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Upper Elementary Literacy Teachers' Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MEd, Regent University, 2013

MS, Old Dominion University, 2003

BA, Medgar Evers College, 1999

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

In a mideastern US school district, culturally and linguistically diverse elementary students were not meeting proficiency on the state reading assessments. Elementary teachers in the district were expected to use culturally relevant teaching (CRT) strategies during literacy instruction to help engage and motivate culturally and linguistically diverse students. The purpose of this qualitative bounded multiple-case study was to understand Grade 3-5 teachers' knowledge of, planning for, and use of CRT strategies during literacy instruction. Ladson-Billings's theory of culturally relevant pedagogy guided this study. Three research questions were posed to examine what teachers knew about CRT strategies, how they planned for reading instruction using CRT strategies, and how they used CRT strategies during literacy instruction. A purposeful sample of 12 Grade 3-5 teachers, with at least 3 years of literacy teaching experience, volunteered and participated in semistructured interviews and document review. Data were analyzed through coding and theme development. Teachers were inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and learning needs and focused on helping students develop and increase reading outcomes in a collaborative learning environment. Based on the findings, a 3-day professional development was designed to support teachers in strengthening their knowledge, planning, and use of CRT reflective practices, community involvement, and socio-political topics. This endeavor could contribute to positive social change when district personnel develop training to increase teachers' cultural competence and CRT practices to improve culturally and linguistically diverse students' reading engagement and literacy learning for increased reading achievement.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my mother, Martrice Bailey, who instilled in me the drive to persevere and overcome obstacles to reach my goals. Mom, thank you for your wisdom, guidance, love, and support throughout my life which has molded me into the woman I have become. You are the strongest woman with the biggest heart that I know!

I also dedicate this doctoral study to my father, John Williams, whose love and support continues to encourage me to pursue my dreams. Additionally, I dedicate this doctoral study to my two beautiful children Alisha and Matthew. Thank you for being such wonderful children and supporting me with unconditional love, patience, and understanding. I cannot wait to see all the wonderful things you will do and become in a future that is so bright!

Ultimately, I dedicate this doctoral study to my husband, Kufere Usanga. You have been my rock, my coach, and my greatest supporter! You have been there for me throughout my journey encouraging me with your love, wisdom, patience, and proverbs. I appreciate those long nights you stayed up with me so I could continue my research. To my late father-in-law, Papa Enefiok Usanga, I finally FinishEd.D! Thank you for always checking on my progress and encouraging me to keep going. I know you would be proud!

To my little brother, Michael Boyles, thank you for your love and support. Olubunmi Balogun, thank you for being a big sister and inspiring me to stay the course while always remembering where I come from. To my extended family, friends, and colleagues thank you for being so loving, understanding and patient with me throughout my journey. Love and blessings to all of you!

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Section 1: The Problem

In schools across the United States, teachers are trying to meet the academic needs of a growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse learners who are struggling with literacy achievement (Brown, Weber, & Yoon, 2016; Reardon, Robinson, & Weathers, 2015). Literacy teachers, who are responsible for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and communication skills, are using various teaching strategies to support improved literacy learning and reading achievement for struggling students (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Valiandes, 2015). Updated pedagogy that requires engaging and motivating teaching strategies that are culturally relevant for literacy learning has many names; in this project study, I will use culturally relevant teaching (CRT).

The Local Problem

Teachers' knowledge, planning, and use of teaching strategies that are culturally relevant in struggling schools within the Magnolia School District (pseudonym) were identified through open-ended interviews and lesson plan documents to determine what teachers know and implement to support struggling readers. The problem was that although all elementary schools within the district were fully accredited in the 2018-2019 school year, there were still several schools struggling to achieve a passing Level 1 at or above proficient rating on the school quality indicators for English academic achievement, including the two school sites in my study. The School Quality Profile from the previous 2017-2018 school year identified the schools in this study as accredited with conditions, indicating that there were one or more school quality indicators at Level 3, or below standard. In a personal conversation with an assistant principal in the

Magnolia School District, the district site for this study, it was shared that culturally relevant strategies may or may not be part of the research-based strategies being used by teachers during literacy instruction because he was unaware of any culturally relevant/multicultural professional development (PD) given by the district in recent years. What teachers understood and brought back to their classrooms from CRT or multicultural PD, if offered, needed to be examined. According to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), these two struggling schools had a culturally diverse student body, with a majority African American student population. These were the two study sites for exploring teachers' CRT approaches in literacy instruction.

Relationship of the Problem to the Local Setting

The Magnolia School District presents a vision statement on the division's website that includes maximizing the academic potential of all students. For several years, however, according to the VDOE School Quality Indicators, the third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade reading scores for the district indicated that a majority of the African American student population failed to achieve reading proficiency and failed to maximize their academic potential. To meet mandatory accountability standards (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015), Magnolia School District administers year-end standards of learning (SOL) reading assessments beginning in third grade and subsequent years after until 12th grade. The two school sites for this study within the Magnolia School District are both high-poverty schools, with at least a 72% African American student population. The school district's disaggregated data show that the prominently African American student body within these two schools have the lowest rates of reading proficiency,

followed closely by Latinos within the district, which is similar to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2020).

Traditional approaches to teaching continue to allow teachers to ignore students' cultures and values, maintain poor connections between school and home, and foster student literacy learning in isolation (Farinde-Wu, Glover, & Williams, 2017; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). I followed Ladson-Billings's (1995) theory of CRT to explore what strategies teachers were using that were culturally relevant, and how they used those strategies in the literacy classroom. I also considered Gay's (2010) analysis of CRT to inform the encompassing arc of classroom research, observing for instances of teaching strategies that were culturally responsive, as described by the teachers themselves, to improve literacy instruction for culturally diverse students. When teachers use CRT strategies to first examine their own perceptions of self and others and to develop meaningful sociocultural relationships and beliefs about knowledge, they can then support their culturally diverse students to do the same (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Byrd, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). As students learn to develop sociocultural relationships and beliefs about knowledge, it can lead to a classroom culture of communication that is engaging and motivating, increasing literacy learning (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Byrd, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). The literacy classroom in this study refers to the block of time allotted for literacy curriculum and instruction that includes reading, speaking, listening, writing, and the use of technology.

Relationship of the Problem to the Larger Educational Setting

Wiggan and Watson (2016), in an attempt to understand how teachers are employing CRT in the literacy classroom, conducted a qualitative case study among high-achieving African American students and teachers in a school that included multiculturalism and antirace education in its literacy curriculum. The researchers found that the presence of culturally relevant curriculum and instruction positively impacted reading success for minority students and was a serious issue that needed to be addressed in the literacy classroom (Wiggan & Watson, 2016). More recently, Sharma and Christ (2017) urged reading teachers to include CRT strategies by highlighting multicultural texts that would support children in making cultural and community connections.

The theory behind CRT in the literacy classroom is to have teachers provide culturally relevant instruction and experiences through literature and literacy activities (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014). In practice, however, schools establish goals for reading instruction supported by state standards and district curricula and monitor learning through reading assessments, which are not aligned with CRT instructional practices (Brown et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014). District reading curricula are written to reflect state reading standards, and although state reading standards do not dictate teaching methods, the reading standards can make it difficult for teachers to include CRT practices during reading instruction (Brown et al., 2016; Paris & Alim, 2014). Several researchers (Bassey, 2016; Clark, 2017; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014) have noted that the use of CRT strategies has had a positive impact on the literacy learning of African American students, who

comprise a majority minority population at the two study sites. Brown et al. (2016) found that teachers were overwhelmed with state accountability standards and assessments that impeded their ability to address CRT during literacy instruction. The gap in practice is teacher awareness and knowledge of CRT practices and implementation of CRT in the literacy classroom for planning and teaching. While teachers may understand the importance of researched-based practices, they may be unaware of teaching strategies that are culturally relevant and easily fit into effective reading instruction to improve motivation and engagement (Byrd, 2016; Kourea, Gibson, & Werunga, 2018).

Early CRT research conducted by Ladson-Billings (l995) and Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) suggested that teachers who used CRT in reading instruction had students who were more motivated and engaged in their learning, with more positive views of the content and of themselves. Since that time, researchers have confirmed the motivating and engaging effects of CRT when working with culturally diverse students (Bennett, Gardner, Cartledge, Ramnath, & Council, 2017; Clark, 2017; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Researchers have also found that the teachers viewed their diverse students, families, and communities as assets to students' literacy learning, which has led to the building of relationships between school and home, with expectations for literacy success stressed by all involved (Byrd, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Moll et al., 1992; Schrodt, Fain, & Hasty, 2015).

Today, CRT practices in the literacy classroom are student-centered, with teachers focused on learning styles that reflect the students' cultures and values (Clark, 2017).

Teachers are using "cross-cultural competence, increased global perspective, and acknowledgement of diverse students" (McKoy, MacLeod, Walter, & Nolker, 2017, p. 51). Student knowledge building may be collaborative and active, with teachers eliciting resources from the home and community (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). CRT differs from traditional pedagogy, which is teacher-centered and views the teacher as the giver of knowledge and the students as individuals with nothing to offer to their own learning (McKoy et al., 2017).

The lack of proficiency on the state reading assessments for minority students is further demonstrated on the most recent NAEP 2019 reading assessment that tracks students in Grade 4, Grade 8, and Grade 12 within the United States. The reading achievement results for the recent NAEP 2019 Grade 4 reading assessments indicate that nationally African American students only had a 18% pass proficiency rate. Valiandes (2015) suggested that differentiating reading instruction to improve reading achievement for all students across the United States has been recommended based on research. Differentiation alone, however, is not enough to affect changes as seen with CRT (Ladson-Billings, 2014) in African American students, as evidenced by failing reading scores across local, district, state, and national assessments (NAEP, 2020; VDOE, 2019).

Brown et al. (2016) proposed that PD for inservice teachers is lacking support in the area of helping teachers learn and use the skills to work with culturally and linguistically diverse learners in the literacy classroom. When a principal, with over 15 years within the district, was asked in a personal conversation about CRT PD within the district, he stated that he was unaware of any CRT PD for teachers or administrators in

the district, but that teachers had received PD in other areas, such as differentiated instruction for shared and guided reading. It remains unclear which teaching strategies used by teachers could be identified as CRT during literacy instruction.

Rationale

To meet mandatory accountability standards (ESSA, 2015), Magnolia School District administers year-end SOL reading assessments in Grade 3 through Grade 12. In the Magnolia District, schools with high-poverty populations, greater diversity representation, and minority populations were not attaining at least a passing 75% proficiency level. Branches Elementary School (pseudonym), a Pre-K through Grade 5 elementary school within the Magnolia School District, with an 88% African American student population, had a failure rate of 40% on the reading SOL in the 2017-2018 school year. The 60% of the African American students who did reach reading proficiency had passing scores that were significantly lower than their peers, with a 26% gap between Hispanic students, 28% gap between White students, and a 27% gap between Asian students within the district. Twig Elementary School (pseudonym), a Pre-K through Grade 5 elementary school within the Magnolia School District, with a 72% African American student population, had a failure rate of 42% on the reading SOL in the 2017-18 school year. The 58% of the African American students who did reach reading proficiency had passing scores that were significantly lower than their peers, with a 28% gap between Hispanic students, 30% gap between White students, and a 29% gap between Asian students within the district. The 2018-2019 school year had similar failure rates and gaps for the reading SOL, as well. Many literacy researchers and

literacy experts have suggested that a contributing factor to reading failure among culturally diverse students is that teachers practice minimal teaching strategies that are culturally relevant that can motivate, engage, and support literacy learning for culturally diverse students in the classroom (Bassey, 2016; Chenowith, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2014, Martinez, 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016; Zoch, 2017).

Several researchers have focused on the gap between teachers of diverse students and their ability to use CRT to support academic success in the literacy classroom (Bassey, 2016; Chenowith, 2014; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Reardon et al., 2015). Ladson-Billings (2014) and Gay (2010) found that teachers who were successfully implementing CRT saw an increase in culturally diverse students' motivation, engagement, and literacy learning. Keehne, Sarsona, Kawakami, and Au (2018), Martinez (2017), and Paris and Alim (2014) found that this was also the case with struggling Hispanic and Asian students when teachers used CRT to improve literacy success. With CRT strategies being a potential contributing factor in student literacy success, it is important to explore whether teachers at the two school sites in this study have knowledge of culturally relevant strategies or plan and use any strategies that are culturally relevant to support student learning in the literacy classroom (see Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Ladson-Billings's (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy was the lens used to examine how teachers implement CRT using curriculum and instruction in literacy.

In recent years, according to a reading specialist in the district, PD for the Magnolia School District has included differentiating instruction within literacy teaching,

including some CRT practices, such as building background knowledge and instruction based on students' needs. Even with a PD that has some multicultural or CRT practices embedded, the changes observed in the literacy classroom may just be the general addition of cultural festivals, holidays, or potlucks to celebrate different cultures around the world instead of CRT strategies to improve reading instruction (Miled, 2019). What teachers understand and bring back to their classrooms from PD sessions that connects to CRT needs to be understood. Having insight into what teachers understand about CRT can help with determining how much PD support is needed for pedagogical change.

The purpose of this study was to explore the knowledge, planning, and use of CRT by 12 teachers, with at least 3 years of literacy teaching experience, at two elementary schools in the Magnolia School District with the highest population of African American students who were overrepresented in the lowest categories of reading achievement. This study provides an indication of what teachers know about strategies that are culturally relevant and how these strategies are being used in different third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade literacy classrooms.

Definition of Terms

To understand the concept of CRT and the impact it has on reading instruction in the literacy classroom, the following definitions were used:

Culturally relevant teaching: CRT is an approach to instruction that supports learning through social, emotional, political, and cultural practices increasing student engagement and achievement (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Culturally responsive teaching: Cultivating the academic and social skills of culturally diverse students to foster authentic learning (Gay, 2010).

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA): The ESSA reauthorized and replaced the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, U.S. Department of Education, 1965). The ESSA (2015) continues to give supplemental aid for poor and disadvantaged children in K to 12 education and continues to support equality, equity, and achievement for all students by holding schools accountable with flexibility and choice of programs, services, and resources.

Literacy achievement gap: One group of students outperforms another group in reading, and the difference in average reading scores for the two groups is statistically significant (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2016).

Multicultural literacy: Literature, text, and communication that is representative of diverse cultures (He, Vetter, & Fairbanks, 2014).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB): Reauthorized and replaced the ESEA (1965). NCLB gave supplemental aid for poor and disadvantaged children in K to 12 education and continued to support equality, equity, and achievement for all students by holding schools accountable, with flexibility and choice of programs, services, and resources (NCLB, 2002).

Significance of the Study

African American students make up 15% of the school population and have one of the highest poverty rates and high school dropout rates in the United States (NCES, 2016; Suh, Malchow, & Suh, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). The gap between

African American students' academic success and students of other ethnic groups remains a concern (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). By understanding existing research and findings from this investigation of teachers' knowledge, planning, and use of CRT when teaching the literacy curriculum, school administrators, reading specialists, academic coaches, and teachers can determine the best way to fill this gap in practice and support classroom instructional decisions that lead to improved outcomes for culturally diverse students (Paris & Alim, 2014; Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

According to the recent 2011-2012 NCES (2016), 82% of public school teachers were White, while only 18% were African American or Hispanic. These statistics become problematic when there is no evidence of teachers using CRT in the classroom, or they are unsure, unable, or unwilling to effectively implement the culturally relevant strategies for successful outcomes (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Paris & Alim, 2014). Teachers can support literacy learning for a more diverse group of learners and make an original contribution to the site by using CRT to connect with students, differentiate students' needs, and reflect on their own practices (Brown et al., 2016; Durden, Dooley, & Truscott, 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

This qualitative study can benefit teachers, reading specialists, academic coaches, and building principals at the two school sites by identifying what teachers know about the components of CRT as a contributing factor to literacy achievement. CRT practices that were being used by teachers in this study were used to determine next steps to further support the use of CRT strategies by those teachers. As teachers are supported in the use

CRT strategies, they will improve literacy learning for the culturally diverse students they serve (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Research Questions

Researchers have found that teachers who successfully implement the components of CRT in the literacy classroom would have culturally diverse students who improve in their literacy learning (Bassey, 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014; Reardon et al., 2015; Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2014). Branches and Twig Elementary School teachers need to improve literacy learning for culturally diverse students who are experiencing reading failure (VDOE, 2019). CRT strategies have been shown to be a contributing factor of increased literacy achievement for culturally diverse students (Bassey, 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014); however, what teachers know about these strategies and how they plan and use the components in the literacy classroom is unclear. A qualitative study was used to address this problem in order to examine teachers' knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies in the literacy classroom.

Research Question (RQ)1: Qualitative: What do third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers know about CRT strategies in the literacy classroom?

RQ2: Qualitative: How do third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers plan for reading instruction using culturally relevant reading strategies alongside the curriculum to support student literacy learning?

RQ3: Qualitative: How do third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers use CRT strategies during literacy instruction?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

This study relied on a definition of conceptual framework as a way of connecting all elements of the research process (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The conceptual framework gives the reasons why a topic of study matters and how the proposed method of conducting the study is appropriate and thorough (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell and Guetterman (2019) suggested that a conceptual framework is the key part of a qualitative research design. Ladson-Billings's (l995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy provided the conceptual framework for this study. Ladson-Billings's theory of culturally relevant pedagogy emerged because of several researchers addressing student differences in the 1980s and 1990s (Au & Jordan, 1981; Banks, 2001; Jordan, 1985; Lee, 1998; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981). Two decades of academic research has focused on effectively teaching diverse students through multicultural education. Scholars have addressed the absence of curriculum content that reflects the various cultures of the growing diverse student body (Au & Jordan, 1981; Banks, 2001; Jordan, 1985; Lee, 1998; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981). The multicultural curriculum has included the celebration of various cultural holidays and multiethnic books and posters depicting various famous heroes and contributors to the American society (Banks, 2001). Teachers who went beyond multicultural books and celebrations to the addition of students' home cultures and values and sociopolitical issues have led to the emergence of culturally relevant practices (Banks, 2001).

Ladson-Billings's (l995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy was described through the lived experiences of classroom teachers through the use of qualitative inquiry. I used the CRT framework to guide the study, including the research questions, literature review, data collection, and data analysis, for this qualitative study. I developed and wrote the interview questions using the CRT framework to address the research questions. I collected the data through teacher interviews and lesson plan documents and analyzed them through the critical lens of Ladson-Billings's theory to find emerging themes (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interview questions reflected Ladson-Billings's theory of culturally relevant pedagogy by questioning how different aspects of CRT are addressed through the classroom teacher's use of reading curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of culturally diverse students.

Ladson-Billings (l995) proposed three components of culturally relevant pedagogy: concept of self and others, social relations, and concepts about knowledge. These three dimensions could be accomplished by teachers having high expectations for students with appropriate support, building relationships between school and home, and raising sociopolitical awareness (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). In her most recent work, Ladson-Billings (2014) built upon Paris's (2012) theory of culturally sustaining pedagogy by suggesting that pedagogy is ever evolving and should continuously develop to meet the needs of diverse students (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Ladson-Billings (1995) focused on teacher posture and paradigm that sought to describe the position a culturally relevant teacher would take to plan, instruct, and assess students for academic success.

Beginning in the 1970s, Gay (1975), a prominent researcher in the area of culturally relevant studies, developed an early model of CRT and later supported Ladson-Billings's (l995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy; Gay developed a framework focused on teacher practice. In her framework, culturally responsive teaching, she used the students' background knowledge, learning styles, and experiences to make connections with new information learned (Gay, 2010). The concept of Gay's (1975) culturally responsive teaching has evolved from a focus on curriculum to a focus on teacher instruction. Gay (2013) found four characteristics to implementing culturally responsive teaching: (a) restructuring attitudes and beliefs by the use of asset-based perspectives of students and communities, (b) resisting resistance by becoming more confident and competent in the use of CRT, (c) centering culture and difference through an in-depth understanding of both principles, and (d) establishing connections within the context in which they are teaching. Gay's focus on teaching described what a culturally responsive teacher would do in the classroom (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Although their foci differed, both Ladson-Billings and Gay saw the classroom as a site for social change. Ladson-Billings further suggested that CRT is what once was considered good solid instruction, from which all students prospered.

Culturally relevant pedagogy not only aims to empower students to bring about social change but also aims to support student learning in the form of curriculum content (Ladson-Billings, l995). Ladson-Billings (l995) found that teachers who were successfully implementing CRT were conscious in their efforts to engage students in a variety of forms of critical analysis. These forms of critical analysis included critiquing a

textbook and resistance to district approved reading materials (Ladson-Billings, l995). The teachers shared what the district expected them to use and what they were going to use for the lesson instead (Ladson-Billings, l995). Gay (2010) proposed that teachers choose and deliver culturally relevant curriculum content in ways that are meaningful to the students.

Researchers noted that preservice student teachers as well as inservice/classroom teachers who have received CRT training still struggle with its implementation (Brown et al., 2016, Daniel, 2016). State-adopted standards and district-adopted curricula that are not culturally relevant become major barriers not only for teachers but for student learning as well (Brown et al., 2016, Daniel, 2016). Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2016), adopted by most of the U.S. states, do not specify how the standards should be taught, but instead propose that the decision be left to teachers and curriculum developers. This is not always the case for some teachers because school districts adopt curricula that are not culturally relevant and expect teachers to use the curriculum and accompanying materials to teach in their culturally diverse classrooms (Cholewa, Goodman, West-Olatunji, & Amatea, 2014; Douglas, 2015; Guerra & Wubbena, 2017). Teachers are also under pressure to follow certain lesson plan formats, pass criteria on administrative walk-through checklists, and have their students pass district assessments that are based on the standards and adopted curriculum that are not culturally relevant (Brown et al., 2016, Daniel, 2016; Wyatt, 2014).

Review of the Broader Problem

This section covers the historical background of the literacy achievement gap in the United States. I cover pre- and inservice teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about CRT and how teachers can move toward culturally relevant practices as a contributing factor to improve literacy achievement for African American students. I also discuss the implications for the project for this study.

I conducted an exhaustive search of current literature using peer-reviewed scholarly journals accessed through Walden University's library. I initially identified the keyword search terms, *culturally relevant teaching* and *literacy*. I then searched using various combinations of the following terms: *literacy achievement gap, culturally relevant pedagogy, multicultural literacy, literacy teaching,* and *asset-based literacy teaching*. I included sources published within the last 5 years and seminal articles of importance to my study. I used the following search engines to generate numerous journals related to my study: Academic Search Complete, ERIC, EBSCO, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, SAGE Premier, and Thoreau. I also searched several websites, including the school district at the study site, NAEP, National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and the Virginia Department of Education.

The prevalence of reading underachievement for African American students in schools across the United States has been well documented (McDonough, 2015; NAEP, 2020; Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016). Sixty years after the landmark court case, *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the literacy achievement

gap between White and African American students continues to plague urban and rural school districts alike (NCES, 2016a). There is a continued debate about the various causes of reading underachievement for African American students and what can be done to remedy the situation (Clark, 2017; McDonough, 2015; Pitre, 2014). Several researchers found that there is an urgent need for educational practices that are responsive and relevant to the individual needs and challenges of the culturally diverse learners who struggle with literacy achievement (Brown et al., 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; He et al., 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017). Researchers found, however, that there is a gap between culturally relevant practices specific to reading and meeting the needs of African American students in elementary education (Glover & Harris, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

The Reading Achievement Gap

Historically, the reading achievement gap, also known as an opportunity gap, between African American students and their White counterparts has existed for over a century (McDonough, 2015). The 2002 NCLB Act mandated disaggregated data for districts to compare among groups of students by student characteristics. Evidence of the reading achievement gap can be found on national, state, city, and districtwide assessments across the United States (NAEP, 2020; NCES, 2016; VDOE, 2019).

The landmark 1954 *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* U.S. Supreme Court decision, which declared separate but equal schools for African American students and White students unconstitutional, was an effort to provide equal education and to begin to close the reading achievement gap. The federal government signed the

ESEA into law in 1965 to provide continued support for the equality and achievement of students in U.S. public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Under the ESEA, section Title I, Part A provided funding for programs and services to support struggling students to close the reading achievement gap. Two years later, Coleman et al. (1966) posited in his groundbreaking report *Equality of Educational Opportunity* that there were several inequalities continuing to occur in public schools across the United States. Coleman et al. reported that school inequalities included (a) the varying amounts of community contributions to schools, (b) schools in districts without different racial compositions not being considered segregated, (c) varying teacher and student attitudes toward teaching and learning, (d) student achievement results in reading and other academic areas based on teacher and student attitudes with similar cultural backgrounds and abilities, and (e) student achievement results in reading and other academic areas based on teacher and student attitudes with different cultural backgrounds and abilities. Coleman et al. suggested increasing the quality of student achievement in reading and other academic areas as the focus of educational institutions, not increasing the quality of the educational institution. With a shift of focus to students' achievement in reading and other academic areas, the gap between African American students and White students could narrow (Coleman et al., 1966). However, even with all the efforts to desegregate schools over the years to provide a quality and equitable education for all and close the reading achievement gap, resegregation of schools is presently on the rise (NAEP, 2015; NCES, 2016). There has been a steady decline in White student enrollment in culturally

and linguistically diverse public schools and an increase of White students attending schools that have a predominantly White student population (NAEP, 2015; NCES, 2016).

In 1983, a new report, *A Nation at Risk*, was released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. This report discussed the alarming mediocre education in the literacy classroom that the culturally and linguistically diverse students in U.S. public schools were receiving. The National Commission on Excellence in Education proposed educational reform that would demand schools to have high standards and expectations, equity, and the unwavering support of parents.

The NCLB of 2001 was added to the ESEA and continued to support equality, equity, and literacy achievement for all students by holding schools accountable, with flexibility and choice of programs, services, and resources, so that no child was left behind. The ESSA of 2015 is the most recent update to the ESEA and continues to build on the progress that has been made within the school community to provide a high-quality and equitable education for all students and to close the literacy achievement gap.

More recently, the United States moved towards a more uniform set of academic standards, the CCSS, led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association (CCSS, 2016). The CCSS were designed for states to adopt in order to bring consistency to expectations, provide a high-quality education for all students, and prepare students for college and future careers (CCSS, 2016). Currently, 42 out of the 50 states have adopted the new standards (CCSS, 2016). While it is too early to tell how effective the new literacy standards are for the diverse learners, Bassey (2016) posited that struggling readers would benefit from teachers who use CRT to help students

make personal connections to their reading. When students make personal connections to their reading, they are thinking about what they are reading and are better able to understand the text (Bassey, 2016; Chenowith, 2014).

Through all the educational reforms to improve the quality, equity, and opportunity for the culturally and linguistically diverse students in U.S. public schools, the national reading achievement gap for Grade 4 African American students went from 26 points in 1992 to 28 points in 2015 and has widened by 2 points (NAEP, 2020). Researchers have agreed that there is no one variable that perpetuates the reading achievement gap on its own; however, they have proposed that with a critical understanding and sustained use of CRT in public schools across the United States, teachers can effectively eliminate the challenges that continue to be problematic for culturally diverse students and their future outcomes (Ladson-Billings; 2014; McDonough, 2015; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Teachers' Beliefs, Attitudes, and Perceptions of CRT

Most preservice and inservice teachers in the United States are White, monolingual, middle-class females (Bloom, Peters, Margolin, & Fragnoli, 2015; Durden et al., 2016; Grissom & Redding, 2016). Researchers suggested that many of these teachers work in urban schools with a predominately culturally and linguistically diverse student population (Bloom et al., 2015; Cole, David, & Jiménez, 2016). Brown et al. (2016) and Bloom et al. (2015) argued that the predominance of White teachers, who do not share the same cultural background and experiences as the students of color that they teach, can create conditions that may lead to minimal motivation and engagement that

support literacy success. Nevertheless, Ladson-Billings (2014) and Paris and Alim (2017) proposed that all teachers, no matter their race, can learn, develop, and implement CRT practices to support and improve reading achievement for culturally diverse students.

Several researchers proposed that teacher preparation programs do not prepare preservice teachers to overcome the challenges they would face with diverse learners due to the lack of culturally diverse experiences in practicum, literature, and their personal lives (Allen, Hancock, Starker-Glass, & Lewis, 2017; Daniel, 2016). Even when preservice teachers had the opportunity to work with culturally diverse students during practicum, Daniel (2016) found that they had a difficult time implementing CRT due to the unsupportive literacy practices of the classroom teacher. Researchers suggested that teacher education programs shift their focus from the traditional teacher knowledge and skills to one that incorporates culturally relevant practices throughout literacy instruction (Allen et al., 2017; Daniel, 2016). Preservice teachers, many of whom grew up in rural and suburban areas and have had limited exposure to culturally diverse students, have not had open conversations about racial identity, oppression, or other controversial topics to analyze and reflect on their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions (Bloom et al., 2015; Durden et al., 2016). This is a critical experience that teacher educators need to provide to support preservice teachers in becoming aware of one's own prejudices and misconceptions and constructing new thoughts and beliefs about equity and quality in literacy education (Allen et al., 2017; Bloom et al., 2015).

Teacher educators are also challenged to infuse multicultural education and cultural experiences into the literacy curriculum (Brown et al., 2016; Daniel, 2016). Multicultural education and cultural experiences expose preservice teachers to topics of diversity and social justice and to challenge their thinking about students of color (Allen et al., 2017; Bassey, 2016; He et al., 2014). Daniel (2016) found that it was also important for preservice teachers to be observed using what they have learned in planning and implementing reading lessons for field experiences with children of color to ensure they are prepared to teach a diverse student body in the literacy classroom.

Like the preservice teacher experiences, most teachers already in classrooms are also ill-prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Goldenberg, 2014; Royal & Gibson, 2017). Teacher perceptions about cultural diversity have not been discussed or challenged (Goldenberg, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014; Royal & Gibson, 2017). Their definitions of multiculturalism may not be clearly defined, and their ability to implement culturally relevant practices in the literacy classroom may be non-existent (Gichiru, 2014; Goldenberg, 2014; Guerra & Wubbena, 2017). Teachers see the culture, language, and community of their students as a deficit and a barrier to learning, and something they need to overcome to learn to read, write, and speak the dominant language, American English (Goldenberg, 2014; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017). This approach to teaching and learning has had a negative impact on the reading achievement of culturally diverse students (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Grissom and Redding (2016) found that teachers who saw their students' culture, language, and community as a barrier to learning had culturally diverse students who

were less likely to be chosen for the gifted program compared to their White peers with similar reading level backgrounds. The missed opportunity for culturally diverse students to be included in a gifted program to build on reading knowledge and advance reading achievement can negatively affect reading motivation and engagement (Grissom & Redding, 2016).

Brown et al. (2016) suggested that even with PD, classroom teachers found it difficult to use CRT practices while teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students because of a focus on obtaining high reading scores on standardized testing, teacher and reading curriculum requirements, and very little support for teacher buy-in. Brown et al. found that a kindergarten teacher was focused on the district's scripted curriculum topics instead of choosing topics that were relevant to the students because of concerns of students passing an emergent literacy skills assessment. Teachers could even find themselves in a difficult position, choosing between culturally relevant practices that are a contributing factor in raising student reading achievement or implementing the required reading curriculum and preserving their jobs (Royal & Gibson, 2017; Wyatt, 2014). The pressure that some teachers felt from administrators and colleagues to teach scripted literacy programs to prepare students for high-stakes literacy assessments was enough to make them not use CRT practices (Brown et al., 2016; Glover & Harris, 2016).

Not only are teachers challenged by their own attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions when teaching students of color, they also must contend with the institution of schooling in general (Glover, 2016; Goldenberg, 2014; Royal & Gibson, 2017). U. S. public schools follow a Eurocentric-based framework (Glover & Harris, 2016; Paris & Alim,

2014; Wyatt, 2014). Textbooks, curriculum, and materials are written through a Eurocentric lens (Cholewa et al., 2014; Goldenberg, 2014; Royal & Gibson, 2017). Literacy textbooks in several states have been banned from including Indigenous American and other ethnic literature or simplify their contributions and experiences (Paris & Alim, 2014; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2015). Literacy textbooks in most states can also only be written in standard American English and not in other languages students may speak or read (Paris & Alim, 2014). The Eurocentric lens is problematic when students of color do not see themselves reflected in the curriculum, or the representations that are included are biased (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2015). The misalignment between home and school culture continues to foster negative outcomes for culturally diverse students (Cholewa et al., 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017; Royal & Gibson, 2017). These negative outcomes include, but are not limited to, underachievement of African American students and negative attitudes towards themselves and their teachers (Cholewa et al., 2014; Royal & Gibson, 2017; Suh et al., 2014)

Ladson-Billings (2014) and Paris and Alim, (2017) suggested that it is not only important to develop culturally responsive teachers, but the institution of school has to shift its focus toward a culturally sustaining pedagogy. Researchers (Cholewa et al., 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017; Peterson et al., 2016) suggested a culturally sustaining pedagogy would provide the growing population of diverse students with a quality-, equity-, and opportunity-based education and improve literacy success for all. A culturally sustaining pedagogy in the literacy classroom would allow for literature,

discussions, and written responses that reflect the cultural, political, and social experiences of the students (Bassey, 2016; Ladson-Billings; 2014; Paris, 2014).

Toward Culturally Relevant Practices in Reading Instruction

There is a need for understanding how teachers address the persistent reading achievement failure of culturally diverse students using CRT (McDonough, 2015; Pitre, 2014). Reading proficiency is one of the most important skills needed to be successful in learning content area-based material (Sparks et al., 2014). Reading is also a major component of academic success in the upper grades (Reardon et al., 2015; Sparks et al., 2014). Addressing this gap in practice of teachers developing a culturally responsive pedagogy and their ability for implementation would provide a greater understanding of the communication of culture within the classroom and of the curriculum that supports cultural differences (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017; He et al., 2014; Wiggan & Watson, 2016; Wyatt, 2014). Teachers who are knowledgeable of CRT, which are routine teaching strategies used in a culturally relevant way and have applied the asset-based practices in the literacy classroom, have had students who become engaged and motivated readers (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Clark, 2017; Durden, Escalante, & Blitch, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Lopez, 2016; Paris & Alim, 2017).

CRT encourages teachers to avoid *colorblindness*, the concept that teachers support racial harmony when they overlook students' color; rather, teachers need to acknowledge and include the differences in linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students they teach into their teaching practices (Bloom et al., 2015; Brown et al., 2016). Teachers need to differentiate learning to meet students' needs and use their diverse

cultural and linguistic backgrounds as strengths to promote learning (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Milner, 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Clark (2017) and Bennett et al. (2017) found that the use of culturally relevant text in the literacy classroom improved the vocabulary and comprehension skills of African American students. Lopez (2016) proposed that teachers who used students' cultural background in instruction and knowledge building in the literacy classroom had higher reading outcomes for their students than teachers who did not implement CRT practices.

Unfortunately, there are many teachers who teach from a deficit approach and see students as children with nothing to offer to their own learning or that of their classmates and teachers (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Guerra and Wubbena (2017) found that teachers with deficit beliefs about CRT were consistently teaching from a deficit approach in the literacy classroom, as well, and had students that did not perform well academically. Furthermore, Brown et al. (2016) suggested that state standards and achievement tests can also have a negative effect on teachers' use of strategies to build on students' background knowledge and support developing their voices. When a child is made to feel that their cultural background is not valued and connections to what they are learning are not linked to their past experiences, it can become a barrier to literacy learning (Clark, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Milner, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2014). Clark (2017) proposed that teachers who did not use culturally relevant texts in the literacy classroom had students who did not perform as well as students who did have culturally relevant texts. Goldenberg (2014) found that students who perceived that their culture was not valued by their teacher often resisted learning in the dominant school culture, negatively affecting

their literacy achievement. Dewey (1938), a prominent social philosopher and educational reformist, posited that education should be based on actual life experiences to benefit not only the learner, but society as well.

Ladson-Billings (1995), a pioneer in the war on equal and equitable educational opportunities for African American students, proposed that CRT empowers students in several ways, to include academic achievement, cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness. Ladson-Billings (2009) suggested the following concepts for culturally relevant pedagogy to occur: (a) concepts of self and others, (b) social relations, (c) and concepts of or beliefs about knowledge. Culturally relevant pedagogy is evident when teachers believe in and value their students' cultural background as an asset to literacy learning and when they include culturally relevant texts, topics, and discussions that reflect the students and community (Clark, 2017; Lopez, 2016). CRT can ultimately bring about successful outcomes for African American students, but it depends on teachers to be both community- and student-driven, without giving one more attention than the other (Ladson-Billings, 2014; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Concepts of Self and Others

According to Ladson-Billings (2009), a culturally relevant concept of self and others means that teachers help students make text connections to themselves, their community, and the broader world. Teachers plan instruction based on their own cultural experiences, teach and project their own culture onto students, and predict how students may respond based on their cultural experiences (Bomer, 2017). It is important for culturally relevant teachers to first be reflective of their own culture, beliefs, and values

to address any biases and beliefs they may have about students from other backgrounds different from their own in order to filter out practices that perpetuate stereotypes and mainstream norms (Farinde-Wu et al. 2017; Kourea et al., 2018). Teachers will then be able to make informed decisions as they choose equitable and relevant resources, topics, and materials for reading instruction, such as local newspapers, diverse music lyrics, poetry, and pop-culture (Farinde-Wu et al. 2017; Kourea et al., 2018; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018). Teachers also need to understand their students' cultural customs and traditions, strengths and difficulties, and interests and activities in order to apply these elements to reading planning and instruction (Kourea et al., 2018) and create student buy-in (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Cartledge, Keesey, Bennett, Gallant, and Ramnath (2015) found when teachers are knowledgeable about their students, they can choose multicultural books and various other types of literature that will engage students in reading and support comprehension of what is read, as well as increase vocabulary knowledge. Kourea et al. (2018) posited that teachers who know their students can select culturally relevant reading materials that reflect the students' culture, giving the students the opportunity to learn about characters that look like themselves, come from their heritage, and are shown in a positive light. Using culturally relevant storybooks with common cultural themes and values, such as a multicultural Cinderella story, also helps students to make connections and build on background knowledge to deepen understanding of reading skills taught (Clark, 2017; Kourea et al., 2018; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018). Durden et al. (2015) suggested that students can also bring in books from home to share their cultures and interests with the class and also give the teacher more insight into their lives.

Cartledge et al. (2015) found that students read culturally relevant passages more fluently than passages considered nonculturally relevant. Students that read fluently comprehend more of what they are reading, since they do not have to constantly stop to decode words (Bennett et al., 2017; Cartledge et al., 2015; Council, Cartledge, Green, & Gardner, 2016).

Having an intentional understanding of students' cultures and interests also lends itself to teachers adjusting the curriculum and scripted text to include issues that are relevant and connect with students (Bomer, 2017; Cartledge et al., 2015; Wyatt, 2014). Cartledge, Keesey, Bennett, Ramnath & Council (2016) suggested that students preferred and had a positive view of culturally relevant passages that reflected the students' backgrounds because they could identify with the text and it helped them learn new information. As students read culturally relevant text in the literacy classroom, they can respond in a variety of ways that affirms students' voices and knowledge (Chenowith, 2014). One way was through having students write personal narratives that reflect their views on current issues, controversial topics, or socio-political topics (Bassey, 2016; Kourea et al., 2018). Students also responded and made connections to what they were reading through creating songs, poetry, video clips, and other ways that support students' understanding of what they were reading and learning (Bassey, 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017).

Kourea et al. (2018) and Paris and Alim (2017) suggested that teachers value their students' family and community to make meaningful connections to their communities and the larger world around them. In the literacy classroom, teachers can use student

interest surveys to find out what students like to do in school, as well as outside of school (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). With the survey information, teachers can incorporate what they learn into their reading planning and instruction. Teachers can also use the information to build on background knowledge and highlight student strengths as they relate to new topics introduced (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Teachers can also use parent surveys to learn about students' cultural background and home language to gain insight about students and incorporate information learned to support student understanding of reading skills (Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018). Using local newspapers during instruction could highlight events and issues within their community that students might have knowledge of and be able to expand on the discussion of the topic (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). To go a step further, teachers can support students into becoming global citizens by reading about political and social issues that are happening around the world and responding through a variety of ways, such as personal narratives that give the student's solutions to social issues like taking care of the poor (Bassey, 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Reading and discussing culturally relevant literature about school, community, and global issues within the literacy classroom brings a sense of community as they share ideas, learn from each other, and become successful fluent readers with increased vocabulary and comprehension skills (Bennett, 2017; Chenowith, 2014; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017).

Social Relations.

Culturally relevant social relations between teacher and student should be equitable, genuine, and extend beyond the walls of the classroom (Cole et al., 2016;

Potter & Morris, 2016). Culturally relevant teachers make a critical effort to get to know students (Kourea et al., 2018). Getting to know students has several benefits that include building mutual respect and trust for one another (Cole et al., 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Kourea et al., 2018). When students have respect and trust for their teachers, they are more open to learning and meeting high reading expectations that teachers have for them (Cole et al., 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Teachers can build relationships with their students in several ways. Farinde-Wu et al. (2017) found that teachers set up lunch dates to have one-on-one time with each student and to discuss the student's interests. Another way that teachers connected with students was by attending after school activities that the students were involved in, such as sports events and recitals, to find out their strengths outside the school setting and then use the information gained when planning for reading instruction (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Tutoring students after school or on the weekend was another way students and teachers could work together for reading success (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Teachers could do home visits to work with students on literacy skills and listen to them read (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018).

To ensure equity, all students must receive instruction based on their needs, and the instruction cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach (Cole et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Potter & Morris, 2016). Valiandes (2015) posited that for educators to meet the individual needs of diverse learners, they must differentiate instruction. Differentiating instruction entailed that teachers would use a range of strategies that included flexibility and complexity in grouping to fit the needs of the student and actively engaged them to

achieve their academic goals (Valiandes, 2015). Teachers tiered, small group reading instruction on reading skills that needed to be addressed (Kourea et al., 2018; Wyatt, 2014). Small groups provided students with a way to discuss skills with peers and learn from each other, while the teacher utilized information learned about students to make connections to their learning and helped them be successful (Kourea et al., 2018; Wyatt, 2014). Wilcox, Lawson, and Angelis (2015) found that differentiation became problematic when teachers were not confident in their abilities to effectively implement strategies due to lack of training and support.

Culturally relevant teachers support a community of learners by helping students learn from and about each other. Culturally relevant social relations also remove the teacher as the leader of the class and into the role of facilitator of learning, allowing students to question and have in-depth conversations about what they are learning (Wurdeman-Thurston & Kaomea, 2015). This concept of a student-centered approach to learning emerged because of several prominent researchers in the field of education (Goodman, 1992; Goodman, 1996). Students would work in collaborative groups of different ability levels so that students could teach and learn from each other as they explored and discussed a variety of culturally relevant literature (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Kourea et al., 2018; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017). These collaborative relationships among students fostered respect and accountability and helped students develop independence as they learned new information in the literacy classroom (Wurdeman-Thurston & Kaomea, 2015). Durden et al. (2015) proposed teachers have students bring in pictures of themselves and their families and write about their family to expose the

class to other cultures as they use their literacy skills to learn about each other. Kourea et al. (2018) and Ragoonaden and Mueller (2017) suggested peer tutoring was another way that students could work together to improve reading success as they focused in on areas of reading difficulty.

Parents are another asset to support literacy learning because of their ability to volunteer, work with their children at home, and access community events (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Kourea et al., 2018; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018). Teachers can do home visits with parents to support them with resources to help their children be successful with reading and literacy skills in the home (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Parents could support teachers with resources, such as cultural books or insights to their children that could assist with learning (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Parents who volunteer in the classroom and share information about their culture, home language, or jobs could support student learning on a particular topic they are reading about (Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018). Teachers could use information gained from community events as a topic they could further discuss and investigate through various forms of literature in the literacy classroom to help students make connections to their learning (Bomer, 2017; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018). Teachers could invite members of the community to the classroom to learn more about a topic the students are reading about, as well as plan field trips that expand on student learning outside of the classroom (Kourea et al., 2018).

Concepts and Beliefs About Knowledge

Culturally relevant concepts of knowledge refer to teachers being able to recognize that they can learn from what their diverse students bring to the literacy

classroom, encouraging both the teacher and student to learn from each other (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Pitre, 2014; Wurdeman-Thurston & Kaomea, 2015). In the literacy classroom, concepts and beliefs about knowledge can also be witnessed when teachers allow students to work collaboratively with peers in their home language to learn and discuss literacy content, as the teacher learns words and phrases in the home language (Bomer, 2017).

When teachers have high expectations for all students and students develop those same expectations for themselves, as well as their peers, students will push themselves to meet those expectations (Cartledge et al., 2015; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016). When student background experiences are validated and used to build new knowledge, academic achievement can thrive (Durden et al., 2015). Student success depends on culturally relevant teachers using an asset-based approach to learning, with the belief that all students can learn and are capable of reading success (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Kourea et al., 2018; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018).

Culturally relevant teachers are knowledgeable and passionate about the reading content they teach. They implement culturally relevant strategies to support students in developing literacy skills. Culturally relevant teachers have successful culturally and linguistically diverse students who will continue to recreate knowledge as they teach and learn from one another (Cartledge et al., 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

Implications

In this qualitative study, I sought to understand what third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers know about CRT and how they plan and use CRT to help culturally diverse students become successful in literacy classroom to improve literacy achievement. Based on the findings of the data collection and analysis, implications for this project is a CRT PD for teachers. The PD was developed for teachers within the Magnolia School District to discuss CRT in the literacy classroom and to increase teacher knowledge, planning, and use of CRT for culturally diverse students. Results of the PD are opportunities to reflect on their current teaching practices and improve teaching and learning for the culturally diverse students they serve.

Summary

Teachers across the United States are struggling with how best to meet the needs of culturally diverse students in the literacy classroom (Brown et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). There is an urgent need to find teaching methods that will benefit all students, African American students, who are failing to meet federal and state accountability mandates in reading proficiency (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris and Alim, 2014). Researchers have suggested that CRT can support teachers in differentiating instruction to build classroom cultures that foster critical thinkers and problem solvers and improve literacy learning (Cholewa et al., 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2014). The review of literature indicated that teachers found it difficult to implement CRT in the literacy classroom due to lack of administrative and colleague support, limited CRT knowledge, curriculum mandates, and a focus on test preparation

(Brown et al., 2016; Royal & Gibson, 2017; Wyatt, 2014). With the achievement gap only slightly narrowing since its existence, there is a greater need for a sustained use of CRT strategies during reading instruction (NAEP, 2020).

In Section 2, I will describe the research design and rationale and my role as the researcher. The next section will also include the participant and site selection, instrumentation, and data analysis that was used for this study. I will also discuss trustworthiness and ethical procedures that were followed.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The problem in the Magnolia School District is that there are several schools with a high population of culturally diverse students who are overrepresented in the lowest categories of reading achievement, preventing the goal of all schools being accredited with Level 1 performance levels. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the knowledge, planning, and use of culturally relevant strategies by 12 upper elementary school literacy teachers to reveal teaching strategies that were contributing to culturally diverse students' literacy learning. My research questions, which sought to discover how third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers describe, plan, and teach culturally diverse students' concepts about knowledge, self, and others to improve reading achievement, guided my selection to use the qualitative bounded case study method. A bounded case study allowed for an in-depth investigation into two schools that were experiencing high rates of reading failure to reveal current CRT strategies and develop a PD project to support teachers' knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies as a contributing factor to increase reading achievement.

Research Design and Approach

The type of research methodology a researcher uses is based on the type of questions the researcher is trying to answer (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). The descriptive and explanatory type research questions in this study support the use of the qualitative method, as opposed to questions that aim to discover the effectiveness of outcomes, as in experimental research designs (Yin, 2018). Quantitative research

involves looking at relationships between variables over time and requires numerical data, which was not the focus of my study (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Qualitative research is based on a researcher continuously constructing knowledge and making meaning of the phenomenon under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The focus of this study was to discover what third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers knew about CRT, how they planned for reading instruction using CRT strategies, and how they used CRT strategies during literacy instruction, instead of the construction of a theory, as in the grounded theory research method.

Case studies in qualitative research allow investigations of a phenomenon for a deeper understanding (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Yin, 2018). A case study was used for this study because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of teachers' use of CRT through interviews and lesson plan documents (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). A case study supports the collection of lived experiences of a group in specific instances (see Patton, 2015), which is the case in my study, where I collected data on teachers' experiences with CRT. Case studies also allowed for in-depth descriptions of current information I collected from interviews and document analysis (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). A narrative analysis that focuses on chronological information about the teachers' life would not have provided the current information that was needed on how teachers use CRT in the classroom (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). A historical analysis would have focused on the teachers' use of CRT over time, instead of just the current use of CRT that was needed for this study (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

The case study method was used in contrast to experimental research designs where data are collected in other ways, such as through questionnaires, that do not give information as in-depth (see Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). I used interviews and lesson plan documents for data collection at the schools in this study, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the teachers' practices. These are also typical types of data collection for case studies (Merriam & Tindell, 2016).

I used a multiple-case study, as opposed to a single-case study, because Yin (2018) suggested that studies with more than one unit, subject, or setting of analysis fall under a multiple-case study design. The research questions were informed by Ladson-Billings's (l995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. The interview questions were descriptive because they aimed to describe what teachers knew about strategies that were culturally relevant, how they planned lessons using CRT strategies, and how they implemented CRT strategies during classroom instruction.

Participants

This multiple-case study took place in two elementary schools in the same school district that shared similar demographics. Branches Elementary School and Twig Elementary School were in the Magnolia School District in a suburban area of Virginia. Branches Elementary School is a Pre-K through Grade 5 high-poverty school, with 382 students in the 2018-2019 school year. Of these students, 88% were African American. Twig Elementary School is a Pre-K through Grade 5 high-poverty school, with 614 students in the 2018-2019 school year. Of these students, 72% were African American.

Sampling Method

Purposeful sampling was defined by Patton (2015) as selecting information-rich individuals with certain characteristics from which the most can be learned about the question being investigated. I chose purposeful sampling for this study because the two school sites and teachers were intentionally selected to participate in this study to learn the most about teachers' knowledge, planning, and implementation of CRT to support African American students' literacy achievement. The participants for this study were five Grade 3 teachers, three Grade 4 teachers, and four Grade 5 teachers of predominantly African American students. I selected the teachers from Branches and Twig elementary schools because these schools had one of the highest populations of third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade African American students and the lowest rates of reading proficiency on the end-of-year reading SOL assessment within the Magnolia School District. The participants had to meet the following criteria: licensed elementary education Grade 3 through Grade 5 teacher with at least 3 years of literacy teaching experience with a majority of culturally diverse student population. This small sample size of 12 teachers from the two schools allowed for a more in-depth inquiry of each teacher. Using a small sample size in a multiple-case study generated sufficient depth and detail needed for information-rich inquiry (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Teacher Demographics

The 12 teachers had varying years of literacy teaching experience (see Table 1). Four teachers had 3 to 5 years of experience, one teacher had 6 to 10 years of experience, one teacher had 11 to 15 years of experience, two teachers had 16 to 20 years of

experience, two teachers had 21 to 25 years of experience, and two had 26 to 30 years of experience. Four of the teachers taught at Branches Elementary School and eight of the teachers taught at Twig Elementary School within the Magnolia School District.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics Based on Study Criteria

Participant	Elementary school	Grade	Years of classroom literary teaching experience	Lesson plan collected
PA1	Branches	5	3 – 5	Yes
PC3	Branches	3	26 – 30	Yes
PD4	Branches	4	11 – 15	Yes
PE5	Branches	5	16 – 20	No
PF6	Twig	5	26 – 30	Yes
PG7	Twig	3	21 – 25	Yes
PH8	Twig	3	3 – 5	No
PI9	Twig	4	3 – 5	Yes
PJ10	Twig	3	3 – 5	Yes
PK11	Twig	3	21 – 25	Yes
PL12	Twig	5	16 – 20	Yes
PM13	Twig	4	6 – 10	No

Gaining Participant Access

To gain access to the participants, I emailed a copy of my proposal and the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) conditional approval letter to the research coordinator at the Magnolia School District to seek permission to conduct my research at the proposed school sites within the district. The research coordinator required modifications before the study could be approved to take place within the school district. The mandated modifications included removing nonparticipant observations as a data collection instrument, removing the observation protocol sheet that would have been used to take notes during observations, removing the collection of participant information

from the interview protocol sheet, and removing the name of the schools and the need for participant signatures on the consent forms. My original data collection instruments, approved as part of my proposal through the Walden University IRB, were open-ended interviews and nonparticipant observations. Upon submitting my proposal to the district, I was told that observations of any kind were not allowed; therefore, I removed the nonparticipant observations as an instrument to collect data and replaced it with the review of a voluntarily submitted current self-selected reading lesson plan document using a document review protocol sheet (see Appendix B). There was no longer a need for the observation protocol sheet to be used because observations were not conducted, so it was also removed. In the district's efforts to maintain anonymity, any identifying information was not allowed on the interview protocol sheet or consent forms. This meant that I needed to remove the following from the interview protocol sheet: race/ethnicity, education attainment, and position of interviewee, so teachers could not be narrowed down and identified. So that the exact number of years would not be recorded, and a teacher was not identified, I also needed to document teachers' years of experience in the form of bands: 0 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, 16 to 20 years, 21 to 25 years, and 26 to 30 years. The actual name of the two schools was changed to just say elementary school on the consent forms so that the school was not identified. The participant signature line on the consent form was removed and was replaced with a tape recorded "I consent" from the participant. The consent form was read, and I asked the question, "Participant number (PA1-PM13), do you consent to being a part of this study?" I was approved to conduct my study by the research coordinator from Magnolia

School District after resubmitting all documents with required modifications that were approved by the Walden University IRB. I then emailed the school district's approval letter to the Walden University IRB, who approved my study to begin.

I then emailed both principals and asked them for a date and time that I could meet with the third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers after school in the library/media center so that I could give a brief overview of the study. Once the dates and times were scheduled, I updated the time and place on the invitation flyers. I hand delivered the flyers to both schools for the initial meeting and placed them in the teachers' school mailboxes.

During the scheduled meetings, I explained that if they were interested and chose to participate in the study, they would be participating in a 45- to 60-minute interview at the school or public library and could voluntarily submit a current self-selected reading lesson plan document at the end of the interview. I then passed out participant flyers to the teachers. The participant flyers had an overview and purpose of the study, a check box to indicate they would like to be a part of the study, a line for their nonschool email address and phone number, criteria questions about years of literacy teaching, and my contact information. The participant flyers were given to all Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 teachers who attended the meeting so they could let me know whether they wanted to participate in the study. The teachers then emailed, texted, or called at their earliest convenience to say that they wanted to be a part of the study. During this initial contact, the teachers provided me with their contact information and answered the study criteria

questions. The teachers returned the bottom portion of the flyer to me at their scheduled interview time.

If the number of participants had exceeded 12, then the first 12 participant confirmations received that met the criteria for the study would have been part of the study. Of the seven teachers who contacted me, six of them confirmed participation and one changed their mind about participation. I then scheduled another meeting date and time with both principles and placed a second invitation flyer in the school mailboxes of the third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers. I held the second meeting and waited an additional week for teachers who wanted to participate to contact me. After waiting the additional week, I had six more teachers confirm that they wanted to participate in the study, for a total of 12 participants (see Table 1). Once the teachers called to confirm participation in the study, I thanked them for wanting to participate, addressed any questions or concerns they may have had, and set a date and time for an interview.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

To establish a researcher-participant relationship, I needed to ensure participants understood the purpose of the study, how data would be collected, my role as a researcher, and their role as a participant (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Patton, 2015). When I met with teachers for their interview, I explained the informed consent letters that disclose the purpose of the study, data collection methods, confidentiality, risks, and benefits. I explained to the participants that data would be kept confidential and that they could change their mind at any time about participating in the study. I then

recorded the participants saying “I consent” if they still agreed to participate in the study and then conducted the open-ended interviews.

Protection of Participants’ Rights

Before conducting the study, I obtained permission from the Walden University IRB, ensuring that research procedures were ethical for this study. Once I received the approval letter from the coordinator of research and had obtained Walden University IRB approval, I began the study. Any risk factors associated with this study were identified and addressed during the IRB application process to ensure minimal risk to participants. To ensure protection from harm to any participant in this study, I submitted a copy of my certificate for the National Institutes of Health training course with my IRB application. To protect participant’s rights, during the reading of the participant consent form with the IRB approval number 12-21-18-0303688, I let the participants know that identifying information, including names and locations, would not be used in the interview or lesson plan document data collected. I used alphanumeric codes (PA1-PM13) to keep participants’ identities and locations confidential; these codes were also used in the results of the study. I explained to participants that all data would be kept on a secure personal computer or locked file cabinet and maintained for five years. After the five years beyond completion of the study, the data would be destroyed by permanently deleting all information kept on my secure computer and cross shredding all documents kept in the locked file cabinet. I have also disclosed any risk factors and benefits of participating in the study. The participants were reminded that the study was voluntary,

and they were free to change their mind at any time during the study without any consequences.

Data Collection

The data for this qualitative case study were open-ended interviews and self-selected reading lesson plan documents. According to Patton (2015) and Yin (2018), open-ended interviews provide insight into the participant's way of thinking about a given topic that goes deeper than the surface of specific questions that are asked. The interviews allowed for a deeper understanding of the participants' knowledge and insight about CRT and how it was used to plan for instruction (Patton, 2015). Documents are like observations, in that they provide a look into what the author of the document thinks is important, as well as an account of their personal perspective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The collection of documents in case study research allows for evidence that could be viewed repeatedly, gives specific details about an event, and unobtrusively gains information about participants (Yin, 2018). Lesson plan documents from the classroom teacher show how the teacher planned to address CRT strategies during literacy instruction to support culturally diverse students. Both interviews and lesson plan documents are included and integrated into multiple-case studies to capture the uniqueness of each case, be sufficiently detailed, and create a comprehensive picture to better understand the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015).

Ten researcher-produced, open-ended interview questions, based on Ladson-Billings's (1995) theory of CRT, were located on the interview protocol sheet (See Appendix C). The interview questions allowed for an in-depth understanding of

teachers' knowledge, planning, and implementation of CRT. The individual open-ended interviews took place over 11 weeks. There was one 45- to 60-minute interview for each participant, which took place in the neutral and quiet location of a public or school library before and after school hours. Before each interview took place, I asked the participants for their permission to audio-record the interview and reminded the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary and they could stop the interview at any time. I used a reflective journal to write down emerging thoughts, reflections, and other information I wanted to remember for each interview and refer to during the analysis of data (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). At the end of the interview, four of the 12 participants voluntarily submitted a current self-selected reading lesson plan document. Five participants voluntarily emailed me their current self-selected reading lesson plan document from a nonschool email address after the interview date.

Three of the participants did not submit a lesson plan document. I removed all identifying information on the lesson plan documents that were received and labeled them with the same alphanumeric codes that were used for the interview data. I transcribed the interviews using Transcribeme.com and labeled each interview by an alphanumeric code (PA1-PM13) for easy retrieval and went through and removed any identifying names and schools. I read through transcriptions while listening to audio-recording for accuracy and to check for any discrepancies, such as inaudible parts, so they could be corrected.

In qualitative research, Creswell and Guetterman (2019) and Patton (2015) suggested that steps be taken to clarify the bias that a researcher brings to the study. Self-

reflection in qualitative research informs the reader of what shapes the researcher's interpretations during the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). With my previous 16 years' experience as an elementary teacher, I understood the struggles of working with diverse students who were reading below grade level and were expected to take assessments that were on grade level. I had certain beliefs and biases about what should be done to ensure these students succeeded. As an African American reading specialist, in a separate school from the ones in this study, the issue of culturally diverse students falling significantly behind their peers in reading achievement is genuinely concerning. I have a vested interest in improving teacher effectiveness with all students they serve. My concern about the achievement of all students has led me to want to investigate how teachers are using CRT to address this issue in their classrooms. To manage my biases during the study, I maintained a neutral position during participant interviews by remaining objective and adhering to the pre-established interview questions, interview protocol sheet and the lesson plan document review protocol sheet. I used my reflective journal immediately following each interview to record my thoughts (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). To ensure the interview protocol and lesson plan document review protocol were as free of bias as possible, the interview questions were open-ended, neutral, singular, and clear in nature and the interview questions and lesson plan document review protocol sheet pertained to CRT conceptual framework to answer the research questions (see Patton, 2015). I addressed bias when analyzing, interpreting, and reporting findings by cross-checking participant accounts, triangulating the data, and using a peer debriefer who was a reading specialist with an Ed. D in Education. I had

participants member check my interpretations of the findings of both the interview data and lesson plan document data to ensure they accurately reflected what the participants wanted to convey (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

I did not hold any professional positions at the two school study sites that could potentially raise power issues (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Professional positions at the site for a study could compromise the ability of the researcher to report data that are valid and credible (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Patton, 2015). I did not have any adverse events or unanticipated problems with any participant at any time during the interview process.

Data Analysis

After all participant interviews had been conducted, I transcribed the audio-file into text data using Transcribeme.com transcription services on a password-protected personal computer. I then read transcriptions, while listening to the audio-recording for accuracy and to check for any discrepancies, such as inaudible parts, so they could be corrected. This also gave me a chance to write down some similarities and differences among the interview transcriptions in my reflective journal. I labeled each interview by an alphanumeric code for easy retrieval and reviewed each transcription and removed any identifying information. I directly uploaded transcriptions into Ethnograph 6.0 qualitative data analysis software program on my personal computer to assist with analysis and storage of the interview data. I then labeled each lesson plan document with the same alphanumeric code (PA1-PM13) as the interviews and removed all names and school identifiers with black permanent marker and a coat of white-out and used the

lesson plan document review protocol word document to manually code all lesson plan documents by hand. Throughout the entire data analysis process, I used my reflective journal to jot down my thoughts, questions, temporary themes, acknowledge my own opinions and thoughts, and reflect on the process (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

I used two cycles of coding for the data analysis process. For the first cycle, I used a priori and in vivo coding and for the second cycle I used pattern coding. Using Ladson-Billings's (1995) CRT conceptual framework, I developed predetermined a priori codes to use during data analysis of interview data. Developing a priori codes from the conceptual framework before collecting data provides the researcher with a start list of codes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2020). A priori codes were also revised to better fit the data as I continued the coding process. Miles et al. (2020) suggested that several codes would need to change and evolve so that the researcher did not try to force-fit data into preexisting codes. I defined each a priori code and used it as a reference as I coded the data. The a priori codes and definitions were stored in the Ethnograph 6.0 codebook (see Table 2).

Table 2

A Priori Code Book for Interview Data

CRT framework	A Priori codes	Definition
Concepts of self and others	Teachers awareness of their own culture and the culture of their students	Teacher awareness of student's cultural differences
	Culturally relevant instructional materials and resources	Teacher's use of culturally relevant, representative, and relatable text/media to make connections to learning and support reading comprehension.
Social relations	Promoting communication through collaborative conversations	Conversations that build relationships between students and teachers through their commonalities in backgrounds, culture, and interests.
	Classroom community of learners	Community of learners in a positive learning environment that is safe to make mistakes and learn from them together.
Concepts of knowledge	Students sharing knowledge to support reading instruction	Teacher views student as someone with something to offer to their learning and the learning of others.
	High teacher expectations for all students	Teachers have high expectations for all students.
	Differentiating instruction	Meeting the needs of all students through equitable best teaching practices.

During the next part of first cycle coding, I used in vivo coding to find short phrases from the participants' own words. Miles et al. (2020) proposed that in vivo coding allows the researcher to capture and prioritize the participants' voice by using the words of the participants themselves. For second cycle coding, I used pattern coding to find patterns within the data and in vivo codes to develop categories. Miles et al. (2020) suggested that pattern coding is a way to group and pull together a significant amount of data from the first cycle of coding into smaller meaningful units. These smaller units or categories can then lead to emerging themes (Miles et al., 2020).

Interview Data

For first cycle coding, I analyzed the interview transcriptions using deductive analysis to line-by-line code the data using a priori codes derived from the CRT conceptual framework (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2016). Deductive analysis would allow for the data to be organized into more common patterns and larger themes that would be used to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used the predetermined a priori codes to label data related to concepts of self and others - red, social relations - green, and concepts of knowledge - blue, using Ethnograph 6.0 software. Appendix D shows the predetermined a priori codes applied to the interview data in the left column, and the excerpts from the data in the right column.

For the next step in first cycle of coding, I used in vivo coding to directly identify words and phrases from the teacher participants' own voice (see Miles et al., 2020). In vivo coding is an inductive coding process that is often used with other coding methods,

such as a priori coding, during the first cycle of coding to be comprehensive and exhaustive in the analysis of data (Miles et al., 2020; Saldana, 2016). Appendix D shows the in vivo codes for concepts of self and others, social relations, and concepts of knowledge.

I used second cycle pattern coding to find smaller meaningful units to help create the bigger picture (see Miles et al., 2020). I looked for patterns and relationships between the interview data and the in vivo codes to come up with categories. Saldana (2016) suggested that second cycle pattern coding be used to group the initial summaries from the first cycle of coding into a smaller number of codes. Table 3 shows the pattern codes on the left and the emerging themes from the codes and data on the right.

Table 3

Second Cycle Pattern Coding and Themes for Interview Data

Pattern codes	Themes
Knowing their students	Teachers knew they needed to be inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds.
	Teachers used scaffolded learning to meet the needs of all students during literacy instruction.
Making culturally relevant connections	Teachers helped students make literacy connections to self and others through culturally relevant text and media during literacy instruction.
	Teachers use student interests to engage learners when planning for literacy instruction.
Collaboration for a community of learners	Teachers helped students develop a collaborative environment through classroom conversations during literacy instruction.
Growth toward common goals	Teachers focused on student growth in reading during literacy instruction.

Lesson Plan Documents

For first cycle coding, I analyzed the reading lesson plans using the lesson plan document review protocol sheet (see Appendix B). I used deductive analysis to line-by-line a priori code the lesson plan data by hand using the CRT conceptual framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2016). I highlighted data for each of the three CRT framework concepts in a different color on the lesson plan document and typed them into the lesson plan document protocol review sheet. Appendix E shows how a priori codes were used to code the lesson plan data with the CRT Framework in the left column and excerpts from the lesson plan data in the middle column. After a priori codes were applied to the data, in vivo codes were then used by directly using words and phrases from the teacher participants (Miles et al., 2020). Appendix E shows the in vivo codes in the right-hand column. I then used second cycle pattern coding to reduce the number of codes into smaller, meaningful units by looking for the patterns in the data as seen on the left side of Table 4 (Miles et al., 2020). To move from the pattern codes to emerging themes, I examined the data for relationships and patterns. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) proposed that themes are the recurring patterns within the data that would become the findings of the study. The themes are located on the right side of Table 4.

Table 4

Second Cycle Pattern Coding for Lesson Plan Protocol Document Data

Pattern code	Theme
Making Connections	Teachers helped students make connections to self and others through culturally relevant text and media when planning for literacy instruction.
Student collaboration	Teachers facilitated student collaboration through classroom discussions when planning for literacy instruction.
Student Growth	Teachers planned for students to grow in their learning of new concepts during literacy instruction.

After analyzing the lesson plan document review protocol data and emerging themes, I was able to triangulate the data to see if the findings from the lesson plan data corroborated the findings from the interview data. Triangulating data allows for the researcher to increase the credibility of the findings in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). I then created a narrative discussion of the findings, to include thick descriptions and interpretations of the data (Miles et al., 2020).

Accuracy and Credibility of the Findings

I used peer debriefing, triangulation, and member checking to assure accuracy and establish credibility of the findings. Peer debriefing allowed me to meet with an impartial colleague who critically reviewed and discussed with me the analysis of data and findings (see Baillie, 2015; Williams & Todd, 2016). The colleague I had chosen to do the peer debriefing for this study had experience with qualitative research, a

background in education, and holds a doctoral degree from an accredited university. After receiving a signed confidentiality agreement from the colleague, meetings took place over the phone and through online video-conferencing platforms. I met with the colleague several times during the data analysis process to discuss first cycle coding, second cycle coding, and my interpretation of the findings.

During the first cycle of coding, I met with my peer debriefer to get a new perspective on the analysis of data (see Baillie, 2015; Williams & Todd, 2016). I was able to tell her about the process of a priori and in vivo coding of the interview and lesson plan data. This allowed me to reflect on the coding process as she posed objective questions and provided her personal perspective to ensure alignment with the conceptual framework and research questions to be answered. I met with my peer debriefer again to discuss the process and results of second cycle pattern coding. She reviewed my pattern codes, posed objective questions, and gave her personal perspectives on the codes based on the data and in vivo codes. Peer debriefing promoted constructive and reflective dialogue to help me clarify my views and offer alternative points of view (see Baillie, 2015; Williams & Todd, 2016). I met with my peer debriefer a final time to discuss the themes and my findings. She offered a different viewpoint, pointed out strengths and weaknesses of my narrative, and asked questions that would help me focus my findings and narrative on the research questions to be answered and to ensure the participants' voices were heard through thick, rich descriptions. She also made me aware of any biases so that I could improve on remaining objective in my interpretations.

Triangulation was also used to validate the findings. According to Patton (2015), one form of triangulating data is comparing and cross-checking the consistency of findings from interviews and documents. I triangulated the data by using the lesson plan document protocol findings to corroborate the findings of the interview data.

I contacted participants by a nonschool email address and asked them to complete a member check of my interpretation of the findings in a two-page written summary to ensure I accurately portrayed their experiences and to rule out any misinterpretation of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The member check was used to clarify or add information, if needed, for validity and reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). All participants were given a week to respond with any changes necessary to ensure there was no misinterpretation of the information. If participants found any misinterpretation of the data, I would have reanalyzed the data and their feedback would have been used to clarify or to add to their responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Discrepant Cases

Negative or discrepant data contradict the patterns or themes that emerged from the analysis of data are in the findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell and Guetterman (2019) suggested that presenting contradictory evidence adds to the credibility and validity of the account. Yin (2018) proposed that the potential for discrepant cases can be minimized by having participants clarify and elaborate their responses. During the analysis of data, no discrepant cases were found that contradicted the themes that emerged.

Data Analysis Results

Data Process Review

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) suggested the following six steps for organizing data for analysis:

1. Preparing and organizing the data for the analysis.
2. Engaging in an initial exploration of the data through the process of coding it.
3. Using the codes to develop a more general picture of the data.
4. Representing the findings through narratives and visuals.
5. Interpreting the meaning of the results by reflecting personally on the impact of the findings and on the literature that might inform the findings.
6. Conducting strategies to validate the accuracy of the findings. (p. 173)

Although researchers may not follow the six steps in the same order, Creswell and Guetterman (2019) found that researchers could visit steps several times throughout the analysis process. I used Creswell and Guetterman's (2019) six steps to guide my analysis of data for this study.

Preparing and organizing the data. To prepare and organize the data for analysis, I gathered the audio-recorded open-ended interviews and lesson plan documents. I transcribed the audio-recorded interviews using transcribeme.com, removed any identifying information, and labeled each with an alphanumeric code. I directly uploaded them into Ethnograph 6.0. I then removed all identifying information from the paper copy lesson plan documents by using a black permanent marker and a

coat of white-out and labeled them with the same alphanumeric code that was used for the interview transcripts to keep data organized and for easy retrieval.

Coding the data for a more general picture. During the first cycle of coding, I used Ethnograph 6.0 as a tool to identify a priori codes in the transcribed interview data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For the next part of first cycle coding, I used in vivo coding to capture the phrases used by the teacher participants themselves (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During second cycle coding, pattern coding was used to reduce the first cycle of codes and develop emerging themes (Merriam & Tisdell; 2016, Saldana, 2016).

During the first cycle of coding lesson plan data, I used a priori coding and in vivo coding so that I could use predetermined codes from the conceptual framework and the participants' own words (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I then used second cycle pattern coding to look for patterns among the data and determine fewer categories (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I looked at the categories and the data to develop emerging themes (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2016).

Findings

The problem in this study was that although all schools within the Magnolia School District were fully accredited, there were still several schools that were struggling to achieve a passing Level 1 at or an above rating on the School Quality Indicators for English SOL academic achievement. The schools that were below Level 1 and below state standards include the two school sites in my study that serve the highest population of African American students who are overrepresented in the lowest categories of reading

achievement. The following three qualitative research questions were used to examine third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers' knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies:

RQ1: Qualitative: What do third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers know about CRT strategies in the literacy classroom?

RQ2: Qualitative: How do third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers plan for reading instruction using culturally relevant reading strategies alongside the curriculum to support student literacy learning?

RQ3: Qualitative: How do third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers use CRT strategies during literacy instruction?

I used open-ended interviews and current self-selected reading lesson plan documents to answer the three research questions and ultimately the study problem. To answer each research question, I will discuss the themes in detail that emerged from the pattern codes, using thick, rich descriptions.

Findings for RQ1

RQ1: What do third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers know about CRT strategies in the literacy classroom? Ladson-Billings' (1995) CRT conceptual framework incorporates how a teacher's ability to use concepts of self and others, social relations, and concepts of knowledge to support student reading success depends on their knowledge of CRT strategies. To find out teachers' knowledge about CRT strategies, teacher participants were asked Interview Question 1: What do you know about CRT strategies? Where and when did you learn about them?

Theme 1: Teachers knew they needed to be inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds. Teacher participants identified being inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds as what they knew about CRT strategies in the literacy classroom. Bloom et al. (2015) and Brown et al. (2016) suggested that teachers need to acknowledge and include differences in students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds into their teaching practices. Teacher PC3 stated, "You have students with various backgrounds, so you make sure that the literature that you use also cover those backgrounds." Teacher PC3 also shared that she "tries to incorporate different types of stories within guided reading and shared reading to make sure that I'm being culturally diverse to match the students in the classroom and they can make those connections to literacy skills being taught." Teacher PC3 tied specific reading skills to students' cultural backgrounds. She shared that she had a student from Japan who had recently visited and stated, "I asked him to tell the class about his trip to Japan and I was able to somehow tie in a character's problem and solution from a book we were reading earlier." Teacher PH8 shared that when teaching literacy skills, it is important to "bring in information and knowledge in a way that the students will understand…like things that they deal with in their everyday lives." Teacher PE5 stated, "I do need to respect students' culture, their religion, their family beliefs, and whatever they were brought up believing in as I teach." Teacher PK11 shared, "We find books written by and books that are about the students to teach comprehension skills." Clark (2017) and Lopez (2016) posited that CRT is evident in classrooms where the texts, topics, and discussions are reflective and inclusive of their students' cultural backgrounds.

Findings for RQ2

RQ2: How do third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers plan for reading instruction using culturally relevant reading strategies alongside the curriculum to support student literacy learning? Ladson-Billings' (1995) CRT conceptual framework incorporates how a teacher uses concepts of self and others, social relations, and concepts of knowledge to plan for reading instruction to support culturally and linguistically diverse students' reading engagement and learning. To find out how teachers plan for reading instruction using CRT strategies, I asked the participants Interview Question 2: When planning for reading instruction, what culturally relevant resources do you use along with the reading curriculum? And Interview Question 3: When planning for reading instruction, what types of text do you use?

Theme 2: Teachers used student interests to engage learners. Teacher participants suggested that they used students culturally diverse interests to plan for literacy instruction. Teacher participants wanted to learn what students were interested in so that they could gather resources and materials students were interested in and would support meaningful conversations to plan for literacy instruction. Gathering culturally relevant resources and materials based on student interests helped teachers plan for engaging literacy instruction (Farinde-Wu et al., 2017). Student interests were used to indicate the type of books, such as sports or animals, teachers would use to teach the reading skills. Teacher PA1 shared, "I pull books on their instructional level where students could relate to what is going on in the story and use them to focus on comprehension skills." Teacher PA1 also stated that a lot of students in her class were

interested in drawing and would "draw or write to show how characters change throughout time" for an upcoming lesson on character development. To help Teacher PE5 plan for a reading lesson she stated, "I've done an interest survey to see what types of books they like…and then I find books and passages with those things to use to teach a lesson on main idea." Teacher PC3 stated, "I can find a passage or book in my classroom library that will keep their interest. I can capture their attention and keep their attention so they can actually stay engaged in discussions during literacy instruction." Teacher PD4 said she also gave interest surveys and shared, "I can learn what they like, their dislikes, their strengths and their weaknesses, and then I develop lessons and activities after I utilize the survey." Teacher PG7 shared, "I try to find books that are culturally relevant...or articles that'll interest students to build their background knowledge when planning for reading instruction." Student interests have guided teacher participants in their choice of culturally relevant literature when planning for engaging reading instruction.

Theme 3: Teachers focused on promoting student growth. Teacher participants indicated that their focus was on promoting student growth when planning for reading instruction by building background knowledge, setting learning goals, and collaborating with colleagues. Durden et al. (2015) and Lopez (2016) proposed that when you build background knowledge to link culturally and linguistically diverse students' past experiences to new learning it fosters positive academic growth. Teacher PC3 used a graphic organizer to plan for reading instruction by "building on their prior knowledge to see what they knew…and what would they like to know about a particular

topic we were going to cover." Teacher PF6 would bring in props to support her reading lesson and help build students' background knowledge and stated, "If I'm going to read about sea glass during instruction, it's sitting out. My kids are allowed to touch it. We do a lot of hands-on schema building of background knowledge."

Lesson plan data analysis also showed evidence that supported the interview data findings that teacher participants focused on promoted student growth when planning for reading instruction by including anticipatory sets to build on background knowledge. Teacher participants used questions to get students thinking about what they would be learning and activate prior knowledge. To activate student prior knowledge when preparing for a writing lesson on plagiarism, teacher PA1 asked, "How would you feel if you found out someone stole your narrative and said it was theirs?" Teacher PD4 planned to ask students before a lesson about prediction, "Do you know what a prediction is? When do we make predictions at school or at home?" Teacher PG7 asked, "Why do you think questioning helps readers understand what is happening in the text?" when preparing a reading lesson on asking and answering questions about what is read. Teacher participants also projected pictures and videos to activate prior knowledge about main idea and supporting details. Teacher PC3 planned to share photographs to have students think about what was happening in the picture to activate prior knowledge about the reading skill drawing conclusions. Teacher PJ10 planned to project a painting of a student in a principal's office to activate prior knowledge about the reading skill making predictions. Teacher PL12 planned to project a music video that would explain and give examples about the reading skill plot setting.

Farinde-Wu et al. (2017), Kourea et al. (2018), and Ndemanu and Jordan (2018) suggested that culturally relevant teachers of reading set positive goals and objectives for their students. Teacher PD4 shared, "I let students know what the goal is in my written objective…so whether we're working on fluency or comprehension, we work together in order to supersede the weakness to meet the goals." Teacher PH8 stated, "I do expect them to read a lot…I set class goals every week, so students have a number of books they need to read independently by the end of the week to practice skills they learned."

Lesson plan data analysis also showed evidence that supported the interview findings by promoting student growth and planning for students to meet objectives with measurable goals. Teachers expected students to complete all independent tasks with 75% accuracy or better. Teacher PA1 wrote a specific objective that stated, "I can create a works cited page with three resources independently with 100% accuracy." Teacher PC3 wrote a learning objective: Given the passage *Saturday Adventures*, students will draw conclusions and make two inferences and highlight details and examples from the text with at least 75% accuracy. Teacher PD4 wrote a learning objective: Given two predictions scenarios, students will independently demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts by making and confirming predictions by answering 2 out of 3 questions correctly. Teacher PG7 wrote a learning objective: After reading *Chester's Way*, the student will generate questions and complete a graphic organizer with at least three questions. Teacher PK11 wrote the learning objective: Given a passage to read, the students will use the clues to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words and match meaning words to the underlined words with at least 7 out of 9 correct. Teacher

participants planned for students improve their reading comprehension skills by the end of each lesson, setting measurable objectives for each day.

Zoch (2017) suggested that teacher collaboration supported planning for culturally relevant reading instruction and student reading achievement. Teacher PC3 explained that during her grade level reading planning meetings, the reading specialist helps them to find culturally relevant resources and materials to plan for reading instruction and shared, "the reading specialists has given us a lot of websites to find passages we can use…and has told us different authors and various titles of books that would also help us with culturally diverse materials to support student learning." Teacher PH8 shared, "we meet as a grade level every week and talk about different themes that we want to implement…that will interest our students during instruction." Teacher PK11, who is an inclusion teacher, works closely with the special education teacher to plan for reading instruction to support growth in reading and shared, "the SPED teacher and I tweak the reading plans to meet the special needs of my students to support their reading goals." Teacher participants planned for reading instruction with a focus on student growth through building on students' prior knowledge, setting goals and expectations, and peer collaboration.

Findings for RQ3

RQ3: How do third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers use CRT strategies during literacy instruction? Ladson-Billings' (1995) CRT conceptual framework incorporates how teachers use concepts of self and others, social relations, and concepts of knowledge during literacy instruction to support student reading success. To find out how teachers

used CRT strategies during reading instruction, teacher participants were asked Interview Questions 4-10. Question 4: During your reading instruction, what CRT strategies did you use? Question 5: What are some examples of how you incorporate a student's culture during reading instruction? Question 6: What are some examples of how you incorporate student interests during reading instruction? Question 7: What are some examples of how you foster relationships with students during reading instruction? Question 8: What are some examples of the literacy classroom expectations you have communicated to your students? Question 9: How do you support students with learning from each other in the literacy classroom? Question 10: What CRT strategies do you think are making the most difference in helping to improve your student's literacy learning?

Theme 4: Teachers helped students make literacy connections to self and others through culturally relevant text. Teacher participants indicated that they help students make literacy connections to themselves and others using culturally relevant text and media during literacy instruction. Teachers help students make text connections to themselves, community, and world using culturally relevant resources during reading instruction (Bomer, 2017; Cartledge et al., 2015; Cartledge et al., 2016). Teacher PA1 shared, "When I taught conflict resolution, I used a familiar TV show as a metaphor to help students relate to the passage." Teacher PK8 used journal writing during reading instruction to support student connections to text and stated, "during reading response time…they can go ahead and relate to their life as they respond to what they have read in the text." Teacher PD4 replied, "I always like to use music and actually have them get

involved with or help adlib a rhyme or just maybe a chant...that will help them remember how to use a reading skill." Teacher PJ10 stated, "I look at what do they do on weekends …trying to tie that in and make those connections to what we are learning during class." Teacher PD4 shared, "Well, I try to allow opportunities for my students to interact and just offer tidbits or experiences in their life where they can make connections while they're reading or make connections during the discussion, or even during writing."

Teacher participants also tried to provide hands-on experiences to make connections to themselves and others during reading instruction, such as teacher PG7 who provided students with "new experiences and showed them things that they could use to understand vocabulary terms we were learning." Teacher PJ10 stated, "When we work with reading comprehension skills, I try to tie in relevant experiences, they may play football, or they may have a cousin or a brother that does and I help them make those connections to the skill." Students can make personal connections to the text as characters, relationships, and themes in the text remind them of themselves and their families (Sharma & Christ, 2017). Teacher participants used various culturally relevant resources and materials to support student connections to skills taught during reading instruction.

The lesson plan data analysis showed evidence of support for the interview data findings of how teachers planned to support making text connections to self and others during reading instruction. Teacher participants used the books listed on lesson plans for shared and guided reading and questions they would ask before, during, and after reading to teach reading skills. The text titles that the teacher participants planned to use during

their instruction included: *Chicken Sunday, The Littles Go to school, George Washington's Breakfast, A Lake Vacation,* and *A letter from Mark, Arthur's Computer Problem*. These book titles include elements that student could relate to and the questions teacher participants would ask would make connections to reading skills they would be taught, such as meals on Sunday with a grandparent, going to school, eating breakfast, going on vacation, writing a letter, and having a computer problem. Bassey (2016) and Farinde-Wu et al. (2017) suggested that the use of books students could relate to supported activating background knowledge which could lead to a deeper understanding and connection to skills being taught.

Theme 5: Teachers helped students develop a collaborative environment through classroom conversations. Teacher participants indicated that they help students develop a collaborative environment through classroom conversations. Opportunities for students to have rich conversations about what they are learning during reading instruction acknowledges culturally and linguistically diverse students' understanding and expertise of reading skills (Wurdeman-Thurston & Kaomea, 2015). Teachers used student conversations during their literacy instruction to answer questions about what they were reading, answer discussion prompts about reading skills they were learning, support peer teaching, and clarify misconceptions and check for understanding. Teacher PJ10 stated, "I allow them to piggyback off of what someone else was saying. I'll say…does anyone want to elaborate on what the student said? And they will elaborate and piggyback with their own knowledge and understanding." Teacher PM13 shared, "Let them have conversations amongst themselves about different topics we are

covering during literacy instruction. I think collaboration helps them get to an experience or get to an understanding that I might not be able to provide for them."

Students also have opportunities for reciprocal learning, sharing their knowledge, and working to help each other grow. Teacher PA1 stated, "We kind of pair students, and sometimes, we try to pair them respectively to where they can learn from each other." To support student collaboration, all teachers had students engage in partner or group work to discuss what they were learning during literacy instruction and to learn from each other. Teacher PI9 said, "We do a lot of group work, partner work, table work when they need to complete reading worksheets. We do a lot of turn and talk and elbow partners and matching up with using a deck of cards so they can answer questions and discuss text." Teacher PE5 shared, "They partner read and discuss their stories as partners sometimes. If a student gets stuck on a word or something, sometimes instead of me offering a suggestion, I'll have their classmate tell them the strategy, not tell them the answer." Teacher participants supported a student-centered approach to reading instruction that allowed students to have collaborative discussions to learn from each other and coconstruct new knowledge during reading instruction (Clark, 2017).

Lesson plan data analysis showed evidence that supported the interview findings that teachers would support student collaboration through conversations about reading skills being taught. Teacher PC3 wrote, "Have students think about each picture, then with a partner, discuss what is happening." Teacher PG7 wrote, "Turn and talk to your partner about the question. Share out a few ideas with the whole group. Teacher PJ10 wrote, "The students will form groups of 4-6 students, each group will read each poem

and develop 1-2 prediction for each station (one student should be the scribe)." Teacher PK11 wrote, "the students will get into pairs and work together and read the excerpt from The Velveteen Rabbit. As they read, they should be highlighting the context clues that helped them figure out the meaning of the underlined words." Teacher participants planned for students to work with partners and in groups during reading instruction.

Theme 6: Teachers used scaffolded learning to meet the needs of all students. Teacher participants tried to scaffold learning to tailor to the needs of the students during reading instruction. Teacher PA1 shared that she customized student learning during reading instruction by "trying to chunk things and break things up…have them repeat information back to me…so that way they're kind of more engaged versus just listening for a long period of time…making vocabulary shorter, understandable and putting it with pictures." Teacher PA1 also stated that she wanted her students to "really monitor what they're reading. I really try to focus on my students who may not comprehend as much and have them repeat back to themself what they just read by covering it up and not just repeating it." Teacher PF6 stated, "If I'm going to read about sea glass, it's sitting out. My kids are allowed to touch it." PM13 shared, "Just trying to provide them with the same things that they may not see regularly as well. That's important too, just to expand that world through literature." Teacher PG7 stated, "You always have your phone. We pull up pictures and videos and that kind of thing, depending on what we're reading to support their understanding of vocabulary." PH8 shared, "Sometimes we'll type books up and make them a passage…then during shared reading I show them that the passage was

this book and it's the same length, they can read it! That helps a lot." Teacher participants found ways to make literacy instruction fit the needs of the students.

Summary

Findings from the lesson plan review document data supported the findings from the interview data. Six themes emerged from the analysis of the findings. The six themes were as follows:

Theme 1: Teachers were inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds.

Theme 2: Teachers knew they needed to use student interests to engage learners.

Theme 3: Teachers focused on student growth in reading

Theme 4: Teachers helped students make literacy connections to self and others through culturally relevant text and media.

Theme 5: Teachers helped students develop a collaborative environment through classroom conversations.

Theme 6: Teachers use scaffolded learning to meet the needs of all students.

The analysis of 10 interview questions and nine lesson plan documents were guided by and Ladson-Billings's (1995) conceptual framework of concepts of self and others, social relations, and concepts and beliefs about knowledge. Based on the findings of data, three of the 12 teacher participants knew that CRT strategies involved being inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds in the literacy classroom. Teacher participants acknowledged that they used a variety of culturally diverse literature and media that matched the culturally diverse student body of their classrooms. Teacher participants used student cultural backgrounds to tie in reading skills being taught by

having students give examples of their cultural experiences from their everyday lives, community activities, and world travels. Teacher participants also shared books and passages that reflected aspects of their students' cultures during shared and guided reading instruction to support student literacy learning.

Teacher participants planned for reading instruction using several CRT strategies. One CRT strategy teachers used was collecting data on student interests to support reading instruction. Teachers gave student interests surveys and had conversations with students to find out their likes and dislikes, strength and weaknesses, and ways they like to learn. They used the information to gather books and other text to read to the class during guided and shared reading or that students would read with peers. The books and other literature would be used to keep students engaged and support connections to reading skills being taught.

Teacher participants also focused on promoting student growth in reading by building on students' prior knowledge, setting learning goals, and collaborating with colleagues on reading instruction. Graphic organizers, props, and questions were used by teacher participants to build on students' prior knowledge. Reading goals and measurable objectives were written and shared with students to support and measure growth in reading skills and reading of books in general. Teacher participants collaborated during grade level meetings with the reading specialist and special education teachers to identify, locate, and share, and discuss culturally relevant resources and materials to use during reading instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Teacher participants supported students with making literacy connections to self and others through culturally relevant text and media resources. Teacher participants used television, music, and hands-on materials to support connections to reading comprehension skills. Teachers also gave students the opportunity to draw or write to demonstrate understanding of comprehension skills and respond to reading. Teachers and students also shared experiences and examples that related to reading skills being taught, supporting understanding and use of new skills.

Teacher participants facilitated a collaborative classroom environment through classroom conversations. Students were provided several opportunities throughout reading instruction to work with peers in small groups and partner work to answer questions to build background knowledge. Students collaborated to practice new reading skills being learned. Students worked together to answer discussion questions and share out new understandings. Teachers also provided students opportunities to share their culturally diverse experiences and expertise with each other to support learning during literacy instruction.

Teacher participants scaffolded learning during reading instruction to meet the needs of all culturally and linguistically diverse students within their classroom in a variety of ways. Teacher participants chunked reading skills for students that needed more time with different elements of skills being taught. Teachers would have students repeat information they were learning to check for understanding. Students were given text in different formats so they would be familiar with reading from books and passages. Teacher participants incorporated the use of technology to share pictures and videos to

support vocabulary building. Teacher participants also supported students by having them explore objects through hands-on activities to further their understanding of reading skills being taught.

These findings suggested that teacher participants were knowledgeable about some of the CRT strategies needed to support reading instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students improved literacy achievement. There are also several CRT strategies that were not evidenced during the analysis of this study that teacher participants need to know, plan with, or use during literacy instruction based on Ladson-Billings's (1995) conceptual framework.

Under Concepts of Self and Others, teacher participants understood the need to be aware and inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds in their daily teaching practices as a CRT teaching strategy. Teacher participants also helped students make literacy connections to self and others through culturally relevant text and media to support literacy instruction. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), teachers need to also be aware and reflective of their own culture, beliefs, and values to address their own biases and shortcomings in order to address areas they need to change or improve to support student reading success. Teachers also need to be a part of an inclusive of community events and issues in their literacy instruction to support the school community.

Under Social Relations, teacher participants showed evidence of all CRT strategies to support students in working collaboratively when planning for and during literacy instruction. Teacher participants engaged students during instruction by using student interests to determine books and prompt conversations about what they were

learning. Teacher participants helped students develop a collaborative environment through classroom conversations around literacy skills and their shared learning. Teacher participants encouraged students to learn with and from each other to develop a classroom community of learners.

Under Concepts of Knowledge, teacher participants focused on the CRT strategy of promoting student growth in reading by building background knowledge, setting learning goals for all students, and working collaboratively with colleagues to plan for literacy instruction. Teacher participants also scaffolded literacy learning to meet the needs of all students to promote student literacy success. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), teachers also need to be inclusive of current events, controversial topics, and socio-political topics during instruction to engage in critical analysis of and make connections between themselves and the society and world they live in.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant, or typical, cases in qualitative research that do not follow the patterns in the data require further analysis (Miles et al., 2020). Deeper analysis gives insights into why the inconsistencies exist (Miles et al., 2020). During the analysis of data for this study, there were no instances of discrepant data found.

Evidence of Quality

To validate the accuracy of the findings, I used peer debriefing, triangulation, and member checking of the findings. Peer debriefing gives peers a chance to go over the findings to see whether they are acceptable based on the data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). My peer debriefer provided a different perspective on the data, helped me remain

objective, and focused on the research questions to be answered, discussed findings based on data, and discussed my feelings and my experiences throughout the process (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Triangulating data is a way for the researcher to corroborate evidence from different individuals and different data sources (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation of data in this study was conducted by cross-checking codes and emerging themes across individual participant interview transcriptions. Triangulation was also done by cross-checking codes and emerging themes of interview data with lesson plan document data.

Member checking allowed participants to ensure the accuracy of their accounts (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I sent participants my interpretations of the findings from the study in a 2-page summary and asked them whether they agreed with my interpretation, and if not, to explain any information they would like modified or corrected to ensure it was accurate.

Transferability is the degree to which a case study's results can be generalized or transferred to other settings, populations, and contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles et al., 2020). To ensure transferability of results, I clearly explained and provided thick and rich descriptions of the participants and criteria needed to be a part of this study, data collection methods and instruments used, the data analysis process, and the results of the study (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). Thick and rich descriptions included detailed accounts and experiences of participants so that they would be meaningful to the reader

who would then be able to transfer results to similar contexts (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018).

Project Deliverable

The findings from this study suggest that the participant teachers need to strengthen their knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies to include (a) awareness and reflection of their own culture, beliefs, and values to address their own biases and shortcomings, (b) being a part of the community and inclusive of community events and issues, and (c) being inclusive of current events, controversial topics, and socio-political topics in the literacy classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995). To support an in-depth understanding of CRT strategies, a CRT teacher PD was developed (see Appendix A).

In Section 3, I will discuss the PD project study to address the findings of this study. A brief description of the PD, PD materials, goals, and rationale of the project will also be discussed. A review of the literature will then be examined and a detailed description of the PD and literacy instruction, the evaluation plan, and the implications will be presented.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In this section, I give a detailed description of a PD designed to address the need to strengthen teachers' understanding of CRT. Teachers need the background knowledge and support of the theories and research of Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2010), which support the effective use of CRT strategies during reading instruction. The findings of this study provided insight to teachers' knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies. Having a clear and proficient understanding of CRT strategies through a specifically designed PD will support teachers in improving student reading achievement. The use of Ladson-Billings's CRT conceptual framework to develop a CRT PD for teachers can ensure all areas of CRT are addressed in the literacy classroom.

The CRT PD will be 3 full days of training at the beginning of the school year and then continue online as a monthly CRT professional learning community (PLC) network for the duration of the school year. During the 3 full days of training, teachers will learn about CRT strategies through in-depth discussions and activities based on the lens of Ladson-Billings's (1995) conceptual framework used in this study. The goals of the CRT PD project are for teachers to

1. Develop an awareness of their own cultural identity, values, attitudes, and biases and become reflective in their literacy teaching practices.
2. Understand the importance and value of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the literacy classroom based on the conceptual lens of Ladson-Billings (1995) and the research of Gay (2010).

3. Increase their knowledge, planning, and use of ways to become part of the community and inclusive of community events and issues in the literacy classroom.
4. Increase their knowledge, planning, and use of current events, controversial topics, and sociopolitical topics in the literacy classroom.

Rationale

The choice to design a CRT PD for this project came from the need to support teachers in strengthening their understanding, planning, and use of CRT strategies. Teachers work with culturally and linguistically diverse students and need a better understanding of strategies to help students improve reading skills. This study was motivated by a problem in two schools within Magnolia School District but could easily be applied across the district and to other school districts with schools that are struggling to increase reading achievement for culturally diverse students. This CRT PD can be offered to ensure all teachers have a proficient understanding in speaking a common language when it comes to CRT strategies used in the literacy classroom to support culturally and linguistically diverse student literacy learning and reading achievement (see Paris & Alim, 2017).

PD is a researched-based way to increase student achievement when several key components are included to engage teachers. The PD must be differentiated, collaborative, supportive, reflective, and time effective (Canaran & Mirici, 2019; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2017). When the PD is differentiated, teachers receive information specifically tailored to their

needs (Hudley & Mallinson, 2017; Martin et al., 2019). When the PD provides information as to where they are in their understanding of CRT strategies, it can reinforce what they already know and help them continue to grow in that area (Hudley & Mallinson, 2017; Martin, Kragler, Quatroclie, & Bauserman, 2019).

Collaboration allows teachers to have conversations on what is or is not working, share ideas, and learn from each other, as they grow in their understanding and use of CRT strategies (Lembke et al., 2018; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018). Support with the CRT PD will provide teachers with continuous collaboration and feedback from colleagues and receive necessary resources from the principal, coaches, and specialists so they can continue to make positive changes towards planning and use of CRT strategies (see Van Kuijk, Deunk, Bosker, & Ritzema, 2015). As teachers reflect on their knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies, they may find areas where they are doing well and areas where they need to grow to be successful with CRT and use strategies to support their culturally and linguistically diverse students (Ben-Peretz, Gottlieb, & Gideon, 2018). Using time wisely to ensure teachers are engaged in purposeful learning activities will contribute to effective implementation of CRT strategies as well (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016). These components of an effective PD will benefit novice to experienced teachers and support them in developing their use of CRT strategies through sustained chances of implementation, reflection, and conversations in the CRT PLC network throughout the school year (Canaran & Mirici, 2019; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2017).

Review of the Literature

I conducted an exhaustive search of current literature using peer-reviewed scholarly journals accessed through Walden University's library. I initially identified the keyword search terms *teacher professional development* and *culturally relevant teaching*. I then searched using various combinations of the following terms: *teacher professional learning, teacher workshops, online professional development, culturally responsive, differentiated learning, professional learning communities, reading instruction,* and *literacy instruction*. I included sources published within the last 5 years and used the following search engines to generate numerous journals related to my study: Academic Search Complete, ERIC, EBSCO, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, SAGE Premier, and Thoreau.

Teacher PD has become an area of concern for many schools trying to improve educational outcomes for a growing culturally and linguistically diverse population of students (Margolis, Durbin, & Doring, 2017; Mellom, Straubhaar, Balderas, Ariail, & Portes, 2018). The purpose of providing teacher PD is to inform and to change teachers' beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and practices to improve student outcomes (Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017; Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). Historically, teacher PD has been viewed as ineffective because they were isolated workshops completed in a day, had little teacher participation involved, and provided little to no feedback or follow-up afterwards (Margolis et al., 2017; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017; Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). These types of isolated workshops did not lead to meaningful changes and were short-term, at best (Margolis et al., 2017; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017).

Researchers have now found ways to make teacher PD effective by including several evidence-based components to improve teacher outcomes (Margolis et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2019; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018). These components include content focus, active learning, cohesiveness, duration, and collective participation (Martin et al., 2019; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018). Content focus includes teaching practices focused on improving reading with cultural competence to increase student learning (Lane & Hayes, 2015; Martin et al., 2019; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018). Active learning includes engaging teachers in practical demonstrations, discussions, observations, and collaborative activities (Margolis et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2019; Mellom et al., 2018; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018). Cohesiveness describes the inclusion of the whole school being trained together as a community of learners that is aligned with school policies and the district's vision (Lane & Hayes, 2015, Martin et al., 2019; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018).

The duration of teacher PD should be from several days to several school years to provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate, have discussions, implement activities, and receive consistent feedback and follow-up to improve teaching and student learning (Martin et al., 2019; Mellom et al., 2018; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018). Collective participation from all teachers will support common learning and shared experiences to support teacher effectiveness (Martin et al., 2019; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018). As teachers experience PD over longer periods of time, they practice what they learn in their classrooms, reflect on their teaching with colleagues, and improve their instruction (Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017). Teachers also

observe experts over time, model what they learn, and have opportunities to receive continuous feedback on ways to improve student learning (Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017).

PD should also build on teacher's existing knowledge (Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017). It is important to gather information about teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge before providing PD to plan for content, format, and duration of time for delivery. The CRT PD should accommodate a wide range of teachers, novice to veteran, as indicated by the findings of this study, and provide knowledge and experiences that may lead to productive discussions and collaborative sessions that support common understanding of CRT strategies and in the area of reading (Lane & Hayes, 2015; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017).

Approaches to Professional Development

There are several approaches to deliver effective PD (Margolis et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2019; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018). Researchers have found that workshops, online teacher PD, PLCs, and PD models are some of the most recent ways to deliver effective teacher PD (Ben-Peretz et al., 2018; Ciampa, 2016; Vereb, Carlisle, & Mihocko-Bowling, 2015). However, without the proper supports with these approaches to PD, it can be disconnected and irrelevant to teacher learning needs (Meijs, Prinsen, & De Laat, 2016). To ensure teachers' professional learning needs are being met for successful teaching, the PD should be a socially active process (Groschner, Schindler, Holzberger, Alles, & Seidel, 2018; Hudley & Mallinson, 2017).

Workshops. Teacher PD workshops have been updated to support teachers in continuous active social learning, rather than receiving lecture style learning that may not be used once the workshop ends. Workshops now include pre- and postsurveys that can be used to target the needs of teachers and assess knowledge gained to implement in the classroom. Presurveys can give workshop facilitators valuable information on teachers' background knowledge, views, and understanding of a specific subject (Hudley & Mallinson, 2017). Ciampa (2016) suggested that the use of a presurvey makes the workshop highly responsive to the needs of the teachers and makes it easier to differentiate the level of support each teacher experiences during the learning process. The information from a presurvey can address the length of time needed for a workshop to include a few hours in a day or several months of a school year (Ciampa 2016; Hudley & Mallinson, 2017). Postsurvey give workshop facilitators a way to gauge what support teachers still need, how perceptions have changed, and how teachers are using what they learned to support student learning (Hudley & Mallinson, 2017). I have used both pre- and post-surveys in my project study to target social learning opportunities for teachers and insights to what knowledge was gained based on the findings.

Teacher reflection during workshops has also been found to positively impact teacher instruction. When teachers are involved in group reflection during a workshop, they see themselves as a community of learners who exchange information and change their teaching practices to benefit students (Groschner et al, 2018). In Groschners et al.'s (2018) study, teachers viewed video excerpts of their recorded classroom lessons with a partner or group and reflected on ways to improve their pedagogy to increase student

learning. Teachers found video reflections greatly beneficial to improving their classroom instruction (Groschner et al., 2018). Even more beneficial, teachers found that the exchange of ideas between teachers supported them in making positive changes to student engagement and learning (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, Haerens, & Aelterman, 2016; Groschner et al., 2018; Meijs et al., 2016). Opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own beliefs and values, as well as their expectation of students, is part of the project study to make the teachers aware of their own biases and how those biases could affect their instruction. Reflecting with colleagues during the CRT PD may support them with having a deeper understanding of CRT strategies, foster genuine conversations around CRT strategies, and improve their use of CRT strategies during reading instruction.

Workshops are also successful when they include coaching through hands-on examples, modeled demonstrations, and implementation with feedback (Ciampa 2016; Lembke et al., 2018). No longer are teachers expected to blindly implement information from a workshop. Now, teachers can expect follow-up from facilitators who can observe their classroom instruction and support areas of concern, while positively reinforcing areas that meet the criteria of teachers' needs (Lembke et al., 2018). When teachers have a chance to see what is expected in their dialogue and actions and then have opportunities to practice with coaching and feedback, they can improve their teaching and student learning (Lembke et al., 2018). Based on the findings of this study, coaching, follow-up, and feedback through an online CRT PLC platform will be utilized by teachers throughout the school year as part of the CRT PD.

Follow-up activities also support teacher implementation of what was learned after a workshop is completed (Dudley & Strietmann, 2018). De Naeghel et al. (2016) used weekly electronic reminders to follow up with teachers after a workshop finished to encourage continued implementation of strategies learned with students in the classroom and to complete a structured journal for reflection. The collaborative opportunities teachers receive when they attend workshops, including pre- and postsurveys, time for group or partner reflection, coaching, feedback, and follow-up, allow for a positive relationship between teachers, as well as the students they serve (Hudley & Mallinson, 2017). During the CRT PD, teachers would have opportunities to participate in follow-up activities as they keep a reflective journal, engage with colleagues on the CRT PLC blog site monthly, and complete postsurveys after the PD is completed.

Online professional development. Online, web-based teacher PD is another approach to PD that can promote teacher learning to increase student outcomes. Shaha, Glassett, Copas, and Ellsworth (2015) found that teachers who participated in an online teacher PD had higher student growth in reading, compared to those teachers who did not participate. Online PD has many benefits, including lower cost compared to paying for an expert to come to the school site (Shaha, Glassett, Copas, and Ellsworth, 2015). When teachers attend a workshop off school campus, it may involve travel and registration fees (Shaha et al., 2015; Vereb et al., 2015). Not only could online PD be more cost effective, but it could also allow for the convenience of viewing online instructional videos and case studies at a time and place convenient to the teacher (Shaha et al., 2015; Vereb et al., 2015). Teachers would not have to be absent from their classrooms to attend teacher PD

(Shaha et al., 2015). The convenience of a self-guided webinar allowed teachers to learn at their own pace, to replay areas they needed more support with, and to improve their ability to evaluate their own teaching practices (Shaha et al., 2015; Vereb et al., 2015).

Online teacher PD can be based on the specific needs of the teacher and offer opportunities to network with other teachers in their school or district that are working on the same areas of knowledge and skills development (Shaha et al., 2015). Web-based PD also allowed teachers to collaborate with others, participate in group meetings, and exchange ideas and perspectives (Shaha et al., 2015; Vereb et al., 2015). Teachers can share and analyze lessons together and discuss how to improve upon them based on instructional practices learned (Shaha et al., 2015). Teachers watched, analyzed, and discussed varied topics that might have helped them reflect and improve their teaching practices (Shaha et al., 2015; Vereb et al., 2015). Teachers in the CRT PD would participate throughout the school year in the online CRT PLC allowing several opportunities for teachers to network with other teachers in their building and collaborate on their CRT instructional practices.

Professional learning communities. Learning in a professional community promotes networking, social learning, and collaboration among teachers (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016; Meijs et al., 2016; Thurlings & den Brok, 2017). Based on the findings of this study, the CRT PLC will allow teachers to share their teaching strengths with one another and reflect and grow in areas of weakness by listening and learning from others (Meijs et al., 2016). Sharing ideas, instead of teaching in isolation, can foster teachers'

professional learning on CRT strategies and provide student growth and more ownership of their learning (Meijs et al., 2016).

Student learning outcomes increase when teachers collaboratively discuss and reflect on content knowledge students need to acquire (Meijs et al., 2016). CRT strategies can be incorporated and discussed in lesson planning to ensure students prior knowledge is activated and used to support the connection of new information learned (Bradshaw, Feinberg, & Bohan, 2016). Lesson studies are a valuable way for teachers to not only plan lessons together, but it also offers the opportunity for teachers to observe colleagues teaching the lesson developed and collect teacher and student data to improve the lesson (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016). Lesson studies require time for daily teacher collaboration throughout the school year (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016), which can foster teacher relationships and build trust and community in school. Akiba and Wilkinson (2016) found that challenges to lesson studies included allotting enough time for teachers to plan, as well as a lack of access to resources for learning new content area research and strategies. To combat these challenges, Meijs et al. (2016) suggested that being a member of a network that extends beyond the school walls would allow teachers and administrators to learn from others who are effectively implementing lesson studies and find ways that will work for their school.

Lesson studies also include what Margolis et al. (2017) call the missing link—students. When teachers implement the collaborative lesson plan, there is opportunity to see how the students engage and meet the outcomes of the lesson (Margolis et al., 2017). Teachers would also have an opportunity to receive feedback from the students and

reflect on next steps (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016; Margolis et al., 2017). Teachers observing the lesson can understand what is working or what is not working and make necessary changes that will make the lesson better for all and improve student learning outcomes (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016; Dos Santos, 2017).

As teachers collaborate with one another to improve instruction and student learning, they may still require the support of a coach to learn the curriculum and current research strategies and best practices (Lembke et al., 2018). The coach does not have to be an academic or reading coach by profession. The coach can be a peer. Peer coaching promotes improved teaching practices in a nonhierarchical way through observation and constructive feedback (Ben-Peretz et al., 2018). Teachers can view, discuss, analyze, and reflect on lesson plans, taught lessons, and student data (Ben-Peretz et al., 2018). The practice of peer coaching can help teachers come to mutual deliberation by learning from different perspectives (Ben-Peretz et al., 2018). There is a development of active listening, posing of different positions, and reflecting on meeting the goal of student outcomes (Ben-Peretz et al., 2018).

PLCs continue to be a model of PD implemented to improve teacher pedagogy (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016; Meijs et al., 2016; Thurlings & Den Brok, 2017). PLCs allow teachers to continue learning through opportunities of active listening and active learning to improve instruction in a collaborative community (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016; Meijs et al., 2016; Thurlings & Den Brok, 2017). With the structures in place to provide adequate time and resources, teacher and student learning continues to increase, leading to improved student outcomes (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016; Meijs et al., 2016).

Professional development models. Other PD models include a mix of various strategies. Scarparolo and Hammond (2018) used an evidenced-based teacher PD model that included the use of a current knowledge survey, a day-long workshop, expert modeling, and ongoing coaching. Each component of the PD model supported an increase in teacher knowledge, fidelity of practice, and student achievement. The knowledge survey contributed to understanding teachers' background knowledge, which helped to determine where to begin to build on prior knowledge (Hudley & Mallinson, 2017; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018). A day-long workshop allowed teachers to learn content knowledge from the experts through modeled demonstrations and practice (Ciampa 2016; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018). Ongoing coaching with teachers provided continuous feedback and support throughout the school year to improve instruction and student learning (Lembke et al., 2018; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018).

Like Scarparolo and Hammond (2018), Greenleaf, Litman, and Marple (2018) found that a mix of strategies in teacher PD contributed to improved teacher instruction and student learning. Greenleaf et al. found that teachers re-enacted what they learned by participating in various collaborative activities with other teachers through a 7-day apprenticeship teacher PD. The activities included discussing and reflecting on video-taped classroom lessons and practicing instructional techniques that support student collaboration, discussion, and problem solving (Greenleaf et al., 2018; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018).

Schools with limited resources and funding to support teacher PD can also apply for grant-funded opportunities. Through a grant-funded teacher PD focused on culturally

relevant pedagogy, Bradshaw et al. (2016) found that teachers who participated improved their CRT practices within their classrooms to support culturally diverse students. Having access to teacher PD provided by experts in the field to coteach and improve teacher pedagogy at no cost can help increase PD access to more schools (Bradshaw et al., 2016).

Some teacher PD models include not only the teachers, but also include the principal and the internal support coordinator, as well (Van Kuijk et al., 2015). This gives the principal a chance to learn alongside the teachers and can lead to more support and resources due to their involvement (Van Kuijk et al., 2015). Teacher collaboration in ongoing afterschool meetings gives teachers a chance to reflect on their implementation of new information (Van Kuijk et al., 2015). As teachers learn to effectively set goals for all students, assess and analyze data, and learn new strategies for instruction, students and teachers increased their learning outcomes.

Through various teacher PD models, teachers can continuously engage in learning to improve their pedagogy (Bradshaw et al., 2016; Van Kuijk et al., 2015; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018). It is important that teachers have a chance to not only do active listening with experts in the field, but also actively learn through doing (Van Kuijk et al., 2015). They also need to be coached by a peer or an expert to receive feedback and improve in their practice (Lembke et al., 2018; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018). When teachers have ongoing collaborative support and resources needed during teacher PD, they can increase their learning and the learning of their students, resulting in academic success (Lembke et al., 2018; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2018).

Literacy Instruction

VDOE is guided by the Standards of Learning (SOL) to determine the English curriculum taught within the schools in the state for Grade K-12 (VDOE, 2020). The English SOL skills include communication, reading, writing, and research so that all students will be able to communicate, read, write, and conduct research (VDOE, 2020). With these skills, students can be productive literate citizens who are able to use critical and creative thinking to collaborate, compete, and problem solve not only in their community, but nationally and globally (VDOE, 2020).

Communication. The communication strand requires that students learn to participate in diverse classroom discussions, formally and informally, and share learning (VDOE, 2020). Students also need to learn to participate in diverse collaborative groups (VDOE, 2020). These opportunities to share and coconstruct new knowledge through collaborative classroom discussions would allow students to develop and reach a goal of giving oral presentations and that include the use multimodal features (VDOE, 2020). Hock (2017) found that small group discussions increased student engagement and understanding of comprehension skills being taught. Through different types of talk, including *disputation* talk that is sometimes characterized by disagreements or challenges, *cumulative* talk that is characterized by building common knowledge, or *exploratory* talk that is characterized by critical engagement and reasoning, and teachers model and explicitly teach students how to have discourse to support collaborative learning. Clark and Fleming (2019) suggested that using culturally relevant children's

literature can create opportunities where students have more examples to share and are engaged in discussions because they can relate the text to themselves.

Reading. The reading strand requires students to acquire a strong foundation in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension as part of a balanced literacy program (VDOE, 2020). Students then continue the study of words and improve comprehension skills through a variety of literary text (VDOE, 2020). When learning to read, teachers need to ensure that students have phonological awareness, or the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken language (Kilpatrick, 2016; Moats, 2020). Examples of phonological awareness are hearing and identifying syllables, rhyme, and initial sounds in spoken words (Kilpatrick, 2016; Moats, 2020). Phonological awareness also includes phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is when a student hears the smallest units of sound, phonemes, in spoken words such as hearing three sounds in the word *sat* (Kilpatrick, 2016; Moats, 2020). When students have phonological awareness and can begin to match the sounds to printed letters, they can begin to sound out written words and write them as well. Once students have become proficient in sounding out words, they can begin to further develop vocabulary knowledge and the meaning of the words they can read and write (Kilpatrick, 2016; Moats, 2020). As they practice reading and writing they become fluent. Fluent readers can read words in text automatically, with expression and intonation, while attending to word meaning so they read with understanding (Kilpatrick, 2016). When the students can read with understanding, this is called

comprehension (Kilpatrick, 2016). Students can then analyze and make sense of what they have read to apply to their learning (Kilpatrick, 2016).

Writing. The writing strand requires students to develop their written communication skills and writing process through exploration of multiple forms of writing (VDOE, 2020). The forms of writing include narrative, expository, reflective, and persuasive/argumentative (VDOE, 2020). Through practice with writing in multiple forms for a variety of purposes and audiences, students become effective in their written communication skills (VDOE, 2020). When students learn to write words and then string the words together to make sentences, teachers support them by teaching syntax or sentence structure (Moats, 2020). Teachers also focus on developing students' handwriting and spelling (Graham, Harris & Beard, 2019; Moats, 2020). Teachers then support students in developing their writing skills by focusing on the writing process which includes, brainstorming or prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing a paragraph, essay, or report (Llaurado & Dockrell, 2019). Teachers expand students writing for a variety of purposes, such as narratives or stories written in their own words about themselves (Llaurado & Dockrell, 2019).

Research. The research strand requires students to learn how to create and investigate research questions and access information (VDOE, 2020). They also need to develop skills to evaluate the validity and credibility of sources and reach the goal of producing research-based products (VDOE, 2020). Teachers support students in researching various topics online using online search engines and keywords (Van Allen & Zygouris-Coe, 2019). When students can research topics independently or in small

groups, teachers support students in learning about websites that give valid and credible information to use in their projects (Van Allen & Zygouris-Coe, 2019). Teachers then discuss plagiarism and writing information in their own words to produce a project or paper based on what they have learned. Students will then continue to practice their research skills to become proficient in using technology to support finding, analyzing, and sharing information (Van Allen & Zygouris-Coe, 2019).

Balanced literacy. A balanced literacy approach to reading instruction occurs when teachers can balance between teaching direct and explicit literacy skills and having student lead literacy activities. Balanced literacy instruction includes reading and writing each being split into four areas. Reading instruction is split into read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading (Policastro, Mazeski, Wach, & Magers, 2019; Willson, & Falcon, 2018). Writing instruction is split into shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, and independent writing (Policastro et al., 2019; Willson, & Falcon, 2018).

Read-aloud time gives teachers the chance to read aloud to students for enjoyment in a whole group setting (Policastro et al., 2019; Willson, & Falcon, 2018). Students hear fluent reading through a variety of text read aloud. During shared reading, teachers explicitly teach reading skills to the whole group and give examples for guided practice (Policastro et al., 2019; Willson, & Falcon, 2018). During guided practice, students work with the teacher, in small groups, or with a partner to practice working on skills that were explicitly taught by the teacher. Teachers then check for understanding and clarify misconceptions students may have by having them work on examples of the skills

learned independently. During guided reading instruction, teachers work in small groups to support students on their instructional reading level (Policastro et al., 2019; Willson, & Falcon, 2018). During independent reading, students can independently read books on their independent level to practice skills learned (Policastro et al., 2019; Policastro, 2018; Willson, & Falcon, 2018). Students could also work in literacy centers, in small groups or independently, to practice skills learned through various skill-based activities or read with partners to practice reading fluency.

During shared writing, teachers explicitly teach writing and grammar skills to the whole group (Policastro, 2018; Policastro et al., 2019; Willson, & Falcon, 2018). For interactive writing, the teachers and students then work together to write a sentence or paragraph on a topic as the teacher gives students examples and shares the pen with the students as they are actively involved in writing together (Policastro, 2018; Policastro et al., 2019; Willson, & Falcon, 2018). During guided practice, teachers work in small groups to support students in improving writing skills where needed (Policastro, 2018; Policastro et al., 2019; Willson, & Falcon, 2018). During independent writing, teachers have students independently practice writing for a variety of purposes (Policastro, 2018; Policastro et al., 2019; Willson, & Falcon, 2018). Students use writing and grammar skills learned to develop their own voice and craft to appeal to various audiences.

CRT PD to support literacy instruction. To ensure the promotion of sustainable changes in CRT practices to support reading instruction, teacher PD must be differentiated, collaborative, supportive, reflective, and time effective (Canaran & Mirici, 2019; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2017). Teachers may be at

different levels of knowledge and understanding of CRT practices to support student learning and achievement (Wilkinson et al., 2017). Based on the findings of this study, to provide teachers with the skills and opportunities they need to be successful, they should be assessed on prior knowledge, background, and experiences (Wilkinson et al., 2017). This can be achieved through PD surveys (Hudley & Mallinson, 2017). Surveys allow for targeted planning based on the differentiated needs of the teachers who have different levels of CRT knowledge (Hudley & Mallinson, 2017; Martin et al., 2019). Once the teachers' needs are known, a collaborative PD can be tailored to those needs and include not only teachers, but principals and peer coaches, as well (Canaran & Mirici, 2019; Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018). The principal and peer coaches provide support teachers can use throughout the school year during regularly scheduled reading planning meetings, either in person or in the form of a sustained PLC online network (Cordingley, 2015; Stosich, 2016). With everyone involved in the learning process, a common language around CRT strategies will be developed in the school (Lane & Hayes, 2015). As teachers reflect on what they are learning through self-, peer-, and student-observation and outcomes, teachers can improve their use of CRT in the literacy classroom (Valiendes & Neophytou, 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2017). Over time, teachers will have opportunities to practice cultural reflection, community inclusivity building skills, and using socio-political events and issues with student to improve literacy instruction and learning outcomes (Basma & Savage, 2018; Martin et al., 2019; Stosich, 2016).

Project Description

This project study will be a 3-day CRT PD workshop, entitled *Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies to Support Literacy Instruction,* with a total of 18 hours of face-to-face time. The 3-day CRT PD workshop will take place in the school's library/media center and will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with an hour lunch and two 15-minute breaks each day. There will also be a sustained online CRT PLC that teachers will use at any time, but participation will be required for 1-hour each month throughout the school year, from September to June, for an additional 10 hours. During the 1-hour CRT PLC each month, teachers will have the opportunity to reflect, receive feedback from colleagues, and collaborate on new CRT ideas and resources.

I developed the CRT PD to provide teachers with strategies that will support working with a growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse elementary students. Teachers will learn and/or strengthen their understanding, planning, and use of CRT strategies to support the reading success and literacy achievement of all students they serve (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Clark, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Resources and existing supports. The CRT PD project will require teachers to bring their laptops and have internet access to participate in several planned activities. The activities include pre- and post-surveys, Google searches for resources, creating lesson plans, and participating in the online CRT PLC blog. I will also use writing journals for teachers to reflect on their learning throughout the PD. A projector and screen will be used to display my PowerPoint slideshow and CRT blog site. I will used paper copies of self-assessments, activity handouts, and daily exit tickets. Culturally

relevant books, poetry, news articles, recipes, and passages will be needed to share ideas. Other resources needed are pencils, markers, chart paper, and sticky notes.

Existing supports needed to assist teachers throughout the school year are reading specialists and reading coaches during their regularly scheduled weekly reading planning times. Reading specialists can assist teachers in locating books and other materials that are culturally relevant online and within the school. They can also order culturally relevant books and other resources teachers could use when the ability to make school-wide purchases are available.

Potential barriers and solutions. A potential barrier might be teacher resistance to using CRT strategies. To support teachers in making a positive mindset change to their existing literacy instruction, so that it includes CRT strategies, I will need to make sure they understand why CRT is important and create teacher buy-in by introducing the research-based CRT strategies through hands-on learning activities and engaging collaboration during the CRT PD. Another barrier may be limited CRT books and materials within the classroom or school. To address this issue, it will be important to share CRT books and resources teachers will need with the school principal to work into the school budget. Lastly, the time needed to implement the CRT PD may not work with the schedule for preservice week. It will be important to speak with the principal over the early part of summer, so this CRT PD can be implemented during preservice week, when new and returning teachers are available to attend. I would also need to speak with the district PD coordinator to ensure teachers receive credit for attending 18 hours during the three initial days of the CRT PD and 10 hours for the online CRT PLC.

Implementation and timetable. In June, I will schedule a meeting with the Magnolia School District superintendent and district PD coordinator to receive permission to implement the CRT PD during August in the two schools that participated in this study. Once approved, I would meet with the principals of Twig Elementary and Branches Elementary to schedule dates for the CRT PD and ongoing CRT PLC. Preservice week in August, when both new and returning teachers are available to participate, would be the ideal time for the CRT PD workshop to take place. The 3-day CRT PD schedule (see Appendix A) would take place over 3 days and would begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. each day. There will be an hour lunch break from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. and one 15-minute break during the morning and another 15-minute break in the afternoon. Teachers would participate in all activities, collaborate with colleagues, share ideas, reflect on learning, complete pre- and post-surveys and daily exit tickets, and give feedback on the concluding evaluation. During September through June, teachers would meet with their grade level for 1 hour each month to reflect on their planning and use of CRT strategies thus far, answer and discuss questions posted on the online CRT PLC blog and share information and resources. I would serve as the CRT PD facilitator during the 3-day CRT PD workshop and will be part of the conversation through the online CRT PLC blog to support, coach, share, and collaborate with teachers throughout the school year.

Project Evaluation Plan

Formative and Summative Evaluation Plan

The main goal of this CRT PD was to provide opportunities for teachers to strengthen their knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies. Formative assessments would be used throughout the PD to assess what teachers know and what they still need to work on so that I can ensure they meet the goals set (Ciampa 2016; Hudley & Mallinson, 2017). To assess what teachers know about CRT before the CRT PD begins, I will have them complete the first two sections of a pre-survey KWL chart. I will use this information to tailor information shared to their needs. I will also use this survey as the post-survey to see what knowledge they gained through the CRT PD by having teachers complete the third section of the KWL chart given at the end of the three days. The feedback would provide me with information to improve on and to make changes to the CRT PD, so it serves to increase teacher knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies with their culturally and linguistically diverse students (Ciampa 2016; Hudley & Mallinson, 2017). At the end of each of the first two days, I will give teachers an exit ticket to assess what they understand and/or still have questions about, so I have a clear understanding of what to address the following day. A summative assessment would be given at the end of the face-to-face PD session and one would also be given at the end of the year-long online CRT PLC. On the last day of the 3-day CRT PD, I will have teachers complete an online evaluation online through Survey Monkey, an online survey platform. This information will inform me on what they learned throughout the face-to-face PD portion. On the last CRT blog site submission in June, I will have teachers

complete an evaluation of the overall ongoing online CRT PLC blog site to see how useful it was in supporting and sustaining CRT collaboration and resources over the entire school year. This information will inform me in making modifications and improvements for future online CRT PLCs.

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders include the teachers, reading specialists, and reading coaches. They would all complete summative evaluations that would be used to determine the CRT PD effectiveness in meeting the goals set for teachers. The results of the evaluations will be shared with these key stakeholders. Other key stakeholders are the superintendent of Magnolia School District and the principals of both schools that participated in the study. I will share the results of the summative evaluation data with them to determine next steps for modifying and improving the CRT PD and possibly implementing it in other schools within the district and/or other school districts.

Project Implications

Social Change Implications

Implications for social change include expanding teacher knowledge about CRT and CRT strategies to use for literacy planning and instruction in the literacy classroom. When teachers use CRT strategies to support literacy instruction, students have more opportunities to learn and collaborate with one another, gain new information about the communities in which they live in engaging ways that builds on their background knowledge, and have exposure to critical events and issues where they can use their literacy skills to become problem solvers and productive citizens that give back to their

community. Ultimately, the reading achievement gap, for African American students in particular, could begin to close as teachers use sustained CRT strategies and resources throughout the school year to improve reading achievement. Building administrators could potentially monitor and track reading data for student growth and achievement. The superintendent could see improved classroom instruction during the reading block and increased reading achievement in the culturally and linguistically diverse students within the schools. Improved teacher understanding and use of CRT strategies could lead to positive changes in student learning, cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness that not only affect their classroom communities, but their communities outside of school as well.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative bounded case study was to examine the knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies in literacy instruction by teachers in state testing Grades 3 through Grade 5 in two schools within the Magnolia School District. Through the collection and analysis of open-ended interviews and lesson plan document data, I found that teacher participants were knowledgeable about and implemented some CRT strategies with their students. However, there were still several CRT strategies that were not evidenced during the analysis of the data. Teacher participants' knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies needed to be strengthened with a formal training on the why behind CRT strategies and how to effectively use them to support literacy instruction for all students. In response to these findings, I created an initial 3-day PD, with an ongoing monthly online CRT PLC throughout the school year, to give teachers the opportunity to collaborate, discuss, reflect, and share CRT strategies and resources. Through the PD and CRT PLC, teachers will be able to effectively support student learning, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this project are supported by the current research-based design using the Ladson-Billings's (1995) conceptual lens of CRT and Gay's (2010) research on culturally responsive teaching. The strengths of this project are also supported by the interview and lesson plan document analysis and findings from 12 teacher participants at two schools with the lowest passing rates on reading proficiency and the highest rates of

culturally and linguistically diverse students in the Magnolia School District. I designed the project to address the limited understanding, planning, and use of CRT strategies during literacy instruction, as revealed by the findings of this study. The strengths of this project include the use of current research-based strategies teachers can use to support literacy instruction and increased reading achievement. The strengths also include the use of collaboration, ongoing opportunities for reflection and feedback from colleagues throughout the school year and use of technology to support teacher sharing and learning. Collaboration gives teachers the opportunity to have discussions about CRT, what they are teaching and learning with their students using CRT strategies, and the positive impact they may have on their students as they become a collaborative learning community (Lane & Hayes, 2015; Meijs et al., 2016; Scarparolo & Hammond, 2017). As teachers plan with and use CRT strategies, they can reflect on the effect it is having with students and their literacy learning (Groschner et al., 2018). Teachers can reflect and share their insight with colleagues in their building throughout the school year for support and constructive feedback when needed so they can effectively implement CRT strategies with all students (Ciampa 2016; Lembke et al., 2018). The use of an online platform for a CRT PLC allows teachers to share their learning, materials, and resources with other teachers so they can learn from each other and become more expert in their practice with the use of CRT strategies during literacy instruction throughout the school year (Shaha et al., 2015; Vereb et al., 2015).

The limitation of the project to address the problem is that it may not have included enough time to sustain changes in the continued use of CRT strategies in the

literacy classroom once the PD ends at the end of the school year. Having another face-to-face session and/or opportunity to continue the CRT blog after one school year for teachers who were part of the PD, new teachers to the school, or teachers who may have transferred to the upper elementary grade levels could benefit from having an opportunity to be a part of the CRT PD and collaborative CRT blog site as well.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

An alternative approach to address the problem could be to broaden the scope of the research by having more participants included in a study. More participants would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies to support culturally and linguistically diverse students' literacy learning and achievement. Instead of just using teachers in Grades 3 to 5, where they only have a school year to address students' needs before students take a state mandated reading test, research on teachers in Grades K to 2 could be conducted to discover what CRT strategies are used before students enter Grade 3. For a larger scale study, teachers from all elementary schools within the district could also be included in a study to find out the knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies of the entire school district. This could be beneficial as teachers move to different grade levels within their school buildings and/or other schools within the district. Analyzing the needs of the entire school district could allow data to be disaggregated in a way that meets districtwide needs as well as individual school-wide needs.

An alternative definition of the problem includes elementary school parent involvement and an understanding of their child's reading strengths and needs and how to

address and support students at home. An alternative solution to the local problem includes a more continuous, sustained, and structured approach to parent involvement that allows teachers to share how to teach and support reading skills students may be struggling with at home and what parents can do for daily practice and reinforcement of newly learned skills at home.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

Through my qualitative project study journey, I have developed into a scholar-practitioner. My journey started as a classroom teacher, who began to question the low performance of culturally and linguistically diverse students, African American students, on standardized state reading tests. It was not in just the one school I worked in; it was prevalent in all five schools in several districts I have worked in that had students of different socioeconomic backgrounds. I returned to school and became a reading specialist to gain more knowledge and perspective on the science of reading, to support teachers with best practices to increase student reading achievement, and to work more closely with students who were struggling with reading to offer them strategies for success. In my work as a reading specialist, I continued to have the same questions I did as a teacher, as I continued to see culturally and linguistically diverse students struggling with reading achievement. I then began my doctoral program journey.

I gained the knowledge and preparation necessary to conduct research through reading peer-reviewed journal articles on various topics in the field of education and learning about various methodologies available to investigate those topics. I also

developed my scholarly writing skills as I learned to write critically, clearly, precisely, and objectively through continuous constructive feedback of my professors. The prospectus stage of my doctoral program helped me develop my research problem, find several supporting theories and concepts that needed to be narrowed down, and determined my research questions, methods, and design. Throughout my proposal stage, I was immersed in literature and did an exhaustive search for current research for my literature review. I gained extensive knowledge on the problem, the broader problem, the conceptual framework, qualitative methodology, and methods for collecting, coding, and analyzing data, and I used scholarly writing to convey this information. After receiving IRB approval, I interviewed teachers and, through their perceptions and voices, gained an understanding of their knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies during literacy instruction. I understand how the teachers planned for instruction through the lesson plan documents they used to plan for their reading instruction. Coding and analyzing the data several times allowed me to interpret the data and write up the findings. I then determined, with the support of my doctoral committee, the best project genre based on the results of the study.

Project Development and Evaluation

During the final stage of the project study, I entered an exhaustive search of current peer-reviewed literature on my project study genre of teacher PD, CRT, and reading instruction. Through the research, I determined the best methods to uncover, engage, support, and sustain teachers' knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies throughout the school year to ultimately become part of their daily teaching practice.

Based on the findings of the study, when designing the project, my focus was to ensure that teachers would understand how to use CRT strategies in the literacy classroom to support culturally and linguistically diverse students' reading achievement. As a reading specialist, I have facilitated PDs for teachers that may have lasted up to an hour, at the most. The project for this study is a full 3-day PD, with monthly check-ins through an online PLC for the entire school year. This required me to use all the current research-based practices I learned to have a successful PD that not only encouraged the teachers to use the strategies learned and share the information with other teachers but also to have sustained use of the strategies, so they become second nature. I was guided by Ladson-Billings's (1995) conceptual framework on CRT. To ensure teachers gained the knowledge and practice they need, and feel is beneficial to their growth as an educator, I included formal and summative assessments. The feedback from the assessments will be used to adjust and improve the PD and online PLC to gain the maximum benefits of learning.

As a project developer, I designed a PD that allowed me to share the knowledge and understanding of CRT I gained throughout my doctoral journey to support teachers in growing their knowledge and understanding of equitable research-based CRT strategies that will make a difference in the lives of the students they in their literacy classrooms. Through multiple opportunities for open dialogue with colleagues during the face-to-face professional developing and the online PLC, teachers will reflect, learn, teach, assess, and affect positive change in their classrooms and school communities.

Self as Scholar

I have grown as a scholar in several ways. One way was by reading and immersing myself in current scholarly and peer-reviewed articles, seminal works, and research books to support and increase my knowledge throughout my doctoral journey. Another way was by becoming a scholarly writer through countless hours of writing, revising, and editing each section and chapter throughout my doctoral journey, with the support, insight, and expertise of my doctoral committee to guide my steps along the way. Going through the doctoral process of collecting interview data, analyzing, writing up the findings, and reviewing the literature has helped me to also build my skills as a scholarly researcher. I strive to not only continue learning to increase my knowledge in the field of reading education but to share what I have learned with other educators so they will be empowered to continue learning and using what they learn to effect positive change in the classroom.

Self as Practitioner

As a practitioner in the field of reading education, I increased my knowledge about using CRT strategies to support and improve students' literacy learning. I also learned ways to improve reading instruction for teachers and students in the two schools in this study with majority culturally and linguistically diverse student body and the lowest scores on state standardized reading assessments. With the feedback I received from the CRT PD and online CRT PLC summative assessments, I will continue to make improvements to the CRT professional and online CRT PLC and work with local

stakeholders in sharing the information learned throughout the district, so other schools within the district could also benefit from the information learned.

Leadership and Change

I believe that leaders lead by example and teach others how to lead through equitable, positive, and respectful practices to bring about change. With the knowledge I gained through my doctoral project study, I will share research-based CRT strategies with teachers at the two study sites to improve reading instruction for the students they serve. I designed a CRT PD that would create an environment where teachers can discover what students will experience with CRT strategies through purposeful activities that grow their knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies. This can positively have a sustaining effect on the pedagogy of educators, who will be informed in CRT strategies and will use these strategies for engagement and instruction of all students in the literacy classroom, which supports improved reading achievement.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Although there are several factors contributing to the African American reading achievement gap, research shows that CRT strategies are a part of the solution (Bassey, 2016; Cartledge et al., 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; McDonough, 2015; NAEP, 2020; Peterson et al., 2016). The findings of my study suggest that teachers need a deeper understanding of CRT and how to use CRT strategies effectively as they plan and implement reading instruction. I was happy to know that even if the teachers had not heard of the term *culturally relevant teaching*, they did know a little about it through working daily with culturally and linguistically diverse students. They understood that

they needed to find ways to engage students in reading lessons, so they could learn the reading skills being taught. I feel strongly that teachers should not have to wait until they are working with students to figure out how to best help students be successful. Teachers should go into the classroom equipped with the knowledge necessary to support students in improving their reading skills, so they are not only prepared to take standardized reading tests at the end of the school year to show their understanding of grade level reading material, but also experiencing academic success, cultural competence, and socio-political awareness. My CRT PD and online PLC project will provide teachers with strategies to meet the urgent need for educational practices that are culturally relevant, responsive, and competent. Teachers at the two study sites will reflect on their current teaching practices and gain insight into culturally relevant ways they can grow to have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The CRT PD and online PLC project will have important implications for teachers at the two study sites. With the culturally relevant pedagogy conceptual framework embedded throughout the project, teachers will learn to speak a common language around CRT strategies (Ladson-Billings, 2009). They will also form a collaborative community of educators who will have the continuous support of the reading specialist, reading coach, and principal, so they have the feedback and resources needed to sustain the positive social changes within the school. Teachers at the two study sites will become more aware, reflective, and purposeful in their knowledge, planning,

and use of CRT strategies in their classroom community and positively affect student literacy outcomes.

Recommendations for future research include a follow-up study to see the correlation between standardized reading test scores before and after implementation of the project to see if there is a significant gain for culturally and linguistically diverse students, particularly African American students who had the lowest pass rates. Another recommendation would be to conduct a study of the knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies in another subject, such as mathematics, to see what teachers understand and use to support students. A study could also be conducted to examine what teachers know, how they plan, and how they use CRT strategies in reading instruction at the middle and high school levels of education. The insight from the findings may support the need for a similar CRT PD and online PLC in other subject areas and levels of education to improve teaching and learning for educators and students.

Conclusion

In the words of Frederick Douglass (1845), "Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." Reading is an essential part of our society and a skill that all students need to grow and develop for mastery (VDOE, 2019). Teachers are tasked with ensuring all students in their classrooms become proficient in reading and are measured by their ability to do this when students take standardized state reading tests (VDOE, 2019). Standardized test scores at the two study sites showed that culturally and linguistically diverse students, particularly African American students, were struggling to be proficient on grade level reading skills and consequently were not mastering the reading content

being taught. Prominent researchers in the field of education found that CRT improves reading achievement when teachers support students in reading instruction that engages students in critical analysis of reading content, deliver instruction in ways that are meaningful to the students, and empower students to bring about changes in their own community. This project study was developed to examine teachers' knowledge, planning, and use of CRT strategies to support reading instruction. Guided by Ladson-Billings's (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy conceptual framework, the CRT PD and online PLC project will support teachers at the two study sites in expanding their learning to support culturally and linguistically diverse students to develop into proficient readers. With the increased knowledge and understanding of using CRT strategies for planning and implementing reading instruction, teachers will be able to bring about positive change in the academic lives of their students and help their students become agents of change in their community.

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Appendix A: The Project

3-Day Professional Development and

Monthly Online Professional Learning Community

CRT PD and Online PLC Flyer (Front)

Welcome to the New School Year!

Get Ready to Support All Students with Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies during Literacy Instruction!

This 3-Day CRT Professional Development and CRT Online Blog Site will help you to prepare and sustain a positive classroom learning environment for your students who will be engaged in literacy learning!

CRT PD and Online PLC Flyer (back)

3-Day Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) Professional Development & Ongoing Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Day 1 Preservice Week (August) 9:00-4:00 (6 hours)		Day 2 Preservice Week (August) 9:00-4:00 (6 hours)		Day 3 Preservice Week (August) 9:00-4:00 (6 hours)	
9:00-9:15	CRT Pre-Survey	9:00-9:15	CRT Agenda/Overview	9:00-9:15	CRT Agenda/Overview
9:15-9:30	CRT Agenda/Overview	9:15- 9:30	Welcome to the CRT PLC Blog Site!	9:15-9:30	Current Events (CRT PLC)
9:30- 10:30	What is CRT and Ladson-Billings' (1995) Conceptual Framework	9:30-10:00	Community Activity: What do you know about the Community you teach in?	9:30-10:30	Lesson Planning with Current Events (CRT PLC with Grade Level)
10:30-11:00	CRT Video Clip and Reflection	10:00-11:00	Community Research (CRT PLC with Grade level)	10:30-11:00	Controversial Topics (CRT PLC)
11:00-12:00	Self-Awareness & Self-Reflection Activity: Cultural Sensitivity Self-Test	11:00-12:00	Becoming Part of the Community (CRT PLC with Grade level)	11:00-12:00	Lesson Planning with Controversial Topics (CRT PLC with Grade Level)
12:00-1:00	Lunch	12:00-1:00	Lunch	12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Self-Awareness & Self-Reflection Activity: Equity Self-Assessment	1:00-2:00	Bringing the Community into the Literacy Classroom (CRT PLC with Grade Level)	1:00-1:30	Social-Political Topics (CRT PLC)
2:00-3:00	Planning and Teaching Through Reflective Practices	2:00-3:00	Lesson Planning with Community in Mind (CRT PLC with Grade Level)	1:30-2:30	Lesson Planning with Social-Political Topics (CRT PLC with Grade Level)
3:00-4:00	Wrap-Up, Questions, Exit Ticket	3:00-4:00	Wrap-Up, Questions, Exit Ticket	2:30-3:00	CRT Post-Survey
				3:00-4:00	Questions/Comments & CRT PD Evaluation on SurveyMonkey.com
Monthly Online Grade Level CRT Sustainment PLC Activity Meetings 1 hour (total of 10 hours) – September-June					

3-Day CRT PD PowerPoint (Slides 1 – 35)

A Little About Me...

Brooklyn, NY
Medgar Evers College B.A.
Old Dominion University M.S.
Regent University M.Ed.
Walden University Ed.D.
Kufere, Iceland, Japan
Alisha & Matthew
Classroom Teacher 11 Years
Reading Specialist 7 Years

3

3

Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies to Support Literacy Instruction PD & Ongoing Professional Learning Community

Overview

3-Day Professional Development 9-4pm

PLC - Culturally Relevant Teaching Blog Site

1-Day & 1-Hour a Month CRT Blog Site Sept-Jun

Goals

- ❑ Develop an awareness of his or her own cultural identity, values, attitudes, and biases and become reflective in their literacy teaching practices.
- ❑ Understand the importance and value of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the literacy classroom based on the conceptual lens of Ladson-Billings (2009) and the research of Gay (2010).
- ❑ Increase their knowledge, planning, and use of ways to become part of the community and inclusive of community events and issues in the literacy classroom.
- ❑ Increase their knowledge, planning and use of current events and controversial and socio-political topics in the literacy classroom.

4

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Today's Agenda

Day 1 Agenda Preservice Week (August) 9:00-4:00	
9:00-9:15	CRT Pre-Survey
9:15-9:30	CRT Agenda/Overview
9:30- 10:30	What is CRT and Ladson-Billings' (1995) Conceptual Framework
10:30-11:00	CRT Video Clip and Reflection
11:00-12:00	Self-Awareness & Self-Reflection Activity: Cultural Sensitivity Self-Test
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Self-Awareness & Self-Reflection Activity: Equity Self-Assessment
2:00-3:00	Planning and Teaching Through Reflective Practices
3:00-4:00	Wrap-Up, Questions, Exit Ticket

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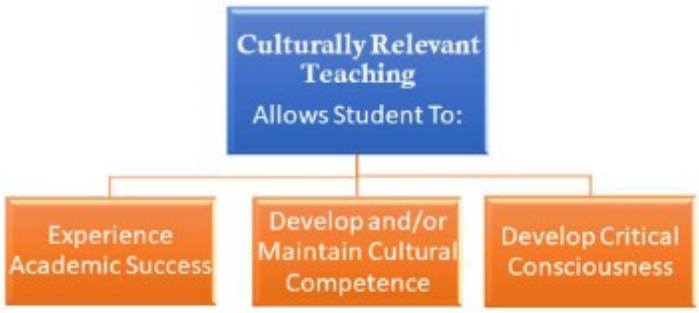
Culturally Relevant Teaching



Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. American Educational Research Journal, 32(3), 465-491.

6

Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

7

7

Concepts of Self & Others

- ❑ Teacher sees herself as an artist, teaching as an art.
- ❑ Teacher sees herself as part of the community and teaching as giving something back to the community, encourages students to do the same.
- ❑ Teacher believes all students can succeed.
- ❑ Teacher helps students make connections between their community, national, and global identities.
- ❑ Teacher sees teaching as "pulling knowledge out" - like "mining."

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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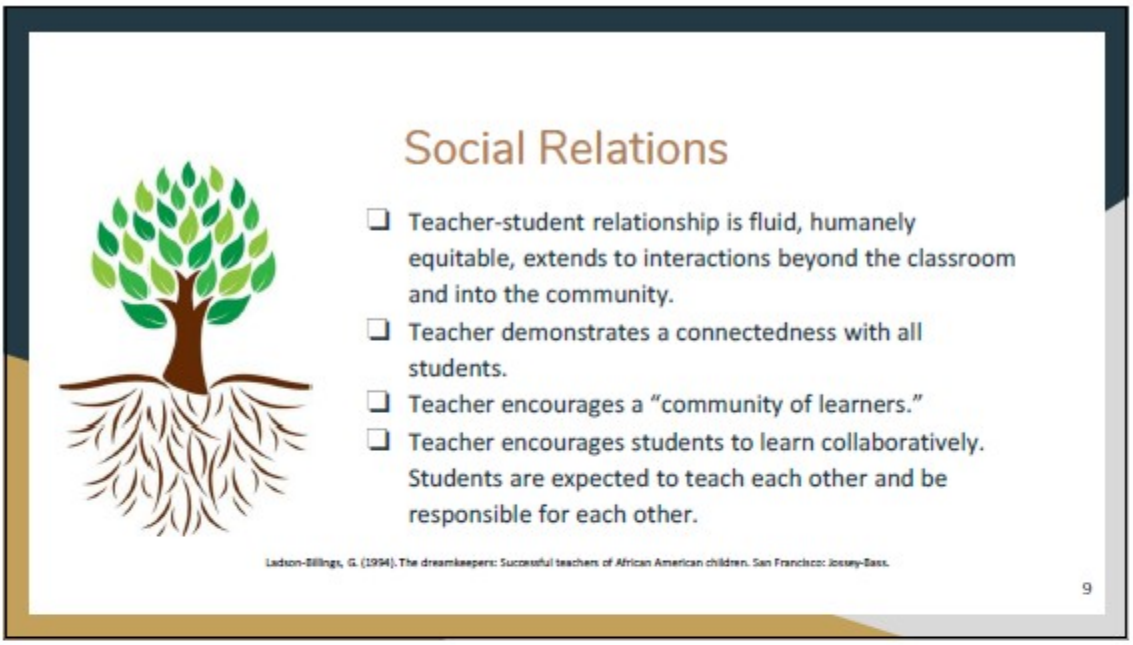
Social Relations
Teacher-student relationship is fluid, humanely equitable, extends to interactions beyond the classroom and into the community.
Teacher demonstrates a connectedness with all students.
Teacher encourages a "community of learners."
Teacher encourages students to learn collaboratively. Students are expected to teach each other and be responsible for each other.
Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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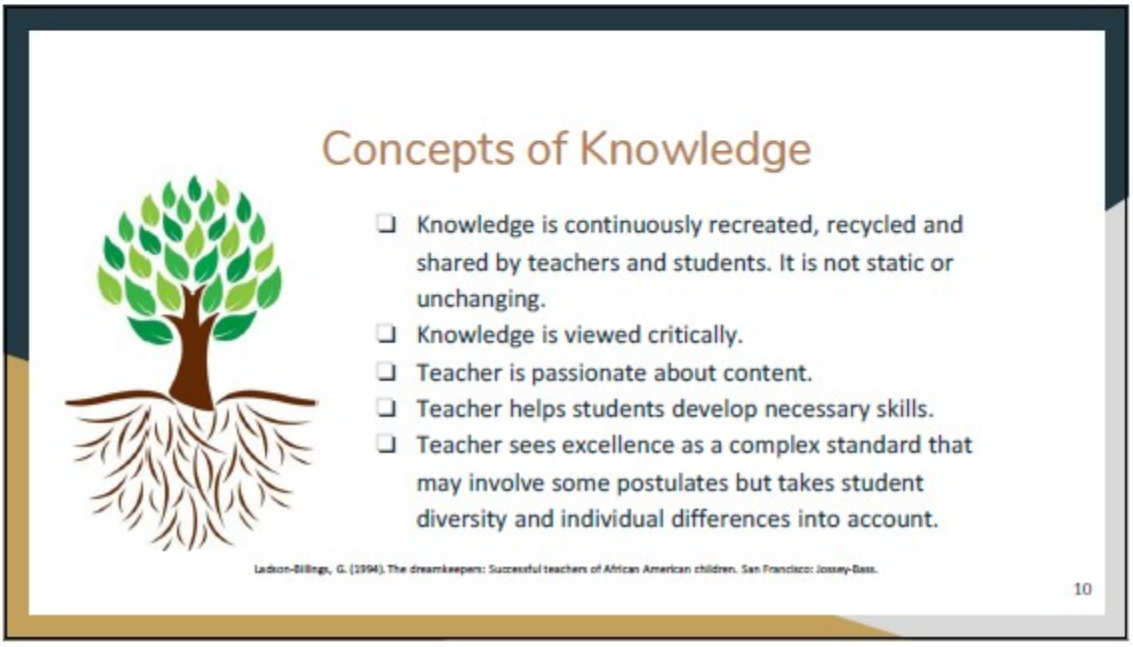
Concepts of Knowledge
Knowledge is continuously recreated, recycled and shared by teachers and students. It is not static or unchanging.
Knowledge is viewed critically.
Teacher is passionate about content.
Teacher helps students develop necessary skills.
Teacher sees excellence as a complex standard that may involve some postulates but takes student diversity and individual differences into account.
Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
10


Culturally Relevant
Pedagogy
11

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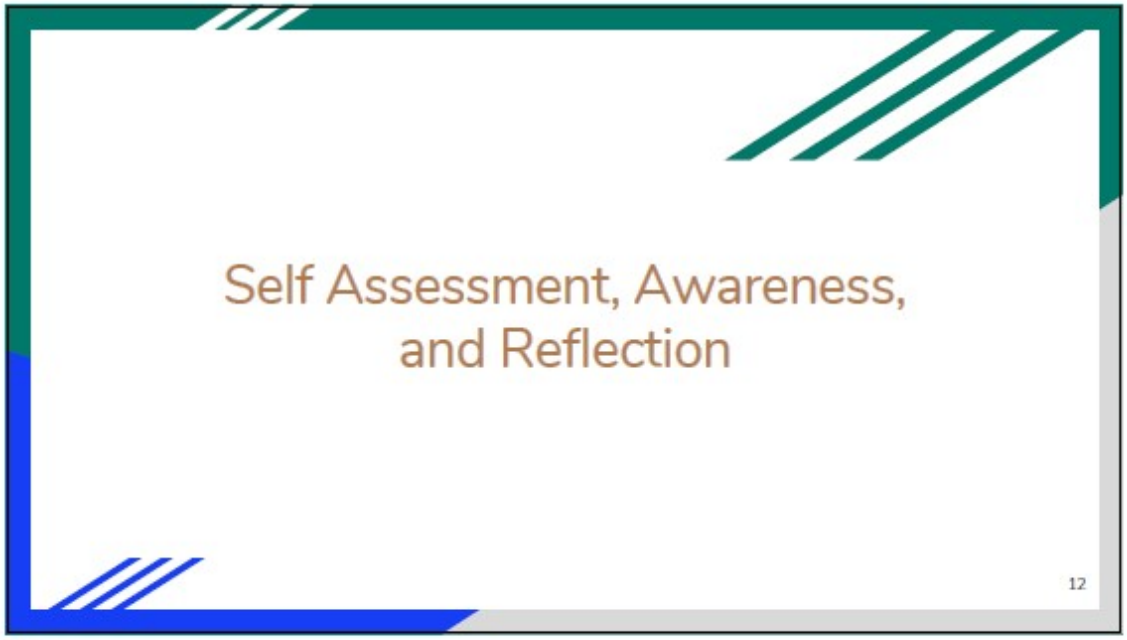
Self Assessment, Awareness,
and Reflection
12

12


EXIT
TICKET
146017
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13


Today's Agenda
Day 2 Agenda
Preservice Week (August)
9:00-4:00
9:00-9:15 CRT Agenda/Overview
9:15- 9:30 Welcome to the CRT PLC Blog Site!
9:30-10:00 Community Activity: What do you know about the Community you teach in?
10:00-11:00 Community Research (CRT PLC with Grade level)
11:00-12:00 Becoming Part of the Community (CRT PLC with Grade level)
12:00-1:00 Lunch
1:00-2:00 Bringing the Community into the Literacy Classroom (CRT PLC with Grade Level)
2:00-3:00 Lesson Planning with Community in Mind (CRT PLC with Grade Level)
3:00-4:00 Wrap-Up, Questions, Exit Ticket
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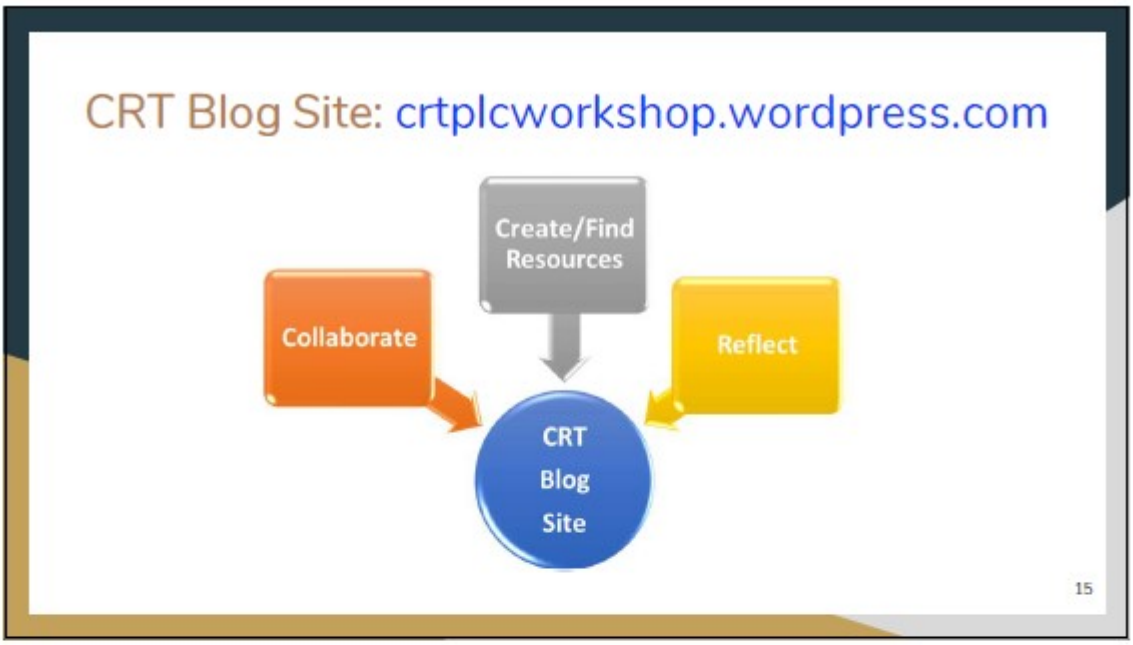
CRT Blog Site: crtplcworkshop.wordpress.com
Create/Find Resources
Collaborate
Reflect
CRT Blog Site
15

15


Community
What do you know about the community you teach in?
16

16


Community Research
17

17


Becoming Part of the Community
❑Extra-Curricular Activities
❑Community Events
❑Shops/Restaurants
❑Community Partners
18

18

Bringing the Community into the Literacy Classroom

Group work:

- Choose a community topic to explore with students.
- How can you make the topic grade level appropriate?
- What literacy skills can your topic include?
- What resources will you need?
- How can you involve communication, reading, writing and research for your students?

19

19

Lesson Planning with Community in Mind

20

20

Literacy Lesson Planning Time!

Communication
Reading
Writing
Research

- Bloom's Level
- Possible Misconceptions
- Materials
- Lesson Modification
- Objectives
- Anticipatory Set
- Teacher Modeling
- Guided Student Practice
- Independent Practice
- Closure
- Assessment

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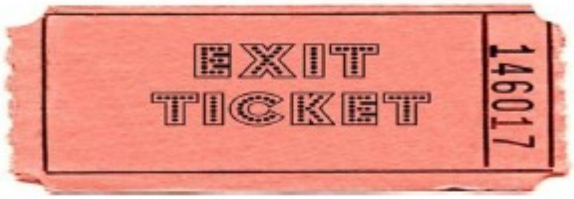

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Today's Agenda
Day 3 Agenda
Preservice Week (August)
9:00-4:00
9:00-9:15 CRT Agenda/Overview
9:15-9:30 Current Events (CRT PLC)
9:30-10:30 Lesson Planning with Current Events (CRT PLC with Grade Level)
10:30-11:00 Controversial Topics (CRT PLC)
11:00-12:00 Lesson Planning with Controversial Topics (CRT PLC with Grade Level)
12:00-1:00 Lunch
1:00-1:30 Social-Political Topics (CRT PLC)
1:30-2:30 Lesson Planning with Social-Political Topics (CRT PLC with Grade Level)
2:30-3:00 CRT Post-Survey
3:00-4:00 Questions/Comments & CRT PD Evaluation on SurveyMonkey.com
23

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Current Events
newsela
ReadWorks.org
DOGOnews
TweenTribune
TIME For KIDS
24

24


Controversial Topics
newsela
ReadWorks.org
DOGOnews
TweenTribune
TIME For KIDS
25

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Socio-Political Topics
newsela
ReadWorks.org
DOGOnews
TweenTribune
TIME For KIDS
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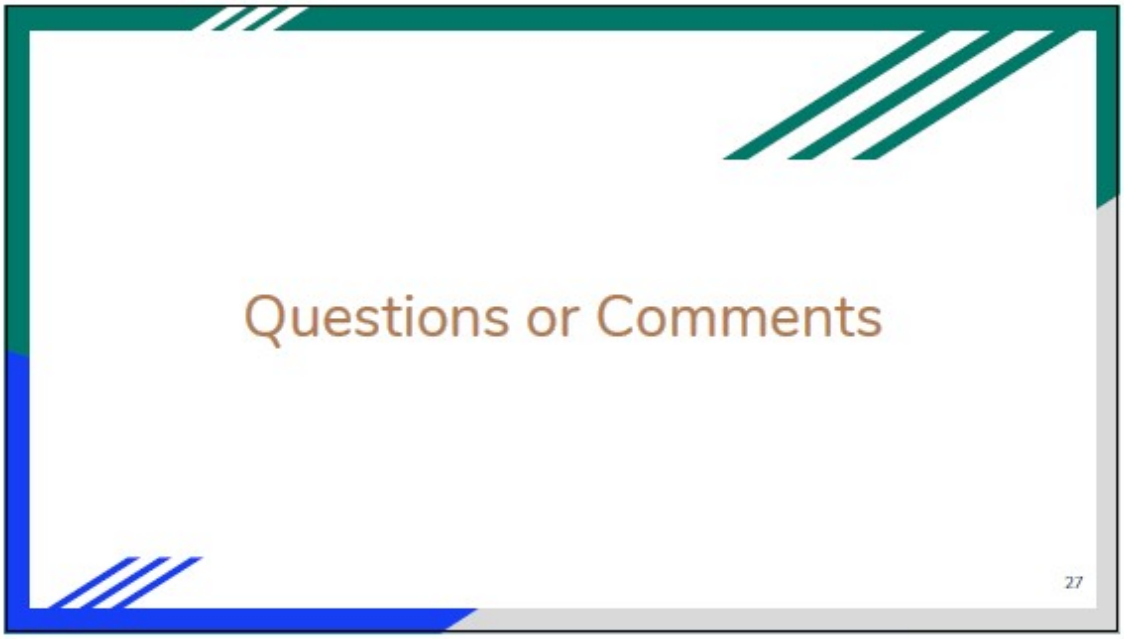

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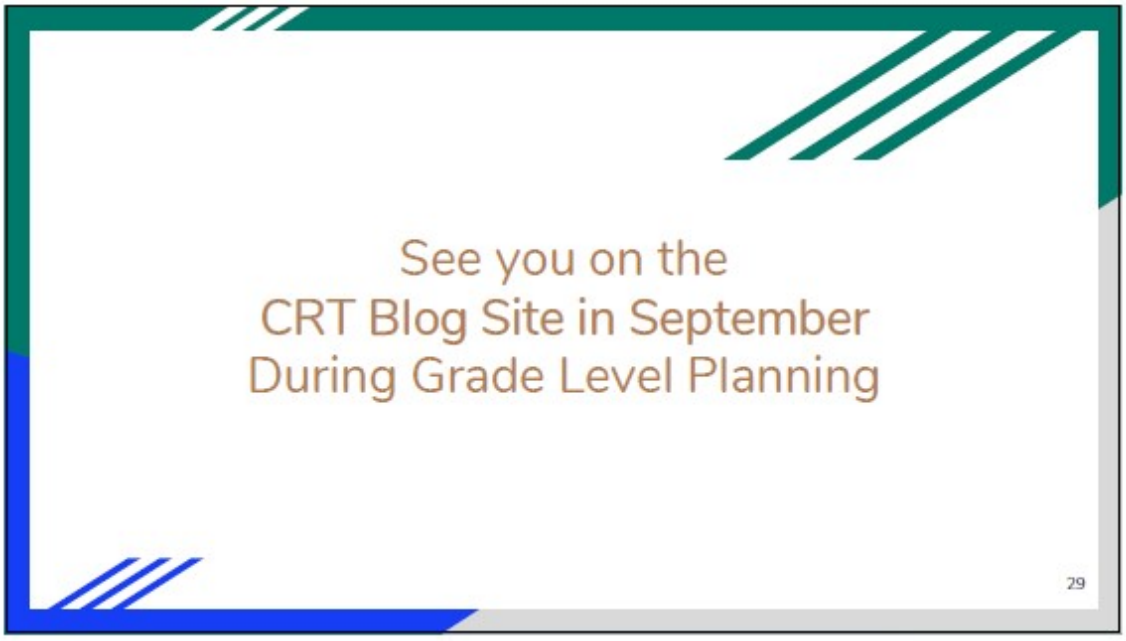
See you on the
CRT Blog Site in September
During Grade Level Planning
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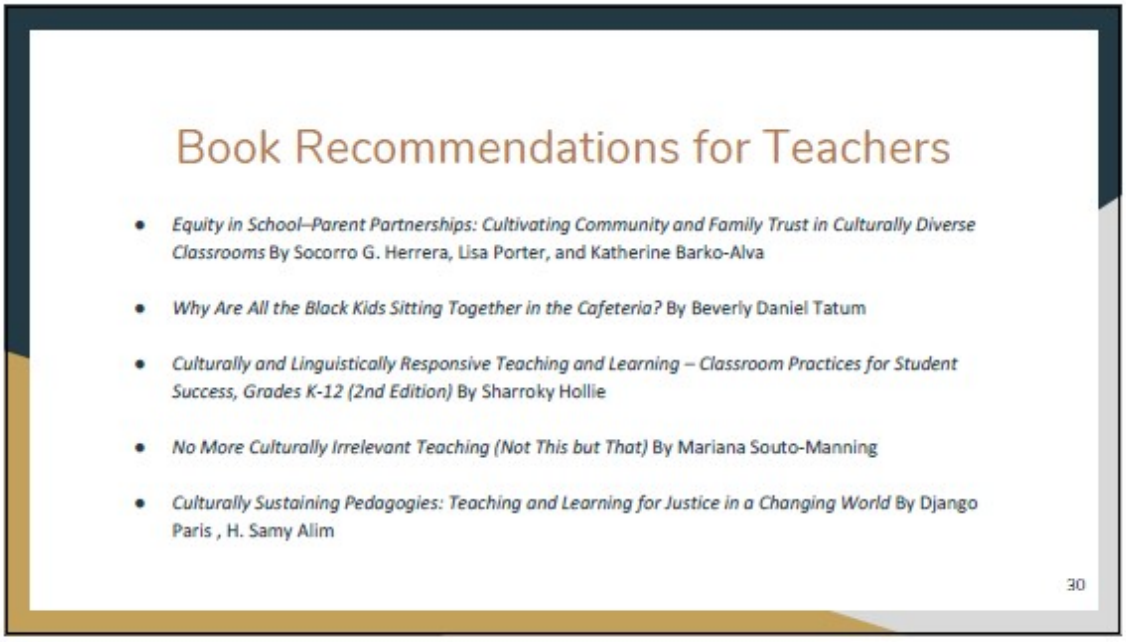
Book Recommendations for Teachers
Equity in School–Parent Partnerships: Cultivating Community and Family Trust in Culturally Diverse Classrooms By Socorro G. Herrera, Lisa Porter, and Katherine Barko-Alva
Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? By Beverly Daniel Tatum
Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning – Classroom Practices for Student Success, Grades K-12 (2nd Edition) By Sharroky Hollie
No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching (Not This but That) By Mariana Souto-Manning
Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World By Django Paris , H. Samy Alim
30

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CRT Book Club for Teachers
Consider joining the CRT Online Book Club where we will dive into books that are immersed in the science of CRT and practical in their application to everyday classroom practices to increase student learning and achievement!
More Information on the CRT Blog Site.
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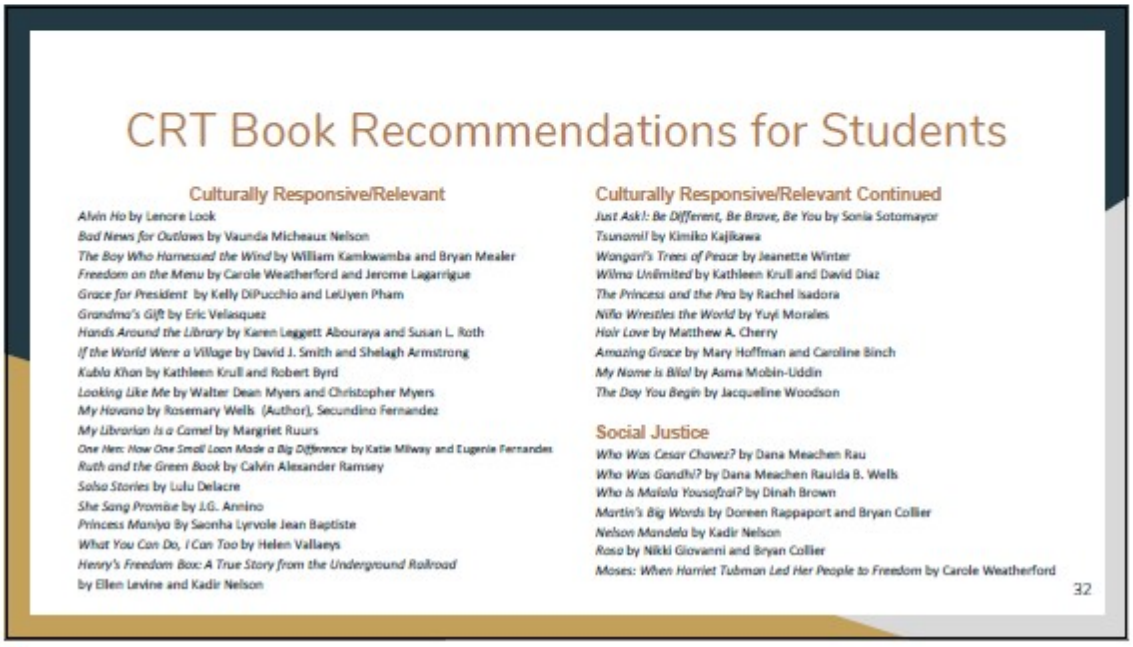
CRT Book Recommendations for Students
Culturally Responsive/Relevant
Alvin Ho by Lenore Look
Bad News for Outlaws by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson
The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer
Freedom on the Menu by Carole Weatherford and Jerome Lagarrigue
Grace for President by Kelly DiPucchio and LeUyen Pham
Grandma's Gift by Eric Velasquez
Hands Around the Library by Karen Leggett Abouraya and Susan L. Roth
If the World Were a Village by David J. Smith and Shelagh Armstrong
Kubla Khan by Kathleen Krull and Robert Byrd
Looking Like Me by Walter Dean Myers and Christopher Myers
My Havana by Rosemary Wells (Author), Secundino Fernandez
My Librarian Is a Camel by Margriet Ruurs
One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference by Katie Milway and Eugenie Fernandes
Ruth and the Green Book by Calvin Alexander Ramsey
Salsa Stories by Lulu Delacre
She Sang Promise by J.G. Annino
Princess Maniya By Saonha Lyrvole Jean Baptiste
What You Can Do, I Can Too by Helen Vallaeys
Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad by Ellen Levine and Kadir Nelson
Culturally Responsive/Relevant Continued
Just Ask!: Be Different, Be Brave, Be You by Sonia Sotomayor
Tsunami! by Kimiko Kajikawa
Wangari's Trees of Peace by Jeanette Winter
Wilma Unlimited by Kathleen Krull and David Diaz
The Princess and the Pea by Rachel Isadora
Niño Wrestles the World by Yuyi Morales
Hair Love by Matthew A. Cherry
Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch
My Name is Bilal by Asma Mobin-Uddin
The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson
Social Justice
Who Was Cesar Chavez? by Dana Meachen Rau
Who Was Gandhi? by Dana Meachen Raulda B. Wells
Who Is Malala Yousafzai? by Dinah Brown
Martin's Big Words by Doreen Rappaport and Bryan Collier
Nelson Mandela by Kadir Nelson
Rosa by Nikki Giovanni and Bryan Collier
Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom by Carole Weatherford
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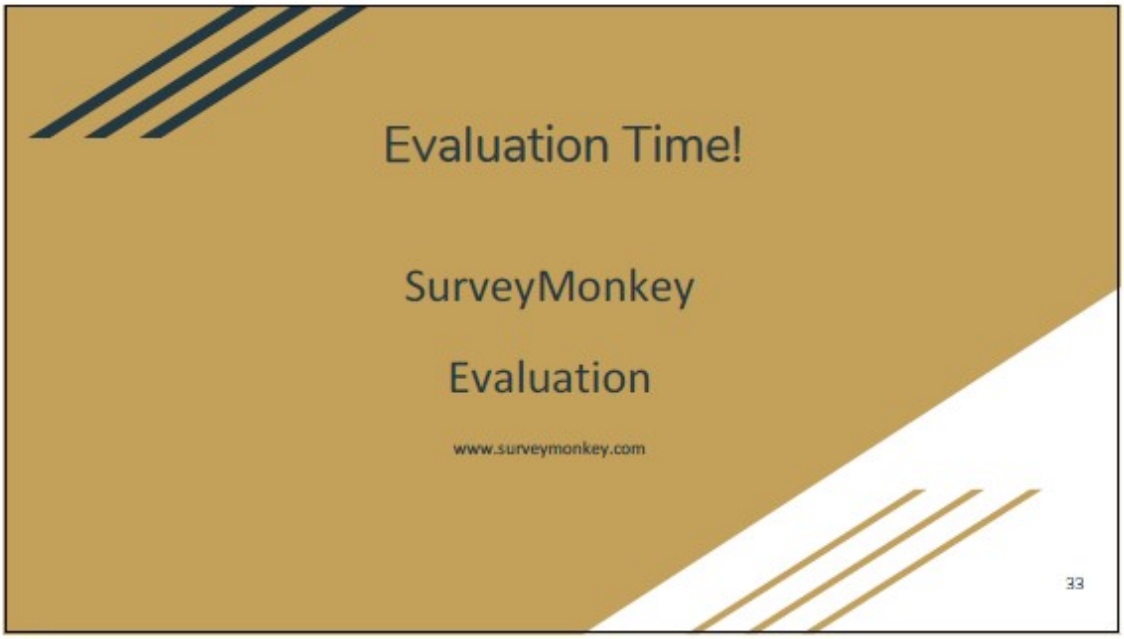
Evaluation Time!
SurveyMonkey
Evaluation
www.surveymonkey.com
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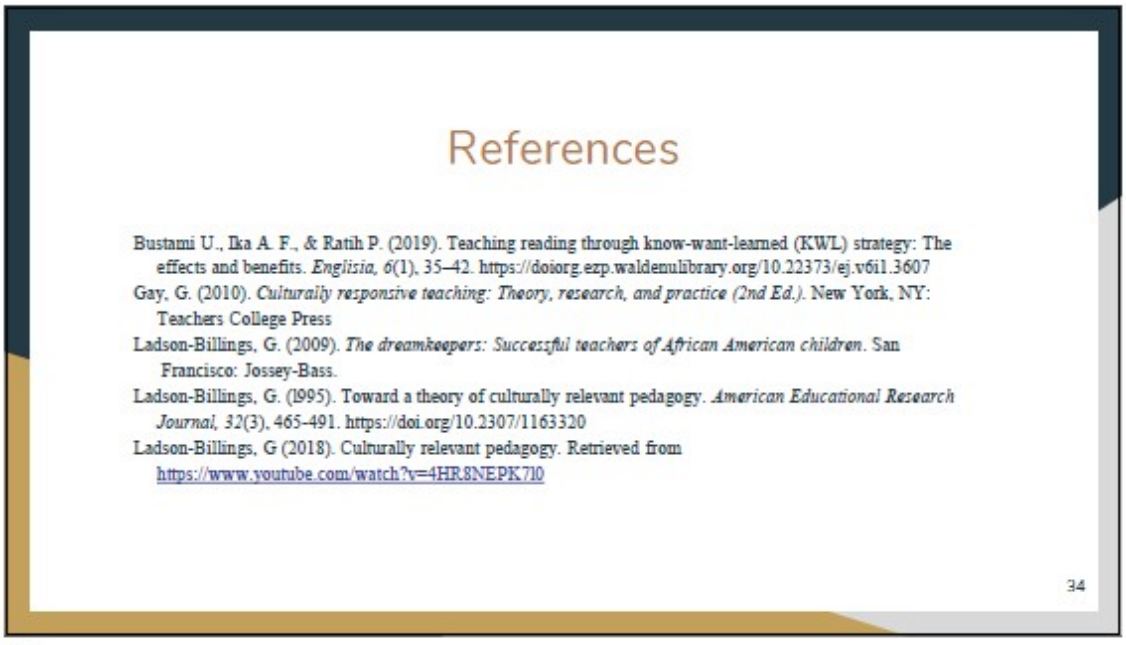
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Bustami U., Ika A. F., & Ratih P. (2019). Teaching reading through know-want-learned (KWL) strategy: The effects and benefits. Englisia, 6(1), 35–42. https://doiorg.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.22373/ej.v6i1.3607
Gay, G. (2010). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice (2nd Ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press
Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Ladson-Billings, G. (l995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. American Educational Research Journal, 32(3), 465-491. https://doi.org/10.2307/1163320
Ladson-Billings, G (2018). Culturally relevant pedagogy. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HR8NEPK710
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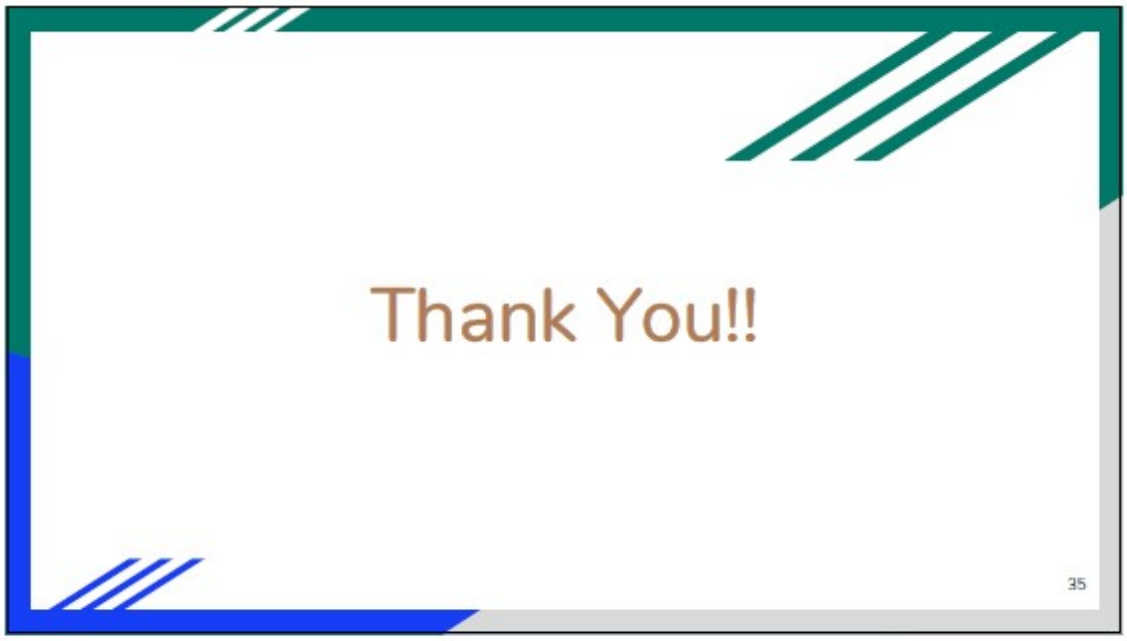

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Daily Activity Materials, Descriptions, and Goals

Activity	Materials	Description	Goals
Day 1 Activities			
What is CRT and Ladson-Billings's (1995) Conceptual Framework	PowerPoint	I will explain what CRT is and the CRT Conceptual Framework. Teachers will be given the chance to discuss what they are learning with colleagues.	For teachers to have a definition of CRT and understand the CRT conceptual framework and the importance and value of student's cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the literacy classroom.
CRT Video Clip and Reflection (Ladson-Billings, 2018)	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Video Clip by Gloria Ladson-Billings, Chromebooks	In the video, Gloria Ladson-Billings will explain Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Teachers will then reflect on what they learned about CRT and come up with their own definition. Teachers will have an opportunity to share their definitions using Jamboard digital sticky notes.	For teachers to take notes on CRT and understand the CRT conceptual framework and the importance and value of student's cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the literacy classroom.
Cultural Sensitivity Self-Test	Cultural Sensitivity Self-Test	I will explain to teachers that to effectively work with students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, we need to be aware of our own bias and beliefs that we bring with us into the classroom so that we do not let them effect how we teach others. The teachers will be asked to complete the Cultural Sensitivity Self-Test. We will then go over the results and discuss each question.	For teachers to become aware of their biases, behaviors, and beliefs and how they could impact their instruction with culturally and linguistically divers students. To reflect on ways to reduce biases, behaviors, and beliefs in the literacy classroom.
Equity Self-Assessment	Equity Self-Assessment, pens, pencils	Teachers will complete the Equity Self-Assessment. We will go over the results and discuss each statement. I will then discuss CRT to support all students in equitable teaching and learning.	To become aware of equitable practices during literacy instruction.
Planning and Teaching Through Reflective Practices	Markers and Chart Paper	Teachers will work in groups and reflect on ways to be culturally relevant in the literacy classroom. They will write their ideas on chart paper and share out and discuss.	Teachers will reflect on CRT practices in the literacy classroom.

Day 2 Activities			
CRT Blog Site	Chrome books	Teachers will then be introduced to the CRT Blog. They will log on and make a grade level folder. They will learn to navigate the different tabs to post individual and group comments and resources about CRT throughout the rest of the training.	Teachers will become familiar with and learn how to navigate the CRT Blog Site.
What do you know about the community you teach in?	Chromebooks	Teachers will share what they know about the community they teach in and use Google Jamboard to write their responses and share with the group on the screen. We will then go over what they know about the community.	Teachers will share what they know about the community that they can use to teach comprehension skills in the literacy classroom.
Community Research	Chromebooks, paper, pencils	Teachers will build a community resource bank from what they learn about the community through their online research. The teachers will upload the list of resources on the CRT Blog so that they can be shared with all teachers. Teachers will share some things they found out about the community.	Teachers will create an online CRT resource library and place on CRT Blog Site for community research findings so they can refer to it during the school year when planning for reading instruction.
Becoming Part of the Community	Laptops, paper, pencils	Teachers will discuss ways they can become part of the community.	Teachers will be knowledgeable of several ways to become part of the community.
Bringing the Community into the Literacy Classroom	Chromebooks	Teachers will work in their grade level groups and look at their list of community topics and choose two. With the two topics, teachers will discuss how the topics could be used to develop students in the areas of communication, reading, writing, and research.	Teachers will be inclusive of the community when planning for literacy instruction.
Lesson Planning with the Community in Mind	Chromebooks, school literacy lesson plan	Teachers will take their two community topics they discussed in the previous activity and use them to develop lesson plans. The teachers will add the lesson plans to a Community Lesson Plan Bank on the CRT PLC Blog Site for access to all teachers.	Teachers will create community-based lesson plans to use during literacy instruction.

Day 3 Activities			
Current Events and Lesson Planning	Chromebooks, reading pacing guides for each grade level, reading lesson plan templates	I will explain the importance of including current events (such as local elected officials from the current election) in the planning and instruction of literacy skills. Teachers will use several websites to look for current event news articles to use in the literacy classroom. Teachers will discuss how the current event articles could be used to support students in communication skills, reading skills, writing skills, and research skills. Teachers will then spend time creating current event lesson plans to use during literacy instruction. Teachers will then add their plans to the Current Events Lesson Plan Folder on the CRT Blog Site so that they can be easily accessed and modified for different grade levels for the same skill.	Teachers will plan and create current events lesson plan bank to use during literacy instruction.
Controversial Topics and Lesson Planning	Chromebooks, reading pacing guides for each grade level, reading lesson plan templates	I will explain the importance of including controversial topics (such as wearing or not wearing uniforms in schools) in the planning and instruction of literacy skills. Teachers will use several websites to look for controversial topic articles to use in the literacy classroom. Teachers will discuss how the current event articles could be used to support students in communication skills, reading skills, writing skills, and research skills. Teachers will then spend time creating controversial topic lesson plans to use during literacy instruction. Teachers will then add their plans to the Controversial Topic Lesson Plan Folder on the CRT Blog Site so that they can be easily accessed and modified for different grade levels for the same skill.	Teachers will plan and create controversial topic lesson plan bank to use during literacy instruction.
Social-Political Topics and Lesson Planning	Chromebooks, reading pacing guides for each grade level, reading lesson plan templates	I will explain the importance of including Social-Political Topics (such as: Should vaccines be mandated) in the planning and instruction of literacy skills. Teachers will use several websites to look for social-political topic articles to use in the literacy classroom. Teachers will discuss how the current event articles	Teachers will plan and create social-political topic lesson plan bank to use during literacy instruction.

		could be used to support students in communication skills, reading skills, writing skills, and research skills. Teachers will then spend time creating social-political topic lesson plans to use during literacy instruction. Teachers will then add their plans to the Social-Political Topic Lesson Plan Folder on the CRT Blog Site so that they can be easily accessed and modified for different grade levels for the same skill.	

Equity Self-Assessment

Equity Self-Assessment Directions: Read each statement and circle the number that best describes your behavior or belief. Remember, be as candid as possible with your responses, there are no right or wrong answers.			
I am aware of my own biases and how they affect my thinking.	**Almost Never**	**Sometimes**	**Always**
I can honestly assess my strengths and weaknesses in the area of diversity and try to improve myself.			
I assume good intent and ask for clarification when I do not understand what was said or implied.			
I realize that students of other cultures have a need to support one another and connect as a group.			
I do not make assumptions about a person or individual group until I have verified the facts on my own.			
I connect easily with students who do not look like me and am able to communicate easily.			
I am interested in the ideas and beliefs of people who do not think and believe as I do, and I respect their opinions even when I disagree.			
I work to make sure people who are different from me are heard and accepted.			
I recognize and avoid language that reinforces stereotypes.			
Avoid assuming that others will have the same reaction as me when discussing or viewing an issue.			
I understand that I am a product of my upbringing and believe there are valid beliefs other than my own.			
I do not take physical characteristics into account when interacting with others and when making decisions about competence or ability.			
I actively seek opportunities to connect with people different than me and seek to build rapport.			
I believe "color blindness" is counterproductive and devalues a person's culture or history.			
I avoid generalizing behaviors or attitudes of one individual group to another group. (Ex. All sped students are…, Title 1 students are…)			
I believe there are policies and practices in place that negatively impact people outside the majority culture.			
I know and accept that a student's experiences and background impacts how they interact and trust me.			
Total Each Section:			

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Pre- and Post-Survey

Culturally Relevant Teaching Pre- and Post-Survey

What do you **know** about culturally relevant teaching strategies?	What do you **want** to know about culturally relevant teaching strategies?	What did you **learn** about culturally relevant teaching strategies?

How Well Do You Understand CRT Strategies?

Before the CRT PD	After the CRT PD
4 I can do CRT strategies in my classroom and explain them to someone else.	**4** I can do CRT strategies in my classroom and explain them to someone else.
3 I understand CRT strategies and can implement them in my classroom.	**3** I understand CRT strategies and can implement them in my classroom.
2 I need more practice using CRT strategies.	**2** I need more practice using CRT strategies.
1 I do not understand CRT strategies yet.	**1** I do not understand CRT strategies yet.

Exit Ticket for Day 1 and 2

List 1 thing you are still not sure about.

List 2 things you learned today.

List 3 things you can implement in your classroom right away.

CRT PD Evaluation on SurveyMonkey.com

CRT PD Evaluation

Directions: Read each statement and rate how much you personally agree or disagree by placing a check mark in the corresponding box.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The CRT PD was presented in an organized manner.					
2. The presenter was knowledgeable about CRT strategies.					
3. The CRT handouts were useful.					
4. I learned about myself and others during the CRT PD.					
5. The activities in the CRT PD will help me be culturally relevant in my classroom.					
6. I feel confident in my ability to use the CRT strategies learned during the CRT PD.					
7. I would recommend the CRT PD to be given throughout the district.					
8. The CRT PD provided me with a clear understanding of why CRT strategies are important?					
9. The CRT PD provided me with a clear understanding of what CRT strategies are?					
10. I will use the CRT Blog Site as a resource during the school year.					

11. Was there something you liked or that really stood out to you during the CRT PD?

12. Was there anything you would change about the CRT PD?

13. Is there anything that you are still unclear about concerning CRT strategies?

Online CRT PLC Evaluation on SurveyMonkey.com

Online CRT PLC Blog Spot Evaluation					
Directions: Read each statement and rate how much you personally agree or disagree by placing a check mark in the corresponding box.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The questions I had to answer on the CRT Blog each month helped me to be reflective and aware of my planning and use of CRT strategies.					
I found the resources shared on the CRT Blog helpful.					
My questions and/or concerns posted on the CRT Blog were answered in a timely matter by the reading coach/specialist/facilitator.					
The CRT Blog help me sustain the use of CRT strategies.					
The CRT Blog supported collaboration with colleagues.					
Overall, the CRT Blog was beneficial to my use of CRT strategies in the classroom.					

Appendix B: Lesson Plan Document Review Protocol

Lesson Plan Document Review Protocol based on CRT Framework

Lesson Plan Document Review Protocol	
Concepts of Self and Others	
Social Relations	
Concepts of Knowledge	

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee: (Example: Participant 1)

Years of Teaching Experience: (Circle One): 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30

Describe Project Here: The purpose of this study is to find out about teachers' knowledge, planning, and use of culturally relevant teaching strategies to increase the literacy learning of culturally diverse students. Third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teacher participants would be interviewed and observed once for this study. Identifying information about participants, including names and locations would be concealed, kept confidential, and would not be included in the transcripts.

The interview will take between 45-60-minutes, depending on participant responses.

Turn on tape recorder and test it.

Read consent form aloud and have participant state "I consent."

Questions:

1. What do you know about culturally relevant teaching strategies? Where and when did you learn about them?
2. When planning for reading instruction, what culturally relevant resources do you use along with the reading curriculum?
3. When planning for reading instruction, what types of text do you use?
4. During your reading instruction, what culturally relevant reading strategies do you use?
5. What are some examples of how you incorporate a student's culture during reading instruction?
6. What are some examples of how you incorporate student interests during reading instruction?
7. What are some examples of how you foster relationships with students during reading instruction?
8. What are some examples of the literacy classroom expectations you have communicated to your students?
9. How do you support students with learning from each other in the literacy classroom?
10. What culturally relevant teaching strategies do you think are making the most difference in helping to improve your student's literacy learning?

Potential interview probes:

Please tell me more about… Please describe your process.

Appendix D: A Priori and In Vivo Codes Using CRT Framework for Interviews

A Priori and In Vivo Codes Using CRT Framework for Interview Data

Concepts of Self and Others		
A Priori Code	***Participant Excerpt***	***In Vivo Codes***
Teachers' Awareness of their own culture and the cultures of their students	PA1 A lot of our kids are different. We even have a couple of students in our rooms right now who are from Africa. PC3 You have students with various backgrounds, so you make sure that the literature that you use also covers that background, whether it's African American or Indian. PD4 I don't just base instruction on one ethnic background. PE5 We have a diverse population in that we have some Hispanic children here… I do need to respect people's cultures, their religions, their just family beliefs, culture, whatever they were brought up believing in. PJ10 I'm always giving them examples of myself because I feel like I can relate to them culturally because I am African American. PL12 So a lot of things we try to do is when we're looking at read-alouds or textbooks, making sure that we have a diverse population or student representation. I guess, here there's not really a big difference as in culture. But last year I did have one Asian student.	"students with various backgrounds" "need to be aware of culture" "diverse population or student representation" "talk about all cultural holidays" "our kids are different" "I can relate to them culturally" "I need to respect people's culture" "diverse population or student representation"
Use of Culturally Relevant Instructional Materials and Resources	PA1 So, pulling books like books written by Patricia Polacco where the students can relate to what's going on in the story. Pulling articles about maybe artists that they know of or TV shows or things that are relatable to them. Trying to bring music in there. Trying to use maybe a metaphor for certain things. A TV is a big one. And a lot of our students in our class enjoy drawing as well, so we'll try to incorporate drawing as an option to respond to reading. Find different books that students would be more adaptable to students. PC3 I try to incorporate different stories within guided reading and shared reading to make sure that we're	"artists that they know" "TV shows "collaborate with the reading specialists" "incorporate game strategies" "Music, raps, poetry, that my students can relate to" "African American characters" characters that are relatable" "characters that match the children"

	actually being culturally diverse. I collaborate with the reading specialists here and they have given us a lot of websites to look on that actually have different passages… to help us with culturally diversity. PD4 I try to incorporate game strategies and I always like to use music. Music, raps, poetry, that my students can relate to and actually get involved with or help ad lib a rhyme or just maybe a chant to go along with the poem or the song. I try to find characters inside of the reading that students can relate to no matter what ethnic background they come from can relate to. PE5 I use books that have African American characters. We have books with Hispanic speaking people but still written in English, though. We don't have any books written in Spanish. I have seen African American and Whites in books in our bookroom. PF6 we do spend a lot of time looking for characters in books that are relatable to our students We use a lot of nonfiction materials and a lot of things or problems and solutions are relatable. I think acknowledging and celebrating differences, as well as ways that we are alike in books. PG7 I try to find books that are culturally relevant. Especially with characters that match the children that are in this building. Non-fiction, fiction, books, articles, magazines. Finding books that they're interested in, but also that have characters that look like them. PH8 I'll pick books that we know will interest them. PK11 We find books written by and books that are about them. PL12 Using stories or just current news. Just kind of bringing in different perspectives of how different students may feel about different things. When we're looking at read-alouds or textbooks, making sure that we have a diverse population or student representation. I think being at a predominantly African American school, it probably does help to have books that they see	"Picture books" "passages" "play some Tupac" "read an article with the students about Tupac's life" "books written by and books that are about them" "we have books with Hispanic speaking people" "We don't have any books written in Spanish" "African American and Whites in books" "stories or just current news" "books where they're seeing themselves" "TV" "probably does help to have books that they see themselves and in a positive light" "graphic novels"

	themselves and in a positive light. Not always the kid that's getting in trouble, or the kid that's being teased or being a bully but someone that's actually doing what they're supposed to be doing. PM13 I try to find material that is relevant to the students. Either things that they can see themselves in So that would be like in those books where they're seeing themselves, or they're seeing neighborhoods that they're used to being in. I'm trying to find graphic novels that are interesting to them but are still culturally relevant to them.	
Student Interests	PC3 At the beginning of the school year I believe we filled out a student interest survey. So, I knew what the kids like and what they disliked so I tried to look at that and say, "Oh, if I can find a passage on this or books on my classroom library that will keep their interest. Any poems, recipes, read alouds. Anything to keep their interest so I'll know, okay, they're really interested in this so I know I can capture their attention and keep their attention so they can actually stay engaged. PD4 I try to at the beginning of the year, give students interest surveys, so I can learn what they like, what are their dislikes, what are their strengths and their weaknesses PH8 Picking things that they're interested in PI9 Allowing them that opportunity to choose through a menu for guided reading and these are the five things you can do and allowing them that choice gives them the opportunity to kind of self-select and self-educate. PJ10 Tapping into what those interests are. PK11 Their interest, like, say, baseball players PM13 I try to see what they're interested in when they're checking books out to kind of gauge what is the most popular, so that I can plan lessons on things that they are interested in.	"student interest survey" "they're really interested in this" "interest surveys" "strengths and their weaknesses" "Picking things that they're interested in" "choose through a menu" "they like to research about certain animals" "Their interest" "what they're interested in"
Differentiating Instruction	PA1 books on their instructional level. Or if it's shared reading, then books that are on grade level or close to grade level. We do use passages as well at times. PE5 We use level books It just depends on where they are, what they need. PF6 You want to make reading a comfortable place before you send them out into reading tons of things where they're learning new experiences or about people	books on their instructional level" "they can see a variety of text" "level books" "Stories or just current news" "exposed to all types of literacy" "building background knowledge"

	that live in different places or have just different life experiences. If I'm going to read about sea glass, it's sitting out. My kids are allowed to touch it. We do a lot of hands-on schema building. PG7 Providing them with hands-on experiences that either relate to things that they've done, or I try to give them new experiences and bring things in to show. Or you always have your phone. We pull up pictures and videos and that kind of thing, depending on what we're reading. PH8 We try to use mostly fiction and non-fiction books. PJ10 Building background knowledge… what I've tried to do is also provide a system of forward-thinking. PK11 guided reading leveled books	Providing them with hands-on experiences" "strengths and their weaknesses" "we'll type the books up and make them a passage" "chunk things and break things up" "make vocabulary shorter" "Putting it with pictures" "variety of text" "hands-on schema building" "monitor what they're reading" "board that tells them what we're going to learn"

Social Relations

A Priori Code	*Participant Excerpt*	*In Vivo Codes*
Promoting student communication	PA1 …we try to foster relationships with relationships among everybody by having them share out something that they're making a connection to. I try to have those conversations with the students like if you got a question wrong --Well, let's go back and figure out why we got it wrong. What did we misread, or did we just rush through? Or what did we do wrong, and how can we fix it next time? PC3 I've had several students share their experience during reading. Like one boy said he went to Japan or China. So, I said, "Okay, well tell the class about your trip." PC3 We do a lot of think, pair, share… I do that a lot during shared reading, so the kids work together because they always work in pairs or work in groups first before I have them do any type of independent work. When I have them communicate and when they're doing think, pair, share, or they're doing face-to-face or shoulder-to-shoulder-type activities, that they're actually learning from each other just by communication PD4 I try to allow opportunities for my students to interact and just offer tidbits or experiences in their life where they can make connections while they're reading or make connections during the discussion, or even	having them share out something that they're making a connection to "get them involved in a conversation" "students share their experience" "student conversation" "share their experience during reading" "connections during the discussion, or even during writing" "conversations with the students" "open conversation" "conversation about the question" "conversations amongst

	during writing. Listen to their needs and just allow them the opportunity to understand during reading we have somethings that we have in common. PE5 We talk about different things, and so if something culturally diverse comes up, it's basically stemming from the student conversation rather than me introducing it in a lesson. During discussion of the text, whatever book we're using or if vocabulary is relevant to something they've already talked about or shared about themselves supports learning. If something comes up in the story that they're interested in that they can relate to, then we have discussions there. Just really allowing them to converse and conversing with them. And they have to express themselves. PF6 I want students to have conversations and do their best and feel comfortable about making mistakes so that we can kind of work on those. PG7 Building relationships goes back to that conversation. Allowing them to talk, and talk about books, and talk about strategies. PH8 I think that picking books that they like opens up a conversation, so it allows me to get to know them better. PI9 We do a lot of group work, partner work, table work PM13 They're welcome to have conversations about these things and about what they're doing and how they can relate to the books. I like to do a lot of collaborative experiences with them. Let them do partner work. Let them have conversations amongst themselves about different topics. Because I think collaboration helps them get to an experience or get to an understanding that I might not be able to provide for them.	themselves about different topics” “Allowing them to talk, and talk about books” that picking books that they like opens up a conversation relate to the books “collaboration helps them get to an experience or get to an understanding that I might not be able to provide for them” willing to talk and learn” “turn and talk” “pair them” “partner talk” “change it each month, so they're not always with the same person” “think, pair, share” “shoulder partner” “partner read and discuss”
Classroom Community of Learners	PD4 I let them know that we're a team and we work together, and I don't allow criticism or laughing. PI9 We do a lot of group work, partner work, table work, even when they do things like complete the sheet, which is just when they do a worksheet for a grade. There is an open conversation about how they are expected to work and how their partners are expected to work. We do a lot of turn and talk and elbow partners and matching up with using decks of playing cards. So, we do a lot of hands-on interactive stuff with them where they're involved with one another.	“environment that promotes learning and growth” “class as if it's our family” allow opportunities for my students to interact “working as teams” that we're a team and we work together

	PJ10 We had a jeopardy game yesterday for reading. They were working as teams. And so, we had to have conversation about the questions. PJ10 We also do very strategic pairing. A medium level in reading, and maybe a high. And so, we are very much a collaborative community with-- I'm not the sage on the stage. They do facilitate a lot of their learning. We introduce, we manage, we guide, but we are a community of learners this is what this is.	"We are a community of learners"

Concepts of Knowledge

A Priori Code	***Participant Excerpt***	***In Vivo Codes***
Students Sharing Their Knowledge to Support Learning	PA1 Students even teach each other if they're comfortable PE5 They partner read and discuss their stories as partners sometimes. If a student gets stuck on something, sometimes instead of me offering a suggestion, I'll have their classmate tell them the strategy, not tell them the answer. PH8 I have them rely on each other, and if they don't know, they know they 're more than welcome to ask me. PI9 Understanding what they know and don't know given their prior knowledge allows me the opportunity to be a better teacher for them. PJ10 We also do very strategic pairing. A medium level in reading, and maybe a high. PK11 Well, with the KWL, we can go back and-- what do you know about this person? What do you want to know about this person? And then what did you learn?	"even teach the other students" Understanding what they know and don't know "strategic pairing" "what do you know"
High Teacher Expectations for All Students	PA1 One of my biggest expectations is for them to pay attention to what their reading and really monitor what they're reading. I think taking the time to help them learn from their mistakes is truly one of the biggest things that's helping improve them. PC3 I expect them to make sure they follow the reading strategies before they read a passage. PD4 Some of my literacy expectations, what I feel that all my students can learn and grow and when they come inside of my class. PF6. Not just read or get stuck on Dog Man books and graphic novels and the animal books to try branch out and do some other things that you have a wide variety of experiences with books.	"pay attention to what their reading" "monitor what they're reading" "Always try to learn something in everything that you read" "follow the reading strategies before they read a passage" "all my students can learn and grow" "work together in order to supersede the weakness to meet the goals" "read a lot"

PG7 I want you to love books. Yeah. I want them to love reading. I want them to grow as readers

PH8 I do expect them to read a lot.

Appendix E: A Priori and In Vivo Coding for Lesson Plan Document Review

A Priori and In Vivo Coding for Lesson Plan Document Review Protocol

CRT Framework	Participant Excerpts	In Vivo Codes
Concepts of Self and Others	PA1 The teacher will ask "How would you feel if you found out someone stole your narrative and said it was theirs?" Would you like to make Ukrainian eggs? Why or why not? PD4 When do we make predictions in school or at home? When do we make predictions in school or at home? PC3 How do you assume Ron is feeling in paragraph 1? What clues from the text helped you to determine the answer? What do you know that helped you determine the answer?" PG7 Why do you think questioning helps readers understand what is happening in the text?	"Book: Chicken Sunday" "book level" "discuss character development and traits" "essential vocabulary" "Flocabulary video on setting" "Passage: Saturday adventures" "what do you know that helped you determine the answer?"
Social Relations	PA1 talk to a partner about why you think the author wrote the story. PC3 Give pairs of students one of each of the following photographs. Have students think about what is happening in the picture, then with their pair, discuss what is happening Have the students pair up and discuss the answer. Have each pair of students share what they think is happening in the photograph Share responses with the class. PF6 The students will share responses from their graphic organizer explaining the characters they found and trait words to describe them. PG7 You and your partner are going to work together to develop your own question(s).	"Teacher will record ideas" "talk to a partner" "Give pairs of students one" "pair up and discuss" "Share responses with the class" "share responses" "turn and talk" "The students will work with their partner" "Discussions" "discuss their answers" "shoulder partner" "discuss what is happening"

	The students will turn and talk to their partner about the question The students will work with their partner around the room to develop questions about the text using the graphic organizer. After student have had time to generate questions, bring them back together and share out questions. Walk around the room giving feedback or prompting where necessary. PI9 Discussions will be had to discuss answer and detail rationale. PK11 I want you to work with your shoulder partner and read part of a story together.	"Share responses with the class" "share responses" "bring them back together and share out questions" "giving feedback or prompting" "Give the students an opportunity to tell the meaning" "share their prediction"
Concepts of Knowledge	PA1 Possible misconceptions/gaps: this will be the student's first experience working on a "works cited" page. They may struggle with idea/understanding the purpose for doing this. Possible misconceptions/gaps: Students may have a difficult time understanding the difference between main idea and theme. The student will find, evaluate, and select appropriate resources to create a research product. I can create a "works cited" page with three resources independently with 100% accuracy. Bloom's Level: Create PC3 Possible misconceptions: Students may select information that is not important from the text when trying to draw conclusions; students may not have the background knowledge necessary to make an inference from the text. Given the passage Saturday Adventures, students will draw conclusions and make two inferences and highlight details and examples from the text with at least 75% accuracy Students will draw conclusions and make two inferences and highlight details and examples from the text with at least 75% accuracy PD4 Possible misconceptions: The students lack the background knowledge/experience to make prediction. Anticipatory set: The teacher will ask "Do you	"student's first experience may struggle" "difficult time understanding" "Students may select information that is not important" "Apply, Evaluate" "students lack the background knowledge" "students may not understand "students will lack the background knowledge/life" "Student's don't have enough background knowledge" "find, evaluate, and select" "create" "Independently" "Create" "create" "Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze" "I can identify" "student responses with their partners will determine success" "draw conclusions and make two inferences"

	know what a prediction is? Standard: The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts, narrative nonfiction, and poetry: Make, confirm, or revise predictions. Bloom's Level: Apply, Evaluate Assessment: Given two prediction scenarios, students will independently demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts by making and confirming predictions by answering 2 out of 3 questions correctly. PG7 Objective: TSW generate questions and complete a graphic organizer with at least 3 questions. Bloom's Level: Understand, Apply TTW read the "I Can" statement, "I can ask and answer questions before, during, and after reading". Assessment: The students will be able to generate questions while reading. PI9 Possible misconceptions: The students may not understand that conflicts arise within text and often times with a solution embedded in the text. The student may not understand that conflict/resolution is synonymous with problem/solution. Objective: Given the text and a set of conflict resolution strips and details, the students will identify the conflict/resolution and the details that support with 70% accuracy or better. PJ10 Possible misconceptions: The students will lack the background knowledge/life experience to make reasonable predictions. Objective: Given a shared reading passage, the students will be able to independently make, confirm, or revise predictions with 2 out of 2 accuracy. Bloom's levels: Apply – Evaluate Possible misconceptions: The students will lack the background knowledge/life experience to make reasonable predictions. PK11 Possible misconceptions: Student's don't have enough background knowledge to figure out unknown words.	"75% accuracy" "draw conclusions and make two inferences and highlight" "75% accuracy" "answering 2 out of 3 questions correctly" "Identify and describe" "Understand, Apply" "I can ask and answer questions" "The students will be able to generate questions while reading" "identify the conflict/resolution and the details that support with 70% accuracy or better" "identify the conflict/resolution and the details that support with 70% accuracy or better" "students may not understand The student may not understand" "students will identify the conflict/resolution and details that support with 70% accuracy or better" "to independently make, confirm, or revise predictions with 2 out of 2 accuracy" "Apply – Evaluate" "independently make, confirm, or revise predictions with 2 out of 2 accuracy" "Use context" "Apply" "at least 7 out of 9 correct" "students will identify the conflict/resolution and details that support with 70% accuracy or better" "to independently make, confirm, or revise predictions with 2 out of 2 accuracy" "Apply – Evaluate" "independently make, confirm, or revise predictions with 2 out of 2 accuracy"

	Bloom's level: Apply	"Apply"
	Assessment: The teacher will assess students using the excerpt from *Peter Rabbit* independent work and a board game to match the meaning with words with at least 7 out of 9 correct.	"at least 7 out of 9 correct"
	PL12 Objective: Given a graphic organizer, TSW identify the problem, solution, and identify character development and traits throughout the story by filling in the graphic organizer with 4 out of 5 components correct.	"with 4 out of 5 components correct"