverse programs or courses and activities, cultural awareness consists of more than the typical banal aspects of school life. Instituting cultural knowledge is a guiding element of culturally competent/proficient leadership.

Instituting cultural knowledge. Instituting cultural knowledge is a key element in culturally competent/proficient leadership. The NEA (2008) noted the importance of focusing on student cultures in educational design as doing so creates a more conducive learning environment for a diverse student body. Miller and Martin (2015) acknowledged that a key element in an aspiring principal's coursework should be in-depth study of cultures and environments in order to incorporate experiential learning opportunities. Hines (2008) suggested that principals should honor cultural differences by instituting staff development and training and holding cross-cultural assemblies for teachers and students. Experiential learning is essential for building culturally competent/proficient leadership and is provided in the present study's project. The project's goals are to (a) facilitate practices that promote culturally competent/proficient leadership and offer a

better understanding of diversity; (b) provide structure for showcasing a variety of activities related to site, system, and participants; (c) facilitate collegial learning experiences; and (d) improve student learning.

Clifford (2013) stated that principals occupy a privileged position in affecting student learning by working through the acts of others, which points to improving the academic success of all students, the primary goal of this project. The project facilitator must identify the goals and align them with the outcomes. The project's expected learning outcomes are:

- to increase engagement of all students in the learning process through acceptance of student diversity and to use diversity to create better instruction,
- to increase knowledge of a diverse student body's needs,
- to create educational opportunities for diverse learners,
- to reduce barriers that inhibit the learning process, and
- to promote successful leadership that enhances learning.

These outcomes were acquired from standards established by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). A goal of Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Err's (2010) and Mendels and Mitgang's (2013) research was to strengthen school leadership through building a robust pipeline of school leaders, beginning with standards. The National Policy Board for Education Administration (as cited in Duncan et al., 2011) noted that applying standard-based knowledge, skills, and research in the educational arena is important for building a strong pipeline of school leaders. Many districts use their state's leadership standards, which focus on skills needed for improving

instruction (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). As it relates to the study project, employing Standard 2 of the *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium: Standards for School Leaders* will help improve principals' learning because of its relevancy to increasing student academic achievement (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Mendels and Mitgang stated that standards consist of key behaviors and competencies of a successful leader. When relating leadership standards to educators' professional development, the standards focus on skills needed to improve instruction whether the educator's role is to teach or support teaching and learning.

Because of the relationship between principal professional development and student academics, improving student success is directly tied to administrators' intended learning outcomes. Therefore, principals are motivated to gain the relevant knowledge, and their learning is characterized as goal oriented (Knowles et al., 2005). Connecting professional and career development, which encompasses including leaders' competencies in professional development to further develop them throughout their careers, is an important professional development practice for educators. As it relates to this project, professional development is tied to principals' educational standards (see the following discussion on Standard 2 of the ISLLC's *Standards for School Leaders*).

Principle 6 reflects the theory that adult learning is relevant. As reflected in the present study's project, the facilitator should relate the assigned tasks to the participants' learning goals. With this said, Standard 2 of the ISLLC's *Standards for School Leaders* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008) was used to develop this project (The ISLLC standards were in place when the present study began. They have since been

superseded with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders*.). Standard 2 states: "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 14). Using standards, according to Mendels and Mitgang (2013), helps highlight key behaviors and competencies of successful school leaders while focusing on improving instructional skills.

In the present study, the principal's self-reported view of culturally competent/proficient leadership practices that impact student achievement was found to be consistent with the assistant principal's and the teachers' views regarding such academic practices as academic tutorials, pull-outs, and differentiated learning for ensuring student success. However, only the principal emphasized teaching diversity as a best practice. Consequently, principal professional development activity that focuses on core competencies tied to career development is extremely relevant, inspiring, and motivating, as well as necessary to engage administrators in professional development (Zepeda et al., 2014). With this said, a notable and guiding element of cultural competent/proficient leadership is adapting to diversity.

Adapting to diversity. R. B. Lindsey et al. (2005) and R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell (2009) supported the premise that cultural proficiency is a lifelong learning process as indicated by Hines (2008); therefore, principals should allot students and teachers adequate time for adapting to other individual cultures. Hines suggested that

support strategies should include (a) engaging stakeholders in cross-cultural activities, events, and functions; (b) accepting cultural interventions to support conflict and resolution; and (c) confronting barriers that promote removal of discriminatory policies and procedures. Using these strategies as teaching tools makes for a more inclusive learning environment (R. B. Lindsey et al., 2005). Thus, my project is relevant as it supplies a specific activity to support the principals in the capacity of instructional leadership. For example, the administrators are asked to develop a lesson plan framework for teachers that illustrates adapting to diversity from the perspective of a diverse group. This diversified lesson plan framework can be used to help teachers plan lessons for a diverse student body.

Summary of Literature Review

Knowledge gained from focusing on diversity and culturally competent/proficient leadership practices can improve academic achievement and teaching strategies, provide structure that encourages better relationships in the classroom, and promote understanding for families in the school environment (Jackson, 2012). Professional development standards can provide a framework for engaging educators in their learning. The Learning Forward Association (2014) acknowledged three crucial components of profession development—content, context, and process—which are all relevant to my project. I next discuss each component.

Professional development content should be research-based and participant-appropriate to further the educator's learning (Figueiredo-Brown et al., 2015). The foundation for the present study's project, Professional Development With a Focus on

Diversity and Cultural Leadership, was built on research. More specifically, this professional development program reflects a thorough, critical, and interconnected analysis of how theory and research support the project and it also includes a discussion of findings from Section 2 throughout this analysis. Context refers to constructing an environment with relevancy. When this happens, learning is more likely to happen. Being conducive to learning addresses professional development participants' needs through incorporating examples and strategies that pertain to the particular site (Figueiredo-Brown et al., 2015). My project activities are filled with examples and strategies to aid principals in their learning endeavors, but, more importantly, the activities are based on real-life situations that do and could occur at schools in the district.

The professional development process should begin and end with a focus on learning outcomes and conclude by evaluating the professional development program's effectiveness (Figueiredo-Brown et al., 2015). Each day of the 3-day professional development begins and ends with the learner-intended outcome and concludes with a period of reflection and evaluation to see to what extent the participants meet the expected learning goals. A summative evaluation is eventually needed to determine the success or failure of the learners' intended outcomes.

Barnett et al. (2012) noted that professional development should be structured and purposeful. The present study's professional development program is appropriate for principals as it provides the needed structure for adult learners and the essential elements of culturally competent/proficient leadership. The program's appropriateness and structure hinge on andragogy and the essential elements of cultural competent/proficient

leadership, which were fully incorporated. All activities in the project relate to the direct needs of administrators as indicated by the present study's findings in Section 2. The literature review, coupled with my project study research findings, helped build a cohesive product, my project, which contains content, context, and processes for ensuring meaningful learning of competencies and skills for educators.

Finally, professional development is the venue for administrators and teachers to constantly improve their knowledge and skills and stay abreast of current research and best practices in education (Figueiredo-Brown et al., 2015). Effective professional development should be ongoing to transfer principals' learning into their practice (Fogarty & Pete, 2010; Zepeda et al., 2014). The professional development program I developed can be changed as needed and used as a template for aspiring and practicing leaders (Zepeda et al., 2014). Furthermore, this professional development program should be adapted and used for principals as they train teachers on the different aspects of diversity. Pfaller (2010) showed that student achievement measurably increased at 4 of 5 urban schools with administrators of color when the administrators practiced culturally proficient school leadership.

Implementation

I will contact my former school principal, who is now the chief academic officer for all of the high schools in the district. I will seek a recommendation for five of the unsuccessful schools to pilot my project, Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership. The professional development addresses the district's problem of failing to close the achievement gap between minority and nonminority

students by not meeting AYP, as identified in Section 1. The next step will be to contact the schools in the district as suggested by the chief academic officer.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Professional development and training have always been viewed as valuable commodities in the district. The district has 60 school sites for which only 25 or 42% have successful school accountability results. The district does receive Title 1 funds for supporting professional development. The professional development delivered in the form of a PowerPoint presentation will provide engaging and thought-provoking hands-on activities to facilitate collegiality among the administrators. This method will serve as a template to help principal leaders teach and implement the components of diversity and build a collaborative practice through sharing best practices, ideas, experiences, and information.

Potential Barriers

A potential barrier to implementing this project is that administrators of failing schools who should participate may not if participation is not mandated. For example, the principals with the greatest needs for professional development may be too busy with preexisting commitments, might think professional development is unnecessary, may feel that they will not benefit from it, and might think they are already culturally competent leaders. Another barrier may be that leaders of successful schools may not choose to accept the invitation to attend or to serve as facilitators. It is possible that preexisting scheduling and time constraints might impede placing the professional development on the principals' agendas during the summer months when school is not in session.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The summer months, when only a few staff and no students are present, will be an ideal time to implement the 3-day professional development. Specifics of the program schedule are shown in Figure 2.

<i>Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership</i>	
AGENDA	
<i>Day 1</i>	
Welcome	
Administrators.....	Continental Breakfast... 8:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m.
Outlining Differences	
8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	
Sessions:	
I. Acknowledging Our Differences.....	8:30 a.m.–9:15 a.m.
II. Accessing Diversity.....	9:25 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
III. Administrating our Differences.....	1:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.
<i>Day 2</i>	
Administrators.....	Continental Breakfast... 8:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m.
Respecting Differences	
8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	
Sessions:	
I. Appreciating Differences.....	8:30 a.m.–9:15 a.m.
II. Adjusting to Differences Diversity.....	9:25 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
III. Instituting Cultural Knowledge.....	1:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.
<i>Day 3</i>	
Administrators.....	Continental Breakfast... 8:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m.
From Culturally Conscious to Culturally Competent/Proficient Leaders	
8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	
Sessions:	
I. Making a Difference.....	8:30 a.m.–9:15 a.m.
II. Leading Change.....	9:25 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
III. Improving Student Success.....	1:00 p.m.–3:30p.m.

Figure 2. Schedule for the 3-day professional development program.

Roles and Responsibilities of Participants and Others

The chief academic officers over the elementary and high schools in the district are expected to initiate the professional development at the schools they oversee. They can determine if school administrators' attendance will be mandatory. The chief academic officers will determine which schools will be included and the appropriate times for attendance. I will supply the Five Essential Elements handout, examples for various activities, and the evaluation form (see Appendix A). Other materials needed are laptops, Internet connection/Wi-Fi, one easel, flipchart pads for each table, journals, writing paper, and writing utensils. Name tags are optional. Room needs consist of seating capacity for 25 participants (five tables with five chairs per table).

The librarian at the school where the professional development will be held will give the completed evaluation forms to the appropriate chief academic officers. At the end of the 3-day training, these leaders can determine whether expansions of activities or adjustments are needed. The librarian will be responsible for video/audio equipment, room setup, and assisting with distributing and collecting the evaluation/feedback forms.

Project Evaluation Plan

After completing the first professional development, I will conduct a follow-up visit with the district's chief academic officer and obtain feedback from the daily formative evaluations collected. During the follow-up visit, the chief academic officer and I will review the completed evaluation assessments based on participant feedback regarding the hands-on simulations, problem-solving activities, exercises such as scenarios, ways to address diversity, etc., and the daily questions for reflection.

Participant feedback should provide information regarding three crucial elements of professional development—content, context, and process—that are needed to ensure successful principal growth. The chief academic officer and I will then use the feedback to determine what revisions to make to the professional development. Scriven (1967) defined formative evaluation as a method for discovering the successes and failures of the standard versions of a new program. Misanchuk (1978) noted that (a) a formative evaluation is an internal method of determining the worth of a program during program or product development, and (b) formative evaluation produces meaning when the object of assessment is a durable and replicable product, meaning that the end results are predictable and reproducible. The goal of using a formative evaluation is to allow the course designers as well as the learners, administrators, and managers to monitor the meeting of the instructional goals and objectives. This facilitates interventions that will help participants to master the required skills and knowledge (Misanchuk, 1978).

A summative evaluation, according to Scriven (1967), is the process of evaluating a finished product. Misanchuk (1978) further explained that testing the finished product in the field is a requirement to ensure the worth of the product. Finding the end product reliable for its intended purpose or purposes is also a requirement. The chief academic officer must determine when no additional modifications are needed and whether to adopt the product and put it to use. A summative evaluation should eventually be done, and then the chief academic officer can decide whether or not to continue using the product or to provide other training.

Project Implications Including Social Change

Local Community Implications

This project is important for several reasons. First, it provides proven strategies and practices essential for establishing cultural leadership. The project offers beneficial training for administrators that will increase their knowledge about diversity's facets, especially the importance of linking diversity to academics. Next, it helps to foster a professional learning community. Finally, the project offers resolutions for equity issues.

Professional development focusing on diversity and culturally competent/proficient leadership can help administrators of diverse students at failing schools become successful by incorporating proven practices into their day-to-day activities. This professional development program can be an agent of change by indirectly impacting teacher practices and thus improving student academic outcomes, which is beneficial for students, families, instructors, and community members throughout the district.

If students are successful academically and socially they may then pursue higher education, obtain jobs, become capable citizens, and become future leaders. All in all, professional development on diversity and cultural leadership could be beneficial to the community at large, which can promote social change that, in turn, results in productive citizens with productive futures.

Far-Reaching Implications

Because this project's focus was on diversity and cultural leadership in a larger context, it could be used to improve the teaching and learning practices of principals in

any school or district by increasing their understanding of diversity. Aspiring principals can also use this training in leadership development programs. The underlying research and the project itself hold may promote social change by connecting the research data to instructional practices and making its intended audiences more culturally responsive, resulting in more informed decisions regarding a growingly diverse student population and, ultimately, increasing the academic achievement of students nationally.

Conclusion

This section included a detailed description of my project. I (a) specified its goals and rationale, (b) provided research to substantiate the project's value as it relates to the problem of having a limited understanding of diversity, (c) detailed implementation steps, (d) offered timelines for implementation, (e) addressed potential barriers, (f) discussed evaluation procedures, and (g) provided implications for social change. Section 4 is a detailed reflection of all project aspects, including its strengths and weaknesses as well as implications, applications, and recommendations for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

Principals are held accountable for not narrowing the performance disparity between high and low achievers. Strengthening administrators' leadership in failing school districts can help administrators and teachers effectively carry out mandates of school reform (Clifford, 2013; Kanokorn et al., 2014). Administrators' and teachers' understanding and skills must be consistent with diversity's distinctive aspects if these leaders are to be successful (Hernandez & Kose, 2012; Howard, 2010). In the present study, I found that the assistant administrator at the study school had a limited perception of diversity. I also found that the teachers had a narrow view of diversity. The teachers did not recognize the association between diversity and academics. These findings were key drivers for the professional development program I developed.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) found that principals of successful schools serve as instructional leaders. Additionally, instructional leadership provides support for the teaching and learning process, uses student data, and supports instructional practices. For administrators to execute these tasks, they need to be shareholders in effective and efficient leadership development programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). Therefore, providing professional development that focuses on diversity and cultural leadership can be a template for present and future administrators as they can reap the benefits it provides.

Section 4 comprises my perceptions as they relate to (a) my project's strengths, limitations, and the recommendations for remediation of the project; (b) my learning,

which focused on scholarship, project development, and leadership and change; (c) my thoughts on the process incurred during project development and evaluation plans; (d) my analysis of self as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer; and (e) my reflections, which include the project's potential for social change and its implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths

I believed that profession development focusing on diversity and culturally competent/proficient leadership was a pertinent option for my project as a finding from Section 2 affirmed that an assistant administrator at the study school did not understand the many facets of diversity. Principals need to recognize diversity and address the needs of a diverse student culture. Therefore, several areas that the study project was designed to support are mentioned here. First, administrators play a pivotal role in dealing with diversity in a culturally responsive and student-centered fashion. Second, principals as didactic leaders should show how diversity is a value-added resource that will augment the learning process for pupils, educators, and the community. Third, administrators should convey the importance of linking diversity to academics as a best practice and relate this to their teaching staff. Last, leaders will establish a collaborative allegiance sustained by stronger collegiality among their peers.

Recommendations for Remediating Limitations

The present study had several limitations. First, the data presented were from the perceptions of administrators and teachers at just one of the district's successful high schools. As such, the results are limited to the context of an urban school district in

central Mississippi. Therefore, the data may not be generalized but may be contextualized to other regions. Next, the professional development might be site specific as it was only based on issues found at the study site. Last, more information is required to provide greater knowledge of principals' and teachers' perceptions of culturally competent/proficient leadership.

One way to remediate the project limitations is to collect data on the perceptions of administrators and teachers at all of the district's successful high schools. If the data collected from all of the successful school's teachers and principals' perceptions remain constant, and the findings do not show additional deficiencies, then the perceptions of the principals and teachers in the present study would represent those from principals and teachers at all of the district's successful schools. Next, data should be compiled from administrators and teachers from other school districts throughout Mississippi and other states to generate a more comprehensive look at the needs of schools regarding culturally competent/proficient leadership.

Alternative approaches for addressing the issue of individuals having narrow views of diversity include designating principals of effective schools to serve as mentors and coaches for discussing diversity issues and to provide cultural leadership in the schools (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Mentoring is noted as a professional development practice that should be encouraged (Zepeda et al., 2014). Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) stated that mentors should serve as guides in the process of becoming successful leaders. Likewise, Mendels and Mitgang (2013) stated that it is feasible for a school district to invest in mentoring and professional development. Duncan et al. (2011) stated that

principals want their professional development to focus on mentoring, coaching, and networking.

The district can pursue outside supports to identify and discern the true nature and substance of diversity and cultural leadership. Zepeda et al. (2014) stated that principals should participate in both externally and internally provided professional development. In addition, the district can locate various experts to address diversity issues; for example, hiring a group of scholars to present lectures on different diversity topics to stimulate engagement and dialogue with principals about diversity (Figueiredo-Brown et al., 2015).

Administrators with diversity experience could be required to create diversity curriculums. However, Duncan et al. (2011) stated that principals' training curriculum should be based on standards adopted from the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, formerly known as the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium standards. Most states use these standards for principal leadership as they focus on educating all students. Principals could attend online seminars that focus on diversity issues and on becoming culturally competent/proficient leaders (Ross, 2011).

Scholarship

I now understand the meaning of scholarship as it has influenced my judgment and enlarged my leadership capabilities both inside and outside of the present study's research site. However, recruiting administrators and teachers for this project proved challenging and occasionally disheartening from the onset. That said, I was determined to complete this project as I felt it important to find ways for improving the leadership practices of principals at unsuccessful schools in the district.

The project I developed addresses the obstacles that administrators confront daily in this school district. Scholarly inquiry conducted at Walden University's library supplied the framework for this project. My review of the literature yielded strategies, examples, theories, and practices for administrators and led to the project I developed: Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership. In the project, I encourage communication and collegiality, which are assets in helping administrators form a cohesive culture of learning.

Project Development and Evaluation

As I constructed this project, I was amazed at the role of research as it was so instrumental and crucial to the process. The project required careful planning, thought, and engagement. Each step, as directed by my research findings, had to be deliberate. For instance, the project had to accommodate the needs of adult learners. The educators' intended learning outcomes were placed at the forefront, middle, and end of the project. Additionally, the project had to contain overtones pertinent to administrators' needs. Only then was I able to align the needs with the intended learning outcomes to strengthen and promote cultural leadership practices for improving student success.

The project originated from my intense desire to help principals improve their leadership skills, as doing so has been shown to result in better student performance. A discussion about the school's accountability has become somewhat of a ritual at the study school. The most recent discussion deeply impressed me and ignited my desire to help principal leaders as well as my desire to become a more productive and proactive teacher

leader. I knew there were successful schools in our district; however, our district consistently failed to meet AYP from 2012 to 2015.

Culturally competent leadership practices would help address the needs of a growingly diverse student population. However, principals must be aware of diversity and culture to become effective leaders. Consequently, administrators need collegial support to improve their leadership practices. Principals should be able to communicate properly with all stakeholders. Improving student academic performance requires leaders to improve their leadership practices. Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership supports such efforts.

Leadership and Change

When I started this academic journey, I hoped to engender social change in the lives of those who were less fortunate. I frequently encountered prejudices and injustices, but I worked beyond them. It is not always easy, but teaching stems from the calling placed upon my life. Teaching and education, specifically, led me down the pathways of leadership. First, my principal appointed me to be the department chair of my discipline. From there, my leadership role continued to emerge, and as I became more and more engaged, I used what I learned in my studies and employed it in my practice. As my leadership skills flourished, my workplace responsibilities expanded. This growth has compelled my actions, which began with my conducting professional development and then led to my implementing a service learning project at the school. From there, my leadership skills continued to grow.

Change is sometimes distinguished as an unavoidable evil, but it is a part of life. Not all change is desirable, nor is all change dreadful. No one should be apprehensive of change as transformation is critical to personal growth. Change contributed to this doctoral project. Change has led me to be a critical thinker, to use collaborative skills, to conduct research, and to make change happen; that is, social change. Changes in leadership can result in greater student accomplishments and in schools meeting their required goals. I believe that professional development for administrators designed to help them learn about diversity and culturally competent/proficient leadership practices can effect such change. Becoming culturally competent leaders will help administrators deal with an increasingly diverse student population and bring about desired reforms in the lives of the students who are members of a historically underserved population.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

As an educator, I find myself enveloped in active learning. The galvanizing force for this is my abiding desire to influence the lives of others for a common good. Exemplifying persistence and resilience in my pursuit of knowledge and my pursuit to aid others not only astonished me but also steered me into leadership. Although my ambition is to be humble and never think more of myself than I ought, I am honored of what God has granted me to achieve; I see myself not as a scholar but as an apparatus, one that Walden University has groomed.

I acknowledge the value of research and how it has informed my judgments, illuminated key concepts, and helped me meticulously assemble my project. During my deliberation on this project, I applied research and theory to bolster the framework used

in principals' daily activities. Research remains the ethos of academic leadership in its quest to solve problems and produce change, both social and academic. Although research is time consuming and requires considerable effort, it is a vital element in creating professional development for administrators. The success or failure of the professional development I created is not known; therefore, applying both formative and summative evaluation is recommended. I expect positive results that will revolutionize and effect positive learning outcomes for all stakeholders—principals, teachers, students and their families, and the community.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a practitioner, I believe that the true scope of my accomplishment is immeasurable. My growth is infinite, and my excitement never weakens. I am a lifelong learner, and I began my studies long before I became a teacher although I received degrees qualifying me as a teacher 8 years before conducting this study. It is my aspiration and vocation to promote, advocate, sustain, fortify, and increase the scholarship of others. As such, my accomplishments are far greater than my years of service. Many former students have acknowledged the role I played in their educational success. I have friends, colleagues, and acquaintances who request my counsel and aid. Church members frequently rely on my knowledge and practices. Meanwhile, I know my reputation is sound.

Family, educational experiences, students, collaborative relationships, and religious beliefs have fashioned and enriched who I am and all I hope to be. All of my roles and responsibilities guide my travels. I never envisioned the importance the doctrine

of teaching holds or the fulfillment it has given me. Nor has it ever ceased to amaze me. I have learned so much over the years, often making blunders along the way, but what I am proudest of is that I am stronger because of my scholarship.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

Studying for my doctorate in education gave me the opportunity to demonstrate competencies I gained through the matriculation process. For example, my resilience and vitality helped me face challenges as they presented themselves along the way.

Developing the project for this study also required a great amount of energy and perseverance. The research process was challenging yet vital for providing the direction for this project's foundation. It is the past knowledge, experiences, and practices of other researchers that helped me develop a reservoir of information on professional development that fueled this project's purpose and completion.

Andragogy, the adult learning theory conceptualized by Knowles et al. (2005), was a compelling aspect of my project. I employed the six core andragogical principles established by Knowles et al. and the five essential elements of culturally competent/proficient leadership identified by R. B. Lindsey et al. (2005) and R. B. Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell (2009) as the foundation for the professional development sessions. As the project developer, I had to ensure that the project integrated action, experiential learning, self-directed learning, and project-based learning. Education for adult learners must reflect their desires to be self-motivated and self-directed and must be problem-centered, goal-oriented, and relevant to be effective. Culturally

competent/proficient leadership involves accessing culture, valuing diversity, adapting to diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, and instituting cultural knowledge.

A challenge I encountered as the project developer was aligning the product goals with the intended learning outcomes for active adult learning throughout the program. To accomplish this, I incorporated Mississippi's standards for administrative leadership, which are based on the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. To ensure project alignment I chose Standard 2, which states, "a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 12). I believe that the project I developed—Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership—will improve principal leadership. Formative and summative assessments are needed to determine the project's effectiveness.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership could support social change in several ways. First, culturally competent/proficient leadership is necessary for enhancing the teaching and learning process (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). However, Mendels and Mitgang (2013) also noted that enhancing this process must be done by focusing on the quality of the leadership and on cultivating leadership in others. Quality leadership involves a conscientious effort by both the individual and the institution to improve the learning in a diverse student population

(Jackson, 2012). Jackson (2012) also stated that leaders must acknowledge culture's vital role in education.

Secondly, principals who acknowledge that culture plays a vital role in teaching diverse students can benefit from training designed to increase their understanding of valuing, accessing, adapting, managing, and instituting diversity (Jackson, 2012). Next, it is necessary that principals form collaborative relationships and foster a community of professional learners. Finally, culturally competent and proficient leaders can help those who teach students at failing schools become successful; that is, if principals use culturally competent/proficient practices in their day-to-day activities.

Professional development can be the catalyst for change and can benefit students, families, instructors, and community members throughout the district. Improving student academic and social achievement can result in their pursuing higher education, obtaining good jobs, and developing into competent citizens and future leaders. Professional development that concentrates on diversity and cultural leadership can be beneficial for the community at large. Students with skills and knowledge relevant to today's society can obtain good jobs and pursue higher education, which truly are opportunities to promote social change. Simply put, student success can mean productive citizenry and productive futures.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The district's chief operating officers should be the instruments for introducing present and prospective administrators to the many aspects of diversity and culturally competent/proficient leadership practices and for enforcing professional development

initiatives, including the program developed for the present study. Implementing this professional development program is only the beginning; ongoing efforts to address diversity and support culturally competent/proficient leadership practices are needed because both present and prospective administrators are frequently oblivious of their biases and prejudices. Leaders are not always aware of others' tendencies and preconceptions. As such, they need to recognize and employ meaningful and culturally relevant practices in their lives and their work. To reach a stage of awareness demands a readiness to learn. When using Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership, facilitators must continually advocate reform by allowing educators to take ownership of their learning through such approaches as including thought-provoking questions, illustrations, active- and problem-based activities, effective strategies, reflection, evaluation, and collegiality. At the same time, it is imperative that more data be collected on principals' and teachers' views on culturally competent/proficient leadership practices as they apply to valuing, accessing, adapting, managing, and instituting diversity.

Conclusion

In 2009, I enrolled at Walden University with one goal in mind: to complete the coursework and earn my doctoral degree. From the onset I knew I wanted to be an agent of social change. I wanted to give back to my community as it had so graciously given to me. I constructed this professional development project, designed to aid principals in leading a growingly diverse student body, by focusing on diversity and cultural leadership.

This professional development was designed to help administrators foster and sustain a stronger, more collaborative collegiate culture. I hope it can help create a culture in which individuals are not afraid to examine their personal beliefs or take part in consciously informed decision-making practices; a culture in which individuals can look at diversity, appreciate students' differences, and embrace those differences by treating them as opportunities.

I have often said and will continue to say that my educational attainment is immeasurable for I am a lifelong learner. And, I will always and forever be an educator. This program and project are not the end of my journey but instead a new chapter in my life. I hope that Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership will be a new breath of life for all who partake of it.

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Appendix A: The Project

Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership



Leading to Increased Academic Achievement

PD for Administrators

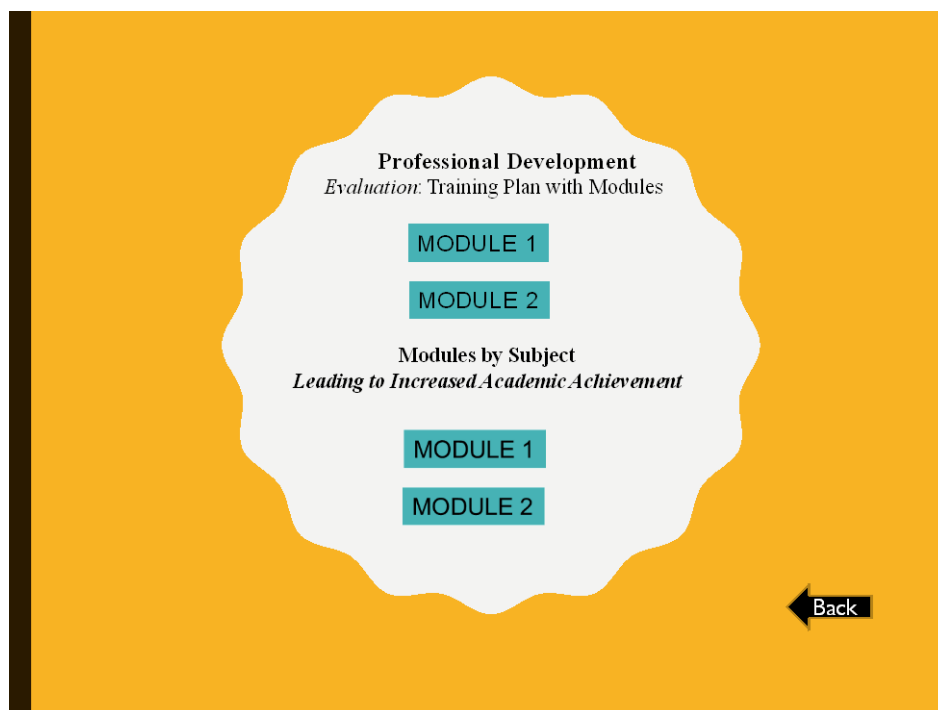
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PD Contents

- Diversity Pretest [Slide 9](#)
- Training Modules [Slide 3](#)
- Purpose [Slide 4](#)
- Leadership Standard [Slide 5](#)
- Intended Learning Outcomes [Slide 6](#)
- Training Schedule [Slide 7](#)
- Being Different is Beautiful (video) [Slide 11](#)
- A Peacock in the Land of Penguins (video) [Slide 19](#)
- A Principal's Story (video) [Slide 27](#)
- We are the World (video) [Slide 31](#)
- References [Slide 35](#)
- Diversity Post Test [Slide 32](#)
- What Type of Leader Are You? [Slide 34](#)

PD for Administrators

2



Module 1 Recognizing and Understanding Diversity

Research, collaboration, and continued education help tremendously in facilitating the teaching and learning process. Effectively assisting and assessing a diverse student body and forming collaborative relationships are necessities for school leaders. Administrators must learn to become proficient in the communication process from a cultural aspect as communication is a vital part of culture (Peace Corps, n. d.).

One way to do this, is to realize student individual values, beliefs, behaviors, and needs. Assessing the culture of students is helpful in reaching those who have been historically underserved. Students can be taught to rely on the diversity of each other and learn through social interactions and cultural differences.

This training will focus on the different aspects of diversity to offer a clearer definition to help the participants learn how to employ organizational and instructional strategies that guides the valuation, adaptation, assessment, management, and institutionalization of diversity. Collegiality is the essential format for this training.

Back

Module 2 Becoming Agents of Change through Cultural Leadership

School and district administrators play a central role in creating, supporting, and participating in professional development opportunities. Culturally proficient leaders recognize the value of professional development; so, they do not only engage their teachers in professional development but they also are active participants (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Administrators can advance teachers' capacity to develop quality assessments in three ways, innovation, reflection, and collegiality.

Administrators must encourage a culture and climate of innovation. Teachers perform better when principals value their professional judgments and give them the independence to decide to improve their practice, according to Blase and Kirby (2008). Administrators need to encourage and participate in a culture of reflective practice. In 1987, Schön's stated that reflective practitioners seek innovation but also venture outside their comfort zones, take risks with new ideas and practices, and ultimately adopt improved ways of conducting their work. On the one hand, administrators need to be encouraged by administrator-peer exchanges and on the other hand, administrators need to encourage teacher-peer exchanges, collegiality.

This training focuses on sharing best practices believed to promote student achievement by identifying the type of leadership needed and research-based best practices. The training will encompass administrators possessing a holistic view of diversity and linking diversity to academics as a best practice, thus becoming competent in transferring learning to faculty. Collegiality is the essential format for this training.

Communication

Acknowledging Our Differences

Accessing Diversity

Managing Differences

Acknowledging Our Differences

- This session emphasizes the importance of recognizing that all individuals are different and that one size does not fit all. In this session it is important to communicate two ideals of principal's leadership: (a) principals recognize that no two individuals are the same in the multi-aspects of diversity and (b) diversity is more than just race and culture.

Accessing Diversity

- This session is design to help leaders share practices used for assessing their school's culture. This session emphasizes that a principal's role is to assess the culture of their school (Nuri-Robins et. al., 2007). Also, according to Nuri-Robins et al. (2007) principals' are responsible for articulating the cultural expectations to all stakeholders and effective communication is vital to this process.

Managing Differences

- An exercise in this session stresses on highlighting cultural differences and behavioral problems; Nuri-Robins et. al. (2007) found showcasing cultural differences and behavioral problems to be important. The principal must provide support and training systems to combat conflicts (Nuri-Robins et. al., 2007).

Leadership

- Appreciating Differences
- Adjusting to Differences
- Instituting Cultural Knowledge
- Making a Difference
- Leading Change
- Improving Student Success

Appreciating Differences

- This session provides several opportunities for administrators to collaboratively engage in activities that demonstrate the use of a culturally proficient vision. Nuri-Robins et. al. (2007) declared that a principal's role is to articulate a culturally proficient vision and to hold their staff and faculty accountable to their vision.

Adjusting to Differences

- Administrators will be encouraged to participate in the sharing of best practices by embracing their role as instructional leaders. In this session, principal leadership is bolstered through the venue of performing as agents of change.

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Con't Leadership

Instituting Cultural Knowledge

- This session afford opportunities for administrators to model classroom practices. These practices can be used in their role as instructional leaders at their respective schools. This is important because the schools' student body is growing in cultural diversity.

Making a Difference

- This collaborative session is instrumental in identifying and improving challenges that may impact leadership. These activities are design to strengthen principal leadership by showcasing best practices.

Leading Change

- This session consists of applying diversity competencies in educators' practice. Administrators will have an opportunity to build solutions from their reflections and knowledge gained during the 3-day professional development sessions and apply it to their practice.

Improving Student Success

- This session holds the potential to change administrators' outlook on diversity through the facilitation of their diversity-driven products. The products include the creation of their new (a) school's mission, (b) philosophy of education, and (c) advertisement for a model assistant.

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH A FOCUS ON DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

The purpose of this professional development is to facilitate practices that promote culturally competent/proficient leadership and strengthen collaborative efforts through the sharing of best practices, ideas, experiences, and information.



LEADERSHIP LICENSURE CONSORTIUM STANDARD 2

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Why are leadership standards important?

Using standards, according to Mendels and Mitgang (2013), helps highlight key behaviors and competencies of successful school leaders with a focus on skills to improve instruction.



The intended learning outcomes of Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership are:

- To increase engagement of all students in the learning process through acceptance of student diversity and the use of diversity to create better instruction.
- To increase knowledge of the individual needs of a diverse student body.
- To create educational opportunities for diverse learners.
- To reduce barriers that inhibits the learning process.
- To initiate successful leadership that promotes learning.

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PD for Administrators

6

Professional Development With a Focus on Diversity and Cultural Leadership

School Mission
(Place your school mission here.)

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

[Back](#)

PD for Administrators

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DAY 1 AGENDA

Welcome
Administrators.....Continental Breakfast... 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.



Outlining Differences
8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Sessions:

Acknowledging Our Differences.....8:30-9:15 a.m.

Accessing Diversity.....9:25-12:00 noon

Administrating our Differences.....1:00-3:30p.m.

PD for Administrators

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PREPARATION DETAILS: DAY 1

Participants: Maximum 25

* As participants enter the room, they can be given colored coded attendance slips. Attendance slips can be used as proof of attendance and to ensure that participants from the same schools are not seated together.

Room setup: 5 tables with no more than 5 chairs per tables

*tables can be color coded


Materials needed 1 easel, 5 flip charts (1 per table), 5 flip chart writing pads (1 per table), markers and/or writing utensils (per table), writing journals (for each participant)


* Optional

School Mission
Place here.

Question
For
Today

What is diversity?

Voice from the Field 



Activity I

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PD for Administrators

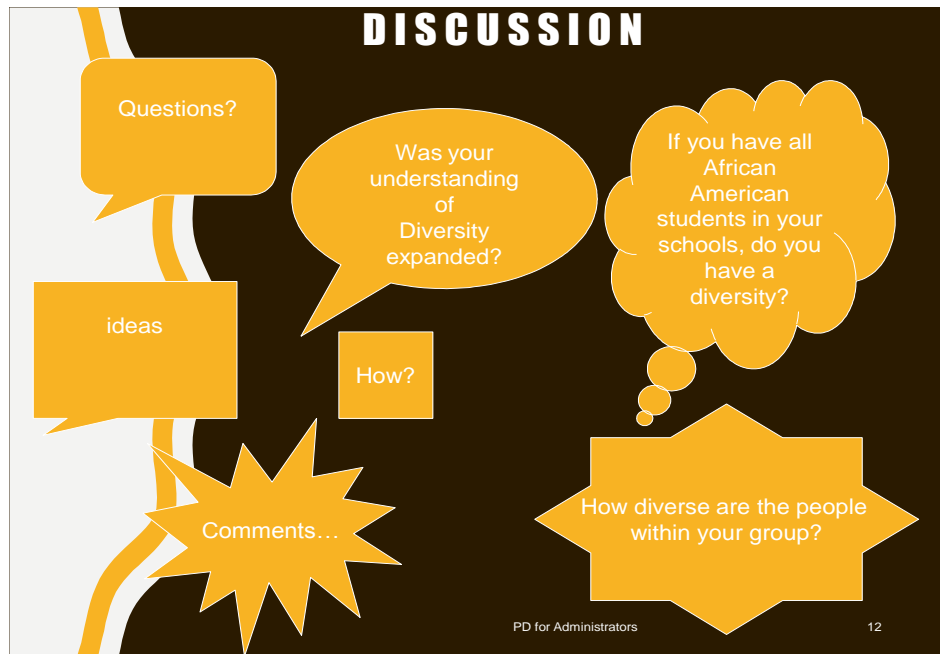
10

Begin with the Question for Today (**QFT**). See schedule below for timelines. Allow for collaboration among groups. Groups should record their definitions for diversity on the writing pads. Groups are to present their deliverable to the class. Voice from the Field can be any expert or someone who is knowledgeable about the subject, and then follow with the video. Advance to the next slide for discussion.

BEING DIFFERENT IS BEAUTIFUL BY LITTLESIKHS.COM
(DIVERSITY VIDEO FOR CHILDREN, KIDS, & SCHOOLS)

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=KJ1YGFKNJYO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJ1YGFKNJYO)

Acknowledging Our Differences					
8:30 am					
What is diversity?					
Actions	Collaborative engagement	Presentations	Voice from the field/video	Discussion	Break
Timeframe	35 min.	5 min. per group	20 min.	25 min.	10 min.



Allow for questions, ideas, and comments. Afterwards, ask volunteers to address the remaining questions prior to advancing to the next slide, Activity 2.

ACTIVITY 2

Accessing Diversity

Categories

1. Religion
2. Non-traditional families
3. Economic status
4. Linguistics & Dialects
5. Differently Abled students

Specifics

- Select a category from above
- Describe the issue
- Identify potential conflicts that may occur
- Identify plans for working through the conflicts
- Describe how your group will resolve conflicts, if not describe why?
- Reflect as a group, and then record what you've learned about yourself and your group members during this exercise

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This is a collaborative activity with five topics. Allow each group to draw from a bag/basket or assign each topic. The results should be recorded on the flip chart paper. Allow each group to present. Refer to the schedule timeline.

Distribute:

Day 1 Activity 1, 5 Essential Elements of Cultural/Proficient Leadership

Day 1 Activity 2, Directions for Activity 2

Day 1 Activity 2, Examples Sheet

Accessing Diversity-Allowed timeframe is 2 hrs.

ACTIVITY 3

Managing Differences

- Presentations
- Collegiate Feedback



PD for Administrators
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Activity 3 is a continuation of Activity 2. Allow participants 30 minutes for completing their group activity. Allow group presentations. Allow collegiate feedback prior to viewing the next slide, reflections.

Managing Differences					
Activity 3					
Actions	Complete projects	Presentations	Collegiate feedback	Reflections	Evaluations
Timeframe	30 min.	20 min. per group	20-25 min.	20 min.	10 min.
Draw for today's prize!					

School Mission
Place here.

REFLECTIONS

- Diversity to me is....
- How are we different from one another?
- How do I acknowledge diversity?
- How do I access diversity?
- How do I manage differences?

PD for Administrators

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Allow groups to record their reflections in their journals. Distribute the evaluation handouts. Collect all completed evaluations. Draw a participant's name for today's prize.

Day 2 Agenda

Welcome

Administrators.....Continental Breakfast... 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

Respecting Differences

8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Sessions:

Appreciating Difference.....8:30-9:15 a.m.

Adjusting to Differences.....9:25-12:00 noon

Instituting Cultural Knowledge.....1:00-3:30p.m.



PD for Administrators

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PREPARATION DETAILS: DAY 2

Participants: Maximum 25

* As participants enter the room, they can be given colored coded attendance slips. Attendance slips can be used as proof of attendance and to ensure that participants from the same schools are not seated together.

Room setup: 5 tables with no more than 5 chairs per tables

*tables should be color coded

Material needed: 1 easel, 5 flip charts (1 per table), 5 flip chart writing pads (1 per table), markers and/or writing utensils (per table). Laptops, Computers & Handouts

*Name tags

* Optional

School Mission
Place here.

SNAPSHOT


What did you learn on yesterday?

Question For Today

Activity I

How do you show that you value your staff, faculty, students, families, and community?

Voice from the Field






PD for Administrators


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Begin with the snapshot for review by asking for volunteers or allow table-to-table feedback. Proceed to the **QFT**. Distribute the **5 Essential Element of Cultural/Proficient Leadership** to each group. Allow for collaboration. Allow groups to record their responses on their writing pads addressing each stakeholder. Allow group presentations. Select Voice from the Field (any individual(s) who is an expert or knowledgeable on today's topic) and then play the video. Proceed to the next slide for discussion. See schedule below for timelines.

A PEACOCK IN THE LAND OF PENGUINS					
HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/HNER4BBUJ68					
Appreciating Differences					
8:30 am					
How do you show that you value your staff, faculty, students, students' families, and community?					
Actions	Collaborative engagement	Presentations	Voice from the field/video	Discussion	Break
Timeframe	45 min.	6 min. per group	15 min.	20 min.	10 min.

DISCUSSION



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Encourage participants to share ideas, entertain questions, and comments about Voice from the Field (any individual who is an expert or knowledgeable on the subject) and the video. Use the following questions to elicit further discussion:

- **What are some ways to show student with different religious beliefs they are valuable to the student body?**
- **Name some ways to show value for non-traditional families.**
- **How can students of low socio-economic status be shown that the student body values them?**
- **How can students with linguistics and dialects abilities be shown that they are important?**

Proceed to the next slide for Activity 2.

ACTIVITY 2


Adjusting to Diversity

Categories

1. Religion
2. Non-traditional families
3. Economic status
4. Linguistics & Dialects
5. Differently Abled students

Specifics

- Objective(s)
- Hook (Attention Getter)
- Activity
- Closure
- Materials needed
- Reflect as a group, and then record what you've learned about yourself and your group members during this exercise



PD for Administrators

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This is a collaborative activity. The groups' results should be recorded on their flip chart paper. Groups should be allowed to present. See schedule for timeline for this session. Allow one participant from each group to draw a topic from the categories listed. Distributed **Day 2 Activity 2, Directions for Activity 2, and Day 2 Examples.**

Adjusting to Differences – Allowed timeframe is 2 hrs.

ACTIVITY 3

Introducing Cultural Knowledge

- Presentations
- Collegiate Feedback



PD for Administrators

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Activity 3 is a continuation of Activity 2. Allow groups to use the writing pads to record their lesson plans. Allow group presentations. Allow collegiate feedback, prior to advancing to the next slide.

Introducing Cultural Knowledge					
Activity 3					
Actions	Complete projects	Presentations	Collegiate feedback	Reflections	Evaluations
Timeframe	30 min	15 min per group	20-25 min	15 min	10 min
Draw for today's prize!					

REFLECTIONS

- Am I respecting differences as it relates to my staff, faculty, and student body?
- In what ways does my action convey that I value differences?
- How do I adapt to differences?
- How do I institute cultural knowledge?

Allow groups to record their reflection on today's activities. Distribute evaluation handouts and collect the completed evaluations. Draw a winner!

Day 3 Agenda

Welcome
Administrators.....Continental Breakfast... 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.



From Culturally Conscious to Culturally Competent/Proficient Leaders
8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Sessions:

Making a Difference.....8:30-9:15 a.m.

Leading Change.....9:25-12:00 noon

Improving Student Success.....1:00-3:30p.m.

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PREPARATION DETAILS: DAY 3

Note: Allow participants to choose their own seating with no more than 5 per table.

Participants: Maximum 25

Room setup: 5 tables with no more than 5 chairs per tables

Material needed: 1 easel, 5 flip charts (1 per table), 5 flip chart writing pads (1 per table), markers and/or writing utensils (per table) At least 15 sheets of writing paper or writing pads for each participant (per table) or Laptops, Computers & Handouts

*Name tags

* Optional

School Mission
Place here.

SNAPSHOT

What did you learn on yesterday?

Question For Today

Activity 1

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What are some challenges that you may encounter that could affect your ability to lead?

List some challenges that your teachers have experienced that affected their practice. Identify some challenges that your teachers may experience that might impact their practice.

Voice from the Field



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Review snapshot followed by **QFT**. Distribute **Day 3 Activity 1** for directions. Participants should record their results on the writing paper or copier paper. When timeframe for this activity has ended, participants should exchange papers and analyze each other responses. Participants should be encouraged to suggest ways to improve each other weaknesses. Participants should record ways to improve leadership /teachers' practices on their writing pad. Share ideas with class. See schedule below for timeline for first activity. Select the Voice from the Field (any individual who is an expert or knowledgeable on the topic) follow by showing the video. Advance to the next slide and allow time for discussion.

A PRINCIPAL'S STORY

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-62KEU_kkA

Making a Difference 8:30 am					
Identify some challenges that you may encounter that could affect your ability to lead. List challenges that your teachers have experienced that affected their practice. Identify some challenges that your teachers may experience that may affect their practice.					
Actions	Collaborative engagement	Presentations	Voice from the field/video	Discussion	Break
Timeframe	30 min.	5 min. per group	20 min.	25 min.	10 min.

DISCUSSION

- Why is cultural competence important?
- What is the relationship between diversity and culturally competent leadership?
- Should diversity be taught?
- How do you manage your prejudices?
- How does diversity impact your leadership?
- What are some ways that you can improve your leadership?

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Encourage a member from each group to answer a question or ask for volunteers.

ACTIVITY 2

Your School, Your Leadership



Deliverables due: school's mission, philosophy of education, and advertisement.

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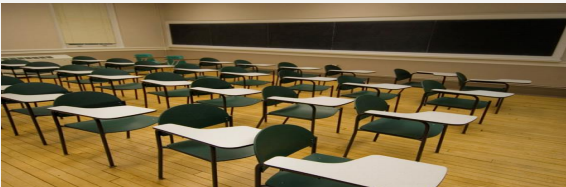
Distribute **Day 3 Activity 2, Your School, Your Leadership** handout and allow participants to use their laptops or computer

Your School, Your Leadership – Allowed timeframe is 2 hrs.

ACTIVITY 3

IMPROVING STUDENT SUCCESS

- Presentations
- Collegiate Feedback



PD for Administrators

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Allow participants 30 minutes to complete individual activities. Allow participants to present deliverables to those at their table, then allow for collegiate feedback. Depending on the time, please allow individuals to share their deliverables with the whole class. If possible, make copies for class members of all deliverables. Then advance to the next slide, reflections.

Improving Student Success					
Activity 3					
Actions	Complete projects	Presentations	Collegiate feedback	Reflections	Evaluations
Timeframe	30 min.	15 min. per group	20-25 min.	15 min.	10 min.
Draw for today's prize!					

REFLECTIONS

- What can I do to become an agent of change?
- How can I create a culture and environment that is welcoming and accepting to all?
- What can I do to ensure teacher quality?
- How can I employ organizational and instructional strategies that guide the valuing, adapting, assessing, managing, and instituting of diversity?

Allow group members to record their reflections on today's activities. Advance to the next slide and play video (We are the World).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9bNoNFKCBI>

Distribute the evaluation handouts and collect the completed evaluations. Draw a lucky winner's name for a prize!

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HANDOUTS & ASSESSMENT FOR DAILY ACTIVITIES

Day 1 Activity 2 Accessing Diversity Directions Sheet

Directions: You are to take the topic your group received and create an issue/conflict that needs to be resolved. You will create a situation to fit the issue and a presentation with the specifics as to how your group will manage it. Use your writing pad to record your story. Be sure to include in the scenario the specifics listed below:

Topics

1. Religion
2. Same sex parents
3. Poverty
4. Linguistics & Dialects
5. Ableness

Specifics

- Name of your issue
- List the people involved
- Identify potential barriers that may occur
- Identify plans for working through the barriers
- Describe how your group will meet the intended outcome, if not describe why?
- Reflect as a group, and then record what you learn about yourself and your group members? What are some things that might arise during this scenario?

Day 1 Activity 2 EXAMPLES

Example 1- Generic

The principal has delegated the assistant principal to oversee Teacher Support Team (TST). The assistant principal has decided that all teachers will participate and has appointed a team that consists of three teachers to begin the tutoring process. The assistant principal also gave a list of six students and their schedules. The group members consist of an English teacher, football coach, and business education teacher. The goal is to tutor these students in English, mathematics, history, and science, which will require focusing and working as a cohesive team. We are to brainstorm and select how we will complete this process to meet the needs of each student.

English teacher speaks, "In addition to all my other duties, now I have to worry about tutoring students in subject areas that I have no expertise in." The other two teachers are quiet. The English teacher continues, "What about my already overloaded classes, lesson plans?" "I suppose that we will have to use what time we have for planning to tutor—this is not fair." I listen patiently and when the English teacher finished speaking. I said, "I agree each year our school and district are always assigning us with extra things to do, probably next year we will not even get a planning period." Then, I asked, "Would any of you like to assume the role of team leader? This is to meet **Roadblock #1** – My assigned leaders perhaps made some of the members reluctant to participate due to them wanting to interact with those sharing the same discipline. Then **Roadblock #2** -Resentment as to me having the answers or having already developed a plan of action. I continued, "Our goal today is to meet and decide the best course of action. We have to decide as a group what dates and times to tutor students and what students we will be responsible for tutoring." "Does anyone have any suggestions or thoughts?" No one speaks. Then I continue---"First, let's agree to review each student folder and determine their area(s) of need then perhaps we can agree on how to separate the students based on their need. "If it is acceptable to the group --I think the English

teacher can tutor students who are deficient in English and I have been given research based information and websites with programs online that will help with the other disciplines." "We can meet next week after reviewing the folders and decide how to proceed." I further explained that the assistant principal plans to attend our next meeting. I also suggested that we correspond via email with updates. I concluded with "Is this agreeable to everyone or are there any other ideas?"

Example 2 – Same Sex Parents

The room began to fill with students, educators, and parents to hear the students' presentations. Leticia, a 12th grade student walked in. Leticia was one of their top students, was presenting a simulation of her group's project to the team, Mayor Youth Council, the city's police department, her parents, and a few of her good friends. One of the local news stations scheduled to interview Leticia's project team next week. Everyone wanted to be on the same page when the camera rolled on Monday, so the afternoon simulation was crucial. Leticia was the only one who seemed relaxed and confident.

Two women entered the room a few minutes prior to the start of the presentations and waved to Leticia. Leticia jumped up from her seat and ran over to them, hugging them both. Then she went back to her seat and pulled up two chairs one on each side of her and said, "Mom, sit here." Mrs. Jones leaned over and asked, "I met the lady in green coming to the chair last week I thought she was your mother." Leticia responded, "Both of them are my mothers." Mrs. Jones took a deep breath, and held it. As the students were presenting, Mrs. Jones began trying to understand her reaction to finding out that Leticia have two mothers.

Day 2 Activity 1

5 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TO CULTURAL COMPETENT/PROFICIENT LEADERSHIP

Valuing diversity is when individuals/companies/and or entities (a) acknowledge multiple perspectives, (b) accept common purposes, and (c) center visions and actions on common assessment results.

Valuing Diversity- Examples

- a. Ensuring that company decisions includes different perspectives
- b. Overseeing instruction to ensure that it is suitable for all students
- c. Encouraging demographically mixed groups in all school activities
- d. Establishing advisory groups that represent diverse backgrounds
- e. Providing leadership in the development of policy statements, mission and goal statements that include the concept of diversity
- f. Directing human and financial resources into training to proactively address diversity
- g. Reviewing school policies for consistency in regards to respecting and accepting other cultures
- h. Assessing programs to identify that they are meaningful and congruent with the students' language, cultural beliefs, and environment
- i. Providing training to all staff to increase their awareness of how to function and perform effectively in cross-cultural situations

Adapting to Diversity involves teaching appropriate communication skills to allow multiple voice interactions.

Adapting to Diversity- Examples

- j. Making the dominant cultural group aware that their cultural norms may have downplayed the value of diversity in the past
- k. Using culturally competent behaviors as a basic to analyze and review school policies
- l. Using culturally competent behaviors as part of the standards for performance appraisals

Cultural Assessment involves (a) conducting both individual and group assessments, (b) building specific goals to induce peer to peer support and (c) plan, facilitate, and promote deliberate professional learning to increase student achievement.

Cultural Assessment- Examples

- m. Gathering and circulating demographic information to your staff about the student body to increase cultural awareness
- n. Ensuring that everyone feels welcome by adjusting the way formalities are handled at the site level
- o. Assessing and removing barriers to core curriculum for culturally diverse students
- p. Sponsoring professional development that reflects the academic needs of a culturally diverse population
- q. Providing academic intervention programs scheduled to meet the needs of your culturally diverse student population
- r. Demonstrating sensitivity to cultural differences when conducting performance evaluations
- s. Developing school programs with opportunities for parental input

Managing the dynamics of differences entails meeting the needs of the community by (a) fostering discussions about race, gender, sexual orientation, social economic status and religion, and (b) making decisions transparent and subjective to change (if needed).

Managing the Dynamics of Differences- Examples

- t. Providing training to faculty and staff to increase awareness of conflict resolutions
- u. Supplying a conflict resolution program for students
- v. Communicating to parents a well-developed complaint resolution plan

Instituting cultural knowledge involves (a) addressing and identifying student needs and using success indicators and (b) developing a method for continuous inquiry to access progress toward known goals.

Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge- Examples









- w. Providing a professional development program that includes training to address values, skills, knowledge, attitudes and attributes needed to work effectively in cross-cultural situations for all staff

Day 2 Activity 2

Adjusting to Differences

Directions: Your group members will share ideas on how to introduce best practices on diversity to your teacher based on the categories listed below. You are to take the category your group received and design an outline to include the necessary components.

Be sure to include all of the following in your outline:

-  Objective
-  Hook (Attention getter)
-  Lesson
-  Activity
-  Closure
-  Materials-
-  Pick only one— Advance, Special, or English language learners to include modifications
-  Typed Lesson (for sharing --include copies at least 24 for handout)

Category

6. Religion
7. Same sex parents
8. Poverty
9. Linguistics & Dialects
10. Ableness

Day 3 Activity2

5 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TO CULTURAL COMPETENT/PROFICIENT LEADERSHIP

Valuing diversity is when individuals/companies/and or entities (a) acknowledge multiple perspectives, (b) accept common purposes, and (c) center visions and actions on common assessment results.

Valuing Diversity- Examples

- a. Ensuring that company decisions includes different perspectives
- b. Overseeing instruction to ensure that it is suitable for all students
- c. Encouraging demographically mixed groups in all school activities
- d. Establishing advisory groups that represent diverse backgrounds
- e. Providing leadership in the development of policy statements, mission and goal statements that include the concept of diversity
- f. Directing human and financial resources into training to proactively address diversity
- g. Reviewing school policies for consistency in regards to respecting and accepting other cultures
- h. Assessing programs to identify that they are meaningful and congruent with the students' language, cultural beliefs, and environment
- i. Providing training to all staff to increase their awareness of how to function and perform effectively in cross-cultural situations

Adapting to Diversity involves teaching appropriate communication skills to allow multiple voice interactions.

Adapting to Diversity- Examples

- j. Making the dominant cultural group aware that their cultural norms may have downplayed the value of diversity in the past
- k. Using culturally competent behaviors as a basic to analyze and review school policies
- l. Using culturally competent behaviors as part of the standards for performance appraisals

Cultural Assessment involves (a) conducting both individual and group assessments, (b) building specific goals to induce peer to peer support and (c) plan, facilitate, and promote deliberate professional learning to increase student achievement.

Cultural Assessment- Examples

- m. Gathering and circulating demographic information to your staff about the student body to increase cultural awareness

- n. Ensuring that everyone feels welcome by adjusting the way formalities are handled at the site level
- o. Assessing and removing barriers to core curriculum for culturally diverse students
- p. Sponsoring professional development that reflects the academic needs of a culturally diverse population
- q. Providing academic intervention programs scheduled to meet the needs of your culturally diverse student population
- r. Demonstrating sensitivity to cultural differences when conducting performance evaluations
- s. Developing school programs with opportunities for parental input

Managing the dynamics of differences entails meeting the needs of the community by (a) fostering discussions about race, gender, sexual orientation, social economic status and religion, and (b) making decisions transparent and subjective to change (if needed).

Managing the Dynamics of Differences- Examples

- t. Providing training to faculty and staff to increase awareness of conflict resolutions
- u. Supplying a conflict resolution program for students
- v. Communicating to parents a well-developed complaint resolution plan

Instituting cultural knowledge involves (a) addressing and identifying student needs and using success indicators and (b) developing a method for continuous inquiry to access progress toward known goals.

Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge- Examples

- w. Providing a professional development program that includes training to address values, skills, knowledge, attitudes and attributes needed to work effectively in cross-cultural situations for all staff

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH A FOCUS ON DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Evaluation Form

1. What could the presenter have done to make this presentation more effective?

2. What did you like most/least about this presentation?

3. Have you previously attended seminars, workshops, or professional development on service learning? Please circle. YES or NO
4. Do you feel that all students should be responsible for their own learning and be active in the learning process? Please circle. YES or NO
5. Do you think that using service learning as a teaching strategy aligns with JPS mission statement? Please circle. YES or NO
6. Would you be willing to collaborate with others in planning, designing, implementing and sharing service-learning projects? Please circle YES or NO
7. Would you recommend this presentation to other educators? Please circle YES or NO
8. This question deals with content only. Please use the following scale to indicate the overall quality of the information presented.

1 poor	2 average	3 good	4 very good	5 excellent
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PowerPoint Presentation	
Handout	

9. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest possible score, how would you rate this presentation? Please circle. 1 2 3 4 5

Presenter:

Evaluator:

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

PD for Administrators

8

DIVERSITY PRETEST

1. Diversity is defined as "the condition of being different. True or False
2. Diversity equates to "race" and "culture". True or False
3. Diversity also includes income, education, religious beliefs, military experience, geographic location, parental status and marital status. True or False
4. Valuing diversity recognizes and appreciates differences between people. True or False
5. Diversity exists when there is more than one student. True or False



PD for Administrators

9

DIVERSITY QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Diversity is defined as "the condition of being different. True or False **true**
2. Diversity equates to "race" and "culture". True or False **false**
3. Diversity includes income, education, religious beliefs, military experience, geographic location, parental status and marital status. True or False **true**
4. Valuing diversity recognizes and appreciates differences between people. True or False **true**
5. Diversity exists when there is more than one student. True or False **true**

← Back

LINKS FOR AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDINGS

- <http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~asuomca/diversityinit/definition.html>
- <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diversity>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIMl_h0Hlcw
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJlygFknjYo>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTh3pe8N3DQ>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOmlZsWqi2g>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfkrSrYUS_I
- <https://youtu.be/hNeR4bBUj68>
- https://youtu.be/v-62KEU_kkA

Appendix B: District Approval Letter

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

September 10, 2015

Doristine Cornelius

Dear Ms. Cornelius,

[Redacted] Research Review Committee has approved your request to conduct your study, "Exploring an African American Principal's Cultural Leadership Effects on Closing the Achievement Gap". Please ensure that all information pertaining to individuals' identity and facilities used in the research remain anonymous. This letter certifies that your study will be conducted during the 2015-2016 school year and is limited to schools listed in your formal request. If you should need further assistance, do not hesitate to contact our office. Best wishes with your research.

Please contact school administrator to schedule a meeting.

Before beginning your research at the selected site(s), you are required to present a copy of this letter along with your original IRB approval letter to the site's administrator.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation (Research Partner)

Letter of Cooperation

Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

[Redacted]

Dear Mrs. Doristine Cornelius:

After reviewing your research proposal, I am approving your request to conduct the proposed study entitled "Exploring an African American Principal's Cultural Leadership Effects on Closing the Achievement Gap" within [Redacted]. As part of this study, you are authorized to observe, distribute survey questionnaires, and perform member checks to verify information and meet with the selected teachers and administrator to disseminate findings. You should realize that individual participation will be voluntary and at their discretion. It is agreed that your research will not involve the use of students as participants.

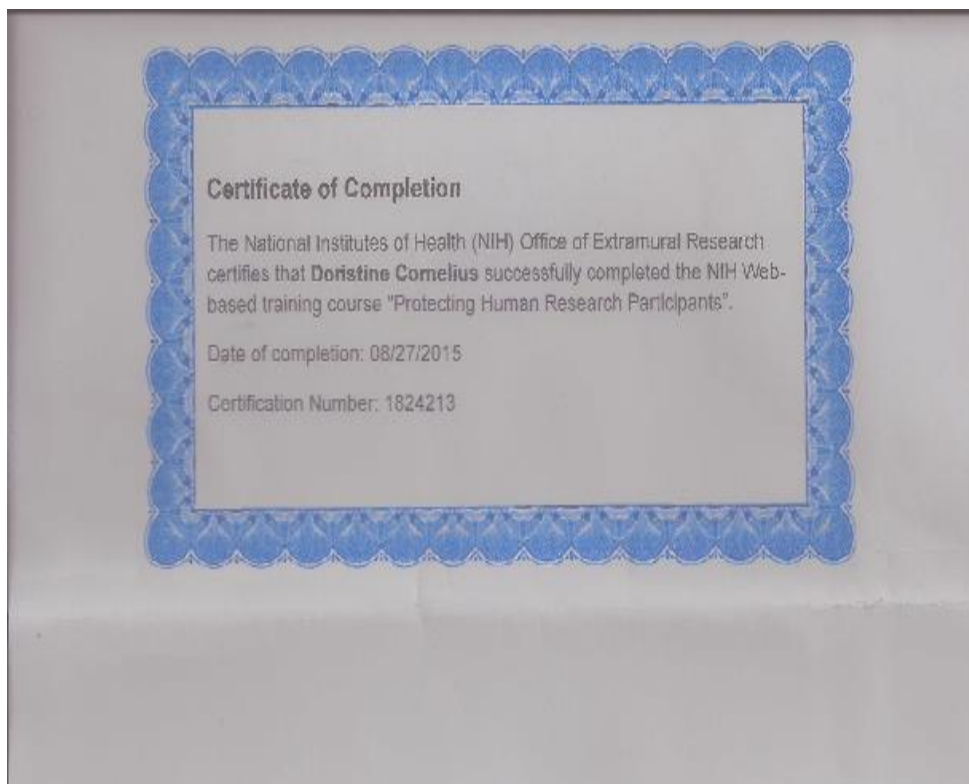
My signature acknowledges the researcher, Doristine Cornelius, has presented a copy of her approved proposal, which I have reviewed. [Redacted] reserves the right to withdraw from the study at any time if circumstances change. Additionally, this document is confirmation that Doristine Cornelius is authorized to implement this research study within [Redacted].

I acknowledge that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and must not be provided to anyone other than Doristine Cornelius' supervising faculty/staff without the expressed permission of Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]

Appendix D: Protection Human Research Certificate



Appendix E: Participant Invitation Letters

Dear administrator,

I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University and a former teacher at [REDACTED] High School who taught there for the past seven years. I am inviting you to participate in a research study entitled “Exploring an African American Principal’s Cultural Leadership Effects on Closing the Achievement Gap.” You are invited to participate because you are a successful African American principal who has received recognition for being the leader of a successful school within the district. Congratulations! I am elated.

Your participation will consist of (a) completing a 3-question survey questionnaire about your cultural leadership practices, (b) sharing your philosophy of education or the school’s mission statement, (c) sharing your faculty meeting agendas/minutes, and (d) to participate in clarifying, changing, or removing any information that you deem is necessary from the transcribed survey questionnaire known as member checking, which combined should require less than 2 hours of your time. Your response to the survey questionnaire will be kept confidential. Each participant will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to the research and findings, which could translate into being a template for professional development for current and new administrators and teachers by providing cultural leadership practices and policies use to improve student academic achievement. If you are interested in participating, please contact me at the numbers or email address listed below. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you in advance,

Doristine Cornelius

Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning Doctoral Candidate
Walden University

[REDACTED]

Dear assistant administrator and teachers,

I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University and a former teacher at [REDACTED] High School who taught there for the past seven years. I am contacting you because you have at least 3 years teaching experience, are full-time teachers and assistant administrator, 25 or older, and have been employees of [REDACTED] High School for at least 2 years. Congratulations! I am elated! I am inviting you to participate in a research study conducted at your school entitled “Exploring an African American Principal’s Cultural Leadership Effects on Closing the Achievement Gap.”

Because you serve in the capacity of an assistant administrator or teacher, your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. Your participation would consist of completing a 3-question survey questionnaire concerning your principal’s cultural leadership, which is anticipated to take approximately 30 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in clarifying, changing, or removing any information that you deem is necessary from the transcribed survey questionnaire known as member checking, which is anticipated to also take approximately 30 minutes. Your responses to the survey questionnaire will be kept confidential. Each participant will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. Your input is simply invaluable.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to the research and findings, which could translate into being a template for professional development for current and new administrators and teachers by providing cultural leadership practices and policies use to improve student academic achievement.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at the numbers or email address listed below. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you in advance,

Doristine Cornelius
Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning Doctoral Candidate
Walden University
[REDACTED]

Appendix F: Participant Consent Forms

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Month, 2015

Dear Administrator,

You are invited to take part in a research study about exploring an African American principal's cultural leadership effects on closing the achievement gap. You are invited to participate because you are a successful African American principal who has received recognition for being the leader of a successful school within the district.

Congratulations! By exploring the perceived cultural leadership practices of African American principal's use of cultural leadership in an urban successful school, this study may add to the current body of knowledge by providing (a) much-needed insight into the cultural leadership practices of successful African American principals, (b) valuable research from African American principals who are successful leaders of their schools, (c) cultural proficient leadership practices that are perceived to impact academic achievement, and (d) new cultural proficiency strategies, which may give insight into cultural proficient leadership styles, highlight the necessity of changing teaching practices, and hold significant value for addressing the problem for diverse audiences.

This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. My name is Doristine Cornelius, and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University in the Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning Program. It was just last year that I taught business education courses at [REDACTED] High School. I left [REDACTED] to pursue my doctoral degree so that I could advance in the field of education.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the cultural competent/proficient leadership practices that a successful African American principal in an urban high school uses to (a) value diversity, (b) adapt to diversity, (c) access culture, (d) manage the dynamics of differences, and (e) institute culture knowledge that are believed to be most effective in closing the achievement gap.

Inclusion Criteria:

- African American principal
- Leader of a successful school

Exclusion Criteria:

- Not an African American principal
- Leader of an unsuccessful school

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey questionnaire, which consist of three questions, share two documents such as your philosophy of education or the school's mission statement and 2 of your faculty meeting agendas/minutes. I realize that you are busy, and I appreciate your time.

- Participants are asked to complete a 3-question survey questionnaire about their cultural leadership, which may take approximately 30 minutes. Your response to the survey questionnaire will be kept confidential. Each participant will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.
- Participants are asked to provide their philosophy of education or the school's mission statement, retrieving one of these documents should not take more than 5 minutes.
- Participants are asked to provide 2 faculty meeting agendas/minutes, which is estimated to take approximately 20 minutes.
- Participants will be given a copy of the data received from the survey questionnaire, allowing them to review the information. You, the participant, will be allowed to clarify, change, or remove any detail, if necessary. Member checking should take approximately 30 minutes. You, the participant, will be given five days to review the information and respond with any changes, if necessary.

Here are some sample questions:

- Describe some of the actions that you do, or have done, on a daily basis to effectively impact the academic achievement of a diverse student population.
- Rank the top three actions you described above to impact academic achievement in order of their effectiveness with # 1 being the "most effective".

1.

2.

3.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future affiliation with anyone at [REDACTED] High School. If you initially decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are minimal risks associated with this study however; these risks are no greater than those you would encounter in daily life.

Benefits associated with participating in this study include highlighting a successful school practices and procedures, assisting other schools within the district in making adequate yearly progress, and contributing to the success of future students by providing cultural leadership practices believed to promote academic achievement.

Compensation:

You will receive no compensation for your participation in this study.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure in the research's password protected personal computer at the researcher's home. The completed survey questionnaire and shared documents collected; transcribed data collected from the survey questionnaire; and transcribed data that resulted from member checking will be kept by the researcher in a lock file cabinet in the researcher's home office. All data associated with this study will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Doristine Cornelius. The researcher may be contacted at [REDACTED] or via phone at [REDACTED] (cell) or [REDACTED] (home). The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Ella Benson; you may contact her at ella.benson@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-12-15-0183890** and it expires on **October 11, 2016.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Month, 2015

Dear Assistant Administrator and Classroom Teachers,

You are invited to take part in a research study about exploring an African American principal's cultural leadership effects on closing the achievement gap. You are invited to participate because you have at least 3 years teaching experience, are full-time teachers and assistant administrators, 25 or older, and have been employees of [REDACTED] High School for at least 2 years. Congratulations! By exploring the perceived cultural leadership practices of African American principal's use of cultural leadership in an urban successful school, this study may add to the current body of knowledge by providing (a) much-needed insight into the cultural leadership practices of successful African American principals, (b) valuable research from African American principals who are successful leaders of their schools, (c) cultural proficient leadership practices that are perceived to impact academic achievement, and (d) new cultural proficiency strategies, which may give insight into cultural proficient leadership styles, highlight the necessity of changing teaching practices, and hold significant value for addressing the problem for diverse audiences.

This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. My name is Doristine Cornelius, and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University in the Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning Program. It was just last year that I taught business education courses at [REDACTED] High School. I left [REDACTED] to pursue my doctoral degree so that I could advance in the field of education.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the cultural competent/proficient leadership practices that a successful African American principal in an urban high school uses to (a) value diversity, (b) adapt to diversity, (c) access culture, (d) manage the dynamics of differences, and (e) institute culture knowledge that are believed to be most effective in closing the achievement gap.

Inclusion Criteria:

- 3 years teaching experience
- Full-time teachers and administrator

- 25 or older
- Employee at [REDACTED] High School for 2 years

Exclusion Criteria:

- Less than 3 years teaching experience
- Not full-time teachers and administrators
- Under the age of 25
- Employee at [REDACTED] High School for less than 2 years

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey questionnaire, which consist of three questions and to participate in clarifying, changing or removing any information that you deem is necessary from the survey questionnaire (member checking). I realize that you are busy, and I appreciate your time.

- Participants are asked to complete a 3-question survey questionnaire about their principal's cultural leadership, which may take approximately 30 minutes. Your responses to the survey questionnaire will be kept confidential. Each participant will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.
- Participants will be given a copy of the data received from the survey questionnaire, allowing them to review the information. You, the participant, will be allowed to clarify, change, or remove any detail, if necessary. Member checking should take approximately 30 minutes. You, the participant, will be given five days to review the information and respond with any changes, if necessary.

Here are some sample questions:

- Describe some of the actions that your principal does, or has done, on a daily basis to effectively impact the academic achievement of a diverse student population. The actions do not necessarily have to be the ones listed in this questionnaire.

- Rank the top three actions you described above (about your principal) to impact academic achievement in order of their effectiveness with # 1 being the “most effective”.

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future affiliation with anyone at [REDACTED] High School. If you initially decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are minimal risks associated with this study however; these risks are no greater than those you would encounter in daily life.

Benefits associated with participating in this study include highlighting a successful school practices and procedures, assisting other schools within the district in making adequate yearly progress, and contributing to the success of future students by providing cultural leadership practices believed to promote academic achievement.

Compensation:

You will receive no compensation for your participation in this study.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure in the research’s password protected personal computer at the researcher’s home. The completed survey questionnaires; transcribed data collected from the survey questionnaires; and transcribed data that resulted from member checking will be kept by the researcher in a lock file cabinet in the researcher’s home office. All data associated with this study will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Doristine Cornelius. The researcher may be contacted at [REDACTED] or via phone [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] (home). The researcher’s faculty advisor is Dr. Ella Benson; you may

contact her at ella.benson@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-12-15-0183890** and it expires on **October 11, 2016.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix G: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet**Name:** _____**Position:**

- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Counselor
- ☐ Other

Years at [REDACTED] High School:☐ 0-1☐ 2⁽⁺⁾**Age:**

- ☐ Less than 25
- ☐ 25 or older

Teaching Experience:☐ 0-1 year☐ 2 yrs☐ 3 ⁽⁺⁾ yrs**Contact Numbers:**

_____ Alternate: _____

Office Location/Classroom:

Planning Period: _____

Appendix H: Survey Questionnaires

Cultural Leadership Questionnaire (Self-Report)

Demographics Information: Please select the approximate response.

Gender

Male_____ Female_____

Position

Principal_____

No. of Years in your position: 1-3_____ 4-7_____ 10+_____

Directions: Please answer each question using the space below to identify cultural leadership practices you use in your school.

Valuing Diversity is taking into consideration people whose viewpoints and experiences are different from your and the dominant group by including those individuals through creating formal and informal decision-making groups. It is important to look at diversity as an asset rather than a hindrance.

Cultural Assessment happens when a leader examines his/her own culture, learns about the cultures of others, and about how educators and the school as a whole react to those whose cultures differs from theirs. Leaders also learn how to become effective in cross-cultural situations.

Managing the Dynamics of Differences it is when leaders model problem solving and conflict resolution strategies as natural occurrences within the organization culture of the school and the cultural contexts of the communities of your school.

Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge means developing policies involving cultural groups regarding their experiences and perspectives, and informing others through professional development.

Adapting to Diversity means taking the lead in learning about cultural groups different from your own and learning to use other's individual backgrounds and cultural experiences effectively in your school's setting.

1. What is your role as it relates to (a) valuing diversity, (b) adapting to diversity, (c) cultural assessment, (d) managing the dynamics of differences, (e) and institutionalizing cultural knowledge?
2. Describe some of the actions that you do, or have done, on a daily basis to effectively impact the academic achievement of a diverse student population.

3. Rank the top three actions you described to impact academic achievement in order of their effectiveness with # 1 being the “most effective”.

1.1

1.2

1.3

Thank you for your participating.

Would you like a copy of this research study? YES _____ NO _____

Would you like a copy of the executive summary (overview of the research findings) of research?

YES _____ NO _____

Cultural Leadership Questionnaire

Demographics Information: Please select the approximate response.

Gender

Male _____ Female _____

Assistant Principal _____ Teacher _____

Other _____

No. of Years in your position: 1-3 _____ 4-7 _____ 10+ _____

Directions: Please answer each question using the space below to identify cultural leadership practices use by your principal at your school-based on the five terms and their definitions listed in the box below.

Valuing Diversity is the acceptance and respect of cultural differences. Policy statements, mission and goal statements include the concept of diversity. Inclusion of all groups within the school is communication.

Cultural Assessment occurs when a school leader has taken an assessment of both his/her own individual culture and the culture of the school. She/he recognizes how those cultural behaviors may affect students who are from different cultures

Managing the Dynamics of Differences means the provision of conflict resolution strategies to address current attitudes of negativity and mistrust that may arise among ethnic groups who have experience discrimination and unfair treatment from the dominant American culture.

Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge means that policy has been developed that is responsive to cultural diversity. This is done through the integration of information and skill through professional development. This enables educators and students to effectively interact in cross-cultural situations.

Adapting to Diversity means revising the way situations and procedures are handled at the site level to recognize the cultural differences that exist among staff, students, and community.

1. As it relates to your principal's action, practices, and/or policies, describe some of the actions your principal does or have done as they relate to (a) valuing diversity (b) adapting to diversity, (c) cultural assessment, (d) managing the dynamics of differences (e) institutionalizing cultural knowledge.

2. Describe some of the actions that your principal does, or has done, on a daily basis to effectively impact the academic achievement of a diverse student population. The actions do not necessarily have to be the ones listed in this questionnaire.
3. Rank the top three actions you described above (about your principal) to impact academic achievement in order of their effectiveness with # 1 being the “most effective”.
 - 1.1
 - 1.2
 - 1.3

Thank you for participating.

Would you like a final copy of this research study? YES_____ NO_____

Would you like a copy of the executive summary (overview of the research findings) of research?

YES_____ NO_____

Appendix I: School Mission Statement

MISSION

The mission of [REDACTED] is to provide a well-rounded educational foundation in an ever-changing society. At [REDACTED], all students will be taught to think critically and creatively to develop their potential through a diverse program of courses and activities that will help them mature into productive and responsible lifelong learners.

Appendix J: Analyst Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement **Hollie Jones, PhD**

It is understood and agreed to that the Discloser and the Recipient would like to exchange certain information that may be considered confidential. To ensure the protection of such information and in consideration of the agreement to exchange said information, the parties agree as follows:

1. The confidential information to be disclosed by Discloser under this Agreement (“Confidential Information”) can be described as and includes:

Information relating to Discloser’s ideas, dissertation and data, research and development, clients, marketing, and current or future business plans and models, regardless of whether such information is designated as “Confidential Information” at the time of its disclosure.

In addition to the above, Confidential Information shall also include, and the Recipient shall have a duty to protect, other confidential and/or sensitive information which is (a) disclosed by Discloser in writing at the time of disclosure; and/or (b) disclosed by Discloser in any other manner and identified as confidential at the time of disclosure and is also summarized and designated as confidential in a written format.

2. Recipient shall use the Confidential Information only for the purpose of evaluating potential dissertation and research consultation with Discloser.

3. Recipient shall limit disclosure of Confidential Information within its own organization to its employees without the prior written consent of Discloser. Recipient shall have satisfied its obligations under this paragraph if it takes affirmative measures to ensure compliance with these confidentiality obligations by its employees.

4. This Agreement imposes no obligation upon Recipient with respect to any Confidential Information (a) that was in Recipient’s possession before receipt from Discloser; (b) is or becomes a matter of public knowledge through no fault of Recipient; (c) is rightfully received by Recipient from a third party not owing a duty of confidentiality to the Discloser; (d) is disclosed without a duty of confidentiality to a third party by, or with the authorization of, Discloser; or (e) is independently developed by Recipient.

5. Discloser warrants that he/she has the right to make the disclosures under this Agreement.

6. This Agreement shall not be construed as creating, conveying, transferring, granting or conferring upon the Recipient any rights, license or authority in or to the information exchanged, except the limited right to use Confidential Information specified

in paragraph 2. Furthermore and specifically, no license or conveyance of any intellectual property rights is granted or implied by this Agreement.

7. Neither party has an obligation under this Agreement to purchase any service, goods, or intangibles from the other party. Discloser may, at its sole discretion, using its own information, offer such products and/or services for sale and modify them or discontinue sale at any time. Furthermore, both parties acknowledge and agree that the exchange of information under this Agreement shall not commit or bind either party to any present or future contractual relationship (except as specifically stated herein), nor shall the exchange of information be construed as an inducement to act or not to act in any given manner.

8. If there is a breach or threatened breach of any provision of this Agreement, it is agreed and understood that Discloser shall have no adequate remedy in money or other damages and accordingly shall be entitled to injunctive relief; provided however, no specification in this Agreement of any particular remedy shall be construed as a waiver or prohibition of any other remedies in the event of a breach or threatened breach of this Agreement.

9. This Agreement states the entire agreement between the parties concerning the disclosure of Confidential Information and supersedes any prior agreements, understandings, or representations with respect thereto. Any addition or modification to this Agreement must be made in writing and signed by authorized representatives of both parties. This Agreement is made under and shall be construed according to the laws of the State of New York, U.S.A.

10. If any of the provisions of this Agreement are found to be unenforceable, the remainder shall be enforced as fully as possible and the unenforceable provision(s) shall be deemed modified to the limited extent required to permit enforcement of the Agreement as a whole.

WHEREFORE, the parties acknowledge that they have read and understand this Agreement and voluntarily accept the duties and obligations set forth herein.

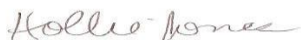
Recipient of Confidential Information:

Name: Hollie Jones, PhD

Company: Dissertation Genius LLC

Title: CEO and Director

Signature:



Date: 1/15/16