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High School Teachers' Perceptions of Their Use of Equity Practices in Classrooms

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Walden University

College of Education & Human Sciences

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Seeku Cleland

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

High School Teachers' Perceptions of Their Use of Equity Practices in Classrooms

by

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MSc. Education, Johns Hopkins University, 2011

MA, California State University East Bay, 2004

BA, University of San Francisco, 1986

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2023

Abstract

As the study site district became more diverse, providing educational opportunities that met all learners' needs became more urgent in a large US school district. The local problem was that little is known about how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of their understanding and use of equity practices as well as suggestions for improvement. The study was grounded by Banks' three dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, and equity pedagogy. Semistructured interviews were conducted with eight full-time high school teachers with at least 4 years of teaching experience, who had attended equity professional development sessions, and who had participated in biweekly professional learning communities. Open and axial coding was used to categorize the data into more specific categories. The findings are that study participants could not distinguish between equity practices in general and the use of multicultural education content. In addition, none of the participants actively used multicultural content or strategies recommended by other theorists. When Banks's dimensions were clarified, study participants implied they used content integration and equity pedagogy the most. A 3-day professional development project was designed to improve teachers' understanding of the dimensions of multicultural education and their application in diverse classrooms to improve students' academic outcomes across the district. The findings from the study can promote positive social change as teachers develop and strengthen their intra and intercultural capacities and use of research-based equity practices to facilitate student learning and academic progress.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my late father, Ambassador Joseph Quao Cleland, a retired professor at the University of Ghana, Legon, who worked tirelessly as a diplomat and educator to promote and advance the attainment of educational goals across diverse disciplines. He passed away peacefully on Friday, July 13, 2018; as my guiding light, mentor, and hero, his light has diminished but has not been extinguished.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	2
Rationale	5
Evidence of the Problem in the Local Setting	6
Evidence of the Problem in Literature	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
Significance of the Study.....	11
Research Questions	12
Review of the Literature	12
Conceptual Framework.....	13
Review of the Broader Problem.....	16
Multicultural Classrooms	17
Intercultural Competence.....	18
Teacher Perceptions	19
Best Practices for Equity Classrooms	21
Teacher Preparation	29
Implications.....	30
Summary	32
Section 2: The Methodology.....	33
Research Design and Approach	33
Participants.....	37

Criteria for Participant Selection.....	37
Justification for the Number of Participants	37
Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants	38
Establishing a Researcher–Participant Relationship.....	39
Protection of Participants’ Rights	39
Data Collection	40
Interviews.....	41
Sufficiency of Data Collection.....	41
Processes for Data Collection and Recording.....	42
Systems for Tracking Data.....	42
Role of the Researcher	43
Data Analysis	43
Data Analysis Results	46
Findings for Research Question 1	46
Findings for Subquestion 1	48
Findings for Subquestion 2	49
Findings for Subquestion 3	50
Findings for Subquestion 4	52
Interpretation of the Findings.....	52
Relationship of the Findings to the Conceptual Framework	53
Themes	53
Summary	61
Teacher Demographics	63

Discrepant Cases	63
Evidence of Quality	64
Limitations	64
Project Deliverable.....	65
Section 3: The Project	67
Rationale	68
Review of the Literature	69
CRP	70
Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Curriculum	71
Cultural Competence.....	72
Relevance of Multicultural Education	73
Multicultural Education and Language Integration	73
Multicultural Texts.....	76
Multicultural Staff.....	77
Professional Development in Multicultural Education.....	78
Project Description.....	79
Needed Resources.....	80
Existing Supports	81
Potential Barriers and Solutions.....	81
Proposal for Implementation.....	81
Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders	83
Project Evaluation Plan	83
Project Implications	84

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	85
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	85
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches	86
Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change	88
Reflection on Importance of the Work	89
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research	90
Conclusion	91
References.....	93
Appendix A: The Project	119
Appendix B: Informal Assessment	145
Appendix C: Consent Form.....	146
Appendix D: Interview Protocol.....	147
Appendix E: Interview Guide.....	148
Appendix F: Themes	149
Appendix G: Content Integration.....	153
Appendix H: Alignment of Themes to Central Research Question and Subquestions	157

List of Tables

Table 1. Open Coding	44
Table 2. Axial Coding	45
Table 3. Teacher Demographics	63

Section 1: The Problem

A meaningful relationship exists between culture and education because the culture of teachers and students influences educational outcomes (Lac & Diamond, 2019). Qian and Garner (2019) defined *culture* as a way of life or a set of shared patterns of thought and behavior that give meaning to a particular community. Multicultural education denotes practices and theories that underpin equitable opportunities for students regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, religion, or national origin (Jabeen, 2019). In the current study, multicultural education was synonymous with equity practices. The United States comprises people of different cultures, requiring teachers to use diverse instructional methods to boost student participation and achievement.

The literature suggested that the multicultural nature of classrooms creates issues for instructional practice (Lac & Diamond, 2019; Parkhouse et al., 2019). One problem is low student achievement, particularly for African American and Latino students. Some studies suggested that Latino students, who are recent immigrants, come from countries where the culture and educational systems are different and need help adjusting to new environments (Jabeen, 2019). As a result, their achievement may suffer (Jabeen, 2019). Other studies indicated that the classroom's cultural character impedes students receiving European American education (Banks & Banks, 2016; Chang, 2018). The result is that teachers and students need help communicating with each other. Chang (2018) posited that this is an event that students from nondominant cultures often experience in classrooms. Teachers may have questions about remedying the issues they face because of how they perceive the use of equity practices.

The Local Problem

In 2005, the study site district instituted a professional development program known as The Practice (pseudonym) to improve teachers' use of equity practices in classrooms. The Practice included research-based equity methods, techniques, and procedures for instructing students from diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. The local problem was that little was known about how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. Despite decades of equity improvement efforts in the district, disparities in achievement between White, African American, and Latino students persist. After 14 years of implementing The Practice, the district's 2018–2019 Report Card revealed that 74% of White students met the state's annual proficiency target in math, compared to 39.4% for Black students and 29.8% for Latino students. In English, 85% of White students met the proficiency standard compared to 50.5% of Black students and 47.4% of Latino students. Continued deficits in African American and Latino students' performance indicated a gap in educational performance.

The 2017 annual report recognized the concern of district administrators that after 14 years of use, The Practice had failed to reduce the variance in the achievement between White, African American, and Latino students. This failure indicated a gap in using instructional methods and techniques that promote the academic growth of African American and Latino students. Although the district initiated The Practice as a faculty development program to increase teacher facility with equity practices, there may have been variations in implementation practices. It was unknown how district teachers

perceive their use of equity practices in classrooms to meet African American and Latino students' instructional needs.

As the district became more diverse, the urgency to provide educational opportunities that met all learners' needs became more acute. The existence of multiple races and ethnicities has complicated issues of approaching diversity and multicultural education (Banks, 1993) and how teachers can best address the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds. Equity refers to a principle of fairness. Although "fairness" is often used interchangeably with the principle of equality, equity encompasses various educational models, programs, and strategies that are considered fair but not necessarily equal (Bukko & Liu, 2021). The local problem was that little was known about how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms.

Ticknor et al. (2020) suggested a need to center equitable teaching in literacy education courses to disrupt traditional perspectives of teaching diverse students. Ticknor et al.'s findings revealed that throughout a teacher education program, three possibilities emerged about how teachers perceive the use of equity practices: Teachers resisted change because they continued to focus on barriers related to full implementation of equitable practices, teachers who participated in the teacher education program discussed new opportunities for teaching, or were ready to implement equity practices with fidelity. As teachers become better equipped to promote culturally responsive and equitable procedures for African American and Latino students, these students often show higher motivation, self-confidence, and academic achievement (Parkhouse et al., 2019). Issues

of addressing equity and multicultural education are not unique to the study site district. Inequities also exist nationally (Lac & Diamond, 2019).

Within the larger educational environment, African American and Latino students lag their White and Asian American counterparts despite decades of reforms. Hwang et al. (2018) suggested that students from high socioeconomic status, who are usually White, outperform students from low socioeconomic status, who are usually Black and Latino. Scholars have asserted that educational reform efforts attempted to reduce the achievement gaps through student-centered instruction (Bremner et al. 2022; Zhang et al., 2023).

Reform-based instruction provides equal learning opportunities for students to communicate their understanding of concepts. Nonetheless, teachers sometimes implement student-centered strategies differently from what educational reformers intended (Hwang et al., 2018). Learning gaps may persist based on how teachers interpret the application of student-centered learning in math and science. Demographic changes have spurred modifications in pedagogical approaches across the United States, but those changes have not included multicultural instructional practices (Preston, 2022). Many teachers assume multicultural education amounts to “teaching about other cultures” (Parker, 2019, p. 26). Teachers often lack an awareness of multicultural practices and do not make a concerted effort to learn about student cultures.

Most students in American schools are now non-White, and the number of English language learners (ELLs) in public schools has increased by 51%., compared to a 7% increase in the general student population (Harrison & Lakin, 2018). The increased

diversity of American schools has prompted educators to understand the role that culture plays in classrooms. The study site district has implemented equity practices that promote research-based multicultural educational practices for instructing students in classrooms to improve all students' academic outcomes.

Multicultural education allows students to think and learn in environments connected to their own cultures. Culture is a complex, multifaceted construct that includes race, religion, language, and socioeconomic status. If teachers understand and welcome the diverse cultural perspectives students bring to the classroom, teachers are more likely to appreciate the differences students bring (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018).

Rationale

Researchers suggested that equity in academic achievement is attainable only if equal opportunity exists. Equality is attained when academic achievement is not dependent on background variables or other circumstances (Dadon-Golan et al., 2019). Teachers need to appreciate what the term equity means and what equity looks like when implemented correctly in classrooms (Bukko & Liu, 2021). On a policy level, Every Student Succeeds Act implied continued support for ELLs in K–12 schools (Murphy et al., 2019). Schools must account for all students' educational and learning needs, not only the needs of the English-speaking population (Harrison & Lakin, 2018). The influx of ELL students highlights the importance of understanding how teacher perceptions influence pedagogy.

Multicultural education acknowledges the cultural knowledge, experiences, and learning styles of ethnically diverse students, including ELL students. Multicultural education can create learning spaces that are relevant, supportive, and effective for all students (Parker, 2019). Culturally responsive pedagogy encourages teacher–student dialogue that embraces students’ academic, language, and cultural backgrounds for ELL students mostly of Latino and African American origin (Couch, 2019). Little was known about how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. A gap in practice existed because teachers may have held professional views that influenced how they implemented equity practices. Teachers’ professional opinions matter because they can be private and resistant to change (Bice & Tang, 2022).

Evidence of the Problem in the Local Setting

The district’s 2018 annual report indicated that although progress had been made in improving student performance, the gains had not been sufficient to curtail the opportunity gaps confronting African American and Latino students. In prior years, the Annual Report highlighted African American and Latino students’ continuing struggles to access equity practices instituted in 2005, as shown in performance reports. Decades earlier, the district endorsed case studies that had documented a lack of vision and effort to engage marginalized students through teaching practices.

The district reported in 2015 that students of color and ELLs comprised 66% of student enrollment, while White educators constituted approximately 75% of the staff. The report also revealed that although 21% of the students were Black, only 13% of the teachers were Black. In addition, although Latinos were 27% of the student population,

only 5% of the teachers were Latino. On the other hand, Whites represented 33% of the student population but 76% of the teacher population, a disproportionate share with cultural implications. When the district conducted a study to determine the demographic match between students and staff, the following findings emerged:

1. A demographic mismatch between the district's students and school mirrored state and national trends.
2. The alignment between school-based staff's language proficiencies and the linguistic diversity of its ELL-eligible students was unknown.
3. Student subgroups were concentrated in schools with other members of their subgroups.
4. A demographic mismatch existed between students and staff; this was reflected in student-to-staff ratios that were widest among schools with the highest enrollment of Black and Latino students.

Over the years, much money has been invested in hiring African American and Latino teachers and improving equity practices, but gaps remained. According to the district's Achieving Excellence and Equity Through Resource Use report, performance gaps existed even though more time was spent on the neediest students. These challenges persist locally and are also seen at the national level. The recent literature showed differences between African American and Latino families and their wealthier White counterparts (Bice & Tang, 2022). There was also evidence of the problem in broader literature.

Evidence of the Problem in Literature

Literature indicated a relationship between race, culture, and education because teachers' and students' cultures affect educational outcomes (Dryden-Peterson, 2018). African American and Latino children often find themselves in the situation of either assimilating into an existing culture or creating a stable balance between their own and the leading culture. Felton-Koestler (2019) traced the development of one teacher's views on equity and found that early in the teacher development program, the subject favored a teacher-centered approach to learning. Teacher-centered instruction involves teachers demonstrating how to solve one or two problems and then giving students problems to solve. In a student-centered approach, the teacher shows students how to solve problems and has students use their existing knowledge base to solve problems.

A practical approach is required to improve student achievement using culturally responsive teaching practices. Cultural differences between the teaching force and what some teachers perceive as problem behavior often drive the best-qualified teachers into more traditional White schools (Yon, 2022). An inability to prepare teachers to deal with problem behavior could be due to inadequate teacher preparation programs and a failure of continuing education to respond to teachers' pressing problems (Bonner et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995). One response is to use instructional strategies that connect students' home and school lives and make students feel more accepted.

Culturally responsive teaching challenges long-held beliefs that students from culturally and linguistically divergent backgrounds lack the tools needed to succeed. Mellom et al. (2018) found that even though teachers may bring their attitudes toward

ELL students, professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy leads to the mitigation of teachers' negative attitudes over time. Culturally responsive teaching links instruction to students' cultural backgrounds, rejects leading narratives that ignore diverse perspectives, and promotes cultural awareness and appreciation for students from culturally and linguistically divergent backgrounds (Mellom et al., 2018). Some barriers persist in the use of culturally responsive teaching practices, including teachers' lack of knowledge of students' cultural experiences, a racial mismatch between students and teachers, and teachers' preparation and exposure to practices that are useful in diverse classrooms (Comstock et al., 2023).

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs may present a significant barrier to implementing culturally responsive pedagogy (Mellom et al., 2018). Teachers must have the knowledge, dispositions, pedagogical skills, and competencies to reach students from diverse backgrounds. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of their understanding and use of equity practices as well as suggestions for improvement. Multicultural education was used to frame the research questions that guided this study.

Definition of Terms

The definitions of key terms used in this study came from the literature review. The definitions are not inclusive.

Classroom equity: The rights granted to a group of people, which include demographic notions of diversity. Equity does not imply that everyone is treated the

same. Instead, each group is given the resources they need to be successful (Celedón-Pattichis et al., 2018).

Content integration: Teaching practices that incorporate student cultures into everyday lessons (Banks, 1993).

Cultural competence: Cultural competence is one's ability to respect and understand values, beliefs, and attitudes that differ from one's own (Couch, 2019).

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). Ladson-Billings (1995) defined CRP as using "student culture to maintain it and transcend the dominant culture" (p. 19).

Culture: A way of life (Qian & Garner, 2019) or a set of shared patterns of thought and behavior that gives meaning to a particular community. Culture is one aspect of diversity in classrooms and influences teaching and learning.

Equity practices: Inclusion and fairness that strengthen the ability of an educational system to reach all learners in a community (Celedón-Pattichis et al., 2018).

Intercultural competence: The ability to effectively communicate and behave in multicultural classrooms (Couch, 2019).

Multicultural education or multiculturalism: The incorporation of cultures, ways of doing things, customs, and beliefs in teaching practices (Jabeen, 2019).

Teacher perceptions: Teachers' views about culturally responsive pedagogy and student engagement. They represent the thoughts and mental images teachers have of their students (Couch, 2019; Whittle et al., 2018).

Significance of the Study

I investigated teachers' perceptions of their understanding and use of equity practices as well as suggestions for improvement. Equity practices are pedagogy in which classroom instruction centers on multicultural frames of reference (Taylor et al., 2019). Because student diversity has expanded with a population increase that has resulted in one of the most diverse school districts in the United States, teachers must be equipped with the tools to cater to the learning needs of a diverse student population. Understanding how teachers perceive equity practices with culturally diverse students was essential because the knowledge gained could provide an opportunity for teachers to better manage their classrooms. Understanding how teachers perceive their use of equity practices influences pedagogy and teacher classroom management (Butler, 2019; Whittle et al., 2018).

Despite efforts to infuse multicultural education into instructional practice, effective instruction is hampered by some teachers' negative perceptions of students from diverse cultures (Bonner et al., 2018). Teachers' deficit perceptions are often based on belief systems that students from nonleading groups are culturally or genetically inferior (Couch, 2019). The district could use the findings from the current study to develop professional development plans that better position teachers to use instructional strategies that take all students' needs into account to improve student participation and overall achievement. The study's findings could benefit the local and similar school districts confronting current and changing student demographics to develop training programs that help teachers. A better understanding of teachers' perceptions of their understanding and

use of equity practices as well as suggestions for improvement may provide information that could be used in developing guidelines for staff development that enhances teachers' cultural and intercultural proficiency (see Couch, 2019; Whittle et al., 2018). The current study could uncover critical aspects of the equity educational process that require further exploration (see Powell & Bodur, 2019; Reinsfield, 2019).

Research Questions

This study's research questions were informed by Banks's multicultural education framework. The research indicated that teachers who consistently use equity practices are more prone to embrace cultures that differ from their own (Stembridge, 2019). By embracing cultures different from their own, teachers can create lessons that reflect various cultural perspectives. The primary research question was the following: How do teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms? Four subquestions were used to guide the study and inform the interview protocol (see Appendix D):

1. What is your understanding of equity practices?
2. Which multicultural education practices do you implement in your classroom?
3. Which of the strategies do teachers use most often?
4. What suggestions do teachers have to improve the use of multicultural education as equity practices in classrooms?

Review of the Literature

The literature review provided critical thinking of peer-reviewed research on how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in classrooms and their perceptions of

multicultural education practices. Banks's (1993) theory of multicultural education provided a framework to examine how teachers perceive their use of equity practices.

Conceptual Framework

Banks's (1995) dimensions of multicultural education formed the conceptual framework for this study. Banks's theory encompasses five dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture (Banks & Banks, 2016). Even though the dimensions are interrelated, I used three of the five dimensions (knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, and content integration) because they relate more directly to instructional practice. Banks posited that multicultural education is an idea that creates equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the school environment; this is reflected in the diverse cultures and groups within a society and classrooms. Content integration is a good starting point to explore Banks's dimensions.

Content Integration

Content integration has become a key topic of multicultural education research because of its implications for instructional practice (Jakonen, 2019). Banks (1993) defined content integration as teaching practices that incorporate student cultures into everyday lessons. Content integration prescribes how teachers use data and examples from different cultures to illustrate critical concepts, principles, and theories in their disciplines (Banks, 1995; Kazanjian, 2019). For example, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teachers can insert multicultural content into their disciplines by using biographies of physicists and mathematicians of color and by

including portraits of STEM scientists representing different cultural groups (Banks, 1993). Content developers bear a responsibility to present an unfiltered view of world events, cultures, and perspectives that do not necessarily reflect their viewpoints (Banks, 1993). Banks (1989) provided four historical and currently used approaches to integrating content for instructional planning: contributions, additive, transformation, and social action.

The contributions approach is the most frequently used (Banks & Banks, 2016). In this approach, ethnic heroes are selected for inclusion in the curriculum and used for instructional planning. The additive approach involves the integration of content, concepts, themes, and perspectives into the curriculum and instructional planning, but without altering the curriculum's basic structure, purposes, and characteristics (Banks, 1993). A book, unit, or course is added to instruction in the additive approach without fundamentally changing the focus (Banks, 1989; Butler, 2019; Dennis, 2018; Whittle et al., 2018). The transformation approach differs from the contributions and additive methods. Whereas the contributions and additive approaches add ethnic content to instructional planning, they do not change the basic assumptions, nature, and structure.

The transformation approach changes the curriculum and instruction's basic beliefs so that students are exposed to concepts, themes, and perspectives (Banks, 1989). A vital benefit of the transformations approach is that it infuses various perspectives and frames of reference from different ethnic groups that broaden student understanding of American society's development and complexity (Banks & Banks, 2016). This approach embeds social issues such as sexism, racism, and economic injustice into instructional

practices (Banks & Banks, 2016). This approach focuses on educating students for social change and criticism while teaching them to make informed decisions related to a concept, issue, or problem they have studied (Banks, 1989). The transformation approach underpins all of Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education. The second dimension examined in the current study, however, is knowledge construction.

Knowledge Construction

Knowledge construction, another aspect of Banks's dimensions, encompasses discussions about how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases influence how knowledge is constructed across disciplines and repeated by teachers without deconstructing what is taught (Banks, 1995). Implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference delineate the perspectives and beliefs teachers bring into lessons without taking into consideration students' cultural backgrounds and knowledge (Banks, 1993). Banks (2006) asserted that miseducation occurs in classrooms when teachers fail to deconstruct accepted knowledge so students can understand how inherent biases or misinformation are propagated as truth and repeated by teachers without adequate analysis. This lack of deconstruction may lead to students failing to understand how significant contributions from other cultures, including their own, contribute to what is perceived as established dogma (Banks, 1993; Banks & Banks, 1995; Whittle et al., 2018). Other theorists such as Gorski (2001) appear to support Banks's notion that the goal of multicultural curriculum and instructional transformation should be to expose students to various experiences, voices, and perspectives that can be interwoven into current frameworks of knowledge. In addition to content integration and

knowledge construction, Banks and Banks (2016) espoused the importance of equity pedagogy in creating multicultural classrooms.

Equity Pedagogy

Banks and Banks (1995) defined equity pedagogy as a process for fostering students' academic achievement from different racial, ethnic, and social-class groups. Banks viewed equity pedagogy as the promotion of environments that foster knowledge acquisition and production (Banks, 1993; Chang, 2018). Teachers employ an equity pedagogy when they combine strategies and teaching methods that meet the diverse needs of students (Banks, 1995; Blue et al., 2018). According to Banks and Banks, "helping students become reflective and active citizens of a democratic society is at the essence of our conception of equity pedagogy" (p. 152). Other theorists offered their views on multicultural education, which are covered in the review of the broader problem.

Review of the Broader Problem

Several issues were identified in the body of the literature. These issues include multicultural classrooms, intercultural competence, teacher perceptions, best practices for equity classrooms, and teacher preparation. Recent literature related to these issues addressed challenges brought about by diversity in classrooms, whether teachers can meet student needs, how teachers perceive students from different cultural perspectives, and what practices best meet student needs. Walden Library's databases, namely Education Source, Eric, Thoreau Multi-Database Search, and Sage Journals, provided a means to identify peer-reviewed articles and journals. Boolean strings facilitated searches

because they made it possible to limit the scope of the searches. The search terms included *deficit thinking*, *cultural differences*, *cultural dissonance*, *teacher education programs*, *teacher preparation programs*, *best practices*, *cultural competence*, *teacher perceptions*, *teacher education*, and *subtractive schooling*. This literature review ties seminal work from multicultural education with more recent research on using culturally appropriate strategies to create welcoming environments for students.

Multicultural Classrooms

As public schools have become more diverse, it has had implications for instructional practice in a field dominated by White teachers who may have their perceptions of equity practices (Couch, 2019; Harrison & Lakin, 2018). Bonner et al. (2018) explored urban teachers' perceptions of diverse students' instruction and their abilities to implement culturally responsive teaching in multicultural classrooms. Results revealed that even though teachers have a strong commitment to culturally responsive teaching, certain limitations remain. The first limitation is that because participants were from urban schools in Southern California, it was difficult to determine how teachers from suburban areas would perceive multicultural practices. Bonner et al. also failed to match teacher perceptions with culture to determine whether teachers' culture influenced their perceptions. Villegas (2019) similarly observed that emphasizing diversity requires educators to use multicultural perspectives during instruction. According to Villegas, multicultural education is important because it teaches individuals to acknowledge, respect, and embrace difference. Theorists such as Freire (2018) suggested the use of critical pedagogy as a tool to make curricular and instructional practice more equitable to

the learning needs of racial minority groups such as African American and Latino students. As classrooms have become more diverse, the need for teacher intercultural competence has come to the forefront.

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence improves teachers' perceptions of their ability to effectively support diverse students (Couch, 2019). Teachers require intercultural competence to interact with and instruct students from differing cultural and social backgrounds (Martin-Beltran et al., 2023). Intercultural competence is defined as the ability to effectively communicate with students who differ from teachers in their linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Markey et al., 2023). Although many school districts have made efforts to improve teacher intercultural competence, many teachers still feel unprepared to deal with culturally and linguistically diverse students (Romijn et al., 2021). Tualaulelei (2020) similarly lamented the culture shock teachers experience in highly multicultural classrooms. Tualaulelei identified a dearth of opportunities for teachers to engage culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Teacher preparation programs prepare teachers to accept student diversity and incorporate multicultural experiences into classrooms. Good teacher preparation programs reshape teachers' mindsets and perceptions so they can be better prepared to provide instruction (Blue et al., 2018; Bonner et al., 2018; Couch, 2019; Whittle et al., 2018). In addition to multicultural classrooms and intercultural competence, teacher perceptions were also examined.

Teacher Perceptions

Recent studies focused on how teacher perceptions of African American, Latino, and other racial groups influence practice (Kaldi et al., 2018). Teacher perceptions could derive from ethnic prejudice and ethnocentrism, ideas, and attitudes regarding ethnic out-groups, including their impact on classroom behavior and instructional planning. Teacher perceptions are important because they affect content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, and rigor (Whittle et al., 2018). Teacher perceptions contribute to the opinions of students on how best to implement equity practices. In the absence of a racial match between teachers and students, teachers benefit from multicultural education training because it could modify their perceptions of equity practices (Thapa, 2019). Empirical evidence suggested a link between teacher perceptions and the use of equity materials (Harrison & Lakin, 2018).

Teachers' ability to implement equity practices depends on their perceptions of equity within a multicultural context. A recurring theme in education studies is that ethnically and socioeconomically privileged teachers bring their perceptions of equity practices to the classroom and often lack the knowledge or skills to implement multicultural approaches (Vayner, 2019). In addition to the added pressures of class size and testing regimes, compositional features of schools such as the ethnic and socioeconomic composition affect teacher perceptions, pedagogy, and implementation of multicultural education principles (Dryden-Peterson, 2018; Freire, 2018; Jabeen, 2019). Taylor et al. (2019) showed that ability grouping (tracking) is highly susceptible to teacher perceptions and perpetuates inequities. The research is not conclusive about

whether ability grouping is effective. Taylor et al. found that schools improved their practices under mandates and that without the pressure of federal or state mandates, schools maintained the status quo.

Teachers have long blamed their inability to reach ELL students on a multitude of factors including lack of student motivation, lack of time, and lack of resources.

According to Simpson and Cremin (2022), teachers have an ethical responsibility to redress inequities through literature. Because not all reading practices are equal, there should be a scaffolded introduction to reading literacy texts (Simpson & Cremin, 2022). Simpson and Cremin asserted that teachers need to be adept at improving teaching practices through adoption of literacy texts; such practices would improve social justice for disadvantaged students typically from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Even though teachers may have perceptions that students' racial and socioeconomic status impair their educational outcomes (Bice & Tang, 2022), teachers contribute to student outcomes by the way they interact with and treat students from lower socioeconomic status (Jabbar & Mirza, 2019; Shannon-Baker, 2018).

Another way teachers' perceptions influence their students' academic outcomes is deficit thinking. Teachers often view racial minority students as lacking academic values and critical thinking skills, and this inhibits equity practice. According to teacher deficit perspective, students from Africa, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia place greater emphasis on rote memorization as a vehicle for developing a deepening understanding of concepts (Jabbar & Mirza, 2019). In many instances, these students fare better than their White and African American counterparts. Heng and Lim (2021) viewed diversity as a

social construct based on perceptions. Teacher perceptions are influenced by markers such as race, gender, and disabilities. According to Heng and Lim, teacher practices are influenced by their perceptions of student readiness to engage in academic instruction. There is an intersection of student readiness and practices of equity. Addressing issues of classroom diversity yields critical insights into dominant social narratives pertaining to student abilities based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Heng & Liam, 2021).

Teacher perceptions influence outcomes in how educators perceive non-college-track students. Sanchez (2018) and Valenzuela (2018) examined teacher practices from a perspective of subtractive schooling for Latino youths and the implications for instructional practice. Subtractive schooling is a form of education experienced by non-college-track students. Because these students are not on a college track, they feel less valued by counselors, teachers, and the school community and often experience a dehumanizing pedagogy caused by limitations in their educational process participation. Sánchez and Valenzuela recommended critical pedagogy espoused by Freire (2018) to counter subtractive schooling and dehumanization.

Best Practices for Equity Classrooms

Multicultural education provides a set of practices, values, and principles that teachers use in creating a multicultural education praxis (Shannon-Baker, 2018). A multicultural education praxis exists when African American and Latino students are more active classroom participants, and their achievement improves. For instance, Shannon-Baker (2018) argued that a multicultural education praxis is organized around three core themes: Define and frame multicultural education within its contemporary and

historical context, connect theories to lived experiences, and model and teach a multicultural education praxis. Shannon-Baker suggested that teachers define and frame multicultural education within its contemporary and historical context:

1. Investigating the history of the field, idea, or concept of multicultural education.
2. Discussing social justice movements.
3. Designing more critical lessons that analyze both “safe” versions of history as well as more critical versions.
4. Utilizing technology and media as tools for discussions and assignments. (p. 52).
5. Furthermore, teachers can connect theories to lived experiences by
 - Reading and discussing testimonials with a critical perspective.
 - Utilizing multimedia resources such as films, interactive presentations, and comics.
 - Framing discussions from local or regional perspectives.
 - Encouraging students to share their own stories (Shannon-Baker, 2018, p. 52).
 - Finally, teachers model a multicultural education praxis by employing the following strategies:
 - Sharing teaching practices and decisions with students whenever possible.
 - Assigning students projects that engage their autonomy.

- Facilitating peer feedback through the intentional grouping of students.
- “Owning practices” and mistakes are publicly made to the class, so students know it is necessary for self-reflection and growth.
- Engaging in self-reflection whenever possible (Shannon-Baker, 2018).

Multicultural education practices empower teachers to critically reflect on their pedagogy to improve instructional outcomes while improving student participation and achievement (Shannon-Baker, 2018).

According to Aragona-Young and Sawyer (2018), the diversity of students in the United States justifies the need for multicultural education teaching practices. Other scholars pointed out that classrooms are not race-neutral spaces, and teachers can center racial equity and diversity in their instructional practices (see King et al., 2023; Kozleski & Proffitt, 2019). Despite these challenges, some recommendations can improve student outcomes. Agirdag et al. (2016) found that schools with students who were from more racially and ethnically diverse students were more likely to use multicultural education practices. Aragona-Young and Sawyer (2018) suggested that teachers with prior experience with people from differing racial and cultural backgrounds make teachers more likely to use multicultural education practices. In addition, teacher education programs should align training with school reform policies. Teachers should create and encourage heterogeneous cooperative learning groups to help students develop various unions and organizations. In turn, this can help students excel academically and socially. Aragona-Young and Sawyer espouse that multicultural education enriches the experiences of African American, Latino students, and other racial groups.

Gorski and Parekh (2020) examined multicultural education from a broader teacher-education perspective. Gorski and Parekh suggested that teacher education programs provided opportunities for teachers to develop equity skills. Teacher education programs are either liberal or conservative in their approach and focus on cultural competence or diversity appreciation but rarely examine issues from a critical perspective. Gorski and Parekh examined the negative relationship between multicultural teacher education (MTE) courses and how teachers perceived institutional support. The more reflexive teachers were in instructional practice, the less support they received from the administration. Therefore, inherent risks exist in applying conservative or liberal approaches to MTE because these approaches do not always prioritize equity and justice issues. Teachers who successfully used a critical lens understood the sociopolitical context of education (Gorski & Parekh, 2020).

Conversely, teachers who held a liberal view of MTE viewed diversity through a colorblind lens; a liberal view of MTE hampered the ability to appreciate the reproduction of racism in even the most subtle aspects of schooling. An MTE approach empowered teachers to teach against racism rather than diversity issues; teachers developed the facility to devise learning materials steeped in critical racial analysis (Gorski & Parekh, 2020). Other scholars argued for a vision of multicultural education steeped in social activism (Miike, 2022). As a concept, social activism allowed teachers to empower students by taking a critical view of societal issues that affect change in their communities. MTE succeeded in teacher education programs when teachers acquired administrative support to devise lessons that enhanced students' critical thinking skills

and enabled students to take a more active role in examining socioeconomic issues that impacted their communities (Gorski & Parekh, 2020).

Best practices in multicultural education are pertinent to the science field, where African Americans and Latinos underperform. For example, the National Research Council described responsive science instruction as practices that enables all students to succeed. Multicultural education creates opportunities for students from differing racial, social, ethnic, and cultural groups (Banks & Banks, 1995) by changing classroom dynamics, especially regarding culture.

Increasing student engagement in science requires educators to create learning environments that encourage students of color to perform in answering content-knowledge problems (Godec et al., 2018). In the current study, students of color are African American and Latino students, whereas leading students are Whites. Teachers create lessons where students learn by attending to the linguistic, cultural, and emotional differences between students and teachers (Markey et al., 2020). To help students develop a connection between their lived experiences and science, teachers identify ways in which teacher lives, and their communities differed from students' (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Responsive classroom practices in science and MTE are not the only equity practices those teachers employed (Gorski & Parekh, 2020).

Other possible strategies include using 3D classrooms, Funds of Knowledge (FOK), racial literacy, contextualized close reading, classroom libraries, and cooperative learning through complex instruction (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The FOK is a research-

based conceptual tool that teachers use to bridge the gap between themselves, students, and their communities (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Teachers affirm students' FOK by acknowledging student experiences and cultural knowledge. Teachers' use of FOK makes it possible for educators to understand the communities they teach, relationships between the school and district, and science-related values the community holds. Using FOK allows teachers to have a powerful influence on student knowledge (Kolonich et al., 2018). A 3D strategy positions students as generators of knowledge. A 3D classroom exists when students ask questions, gather evidence, and develop explanations that make them active scientific knowledge developers. To position students as generators of scientific knowledge, teachers should create an asset rather than deficit perspectives on student ability (Celedón-Pattichis et al., 2018).

Teachers should encourage the sharing and use of student language. The National Research Council has encouraged using students' native language in classrooms (Brevik & Rindal, 2020). When teachers allow students to use their native language to express their ideas, they demonstrate acceptance and enable students to construct knowledge (Brevik & Rindal, 2020). Teachers promote student collaboration by encouraging them to decide on a common language and revise languages as their understanding deepens. Teacher promotion of student language is related to FOK because students bring their experiences into discussions and become more willing to participate. The teacher integration of disciplinary knowledge and context allows teachers to use students' rich cultural experiences during instruction (Nortvedt et al., 2020). Integration creates

classroom environments where lived experiences and student contributions are not only tolerated but also encouraged.

Another effective teaching strategy is for teachers to promote a critical lens when solving problems (Kelly et al., 2020). Traditional classrooms are structured so the teacher is the center of instruction, and students memorize what is taught. As students develop critical perspectives, they ask questions, examine arguments, question the reliability of evidence, and evaluate each other's work. Teachers position students as holders of knowledge when they use students' backgrounds to enrich instruction and provide students with the skills and opportunities to learn (Kolonich et al., 2018).

Racial literacy is another effective practice that improves the achievement of African American and Latino students (Chavez-Moreno, 2022). Multicultural literature empowers students to explore worlds different from their own while exposing them to unfamiliar perspectives. Students who read books or stories about a world different from their own become exposed to characters, feelings, attitudes, or situations they do not encounter in their everyday lives. Chavez-Moreno espoused that exposing students to representations that are diverse and multicultural helps students develop racial literacy and a knowledge of human differences. The development of racial literacy through multicultural education requires an awareness of literary interpretation, accurate information about racial dynamics, and a respect for the literariness of text. Racial literacy can be developed through contextualized close reading (Culaste-Quimbo, 2022).

Contextualized close reading involves intensive reading and rereading of text to heighten attention to literary language. In contextualized close reading, readers pay

attention to narrative structure and perspective, syntax, tone, imagery, and rhetorical devices, which helps readers develop a working knowledge of the historical, political, social, and cultural contexts in which text is steeped (Culaste-Quimbo, 2022; Epley, 2019). Contextualized close reading allows readers to develop a sense of other cultures through mediation and excavation of socio-cultural ideas on social class, ethnicity, and race in a world where readers and authors cohabit (Culaste-Quimbo, 2022). Teachers become effective multicultural educators when they develop a sense of racial literacy. Culaste-Quimbo espoused that teachers educate students about race in ways that pique their curiosity, inform, and empower them. Thus, teachers can develop research-based strategies that avoid stereotypes about race, acknowledge the positive and negative aspects, and prioritize underrepresented racial groups' stories and experiences.

When teachers establish classroom libraries in early childhood and elementary education, they enhance student exposure to cultural literature (Howlett & Kindall, 2019). Classroom libraries foster racial literacy while enhancing racial awareness (Kolonich et al., 2018). Teachers employ a "narrow" definition of multicultural literature when they use the words "cultural," "nationality," and "race". Teachers are more likely to use multicultural literature if they feel they have the administration's backing. Teachers can use multicultural literature to focus on underrepresented groups' social and cultural experiences. Benefits accrue to teachers who expose their students to multicultural literature. The first advantage is that students learn about the similarities and differences across the racial and cultural spectrum. Additionally, students develop cross-cultural perspectives they can use in other courses (Howlett & Kindall). Teachers must examine

textbooks because they represent codification of knowledge (Parker, 2019). Children's libraries that have a wide variety of cultural texts expand student knowledge of culture and affirm that cultural differences are assets rather than liabilities.

Lastly, cooperative learning is a multicultural education tool used in culturally diverse classrooms (Pescarmona, 2019). According to Pescarmona, there are different types of collaborative learning groups, with complex instruction (CI) being the most effective. CI fosters equal standing between students and fosters wide-ranging interactions. Through CI, teachers design learning tasks, guide communication between students, and design appropriate assessments. According to Pescarmona, CI offers three critical pathways for improving educational outcomes for marginalized students. In the first pathway, teachers delegate accountability to students. In the second, teachers modify the curriculum towards more open-ended and interdisciplinary tasks. In the last pathway, teachers formulate feedback procedures that alter teacher perceptions of students' capacity to learn. CI helps students bring their experiences to class, participate on a level footing with their peers from all socioeconomic statuses, and help teachers design tasks that foster collaboration between students from differing social and cultural backgrounds.

Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation programs prepare future educators to work with diverse student groups (Adams & Glass, 2018). The current projections for student enrollment show increases in enrollment for students of color (Bussey et al., 2019). Employment trends indicate that new teachers are more likely to work in urban areas with higher populations of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and high mobility (Ortiz,

2020). Newly recruited teachers are the most likely to face significant challenges in educating students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Even though pre-service and in-service teachers understand multicultural education constructs, they do not associate multicultural education with Banks's social action approach to make explicit connections to multiculturalism in practice (Mensah et al., 2018). Schools face challenges in the hiring and retention of highly qualified teachers who are effective in high-poverty urban schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Implications

This project study has implications for social and academic change. The fostering of social change relative to teacher–student power dynamics could lead to students taking more responsibility for their learning, instruction becoming more student-centered, and multicultural perspectives that improve outcomes for African American and Latino students. The findings can have a positive impact on classroom culture and environment. There are implications for project direction based on data collection and analysis. As the student demographics change due to an influx of Latino students from Central and South America, schools can make decisions on how quickly to transition English Language Learners (ELL) into general education and the levels of student support needed. Semistructured interviews on equity practices may provide opportunities to identify inequities in classroom practices (Flick, 2018). Semistructured interviews could shed light on student treatment based on language, culture, or academic abilities. Flick asserted that semistructured interviews provide opportunities to address inequities that hinder

student outcomes and reduce gaps between the stated goal of equitable practices and practice.

African American and Latino students are at a disadvantage in resource access and underachievement. COVID-19 led to school closures and the implementation of long-distance learning plans that put African American and Latino students at further risk of academic failure. Data collection and analysis helped teachers and the district understand approaches to curricular and instructional transformation; teachers developed critical thinking and decision-making skills that empowered and improved student self-efficacy. An understanding of teacher perceptions may foster the modification of existing professional learning community (PLC) practices. Understanding teacher perceptions could lead to the development of teaching strategies that are responsive to changing student demographics. A 3-day professional development program could help schools develop teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for diverse students (Voet & De Wever, 2019).

Summary

In section 1, I presented background information that described multicultural education and equity practices as a tool for implementing equity instructional practices. The literature review in section 1 explained why I selected multicultural education as a conceptual framework. In the next section, I described the research design and approach and the justification for the design choice. In section 2, I included information about the population, sample size, criteria for participant selection, procedures for gaining access to participants, and the setting up a researcher-participant relationship. In section 2, I included information on data analysis, protection of participants' rights, identification of data collection instruments, and strategies for dealing with discrepant cases.

Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of their understanding and use of equity practices as well as suggestions for improvement. In a basic research design, sample sizes are small, and data collection involves semistructured interviews (Karadag et al., 2021). The primary research question that formed the basis for developing interview questions for this study was the following: How do teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms? A basic qualitative approach (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was appropriate to capture how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. I conducted semistructured interviews remotely to gather in-depth experiences from teacher participants (see Ceallaigh, 2022; Flick, 2018). Section 2 addresses why a basic qualitative approach was suitable for capturing teacher perceptions on using equity practices. Participant selection, how I facilitated the researcher–participant relationship, and how I established access to participants are explained. The measures to protect participants from harm, data collection procedures, and data analysis are detailed.

Research Design and Approach

A basic qualitative approach allows for the investigation of phenomena that are not well defined. A basic qualitative design was appropriate because it helped me understand how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in classrooms. Basic qualitative research allows for data collection using semistructured interviews (Hosgorur & Aysel, 2022). The central research question and subquestions provided a foundation for this study and allowed for the identification of themes (see Case et al., 2020).

I used semistructured interviews as the data collection tool. The advent of COVID-19 necessitated conducting interviews through Zoom as a safe data collection instrument. Semistructured interviews are useful in basic qualitative research because they provide in-depth information on phenomena (Karakaya et al., 2020). Semistructured interviews were appropriate to explore how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in classroom settings. The interview questions' open-ended nature enabled participants to express themselves in meaningful ways (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The open-ended interview questions allowed respondents to elaborate on their answers rather than providing simple "yes" or "no" responses.

Basic qualitative research is a methodical examination of social phenomena in participants' usual setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomena are events or occurrences that can be observed to describe how people experience their lives. Quantitative research, on the other hand, is based on positivist beliefs that a singular reality exists that can be studied using experimental methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Conversely, basic qualitative research relies on postpositivism, meaning that environmental and individual differences, such as learning culture or learners' capacity, influence the reality of participants (Karadag et al., 2021). A postpositivist approach was appropriate to consider the merits of each design option.

Ethnography requires a researcher to focus on groups' shared culture (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I did not focus on shared patterns of behavior, language, actions, or religion but sought to understand how teachers perceive their use of equity practices. An ethnographic approach was not suitable for this study because ethnography requires

studying shared patterns of behaviors, language, and cultural groups' actions in a natural setting (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Grounded theory is an inductive method grounded in participants' views to obtain a general, abstract idea of a process, action, or interaction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I did not use grounded theory because there was no functional theory to be derived as an outcome of the current study (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I focused on teacher perceptions of instructing culturally diverse students (see Bonner et al., 2018).

Narrative inquiry requires one or more individuals to provide stories about their lived lives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I did not analyze first-person accounts of experiences in story form. Rather, I focused on teacher perceptions and how they affect classroom equity practices (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Phenomenology focuses on the subjectivity and personal knowledge of the research participant (Qutoshi, 2018). The researcher strives to understand the meaning of an individual's lived experience through in-depth interviews (Elizabeth & Onyango, 2022). A phenomenological approach was unsuitable for the current study because phenomenology studies describe participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The current study was not rooted in phenomenology, nor was it suspended in beliefs about events. I explored how teachers perceive their use of equity practices (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Basic qualitative action research focuses on workplace or community problems. The current study did not qualify as basic qualitative action research because participants

did not design or carry out the types of investigations involved in basic qualitative action research (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Quantitative researchers quantify a problem by generating data that is analyzed using statistical tests (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative approach was unsuitable for the current study because the schools used in this study were demographically similar. For example, the district is 30.1% Latino, 29.3% White, 21.3% Black, 14.3% Asian American, less than 5% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, less than 5% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and less than 5% two or more races.

Case study research is used to examine a phenomenon in context so findings can generate insight into how the phenomenon occurs in each situation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A case study is an appropriate design for a researcher to gain contextual, in-depth knowledge about a real-world subject when the boundaries between context and phenomenon are murky (Ceallaigh, 2022). A case study design was inappropriate for the current study because it would not have provided detailed observations (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Direct observation was not one of the instruments I used. Instead, I used semistructured interviews to explore how teachers perceive their use of equity practices from their different perspectives.

A basic qualitative design was appropriate for this study because it enabled me to explore the phenomenon when time and resources were limited (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Semistructured interviews were an appropriate means to explore how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. The following sections detail the participant selection criteria and data collection instruments.

Participants

Criteria for Participant Selection

I used purposeful sampling to recruit individuals with knowledge about equity practices in the district. The criteria used to select participants were the following:

1. Participants were eight full-time high school teachers familiar with a school's structure, curriculum, and equity practices.
2. Participants had at least 4 years of teaching experience.
3. Teachers had participated in required professional development activities and biweekly PLCs for at least 4 years.

Teachers were interviewed to gain a more in-depth understanding of how they perceived the use of equity practices. Using probing questions made it possible to gain a deeper understanding of teacher experiences (see Bonner et al., 2018; Butler, 2019).

Justification for the Number of Participants

The district is one of the largest school districts in the United States. Approximately 1,800 teachers were invited to participate in the study. I informed study participants that their participation was voluntary. Of the 1,800 teachers who were sent email invitations, 12 responded. I used purposeful sampling to select eight teachers who met the selection criteria. I informed participants they could withdraw from the study at any time. Vasileiou et al. (2018) argued that choosing an appropriate sample size is critical in establishing reliability. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) confirmed the importance of proper sample size when they asserted that using the right sample size enhances the richness of the information provided by the data.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

The research request provided detailed information about the study, its purpose, and procedures to protect participants' rights (see Ceallaigh, 2022). The approval for external research was granted through the Office of Shared Accountability on April 23, 2021. Participant access was acquired by following these steps:

1. An email was sent to the principal of each of the high schools, and the email contained two attachments. The first attachment contained the Walden approval notice for the study.
2. The second attachment contained an external research memo from the district notifying high school principals that the study was approved under the terms authorized in Walden University's approval notice.
3. After principals granted permission to contact teachers, I obtained the teachers' email addresses using each school's staff directory.
4. I sent an email to every teacher who had responded "I consent" to ascertain the date and time for a Zoom interview.
5. Once participants agreed to a date and time, I sent a second email including the Zoom conference user ID and password.
6. I recorded each interview session to ensure an audio and video recording.

It was necessary to ensure participants met the selection criteria. I verified the schools participants taught in, how long they had been teaching, and what subject they taught. This informal approach had the dual purpose of ensuring participants met the criteria and putting them at ease. Participants had to be full-time teachers who had taught

in the district for at least 4 years. Several participants requested reassurance that their identities and locations would not be disclosed.

Establishing a Researcher–Participant Relationship

I emailed teachers through the publicly available email addresses. I had to exclude two schools to avoid potential conflicts of interest. To establish researcher–participant relationships, I contacted participants to determine a date and time that was convenient for them. I emailed participants copies of the Walden Consent form and the district’s approval to conduct external research. This provided the volunteers with opportunities to read through the consent form and the district’s approval authorizing the research.

Before the interviews started, I asked the volunteers to confirm their name, their school, and how long they had been teaching. Before starting the interview protocol (see Appendix D), I began each interview by carefully going through the consent form. The lack of direct physical contact helped me avoid power dynamics that sometime occur between researchers and participants. I reminded participants that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw without retribution (see Soubra et al., 2022).

Protection of Participants’ Rights

Confidentiality

The consent form (see Appendix C) indicated the degree to which collected data would be kept confidential. The consent form also indicated that participants could leave at any time. Basic qualitative studies are useful in exploring and obtaining the depth of understanding required to implement evidence-based practices. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), privacy and confidentiality are essential aspects of research.

Informed Consent

It was necessary to remind participants that their participation was voluntary. I supplied participants with a consent form explaining the study's purpose and indicated that their signature implied consent (see Ceallaigh, 2022). The consent form included the purpose of the study, its approximate length, and whether participants would receive compensation. The consent form warned of risks associated with the research (whether physical, psychological, social, or emotional) and the steps to minimize risks.

Protection From Harm

I received the informed consent form from each participant. Participant identities will remain confidential, and interview data stored in password-protected files for 5 years per Walden University's research requirements. Pseudonyms will substitute for participant names to protect their identity.

Data Collection

Semistructured interviews with teacher participants were the data source for this study. A researcher must be willing to create the best possible study approach by carefully planning and identifying available resources such as data collection tools and participants (Soubra et al., 2022). Data collection did not begin until approval was received from Walden's Institutional Review Board. Three individuals had to agree that the study met the district's guidelines; these were the deputy superintendent of schools, chief academic officer, and chief operating officer. I conducted semistructured interviews with full-time teachers in selected schools to answer the research questions.

Interviews

Semistructured interviews (researcher-produced) were the data source for this study. Due to the advent of COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines, face-to-face meetings were impossible. I used semistructured Zoom interviews in place of direct observations. Zoom provided an opportunity for capturing teacher responses interactively. Interviews are useful as data collection instruments for open-ended conversations with participants (Ceallaigh, 2022).

The interview protocol, Appendix C (researcher-produced) served as a roadmap for research questions. I designed the interviews to last 30-45 minutes, and the open-ended nature of the questions informed the research questions. Zoom has a recording function that makes it possible to record sessions for sharing and transcription purposes. Recorded interviews provide opportunities for capturing the full context of sessions without note-taking (Ceallaigh, 2022). To understand participant responses, I read transcripts and reread them to decipher nuances in their responses. I coded and categorized interview data for further analysis in Microsoft Word with summary tables tabulating the participant responses to research questions.

Sufficiency of Data Collection

Participants shared their perspectives and addressed the research questions. The goal of the project study was to use at least 10 participants. In the end, 10 teachers indicated “I consent” via email, 2 volunteered but failed to show up for the interview, 1 was a discrepant case, and 7 provided data for the interview. Fortunately, the eight participants who volunteered provided enough information to achieve data saturation.

Elizabeth and Onyango (2022) suggested asking probing questions that provide clarity and honest, in-depth responses. This study generated in-depth responses by adding probing questions to provide depth, as seen in Appendix C.

Data saturation is a point in research when no other information is forthcoming, and redundancy is attained. Researchers attain data saturation when any new data is redundant in confirming emerging themes and conclusions (Hennick & Kaiser, 2022). There are different ways of reaching data saturation, first, by interviewing many people for a shorter time or a smaller number of people for an extended period (Ceallaigh, 2022).

Processes for Data Collection and Recording

Semi-structured interviews are useful as data collection instruments. Semi-structured interviews are convenient data collection tools for understanding participants' beliefs (Flick, 2018). This project study aimed to obtain a pool of 10 teachers. I received the consent of 10 teachers who showed "I consent" via email: of that number, eight volunteered, and seven provided data for the study. I recorded the interviews electronically through Zoom web portals and stored the information in data-encrypted files.

Systems for Tracking Data

It is crucial to organize data files during data collection and tracking consistently (Creswell & Creswell). Proper organization needs consistent ways of saving, labeling, and retrieving data. For example, the interview protocol (Appendix B) details the time and date to separate interviews for tracking purposes. Zoom recordings provide electronic transcripts that participants can verify for accuracy. This process of member-checking

allows participants to verify that their responses were accurately captured (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I assigned each participant a pseudonym (TP) to maintain confidentiality.

Role of the Researcher

I explained to participants that data collection was for research purposes only and that identities were confidential. A power imbalance exists between researchers and participants. Despite that, researchers should be committed to keeping a professional distance from the participants. The experience of having worked first as a substitute teacher while completing a master's in education at Johns Hopkins University and after as a full-time certified Biology teacher has supplied insight into equity practices within the district.

The earlier teaching experience supplied perspective on using research questions (RQ 1) and other questions to summarize responses and generate themes. The approval to conduct research specified that neither the terms nor the scope of the research would be altered without district approval.

Data Analysis

Principals from the districts' 30 high schools received an email requesting permission to recruit their teachers for the project study. The emails outlined the study's parameters and had Walden's Consent Form. Once the principals consented to have teachers contacted, participants received a second email asking for convenient meeting dates and times. The seven teachers who agreed to participate received a second email requesting them to choose two dates and times. Seven participants agreed to take part in

the study. Of the seven, two were mathematics teachers, two were science teachers, two were English teachers, and one was a history teacher. All seven teachers met the criteria for being full-time teachers and having taught for at least four years. I began data analysis immediately after collecting the data by transcribing the audio meetings recorded to iCloud. Once I had completed the transcription, the recording appeared as a VTT file in the interview recordings. To code the interviews, I carefully reviewed the transcripts and highlighted keywords and phrases to determine patterns in the phrases (see Table 1).

Table 1

Open Coding

Transcript	Keyword	Phrase
“So, what I’m saying is if I’m teaching Black Boy by Richard right, I’m not going to attack it in the same way that you might attack it”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching ● Black 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Black Boy ● Attack it in the same way
“About the methodology, the culture, the even the pronunciation of some terms belief systems”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Methodology ● Culture ● Beliefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Belief systems
“Really create a variety of texts from BIPOC authors and us, and especially from women by BIPOC authors”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Variety ● Texts ● Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color ● Variety of texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color
“The answer to me is pretty simple hire more of African American Black and Latino teachers”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hire ● African American ● Latino ● Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hire more African American and Latino teachers
“All that saying is 30% are not born in this country”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 30% ● Born ● Country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not born

After analyzing Table 1, I began the second phase of data analysis by determining the codes needed to identify themes. During this phase, the categories were determined and redundant codes which did not help answer the research questions were deleted. The

themes emerged from data analysis and aligned with the research questions. Table 2 shows the themes that resulted from the data analysis.

Table 2

Axial Coding

Keyword	Phrase/code	Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Variety ● Texts ● Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color ● Variety of texts 	Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color Variety of texts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hire ● African American ● Latino Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● African American teachers ● Latino teachers 	Staff diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multi-faceted ● Experiences ● English Class ● Voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bring in multiple multifaceted voices and experiences 	Multifaceted voices and experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching ● Black ● Boy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching Black Boy ● Persepolis ● Opportunity to think and discuss 	Diverse Text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity ● Leadership ● Roles ● Classroom Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● opportunity to think and discuss ● Leadership roles ● Classroom environment 	Increase student participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Culture ● Different ● Communicating ● Spanish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Culture is different ● Find a way of communicating ● Trying to teach in Spanish 	Use a Dual Language Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Methodology ● Culture ● Pronunciation ● Belief ● Systems ● Muslim ● Faith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learned about the methodology, the culture ● Pronunciation of some terms, belief systems ● Muslim faith ● understanding of what it is that they're going through 	Let staff choose the PD Session

Data Analysis Results

Findings for Research Question 1

Banks's dimensions of multicultural education, namely, content integration, knowledge construction, and equity pedagogy serve as the conceptual framework for evaluating study participants' responses. Banks and Banks (1995) define content integration as the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures to illustrate key concepts. Per Banks and Banks, teachers utilize equity pedagogy when they modify their teaching in ways that facilitate the academic achievement of students from different racial, socio-economic, and cultural groups (Banks & Banks, 1995). Banks defined knowledge construction as the degree to which teachers position their students to investigate, determine, and understand the frames of reference, and the implicit cultural assumptions determine how knowledge is constructed (2002). I evaluated study participants' responses against Banks's teachings.

The central research question (RQ 1) was: How do teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms? Teachers could not connect their classroom practices to Banks's dimensions of multicultural education; they could only explain their practices and experiences from the standpoint of what they viewed as equity practices. The study found that teacher integration of multicultural content and practices was very limited. TP 1 uses Richard Wright in his study of early 20th-century authors because the standard curriculum was not culturally inclusive. He stated, "I am teaching Black Boy by Richard Wright." TP 1 elaborated, "In terms of material, I tried to make it a point to bring in multiple multifaceted voices and experiences; it is hard to do in an English class."

While TP 1 uses *Black Boy* to bring in multicultural perspectives and reflect multicultural education practices, TP #1 does not point out in his response whether he was trying to illustrate racial prejudice or violence in the Jim Crow South. One key requirement of Banks's dimension of content integration is to illustrate the key concepts. On the topic of using multicultural perspectives, TP 1 admits, "It is hard to do in an English class." TP 2 asserted he encourages multicultural perspectives by choosing novels that offer the viewpoints and experiences of people of color. Like TP 1, TP 2 did not explain how his choice of novels helps illustrate concepts as is required in content integration. TP 2 continued, "practices that are meant to preserve equity and, you know, celebrate multicultural perspectives." In addition to content integration, TP 2 also employs knowledge construction, but on a limited basis. TP 2 explained, "Having students' responses to those texts always involves some element of reflection." Banks defined knowledge construction as helping students to investigate and understand implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference (Banks, 1993). By having students do self-reflection to develop a more in-depth understanding, TP 2 engages in some form of knowledge construction.

TP 3 similarly helps students understand the context by ensuring students develop knowledge when doing their research. TP 3 explained, "If we read a text, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I have them research what life was like between 1900 and 1930s for Black Americans in the United States. Otherwise, the book is out of context." What TP 3 needs to do is point out the major themes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which are: 1) Don't judge a book by its cover, 2) Actions speak louder than words, 3) Fight with your head, not with

your fists, 4) Protect the innocent, and 5) Courage means overcoming the odds. By having students do independent research, TP 3 influences how students investigate and determine the implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference for periods in which authors depict their characters. TP 3's approach fits Banks's definition of knowledge construction in a limited sense.

This project study found that participants did not refer to James Banks's dimensions (1995) by name, or name and explain the concepts of other multicultural education theorists. TP 6 explained how he influences student knowledge construction by correcting historical errors and giving perspectives to frames of reference. Facilitating student knowledge involves bringing the experiences, values, and viewpoints of different ethnic and cultural groups from the periphery to the center of the curriculum (Banks & Banks, 1995). In Euclidean geometry, the Pythagorean theorem explains the relationship between the three sides of a triangle. TP 6 explained how the Pythagorean theorem is attributed to the Greeks, and that historians do not mention that the Egyptians had built the pyramids using those same principles about triangles. "Well, that was an example of implementing a concept attributed to the Greeks. Moreover, I let them know that the Egyptians knew this."

Findings for Subquestion 1

Sub-research 1 (SQ 1) pertained to the following question: *What is your understanding of equity practices?* I designed this question to determine the depth of teacher understanding of equity practices and to examine the extent of their integration of multicultural content. The findings from the study indicated that study participants do not

distinguish between equity practices in general and the integration of multicultural content. In addition, study participants do not actively integrate multicultural content into their lessons. TP 1 admitted that the extent of content integration may be influenced by the cultural background or race of the teacher, “so, what I am saying is if I am teaching *Black Boy* by Richard Wright, I am not going to attack it in the same way that you might attack it.” TP 1 did not elaborate while teaching *Black Boy*, how Jim Crow laws restricted the movements of Blacks nor how they contributed to racial prejudice. TP 2 uses cooperative learning strategies. TP 2 elaborated, “You know, whether it is reframing the question, asking a different student a similar question, and then coming back.” TP 3 views equity practices in terms of student research. James Banks insisted that cooperative learning strategies help students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds in addition to middle-class white students. TP 4 views equity practices from the point of view of text selection. “I try hard to bring in texts that are reflective of my student’s experiences.” TP 7 said, “Equity practices have everything to do with what texts we choose and how those texts are relevant to our kids’ lives.” Like TP 4, TP 7 views equity practices from the point of view of diverse text selection. James Banks insisted that by using books from different cultures and countries, teachers help students see the interconnections between different cultures (Banks, 1994).

Findings for Subquestion 2

Sub-research 2 (SQ 2) referred to the following question: Which multicultural education practices do you implement in your classroom? The question intended to determine if teachers implemented Banks’s dimensions or the equity practices of other

theorists. Findings from the study indicate that none of the participants actively use multicultural content or use multicultural strategies recommended by other theorists. When participants described their instructional strategies, their practices reflected aspects of multicultural education such as diverse text, cooperative strategies, and teacher-facilitated construction of knowledge. TP 1 elaborated, “In terms of material, I tried to make it a point to bring in multiple multifaceted voices and experiences. In using multifaceted voices and perspectives, TP 1 may be referencing content integration. TP 2 explained his perception of equity practices as follows, “practices meant to preserve equity and, you know, celebrate multicultural perspectives.” It is not clear if TP 2 is referring to content integration, equity pedagogy, or both. TP 4 explained her use of content integration as follows, “equity practices have everything to do with what texts we choose and how those texts are relevant to our kids’ lives.”

For example, TP 6 explained he facilitates students’ knowledge by correcting historical inaccuracies. On Pythagoras’s theorem, TP 6 explained, “Well, that was an example of implementing a concept attributed to the Greeks. TP 6 could not name or explain Banks’s dimensions nor name other theorists. TP 6 explained, “Moreover, I let them know that the Egyptians knew this.” Akcaoglu and Aarsal (2022) emphasized the importance of teachers understanding how Banks’s dimensions work in multicultural classrooms.

Findings for Subquestion 3

Sub-research 3 (SQ 3) pertained to the following question: Which strategies do you use most often? SQ 3 aimed to have teachers focus on their multicultural education

practices in classrooms. Study participants asked me to clarify what multicultural education practices are. For example, TP 1 inquired, “Tell me what practices you are referring to.” Several study participants revealed that content integration and equity pedagogy are their preferred equity strategies. TP 1 responded to the question, without explaining why, “I think content integration.” TP 2 described multicultural education practices in the following terms, “practices meant to preserve equity and, you know, celebrate multicultural perspectives.” Akcaoglu and Arsal (2022) stressed the importance of teachers understanding and utilizing multicultural education strategies. TP 2 uses an equity pedagogy approach because he reframes questions and makes simulations so struggling students have opportunities to participate in classes by answering questions. TP 2 explained, “You know, whether it is reframing the question, asking a different student a similar question, and then coming back.” Equity pedagogy is the modification of teaching in ways that facilitate the academic achievement of students from different racial, socio-economic, and cultural groups (Banks & Banks, 1995).

Reframing questions is consistent with Banks’s methodology because it employs a range of teaching styles, including cooperative groups, role-playing, discovery, and simulations (Banks, 1998). TP 5 uses a combination of knowledge construction and content integration, he explained, “knowledge construction and content integration. I think I use a combination of all of those.” He could not explain his choice of either strategy or why he employs either strategy. TP 5 offered the following self-reflection, “It was a very self-absorbed start with them, then you bring it to the broader context.”

Findings for Subquestion 4

Sub-research 4 (SQ 4) pertained to the following question: What suggestions do you have to improve the use of multicultural education as an equity practice in your classrooms? This question elicited the most varied responses from study participants. Most of the study participants' responses focused on a need for more staff diversity and a need for teachers to incorporate more varied text. Study participants believe the composition of the teaching body should be more reflective of student demographics and that it will help improve the incorporation of multicultural education practices. TP 1 explained, "We need to diversify our staff; I have advocated for getting more teachers of color on our staff." Demie (2019) explained the importance of staff diversity in improving student achievement. Other participants believe the district is too conservative in its approach to the curriculum. TP 2 observed that it is not too late to change the curriculum "because the landscape has already changed." Continuing their concerns with the curriculum, study participants called for a curriculum overhaul to make it more adaptive and less Euro-centric. TP 5 explained, "Oh, goodness, I think it is the way the curriculum is structured. There must be more." Darling-Hammond called for curriculum reform that embraces learning communities, embraces community partnerships, and uses adaptive teaching practices (Preston, 2022).

Interpretation of the Findings

This basic qualitative study aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions of their understanding and use of equity practices and their suggestions for improvement. I will

interpret the findings as they relate to the larger body of literature and discuss the conceptual framework, which is Banks's dimensions of multicultural education.

Relationship of the Findings to the Conceptual Framework

The study participants welcomed opportunities to learn about Banks's dimensions so they could explain how they applied Banks's dimensions in their classrooms. Banks's dimensions are a valuable model for teachers to evaluate their lessons and find ways to make them more culturally relevant and sustaining. Banks's (1995) dimensions enable students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to fully engage with and access the curriculum. Banks's dimensions challenge the Euro-centric curriculum and recognize the contributions of Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color to education and literary society. Banks's dimensions take advantage of the cultural traditions students bring to the classroom while working toward reducing prejudice. Banks's approach to multicultural education requires not just embracing other cultures but requires fundamental changes in the curriculum (2016).

The data findings relate to the instructional strategies study participants use. Even though they did not mention Banks specifically by name, study participants likened their practices to multicultural education practices.

Themes

The data support the themes that emerged from the study. The themes that emerged from this study are as follows:

1. Modify teaching practices.
2. Illustrate content with culturally targeted examples.

3. Integrate Black, Indigenous, and people of color into literature.
4. Investigate and discuss dominant theories and concepts.
5. Diversify staff.
6. Make PLCs sustainable.
7. Personal Experiences of Equity
8. Curriculum Restrictions

Theme 1: Modify Teaching Practices

The data shows that study participants take pride in knowing their students' backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses as the reason for their belief in their self-efficacy. TP 1 explained how he had utilized cooperative learning strategies by saying, "What I attempt to do is bring in voices, which are not my voices, obviously, and maybe have a different perspective than I do." TP 2 encourages student participation, especially students who always decline to speak up in class, by saying, "You know, whether it is reframing the question, asking a different student a similar question and then coming back, like hoping that that information, you know helped out." Banks (1998) supports the modification of teaching styles, so teachers use a variety of teaching styles such as cooperative groups, role-playing, and simulations.

TP 4 explained how heterogeneous grouping has helped some groups in her class learn better. Heterogeneous grouping is not a teaching style endorsed by Banks (1998). TP 4 elaborated that this practice is in line with research which shows that some racial minority groups, such as African Americans, learn better when they are encouraged to cooperate in groups "to kind of help understand the math concepts, that is what the

research says, so I believe in group work.” TP 6 opined that the lack of teacher diversity was hampering the academic achievement of Black and Brown students because teachers of color can give interpretation to some nuances. TP 6 explained, “Latinos are 62%, with 52-58% of white faculty, so I am not saying they cannot teach them; it is not reflective of the student body, let me just say that.” Demie (2019) argues about the benefits of staff diversity to student achievement.

Theme 2: Illustrate with Culturally Relevant Examples and Material

The data from the study participant interviews demonstrate that to a limited extent, teachers modify their course content and instructional strategies to accommodate the learning needs of diverse students. The content area highly influenced the strategies teachers adopted. For example, while an English literature class lends itself to teachers selecting a variety of text that represents a wide variety of student experiences, science, and math teachers are limited in the variety of cultural textbooks they use in class. The benefits of text diversity are a practice supported by Banks (1998).

The participants observed that the use of examples and content from various cultures and groups had not significantly enhanced student outcomes. TP 1 admitted that using more culturally diverse text had not significantly improved students’ grades. He elaborated, “I am not seeing a huge jump in grades, for example, you know, when we are studying James McBride as opposed to when we are studying Gatsby.”

TP 4 expanded on why she uses equity practices, TP 4 said, “My challenge is how do I make it relevant to them so that they can see themselves in the math and then be able to complete it and hopefully like it.” Stehle and Peters-Burton (2019) emphasized the

need to prepare students in STEM fields like mathematics and science to meet the challenges of the 21st-century workplace. TP 6 expanded on how he constructs knowledge, “so I tried to get a variety of sources that everyone has contributed, and no one has a monopoly on mathematics.” TP 2 assembles a variety of texts from different authors and genres, in effect, his version of content integration. “I’m like putting these texts together; they are generally in some form of literature circles or like a playlist.” In his view, the blending of texts from diverse cultures has a cascading effect on explaining the benefits of seeing things from distinct cultural perspectives, “the result is they are engaging with a culture that they are interested in, or that resonates with them.” As a first-generation American, TP 2 used the novel, *The Paper Menagerie*, to illustrate his experiences trying to fit into the American dream, “we brought in a nonfiction article about first-generation Americans fitting- in conjunction with *The Paper Menagerie* in that group.” Ladson-Billings (1995) noted the benefit of using text from different cultures to increase student empathy and push back against prejudice and racial bias.

Theme 3: Integrate Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

The data from the interviews confirm study participants’ concerns with the changing demographics of classrooms and the lack of diversity in the subject matter content. Novels and theories by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) have often taken a back seat to the publications and accomplishments of Whites. In the past, the United States was majority white, but the demographics are changing so fast that by 2025, the United States will be majority colored. Teachers must adjust their teaching

styles in English, math, or science to incorporate stories, theories, or accomplishments by people of color so students can relate.

TP 1 explained that the changing student demographics were the reason for his novel choice and that rather than teach *The Great Gatsby*, he taught *Black Boy* by Richard Wright. TP 1 offered that some lessons will be more effectively taught by people of color. “I am teaching *Black Boy* by Richard Wright; I am not going to attack it in the same way you might.” Yon (2022) noted the benefits of using diverse texts that serve as mirrors of other cultures. TP 1 elaborated that the novels by Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color would be even more helpful in explaining the female experience on issues such as discrimination, feminism, and female rights. TP 1, “create a variety of texts from BIPOC authors and us, especially from women BIPOC authors.”

Theme 4: Discuss and Investigate Theories and Concepts

There are many facets to education. One core principle is to teach students the critical thinking skills they need to understand and apply what they learn to their problems and communities. Banks (1993) explains that knowledge construction helps students investigate, understand, and determine how the biases, frames of reference, and perspectives within a discipline influence how teachers frame knowledge. Study participants extolled the efforts they made to help students develop critical thinking skills. According to TP 2, “having students’ responses to those texts always involves some element of reflection and speaking and listening.” He further explained the dangers of a “single story,” of not examining issues from multiple cultural perspectives. TP 6

explained that math lacks diversity regarding the theorists who produced fundamental theories because he believed the theorists mentioned in class were Whites.

On the Pythagoras theorem, TP 6 said, “Well, that was an example of implementing a concept attributed to the Greeks. Moreover, I let them know that the Egyptians knew this.” TP 6 elaborated on the role of Black and Brown mathematicians in providing the foundational theory for geometry, “so I tried to get a variety of sources that everyone has contributed, and no one has a monopoly on mathematics.” TP 7 explained that his conception of content integration is that “equity practices have everything to do with what texts we choose and how those texts are relevant to our kids’ lives.” In other words, schools must introduce more culturally diverse materials across subjects.”

Theme 5: Continue Staff Diversification

A diverse staff is likely to be culturally sensitive to their students and less likely to subscribe to biased theories and prognostications (Civitillo et al., 2019). An essential part of equity pedagogy is about who teaches students. There is a distinct advantage to having teachers of a particular race, sex, racial, or cultural background lend a perspective only people of a particular background have. One of Banks’s dimensions is an empowering school environment (Banks, 1998). Students feel empowered when they see teachers who look like them, and who can lend perspective to issues raised in a novel or book. TP 1 said as much when he said, “I am teaching *Black Boy* by Richard Wright; I am not going to attack it in the same way that you might.” TP 1 continued, “We need to diversify our staff; I have advocated for getting more teachers of color on our staff.”

Theme 6: Make PLC Sustainable

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) comprise educators who meet regularly, plan together, and share their expertise to improve student learning outcomes. Study participants had mixed reviews about the value of PLCs in using equity practices. TP 2 felt that PLCs could be more proactive in using lessons learned to improve student outcomes. Nevertheless, TP 2 believes that the district's restrictions have tied the hands of PLCs, "I have even heard a lot in my PLC, and I mean something that I have taken to saying, is that sometimes you have to reinvent the wheel because the terrain has changed." TP 3 agreed that PLCs did not have direction, "a healthy PLC has an agenda, healthy PLC has a leader." TP 4 believes that in implementing equity pedagogy, PLCs have a noble mission but that their work eventually becomes redundant, "engaging and trying to figure out strategies to connect with our students, but the rest of them are kind of just okay." TP 7 felt that PLCs could drill down on assessment data to improve outcomes for Black and Brown students, "as a PLC being able to, especially in the county assessments, where we could break down the data very easily by subgroup."

Theme 7: Personal Experiences of Equity

Study participants' views of equity practices are motivated or influenced by their personal experiences (Vayner, 2019). Study participants who had experienced instances of inequity or been treated harshly or discriminated against are more likely to use equity practices. TP 1 stated, "I can think of an instance of racial inequity outside the classroom. I do not know if it applies, but it is something that happened to me that gave me perspective in terms of what people of color go through in this country." TP 4 explained

that her college experiences inform her classroom strategies. TP 4 elaborated: “even when I was in college, I actively sought out a group of people to kind of help me understand the math concepts, so I guess that is what the research says, I fall into that category, so I believe in group work.”

Theme 8: Curriculum Restrictions

Study participants believe the pressure to complete the curriculum hampers their ability to implement equity practices because of time limitations. Study participants opined that time and space concerns limit their ability to implement Banks’s equity pedagogy. TP 4 expressed her concerns: “There is not enough space and time for teachers who choose to incorporate these equity practices and want to connect with students; there is no time for it.” TP 4 offered this potential solution, “My suggestion would be for the district to adjust their curriculum to cater to the needs of our students.” TP 1 believed his creative writing class gave him more flexibility in implementing equity practices, “I do also teach a creative writing class, and that class gives me a lot more leeway because there is no curriculum.” TP 2 observed how certain voices and perspectives prefer newly emerging perspectives regarding the curriculum. Teachers must be sensitive to the needs of their district. TP 2 explained, “perspectives that have been favored historically and ingrained as part of our curriculum; those are favored over voices that are still emerging.”

According to teachers, there are systemic barriers to successfully implementing equity barriers. The onset of COVID entrenched these systemic barriers. Nonetheless, teachers are optimistic that the barriers can be removed. Appendix H presents how the themes align with the central and sub-research questions.

Summary

This basic qualitative study's problem was that little was known about how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. The district's 2019-2020 *School Performance Report* acknowledged that although there has been progress, gaps still exist in the performance of Black and Latino students. This study provided answers to the research question (RQ 1) and in-depth information on the sub-research questions. The research question (RQ 1) was: "How do teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms?" Findings indicate that some study participants do use multicultural education practices but on a limited basis. Study participants could not name James Banks's dimensions by name. English and history teachers were more likely to emphasize using Black, Indigenous, and People of Color novels.

In terms of specific strategies, TP 1 used diverse authors to expose his students to novels by Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color (BIPOC). TP 1 felt this practice would expose students to diverse cultural experiences and reiterated that women's experiences would benefit his students. TP 2 felt he exposed his students to multicultural perspectives through literature circles. TP 2 felt that text diversity and elevating students' voices were critical to their development and critical consciousness. TP 3 and TP 6 felt research was essential for fostering knowledge construction. Research helps students appreciate the context and is necessary for students to appreciate the complexity and different cultural perspectives on theories related to astronomy, mathematics, and the sciences. TP 4 felt that COVID made it more necessary to use music as a technological bridge as students are so attached to their cell phones. Rather than restrict the use of cell phones, TP 4 used

cell phones to generate QR codes with embedded assignments and quizzes. The student cell phones, in effect, became learning tools. Both TP 6 and TP 7 emphasized the importance of research. Through research, students gain a broader educational experience by doing more critical thinking so they can solve problems for themselves and their communities at large. In reading *Gone with the Wind*, TP 6 and TP 7 would have students research conditions in the antebellum South and the status of Blacks in the South. The research gave students more perspective and context about the characters in novels, an essential aspect of critical thinking and consciousness.

Regarding which strategies study participants used most often, participants cited content integration and knowledge construction as the most frequently used strategies. Content integration and knowledge constructions are two of the three dimensions addressed in this study. Most participants used content integration and novels by authors of Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Teachers had students engage in knowledge construction through student research. The last sub-research question elicited the most diverse responses. TP 1 and TP 6 expressed the hope that the district would hire more Black and Latino teachers to reflect student diversity. TP 2 felt that Black and Brown students would not progress until the district had removed systemic barriers. TP 1 believed that many Black and Brown students worked while going to school. Socio-Economic problems made it difficult for these students to experience the same level of success as their white and Asian counterparts. Fair grading is one solution to level the playing field.

Teacher Demographics

Even though eight full-time district teachers initially volunteered for this study, this study used the data for seven study participants because the data for one of the interviews was inconsistent. Four participants were English teachers, two were math, and one was a science teacher. Of the participants, four were male teachers, and three were female. According to Table 4, the average teaching experience across groups was 14 years.

Table 3

Teacher Demographics

Pseudonym	Teaching experience (years)	Professional development (years)	Supported content
TP1	13	13	English
TP2	4	4	English
TP3	24	24	Mathematics
TP4	4	4	Mathematics
TP5	24	24	English
TP6	17	17	Science
TP7	11	11	English

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant findings may expose potential flaws in the data collection process or a lack of depth in participant responses. I checked for discrepant cases to prove credibility. In the case of one participant for this study, the interview quickly went off-track because the participant was driving while taking the call, leading to poor audio quality. The poor audio quality may have contributed to the line of questioning deviating significantly from the established interview protocol. Discarding the data from that interview was necessary due to a profound lack of alignment with the other seven interview protocols.

Evidence of Quality

Researchers must establish the trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability of their findings by selecting research methods, data analysis protocol, and reporting of findings. Per Rose and Johnson (2020), trustworthiness in qualitative research describes the rigor of the research design, the researcher's credibility, the believability of the findings, and the applicability of the research methods. Nyirenda et al. (2020) describe credibility as figuring out how congruent the findings are with reality; prolonged engagement enhances generality and rapport-building between researchers and participants. The applicability of findings to other contexts strengthens the generalizability of a study. To establish the credibility of the interview data and reduce bias, I concluded data collection using the same interview protocol (Appendix C).

Upon each interview (Zoom), I provided participants with audio and verbatim transcripts recordings to ascertain the accuracy of their recordings. Only one of seven participants questioned the accuracy of the Zoom transcript; upon provision of the backup transcript (Aiworth recording), TP1 agreed that the transcript was correct. Code development was carried out through open (first level) and axial coding (second level), resulting in the codes accurately reflecting participant responses. Detailed descriptions of the study contexts and assumptions established the transferability of the findings.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that it was not possible to use three or more data collection tools for triangulation to prove credibility and reliability due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, I conducted Zoom interviews, and it

was the only data collection instrument. The conceptual foundation of this study was James Banks's dimensions of multicultural education. Even though each participant had broad ideas of teacher equity practices, they could only name or describe one of Banks's dimensions of multicultural education.

Project Deliverable

The problem of this study is how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. This PD plan used three of Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education because his principles supplied the pedagogical groundwork for students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in an ethnically and racially diverse world. This PD plan focused on the following research questions to explore the problem: what is your understanding of equity practices? Multicultural education practices improve teacher intercultural competence and efficacy within diverse classrooms. The findings from the study dictated the development of a PD plan that addresses the district's unique needs. The themes that appeared from this research are:

1. Modify teaching practices.
2. Illustrate content with culturally targeted examples.
3. Integrate Black, Indigenous, and people of color into their literature.
4. Investigate and discuss dominant theories and concepts.
5. Diversify staff.
6. Make PLCs sustainable.
7. Personal Experiences of Equity
8. Curriculum Restrictions

This PD plan can improve teachers' knowledge of Banks's dimensions of multicultural education, increase teachers' intercultural competence, and improve their efficacy within diverse classrooms. Appendix A (Project Study) details a 36-hour, three-day session using equity sessions designed to enlighten teachers, school leaders, and administrators about how student access and opportunity are distributed across race and socio-economic boundaries, more so when they are data-driven. Follow-up PLCs will take place and having the support and resources necessary to host a 36-hour PD session over three days is essential. Potential barriers to successful implementation include teacher resistance to change. In addition, there is a certain amount of teacher apathy during PD sessions. Lack of administrative support at the district and state levels is another constraint to successful implementation.

As a researcher, it was essential to develop a PD plan that addressed teacher knowledge of Banks's dimensions, intercultural competence, and pedagogical practices. For schools to accomplish this goal, it is imperative to collect and analyze the data to understand how teacher perceptions influenced their classroom practices and galvanized student participation and outcomes. This PD workshop improves teachers' multicultural education practices so that they can be better informed about pedagogy. The long-term goal is to improve student participation and outcomes (Lynch, 2020).

Section 3: The Project

I created a 3-day professional development project (see Appendix A) to increase teachers' knowledge of Banks's dimensions and improve their intercultural competence to address the professional needs identified in this study. In response to a follow-up question about whether anything would improve the use of multicultural education practices in classrooms, TP1 responded "in terms of equity, yeah." Multicultural professional development is necessary to remove prejudice, build intercultural competence, and help teachers appreciate the diverse experiences and perspectives that students from multicultural backgrounds bring to the classroom (Gorski & Parekh, 2020).

Creating a 3-day professional development experience may help teachers appreciate the differences between the different forms of multicultural education. Banks (1995) stated that multicultural education manifests in five dimensions: content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, and an empowering school culture and social structure. However, the current study's professional development project focused on three of Banks's dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, and equity pedagogy. Through multicultural education, students may become more critical thinkers, disrupt oppressive policies, and may become more productive advocates for their communities. After analyzing the data, I designed professional development training around the following themes:

- adjust teaching practices
- illustrate with culturally relevant examples and materials
- integrate Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color into literature

- investigate and discuss dominant theories and concepts
- diversify staff
- make PLCs sustainable
- personal experiences of equity
- curriculum restrictions

The professional development will be conducted in the district and will be led by a staff development specialist. The professional development sessions will be designed to help teachers appreciate the differences between the different dimensions of multicultural education and build their intercultural competence. The research indicated that continuous professional development helps teachers improve their understanding of effective instruction and adapt to their students' changing needs (Powell & Bodur, 2019; Tualaulelei, 2020; Weuffen et al., 2020). Participation in the professional development sessions may enable teachers to consider the effects of the themes on their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. The year-long professional development sessions may allow teachers to improve their perceptions of equity practices and expand their knowledge of Banks's dimensions and intercultural competencies.

Rationale

The district's annual report highlighted the continuing struggles of African American and Latino students in accessing equity practices instituted in 2005. African American and Latino students' struggles could be attributable to teacher perceptions of the feasibility of implementing equity practices in diverse classrooms. Of the four

available genres, a professional development plan offered the best opportunity to inform teachers' beliefs and improve their intercultural competence.

This professional development plan provides an opportunity to address themes found in the data analysis. I considered an evaluation plan but did not use one. Evaluation plans do not capture nuances inherent in participant responses (Kassab et al., 2020). A curriculum plan was not suitable because curriculum plans limit what researchers can measure or see. A position paper was not appropriate because position papers require thorough examinations of a district's records, and position papers may be static. In addition, position papers require districts to show shortcomings in their practices (Brown & Klein, 2020).

Review of the Literature

This project study centered on improving teacher perceptions related to the use of multicultural education practices. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and Walden University dissertations were employed throughout the literature review. The search engines included but were not limited to Databases A-Z and Publications, Education Source, Eric, and Sage Journals. Google Scholar, ProQuest One Academic, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search were also helpful. A combination of search terms such as Banks's dimensions of *multicultural education*, *integrating multicultural education*, *teacher perceptions*, *professional development*, *teachers' cultural attitudes*, *relevance of multicultural education*, *culturally relevant pedagogy*, *culturally responsive teaching*, *cultural competence*, *improving teacher intercultural competence the impact of COVID-19 on student learning*, *benefits of professional development on equity practices*, and

importance and benefits of dual language learning proved helpful in generating articles specific to the research. In this literature review and project study, equity practices, multicultural education, multiculturalism, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally responsive pedagogy are used interchangeably.

CRP

Ladson-Billings (1995) defined CRP as teaching that focuses on a student's linguistic and cultural backgrounds to guide learning. The study site district's educational system has norms and traditions that may not reflect the student population. Students and families benefit from access to schools that view diversity as an asset and value students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. All students, not only Black and Brown students, benefit from CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Through CRP, teachers can expand their cultural competence while expanding the sociopolitical consciousness of students (Lynch, 2020; Mellom et al., 2018).

The findings of the current study indicated that although teachers use equity practices, they need to be made aware of Banks's dimensions, which would mean knowing the details of content integration, knowledge construction, and equity pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1995) noted that students learn better when teachers link student cultures to their development and learning. Ladson-Billings espoused that teacher in a multicultural classroom view student cultures as dynamic assets for engaging students. Teachers who practice CRP are proactively responsive to the changing social, economic, and cultural dynamics of students' lives.

According to Lynch (2020), CRP, a student focused model of learning, has three facets: personal, institutional, and instructional (Lynch, 2020). The personal facet of CRP emphasizes teachers' understanding of cultural responsiveness (Lynch, 2020). The institutional facet stresses the need to work on a school's cultural issues (Lynch, 2020). The instructional aspect focuses on direct responsiveness to classroom students (Lynch, 2020). CRP is required to improve student outcomes in classrooms.

Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Curriculum

Although CRP is an umbrella framework, Gay (2019, as cited in Muniz, 2019) coined the term culturally responsive teaching to mean "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 9). The current study's findings indicated that teachers should implement culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching uses the students' diverse cultures to influence classroom culture and guide inclusive curriculum development. The research also demonstrated that culturally responsive classrooms improve student engagement and outcomes (Roberts, 2020). Culturally responsive teaching improves student outcomes and engagement by having teachers and students respect diversity, engage a wide range of student interests, use teaching practices across disciplines, and promote a safe learning environment.

Gay (2002) also emphasized how teachers could design curricula that provide connections between students' home and school experiences. These connections provide a checkpoint for students and their communities. Huang and Li (2021) emphasized how

teaching materials and methodology must be reflective of social environment and cultural backgrounds in the designing of school curricula. Gay also mentioned the positive role the media can play in promoting the advantages of a diverse classroom.

Cultural Competence

Although the study's findings revealed that teachers implement a limited form of multicultural education strategies, teachers show different levels of cultural competence. Macqueen et al. (2020) espoused that cultural competence is required for teachers to cater to the diverse students in their classrooms while preparing these students to meet the challenges of a 21st century workforce. McBride et al. (2020) described the theory and practice of three multicultural education courses. The courses used the Intercultural Development Inventory and Development Continuum to assist students, in addition to Rogerian principles of personal growth and Freire's two notions of praxis: action and reflection. McBride et al. espoused Rogerian principles to achieve intercultural competence. Rogerian principles require that preservice and continuing teachers continually reflect on diversity within multicultural classrooms. The theory suggests that teachers must use intentional guidance that combines Rogerian principles with Freire's theory of practice and Hammer's Intercultural Development Inventory to be culturally competent.

Elcicek and Avci (2022) determined the effects of social and cultural capital on teacher competencies. The regression analysis showed that social capital alone accounted for 17% of professional performance. A combination of social and cultural capital accounted for 36% of performance. The effect of cultural capital increased professional

performance when social capital was held constant. However, when cultural capital was held constant, the solitary effect of social capital decreased performance. This study demonstrates that teachers become more culturally competent through training. The more teachers acquire intercultural competence, the better they relate to students' cultures and improve students' outcomes.

Relevance of Multicultural Education

One of the current study's findings was the importance of teachers modifying their instructional strategies to meet students' needs (see Hoffman & Ramirez, 2018). The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of their understanding and use of equity practices as well as suggestions for improvement. The findings of this study confirmed the benefits of implementing multicultural education in classrooms. However, the study also found that teachers need additional training in multicultural education, that teachers need continual multicultural education professional development, and that teachers need to use examples from diverse cultural groups in their practice at the curricular level so all students can benefit. Haughton and Schodl (2020) proposed an alternative to costly exchange programs. They proposed an alternative approach in which course assignments would replace exchange programs, which can be costly, so students could experience other cultures.

Multicultural Education and Language Integration

Dual language programs, or what the district refers to as language immersion programs, are offered in the district up to Grade 8. Findings of the current study indicated that the district's high schools could benefit from language immersion programs at the

high school level. Currently, the district uses World Language programs, which may not be as effective as the dual language programs because many of the students come into the programs with severe English-speaking and writing deficits and require a more intensive approach. The research showed that an additive approach to language could address a school's attitude to the use of Spanish in bilingualism (Barrera et al., 2019). Schools can improve their multicultural education practices by increasing access to Spanish-language reading materials in their library offerings. Barrera et al. had the following suggestions for improving bilingualism. One way to increase reading ability and pride in Spanish is creating a Spanish language book club. Another possibility is offering diverse texts in languages such as Spanish during the summer recess, or partnering with universities to offer enrichment activities. These activities change the beliefs of bilingual education and improve knowledge of and facility in using Spanish and English in class. Barrera et al. concluded that pride in a native language and facility in English improves student participation in the curriculum, increases their access to the general education curriculum, and improves their outcomes.

Dual language programs promote bilingualism and biliteracy by enhancing student awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity. The early student acquisition of English is a predictor of better academic performance for dual language learners (Winsler et al., 2023). Dual language programs (or immersion programs) are a powerful tool for educating bilingual students in multicultural settings. Despite the promises of dual language programs, more research is needed on their effectiveness at the high school level. Moreover, as the United States has racially become majority-minority and the

student population has become more diverse, an urgency has arisen about how teacher beliefs about bilingual education affect pedagogy (Park, 2018). The focus of Ramirez and Ross's (2019) study was for teachers to implement strategies that promote oral language within multilingual classrooms.

Dual language programs contain native English speakers who are placed in addition to recent immigrants, and the programs tend to be more ethnically and socioeconomically balanced. Some of the teacher participants who spoke Spanish reported that their students were more open to them and showed greater levels of participation in class because they made efforts to speak these students' native language. Although teachers may not be required to learn Spanish, they should be encouraged to offer some translations in Spanish. For example, a science teacher who requires students to sign a safety contract to participate in science laboratories may offer students the chance to sign the translated laboratory contract in Spanish.

Dual language programs yield substantial equity benefits for students of all races and socioeconomic statuses. Dual language programs help teachers with content integration, equity pedagogy, and knowledge construction, the critical tenets of Banks's dimensions. For example, through the dual language approach, content can be integrated whereby students learn the science concepts in English and the vocabulary and language skills of a second language at the same time. Dual language programs help learners to improve their linguistic skills by linking them with content knowledge. These programs can also help students in their knowledge construction by helping them develop an understanding of the technical terms related to academic language. Using students' native

language creates an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion, characteristics that are crucial to making students feel that their language, cultures, and backgrounds are valued (Biondi, 2021).

Dual language programs have other important benefits for the study site's students: first, Dual language programs improve children's executive functioning skills. When students use task-switching skills, for example, saying "goodbye" to another student in English while saying "Bueno Día" in Spanish to a teacher requires fluid interaction and improves a student's ability to switch from one task to another. Dual language improves students' empathy skills ("5 benefits of dual language learning," 2022). Dual language students figure out when to use one language or another. Chavez-Moreno's (2021) ethnographic study examined a Dual language program believed to provide Latino students with educational equity. Using a three-stage recursive approach, Chavez-Moreno found that Dual language program's policies and programs were incredibly beneficial to Latino and Latina youth if the program was helpful to white students. Dual language helps students build social empathy and engagement skills. Students constantly relied on the creation of connections between symbols, words, and concepts. Chavez-Moreno summarized that Dual language programs helped students develop visual, pattern recognition, abstract thinking, and visual critical thinking skills.

Multicultural Texts

Multicultural texts share ideas, stories, and information about cultures, races, religions, languages, and traditions (Henderson et al., 2020). Henderson et al. emphasized the importance of children reading and reflecting on the realities they live in especially

when classrooms lack texts that reflect the racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity of students' experiences. Henderson et al.'s findings show that the district's teachers would like to have more leeway in text selection. The research shows the necessity of challenging approaches that prioritize Eurocentric worldviews at the expense of Black and Brown authors (see Ford et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2019). Efforts at reform have three pathways. First, challenge the bias through institutional norms. Second, decolonize middle and high school curricula by elevating the voices of Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color authors while adding a critical lens to pedagogy. Third, educators must work cohesively with their communities ("DisruptTexts: An Empowerment-centered pedagogy," 2020).

Recent studies indicate that the use of diverse text, particularly those of Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color, is important to student development because diverse text exposes students to different characters, contexts, and life experiences that are often pertinent to their own life experiences (Ford et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2019). According to Yon (2022), students benefit from opportunities to read text that serve as mirrors. The diverse texts are mirrors that help students observe themselves through the characters depicted in fiction, so they can see representations of their experiences and realities.

Multicultural Staff

A diverse work environment empowers students and staff to use their strengths and points of view to contribute to a diverse school environment. The current findings reveal that the district's teachers would prefer the staff to reflect the students' demographics. There is debate about the role diversity plays in schools. A school of

thought is that staff diversity reflects the diversity on campuses. Opponents argue that diversity initiatives tend to discriminate against the racial majority. There is debate about the hiring policies of institutions and their impact on multicultural education practices (Demie, 2019; Gould, 2021; Osborn et al., 2019).

Intercultural programs are one aspect of the multicultural vignettes used for the current study. Intercultural programs make up an integrative form of PD. Intercultural programs are action-oriented programs that can interact and communicate with ethnic, religious, cultural, and ethnic communities. Intercultural programs integrate the study of different ethnic and cultural groups, focus on human relations, and develop critical thinking skills for social action (Cortina & Earl, 2020). Cortina and Earl detailed the diverse types of intercultural programs.

According to Cortina and Earl, the first type of intercultural program requires students to combine community service programs within classroom instruction. Specifically, service-learning programs imbue civic responsibility in the community. Study abroad programs may link an individual to cultural groups at home and abroad. Intercultural groups supply opportunities for dialogue that challenge dominant narratives about people of different racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds (Cortina & Earl, 2020).

Professional Development in Multicultural Education

Properly designed multicultural education PD sessions empower staff to take initiatives that improve their pedagogy. It is empowering for staff to be able to choose the PD sessions they will attend and when. Recent research posits the preference of educators

to choose their PD sessions to address classroom needs (Casserly & Padden, 2018; Dali et al., 2021; George & Maguire, 2019; Lunsman et al., 2021). For example, George and Maguire focused on the benefits of teacher choice of PD (2019). Their study focused on the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers capable of raising students' standards. George and Maguire's findings showed that participants valued the flexibility of finding programs and institutions they were interested in attending. Participants also supported a synthesis of teacher experiences in making PD more efficient.

In the current study, teachers emphasized a need for PD to hone teacher skills for classroom adaptation (see George & Maguire, 2019). Similarly, Casserly and Padden's (2018) focused on meeting the needs of co-teachers in inclusive multicultural classrooms.

Project Description

Zoom interviews were the primary data source, with the data collected through semistructured interviews and open-ended research questions. I assigned pseudonyms to the participants to conceal their identities. A total of seven teacher participants participated in the study. I analyzed the categories and came up with three key findings. These findings emerged from the research question (RQ 1), "How do teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms?" The study confirms that teachers' integration of multicultural content is very limited. This project study confirms that none of the study participants referred to James Banks's (1995) dimensions, the use of multicultural education practices, or other equity theorists by name. Third, the teacher practices are not representative of Banks's theories of practices or research. I developed a 3-day professional development (PD) program to provide teachers with equity tools and

understanding of how Banks's dimensions improve outcomes for Brown and Black students. This PD program should supplement existing resources to enhance teacher knowledge of equity practices, improve understanding of James Banks's dimensions, and enhance teacher intercultural competence. The PD sessions include opportunities for teacher collaboration.

In the current study, teachers may benefit from the use of Banks's dimensions of content integration, knowledge construction, and equity pedagogy. At the same time, teachers may utilize strategies that enhance the academic achievement of Black and Brown students. The resources needed, existing supports, potential barriers and solutions, proposal for implementations, and roles and responsibilities, are addressed below.

Needed Resources

Section 1 showed the local problem to be the fact that little is known about how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. Student demographics highlight the uneven distribution of resource allocation across the district. The resources required for the current study include an auditorium or space large enough to hold approximately three hundred teachers and administrators. Tables and chairs are required for teacher collaboration. Projection screens and laptops may help discourse and enable teachers to actively participate. Notepads and sticky notes may allow teachers to take notes or ask questions. Pencils and highlighters could provide teachers with color-coded vignettes for discussion and aid their understanding.

Existing Supports

The existing support for this PD plan is a large auditorium and a medium-sized Media Center, both needed for PD sessions. Desktops, laptops, projection screens, and Promethean screens are other supports for the PD sessions.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

This researcher could manage the collection and analysis of data from the PD sessions. Researchers must be aware of researcher bias and the maintenance of objectivity during a study. A potential barrier to this study is that I am employed at the site. As a high school teacher who worked at the same school for 9 years, the selection of participants who work outside the school was paramount. None of the seven participants worked at my school; only one knew the researcher because she had transferred to another school. Other barriers included the use of repetitive modules that likely led to teacher apathy. Teacher fatigue, excessive workloads, and the need for excessive student documentation are other barriers to successful implementation. Teacher apathy toward PD is always a concern. Finally, the study sites' hesitancy towards new initiatives is a matter of concern.

Proposal for Implementation

Since the project study involves PD sessions, implementation requires reporting feedback to stakeholders in the study site district. The Staff Development Specialist reports their findings to the principal and the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). The principal then forwards a report to the Central Office.

The timetable is as follows. Breakout sessions allow teachers and administrators to take part and reflect on each module. This three-day PD plan could spread out over 12-hour sessions. An average of five different activities occurs in each 12-hour session. The daily activities include breakout sessions, where teachers, school leaders, and administrators are seated randomly. Teachers take detailed notes during the PD sessions. In addition, each day's session starts with a sign-in sheet to determine who showed up and who did not. The sign-up sessions occur before the free coffee and donut sessions. The sign-up sessions occur daily between 8:00-and 09:00 am. Between 9:00 am and 09:30 am, a staff development specialist details the sequence of each day's activities.

The first breakout session occurs between 9:30 am and 10:30 am, followed by half-hour breaks. Finally, between 11:00 am and 12:00 pm, participants reflect on the breakout sessions that just took place. Lunch is between 12:00 and 1:00 pm, followed by a second breakout session between 1:00 pm and 02:00 pm. Reflections on the first-afternoon breakout session occur between 2:00 pm and 03:00 pm. The second breakout session occurs between 3:00-and 4:00 pm. Thoughts on the second breakout session occur between 4:00 pm and 05:00 pm, followed by a short break between 5:00 pm and 5:30 pm. The last breakout session of the day occurs between 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm. The final reflection and wrap-up occur between 6:30-and 7:30 pm. After that, staff complete their attendance and one evaluation online daily between 7:30-8:00 pm. The list of materials used for the PD plan is in Appendix A.

A staff development specialist leads the PD sessions. Formative assessments are suitable for this PD plan. Formative assessments are appropriate because formative

assessments serve as checkpoints, and the data is required to establish and revise goals for the enhancement of teacher understanding. In addition, confidential formative evaluations could capture participant responses in the current study (Zeggelaar et al., 2020). The PD sessions will be ongoing and could be supplemented with bi-weekly PLCs. The overall goal of this PD plan is to improve teacher intercultural competence, teacher understanding of Banks's dimensions of multicultural education, and to improve student access to resource allocation while improving student outcomes.

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

I am responsible for giving stakeholders an executive summary of the project study's findings. The executive summary will contain the summary, program strengths, and recommendations to the Director of Equity Initiatives. The findings may help the Director of Equity Initiatives make decisions about strengthening or changing the study site's equity policies.

Project Evaluation Plan

This current study PD aimed to understand how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. Equity is experienced differently by different groups, and there are clusters of schools with higher concentrations of Black and Brown students. Data collected from Zoom sessions and confidentiality may give teachers the confidence to express themselves without fear of retribution. The goal of the current study was to understand how teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. The key stakeholders are district leaders, administrators, PLCs, Instructional

Leadership teams, directors, and department heads. A summative evaluation may be produced upon request.

Project Implications

The current study aimed to understand how teachers perceived their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. By analyzing data from the Zoom interviews, teacher perceptions of using equity practices may be better understood. The study results could reveal that teachers use equity practices regularly but may not be aware of the names of Banks's dimensions of multicultural education.

Public education could serve students by acknowledging and enacting policies that integrate races, ethnicities, and cultures. Public education could ensure the fair allocation of resources within classrooms. A district implements its mission by leading and instructing its students. The implementation of a PD program that addresses teacher perceptions of equity practices may help teachers improve their intercultural skills, and work to ensure fairer resource allocation. This project study may be a big step toward an understanding of teacher perceptions of using equity practices. Section 4 addresses project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, scholarship, project development, leadership, and positive social change, reflection on the importance of work, implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The study site's annual report highlighted the continuing struggles of African American and Latino students in accessing equity practices instituted in 2005. African American and Latino students' struggles may be attributable to teacher perceptions of the feasibility of implementing equity practices in diverse classrooms. Of the four available genres, the professional development plan offered the best opportunity to inform teachers' beliefs and improve their intercultural competence.

This professional development plan offers the best opportunity to address practice gaps in the district. I considered an evaluation plan but did not use one because evaluation plans do not capture nuances inherent in participant responses (see Kassab et al., 2020). A curriculum plan was not suitable because curriculum plans limit what can be measured or seen. In addition, curriculum plans limit what can be captured about teacher beliefs because teachers customize instructional practices based on their personal preferences (Edmonson, 2021). A position paper was not appropriate because position papers require thorough examinations of a district's records, and position papers may be static. In addition, position papers require districts to show shortcomings in their practices (Brown & Klein, 2020). Professional development should be ongoing and address teachers' challenges in meeting the needs of multicultural students. The staff development specialist will follow up with teachers by observing them, retooling future professional development sessions, or offering timely advice during classroom observations.

The first day of the 3-day session will focus on Banks's dimensions and differences between the dimensions. The second day will focus on ethnicity and understanding bias and discrimination. The third day will focus on curricular, pedagogical, and instructional activities. The goals of the PD program are as follows:

- to document the current practices of teachers within the district
- to educate teachers on Banks's dimensions
- to differentiate among those dimensions and understand how to integrate the dimensions into instruction
- to make recommendations for using equity practices in schools with diverse student bodies

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Several alternative approaches were considered but not used. Learning to Learn is one such approach. Learning to Learn is a professional development model that improves teacher equity practices by focusing on teacher–student interactions (Zydzionnaite et al., 2022). The research indicated that the more teachers use the Learning to Learn approach, the greater the likelihood for students to get involved in their learning (Zydzionnaite et al., 2022). The long-term goal of the Learning to Learn approach is for teachers to transition from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction. However, the mask and distancing requirements imposed by COVID-19 meant this choice was impractical for observing teacher–student interactions.

Integrative learning, another feature of the Learning to Learn approach, requires teachers to bridge the divide between academic knowledge and practice (Vashe et al.,

2019). Four components of the integrative learning approach are the integration of experience, integration of knowledge, integration of curriculum design, and social integration. However, an integrative learning approach could have been more practical because it could have required students to take ownership of their learning over an extended period. The time constraints imposed by this project study meant that integrative learning was not a practical approach. In addition, an integrative learning approach is not considered practical for a district where many students are from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds and require an adjustment period.

Technology is a critical aspect of education and prepares students for 21st-century jobs. Technology plays such a key role in classrooms that technology integration is a crucial feature of professional development (Hinton et al., 2018; Kucuk, 2018). However, teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development need to address the symbiosis of technology with content knowledge. In other words, professional development from a technological perspective would not address the core needs of professional development case-based instruction (CBI); this would affect the quantity and quality of students' educational experiences. CBI presents students with real-life problems and encourages them to use their conceptual knowledge to solve real-life challenges. However, CBI was not the preferred choice because the literature needs to be more extensive, and more research is needed to determine its effectiveness. Because the literature was light on the efficacy of CBI, I did not choose CBI.

I considered an explanatory sequential design approach but did not choose it. An explanatory sequential design approach is a mixed-methods approach and a step-by-step

approach. The first step in an explanatory sequential mixed-methods study is the collection of quantitative data. The second step is using a qualitative approach to interpret the quantitative data (Demir et al., 2022). A mixed-methods approach could have been more practical given the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying restrictions at the state and federal levels. However, it was impractical to observe teachers in their natural environment using an explanatory sequential design approach (Demir et al., 2022). Research showed that teachers' perceptions of students are influenced by whether their students come from the same racial, ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic backgrounds (Perouse-Harvey, 2022; Silverman et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2019).

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

The impetus for this project study was to inform teachers' perceptions of using equity practices for Black and Brown students. The diversity of student cultures and races differs from the teacher corps's homogeneity. Teachers in the district can apply Banks's dimensions of multicultural education with fidelity for students to expand their access to resources. Expanding students' access to resources ensures they take part in advanced placement and international baccalaureate courses, have enough support to succeed in their first courses, and have teachers and district leaders who engage in a community of practice.

As a person of color working in a school district with teachers of largely White ancestry, I have observed that the racial and cultural divide between students and teachers may negatively affect equity distribution. The extensive research needed to complete this project study illuminated the role of teacher beliefs in the distribution of resources. The

onset of COVID-19 heightened existing disparities for students of color, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Doctoral work heightened my appreciation for peer-reviewed articles that address best equity practices. The research process was tedious but worthwhile. This project study required a basic qualitative approach because it was the only practical tool available to deal with the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. Time management skills required a balance between family, full-time work, and completing the project study.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Equity is not equality, and equality is not equity. Teachers confuse the terms and use them interchangeably (Jackson et al., 2019; Shelton, 2019; Williams & Brown, 2019). The district's teachers are primarily homogenous in their racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The district's students, on the other hand, are heterogeneous in their racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This difference in cultures can affect teachers' beliefs about the utility of using equity practices in improving student participation and outcomes. Decades of equity initiatives have failed to reduce differences in resource allocation, have not expanded participation rates in advance placement and international baccalaureate courses, and have not improved overall outcomes for Black and Brown students in this district. The current project study addressed teachers' lack of knowledge of Banks's dimensions, which may improve intercultural competence and enhance teachers' beliefs about using equity practices in diverse classrooms. This project study was motivated by the findings and provided succinct analysis and recommendations for teachers, administrators, and district leaders.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project study was conducted to understand teacher perceptions of using equity practices for diverse students. The data analysis showed that teachers' use of equity practices increases when they have gone through professional development, become aware of their biases, and improved their multicultural education practices. This study's findings could contribute to social change at the district and societal levels by showing that teachers' perceptions of students are influenced by whether students come from the same racial, ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic backgrounds as their teachers. This study filled a gap in practice about the impact of teachers' beliefs on the use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. The data analysis made it possible for me to make the appropriate recommendations.

The onset of COVID-19 broadened the district's teacher selection process because more candidates became available. The district should continue to hire Black and Brown teachers to reflect student diversity. The onset of COVID-19 forced districts to do asynchronous training to meet federal and state distancing guidelines. Teachers appreciate the flexibility that asynchronous training has afforded. After the pandemic, schools should consider asynchronous training as the default choice for professional development.

Teachers have complained that the PLC and professional development sessions contribute to apathy and exhaustion. The district should reduce the number of professional development sessions and have teachers select professional development topics that interest them. There have been informal discussions about the feasibility of

reducing the number of school days from five to four and how those decisions impact student learning, reduce teacher burnout, and improve teacher retention.

Understanding teacher perceptions is crucial in the district. Social promotion policies at the elementary and middle school levels influence student readiness for high school. The effect is that students deficient in reading, writing, and mathematics get promoted to Grades 9–12 without the requisite skills to succeed at the high school level. A district policy that remediates students' mathematics, reading, and writing abilities at the elementary and middle school levels will ensure that students are fully ready to engage at the high school level. Remediation policies and tutoring services should go a long way toward improving teachers' perceptions of the utility of equity practices in diverse classrooms.

Conclusion

This project study was conducted to understand teacher perceptions' of using equity practices for diverse students. The data analysis showed that teachers' use of equity practices increases when they have gone through professional development, become aware of their biases, and improved their intercultural competence. This study's findings could contribute to social change at the district and societal levels because a factor in teachers' perceptions is students' racial, ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic backgrounds. This study filled a gap in practice about the impact of teachers' beliefs. I completed a qualitative analysis of the impact of teacher beliefs on the use of equity practices in diverse classrooms. The data analysis made it possible to make recommendations.

Understanding teacher perceptions is essential because of what happens at the elementary and middle school levels. The district's elementary and middle school social promotion policies influence high school student readiness. The effect is that students who need to improve in reading, writing, and mathematics get promoted to Grades 9–12 without the skills needed to succeed at the high school level. Social promotion negatively affects teachers' beliefs of students' abilities based on students' racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. A district policy that remediates students' mathematics, reading, and writing abilities at the elementary and middle school levels will ensure that students are fully ready to engage at the high school level. That should go a long way toward improving teachers' beliefs of the utility of equity practices in diverse classrooms.

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Appendix A: The Project

Agenda: Day 1	
8:00 am – 8:30 am	Sign In, Coffee and Grabbing of Laptops
8:30 am – 9:00 am	Opening Statement and instructions by Professional Development Lead
9:00 am – 10:00 am	Breakout Sessions: Who is James Banks? What is Banks’s theory on multicultural education? Why multicultural education is important.
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Break
10:30 am – 11:30 am	Reflection on Break Out Session: Name Banks’s dimensions on multicultural education. Identify the first three of Banks five dimensions. How are Banks’s dimensions applicable in a classroom setting. Give examples.
11:30 am – 12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30 pm – 01:30 pm	Breakout Sessions: Banks’s Dimensions. Vignettes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Content Integration: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cinderella Stories: Cinderella Stories b. Famous Mathematicians: Famous Mathematicians 2. Knowledge Construction: Around the World in Five Days 3. Equity Pedagogy: Thematic Units
01:30 pm to 03:30 pm	Reflection on Break Out Session: What is content integration? What are the distinguishing features of content integration? What is knowledge construction? How is knowledge construction different from content integration? What is equity pedagogy? What are the distinguishing features of equity pedagogy? Can you apply each of the dimensions in your classroom? Which of the dimensions would you like to use more of?
03:30 pm to 04:30 pm	Breakout Sessions Exploring Banks’s dimensions
04:30 pm to 05:30 pm	Reflection on Break Out Session
05:30 pm to 06:00 pm	Break
06:30 pm to 07:30 pm	Final Reflection and Wrap-up
07:30 pm to 08:00 pm	Dinner

Note. Adapted from “Teacher professional development for improving the intercultural school: An example of a participatory course on stereotypes,” by C. Hajisoteriou, P. Maniatis, P.

Angelides, 2018, *Education Inquiry*, 10(2), 166-188.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2018.1514908>

Agenda: Day 2	
8:00 am – 8:30 am	Sign In, Coffee and Grabbing of Laptops
8:30 am – 9:00 am	Opening Statement and instructions by Professional Development Specialist
9:00 am – 10:30 am	Breakout Sessions (adapted from Paul P. Gorski Institute) Icebreakers: Knowing the Community: Ethnicity Exercise Name Stories Sharing Ourselves: “Who I am” Poems
10:30 am – 11:30 am	Break
11:30 am – 12:30 am	Reflection on Break Out Session
12:30 am – 01:30 pm	Lunch
01:30 pm – 02:30 pm	Breakout Sessions (adapted from Paul P. Gorski Institute) The Depth and Breadth of “Multicultural” Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination
02:30 pm to 03:00 pm	Reflection on Break Out Session
03:00 pm to 04:00 pm	Breakout Sessions (adapted from Paul P. Gorski Institute) Explore Definitions
04:00 pm to 05:00 pm	Reflection on Break Out Session
05:00 pm to 05:30 pm	Break
05:30 pm to 06:30 pm	Breakout Sessions (adapted from Paul P. Gorski Institute) Circles of My Multicultural Self Inclusion/Exclusion
06:30 pm to 07:00 pm	Final Reflection and Wrap up
07:30 pm to 08:00 pm	Staff Completes Attendance and Evaluation Online

Note. Adapted from “Supporting critical multicultural teacher educators: Transformative teaching, social justice education, and perceptions of institutional support,” by P. C. Gorski & G. Parekh, 2020, *Intercultural Education*, 31(3), 265–285. <https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/14675986.2020.1728497>

Agenda: Day 3	
8:00 am – 8:30 am	Participants Grab laptops and take their seats
8:30 am – 9:00 am	Opening Statement and instructions by Professional Development Teacher. Focus is Curricular, Pedagogical, or Instructional
9:00 am – 10:00 am	Breakout Sessions Diversity Activities in the Classroom Why Diverse Books are Important
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Break
10:30 am – 11:30 am	Reflections on Break Out Session
11:30 am – 12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30 pm – 01:30 pm	Breakout Sessions Inclusive Education, what it Means
01:30 pm to 02:30 pm	Reflection on Break Out Session
02:30 pm to 03:30 pm	Breakout Sessions Teaching Tolerance in the Class
03:30 pm to 04:30 pm	Reflections on Break Out Session
04:30 pm to 05:00 pm	Break
05:00 pm to 06:00 pm	Breakout Sessions Creating an Equitable Grading System Creating a Positive Student-Teacher Relationship
06:30 pm to 07:30 pm	Final Reflection and Wrap up
07:30 pm to 08:00 pm	Staff Complete Attendance and Evaluation online

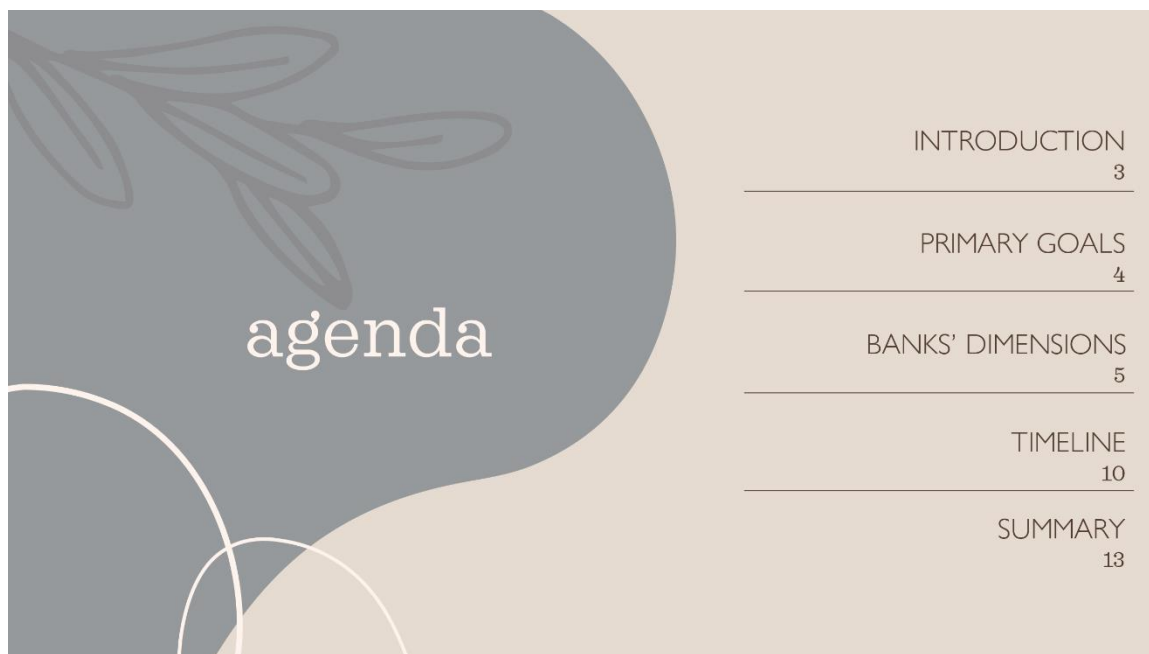
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Multicultural education equity training

Seeku Cleland

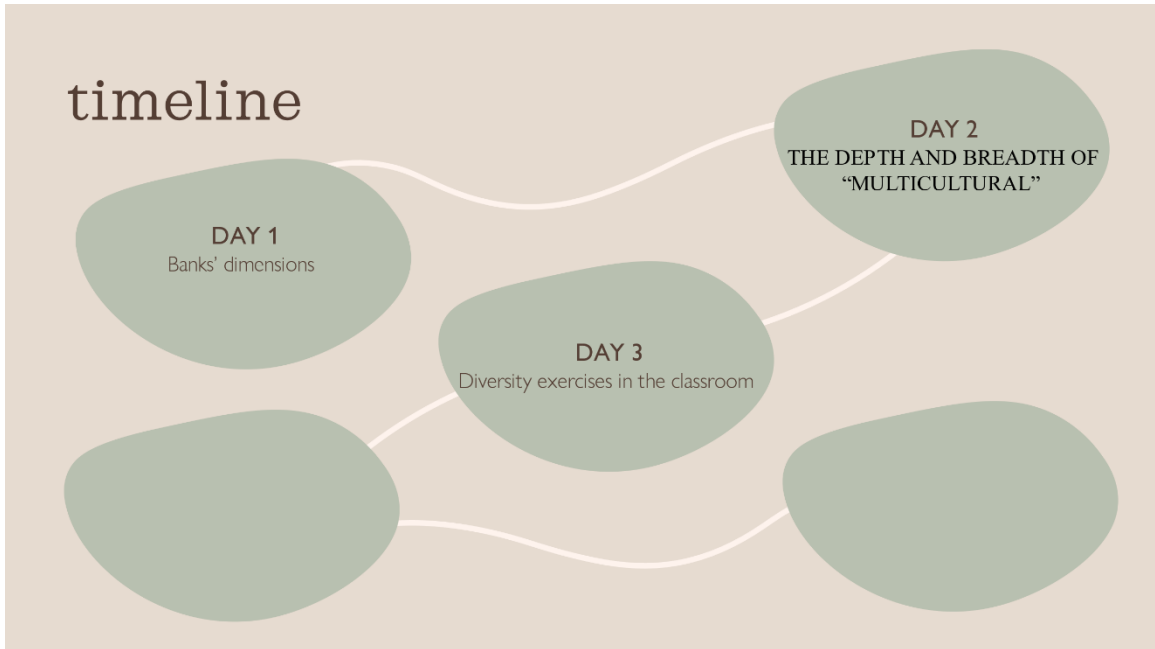
The Project (Equity Handouts)



The graphic features a dark grey circular area on the left containing a stylized leaf pattern and the word "agenda" in white lowercase letters. To the right, a light beige background contains a table of contents with horizontal lines separating the items.

INTRODUCTION	3
PRIMARY GOALS	4
BANKS' DIMENSIONS	5
TIMELINE	10
SUMMARY	13

The Project (Equity Handouts)



The Project (Equity Handouts)



The Project (Equity Handouts)

Primary goals

- Promote educational equity
- encourage openness and acceptance towards people belonging to different cultural and ethnic backgrounds
- Develop teacher competence in Banks' dimensions
- Develop teacher intercultural competence

The Project (Equity Handouts)

Appendix A1: Equity Training: (Day-3 Agenda)

Agenda Day 3	
8:30 am - 8:55 am	
8:30 am - 8:55 am	Morning guidance in connection to Professional Development Lead
9:00 am - 10:00 am	Session 1: What is the role of a teacher? (What is the role of a teacher? Why is it important to understand this?)
10:00 am - 10:30 am	Break
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Session 2: What is the role of a teacher? (What is the role of a teacher? Why is it important to understand this?)
11:00 am - 11:30 am	Lunch
11:30 am - 01:30 pm	Session 3: What is the role of a teacher? (What is the role of a teacher? Why is it important to understand this?)
01:30 pm - 02:00 pm	Session 4: What is the role of a teacher? (What is the role of a teacher? Why is it important to understand this?)
02:00 pm - 03:00 pm	Session 5: What is the role of a teacher? (What is the role of a teacher? Why is it important to understand this?)
03:00 pm - 04:00 pm	Session 6: What is the role of a teacher? (What is the role of a teacher? Why is it important to understand this?)
04:00 pm - 04:30 pm	Break
04:30 pm - 05:00 pm	Session 7: What is the role of a teacher? (What is the role of a teacher? Why is it important to understand this?)
05:00 pm - 05:30 pm	Session 8: What is the role of a teacher? (What is the role of a teacher? Why is it important to understand this?)
05:30 pm - 06:00 pm	Dinner

20XX presentation title 6

The Project (Equity Handouts)

Note. Adapted from "Supporting critical multicultural teacher educators: Transformative teaching, social justice education, and conditions of institutional support," by P. C. Gorski

Day 2

Agenda: Day 2

8:00 am–8:30 am	Sign In, Coffee and Greeting of Laptops
8:30 am–9:00 am	Opening Statement and instructions by Professional Development Specialist
9:00 am–12:30 pm	Breakout Sessions (adapted from Paul P. Gorski Institute) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isabel Klein: Knowing the Community: Ethnicity Overides Name Stories Sharing Our Stories: "Who I Am" Poems
10:30 am–11:30 am	Break
11:30 am–12:30 pm	Reflection on Break Out Session
12:30 am–01:30 pm	Lunch
01:30 pm–02:30 pm	Breakout Sessions (adapted from Paul P. Gorski Institute) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Depth and Breadth of "Multicultural" Understanding Racism and Discrimination
02:30 pm to 03:00 pm	Reflection on Break Out Session
03:00 pm to 04:00 pm	Breakout Sessions (adapted from Paul P. Gorski Institute) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansive Definitions
04:00 pm to 05:00 pm	Reflection on Break Out Session
05:00 pm to 05:30 pm	Break
05:30 pm to 06:30 pm	Breakout Sessions (adapted from Paul P. Gorski Institute) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Codes of My Multicultural Self Indigen/Education
06:30 pm to 07:00 pm	Final Reflection and Wrap-up
07:30 pm to 08:00 pm	Self-Completes Attendance and Evaluation Online

The Project (Equity Handouts)

Day 3

Agenda Day 3	
8:00 am - 8:30 am	Participants Grab laptops and take their seats
8:30 am - 9:00 am	Opening Statement and instructions by Professional Development Teacher Focus in Curriculum Pedagogical or Instructional
9:00 am - 10:00 am	Breakout Sessions Diversity Activities in the Classroom Why Diverse Books are Important
10:00 am - 10:30 am	Break
10:30 am - 11:30 am	Reflections on Break Out Session
11:30 am - 12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30 pm - 01:30 pm	Breakout Sessions Infusing Social Justice into the Classroom
01:30 pm to 02:30 pm	Reflections on Break Out Session
02:30 pm to 03:30 pm	Breakout Sessions Building a Student-Centered Community Teaching Tolerance in the Classroom
03:30 pm to 04:30 pm	Reflections on Break Out Session
04:30 pm to 05:00 pm	Break
05:00 pm to 06:00 pm	Breakout Sessions Creating a Culturally Responsive Classroom Creating a "Project-Based" Teacher-Student Relationship
06:30 pm to 07:30 pm	Final Reflection and Wrap up
07:30 pm to 08:00 pm	Staff Committee Attendance and Evaluation time

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presentation title
8

The Project (Equity Handouts)

Banks' Content Integration

Content integration proscribes how teachers use examples, data, and examples from different cultures to illustrate critical concepts, principles, and theories in their disciplines (Banks, 1995; Kazanjian, 2019). For example, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teachers can insert multicultural content into their disciplines by using biographies of physicists and mathematicians of color and by including portraits of STEM scientists representing different cultural groups (Banks, 1993).

The Project (Equity Handouts)

Banks' Knowledge Construction

Knowledge construction, another aspect of Banks' dimensions, encompasses discussions about how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases influence how knowledge is constructed across disciplines and repeated by teachers without deconstructing what is taught (Banks, 1995; Moya & Hamedani, 2017). Implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference delineate the perspectives and beliefs teachers bring into lessons without taking into consideration students' cultural backgrounds and knowledge (Banks, 1993; Holland, & Mongillo, 2017).

The Project (Equity Handouts)

Banks' Equity Pedagogy

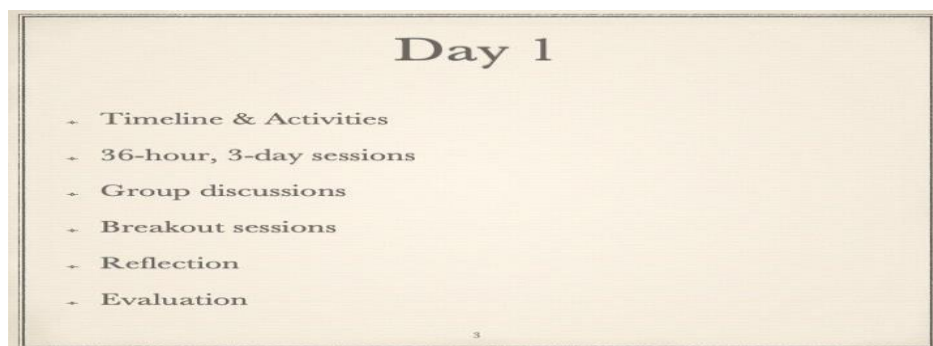
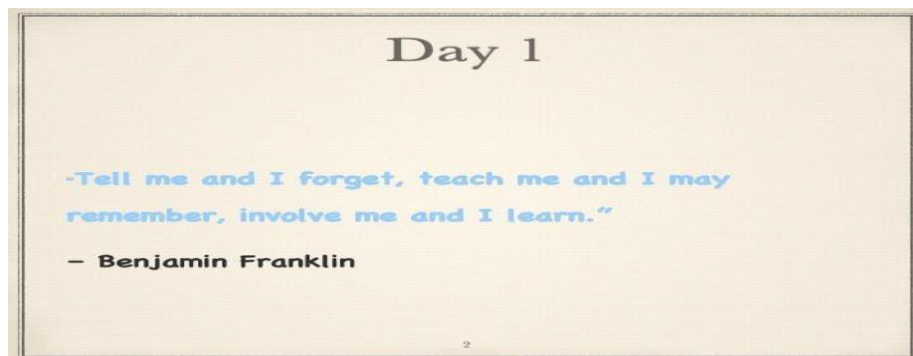
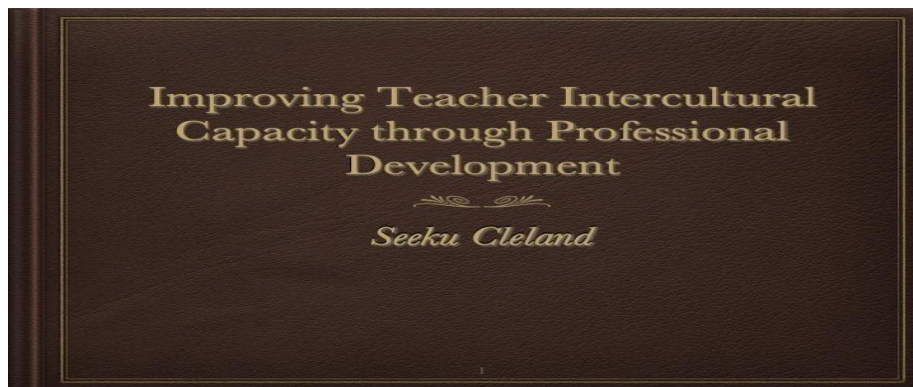
Equity pedagogy is a process for fostering students' academic achievement from different racial, ethnic, and social -class groups. Banks viewed equity pedagogy as the promotion of environments that foster knowledge acquisition and production (Banks, 1993; Chang, 2018; Cui, 2017). Teachers employ an equity pedagogy when they combine strategies and teaching methods that meet the diverse needs of students (Banks, 1995; Billingsley et al., 2017; Blue et al., 2018).

The Project (Equity Handouts)

Summary

1. List Banks' 3 dimensions
2. Explain each of the dimensions
3. How are they different?
4. How would you use each dimension in your classroom?

The Project (Power Points)



Purpose

- This 3-day, 36-hour professional development session aims to improve teacher perceptions and their equity capacity in diverse classrooms.

Goals

- Explore perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes towards diversity
- Explore intercultural interactions and communication within diverse classrooms
- Explore diversity activities in the classroom

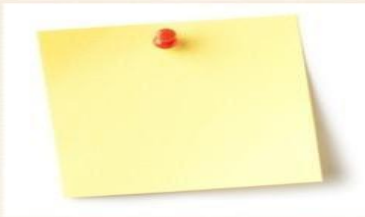
5

Rationale

- + The classroom environment is enriched when teachers undergo professional development to improve their perceptions and intercultural competence.

6

REFLECTION CORNER



Post it Notes

- ❖ Jot down any questions you may have on a post-it note
- ❖ Write down any concerns you may have

7

Day 1 Activities

- Sign-on, Coffee & Tea, and grabbing of laptops
- Address by Staff Development Specialist
- Breakout Sessions
- Reflections
- Lunch
- Breakout Sessions
- Reflections
- Break
- Last Breakout Sessions
- Reflections
- Dinner

8

Day 2 Activities

- Sign-on, Coffee & Tea, and Grabbing of laptops
- Address by Staff Development Specialist
- Breakout Sessions
- Reflections
- Lunch
- Breakout Sessions
- Reflections
- Break
- Last Breakout Sessions
- Reflections
- Dinner

15

Day 2 Group Work (Breakout session # 1)

- ✦ Icebreakers group work
- ✦ Knowing the community ethnicity exercise
- ✦ Name stories
- ✦ Sharing ourselves: "Who am I poems?"

16

Day 2 Group Work (Breakout session # 1)

- Reflections

17

Day 2 Group Work (Breakout session # 3)

- Work with your group to explore definitions of different racial groups

19

Day 2 Group Work (Breakout session #4)

- Work with your group to explore the meaning of circles of my multicultural self
- What does exclusion or inclusion mean/

21

Day 2 Group Work (Breakout session #3)

- + Reflections

20

Day 3 Activities

- Sign-on, Coffee & Tea, and Grabbing of laptops
- Address by Staff Development Specialist
- Breakout Sessions
- Reflections
- Lunch
- Breakout Sessions
- Reflections
- Break
- Last Breakout Sessions
- Reflections
- Dinner

23

Day 3 Group Work (Breakout session # 1)

- + Work with your group to examine diversity activities in the classroom
- + Why are diverse books important?
- + Explore social-emotional learning

24

Day 3 Group Work

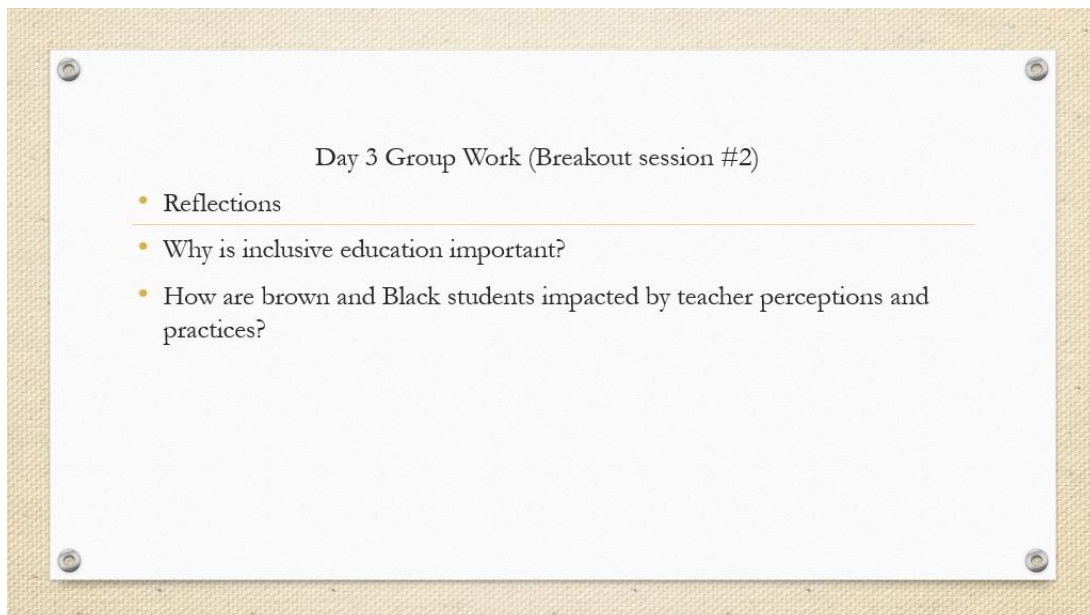
- Reflections
- Why are diversity activities important to student development?
- How do diverse books contribute to student growth?
- What role does social-emotional learning play in student development and growth?

25

Day 3 Group Work (Breakout session # 2)

- Inclusive education.
- What does the term mean?
- Why is it important?
- How should one handle students with social-emotional disorders?
- Best practices for teaching special education students in inclusive classrooms

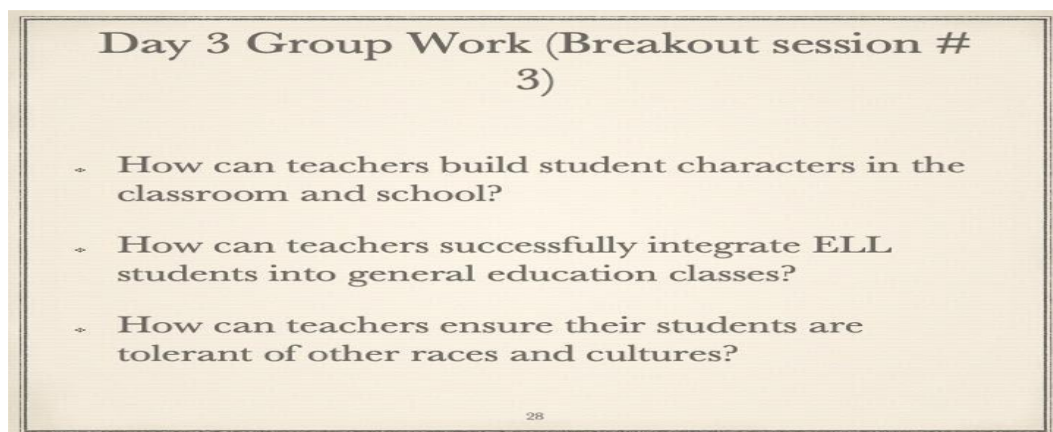
26



Day 3 Group Work (Breakout session #2)

- Reflections

- Why is inclusive education important?
- How are brown and Black students impacted by teacher perceptions and practices?



Day 3 Group Work (Breakout session #3)

- How can teachers build student characters in the classroom and school?
- How can teachers successfully integrate ELL students into general education classes?
- How can teachers ensure their students are tolerant of other races and cultures?

28

Day 3 Group Work (Breakout session # 3)

- ✦ Reflections
- ✦ How can teachers successfully build student character?
- ✦ How can teachers model proper behavior?
- ✦ How can teachers use BIPOC authors to integrate not just ELL but also Brown and Black students?

29

Day 3 Group Work (Breakout session # 4)

- ✦ Work with your group to create an equitable grading system
- ✦ Work with your group to create a desirable teacher-student relationship built on respect and mutual understanding

30

Day 3 Group Work (Breakout session # 4)

- + Reflections
- + What does an equitable grading system mean?
- + How can it be implemented?
- + Does an equitable grading system imply lowering academic standards?
- + Does creating an equitable grading system mean one group will benefit at the expense of the other?

Appendix B: Informal Assessment

District PD Capture Sheet - FY 2022

PD members will use this capture form to document PD sessions, collaborative planning, and other planning opportunities. Responses will be anonymous and will gauge participant understanding and mastery of the topics covered.

Date *

Month, day, year

PD Day (i.e. 1, 2, or 3) *

Short answer text
.....

PD member initials (only enter initials) *

Long answer text
.....

What was your PD's priority today? (choose one) *

Data analysis and reflection

Collaborative planning (aligned with school's instructional focus)

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

Professional Development

Other...

Describe what your group learned today *

Long answer text
.....

Please attach documents that show your work or learning. (For example: On going notes sheet) *

Use this space to provide any additional information, questions, or requests for support relevant to your PLC/planning experience. *

Long answer text
.....

Appendix C: Consent Form

Benefits of the Study

There could be immense benefits from this study. Understanding how teacher perceptions of equity practices (multicultural education practices) could benefit leaders and teachers in modifying teaching practices to serve the needs of diverse student populations. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are also free to withdraw at any time. The study is strictly anonymous and participant identities will not be revealed. Should you have any questions about the study, feel free to email me.

Participant's Statement

This study has been explained to me. My participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher listed on this consent form. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

By signing this form, I attest that I have read the information provided above and freely consent to participate.

Consent Agreement

Name of Participant

Signature Date

Name of Researcher

Signature Date

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview

Interviewee: _____

Interviewer: Seeku Cleland

Date /Time / Location of Interview: _____

Description of Study: _____

I am inviting you to participate in my Ed.D project study. The purpose of the project study is to understand how teachers perceive the use of equity practices (multicultural education practices) in diverse classrooms.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview questionnaire. The interview questionnaire should take no more than 30-45 minutes, the study itself will take place over a 4-6-week period. You may skip any questions you are uncomfortable with or that you choose not to answer. I will take field notes for detailed analysis.

Risks of the Study

There are potential risks to any study and this study is no exception. The study could make you uncomfortable, fearful, or emotional. Your real names will not be used to reduce the risk of discovery. It is still possible that unauthorized persons may discover your identity.

Benefits of the Study

There could be immense benefits from this study. A benefit would be improving teaching practices to better serve the needs of diverse students in classrooms. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are also free to withdraw at any time. The study is strictly anonymous and participant identities will not be revealed. Should you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me via email or phone.

Thanks for your participation in this study!

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Interview Questions
<p>Central Research Question</p> <p>How do teachers perceive the use of equity practices in diverse classroom?</p> <p>Response</p>
<p>Question #1</p> <p>What is your view of using equity practices in classrooms?</p> <p>Probe</p> <p>Is it important to use equity practices in the classroom? Why or why not?</p> <p>Code for Question #1</p>
<p>Question #2</p> <p>Which multicultural education practices do you implement in your classroom?</p> <p>Probe</p> <p>What are Banks' principles of multicultural education? What is your understanding of each term? How do you use these strategies to teach diverse students?</p> <p>Code for Question #2</p>
<p>Question #3</p> <p>Which of the strategies do you use most often? Why?</p> <p>Probe</p> <p>Which strategy or combination of strategies have been most effective for you? Elaborate on why these strategies have effective. Which strategies have not been as effective? Elaborate on why these strategies have not been effective.</p> <p>Code for Question #3</p>
<p>Question #4</p> <p>What suggestions do you have to improve the use of multicultural education as equity practices in classrooms?</p> <p>Probe</p> <p>What would you add from pre-service training to better prepare teachers? What would you add from in-service training to better prepare teachers? What would you remove from pre-service to better prepare teachers? What would you remove from in-service training to better prepare teachers?</p> <p>Code for Question #4</p>

Appendix F: Themes

RQ 1: What is your understanding of equity practices?			
<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Keywords</i>	<i>Phrases/Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
<p>“In terms of material, I tried to make it a point to bring in multiple multifaceted voices and experiences it’s hard to do in an English class because, as you may be aware, there is a lot of white male authors that promote.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multi-faceted ● Experiences ● English class 	<p>Bring in multiple multifaceted voices and experiences</p>	<p>Embrace multi-faceted experiences</p>
<p>TP 2, “practices that are meant to preserve equity and, you know, celebrate multicultural perspectives.”</p> <p>TP 4 viewed equity as the use of material that was culturally diverse. She explained, “when I’m making equity, I’m thinking more culturally proficient or culturally relevant material.”</p> <p>TP 4 views equity from the point of view of what texts students read in English class, “when I’m making equity, I’m thinking more culturally, you know proficient of culturally relevant Material.” TP 7 echoed the same sentiments when she stated, “ I would like to say that my classroom is culturally responsive I try really hard to bring in texts that are reflective of my students’ experiences.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equity ● Culture ● Text ● Proficient ● Relevant 	<p>Culturally proficient</p>	<p>Illustrate with culturally relevant material</p>

RQ 2: Which multicultural education practices do you implement in your classroom?			
	<i>Keywords</i>	<i>Phrases/Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
<p>“I tried to make it a point to bring in multiple multifaceted voices and experiences it is hard to do in an English class”</p> <p>“Though bringing in many, many different voices is something that I do regularly”</p> <p>“I’m a white male there’s certain limitations that I have and so what I attempt to do is bring in voices.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Voices ● Multifaceted ● Experiences ● Different ● White ● Male ● Limitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multifaceted voices ● Different voices ● White male ● Certain limitations 	Adjust teaching practices
<p>“Really create a variety of texts from BIPOC authors and us, and especially from women by BIPOC authors”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Variety ● Texts ● Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color Variety of texts Authors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color Variety of texts 	Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color Variety of texts
RQ 3: Which of the strategies do you use most often?			
	<i>Keywords</i>	<i>Phrases/Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
<p>“So, what I’m saying is if I’m teaching Black Boy by Richard right, I’m</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching ● Black ● Boy ● 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching Black Boy ● Opportunity to think and discuss 	Diverse Text
<p>“I think, by being blatant about what it is that I am doing about giving everybody an opportunity to think and discuss what’s</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity ● Leadership ● Roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity to think and discuss ● Leadership roles ● Classroom environment 	

<p>going on, I love having class discussions in my in my room”</p> <p>“I think when students do not see themselves in leadership roles in the classroom environment that is detrimental to them.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom Environment 		<p>Increase student participation</p>
<p>RQ 4: What suggestions do you have to improve the use of multicultural education as equity practices in classrooms?</p>			
	<i>Keywords</i>	<i>Phrases/Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
<p>“The answer to me is pretty simple hire more of African American black and Latino teachers”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire African American Latino <p>Teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> African American teachers <p>Latino teachers</p>	<p>Staff diversity</p>
<p>“Yeah, because each culture is different, each one has their ways, even the words that they use”</p> <p>“And I tried to find a way of communicating that goes around it, because sometimes I do teach in Spanish”</p> <p>“Trying to teach it in Spanish, they laugh sometimes because I don’t know all the science words in Spanish. But I have ways to get around that by describing what I’m trying to say”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture Different Communicating Spanish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture is different Find a way of communicating Trying to teach in Spanish 	<p>Use a Dual Language Approach</p>
<p>“And I really learned about the methodology, the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learned about the methodology, the culture 	

<p>culture, the even the pronunciation of some terms belief systems”</p> <p>“I can hopefully be a little more open to people of the Muslim faith right and I have a little bit of an understanding of what of what it is that they’re going through”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pronunciation ● Belief ● Systems ● Muslim ● Faith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pronunciation of some terms, belief systems ● Muslim faith ● Understanding of what it is that they’re going through 	<p>Let staff choose the PD Session</p>
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Appendix G: Content Integration

Content Integration: Using resources and texts from various cultures as teaching tools.

Activities: [Cinderella Stories](#), [Famous Mathematicians](#), [Around the World in Five Days](#), [Thematic Units](#)

Cinderella Stories

A good way to integrate multicultural education into the elementary school literature curriculum is to do a unit on Cinderella. The Cinderella story has been written and adapted in many ways. Almost every culture has their own version of this story. By reading and studying different Cinderella stories, the class could chart the differences in the plots, main characters and the goals the characters are trying to reach. With older classes, the students can then dig deeper into the culture that each Cinderella story comes from and discover how the cultures' beliefs are expressed through the story. Another approach would be that the class could talk about a different country every week. Then the students would also get the Cinderella book that was from the country they were talking about.

Famous Mathematicians

A good way to integrate multicultural education into a high school math class is to do a section where students do reports on famous mathematicians. Mathematicians come from a variety of cultures. Have the students each or in small groups pick a mathematician from a list the teacher has chosen (this way you are sure to have a variety of different cultures). They can choose from people such as Sophie Germain, Emilie du Chatelet, John Griggs Thompson, Pierre de Fermat, and many more. While looking up

information for their reports, students will also be learning about that person's culture.

Then, the students will share what they learned with the rest of the class, so they too can learn about a particular mathematician's culture.

Around the World in Five Days

In physical education you can have a week called "Around the World in Five Days." During these days you move around the globe doing activities from five different cultures around the world. The activities would be ones that are not commonly practiced in the United States. This would give the students five new forms of physical activity they can participate in. A great example of an activity would be a dance called Tinkling. It is done in the Philippines quite often and is a sacred dance there. While doing the activities the students would not only be physically active, but also learning about where in the world the activities come from. Also, they will be learning why the people in these places do the dances. Another approach would be that the class could talk about a different country every week. Then the students would also get the Cinderella book that was from the country they were talking about.

Thematic Units

Introducing a variety of cultures could be accomplished by having thematic units based on different cultures. Learning about different cultures is important to teach children tolerance and acceptance of people who are different from them. For instance, if students were learning about Mexico, they could read a book that deals with issues of Mexican culture for their age group. They could have a "fiesta" where the students could break a piñata and prepare Mexican foods. The teacher could invite someone into the

classroom as a speaker to discuss with the class their heritage and culture so the students could form a relationship to their own...either through differences or similarities. For math, students could learn to count in Spanish. The geography class could learn about Mexico, i.e. global position, demographics and climate. Ancient civilizations could also be taught in this manner.

Knowledge Construction

An Activity to Help Students Learn How They Construct Knowledge

In the classroom, or at recess, stage an event without announcing it to the class. For example, have two or three people burst into a classroom with different genders, races, cultures, or ages. Let them act out for about 60 seconds before they leave. When things quiet down, have the students write down the event to the best of their knowledge. Then only select a particular group of students as being the correct view based on gender, race, or culture. Make a big deal out of their correctness. Have them make assumptions and draw conclusions about what they saw. Then have them share their versions as experts. Be ready for some fireworks. Since we all tend to focus on things that are similar to us, the chosen students will probably have a different slant than other students. Ask them how they came to their conclusions? What did they base their truth and accuracy on? Even if they are wrong in their conclusions, their opinions stand as truth because they are the dominant, chosen group with the power to make their beliefs stick, even if they are mistaken.

Then tie this into the view that many white Americans have about other cultures coming to the U.S. today. Or how the black Americans view the Koreans or Vietnamese

in Los Angeles or New York. Or to the Civil Rights movement. Or to the fact that no woman or Black or Latino or Asian or Jew has been President. Who makes these decisions? What do we base our choice and electoral votes on? What do we assume about these people? What do students assume about each other or their teachers? What information do we accept as truth, and what do we ignore?

These are all examples of the many IMPLICIT cultural assumptions we use in our knowledge construction process.

Source: <https://www.siue.edu/~ptheofo/foundations/studentconstruction.html>

An Equity Pedagogy

Equity Pedagogy: Using different teaching styles to meet the diverse needs of your students.

Activity: Embracing linguistic diversity in journal work, fiction writing, free writing, and in-class discussions.

Appendix H: Alignment of Themes to Central Research Question and Subquestions

Theme	Research Question 1: “How do teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms?”
Personal Experiences of Equity	TP 4, “even in college, I sought out a group of people to help me understand the math concepts, which is what the research says. I fall into that category, so I believe in group work.”
Theme	research question (RQ 1): “How do teachers perceive their use of equity practices in diverse classrooms?”
Curriculum Restrictions	<p>TP 4 expressed her concerns: “there is not enough space and time for teachers who choose to incorporate these equity practices and want to connect with students; there is no time for it.” TP 4 offered this potential solution, “my suggestion would be for the district to adjust their curriculum to cater to the needs of our students.”</p> <p>TP 1 believed his creative writing class gave him more flexibility in implementing equity practices. “I do also teach a creative writing class, and that class gives me a lot more leeway because there is no curriculum.”</p>

	<p>TP 2 explained, “perspectives that have been favored historically and ingrained as part of our curriculum; those are favored over voices that are still emerging.”</p>
Theme	Sub-Research Questions
Adjust teaching practices	<p>SQ 1: <i>What is your understanding of equity practices?</i></p> <p>TP 2 “external factors such as you know, race, culture, religion, sexuality, etc., the removal of those barriers_so that all people can participate.”</p> <p>TP 4 identified barriers her students faced, “many different barriers like Internet issues, engaging them and I am talking specifically in math. I do not know about other content areas, but it was hard to see equity practices.”</p>
Illustrate content with culturally targeted examples	<p>SQ 2. <i>Which multicultural education practices do you implement in your classroom?</i></p> <p>The responses showed that teachers used a variety of strategies to achieve student learning. TP 1 uses diverse text to “create a variety of texts from BIPOC authors,”</p> <p>TP 2 not only uses diverse text but also has students reflect on the content, “having</p>

	<p>students' responses to those texts always involving some element of reflection and speaking and listening as well.”</p> <p>TP 7 explained how text selection creates an equitable environment for literature selection and discussion, “equity practices have everything to do with what texts we choose and how those texts are relevant to our kids' lives.”</p> <p>TP 3 has students do research before reading so students have context: “to do that research, I leave them the sources that give the whole truth.” TP 4 uses flexible grouping in her math classes so students can engage in cooperative learning, “to kind of help understand the math concepts, that is what the research says, so I believe in group work.” TP 6 made cultural references so students could appreciate that people from other races and cultures had also made contributions to knowledge, “so I tried to get a variety of sources that everyone has contributed, and no one has a monopoly on mathematics.”</p>
Integrate BIPOC authors into literature	SQ 3. <i>Which of the strategies do you use most often?</i>

	<p>TP 1 uses diverse text to “create a variety of texts from BIPOC authors.”</p> <p>TP 7, an English teacher, brought diversification to the texts their students were exposed to through text selection.</p>
Investigate and discuss dominant theories and concepts	<p>SQ 3. <i>Which of the strategies do you use most often?</i></p> <p>TP 4 had a fascinating take on equity pedagogy, which, according to Banks, characterized as teachers modifying their teaching to facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class groups (Banks, 1995). TP 4 expressed this sentiment as follows, “TP 4: “my challenge, how do I make it relevant to them so that they can see themselves in the math and then be able to complete the math and hopefully like it.”</p>
Diversify staff	<p>SQ 4: <i>What suggestions do you have to improve the use of multicultural education as equity practices in your classrooms?</i></p> <p>TP 1 continued, “also we need to diversify our staff, I have been an advocate for getting more teachers of color on our staff.”</p>