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Elementary Teacher Perspectives of Training, Support, and Resources for Implementing Culturally Responsive Strategies

Amber Nicole Block
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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Amber Block

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2023

Abstract

Elementary Teacher Perspectives of Training, Support, and Resources for Implementing

Culturally Responsive Strategies

by

Amber Block

MA, University of Missouri, Kansas City, 2015

BS, University of Missouri, Kansas City, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2023

Abstract

The problem addressed in this study was that elementary teachers in a culturally and racially diverse school district in the Midwest did not have adequate training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perspectives on their current needs for training, support, and resources to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching strategies. This study was grounded in the conceptual framework of culturally responsive teaching. Data were collected from a purposeful sample of 11 elementary teachers in the study district through semistructured interviews. The thematic analysis of the data revealed that while the findings corroborated aspects of existing literature, they also provided novel insights, particularly in terms of resource management challenges and the significance of inclusive community engagement, offering a deeper understanding of fostering culturally responsive teaching practices. The findings suggest that elementary teachers would benefit from targeted training, support, and resources to create a culturally responsive learning environment. Recommendations include the development of interventions and resources to assist teachers in effectively implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies, taking into account diverse educational contexts and equitable resource allocation, in order to foster positive social change in educational settings. The findings of this study have the potential to contribute to positive social change by fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment within the specific midwestern school district, leading to improved outcomes for both educators and students. Additionally, the insights gained from this research could inform practices in other urban school districts facing similar challenges, amplifying the potential for broader positive social impact.

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Dedication

To everyone who questioned my potential and journey, this achievement reflects how challenges can be transformed into motivation. High school was a time of questioning, but those questions only strengthened my resolve. Your reservations served as the catalyst that drove me forward, reminding me daily that potential is realized not by external validation, but by inner determination.

To my parents, the foundation of my strength and inspiration: this milestone is as much a testament to your consistent faith in me as it is to my hard work. Your belief in me, especially when faced with skepticism, has been the compass that guided my academic pursuits. With your encouragement, I've learned to aim higher than the horizon and reach for the stars.

Today, as I hold this esteemed degree, I am humbled by the journey, recognizing that every challenge was an opportunity to grow and every doubter, an incentive to prove myself. This dedication serves as a message of the power of perseverance, the importance of self-belief, and the unlimited possibilities that lie within us.

To all who ever questioned my journey, I hope my story inspires you to see beyond initial impressions and recognize the boundless potential in everyone. To my parents, my tireless advocates, thank you for your consistent support and belief. Your faith has been the beacon that guided me through every challenge.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Classrooms in urban, suburban, and rural classrooms are rapidly growing in the diversity of their student population while additionally, the demographics of the families within the school communities are more diverse than ever, creating a central issue for teaching and learning (Frankenberg et al., 2019). This study explored elementary teachers' perspectives regarding their current needs for training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in a culturally and racially diverse midwestern school district. This study was necessary for its local setting as evidence from a school-district-collected survey of teachers indicated that elementary teachers in the district of study do not feel their district has provided adequate resources or training to support them in implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies in their classrooms.

This chapter covers the background of the study, the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. Additionally, the chapter provides background information on the conceptual framework, the nature of the study, definitions of key terms, and discussion of the assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations, followed by a conclusion with the study's potential significance and a summary of the key points.

Background

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2021), the demographics of student populations in public schools have shown a significant increase in students coming from culturally and linguistically diverse homes, from 48% in 2012 to 53% in

2021. The continual rise in the diverse demographics in public education has led to a need for investigating how variables linked to demographics (race, ethnicity, income, poverty, cultural backgrounds) directly affect student achievement in the classroom. Gay (2018) identified the need for educational shifts and adjustments to be made to meet the diverse needs of the changing student population. Such shifts include professional development opportunities for teachers and staff who are not equipped or experienced in the relevant content knowledge needed to provide culturally responsive instruction.

Culturally responsive teaching is an educational reform that was shaped as a response to the inequity of educational opportunities for racially and culturally diverse students, aiming to close the achievement gap between children of color and their White peers (Muniz, 2019). The research behind culturally responsive teaching has a direct connection to brain-based learning, which has been studied by instructional strategist, Zaretta Hammond, who described culture as software to the brain's hardware, insinuating that the use of effective culturally responsive teaching tools and strategies are the operating system needed to develop students' cognitive abilities (Hammond, 2021).

According to Hammond, culturally responsive teaching is defined as an educator's ability to recognize "students' cultural displays of learning and meaning making and then respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content to promote effective informational processing." All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in relationship and having a social-emotional connection to the student to create a safe space for learning.

Because of the lack of content and training around culturally responsive teaching in teacher preparation programs and limited professional development opportunities for practicing teachers, there continues to be a stigma around the culture of poverty, being the reason for the growing achievement gap between students of color and White students. Abacioglu et al. (2020) provided evidence against those claims, indicating a significant correlation between culturally responsive teaching in teacher preparation and professional development training programs and the achievement of students whose teachers participated in such preparation or training programs. High-quality professional development opportunities and training in culturally responsive teaching for both preservice teachers and practicing teachers is needed now more than ever, and this study may provide information that can help frame those learning opportunities for teachers.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was that elementary teachers in a culturally and racially diverse school district in the Midwest did not have adequate training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies. Based on personal communication with the executive director and the program coordinator of the central office Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive (DEI) department, the study district began its work in August of 2021 in the areas of DEI. This included the area of culturally responsive teaching. The program coordinator said there had not been any formal data or feedback around culturally responsive teaching collected from teachers and staff from the DEI department because this work is not happening in classrooms due to a lack of

training, resources, or support for teachers. The district DEI Department was created in August of 2020.

Twenty teachers representing six different elementary school sites in the district of study completed a survey sent out in August of 2021 by building instructional improvement coaches regarding culturally responsive teaching strategies in their classrooms. The survey data indicated that 88.2% of participating elementary teachers did not feel their district had provided any training or support to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies successfully, and 94.1% of participating teachers felt that their district had not provided them with the resources needed to be able to provide culturally responsive teaching strategies to their students. Additional qualitative feedback from the survey indicated that this is a problem in this local setting.

Cruz et al. (2019) studied the confidence of educators in applying culturally aware teaching methodologies. The researchers delved into the perspectives of both teachers who were actively teaching and those still undergoing teacher training. The participant pool for this study was sizable, consisting of 245 aspiring teachers from teacher education initiatives in both California and Idaho, educators currently serving in Idaho, California, and Oregon, a considerable group from privately-owned schools in California, and a subset of teachers who were part of a nationwide alternative teaching certification program. Cruz et al.'s results revealed that teachers reported the highest mean scores in areas that involved building trust and relationships with students but reported the lowest mean scores of self-efficacies in areas related to culturally responsive techniques, including specific cultural elements in the curriculum. The study indicated a need for

targeted professional development, training, and resources for teachers to be more confident in their understanding of and ability to implement culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms. There is clear evidence that this lack of understanding and ability to implement culturally responsive teaching in classrooms is a problem at both the local and national levels.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding their current needs for training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district. This study identified what elementary teachers reported that they need to successfully implement culturally responsive teaching strategies using culturally relevant pedagogy. Individual interviews provided insight into what teachers believe they need to be able to provide an equitable learning experience by providing better classroom practices and teaching strategies that support the culturally diverse needs of all students.

In this study, I explored how teachers perceived the implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies using culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. Through individual interviews, the study identified the challenges and barriers that teachers encountered in providing equitable learning experiences to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The study provides insights into what teachers believe they need to effectively incorporate culturally responsive teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of all their students.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were formed using the lens of the culturally responsive teaching framework. The data used to answer the research questions provided evidence and insight into what supports, training, and resources elementary teachers feel they need to be prepared and well trained in culturally responsive and appropriate teaching.

The following research questions guided this study:

- RQ1: What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the training needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?
- RQ2: What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the supports needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?
- RQ3: What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?

Conceptual Framework

The guiding framework for this basic qualitative study was culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is a conceptual framework that was born from the ideological beginnings of multicultural education, which originated in the early 1970s during a time when racial and ethnic inequities were first openly discussed as issues of concerns related to educational opportunities and the achievement gap between students

of color and their White peers (Gay, 2018). As initially described by Gay, culturally responsive teaching provides relevant and effective learning opportunities using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of culturally and ethnically diverse students.

Although Gay, the original scholar behind this framework, used her preferred term, *culturally responsive pedagogy*, when referencing the framework, there have since been a wide variety of scholars and academics who have chosen to use different terminology when discussing the theory, research, and practice of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018). Such terminology is commonly used: culturally relevant teaching, meditated, contextualized, synchronized, and culturally responsive education.

Additionally, Ladson-Billings's (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy extended the culturally responsive teaching framework that further builds on and supports the philosophy of developing students' cultural competence, critical consciousness, and academic achievement through culturally responsive teaching strategies. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, a more contemporary theory with some overlapping components, was proposed by Alim et al. (2017) to build upon the existing framework. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, however, challenged this framework in that Alim et al. suggested that the research and practice needed to go further than relevance and responsiveness and move into a strategy of eradication of current power structures.

Culturally responsive teaching aims to teach ethnically and racially diverse students from cultural perspectives that align with their own through educating and changing teachers' attitudes and perceptions about non-mainstream cultures and ethnic

groups and then developing new skills to be able to implement cultural diversity and culturally responsive teaching strategies within the classroom curriculum and instruction (Gay, 2002). Gay (2018) outlined a framework demonstrating the potential of culturally responsive teaching to boost student success, substantiated by five key pieces of evidence. First, this teaching methodology validates the cultural heritage of diverse ethnic groups, treating it not only as a factor that shapes students' learning attitudes and dispositions but also as valuable knowledge to be included in the formal curriculum (Gay, 2013). Second, it forms meaningful connections between the experiences students have at home and at school, as well as between academic theories and the sociocultural realities they live in (Gay, 2018). Gay (2018) also indicated that, third, culturally responsive teaching employs a range of instructional strategies catering to varying learning styles. Fourth, it encourages students to understand and appreciate their own cultural backgrounds and those of their peers (Gay, 2018). Lastly, this teaching methodology, according to Gay (2018), seamlessly weaves multicultural information and resources into the regular subjects and skills taught in schools.

Nature of the Study

A basic qualitative approach was used in this study. Qualitative research is a form of social research or inquiry focusing on individual interpretations of lived experiences. Qualitative researchers examine how people interpret their experiences, construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Basic qualitative research seeks to dig deep into people's daily lives and actions in hopes of determining the meaning for these actions (Erickson, 2011). A basic qualitative

approach was appropriate for this study because it determined participant perceptions (Patton, 2015).

In this study, I explored how elementary teachers working in a culturally and racially diverse school district perceived the training, support, and resources needed to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies in the district of study. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions of 11 teachers in the study district. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and member checking was then conducted to confirm the interpretation of data. Engaging participants in the accuracy of data collected using member checking enhanced the trustworthiness and credibility of results (Birt et al., 2016).

Definitions

Culture is considered the way a group of people assimilate through patterns of communication, their systems of valuing, and their habits of being. Culture is a group's way of life, understanding, and an indication that one belongs (Bomer, 2017).

Culturally responsive teaching is the practice of using the experiences, perspectives, and cultural characteristics of ethnically diverse students to develop curriculum and create learning environments that would make them academically successful (Woodley et al., 2017).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is a theoretical model that addresses student achievement and helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools and other institutions perpetuate (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Culturally responsive pedagogy uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective (Gay, 2018).

Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate, foster, and support linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project within schools (Alim et al., 2017).

Assumptions

There were several assumptions made regarding this basic qualitative study. One was that the elementary teachers selected to participate in the interviews were qualified educators with experience working in a classroom with culturally and racially diverse students. A second assumption was that the selected participants would be truthful in their responses and share their perceptions based on individual experiences working within the study district. A final assumption was that all participants were familiar with the term culturally responsive teaching and would be able to provide individual perspectives on the training, support, and resources they need to be successful in implementing these strategies in their own classrooms.

Scope and Delimitations

This study explored the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding their current needs for training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district. This study included elementary school teachers who were current teachers in the district of study. The elementary schools included in this study had a diverse demographic of students. To narrow the scope of perspectives to that of

classroom teachers, elementary support staff, paraprofessionals, and school administrators were excluded from this study.

The scope of the study included 10 elementary schools in an urban school district located in the Midwest. Teachers currently working at one of those 10 elementary schools in the study district had access to similar resources and professional development opportunities. Additionally, the demographic makeup of the schools was similar, allowing for the comparison of perspectives to be based on related experiences.

This study had delimitations. Delimitations are used to narrow the scope of a study. To ensure authenticity of responses, interviews took place face to face. The conceptual framework of this qualitative study is based on Gay's (2018) culturally responsive teaching theory which provides relevant and effective learning opportunities using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of culturally and ethnically diverse students. To meet selection criteria, candidates had to (a) have been a current classroom or content area teacher in the district of study; (b) teach in Grades PreK–5; (c) have completed at minimum one full school year of teaching in the district of study.

A key delimitation in this basic qualitative study was the sample size of 10–12 teachers, which is considered a small sample size (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This sample size was recommended because it had the potential to include an increasingly diverse perspective and inclusivity in representation by teachers from all races. Examining the personal perspectives of these teachers may not have provided a broad view of other teachers' experiences with the training, resources, and support they have

received to support the implementation of culturally responsive teaching since the results do not wholly represent the level of training, resources, and support teachers have received on a broader scale.

Additionally, the timing of the study during the summer months presented a delimitation. Teachers were off-duty and not regularly checking their district email, which may have restricted the ability to reach a broader pool of potential participants. This limitation could have affected the representativeness and diversity of perspectives captured in the study.

Limitations

The study was dependent on the qualitative approach and reliant upon subjective individual experiences and perspectives. Another limitation was related to the use of the purposeful sampling strategy. This strategy can pose potential problems, such as the likelihood of the participants being mirror images of one another and not an actual variation. Teachers who participated in the study were potentially the same teachers who volunteer and work together on many other district initiatives, sharing common beliefs and mindsets. Several of the teachers who participated were volunteer members of the newly established DEI committee. The conclusions of this study may not be transferable to settings with different demographics or resources.

One final limitation was my own bias as a researcher. My role as a former teacher in the district and my experiences with the lack of support and training provided had the potential to affect the data collection process. I was intentional about addressing this

potential bias by applying my experience to recognize other teachers' challenges while keeping my own interpretations and ideas away from the study.

Significance

This study has the potential to address the gap in practice within the district of study and surrounding Midwest urban school districts through the collected qualitative data. Peer-reviewed literature, which is reviewed in depth in Chapter 2, indicated that there is no current supporting literature that addresses the specific needs and perceptions on the topic of study by elementary teachers currently working in a culturally and racially diverse school district in the Midwest. Thus, there is a gap in the literature and research base on this topic.

Transitioning to recent research conducted by Cruz et al. (2019), it was discovered that there was little literature about teacher's self-efficacy around the use and implementation of culturally responsive teaching. Teachers reported feeling confident in building relationships with students, and less confident about specific cultural knowledge and understanding how to connect that with their teaching. The findings of this study provide specific guidance and direction for the district of study in how to best move forward with an action plan to prepare teachers to confidently implement culturally responsive teaching strategies in their elementary classrooms.

This study was significant in that it explored elementary teachers' perceptions regarding the support and resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in a culturally and racially diverse school district. Analysis of data collected through individual interviews helped to better understand what teachers know

to be able to provide an equitable learning experience in their classrooms. Positive social change is seen when there is an evident improvement in social issues. Sociologists define social change as changes in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions (Spanos Dunfey, 2019).

The findings from this study contribute to social change in both small and large ways. The findings of this basic qualitative study affect positive social change in every elementary school classroom in all 23 elementary schools within the district of study. The perceptions of elementary teachers of the training, support, and resources they need to be able to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies have the potential to positively affect the educational experiences and opportunities of all students in the district. Culturally responsive teaching strategies could empower students both academically and in their social-emotional skills, leading to success both in and out of the classroom. An increase in student achievement could lead to future success from these students after they graduate and move into the global society where they will be able to impact others with their skills and abilities.

Summary

The problem and purpose of this study were introduced in this chapter. Background information provided evidence for why this research study was needed, including statistical data on the growing population of culturally and racially diverse student populations in public schools across the country. In this qualitative study, I explored the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding their current needs for training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the

study district using individual interviews from 11 participants from elementary schools within the study district to gather data. The guiding framework for this qualitative study was based on Gay's theory of culturally responsive teaching. This study was significant in that it explored elementary teachers' perceptions regarding the support and resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in a culturally and racially diverse school district. Chapter 2 will present an in-depth review of current literature relevant to the topic of culturally responsive teaching strategies in elementary classrooms.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of elementary teachers regarding their current needs for training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies. To fully understand the perspectives of the selected participants, it is important to understand current published research around the topic. This chapter provides a critical assessment of the sources gathered and read regarding culturally responsive instructional strategies in relation to culturally and racially diverse classroom settings. The research was used to identify the gap in literature that my study addresses. This chapter provides a discussion of empirical literature, concepts, and theories from multiple disciplines that will guide this study.

To review the current literature from 2017–2022, the Walden University Library was used to access peer-reviewed journals. Through the library, Sage Journals, Academic Search Complete, Education Source, EBSCOhost, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and Taylor and Francis databases were used to search for peer-reviewed research. The terms used to search were *cultural responsiveness*, *cultural capital*, *classroom community*, *culturally competent teacher*, *teacher perceptions*, *elementary teacher professional development*, *teacher education*, *primary teacher professional development*, *early childhood education*, *culturally relevant education*, *cultural pluralism*, *professional education*, *teacher development*, *career development*, *critical race theory*, *teacher training*, *teacher perception*, *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*, *critical pedagogy*, *teacher attitude*, *education model* and *teacher beliefs of professional engagement*. During the search, 180 articles were found, and most of the articles were written in the last 5 years

(2018–2023). Some articles published earlier were also included. Gay et al. (2002) provided the groundwork for the frameworks involved in this study. One article was from 2013 because it offered unique insight into the weaknesses of professional development practices that remain relevant in 2022.

Conceptual Framework

Culturally responsive teaching is a conceptual framework initiated from the ideological beginnings of multicultural education originating in the 1970s. Racial and cultural divisions and inequalities began to be discussed openly in the U.S. as an underlying factor of difference in performance between ethnic/racial minority students and their White peers. Culturally responsive teaching is the application of techniques of cultural competence implemented in a classroom setting while applying strategies to increase achievement for diverse learners (Gay, 2002). Gay's culturally responsive teaching framework was used as the structural foundation of this study and was the guide in developing the research questions.

Considered but rejected frameworks include Mezirow's (1970) transformative learning theory and Bell's (1974) critical race theory. Mezirow's theory was rejected because it was focused more on the generality of teachers' experiences, and this study requires specific perceptions. Bell's theory was rejected as it is focused on the systems and structures currently in place that are cause for inequity (in classrooms) and does not address specific culturally responsive teaching strategies. In this study, I explored the perspectives of elementary teachers working with diverse learners in racially and culturally diverse classroom settings and their preparedness for implementing culturally

responsive teaching in their classrooms. The use of this framework informed the research questions and provided a structure for analyzing teachers' responses about culturally responsive teaching.

The culturally responsive teaching framework is designed to aid educators in creating student-centered classrooms that affirm students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identities. The framework encourages students to engage in challenging, independent learning, foster students' abilities to network across lines, amplify the voices of those who have been historically marginalized, and equip students to become agents of social change (Hammond, 2018). For almost a century, schools and districts in the United States have battled to adapt to the wide range of demands presented by American children and their families. Amy (2018) argued that the inequitable system that assigns privilege and disadvantage based on factors such as language, gender, and skin color must be recognized for what it is, confronted head-on, and radically altered, agreeing with findings from Hammond (2018). Using an equity and inclusion perspective is essential for public schools to accomplish the results they have set out to achieve for all students (Amy, 2018). This realization of Hammond (2018) and Amy (2018) has heightened the importance of working to ensure that all children have access to the resources they need to succeed. In states like New York, government and education officials are aware that it is the duty of schools to ensure that marginalized groups are not left out of the political and economic decision-making process. This includes reviving and protecting indigenous languages and cultures that have been marginalized and endangered due to a lack of attention and resources (Hammond, 2018).

The P-12 Office of Education and Higher Education in New York State was tasked with developing a comprehensive framework for culturally responsive education after the New York State Board of Regents mandated the task in January 2018. The initiative's foundation is a detailed set of guidelines written by Dr. David Kirkland and his team at Metropolitan New York University's Center for Research on Equity and School Transformation. Students, educators, parents, district administrators, college professors, community organizers, and state and federal policymakers were provided with a copy of the document by the New York State Department of Education.

Building on the concept of culturally responsive education, Hernandez and Burrows (2021) highlighted that this framework provides educators with a toolkit for fostering student-centered learning environments, which affirmed cultural identities, promoted positive academic outcomes, encouraged networking across diverse groups, amplified the voices of historically marginalized individuals, empowered students as agents of social change, and enhanced the engagement, learning, growth, and success of each student. Supporting this perspective, Bonner et al. (2018) asserted that the framework also offered educational stakeholders a foundation for developing and implementing policies that guaranteed all students access to high-quality education and the personalized attention necessary for their success, as emphasized by Kirkland (2019).

Historically, there have been two schools of thought when it comes to discussions about education, with some viewing diversity as a personal failing (Hernandez & Burrows, 2021). The culturally responsive-sustaining education framework is a steppingstone on the road to valuing diversity for what it is. High expectations and

rigorous instruction; an inclusive curriculum and assessment; ongoing professional growth; these are the four pillars which the framework is built. Each tenet was supported by a group of examples drawn from the characteristics of high-quality education that displayed how this framework could be implemented in different settings, from the federal education agency to the classroom. Stakeholders kept working together and making plans for their communities' specific needs thanks to the framework (Kirkland, 2019). The New York State Department of Education acknowledged that much of this work was ongoing across the state and anticipated an even richer understanding of culturally responsive and sustainable education in schools, districts, and communities across New York State. The state's dedication to enhancing education for all its residents was reflected in this framework, which emphasized the importance of building strong, culturally responsive, long-term, and universally accessible systems of student assistance to make significant academic improvements (Kirkland, 2019).

The framework was built on Gay's concept of culturally responsive teaching, which she described as an approach that teaches to and through the strengths of ethnically diverse students by capitalizing on the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning outcomes more relevant and effective for them (Gay, 2013). This idea has been around since the 1970s, when protests against racial and ethnic discrimination gave rise to it. It acknowledged the fact that not all classrooms featured the same types of teachers and students.

Expanding on the idea of cultural compatibility in education, Barrio (2021) argued that a school's culture and its students' cultures might not have always aligned harmoniously. To avoid cultural conflicts, establishing connections between the school and its community was crucial, as well as considering students' cultural backgrounds when teaching, which helped teachers refrain from assuming that differences implied an inability to learn (Barrio, 2021). Allen et al. (2017) concurred with Barrio, further noting that historical achievement data in the United States revealed a correlation between students' academic performance and their cultural background or ethnicity.

Applying the framework more broadly, as was done in this study, enabled an examination of potential issues through the framework's lens, regardless of a school's ethnic composition (Barrio, 2021). Allen et al. (2017) identified five core principles that they believed constituted the foundation of the culturally responsive teaching framework:

- accepts the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds
- as a strength that shapes their education and as a source of enriching material for classroom study
- connects the dots between the classroom and the real world at large
- makes use of numerous pedagogical approaches
- instructs students to adopt and value the cultural traditions of others and encourages them to do so

Researchers (Jia & Nasri, 2019; Johnson-Smith, 2019; Woodley et al., 2017) concluded that attitudes and expectations of educators, open dialogue about culture in the classroom, a diverse cultural curriculum, and pedagogical practices that value cultural

differences were the theoretical underpinnings of culturally responsive teaching. Previous research by Spanos Dunfey (2019) and Robison (2020) raised concerns that not all these criteria had been met; in particular, the content of the current school English curriculum presented challenges across the board for students who were unable to understand the references on which it relied. Hilaski (2018) agreed when she stated that one of the major challenges for students was teachers who were unaware of how to use students' social, cultural, and linguistic knowledge to make a connection between their familiar knowledge and the new learning being presented. Hilaski's study also looked at how educators adjusted their methods when they were not in a classroom setting, with the goal of establishing whether the findings could be generalized or not.

According to Gay (1995), the value of the framework was in the ability to promote goals related to diversity, inclusion, and social justice through its provision of a constructive framework that challenges various aspects of the current social and cultural conditions of science teaching and learning (Hunter-Doniger et al., 2018). Hunter-Doniger et al., (2018) examined the theoretical connections between three types of asset-based pedagogies: those that emphasize cultural relevancy, responsiveness, and sustainability. The goal of their examination was to investigate how those theoretical frameworks might be put into action in the creation and delivery of instructional resources in the context of a former colony. The examination of these theories did not delve deeply into the colonial history of the country or how it influenced curricular and policy decisions, instead, it offered a picture of the possible by showcasing a community-based, after-school Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM)

enrichment program for children from underrepresented groups (Hunter-Doniger et al., 2018).

Building on the topic of culturally responsive pedagogy, Hogue et al. (2021) concurred with Hunter-Doniger et al.'s (2018) findings and posited that employing culturally adaptive pedagogy enhanced learning opportunities and resources for students of all backgrounds, enabling them to better comprehend the world in which they would grow up. Hogue et al. and Hunter-Doniger et al., in concurrence with Kirkland (2019), emphasized the significance of acknowledging the potential challenges faced by all parties involved—including teachers, parents, and students—when implementing the culturally responsive-sustaining education framework not only in the classroom but also in after-school (science) engagement programs. Obstacles such as personal bias and background experiences, or lack thereof, often served as barriers in fully embracing what the culturally responsive-sustaining education framework meant for children and their families, as educators and stakeholders themselves grappled with the current paradigm (Hunter-Doniger et al., 2018).

Recognizing the challenge posed by the theoretical-practical divide in culturally responsive education research, Gay (2005) asserted its significance as a major obstacle. Researchers such as Hunter-Doniger et al. (2018) and Kirkland (2019) agreed with Gay and had investigated how nonformal science educators could take their programs from a theoretical to a practical level by providing enriched curriculum through the framework. One of the most important things educators could do is address the basic challenges of culture in science and science education and to understand the embeddedness of culture

in everyday scientific practice (Hunter-Doniger et al., 2018; Kirkland, 2019). Despite the challenges however, it is crucial that educators work steadily toward adding culturally adaptable teaching into all subject curriculum (Kirkland, 2019).

Expanding upon culturally responsive teaching research, Hammond (2020) discussed culturally sustaining pedagogy which revealed a current theory that exists in relation to culturally responsive teaching. Culturally sustaining pedagogy builds on years of fundamental asset-based teaching methodology findings that have engaged prevalent deficit solutions to prove implementations and methods of being as students of color are acceptable and should be embraced fully in classroom learning (Braden & Gibson, 2021; Gunn et al., 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Specifically mentioned or not, this culture of asseverate pedagogical research has struggled against incessant, ongoing beliefs in Whiteness and the institutionalized discrimination they perpetuate (McCarty & Brayboy, 2021).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

The literature review shows studies that demonstrate what culturally responsive teaching is and why there is a need for educators to be trained practitioners in this framework and practice. In a study by Hoover and Soltero-González (2018), instructors confirmed that effective instruction requires knowledge of content awareness and pedagogical mastery. None can deliver teachings they lack or know not (Hoover & Soltero-González, 2018). It was projected that more than 50% of K-12 public schools in the United States will have majority of ethnic minorities by 2023, with ethnic variations seeing an increment of 6% annually to 2030 (Howard, 1999; National Center for

Education Statistics, n.d.). As classrooms become more culturally blended, teachers are more often required to work effectively with learners who are not part of majority racially or ethnically (Yoon & Martin, 2019).

As the linguistic and ethnic diversity of U.S. inhabitants has increased, students in the country's classrooms incrementally represented various cultural circumstances (Kayser et al., 2021). A paramount goal of every teacher education program was to prepare graduates to be skilled in working with ethnically diverse students (Kent & Giles, 2016; La Serna, 2020). Therefore, current teacher trainers needed to focus their abilities on adequately preparing pre-service teachers to understand, uphold, and implement these influences via culturally responsive practices (Ebersole et al., 2015; La Serna, 2020).

The literature review presented what culturally responsive training entailed and its preparations. Kayser et al. (2021) stated that confrontations on popular training in the United States still concentrates on main blocks of educational outcomes intertwined with the gap in results between students of color and their White peers, and Laman et al. (2018) and Mellom et al. (2018) agreed. The voices of teachers have historically gone unheard and undocumented in both current and past research (Mellom et al., 2018). Barrio (2019) argued that adequate preparations were needed to properly equip the teaching workforce to execute culturally responsive training effectively. Implications for teacher preparedness to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies included enhanced learning occurrences, disabilities, and engaging in impartiality discussions as a section of preservice teachers' preparedness (Barrio, 2019).

Since 2016, studies and research have been done to better understand culturally responsive training (Laman et al., 2018; Lamb, 2021; Manns, 2021). Some studies dove deep into the models of effective culturally responsive education models. As an introduction to this model, Monica R. Manns (2021), articulated the main areas to focus on for a successful adoption. To describe the problem in this study, the chapter was organized into six areas, five of which Mann broke down in the model as crucial points of foundation: impartiality, teaching techniques, reducing inequality, enabling school cultures, knowledge construction, and the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching implementation. The aforementioned were supported by two other key concepts that built into successful implementation for culturally responsive teaching and activated student's prior knowledge and formation of relationships (Manns, 2021).

Impartiality

To better support all students, especially those who have been disadvantaged in school and outside of society, educators who adopted an equity pedagogy approach to teaching, built instructional methodologies and cultivated classroom settings that did just that (Hogue et al., 2021). Bonner et al., (2018) and Christ and Sharma (2018) agreed that fostering a cooperative learning environment has shown to benefit students of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds; developing instructional strategies to help girls or African American students better understand advanced science classes; modifying the curriculum to enable Mexican American students to learn math more effectively; were all examples of how equity pedagogy was implemented in the classroom. Equity pedagogy ensured children from all walks of life, and especially those who had been economically,

linguistically, and culturally excluded, had the opportunity to achieve academic and professional success in school and beyond (Hogue et al., 2021).

Emphasizing the significance of culturally relevant education, Hogue et al. (2021) asserted the importance of ensuring that both curriculum and pedagogy were culturally relevant and equitable, while also preparing educators with the necessary training before working with students—a sentiment with which Hilaski (2020) concurred. Often, teacher candidates and the programs which prepared them, did not problematize teaching or focus on the fabric of the social and historical context being taught or the environment and community in which their students learn and lived (Hilaski, 2020; Karatas & Oral, 2019). Often, teachers in urban schools served multicultural students, which had necessitated an equity pedagogical approach; one point of consideration is the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy (Hilaski, 2020; Hogue et al., 2021).

Culturally relevant pedagogy was based on a fundamental racial thought that focused on showcasing and confronting race-based policies that maintained the current circumstances (Allen et al., 2017). From this standpoint, teacher instruction schemes were susceptible to institutionalized racism and White privilege as stated by Allen et al., (2017). Laman et al., (2021) along with Ladson-Billings (2021) agreed that this inability to be easily seen opened establishments to perpetuating racism that was unchallenged and omnipresent. La Serna (2020) believed that pedagogies must morph to tackle the complexities of cultural imbalances. Authority and accountability were essential areas which accredited teacher education programs and yet did not clearly consider how teacher candidates should have taught different groups of students effectively, which

meant sending them into schools unprepared to teach (Allen et al., 2017). Curriculum and instruction were the nerve centers of teaching education programs according to both Karatas & Oral (2019) and Ramsay-Jordan (2020). It was not enough to add experiences, political or social, but not change the structure of the curriculum or program (Ladson-Billings, 2018).

Most educational trainers were White, monolingual speakers, who were middle-aged (Allen et al., 2017). Allen et al. believed there should be a paradigm shift from whom they are to what the teacher knows, impacting the transformation of relevant pedagogies. As stated by data provided by the US Department of Education (2020), students in current American classrooms through the years 2016-2022, were vastly different from those prior to the year 2016 (Hussar & Bailey, 2020). The gap was clearly displayed through a significant increase in public school students' origin, societal, lingual, and financial diversity over the past few decades, ranging from 2000-2020 (Hussar & Bailey, 2020). Bonner (2017) used the data provided by the US Department of Education and stated that since the fall of 2014, students of color had become the majority and no longer the minority of the student demographic in public schools. Bonner additionally added that the data dramatically depicted a need for culturally responsive teachers.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2018, more than 80% of the trainers in public academic institutions came from a middle-class, White upbringing, that may not have reflected the all-inclusive learners (Hussar & Bailey, 2020). Ndemanu and Jordan (2018) stated that many of these educators lacked cultural knowledge skills or

experiences and often came from a different background from their students who own different levels of knowledge and perspectives ideologically, ethnically, or even historically. Bonner (2017) and Ramsay-Jordan (2020) agreed with Ndemanu and Jordan. New teachers and veteran practitioners admitted that to effectively teach non-White students had been and continued to be, a significant challenge in American schools (Ramsay-Jordan, 2020; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018; Tolsolt, 2020).

In examining the factors that influence teaching quality, Waite (2021) and Woodley et al. (2017) discovered that educators' dispositions, along with their ability to employ effective teaching practices, had a significant impact on their teaching. Teachers who were sensitized to cultural differences and understood the systemic influences that had disenfranchised groups over time and denied them equitable education were found to be more effective educators (Robinson, 2020; Thomas 2020). Culturally responsive pedagogy was designed to help diverse students succeed by providing them with resources as reverence for their societal origins, relevant integrations to the syllabus, good interactions, and effective instructional methodologies (Bonner, 2017). A traditionally diverse curriculum and within reach of learners was also important for student success (Gunn et al., 2021; Hammon, 2018).

Culturally responsive pedagogy recognized the importance of incorporating features of other groups' cultural systems into training (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Throughout the teaching and learning processes, the praxis of instruction addressed students' and teachers' dialectic dialogue, interaction, and involvement (Bonner, 2017). Ladson-Billings (2021) declared that academic accomplishment improved when teaching

methods matched the learning styles that various students brought to the classroom, such as involvement, thinking, mental schemata, work habits, and experiences. Teachers who were culturally competent ensured that educational activities were aligned with their minority students' learning styles, cultural orientations, and episodes, and that learning spaces were created to facilitate this (Bonner, 2017).

Pre-service teachers needed to shift from scoping various types of oppression as separate individual acts to studying how policies and practices were embedded in establishments such as schools (Braden & Gibson, 2021). The next component in the study by Braden & Gibson (2021), assisted the pre-service teachers in reflecting on the abilities and intelligence within all homes and communities of the children. Finally, the study identified that approaches for action, including collaboration with others, pre-empted points of disharmony from guardians and school leadership while sourcing convenient ways of instructing with quality (Braden & Gibson, 2021).

Teacher educators' preparations, support, and dispositions were critical to the effectiveness of equity pedagogy (Borrero & Ahn, 2018; Bryan, 2021). Braden and Gibson (2021) noted that this system was beneficial as it acted as a purpose statement that supported the minority group. This infrastructure involved having participation from several other teachers in addition from school leadership. Harsh course evaluations and how they would be handled were carefully considered, especially when negative cultural remarks were made. Institutions that rely on their leadership may opt to penalize people who make such remarks, according to Braden & Gibson (2017).

Courses covering content on culturally important instruction frequently employed additive structures that did not question or criticize the Eurocratic assemblage of institutional teaching, syllabus, policies, evaluation, and traditions (Boutte, 2018). Without the focus being on systemic oppression, traditional policies and practices continued to reproduce inequities and social order (Cabrera, 2019; Gladney et al., 2021). Furthermore, rather than working to understand the endemic, pre-service teachers leave these courses with the belief that individuals perpetrate oppression (Cabrera, 2019; Gladney et al., 2021). Braden & Gibson (2021) stated that an instructor's sophistication was required for courses that focused on injustices, which went beyond good individuals and wishing for world peace. One course will not serve to reform curriculum and instruction in a thorough and systematic way; nonetheless, a fundamental course in curriculum design was critical (Braden & Gibson, 2021).

With culturally relevant pedagogy, race must be considered (Bryan, 2021). Geneva Gay (1995) stated that culturally responsive pedagogy was delivered partly as a recognition of the child and was the lens through which they see oneself, and the world's perception of themselves. As a result, the intricacies of race's societal setup in the United States of America should be searched (Ledesma & Calderón, 2020). Critical race theory paid heed to the outcome of prejudice and provoked White supremacy's power enactments which were obscured by attentively designed decent work arrangement (Ledesma & Calderón, 2020). Gay's research showed five pillars of culturally responsive teaching: a strong knowledge base or background about culture and race, culturally relevant curricula, high expectations for all students, authentic appreciation for diverse

communication styles, and the ability to connect students' prior knowledge with current learning. These foundations, when combined with curriculum themes, led to a review of how the syllabus was evolved, how education was funded, how classes were composed, and how group evaluations are conducted (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Developmental appropriateness addressed diverse learning methods, instructional techniques, cultural variety, and psychological needs like motivation, morale, engagement, and teamwork (Boutte, 2018). Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) proposed that a framework of culturally relevant pedagogy should consider dispositions, multicultural curriculum content, equal access, and high expectations for all students. Additionally, Boutte (2018) noted that "identity growth, cultural heritage, different perspectives, and appreciation of diversity are essential components of both identity and academic achievement" (p. 88).

Teaching the whole child focused on culturally relevant skill development, bridging the gap between home and school, learning outcomes, and created a supportive learning environment, and empowered students (Gunn et al., 202; Hoover & Soltero, 2018). Finally, the qualities of care, relationships, engagement, and classroom climate were all incorporated into the school and student-teacher relationship (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Exploring the notion of self-efficacy, Borrero et al. (2018) characterized it as the confidence in one's ability to devise and execute actions necessary to achieve desired objectives. They further posited that self-efficacy serves as a lens through which to evaluate instructors' capabilities and motivation to employ culturally responsive teaching

strategies. A high degree of self-efficacy has been associated with positive outcomes for both students and teachers (Jia & Nasri, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Kayser et al. (2021) argued that enhancing self-efficacy in specific areas proved to be a beneficial intervention for educators struggling to engage learners in aspects related to culturally responsive teaching, a viewpoint supported by Jia and Nasri (2019). However, there has been limited research on teachers' confidence in their ability to implement culturally sensitive instruction (Borrero et al., 2018).

The culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy scale attempted to measure teacher understanding of culturally responsive teaching, self-efficacy, and skills (La Serna, 2020). The scale consisted of 40 items structured around curriculum and instruction, student assessment, classroom management, and cultural enrichment, and was used in some of the research findings in this area according to La Serna (2020). There was still work to be done to guarantee that all elements of the culturally relevant pedagogy were being addressed in classrooms. A strong culture of academic success was a feature of the programs in this study (La Serna, 2020).

Strength guides were high on items related to curriculum and instruction, according to two types of research focused on social demographic aspects including dominant language and background of students served and the investigated instructors' self-efficacy in delivering culturally responsive teaching (Cruz et al., 2019). Other categories with high mean scores included nuanced awareness of learner's predispositions and developing individualistic ties among learners. The areas that

required specified societal intelligence along with the development of stay-at-home tutoring linkages had the lowest mean scores (La Serna, 2020).

Investigating the factors affecting self-efficacy, La Serna (2020) found that aspects such as credential preparation, topic type, school type, and geographic location had no impact on the results. Instead, scores from the self-efficacy scale were greatly influenced. Proficiency exploits, derivative circumstances, oral coercion, along with intellectual and inner states, are four sources of information that contribute to the development of self-awareness (La Serna, 2020). Through the implementation of culturally responsive teaching techniques in learning environments, professional development opportunities assisted teachers with low self-efficacy in gaining confidence and competence (Cruz et al., 2019).

Teaching Techniques

Activating Prior Knowledge

To understand and make sense of complicated texts, whether they be written words, visuals, charts, or any other type of text, educators, and researchers, as well as the developers of the common core, agreed that activating past knowledge was an important first step (Hogue et al., 2021). The writers of the common core standards stated that student background knowledge and experiences could highlight the reading but should not substitute attention to the text itself. Interviewees in a study by Hogue et al. (2021) discussed cultural significance by focusing on students and their experiences within the learning environment as they challenged supremacy concepts of cultural importance. Interviewees addressed a variety of strategies which ensured that their curriculum

accurately represented their students' life experiences. Student assets, culture as a living and dynamic experience, and understanding students are the three sub-themes that developed from this study (Hogue et al., 2021).

Participants expressed that a significant step towards authentically centering students in classrooms and curricula was to view their backgrounds as assets (Hogue et al., 2021). That meant grounding the teaching in what students brought to the table, including student experiences, so that curriculum was relevant to their lives (Hogue et al., 2021). By doing that the students then had some relationship with the knowledge, which was meaningful to them Hogue et al. stated. It also respected them and who they are and did not impose their thinking. Abacioglu and Fisher (2020) agreed with Hogue et al. and said that as opposed to passively receiving information from a teacher, students in an active learning environment would take an active role in the educational process. Questions and answers, dialogues, interactive lectures, writing assignments, hands-on activities, and experiential learning are just some of the methods that can be used to help students learn (Abacioglu & Fisher, 2020; Hilaski, 2020).

In the pursuit of effective teaching strategies, Cruz et al. (2019) emphasized that teachers should set clear expectations, establish effective evaluation procedures, and provide constructive feedback throughout the planning process to help incorporate active learning strategies into a course. Moreover, they suggested implementing a teaching approach that reorganizes students' class time around activities like research and practical application, followed by a formal evaluation of their progress (Cruz et al., 2019). Engaging discussions can be highly beneficial for learning, but they often require

thoughtful preparation (Bryan 2021; Cruz et al., 2019). Bryan (2021) concurred with Cruz et al., asserting that educators must invest time and effort in constructing a solid foundation for the conversation and defining its boundaries with precision. By doing so, students could explore key concepts from various perspectives, stimulating curiosity and fostering deeper understanding among participants (Cabrera, 2019; Cruz et al., 2019).

Regarding student-centered learning, Christ and Sharma (2018) posited that instructors needed to have confidence in learners' ability to bring valuable experiences and prior knowledge into the learning environment, treating these contributions as assets and fostering respect for their students. Samuels (2020) supported Christ and Sharma's viewpoint, arguing that when teachers failed to show regard for their learners, they were unable to develop content that genuinely resonates with them, which led to ultimately imposing their own thinking on students. In classrooms where high standards of academic achievement were valued and recognized, both students and instructors thrived (Samuels, 2020).

A more positive attitude toward education was reflected through improved grades when students developed a passion for studying through a connection made with the content (Johnson-Smith, 2020). To establish and manage the upbringing, education, and personal development of children, Johnson-Smith (2020) said that educators benefited through the application of appropriate training methods, the application of appropriate physical space, and the creation of a favorable psychological environment.

Young people amid the socialization process succeeded in supportive settings with positive role models (Allen et al., 2018). Considering this, it was clear that a

conducive learning atmosphere must feature tidiness, peace, and ease (Gordon & Espinoza, 2002; Samuels, 2020). Samuels (2020) advocated that every educator should make student comfort a top concern when designing a classroom, including considering the room's temperature, lighting, noise level, and other elements. Placement within the school grounds, the layout of the classroom, and the availability of instructional resources all contributed to whether students were able to learn more effectively (Gordon & Espinoza, 2020). It was widely accepted that schools that provided a conducive learning atmosphere do a better job of supporting effective teaching and learning, which in turn benefits students' academic achievement (Cruz et al., 2019; Gordon & Espinoza, 2002; Samuels, 2020).

Highlighting the multifaceted nature of educational settings, Cruz et al., (2019) characterized the learning environment as encompassing a school's resources, technologies, pedagogical approaches, student-teacher interactions, and both external and internal connections. They also noted that emotions played a pivotal role in learning, representing one aspect of human behavior and cultural dimensions encompassed by this term (Cruz et al., 2019). In line with this perspective, Gordon and Espinoza argued that contemporary children deserve classrooms thoughtfully designed to address their unique needs.

Addressing the need for engaging educational environments, Kayser et al. (2021) maintained that school administrators should strive to create settings that are both stimulating and appealing. Various contexts and classrooms offer distinct challenges and opportunities for student learning (Hogue et al., 2021). Depending on the learners' needs,

the educational setting could be student or teacher-centered, knowledge, assessment, or community-focused (Lowery, 2018; Mellom et al., 2018).

Federation University highlighted the objective of a learner-centered classroom as promoting active knowledge development by and for students. In knowledge-centered classrooms, students are granted time and space to critically examine and question core concepts through an array of creative and independent methods (Kirkland, 2019). Karatas and Oral (2019) emphasized that assessment-centered classrooms provide numerous opportunities for evaluation, including reevaluation, self-evaluation, and peer assessment. In community-centered settings, collaboration, negotiation of meaning, respect for diverse perspectives, and connections to local community and culture are highly valued (Cruz et al., 2019; Karatas & Oral, 2019).

Reducing Inequality

Discovery learning, which was sometimes called the inquiry-based learning method or the constructivist approach to education, was founded on the premise that knowledge was best gained via personal experience and exploration (Bennett et al., 2018). Bennett et al., stated that discovery learning was also mentioned under several other names, including problem-based learning, experiential learning, and 21st-century education, and were effective in reducing inequality when used in classrooms. Learning theorists and psychologists like Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner, and Seymour Papert backed these learning styles up with their foundational research.

While many such as Bennet et al. (2018), pointed to genesis of discovery learning, the concepts are strikingly similar to those of older thinkers like John Dewey. The

activities in self-discovery that Bruner advocated for educated students to absorb information in a way that made that information more readily usable in problem solving. Samuels (2020) agreed with Bennett et al. and said that the guiding principle of this school of thought was that students should learn by doing. Different pedagogical approaches fell under the discovery learning umbrella (Bennett et al., 2020; Samuels, 2020). The discovery job involved everything from implicit pattern identification to eliciting explanations and working with manuals and even simulations, as stated in a meta-analytic evaluation conducted by Alfieri et al. (2011). Discovery learning occurred when a student was not handed the solution to a problem but was given the tools to solve it on their own (Samuels, 2020).

In line with the importance of personal connections, Bonner et al. (2018) asserted that getting to know students on a personal level would help foster a classroom culture that valued diversity and welcomed all. Bonner also believed this not only helped students stay focused on their studies, but provided a welcoming environment in which they felt comfortable sharing their feelings and asking for help when they experienced any form of trauma and life upset. Bonner et al. (2018) revealed that some students felt comfortable participating in class discussions, while others did not enjoy working in large groups or giving presentations. It was possible that these students might have felt more at ease sharing their thoughts in private settings, such as online discussion boards, one-on-one chats, or suggestion boxes (Bonner et al., 2018). Using a variety of approaches in the classroom to accommodate these variances boosted confidence and academic achievement across the board (Bonner et al., 2018; Johnson-Smith, 2020).

Discovering a student's preferred method of relaxation, whether it be a movie, a video game, a book, or fresh air, helped to connect with them on a deeper level (Larson et al., 2018). Larson et al. (2018) continued and said that building rapport and demonstrating genuine interest in students' life outside of class was accomplished by talking to a gamer about the newest video game or by recommending a book to a reader. Bryan (2021) and Mellom et al. (2018) agreed with Larson and said that teachers who learned not to understand their students and their abilities, risked manufacturing presumptions about what would interest them. Because students appeared to be influenced in behavior, teachers expected they would have a specific experience or interest in certain areas (Johnson-Smith, 2020).

To authentically reflect students in their curriculum, teachers needed to recognize the ways in which they actively shaped and altered their cultures (Larson et al., 2018). Educators had the power to change the culture and shape it to be unique to the environment and culture of their students, providing students the power to alter the future of society (Moore et al., 2021). According to new and beginning first year teachers, teachers who remained preoccupied on cultural stereotypes and concepts of race and ethnicity failed to observe how children experienced and shaped their own cultures (Larson et al., 2018).

When teachers made assumptions about who their learners were based on founded concepts of their thought of specifications, their syllabus did not align to their students' experiences, which led to disengagement (Johnson-Smith, 2020). It was assumed by Gladney et al. (2021) that what was being taught was not relevant or that students could

not relate to the experience since it was not their own. The results of Johnson-Smith agreed with this assumption, as did Larson et al. and Moore et al. Class participation did not take place if the curriculum and content was something students did not believe in or connect to (Gladney et al., 2021).

Expanding upon the importance of personal connections, Gladney et al. (2021) recommended that teachers get to know their students on a personal level to comprehend and incorporate their experiences and desires into the classroom, such as associations, family ties, songs, and television, creating an atmosphere for societal significant education. Students recognized the importance of creating a supportive surrounding for crucial thinking and in a study by Hramiak (2019), culturally responsive pedagogy was not a teaching method that could be switched off and on, but rather a conversation that necessitated rigorous classroom planning and an open mind. Through student feedback, Hramiak created four subthemes which fostered real culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy: community building, transparency to learner problems, agility, and the danger of lacking the solution.

Establishing Coterie and Responsiveness to Learners' Provocation

A classroom that practiced culturally responsive teaching with fidelity had a lot of trust and mutual respect according to Boerro et al. (2018); McCarty and Brayboy (2021) agreed when applied to the context of classroom on Native American reservations. When engaged in critical debate, teachers shared that early group building enabled students to enlighten one another rather than maintaining attitudes of distrust, inferiority, or superiority (Boerro et al., 2018; McCarty & Brayboy, 2021). Teachers also stated that

they understood the importance of student unity and understanding and therefore invested time and effort during the beginning of the academic year to assure that all have an expressional avenue allowing them to feel respected (Mellom et al., 2018; Utt & Tochluk, 2020). Teachers were able to achieve goals by collaborating with students to establish classroom standards that recognized that everyone had an opinion and that everyone was valued (Boerro et al, 2018; Utt & Tochluk, 2020).

Teachers who not only encouraged children to trust one another, but also acted in a way that increased certitude where the learner and instructor were involved, reported an increase in student involvement leading to an increase in student academic success (Boerro et al, 2018). Boerro et al., stated that these same teachers acknowledged trials to move away from educator-centered enlightenment and created distinctive relationships around their students, even though they had previously held all authority in typical classroom dynamics. Attempts were made to offer students a strong voice which proved that student opinions held value when heard beyond their classmates (Boerro et al., 2018; Utt & Tochluk, 2020).

By giving freedom to students to question an educator's thought or content, empowered them to think critically about new concepts or practices in the classroom (Alim & Paris, 2017). Students who had been in regular schooling for years were unfamiliar with such strategies which led to confusion, disinterest, or reluctance to participate or fear of punishment (Bonner et al., 2018). Enabling learners with the safety of an environment that allowed them to confront their teachers in the classroom proved that students were more inclined to be engaged and try things they might not have tried

before (Alim & Paris, 2017). This perspective was disturbing and incomprehensible to many instructors, but provided evidence of success from those attempting to engage students in critical consciousness (Alim & Paris, 2017; Bonner et al., 2018).

Enabling School Cultures

Teaching Thought and Skill

According to Alim and Paris (2017), students needed to be encouraged to share how their identities shaped their perspectives. If students were given the opportunity to challenge their teacher's authority during the introduction of novel ideas or methods, they achieved desired results (Alim & Paris, 2017; Bonner et al., 2018). Gladney et al. believed that if children had been attending traditional schools for an extended period, they were more likely to be unfamiliar with such methods and strategies, which led to confusion, disinterest, and a flat-out refusal to take part. Students were more interested and willing to attempt new things when they were given the opportunity to directly challenge their teacher in the classroom (Alim & Paris, 2017; Bonner et al., 2018). Although this description was unsettling to many veteran educators, it demonstrated how it would aid those who are striving to engage students in critical consciousness (Gladney et al., 2021; Hammond, 2018; Hammond, 2020).

In a classroom where culturally responsive teaching strategies were used; the importance of student involvement and motivation was stressed (Gladney et al., 2021). When culturally responsive teaching was effective, teachers were willing to abandon doctrine in favor of uncertainty, and placed more weight on student-centered pedagogy and real-time student feedback (Gunn et al., 2021; Gladney et al., 2021; Hammond,

2018). Gunn et al. noted that teachers who implemented these strategies did not have all the answers when engaging in critical discussion with their students, even though historically, educators had often designed their lessons or courses for which they have all the answers. Hogue et al. agreed and stated that teachers must be required to take that chance in their profession as educator and must never presume the students' answers before they are asked a question. Though they typically looked for and provided correct solutions, teachers benefitted by asking questions to which there were multiple possible responses (Hogue et al., 2021).

Even though culturally responsive teaching is a student-centered methodology, educators recognized the importance of regular teacher self-reflection (Gunn et al., 2021; Hunter et al., 2018). According to Bonner et al., sub-themes such as self-reflection, teacher positionality, and teaching as a process, emerged as teachers discussed what it meant to be an educator practicing culturally responsive teaching. These same teachers shared with Bonner that self-reflection was an important step that was taken before attempting to apply this method of teaching.

Numerous educators identified self-awareness, classroom consideration, and goal-focus to have been crucial traits to their success in implementing culturally responsive teaching (Bonner et al., 2018). When reflecting on their ability to teach, educators emphasized the importance, vitality, and difficulty of introspection and goal setting (Manns, 2021; Ramsay-Jordan, 2020). According to Manns, educators also recognized the value of self-reflection in identifying biases and attitudes and Ramsay-Jordan and McCarty (2020) both agreed.

Teacher Positionality

Delving into the impact of societal context, Samuels (2018) believed that as a result of living in a racially charged society, educators had a unique perspective on issues of race and ethnicity to offer their students. Samuels believed that students had preconceived notions about their teacher's identity that shaped how they would receive course content. Bryan (2021) and Cabrera (2019) both agreed with Samuels and stated that it was impossible to examine one's position without considering the impact of cultural norms and normative institutions. An interdisciplinary education provided students with a well-rounded education by the incorporation of knowledge and skills they acquired in a variety of subject areas (Bryan, 2021; Cabrera, 2019).

Many components of an educator's history defined strengths that Samuels (2018) asserted should be present in every classroom: professional training, expertise, and compassion. These qualities, however, when accompanied with potentially harmful expectations, assumptions, and biases, needed to be acknowledged and addressed via self-reflection (Braden & Gibson, 2021). Bonner et al. (2018) noted the importance of teacher identification in the classroom and elaborated on that notion by stating that educators must consider who they are, where they came from, and what they bring to the classroom. This was relevant because their remarks emphasized the necessity of teacher positionality: if students were needed to embark on journeys of self-discovery and introspection, students must also be taught how to identify with their own unique traits and embark on a similar journey (Bonner et al., 2018).

According to studies done by Bonner et al. (2018), Samuels (2018), Braden and Gibson (2021), and Bryan (2021), examining the positionality of teachers in the classroom involved an analysis of instructors in the American education system. These researchers found that one of the major ideas of culturally responsive teaching was to identify and name the oppressive systems that operated around the current environment. This was an important component of teacher positionality that cannot be overlooked (Gordon, 2020).

Even though self-reflection was a technique that allowed instructors to reflect on their practice, positionality, and their role in the classroom, Gordon (2020) said that teachers recognized that this reflection was never comprehensive; self-reflection was an attitude. When discussing instruction, teachers had a similar sentiment: there was no such thing as perfect mastery or completion (Borero et al., 2018). Borrero et al. then characterized the concept as *continuous becoming*. Educators were constantly striving to enhance their work, committed to implement culturally relevant teaching through continual dedication and effort, regardless of the lack of training and preparation they were provided (Borrero et al., 2018).

Prejudice Reduction

When parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds had different perspectives on how best to help their children succeed in school than teachers and administrators, it was difficult to forge a cooperative working relationship (Iwai, 2019; Kayser et al., 2021). Kayser et al. said that when there was clear communication between home and school, families were more likely to participate in their children's education. This

highlighted the significance of incorporating students' cultural, linguistic, and historical backgrounds into the classroom and works toward the reduction of prejudice (Lambara et al., 2020).

Knowledge Construction

Sociology and education communicated very little with one other, especially on the level of racial theory, despite complimentary tensions and developments (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Unspoken was the racial component of the school of sociology in which the status of immigrants was consistently equated to that of the underclass, which included people of African descent (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018). Therefore, many scholars in the field of education adopted the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy which stated that educators should use teaching methods and materials that were appropriate for their students' cultural backgrounds (Hammond, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

An implicitly racist element permeated this mode of sociology in the form of constant comparisons between the economic status of immigrants and that of the Black underclass (Hammond, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Scholars in the field of education, including Ladson-Billings and Hammond agreed that culturally relevant pedagogy demanded that classroom teachers use methods and materials that were appropriate for their students' backgrounds and experiences. Ndemanu and Jordan (2018) stated that when culturally sustaining pedagogy emerged, the cultural orientation of youth from marginalized groups became valued for what and who they were. This was partly because they had rethought the point of social scientific study.

Examining the role of personal biases, Utt and Tochluk (2020) found that teachers' views were determined by their own preconceptions. Effective, socially aware, and pro-integration pedagogical strategies were more likely to be used by White teachers who had a positive, anti-racist racial identity (Utt & Tochluk, 2020). Tosolt (2020) agreed and believed that most White teachers in urban schools primarily worked with students of color, but because so few White teachers came from the areas where their students lived, very few truly understood the racialized socioeconomic conditions and resource insufficiency caused by institutional racism. Some White teachers in today's classrooms were aware of the existence of institutional racism, but much fewer were able to articulate how their own racial identity informed the way they instructed their students (Tosolt, 2020).

Addressing the topic of professional growth, Utt and Tochluk (2020) identified six areas that presented both practical and theoretical challenges which aligned with culturally responsive teaching: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independence, immersion, and autonomy. Race-based ideology was intrinsic to the dominant culture and was often seen in its epistemologies and heuristic techniques (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). This suggested that the methods of inquiry, theoretical frameworks, and clinical procedures emphasized in social work curricula were founded on Euro-American cultural assumptions and values that may not have been applicable to populations with differing worldviews (Utt & Tochluk, 2020).

It was important for research into the third space to be guided by non-White discourses, such as statements that people of color actively pursued racial fairness when it

was to their advantage (Iwai, 2019). White individuals needed to analyze privilege and macroaggressions; investigate ethnicity and cultural identifications; investigate the history of White multiracial struggles for equality; develop a cross-cultural identity; form a White anti-racism group; and demonstrate accountability across racial lines (Iwai, 2019).

In their study, Mellom et al. (2018) presented an analysis of six focal points, which revealed three main ideas. First, attracting and retaining teachers of color, especially in urban settings, required White educators to first fight to transform the educational system. Second, it was important for newcomers to integrate and use their knowledge of color identification anchors to be able to use them effectively (Mellom et al., 2018). Last, there should have been harmony between contemplation and action; the former would lead to verbalism, the latter to its antithesis. The teaching profession had been shown to be a fluid one, where success was in the hands of those who were flexible and open to meeting the needs of their students (Utt & Tochluk, 2020).

Addressing the historical context, Waite (2021) stated that education in the United States had been fundamentally biased since the very beginning of formal schooling in the nineteenth century. According to Waite (2021), maintaining the White dominance ideals on which the United States and many other Western countries were founded, depended critically on anti-Blackness in education. It also served to normalize ideas of entitlement and White privilege through social norms (Ramsay & Jordan, 2020; Woodley et al., 2017). A historical narrative had emerged in schools because of the lasting influence of European settler ideas that made it into higher levels of education (Waite, 2021).

Critical race theory was a method for examining non-White (and primarily Black) experiences in the United States (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). It applied the principles of culturally responsive teaching to demonstrate the positive changes in communities under observation (Cabrera, 2019; Ortiz & Jani, 2010). These communities had persistently been denied access to equal educational opportunities (Ramsay-Jordan, 2020). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) introduced the idea of conscientization, arguing that the awakening of vital awareness drives the manifestation of societal dissatisfaction because such manifestations were actual setups of infringing events. This critical reflection built the framework for heightened awareness growth in envisioned future directions (Ramsay-Jordan, 2020). Reflection was a necessary preliminary to interrogation and can lead to it, and both were essential for critical analysis of society and of oneself (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

The principles of culturally responsive teaching helped teachers see why some of their students and colleagues chose to take a knee during the national anthem (Tosolt, 2020). Through culturally responsive teaching, students gained a greater understanding of racism, shifting from a state of color-blindness and ignorance to one in which they were able to recognize their privilege and vow to act to make a change for their future (Gooden et al., 2015).

Representation

Taking into account the changing demographics, Barrio (2021) said that based on data from various studies dating back to 2012, educators in the United States did not accurately reflect the cultural diversity of their students. Additionally, many schools

provided inexperienced teachers with scripted, standardized, and homogenous curricula that emphasized consistency over diversity (Bennett et al., 2018; Bomer, 2017; Gunn et al., 2021). The U.S. Department of Education (2013) projected that by 2030, racial and ethnic minorities would account for 55% of all students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade in the United States. Allen et al., stated that this data is evidence that educators must improve their methods for engaging with kids who are not members of the majority race or ethnicity.

Emphasizing the value of cultural inclusivity, Hoover and Soltero-González believed that culturally responsive teaching strategies promoted culturally responsive education, which highlighted the importance of incorporating students' cultural references into all facets of the educational process. Pre-service teacher education programs and school districts had the responsibility to provide structured opportunities for teachers to engage in intensive pre-classroom education so that they were ready to teach students with a wide range of needs (Gunn et al., 2021; Hoover & Soltero-González, 2018). Debates about openness and accountability in the classroom encouraged scholars, legislators, and educators to examine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs (Gunn et al., 2021; Hoover & Soltero-González, 2018).. Teachers in preservice positions were found to have tried to deliver culturally responsive teaching strategies and learning techniques to their students, as indicated by the research (Allen et al., 2017).

In the context of education, Moore (2020) characterized clinical supervision as an ongoing, non-judgmental, collaborative process where teachers engage in dialogue that fosters deep reflection techniques, ultimately aiming to enhance teaching and learning.

The educator and their immediate supervisor built a trusting and collaborative relationship based on a shared understanding of the importance of data gathered from the classroom's analytical examination (Moore, 2020). Educators who worked with students from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds but who failed to implement strategies to make their lessons more responsive to these students' needs were unable to fulfil their professional potential as educators and see their students struggled academically as a result (Moore, 2020).

One of the most frequently listed skills needed by teachers was the ability to comprehend the cultural backgrounds of one's students (Cabrera, 2019). Cabrera (2019) stated that it was important to strike a balance between authority and empathy when instructing students. By adapting lessons to varying cultural backgrounds and strengths, student work was presented in a wide range of formats (Spanos Dunfey, 2019). Additionally, Spanos Dunfey (2019) shared that it took most teachers some time to develop that skill, which was needed when working with students from different cultural backgrounds. Successful implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies in the classroom required careful preparation, data collection, conclusion drawing, and instructional improvement planning, all of which was aided by clinical supervision (Cabrera, 2019).

Family Partnerships

Gay (2018) believed that learning must be designed to preserve and enhance perspectives while also preparing children to become valuable members of society. Through establishing channels of communication while working to ensure that families

felt accepted inside the school facility, institutions started a procedure to send communication about remaining obstacles to successful institutional and household partnerships (Baker et al., 2016). Collaboration conflict resolution involving families was critical, and it worked best where communities not only helped educators identify obstacles, but also helped educators find favorable outcomes that benefitted the long-term success of their students in partnership with families.

This cooperative problem-solving effort was required to assist educators in seeing past potential family blind spot deficient beliefs; Yu (2022) believed that without it, educators' responses were typically inadequate to truly overcome obstacles (Baker et al., 2016). Most family participation attitudes and practices were molded by White, middle-class aspirations and experiences, which rarely connected with underprivileged households (Henderson et al, 2006; Yu, 2022). Murray et al., (2014) believed that there was a moral obligation to pursue the perspectives of racial minorities to be able to better problem-solve with families. Strong family cohesiveness was significantly more probable to occur, and in distinctive methods, among households of color (Murray et al., 2014).

Examination of The Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Since the year 2000, culturally responsive teaching had been a constant in the education researchers' tools aiming to deeply analyze chances for education, institutional climate representations, and methodology (Hammond, 2018). The examination of culturally responsive teaching in peer-reviewed literature emphasized the need for integrating modern practice in sensitized cultural environments (Manns, 2021; Woodley et al., 2017). Counter story telling was a strategy which won recognition as a productive

culturally responsive teaching tool after successful responsive pedagogy walk-throughs in inner-city classrooms across the U.S. (Laman et al., 2018). Waite (2021) believed that incorporating student voices was not enough and that the lack of qualified and highly skilled instructors would lead to similar efforts falling short of constructively challenging the pervasive White supremacist worldview in the classroom and Laman et al., (2018) agreed.

Transitioning to methodological perspectives, Ledesma and Calderón (2020) highlighted that critical race theory and qualitative research have gained increasing popularity in recent years. Researchers continued to turn to culturally responsive teaching for help with research and to explain lingering social and educational issues, both within and without the legal world (Ledesma & Calderón, 2020). Culturally responsive teaching had attracted students and academics from higher education to explore the persistence of inequities in educational opportunities for historically excluded societies from undergraduate to doctoral levels (Larson et al., 2018; La Serna, 2020; Robison 2020). Critical discourse studies in postsecondary learning had highlighted how culturally responsive teaching had molded and influenced historically underserved students and had provided educational access and opportunities (Ledesma, 2020).

The research of Thomas (2020), Yu (2022), and Mellom et al., (2018) explored culturally diverse classes and concluded that society was continuously dynamic and changing. In addition, previous studies demonstrated the need for requirements for improved diversity training, stating that certain teaching courses only provide limited credit hours to prepare and train teachers around culturally responsive teaching (Mellom

et al., 2018). Oral and Karatas (2019), concluded that primary school teacher candidates agreed that undergraduate primary and secondary education courses did not convey knowledge of diverse cultures that existed in the classroom because cultural awareness was not connected to classroom management skills in multicultural classrooms. They also agreed that there was an absence of information about how to successfully instruct multicultural classrooms and that authentic cultural understanding was still a long way off (Mellom et al., 2018; Oral & Karatas, 2019).

Summary

In Chapter 2, peer-reviewed research and journal articles were used as evidence of a need for educators to be culturally responsive practitioners. Little evidence of district supported training and professional development in diverse school districts in the Midwest exists. The evidence in this chapter included a detailed explanation of the conceptual framework along with the literature review of research articles and texts that helped pinpoint the key issues aligned with this study's topic. Key issues discussed included the different components of culturally responsive teaching, such as understanding the cultural backgrounds of students, incorporating culturally relevant materials and resources, and creating a positive classroom culture that values diversity and promotes equity.

The peer-reviewed researched highlighted the challenges faced by teachers in implementing culturally responsive teaching, such as limited training and resources, a lack of cultural competence, and resistance from colleagues and administrators. It was argued that addressing these challenges required a systemic approach that involved

providing ongoing training and support to teachers, creating a school culture that values diversity, and ensuring that policies and practices support culturally responsive teaching.

The following chapter will provide details of the methods proposed for the research of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of elementary teachers regarding their current needs for training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district. Chapter 3 includes details of the research design and rationale as well as the role of the researcher. The Methodology section provides information on participant selection; instrumentation; procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; and the data analysis plan. The trustworthiness and ethical procedures of this study will be discussed at the end of the chapter followed by a chapter summary and introduction to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

The problem addressed in this study was that elementary teachers in a culturally and racially diverse school district in the Midwest did not have adequate training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies. According to a personal communication with the executive director and the program coordinator of the central office DEI department, the study district initiated its work in DEI in August 2021. This included the area of culturally responsive teaching. The department coordinator said there had not been any formal data or feedback around culturally responsive teaching collected from teachers and staff from the DEI department because this work is not happening in classrooms due to a lack of training, resources, or support for teachers. The following research questions, formed using the lens of the culturally responsive teaching framework, guided this study:

- RQ1: What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the training needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?
- RQ2: What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the supports needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?
- RQ3: What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?

The findings from this study identified what elementary teachers reported they need to successfully implement culturally responsive teaching strategies using culturally relevant pedagogy. Additionally, individual interviews provided insight into what teachers believe they need to be able to provide an equitable learning experience by providing better classroom practices and teaching strategies that support the culturally diverse needs of all students. The results of this study will assist in closing the gap in practice within the district of study and surrounding Midwest urban school districts through the collected qualitative data analyzed and the conclusions drawn.

The intent of the study was the main factor used to determine the appropriate methodology. Qualitative and quantitative research approaches both serve different purposes depending on desired outcome. The quantitative approach relies on numerical data and statistics to quantify social phenomena. This design is grounded in unchanging, universal laws and truths (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative research is a form of social

research or inquiry, focusing on individual interpretations of lived experiences. This type of research is used to analyze traditions, disciplines, and a large variety of methods regarding the way things are done. Qualitative researchers seek to dig deep into people's daily lives and actions to determine the meaning for these actions, using an array of information derived through case studies, personal experience, introspective, life stories, interviews, observation, history, interactional, and visual texts (Erickson, 2011).

A qualitative research design was appropriate for this study. Yin (2016) stated that qualitative research seeks evidence through the lived experiences based on individual perspectives, explaining human behaviors. Yin identified 12 types of qualitative research, whereas Creswell and Guetterman (2019) identified five. Common approaches to qualitative research are phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, and case study. The qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study because data were collected through individual, in-person participant interviews.

Phenomenology is the study of phenomena through the lived daily experiences of individuals, whereas ethnography studies the social and cultural context of those experiences (Yin, 2016). Grounded theory follows a set of procedures to conduct research on social phenomena in hopes of the resulting in new theory. Narrative research collects data through a small sample size of individuals, gathering evidence through in-depth story telling (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Using multiple data collection tools such as observations, documents, emails, interviews, and other sources, the case study identifies the connection between individual experience and real-world context (Yin, 2016).

These research methods, appropriate for a qualitative study, would not have been appropriate for this study as they did not meet the requirements for the timeline of the study, nor would they produce the data needed to answer the research questions. I selected a basic qualitative approach for this study, using one data collection method to investigate the perspectives of elementary teachers working in a Midwest urban school district. This decision was made based on Creswell and Gattermann's (2019) statement that researchers can obtain data for a qualitative study primarily through individual interviews when conducting a basic qualitative study.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of elementary teachers regarding their current needs for training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district. This study identified what elementary teachers reported that they need to successfully implement culturally responsive teaching strategies using culturally relevant pedagogy. Individual in-person interviews provided insight into what teachers believe they need to be able to provide an equitable learning experience by providing better classroom practices and teaching strategies that support the culturally diverse needs of all students.

Role of the Researcher

According to Yin (2019), in qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument used in the process of data collection; thus, my role as the researcher in this study was to serve as the primary instrument for data collection. Consent for conducting research was obtained from the district director of the Department of Evaluation,

Research and Assessment. As the sole researcher of this study, I conducted all in-person interviews, gathering, analyzing, and interpreting all collected data.

Expanding on this idea, Patton (2015) clarified that the role in question involves understanding the world as it develops, staying true to complexities and diverse viewpoints as they arise, and maintaining equilibrium in reporting both supporting and contradicting evidence related to any conclusions presented. Trustworthiness can be established by employing multiple data sources to ensure credibility and data reliability (Yin, 2014). A written invitation containing a comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose and participant criteria was provided to maintain transparency with potential candidates. I built rapport with the interviewees by offering a detailed explanation of the interview process. To minimize potential research bias, open-ended questions were prepared, which did not guide participants towards any specific response.

In this study, my role involved conducting interviews with all selected participants and analyzing the data collected from those interviews. Other responsibilities included reaching out to potential participants in the district of study and providing them with all the information needed to determine whether to participate, including consent forms. Because I have held multiple roles within the district of study and served on various committees during my 10 years with the district, there was a chance that I had previously worked with or had a professional relationship with a potential participant.

My role as a former teacher and instructional coach and current early childhood assistant principal in the district, along with my experiences with the lack of support and training provided, had the potential to affect the data collection process and introduce

researcher bias. I was intentional about addressing this potential bias by applying my experience to recognize other teachers' challenges while keeping my own interpretations and ideas away from the study. To do this, I followed the guidance of Chenail (2011) by journaling my thoughts and feelings before, during, and after the interviews to identify and address any bias thoughts, feelings, or impressions that come up. As a researcher, I understood the importance of recording all biases, so they were not expressed.

Methodology

This section will describe how a basic qualitative study was used to explore the perspectives of elementary teachers regarding their current needs for training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district. In this section, I will first explain how participants were selected, then describe the instrumentation used to collect the data. Next, details will be provided for the procedures used for participant recruitment, participation, and data collection. Lastly, the plan for data analysis will be described.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to identify 11 elementary teachers in the district of study. The method of purposeful sampling was selected as it was based on participants' anticipated relevance to the research questions (Yin, 2016). The purposeful sample of this study aimed to include 10–12 participants with a prepared backup plan for only 10, in the event that one or two participants were unable to follow through. Basic qualitative studies using purposeful sampling should use a sample from one to 10 participants, aiming for a complete sample of 10–12 for saturation (Boddy, 2016).

Utilizing purposeful sampling, I identified candidates who were able to provide dependable answers to research questions and fulfill the participant selection criteria. To satisfy these criteria, candidates had to (a) be a current classroom or content area teacher in the district under investigation, (b) teach in Grades PreK-5, and (c) have completed a minimum of one full school year of teaching in the district in question. Chosen candidates who replied to the email invitation and met the selection criteria also completed an informed consent form for participation.

Instrumentation

Individual, in-person semistructured interviews were conducted using open-ended questions. According to Babbie (2008), a basic qualitative interview involves collecting data from individuals who possess relevant knowledge or experience regarding the identified problem of study using open-ended questions. The structure of the qualitative interview comprises main questions, probes, and follow-up questions as needed to gain clarity, as stated by Rubin and Rubin (2012).

An interview protocol (see Appendix A) was developed using the lens of the culturally responsive teaching framework. The interview protocol was used to guide the procedure of the interview process. The protocol allowed for a semistructured interview process, giving participants opportunities to expand on their responses and provide in-depth answers to their own perspectives of the training, resources, and support they felt like they need to be able to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies in their classrooms (Yin, 2016).

Thirteen open-ended, semistructured interview questions were developed based on the culturally responsive teaching framework that grounds this study. I designed the questions to support the research questions and aid data collection, guided by the literature review. Possible rephrasing of the questions and probes during the interview process had been planned based on the participant's response. Flexibility in the order of questions asked was also considered, as and when required. In addition, I asked six demographic questions designed to help describe the sample.

To ensure the content validity of the instrument, I contacted two professional peers to review the proposed interview protocol and questions. Both peers are currently working in urban school districts in the Midwest and have successfully defended their final dissertations in their respective doctoral and PhD programs. Reviewer 1 is an early childhood building principal with 6 years of school leadership experience and 12 years of experience teaching in public, urban schools. Reviewer 2 is an elementary instructional coach for an inner-city charter school and an adjunct professor at a state university who has 9 years of teaching and leadership experience, working in public charter schools adjacent to the district of study. Modifications were made after their expert review, during which the reviewers asked clarifying questions and offered critiques and suggestions regarding the specific language and wording of my questions, if they were deemed applicable and appropriate. The modifications included restructuring several questions and changing the original language of those questions to provide more context and connection to the framework.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The aim of qualitative research is to interpret the interpretations of lived human experiences through safe, voluntary participation (Yin, 2016). This study explored the perspectives of 11 elementary teachers working in an urban, midwestern school district. In this section, I describe the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection.

Recruitment and Participation

With approval received from the district site and IRB approval obtained from Walden University, a formal invitation was sent to elementary school principals in the district of study using the Walden email address, requesting principals forward it on to their teaching staff. Additionally, a link to the invitation was posted, sharing the information on a private, district Facebook page to gain access to potential candidates who may not have received the forwarded email. Prior to making this posting, authorization was sought from the Facebook group moderators.

To meet selection criteria, candidates needed to (a) be a current classroom or content area teacher in the district of study (b) teach in Grades PreK-5, and (c) have completed at minimum of one full schoolyear of teaching in the district of study. Selected candidates who responded to my email invitation or Facebook post, and also met the selection criteria then also completed a consent to participate form.

Upon receiving interest from teachers, the next step was to attach all study criteria to the recruiting flyer and send to all interested teachers. Before criteria selection was confirmed, participants were sent a consent form to participate through their district email

account. The form included all necessary information about the study, including the requirements and potential benefits for participation and a statement of confidentiality. Participants were given one week to complete and return the consent form. There were 11 consent forms returned.

Selected candidates were notified of their participation through their preferred method of contact, which they indicated on the consent form. All participants responded within 48 hours and agreed to participate. When the participants had been confirmed, individual one-on-one interviews were scheduled with each participant. The participants were given the option to select the location of their choice for the interview or meet at a neutral site on the campus of the study district. Electronic calendar invitations were sent to participants to confirm the details of their interview date, time, duration, and location. All interviews were held individually in a private location and lasted approximately 35–45 minutes. Interviews were all audio recorded and transcribed electronically.

Data Collection

Once the research plan was in place, it was time to embark on the crucial process of data collection. To ensure a systematic and organized approach, a series of steps were meticulously followed.

First, the participant interviews were thoughtfully scheduled, considering the availability and preferences of everyone involved. An electronic calendar invitation was then crafted and sent out to confirm the interview details, providing a seamless and convenient way for participants to acknowledge their participation.

The heart of the data collection process was in the one-on-one interviews that were conducted in person with each participant. Careful attention was paid to creating a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere, allowing the participants to express themselves freely and openly. To preserve the essence of these interactions, an audio recording and transcription program was employed, ensuring that every nuance and detail was captured.

After the interviews were completed, an important step in maintaining rapport and gratitude was taken. A follow-up thank-you email was thoughtfully crafted and sent to all participants. Along with expressing sincere appreciation for their involvement, the email also contained information about when and how they would have the opportunity to review the written findings from the study, maintaining transparency and ethical consideration.

With the interviews and interactions preserved through audio recordings, the final step was to meticulously transcribe each conversation. This process required careful attention to detail, ensuring that the transcripts remained true to the spoken words and accurately represented the thoughts and perspectives of the participants. The data collection process, diligently executed through these steps, laid the foundation for the insightful analysis and invaluable findings that would shape the course of the research study.

Data Analysis Plan

The data from the semistructured, one-on-one interviews were analyzed based on the three research questions of this basic qualitative study:

- RQ1: What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the training needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?
- RQ2: What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the supports needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?
- RQ3: What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?

After each interview, the data collected was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed while it remained fresh and at the forefront of the mind, following the process outlined by Rubin & Rubin (2012). Using coding, a purposeful systematic method for qualitative data analysis, common themes and patterns in the participant responses were identified (Saldaña, 2016). Content analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) was used to assist in coding the interviews.

The thematic analysis began with descriptive codes being assigned throughout the transcribed interview data. These codes were generated through the research questions and the culturally responsive teaching framework. Interpretive codes were then be created to categorize broader themes (Grbich, 2013). As the themes were identified from the coding and supportive data, connections were made between the themes in each data source as they related to the research questions.

To effectively report the data findings in the qualitative research, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase inductive thematic analysis was employed, ensuring a smooth and comprehensive presentation of the results. The approach comprises of six steps, including familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Through this method, the interview transcripts were analyzed, and key themes were supported by relevant excerpts which were identified. A concise reflection on the major findings in relation to the research questions was generated. This structured process enhanced the quality and clarity of the data analysis.

The interpretation of the data in comparison to the literature review will be provided next. Study participants were sent an email with a copy of their transcribed interview. They were asked to review it and return it with any corrections within five business days, after which time the transcription will be deemed to be accurate. This method is referred to as member checking and will help establish trustworthiness of the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in a basic qualitative study, researchers must consider the following criteria: dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Kennedy-Clark, 2012). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), qualitative research is centered on a relationship approach to research, which can present challenges when persuading readers of the trustworthiness of the study and the qualitative method. This

section will address the procedures that will be taken to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

Credibility

To ensure trustworthiness, this study addressed credibility. Credibility assures the internal validity of the study by ensuring that the study measures what it states it intends to measure (Yin, 2016). This study used member checking to ensure credibility.

Member checking was employed to verify the accuracy of the findings related to the experiences and perspectives of the selected participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A transcript of their interview was provided to each participant, and they were requested to respond with any corrections to ensure accuracy. By utilizing member checking in this manner, it helped confirm that the perspectives of the participants on the training, resources, and support needed to implement culturally responsive teaching are accurately represented (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability establishes trustworthiness through external validity when the findings of the research study are applicable and relevant to a broader context (Kennedy-Clark, 2012). Transferability also acknowledged the uniqueness of the local setting and conditions in this study (Yin, 2016). This study used thick descriptions and a variation in participant selection as strategies to establish transferability of the findings. Detailed descriptions of the study setting, participants' perspectives, and research findings provide clarity to facilitate readers' assessment of transferability to their own settings, enabling them to make informed comparisons (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the reliability of the basic qualitative study. Ravitch and Carl, 2016 explained that qualitative researchers must document consistent research procedures which would allow for the study to be repeated, obtaining similar findings. To establish dependability in this study, I, as the researcher, carefully analyzed the data, focusing on similarities in teacher perspectives. These similarities were used to code the data into themes. Participant responses were coded using the identified themes and common patterns, which will enhance the accuracy of the qualitative study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Confirmability

Establishing trustworthiness involves confirmability, which entails making certain that the findings of a qualitative study accurately represent the experiences and truths of the participants, while avoiding research bias or motivation (Kennedy-Clark, 2012). One method to establish confirmability in this study was the use of an audit trail. All collected data was transcribed, and the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation was documented (Burkholder et al., 2016). These comprehensive transcriptions serve as evidence that the findings genuinely represent participants' responses and are not distorted by conscious or unconscious bias.

Reflexivity was additionally used to establish confirmability in this study. Reflexivity is the acknowledgment of the researcher's role in the research (Kennedy-Clark, 2012). To assist in remaining unbiased, I used reflexive journaling to reflect on

any personal bias or opinions that come up during the interview and/or data analysis process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

Qualitative research is based on relationships with human participants (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). Human relations present opportunity for ethical issues, making it imperative to have a detailed set of formalized guidelines and procedures when conducting a qualitative study (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). To ensure the integrity of the study, the research followed codes of ethics established by Walden University and other professional organizations to reduce ethical dilemmas (Yin, 2016).

The Belmont Report (1979) was established to help protect human subjects involved in research. Within this report, three basic ethical principles were established (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. The first principle is the recognition that people are autonomous and should be protected (The Belmont Report, 1979). It covers the idea that people enter the research voluntarily and are provided with adequate information. To ensure respect for participants, each participant was provided with a consent form during the recruiting process.

Within the second ethical principle, beneficence, people are treated in an ethical manner not only by respecting their decisions and protecting them from harm (The Belmont Report, 1979). The Belmont Report identifies two rules regarding beneficence: (a) do not harm and (b) maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms. Beneficence refers to the researcher's responsibility to consider all risks associated with participation.

Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of participants by eliminating the use of their real names, referring to participants as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, and T8.

Participants were assured that all data would remain confidential and disclosed and their responses would not be shared with any stakeholders within the district of study. Participants were assured that all audio-recordings would be kept on a locked file on the researcher's personal computer, where only I would have access to the password and the electronic files. Per Walden University's requirements, the data will be stored for five years from the date of when the study is completed and then securely destroyed.

The last of the Belmont Report's three basic ethical principles, justice, raises questions about who should receive the benefits of research and who should endure its burdens (The Belmont Report, 1979). This principle is centered around the way in which the researcher should determine participants based on a set of fair procedures. All participants of the study were volunteers and had the option to opt-out at any time of their participation should they feel uncomfortable for any reason. As noted, the identity of the participants remained confidential throughout the study and their names were not revealed, but instead referred to as T1, T2, and so on sequentially.

Summary

Chapter 3 reviewed the purpose for this basic qualitative study and introduced the research design and rationale for the study. It was identified that I served in the role as the sole researcher of this study. The research methodology used to investigate the perspectives of elementary teachers in a Midwestern urban school district was discussed in detail including the procedures to be used to participant selection. I served as the

primary instrument in this basic qualitative study, conducting in-person interviews using open-ended questions.

This study explored the perspectives of 11 elementary teachers working in an urban, midwestern school district. There were specific and detailed procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection that established trustworthiness using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The study aligned with Walden University's ethical standards and the 1979 Belmont Report. Chapter 4 will discuss the in-depth findings from the data collection and analyzed from the participant interviews.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of elementary teachers regarding their current needs for training, support, and resources to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district. Chapter 4 presents a comprehensive analysis of the data collected in this qualitative study, focusing on exploring the themes and patterns that emerged from the participants' responses. This chapter is organized into six sections.

The first section provides a detailed description of the settings in which the study was conducted. Following that, the second section outlines the data collection methods employed, including the procedures used to gather rich and diverse information from the participants. The subsequent section examines the data analysis process, explaining the procedures taken to uncover key themes and patterns. Moving forward, the fourth section presents the results, offering an in-depth examination of each identified theme and its associated categories and subcodes. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the fifth section presents evidence of trustworthiness, outlining the strategies employed to establish credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Finally, the chapter concludes with a concise summary, summarizing the main findings and their implications, setting the stage for the subsequent chapter's discussion and interpretation of the results.

Setting

This basic qualitative study was conducted in an urban school district located in the Midwest. The district, with an enrollment of approximately 23,000 students, serves a

diverse population, with students representing 63 different languages. Notably, the district is characterized by a high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals, indicating socioeconomic challenges prevalent within the community. These contextual factors contribute to the complexity of the educational landscape and underscore the importance of exploring issues of DEI within this setting.

The study specifically focused on elementary education, encompassing PreK through 5th grade. To gather valuable insights, 11 elementary teachers, representing different grade levels, were interviewed as key participants in this research. Table 1 provides the participant data of the 11 teachers who were interviewed. These data include their years of experience and number of buildings they have taught in, in the district of study, their current teaching position, and the student groupings they teach daily.

The median years of experience for the participants in this study were found to be 7 years, with some teachers having as little as 3 years of experience (T4) and others with extensive experience, such as 27 years (T9). This variation in experience levels brings a valuable mix of perspectives to the research.

The “mobility” column sheds light on the participants’ movement within the educational setting. It shows that some teachers remain in the same building throughout their careers (T1, T2, T3, T6), while others experience mobility across two (T4, T5, T10, T11) or even three (T7, T8) different buildings. This variation in mobility can have implications for their teaching experiences and perspectives. In terms of “student grouping,” the data showcase the range of student populations with which the participants engage. Participants are involved with a single class (T1, T3, T4, T6, T8, T10, T11),

multiple classes (T5, T7), or multiple small groups (T9). These varying student groupings highlight the diversity of teaching contexts and the unique challenges and opportunities they present.

Additionally, the average grade level taught among the participants was found to span from kindergarten to 5th grade, with some teachers specializing in early childhood education (PreK) and others in specific subjects like reading or English as a second language (ESL).

Overall, this comprehensive data analysis provides a rich understanding of the participants' experiences, current roles, mobility, and student groupings, contributing to a well-rounded and insightful research study on the dynamic landscape of education.

Table 1

Participant Experience

Code	Experience	Mobility	Current position	Student grouping
T1	13 yrs	Same building	Kindergarten	1 class
T2	8 yrs	Same building	K-5 reading	7 class
T3	15 yrs	Same building	Kindergarten	1 class
T4	3 yrs	2 buildings	3 rd grade	1 class
T5	18 yrs	2 buildings	K-5 ESL	5 classes
T6	4 yrs	Same building	K-3 SPED	25 students
T7	7 yrs	3 buildings	K-5 PE teacher	Multiple classes
T8	6 yrs	3 buildings	PreK head start	1 full day class
T9	27 yrs	4 buildings	K-5 ESL	Multiple small groups
T10	6 yrs	2 buildings	Gen ed PreK	1 a.m. and 1 p.m. class
T11	17 yrs	2 buildings	Early childhood unified	1 a.m. and 1 p.m. class

In the process of collecting the participants' perceptions, each teacher was asked about their perceptions of the demographics within the school building where they taught. The teachers' responses are presented in Table 2. The actual student demographics of the study district are as follows: Hispanic (55%), African American (24%), Caucasian (9%),

Asian American (6%), and Pacific Islander/American Indian/Alaskan (6%). However, there is currently no formal data available regarding the demographics of the staff.

Table 2

Perceived Demographics of Students and Staff by Participant

Participant	Perceived student demographics	Perceived staff demographics
T1	Predominantly Hispanic. Small percentage of Hmong and Burmese refugees, 25% African Immigrants and 25% African Americans.	Mostly White women.
T2	High Hispanic population, over 50%. 40% African American. 100% free and reduced.	White females, one Hispanic Female, one bi-racial female, and a couple men.
T3	Predominantly Hispanic	Predominantly White
T4	Mostly LatinX and African American	Mostly Caucasian and some Latina and African American.
T5	Majority Hispanic and ESL	Mostly women, 4 males. Majority Caucasian, a couple Hispanic teachers and 1 African American.
T6	40% Hispanic, 35% African American, 12% Caucasian, 13% Other.	100% Caucasian females.
T7	Mostly Latino, Hispanic, and African American. Small percentage of Indian and Caucasian.	Mostly Caucasian females.
T8	Majority African American or bi-racial, three Hispanic students, two Burmese students	Certified Staff is 100% Caucasian and Female. More diverse representation in support staff.
T9	29% ESL, 39 spoken native languages	98% Female, 2% Male. Diverse racial and ethnic representation.
T10	Low income, variety of ethnicities and home languages, mostly Hispanic, African American, and some Southeast Asian families, and five Caucasian	Certified staff is 100% White Women. Some paraprofessionals who are African American.
T11	ESL, low income, Title One, reduced meals	80% educated with MA, 50% with BA, 20% with 60 hours of Associate work

It is essential to acknowledge that the research context was influenced by potential organizational changes in district leadership over the last 12 months. These changes may have had an impact on participants' feelings and responses during the interviews. It is worth noting that participants' attitudes towards these organizational

changes varied. Some individuals expressed positive views regarding the changes in leadership, perceiving them as opportunities for improvement and growth. Conversely, others held more critical perspectives, expressing concerns or reservations about the impact of these changes on the educational environment. Considering the potential influence of these organizational dynamics is crucial for interpreting and contextualizing the participants' responses and understanding their experiences within the larger educational landscape of the district.

Data Collection

Eleven participants were included in this basic qualitative study, representing elementary teachers from various grade levels within the urban school district. The selection of participants was based on purposeful sampling, aiming to include diverse perspectives and experiences. All participants were individually interviewed once, providing a rich and varied dataset for analysis.

The interviews were scheduled via email, allowing for flexible arrangements based on the participants' availability. The interviews took place in person at locations chosen by the interviewees themselves, either at a local school or a church. The choice of venue was driven by the interviewee's preference and convenience. This approach aimed to create a comfortable and familiar environment that encouraged open and candid dialogue during the interviews.

The duration of the interviews varied slightly, with the majority lasting between 35 and 40 minutes. Three interviews extended beyond this timeframe, lasting approximately 45 minutes or slightly longer. The length of the interviews allowed for in-

depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights related to the research questions.

To ensure accurate capturing of the interview data, all interviews were recorded using Otter.AI (<https://otter.ai>), a transcription software designed to convert audio recordings into written text. This software facilitated the transcription process and enhanced the accuracy and reliability of the transcribed data.

During the data collection process, no unusual circumstances or unexpected variations occurred from the proposed methodology outlined in Chapter 3. The established protocol for data collection, including interview procedures and techniques, was followed consistently across all participants. This approach ensured a systematic and rigorous data collection process, enabling comprehensive analysis of the collected information.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved moving from coded units to larger representations, including categories and themes. Atlas.ti software (<https://atlasti.com>) was utilized to upload and organize all interview transcripts. To guide the analysis, content analysis techniques, as described by Miles et al. (2014), were employed, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase inductive thematic analysis was conducted. Each of the phases is described below in detail.

The initial coding process involved identifying and labeling meaningful units of data that related to the research questions. Codes were generated based on recurring patterns, concepts, and ideas that emerged from the participants' responses. The use of

Atlas.ti software facilitated the systematic organization and retrieval of coded data, ensuring efficient management and analysis.

Through an iterative process, codes were grouped into categories, representing broader themes within the data. These categories emerged through a careful examination of similarities and differences across codes, allowing for the identification of overarching patterns. The themes captured the essence of the participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights related to DEI in the urban school district.

Throughout the data analysis process, which consisted of six distinct phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006), specific codes, categories, and themes emerged, providing valuable insights into the perspectives of the participants.

Phase 1: Familiarization With the Data

In the initial phase of the data analysis process, I familiarized myself with the data by thoroughly reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. This iterative process allowed for a deep understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences related to culturally responsive instructional strategies. Additionally, the transcripts were checked for any obvious transcription errors and inconsistencies. The cleaned transcripts were then sent back to the participants for member checking, providing them with an opportunity to review their responses for accuracy and make any necessary corrections. No participants made any corrections in the transcripts.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Initiating the coding process necessitated the generation of a comprehensive list of initial codes, drawn from the content of the interview transcripts. This involved a

systematic and iterative method, which included careful identification and labeling of data segments portraying essential concepts, ideas, or themes. Detailed documentation of the initial codes produced during this phase is available in Appendix B. All codes were accepted initially, promoting a comprehensive exploration of the data. This phase of the analysis resulted in the generation of 514 initial codes.

After generating the initial codes, I revisited the data, beginning the process of theme searching. This led to organizing the numerous codes into secondary codes, sometimes viewed as categories, by merging and condensing them based on similarities and relationships and aligning them with the existing framework. The emergence of 82 secondary codes or categories during this phase can be seen in Appendix C.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Once the secondary codes and categories were identified, they were reviewed and examined in the context of the conceptual framework and existing literature discussed in Chapter 2. This process involved a careful examination of how the identified themes aligned with previous research findings and theoretical perspectives.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

In Phase 4 of the data analysis process, the identified secondary codes and categories underwent a thorough review and examination within the context of the conceptual framework and existing literature discussed in Chapter 2. This critical review encompassed a detailed examination of how the identified themes aligned with previous research findings and theoretical perspectives. The aim was to ensure the coherence and consistency of the themes across the dataset. Specifically, the themes of DEI, cultural

respect and recognition, equity in education, inclusive community engagement, building relationships with students, culturally informed communication, and professional development for culturally responsive teaching were reviewed.

To accomplish this, a rigorous process was employed to analyze the relationships and connections between the secondary codes and categories, refining and condensing them into more refined and meaningful themes. This iterative process involved a careful consideration of the essence and representativeness of each theme, as well as an examination of how they captured the essence of the data collected. Through this comprehensive review and refinement process, the final themes emerged, providing a clear and concise representation of the key findings from the data. A detailed overview of this review process can be found in Appendix D.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

During Phase 5, the initial themes identified in the previous phases were refined and condensed into a final set of themes that captured the participants' perspectives. This process involved analyzing the relationships between the codes, categories, and themes, ensuring their alignment with the research questions and conceptual framework. Working definitions were developed for each final theme based on the data analysis, providing clear and concise explanations of their underlying concepts. To further illustrate these definitions, selected quotes from participants were included to exemplify the themes and provide a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives.

Theme 1: Culturally Responsive Instruction and Curriculum

This theme emphasizes the importance of modifying lessons to meet the needs of diverse students, addressing language barriers, and providing support for their unique cultural backgrounds within the framework of culturally responsive teaching. It highlights the need for explicit models and strategies that enable teachers to modify given lessons and provide additional support tailored to students' cultural backgrounds.

Participant 1 (T1) exemplified the essence of this theme by recognizing the necessity of deep, explicit models that guide the modification of lessons to better meet the needs of diverse students. T1 stated,

I think that it's still one of those things that everyone just like, yeah, like culturally responsive, but I think there needs to maybe be like some very deep, explicit models of how to take... a lesson that we're given, and modify it, and provide the extra support needed for the kids in our class.

The participant emphasized the importance of providing extra support and acknowledges the potential gaps between the concept of culturally responsive teaching and the practical application in the classroom. This aligns with the objective of culturally responsive instruction and curriculum within the framework, which focuses on ensuring that instructional materials and approaches reflect and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds of students.

Participant 2 (T2) highlighted the significance of ongoing training and cultural awareness in understanding and supporting students from diverse backgrounds: "We have to be trained and always looking for information to keep us well-informed of any child's

background or culture.” This aligns with the emphasis on continuous professional development and the acquisition of knowledge about students’ backgrounds and cultures within the Culturally Responsive Teaching Framework. By being well-informed and trained, teachers can create a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment that acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of their students.

Within the theme of culturally responsive instruction and curriculum, educators are encouraged to adapt instructional materials, modify lessons, and provide additional support that considers the unique needs and cultural backgrounds of their students. By incorporating culturally relevant content, addressing language barriers, and providing the necessary support, teachers can create an inclusive and engaging learning experience for all students.

Culturally responsive instruction and curriculum plays a crucial role in promoting equity, fostering cultural competence, and ensuring that all students have equitable access to high-quality education. By integrating culturally responsive practices into instruction and curriculum, teachers can empower students, validate their identities, and create a supportive learning environment that values and respects their diverse backgrounds.

Theme 2: Equity in Resource Allocation

This theme emphasizes the need for equitable distribution of resources, taking into consideration community structures, transportation accessibility, and poverty as factors that significantly impact educational opportunities within the framework of culturally responsive teaching. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring that resources

are allocated in a fair and inclusive manner to address disparities and promote equitable educational experiences for all students.

Participant T6 raised awareness of the influence of community structures and the impact they have on equitable access to resources. T6 said, “I think it would be beneficial to look at the community structures and really build off of those structures to ensure equitable access ... lack of transportation and poverty ... significantly affecting the education that several of our students are getting.” The participant suggested that by closely examining community structures and building upon them, educational institutions can work towards ensuring equal access to resources for all students. The participant identified transportation challenges and poverty as additional factors that affect educational opportunities, emphasizing the need to address these barriers to promote equitable outcomes.

Participant T7 emphasized the urgency of achieving equitable resource allocation across the district: “We need to figure out a way to make those resources equitable for all of our district ... continuing the conversations with trainings that we’ve started but in a way that helps us know what to do next.” The participant recognized the ongoing conversations and trainings initiated to address this issue but highlights the importance of taking further steps to ensure resources are distributed equitably. This aligns with the objective of equity in resource allocation within the framework, which aims to eliminate resource disparities and ensure that all students have access to the necessary tools and support for their educational success.

Equity in resource allocation acknowledges the inherent disparities that exist in access to resources and strives to create a level playing field for all students. It calls for a comprehensive approach that considers community dynamics, transportation accessibility, and poverty as key factors in determining resource allocation. By addressing these factors, educational institutions can work towards providing equal opportunities and reducing educational inequities.

Within the culturally responsive teaching framework, equity in resource allocation serves as a cornerstone for promoting social justice, inclusivity, and equal educational opportunities. By prioritizing equitable resource allocation, schools can create an environment that supports the diverse needs of students and fosters an inclusive learning experience. This theme reinforces the commitment to ensuring that all students have the necessary resources to thrive academically and socially, irrespective of their background or circumstances.

Theme 3: Culturally Informed Communication and Language Accessibility

This theme underscores the significance of effective communication strategies that prioritize language preferences and ensure language accessibility for parents within the context of culturally responsive teaching. It recognizes the importance of addressing language barriers through the provision of translation programs and information dissemination in families' native languages.

Participant T5 highlighted the need for effective communication with families in their native languages as an expectation: "It needs to be the expectation that we are communicating with families in their native languages ... If that means we have to have

translators, or access to translation programs ... then so be it, we need that.” The participant emphasizes the importance of providing translation services or access to translation programs to ensure meaningful and inclusive communication. This aligns with the objective of culturally informed communication and language accessibility, which aims to create an environment where all families can actively participate and engage in their children’s education, regardless of their language background.

Participant T9 emphasized the significance of ongoing training and being well-informed about students’ backgrounds and cultures: “Making sure staff and myself are trained and always looking for information ... to keep us well-informed of any child’s background or culture will help us with that relationship with them.” This understanding allows teachers and staff to establish meaningful relationships with students and their families. By staying informed about the cultural backgrounds of their students, educators can engage in more culturally sensitive and responsive communication practices. This aligns with the principles of culturally informed communication and language accessibility, which recognizes the importance of cultural competence in facilitating effective communication and building strong relationships.

Culturally informed communication and language accessibility within the culturally responsive teaching framework acknowledges that effective communication is essential for establishing trust, fostering meaningful relationships, and promoting family engagement. By prioritizing language accessibility and providing culturally informed communication strategies, schools can create an inclusive environment where all families feel valued, heard, and supported.

This theme highlights the commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable educational experience by ensuring that language does not act as a barrier to effective communication. By addressing language preferences, providing translation services, and promoting ongoing cultural awareness training, schools can bridge communication gaps and foster a collaborative partnership with families from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Theme 4: Professional Development for Culturally Responsive Teaching

This theme highlights the significance of professional development opportunities and training initiatives, specifically focusing on DEI in education. It encompasses DEI courses, building relationships, department head support, and the utilization of literature on cultural responsiveness to enhance teaching practices.

Participant T7 shared their personal experience with professional development, stating,

I am a member of DEI ... and last summer, I took ... a summer impact course ... on cultural responsive teaching. That course specifically was helpful and then getting to meet with the department heads ... they're giving me different strategies.

This quote exemplified the participants' recognition of the value of DEI-focused professional development in enhancing their understanding and application of culturally responsive teaching practices.

The theme of professional development for culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the participants' emphasis on continuous learning and growth in the areas of culturally responsive teaching and its relationship to DEI. By engaging in DEI courses, building relationships with department heads, and utilizing literature on cultural

responsiveness, participants aim to enhance their teaching practices and create more inclusive and equitable learning environments.

This theme stresses the importance of ongoing professional development opportunities that address DEI topics that go deeper than surface level and provide teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and strategies to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching practices. By prioritizing professional development in these areas, educators can continually improve their instructional approaches and promote inclusive educational experiences for all students.

Theme 5: Data-Informed Decision-Making

This theme highlights the importance of using data to inform instructional decision-making within the framework of culturally responsive teaching. It encompasses the analysis of student performance, subsets analysis, patterns, and demographic data to gain insights into student progress and identify areas of improvement, while considering the cultural and contextual factors that influence student learning.

Participant T3 shared their perspective on data analysis, stating, “We look at student performance ... but it would be interesting to also apply those numbers ... and see if there are any patterns there ... is there a reason why.” This quote reflects the participants’ recognition of the need to explore data through a culturally responsive lens, examining how student performance might be influenced by cultural factors.

Participant T1 further emphasized the need for effective data utilization within a culturally responsive framework, stating,

We have the ability to sort data by subgroups, and dive into things deeper...it would be nice to actually do that and be able to see where we are missing the mark and find out why and make a plan to address it. If we can identify glaring discrepancies within subgroups, we could start reflecting on our current practices and what isn't working and start talking about what we can do that will work.

This quote highlights the participants' desire to analyze data in a way that considers cultural factors and enables them to identify disparities and tailor instructional approaches to meet the needs of diverse student groups.

The Data-Informed Decision-Making theme, within the context of culturally responsive teaching, emphasizes the participants' recognition of the value of data as a powerful tool for guiding instructional practices that honor and respond to students' cultural backgrounds. By analyzing student performance data, subsets analysis, patterns, and demographic information through a culturally responsive lens, educators can gain insights into student progress and make informed decisions to promote equitable and inclusive educational experiences. This theme emphasizes the participants' aspirations to use data effectively within the culturally responsive teaching framework to address disparities, improve student outcomes, and create an environment that values and respects the cultural identities of all learners.

Theme 6: Building Culturally Sensitive Relationships

This theme emphasizes the significance of developing and nurturing culturally sensitive relationships between teachers and students from diverse backgrounds, aligning with the principles of the culturally responsive teaching framework. It encompasses the

need for teachers to actively engage in building trust, understanding, and respect, while integrating the elements of the framework to foster an inclusive and supportive classroom environment. Participant T9 shared,

As a teacher and an educator, if you're working with these students, the most important part of teaching them and educating them is building a relationship with them. Included in that relationship is getting to know their background, but there are different cultures of every student in our school. It is hard there's a lot of them. A lot of them do come from similar cultures. But then there are some cultures that are very different depending on where they live or where they're from or where they're born. So making sure staff and myself are trained and always looking for information. To keep us well informed of any child's background or culture will help us with that relationship with them.

Participant T9's quote exemplifies the essence of this theme, as they highlight the essential role of building relationships with students and getting to know their cultural backgrounds. The participant acknowledges that different cultures exist among the students in their school and emphasized the importance of being trained and seeking information to be well-informed about each child's background or culture. This aligns with the cultural competence element of the culturally responsive teaching framework, which emphasizes the need for educators to understand and appreciate the diverse cultural identities of their students.

Within the theme of building culturally sensitive relationships, teachers are encouraged to integrate other elements of the culturally responsive teaching framework,

such as incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy, leveraging students' cultural assets, and promoting social justice. By utilizing these elements, teachers can create an environment that values and respects students' cultural backgrounds, ensuring their voices are heard and their experiences are acknowledged.

Building culturally sensitive relationships is an integral aspect of culturally responsive teaching, as it fosters a sense of belonging and trust, enabling students to fully engage in their learning. By embracing the principles of the framework and actively developing these relationships, teachers can create an inclusive and supportive educational environment where students from diverse backgrounds thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Theme 7: Resource Management

This theme highlights the significance of resources that address broader social justice and equity issues, aligning with the principles of the culturally responsive teaching framework. It focuses on the provision of resources that combat discrimination, social inequality, and promote social-emotional learning and support to create an inclusive and equitable educational environment. Participant T10 emphasized a lack of equity and stated,

Well, I always said over the years. We do put a lot of emphasis and money into like the ESL population, but as far as like the at-risk, African American kids, they kind of got the short end of the stick. Before they pushed out, like the intervention, things like that they didn't really have any support. It was pretty much on the teacher, and then the ESL kids had extra support with that program.

Participant T10's quote exemplifies the essence of this theme, as they stress the disparities in resource allocation for different student populations. The participant expresses concern over the lack of support and resources for at-risk African American students compared to the emphasis and investment placed on the ESL population. This highlights the need for equitable resource allocation and the recognition of the specific needs and challenges faced by marginalized student groups, which aligns with the principles of social justice and equity within the culturally responsive teaching framework.

Within the theme of resource management, educators are encouraged to provide resources that address the unique needs of diverse student populations and promote inclusive practices. This may include resources that foster cultural competence, challenge bias and discrimination, and provide social-emotional support for students. By utilizing these resources, teachers can create a learning environment that acknowledges and addresses social inequalities and promotes equal opportunities for all students.

Resources for social justice and equity play a crucial role in cultivating an inclusive and equitable educational experience. By incorporating these resources within the framework of culturally responsive teaching, educators can empower students to critically examine social issues, develop empathy and understanding, and actively participate in promoting a more just and equitable society.

Theme 8: Inclusive Community Engagement

This theme highlights the importance of fostering a collaborative and supportive community among educators within the framework of culturally responsive teaching. It

emphasizes the need for professional development opportunities, shared strategies, and a sense of belonging among teachers to promote inclusive teaching practices and enhance student outcomes. Participant T9 stated,

There are new things that are always coming up with our families culturally and in the neighborhood and the community, I think we need to have training going and need to be consistent. So, we are able to connect more with our students and our families and we have a better understanding of how they're living and are able to provide that care and support at school.

Participant T9's quote exemplifies the essence of this theme, as they emphasize the need for ongoing training and consistency in order to connect with students, families, and the community. The participant recognizes the dynamic nature of cultural backgrounds and community contexts, highlighting the importance of educators staying informed and connected to better understand and support their students. This aligns with the collaborative community engagement element of the culturally responsive teaching framework, which emphasizes the value of building strong partnerships among teachers, families, and the broader community.

Within the theme of inclusive community engagement, educators are encouraged to actively participate in professional development opportunities, engage in shared strategies and best practices, and foster a sense of belonging and collaboration within the teaching community. By working together, educators can enhance their cultural competence, share diverse perspectives, and collectively create a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Inclusive community engagement plays a vital role in promoting culturally responsive teaching and fostering a sense of belonging and support for both educators and students. By creating a collaborative community, teachers can draw upon collective knowledge, experiences, and resources to address the diverse needs of their students and create an inclusive and culturally responsive educational experience.

Phase 6: Producing the Final Report

The final themes derived from the data analysis will serve as the foundation for answering the research questions and providing insights into the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding culturally responsive instructional strategies. By exploring these themes in the subsequent results section, the findings of the study will be discussed in relation to the research objectives, contributing to a deeper understanding of the implementation of culturally responsive teaching in the study district.

During the data analysis process, there were instances of participants providing responses that deviated from the expected patterns and themes, reflecting unique perspectives and experiences. These discrepant cases were carefully examined and factored into the analysis, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' viewpoints on implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies.

For example, Participant T3's responses went beyond addressing solely culturally responsive teaching. They expressed frustrations with the district leadership and highlighted areas where the district was failing to provide necessary resources, training, and support. These responses provided a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by

teachers in the district and shed light on broader issues impacting their ability to implement culturally responsive practices.

On the other hand, Participant T5 exhibited a more positive perspective, drawing from their 18 years of experience working in the district. Their responses focused on expressing gratitude for the progress that has been made over the years, emphasizing the improvements they have witnessed. Their perspective highlighted the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the advancements in implementing culturally responsive practices, showcasing a different lens within the participant group.

The inclusion of these discrepant cases, such as T3 and T5, added depth and complexity to the analysis by capturing a range of perspectives and experiences within the participant group. These cases provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by some teachers while also highlighting the progress and positive aspects observed by others. By considering these varying perspectives, the analysis achieved a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies within the district.

Results

The analysis of the data revealed eight key themes from elementary teachers regarding the training, supports, and resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district. The themes that emerged are as follows:

- Theme 1: Culturally Responsive Instruction and Curriculum
- Theme 2: Equity in Resource Allocation
- Theme 3: Communication and Language Accessibility

- Theme 4: Professional Development for Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Theme 5: Data-Informed Decision-Making
- Theme 6: Building Culturally Sensitive Relationships
- Theme 7: Resource Management
- Theme 8: Inclusive Community Engagement

These themes represent the diverse perspectives and experiences of the participants, providing valuable insights into the requirements for creating a culturally responsive educational environment. Each theme offers a unique perspective on different aspects of implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies, ranging from curriculum modification to community engagement. The following sections will delve into each theme in detail, examining the participants' perspectives and their implications for practice and future research. This section presents the findings organized according to the research questions.

Research Question 1

What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the training needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?

In exploring the perspectives of elementary teachers regarding the necessary training for implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies, two key themes emerged: Theme 1 - Culturally Responsive Instruction and Curriculum, Theme 4 - Professional Development for Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Theme 5-Data Informed Decision Making. These themes shed light on the specific training needs and

requirements identified by the participants in order to effectively implement culturally responsive instructional strategies within the study district.

Theme 1 - Culturally Responsive Instruction and Curriculum

This theme reflects the participants' recognition of the importance of incorporating cultural responsiveness into instructional practices and curriculum. They emphasized the need for deep, explicit models and strategies to modify existing lessons and provide additional support for diverse student populations. One participant, T1, described the need for explicit models of modifying lessons and stated:

I think that it's still one of those things that everyone is just like, yeah, like culturally responsive, we need to do that, but I think there needs to maybe be like some very deep, explicit models of how to take, especially now that we're in a more scripted curriculum, how to take a lesson that we're given, and modify it, and provide the extra support needed for the kids in our class. I just talked about how the vocabulary is so much higher, but our kids that especially that don't speak English at home, cannot access it the way that it's written. And so in order to be responsive to that, I've had to put a lot of like front work into the language. And that's not necessarily explicitly supported or modeled by the district, they'll tell us, like, do what you need to do.

Theme 4 - Professional Development for Culturally Responsive Teaching

This theme focuses on the participants' perspectives regarding the professional development and training opportunities required to enhance their cultural competence and instructional strategies. The teachers highlighted the value of courses, literature, and

building relationships with department heads to gain insights and strategies for effective cultural responsiveness. T4 shared her experience of taking a summer impact course on culturally responsive teaching and meeting with department heads, stating:

I am a member of DEI ... and last summer, I took ... a summer impact course ... on culturally responsive teaching. That course specifically was helpful and then getting to meet with the department heads, they're giving me different strategies, but that was something I did that was optional, on my own time. Not everyone can or wants to attend unpaid training in the summer. We need on the job training, especially with all the PD days we have in our calendar, why is this not more of a priority?

Teachers reflected on the fact that the most valuable opportunities happened when teachers and staff were not on duty and were not being paid for their time, taking away from their time with family and personal obligations. T4 added that she felt her colleagues who are not DEI team members need support also.

I would say providing teachers with resources, providing teachers with strategies ideas, whether it's a textbook that just has all the information. I don't even know if there is such a thing, but I mean, something that is a guide to help teachers and then having an all-district PD that is not just up to each principal to organize. It's not up to the, you know, a representative or it's not up to one person at each building. It's the whole district. I think that's where things get lost. There needs to be more consistency and accountability. It seems like some buildings, they might have a principal who takes this stuff very seriously and sees the value, so it is a

priority, but other buildings just say we will get to it, and then never do, and who is there to hold them accountable. They just have to be more consistent in providing what we need and what our kids and our staff need.

Theme 5-Data Informed Decision Making

This theme emphasizes the teachers' recognition of the value of data in guiding their teaching practices. By analyzing student performance data and identifying patterns, educators can make informed decisions to enhance their instructional strategies and address the specific needs of their students. Incorporating data-informed decision-making practices can contribute to the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies and promote positive student outcomes.

Participants expressed the significance of utilizing data to inform their instructional decisions. One participant, T3, highlighted the importance of analyzing student performance data and exploring patterns to gain a deeper understanding of student achievement. T3 stated,

We look at student performance, like I said, Really, like numbers. So this year, there was like a focus on science of reading and writing skills, and we did see a lot of growth. But it would be interesting to also apply those numbers, some of those subsets and see if there are any patterns there that like maybe we're missing something. When we see like the big picture like, oh, this grade level had a lot of growth. But obviously, there's still always going to be kids that aren't meeting the grade level standard. I think we could break it down a little more and see that

there's had plans or any demographics or group of kids that weren't not hitting and is there a reason why.

Measuring the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching strategies was also data that teachers felt would be beneficial to their instructional practices but was something they do not have access to. T11 said, "I think it would be helpful to have a tool that could measure the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching or at least have a way to track that kind of data or something, you know, because honestly, I don't know how to answer if I am an effective culturally responsive educator or not because there is no data to support my response."

The exploration of these themes allows for a deeper understanding of the specific training needs identified by elementary teachers in relation to implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies. The perspectives shared by the participants highlight the importance of comprehensive training programs that address curriculum modifications, support for diverse students, and the acquisition of cultural competence. The following sections will delve into each theme, providing further insights through participant quotes and discussions, to fully explore the perspectives and experiences of the elementary teachers in the study district.

Research Question 2

What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the supports needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?

In examining the perspectives of elementary teachers regarding the necessary supports for implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies, several key

themes emerged: Theme 2 - Equity in Resource Allocation, Theme 3 - Communication and Language Accessibility, Theme 4 - Professional Development and Training, and Theme 8 - Inclusive Community Engagement. These themes shed light on the specific supports and resources identified by the participants as crucial for successful implementation of culturally responsive strategies within the study district.

Theme 2 - Equity in Resource Allocation

This theme highlights the participants' perspectives on the need for equitable allocation of resources to ensure equal opportunities for all students and families. Participants emphasized the importance of addressing community structures, such as lack of transportation and poverty, which significantly impact students' access to quality education.

One participant, T6 expressed the need to look at community structures and ensure equitable access, stating,

The school systems and structures are hard. I think that it would be beneficial to look at the community structures and really build off of those structures to ensure equitable access. What that is, for me specifically, I don't know, but I know that there are structures such as lack of transportation and poverty, and lack of living wage jobs that are significantly affecting the education that several of our students are that most of our students are getting, and not a go in and fix the culture but make sure that there's an equity in those resources and what can we do as a school system to bump that bump up services to ensure equitable services between students here and students in the wealthy suburban counties 10 miles down the

road? Whether that be transportation options, I know it is difficult to get some parents to come to those after school events because transportation is an issue, and the lack of good public transportation is an issue. So structurally within the school, maybe having school buses around for after school events, maybe making some school events before school instead of after school, because work schedules are a thing, especially with a lot of our families working two or three jobs to make ends meet and lots of those jobs are the things which makes it difficult for them to participate. And I know that's looking more through a poverty lens than a racial lens.

Theme 3 - Communication and Language Accessibility

This theme reflects the participants' perspectives on the importance of effective communication and language accessibility in implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies. The teachers emphasized the need for communication in students' native languages, access to translation programs, and providing information to parents in their preferred language. T9 highlighted the need for communicating with families in their native languages, stating, "It needs to be the expectation that we are communicating with families in their native languages... If that means we have to have translators, or access to translation programs... then so be it, we need that." T5 felt like the district needs to put more of an emphasis on the diversity in languages spoken by the student demographic and provide support to teachers and staff to be able to better communicate and support families.

In terms of making those connections with families who have entrusted us with their students, I feel like as a district, we need to put more emphasis into having people who can communicate with students in languages other than Spanish. I feel like as a district, we've put a lot of eggs into the Spanish speaking family population. However, I have students who speak you Hmong, Swahili, and Karen, and Kinyarwanda, and, you know, I can go on and on. And we don't have those resources, that same level of support for those families. And it is not just in our district, but it's across the country. We have resources for our Spanish speaking population that we don't have for other native languages. And as a building, I know, we send out anything that come that goes home from the front office goes home, in English and in Spanish, but Spanish is one of the 39 languages spoken by the students just in the building I work in. So if I'm sending home an English and Spanish note, to a Russian speaking family, they still don't have access to the information. Same for all the other languages. I feel like we need to have more people in our district who can communicate fluently with parents have, we have 63 native languages spoken by students in our district, and I feel like we're covering two. That isn't acceptable.

Theme 4 - Professional Development and Training

This theme underscores the participants' perspectives on the importance of ongoing professional development and training to support the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies. They emphasized the need for courses, building relationships, and access to literature on cultural responsiveness. T11 stated

I think in this district, we've started putting an emphasis on being culturally responsive because we have so many different students in our district. And we've tried to find a curriculum that addresses those needs. And our teachers are starting to take part in more diversity, equity and inclusion, professional development and having discussions revolving around culturally responsive instruction. But I feel like there's still a lot of work to be done. We have a lot of discussions that are good and vulnerable, and you know, making us think about our students in a different way, but we're still lacking a lot of action plan. How do we take this back to our students, to our classrooms, how do I apply this to the content? What's next? So as much as I personally try to understand my students and my families, to the best of my ability, I still don't always know how to support them differently than I would support another class of students. It all feels very surface level right now with no next steps or application. But at least they can check the box that says we do DEI training.

Theme 8 - Inclusive Community Engagement

This theme emphasizes the importance of engaging with the broader community and incorporating community culture and experiences into teaching practices. The participants highlighted the need for resources that facilitate engagement with families and communities from diverse backgrounds. They expressed the desire to create an inclusive environment that fosters trust and respect among students and teachers. T6 emphasized the significance of inclusive practices and stated, "I think the most important part of teaching kids and educating them is building a relationship with them... getting to

know their background... keeping us well informed of any child's background or culture will help us with that relationship with them and their families." T11 added that there needs to be an extension between school and home and support for how to do that.

I think we need to talk more about connecting with families and how to set goals for our students that are appropriate at home as well. You know, I feel like we spend a lot of time addressing challenging behaviors. But that doesn't always reach all of our students from different cultures or backgrounds. You know, if a student in my class is doing what they need to do showing any sort of academic progress. I feel like they kind of just blend into the classroom, and they may not be getting the support that they need. So you know, talking more about what to do for all students and not just the ones who are challenging us on a daily basis.

Research Question 3

What are elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district?

In exploring the resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies, several key themes emerged from the perspectives of elementary teachers. Themes 1, 2, 3, and 7 align with Research Question 3 and shed light on the specific resources identified by the participants as essential for effectively implementing culturally responsive practices in the study district.

Theme 1: Culturally Responsive Instruction and Curriculum

This theme reflects the teachers' perspectives on the need for resources that support culturally responsive instruction and curriculum development. It encompasses the

availability of culturally relevant instructional materials, tools for modifying lessons, and support for meeting the diverse needs of students. When asked what current resources the district of study has provided to help implement culturally responsive instruction with the required curriculum T4 simply said, “I honestly don’t know. I don’t know of any. The district does not provide resources to help us be culturally responsive. It’s frustrating.”

Other teachers felt like there has been inconsistent curriculum resources over the years and things are always changing, making it difficult to learn how to best adapt the content to the needs of their diverse students. T10 shared that there should be more input from the teachers who are doing the work inside the classrooms.

Let us try it out, let us vet it, Let us vote, versus just a few people in the district making the decision and just purchasing it and telling us that we’ll definitely have to teach. Some aspects of the curriculum are good. I mean, of course, no curriculum is perfect. I just feel there are a lot of us teachers here that feel like one size fits all is not the best. When you have so many different diverse learners. You have SPED kids, you have English language learners, you have kids that are gifted, you have kids that are in the middle and of course the ones that need severe intervention. How is our curriculum going to meet all of those needs when no one has offered to provide training or support around it? How do I make it culturally responsive when it is a one size fits all model?

Theme 2: Equity in Resource Allocation

This theme highlights the participants’ views on the importance of equitable resource allocation to ensure all students have access to necessary supports and

opportunities. It encompasses addressing disparities in resources, such as funding, materials, and technology, to promote an inclusive learning environment. T11 felt like there are changes that could be made if funds were better distributed across buildings and departments.

I'm sure there are changes that could be made. I think that our district struggles in some ways. Because maybe the funds are miss proportioned across buildings, some places have a lot of resources and others don't have any. So I feel like we need to figure out a way to make those resources equitable for all of our district, so every student has access to the same opportunities and experiences. And I just think continuing the conversations with trainings that we've started but in a way that helps us know what to do next and ensuring every staff member is receiving the same information and has the opportunity to participate, at every building, because some places it isn't a priority.

Theme 3: Communication and Language Accessibility

This theme focuses on the resources needed to facilitate effective communication and language accessibility in culturally responsive teaching. It includes resources for language translation, cultural sensitivity training, and tools to promote inclusive communication with students and their families. T5 shared several examples of ways in which improvements could be made and increase their ability to implement culturally responsive strategies with students.

I do think also, that during Family advocacy days, that there needs to be bodies of people in each building, who can speak the native languages of the families that

are coming in, for those family advocacy events, and for kindergarten round up, math night and reading night, and all of these things that we are we are trying to do as a district in terms of family advocacy, but we can't just do it for English and Spanish speaking families, that is not inclusive or culturally responsive. Our building also has a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program. So students who are DHH come to our building from throughout the district because we have DHH teacher, but at all of our events, do we have a sign language interpreter up there, signing for all of the programs that math night, the reading night? The other things? No, we don't. And that is something that we can improve on. And in addition, in terms of IEPs, legally, the federal law requires that we provide those IEPs and those parents rights to parents in their native languages. But the program that we have access to that all of our IEPs are written in is only in English. So in order to get an IEP translated, for a kiddo who doesn't have native English speaking parents, that's not being done, but that is their legal rights. And many of those families don't know that that's their rights.

Theme 7: Resource Management

This theme addresses the participants' perspectives on the management of resources necessary for implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies. It encompasses the availability of dedicated time for professional development, funding for program implementation, and access to support systems that facilitate effective resource allocation. T11 expressed their frustration with the surface-level nature of the provided resources and their uncertainty about how to effectively utilize them in the classroom.

They stated, “I just feel like a lot of those conversations around any provided resources are still pretty general. And they’re not helping me take those concepts and apply them to my classroom. They’re not changing my instruction; they’re just changing the way I think about things, but again, I’m not sure how to help my students using that information.”

Another participant, T5, acknowledged the presence of resources but raised concerns about their distribution and accessibility. They highlighted that certain individuals at the Central Office possess extensive knowledge and have made efforts to provide culturally responsive resources. However, the participant also noted that these resources may not be prioritized, and their accessibility might be limited.

I know that there are members at Central Office who are very knowledgeable in this regard. And I know that in terms of resources that we have available to us, the district has recently changed the ELA and science curriculums with putting all of our eggs into the AMPLIFI basket, where the program was touted as being culturally responsive, and representative in terms of its inclusion of various materials, and trade book passages. So I know that there are some people in the district who are really looking out for this and have made sure we have the resources and materials. In addition, we have these courses in Canvas that have DEI research and videos and slideshows that are available to teachers and instructional coaches, and other people throughout. Anybody who has access to Canvas has access to these. However, I don’t know that it is a top priority, as many other things are time-consuming. And not everybody is as passionate about this as other people are.

By examining these themes in the context of Research Question 3, valuable insights are gained into the specific resources that elementary teachers perceive as crucial for implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district. These themes provide a foundation for understanding the resource-related needs and challenges faced by teachers, offering valuable insights for improving resource allocation and support systems. This, in turn, fosters a culturally responsive educational environment.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in this qualitative study, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were carefully considered (Kennedy-Clark, 2012). Given the emphasis on a relationship approach in qualitative research, it was essential to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and the qualitative method (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as they pertained to this study will be discussed below.

Credibility

To enhance credibility and ensure the internal validity of the study, member checking was implemented. Participant interviews were transcribed, and each participant was provided with a transcript to review. They were asked to verify the accuracy of their experiences and perspectives, providing any necessary corrections or clarifications. This member checking process confirmed that the participants' perspectives on the training, resources, and support needed to implement culturally responsive teaching were accurately represented (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability, which establishes external validity by ensuring the applicability and relevance of the findings to a broader context (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), was addressed through various strategies. Rich descriptions of the study setting, participants' perspectives, and research findings were provided, offering detailed insights into the research context. These strategies aimed to facilitate readers' assessment of the transferability of the findings to their own settings, enabling them to make informed comparisons.

Dependability

Dependability, referring to the reliability of the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), was established through consistent research procedures. Data analysis involved careful examination of the similarities in teacher perspectives, which served as the basis for coding the data into themes. The identified themes and common patterns were utilized to enhance the accuracy and dependability of the qualitative study, ensuring consistent and reliable findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability, ensuring that the findings accurately represented the experiences and truths of the participants without research bias or motivation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), was addressed through several measures. An audit trail was implemented to document the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. This comprehensive documentation served as evidence that the findings genuinely represented participants' responses and were not influenced by conscious or unconscious bias. Additionally,

reflexivity was employed through reflexive journaling, allowing for self-reflection on any personal biases or opinions that might have arisen during the interview and data analysis process.

By implementing these strategies, the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings were ensured. These steps provided a rigorous approach to establish the trustworthiness of the study, enhancing the validity and reliability of the qualitative research conducted.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the results of the qualitative study, which aimed to explore elementary teachers' perspectives regarding the training, supports, and resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the study district. Through interviews with 11 participants, valuable insights were gained into the challenges and requirements for promoting culturally responsive teaching practices in the district. This summary provides a recap of the main findings and serves as a transition to Chapter 5, where a detailed discussion, interpretation of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be presented.

In response to Research Question 1, participants expressed a clear need for more comprehensive and effective training in culturally responsive instructional strategies. They emphasized the importance of professional development programs that incorporate cultural competence, respect for diversity, and inclusion. Additionally, participants highlighted the significance of practical, hands-on training opportunities that enable them to apply the learned strategies directly in their classrooms.

Research Question 2 explored teachers' perspectives on the supports needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies. Participants emphasized the importance of adapting organizational structures to promote culturally responsive teaching. They called for administrative support, including an understanding and promotion of culturally responsive principles at the institutional level. Furthermore, participants emphasized the need for creating culturally sensitive relationships to foster trust and respect between teachers and students, as well as among students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Addressing Research Question 3, participants identified resource management as a critical factor in implementing culturally responsive teaching. They expressed concerns about the availability and allocation of resources, including culturally relevant instructional materials, training and development opportunities, and funding for program implementation. In addition, participants highlighted the importance of inclusive community engagement and resources that address broader social justice and equity issues impacting students' lives.

The findings of this study shed light on the perspectives and needs of elementary teachers in the study district regarding the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies. These insights have significant implications for district leaders, administrators, and policymakers in fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

Chapter 5 will provide a comprehensive discussion of the interpretation of the findings, drawing upon relevant literature and theoretical frameworks. The conclusions

derived from this study will be discussed, highlighting the key implications and contributions to the field of culturally responsive teaching. Additionally, based on the findings, recommendations will be provided for district leaders and educators to support the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies. The chapter will conclude with reflections on the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Chapter 5 provides a comprehensive discussion, interpretation of findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on a qualitative study exploring elementary teachers' perspectives on the training, supports, and resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in an urban school district. This chapter aims to further the understanding of the implications of the study and offer actionable recommendations for district leaders and educators in fostering inclusivity and equitable educational practices.

By examining the experiences and insights of the study participants, the research contributes to the field of culturally responsive teaching. The findings highlight the importance of comprehensive and effective training programs that incorporate cultural competence, respect for diversity, and inclusion. Practical, hands-on training opportunities are desired to enable teachers to apply these strategies directly in their classrooms.

Participants emphasized the need for adaptive organizational structures and cultures that promote and value culturally responsive practices. Administrative support at the institutional level, building culturally sensitive relationships, and addressing resource management were identified as crucial factors in successful implementation. Inclusive community engagement and resources addressing social justice and equity issues were also emphasized.

These findings provide valuable insights for district leaders, administrators, and policymakers to support the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies and promote inclusivity and equity in the study district.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section analyzes and interprets the findings of the study in relation to the existing peer-reviewed literature on culturally responsive teaching and the culturally responsive teaching framework. The literature review, presented in Chapter 2, focused on studies conducted within the past 5 years to ensure the relevance and currency of the findings. By comparing the findings with the literature, this section highlights areas of confirmation, disconfirmation, and extension of knowledge in the discipline.

Confirmation of Existing Knowledge

The findings of this study confirm several key aspects highlighted in the literature. First, the identified need for comprehensive and effective training programs aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of professional development in promoting culturally responsive teaching practices (Ladson-Billings, 2017; Ramsay-Jordan, 2020). The participants' call for practical, hands-on training opportunities reinforces the literature's emphasis on the importance of experiential learning and application of strategies (Gay, 2018; Samuels, 2020).

Furthermore, the participants' emphasis on the role of supportive organizational structures and cultures in implementing culturally responsive teaching aligns with previous literature emphasizing the significance of administrative support and institutional alignment (Bonner et al., 2018; Larson et al., 2018). The findings regarding

the importance of building culturally sensitive relationships echo the literature's emphasis on the role of trust and rapport in promoting culturally responsive practices (Ladson-Billings, 2017).

Disconfirmation and Extension of Knowledge

While the findings confirm many aspects of the existing literature, they also offer new insights and disconfirm some assumptions. For example, the participants' expressed concerns about resource management extend the literature's focus on the importance of instructional materials to include broader resource allocation challenges (Bennett et al., 2020; Larson et al., 2020). The participants' emphasis on inclusive community engagement highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that extends beyond classroom practices and involves collaboration with families and communities (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Analyzing Within the Conceptual Framework

The interpretation of the findings within the context of the conceptual framework emphasizes the alignment between the identified themes and the framework's core elements. The themes of professional development for culturally responsive teaching, culturally informed communication, and inclusive and responsive curriculum design reflect the framework's emphasis on teacher training, effective communication, and culturally relevant curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2017). The themes of adapting organizational structures for culturally responsive teaching and building culturally sensitive relationships align with the framework's emphasis on supportive environments and relationships (Larson et al., 2018). The themes of resource management, inclusive

community engagement, and addressing social inequality and justice correspond to the framework's call for equitable resource allocation and social justice-oriented practices (Gay, 2018).

It is important to note that the interpretations provided in this section are grounded in the data and findings of the current study. While the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend existing knowledge, the interpretations should not exceed the data, findings, and scope of this study. Further research is needed to explore the nuances and complexities of implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies in diverse educational contexts.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations arose during the execution of this study that need to be acknowledged. These limitations have implications for the trustworthiness and generalizability of the findings.

First, the study's reliance on the qualitative approach, specifically subjective individual experiences and perspectives, introduces inherent limitations. The subjective nature of the data collection process may have introduced potential biases and variations in participants' responses, impacting the objectivity of the findings.

Another limitation relates to the use of purposeful sampling. While purposeful sampling allowed for the selection of participants with relevant experiences and insights, it also posed potential challenges. There is a possibility that the participants selected for this study may have shared common beliefs and mindsets, as they were teachers who frequently volunteered and collaborated on district initiatives. Additionally, several of

them were member representatives for the district's newly established DEI team. This could limit the diversity of perspectives and potentially reduce the variation among participants.

Furthermore, the conclusions drawn from this study may have limited transferability to settings with different demographics or resources. The study was conducted in a specific urban school district, and the findings should be interpreted within the context of this particular setting. Different demographic characteristics and resource allocations in other districts may influence the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies in unique ways.

Finally, my own bias as a former teacher in the district represents a potential limitation. Personal experiences with the lack of support and training provided may have influenced the data collection process. To address this potential bias, I made a conscious effort to recognize and acknowledge my own experiences while maintaining objectivity in data interpretation and analysis.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into elementary teachers' perspectives on the training, supports, and resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in the specific context of the study district. Awareness of these limitations allows for a more nuanced understanding of the findings and informs recommendations for future research and practice.

Recommendations

Based on the strengths and limitations of the current study, as well as the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, several recommendations for further research emerge.

These recommendations are intended to deepen the understanding of culturally responsive instructional strategies and address the existing gaps in the literature.

- **Diverse contexts:** Conduct studies in diverse educational contexts to explore the applicability and effectiveness of culturally responsive instructional strategies across different demographic characteristics and resource allocations. By examining the implementation of these strategies in various settings, researchers can identify contextual factors that influence their effectiveness and provide practical insights for educators in different contexts.
- **Longitudinal studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to investigate the long-term impact of culturally responsive instructional strategies on student outcomes. By tracking student progress over an extended period, researchers can gain insights into the sustained effects of implementing these strategies and their contribution to academic achievement, engagement, and socioemotional development.
- **Comparative studies:** Conduct comparative studies to compare the implementation and outcomes of culturally responsive instructional strategies across different districts or regions. By comparing districts with varying levels of support, resources, and demographic compositions, researchers can identify promising practices and policies that foster effective implementation and equitable outcomes.
- **Teacher preparation programs:** Explore the integration of culturally responsive teaching approaches in teacher preparation programs. Investigate the impact

of comprehensive pre-service training that incorporates culturally responsive pedagogy, curriculum development, and communication strategies.

Longitudinal studies tracking the preparedness and efficacy of teachers who receive such training can shed light on its influence on classroom practices and student outcomes.

- Stakeholder perspectives: Extend research to include diverse stakeholders, such as students, families, and administrators, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies. By incorporating multiple perspectives, researchers can uncover nuanced insights into the challenges, successes, and potential solutions for fostering an inclusive and equitable educational environment.
- Resource allocation: Investigate the impact of equitable resource allocation on the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies. Research should examine how funding, material resources, and professional development opportunities affect teachers' ability to effectively implement these strategies and promote equitable outcomes for all students.

It is important to note that these recommendations are aligned within the boundaries and scope of the current study. By addressing these research gaps, future studies can build upon the strengths of the current research while expanding the knowledge base surrounding culturally responsive instructional strategies.

Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for positive social change at the district elementary level. By understanding elementary teachers' perspectives on the training, supports, and resources needed to implement culturally responsive instructional strategies, several potential areas for positive social change emerge.

The methodological implications of this study highlight the importance of qualitative research in capturing the nuanced experiences and perspectives of teachers. The use of in-depth interviews and thematic analysis allowed for a rich exploration of teachers' insights, providing valuable qualitative data that complements existing quantitative research. This methodological approach can serve as a foundation for future studies aiming to investigate the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies.

Theoretical implications arise from this study as it adds to the existing body of knowledge on culturally responsive teaching and the culturally responsive teaching framework. The identified themes, such as the need for professional development, culturally informed communication, inclusive curriculum design, organizational support, building culturally sensitive relationships, resource management, and addressing social inequality and justice, contribute to the theoretical understanding of the factors influencing the successful implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies.

The empirical implications of this study provide insights into the practical challenges and needs faced by elementary teachers in implementing culturally responsive

instructional strategies. The findings highlight the importance of comprehensive and practical teacher training programs, organizational support, resource allocation, and community engagement. These empirical insights can inform the development of evidence-based interventions and policies aimed at promoting culturally responsive practices in district elementary schools.

Based on the findings, several recommendations for practice emerge. These recommendations are designed to support district elementary schools in implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies:

1. **Professional Development:** Placing a significance on professional development is crucial for districts to prioritize the provision of comprehensive programs that effectively equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary for implementing culturally responsive instructional practices.

First and foremost, districts should recognize the importance of professional development in enhancing teacher effectiveness and promoting student success. By investing in ongoing training opportunities, districts empower teachers to develop their cultural competence and diversity awareness, which are essential components of implementing culturally responsive instruction. Professional development programs should go beyond theoretical knowledge and provide practical, hands-on strategies that teachers can directly apply in their classrooms.

These programs should be designed to address the specific needs of teachers working with diverse student populations. They should focus on providing teachers with the tools and resources to modify their instructional practices to meet the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds. This may include incorporating culturally relevant materials, integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum, and utilizing instructional strategies that engage and resonate with students' cultural identities.

Moreover, professional development should be grounded in cultural competence, which involves understanding and valuing the cultural backgrounds and experiences of students. Teachers need to develop the ability to recognize and address their own biases, as well as foster an inclusive and respectful classroom environment. By cultivating cultural competence, teachers can create a safe space where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to fully engage in their learning.

Comprehensive and practical professional development is critical in supporting teachers' growth and development as culturally responsive educators. It equips them with the necessary tools and knowledge to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students. By investing in high-quality professional development, districts demonstrate their commitment to providing equitable educational experiences and promoting positive social change.

Districts should prioritize the provision of comprehensive professional development programs that equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed for implementing culturally responsive instructional practices. These programs should be practical, hands-on, and grounded in cultural competence and diversity awareness. By investing in teachers' professional growth, districts foster a more inclusive and equitable educational environment that benefits all students.

2. **Organizational Support:** Organizational support is essential for district leaders to create a supportive organizational culture that values and promotes culturally responsive teaching. This involves several key aspects that contribute to the overall success of implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies.

Firstly, district leaders should provide administrative support by actively endorsing and advocating for culturally responsive teaching practices. This includes allocating resources, such as time, funding, and professional development opportunities, to support teachers in their efforts to implement culturally responsive strategies. By prioritizing and investing in these initiatives, district leaders demonstrate their commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Additionally, aligning policies with the principles of culturally responsive teaching is crucial. District leaders should review existing policies and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the goals of cultural

responsiveness. This may involve revisiting hiring practices, curriculum development, and disciplinary measures to ensure they are equitable and culturally sensitive. By establishing policies that reflect these principles, district leaders send a clear message that cultural responsiveness is a core value within the organization.

Furthermore, fostering a collaborative environment that encourages the sharing of best practices among teachers is essential. District leaders should create platforms and opportunities for teachers to collaborate, exchange ideas, and learn from one another's experiences. This can include regular professional learning communities, workshops, or mentoring programs that focus on culturally responsive teaching. By facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing, district leaders empower teachers to continuously improve their instructional practices and enhance their cultural competence.

Organizational support is a pivotal factor in the successful implementation of culturally responsive teaching. It sets the tone for the entire educational system and influences the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and staff. By creating a supportive organizational culture, district leaders foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among educators, which ultimately translates into better outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds.

Moreover, organizational support plays a critical role in promoting positive social change. It challenges traditional educational practices and systems that may perpetuate inequities and biases. By valuing and promoting

culturally responsive teaching, districts can contribute to dismantling systemic barriers and fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape.

To summarize, organizational support is paramount in facilitating the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies. District leaders should provide administrative support, align policies with cultural responsiveness principles, and foster a collaborative environment among teachers. By doing so, they will create an organizational culture that values and promotes cultural responsiveness, leading to improved outcomes for students and advancing positive social change.

3. **Resource Allocation:** It is crucial for districts to prioritize equitable distribution of resources to support the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies. This includes allocating adequate funding, instructional materials, and dedicated time for professional development.

Equitable resource allocation plays a pivotal role in addressing disparities and promoting equitable educational experiences for all students. It recognizes that students from diverse backgrounds may have varying needs and requires districts to provide the necessary resources to meet those needs. By ensuring that resources are distributed fairly and based on the specific requirements of students, districts can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where every student has an equal opportunity to succeed.

Equitable resource allocation is not just a matter of fairness, but also a fundamental aspect of educational justice. It acknowledges the systemic barriers and inequalities that exist within our education system and aims to dismantle them. By allocating resources in a way that takes into account the unique needs of students from different cultural backgrounds, districts can mitigate the effects of resource disparities and provide a more level playing field for all learners.

Furthermore, equitable resource allocation supports the effective implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies. Adequate funding allows for the development and acquisition of culturally relevant instructional materials, ensuring that students have access to materials that reflect their own identities and experiences. Dedicated time for professional development enables teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in culturally responsive practices, enabling them to create inclusive and engaging learning environments.

Resource allocation is a critical factor in promoting equity and supporting the implementation of culturally responsive instructional strategies. Equitable distribution of funding, instructional materials, and professional development time is necessary to address disparities and provide all students with equitable educational experiences. By ensuring that resources are allocated in a fair and inclusive manner, districts can foster a more just and inclusive education system that meets the needs of diverse learners.

4. **Community Engagement:** Expanding on the importance of community engagement, it is essential for districts to proactively involve families and communities from diverse cultural backgrounds in the educational process. By creating meaningful partnerships and actively seeking input from parents and community members, districts can ensure that the voices and perspectives of all stakeholders are heard and valued.

Incorporating community culture and experiences into the curriculum is another crucial aspect of community engagement. By recognizing and embracing the rich cultural diversity within the community, districts can design curriculum materials and learning experiences that are relevant, relatable, and meaningful to all students. This approach not only enhances students' sense of belonging and cultural identity but also promotes a more inclusive and holistic educational environment.

Furthermore, providing resources that facilitate collaboration between schools and the broader community is vital for fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment. Districts should establish partnerships with local organizations, cultural centers, and community leaders to leverage their expertise and resources. This collaborative effort can help address the unique needs and challenges faced by students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds, ultimately promoting equity and positive social change within the educational system.

Community engagement is a key pillar of culturally responsive education. It acknowledges the value of community knowledge, experiences, and resources in shaping educational practices. By actively engaging with families and communities, districts can bridge the gap between home and school, foster mutual trust and understanding, and create a shared responsibility for student success. This collaborative approach not only benefits students academically but also nurtures a supportive and inclusive community where everyone feels valued and empowered.

Community engagement is an essential component of creating an inclusive and supportive educational environment. It involves involving parents and community members in decision-making processes, incorporating community culture into the curriculum, and establishing collaborative partnerships with the broader community. By embracing community engagement, districts can cultivate a sense of belonging, enhance cultural relevance, and foster positive social change within the educational system.

It is important to note that these recommendations for practice should be tailored to the specific context and resources of each district elementary school. By implementing these recommendations, district elementary schools can take meaningful steps toward creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment that supports positive social change.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the critical need for comprehensive training, supports, and resources to effectively implement culturally responsive instructional strategies in elementary schools. Elementary teachers identified key areas such as professional development, culturally informed communication, inclusive curriculum design, organizational support, building culturally sensitive relationships, resource management, and addressing social inequality and justice as crucial components for promoting an inclusive and equitable educational environment. By prioritizing these elements and implementing evidence-based recommendations, district elementary schools can take significant strides towards positive social change and create classrooms where every student feels seen, valued, and empowered.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate my notetaking and understanding, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. To ensure confidentiality, I would like you to select a pseudonym that I will refer to you as during the interview. All audio recordings will then be transcribed and saved under that pseudonym and then sent to you following the interview to ensure accuracy. During the audio recording, please know that there are no right or wrong answers and if at any time, a question becomes uncomfortable you can refuse to answer it.

For your information, myself, as the only researcher on the project, will be privy to the tapes which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you signed a form devised to meet the study requirements and have agreed to be interviewed as a participant. As a reminder, that document stated that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

Introduction (Beginning)

- 1) How many years of teaching experience do you have in the district of study?
- 2) Have you remained in the same position throughout those years, or have you taught in different buildings, grade levels, or content areas?
- 3) What is your current position?
- 4) Do you teach the same group of students throughout the day, or do you see multiple classes of students?
- 5) Describe the demographic of the current student population that you teach.
- 6) Describe the demographic of the current staff population in the current building where you work.

Interview Questions

- 1) Please explain your understanding of culturally responsive instruction.

Element: Cultural competence

- 2) How has your district prepared you to be a culturally responsive educator?

Element: Professional development

- 3) Explain how you have been supported by instructional leaders, including principals, executive directors, curriculum and instruction, and the school board, in your district to help you understand culturally responsive instruction and its purpose and outcomes.

Element: Relationships and respect

- 4) Has that support been effective? Why or why not?

Element: Assessment of culturally responsive teaching

- 5) What would your ideal training or professional development look like to deepen your understanding and implementation of culturally responsive teaching?

Element: Professional development

- 6) Describe the training your district has provided to you which supports your understanding of and ability to provide culturally responsive instruction in your classroom.

Element: Professional development

- 7) What regularly scheduled professional development opportunities are available to teachers and staff that have helped you develop skills in being able to successfully implement culturally responsive teaching strategies?

Element: Professional development

- 8) Describe the support your district has provided to you, so you are able to provide culturally responsive instruction in your classroom.

Element: Family and community engagement

- 9) Do you feel as if you are able to provide effective, culturally responsive instruction in your classroom? Why or why not?

Element: Culturally responsive assessment

- 10) Describe the resources your district has provided to you which supports your understanding of and ability to provide culturally responsive instruction in your classroom.

Element: Culturally relevant curriculum

- 11) How have these resources impacted your instruction? What evidence of effectiveness can be seen in what your students are doing and saying?

Probe: How are you student performing with the help of these resources?

Element: Building on students' assets

- 12) What else do you believe could be done by the district of study to support teachers in implementing culturally responsive instruction?

Element: Critical consciousness

- 13) Are there additional supports you believe that would be beneficial in addition to professional development, training, and resources? Human capital, changes in the school systems and structures, or other?

Element: Systemic support for culturally responsive teaching

Appendix B: Initial Codes

Initial Codes		
Academic performance evaluation	Education (2): Language preservation	Negative attitude towards DEI initiatives
Access to resources	Education (2): Student performance	Networking
Accessibility	Education access	Objectivity
Accountability	Education and Training	Open-Ended Questioning
Achievement	Education evaluation	Open-mindedness
Acknowledgement of cultural differences	Education improvement	Openness to feedback
Acknowledgment	Education inequality	Opportunities for growth
Action plan	Education Policy	Opportunity seeking
Adaptability	Education quality	Optimism
Adaptation	Education reform	Organizational change
Administrator support	Education resources	Organizational culture
Advocacy for DEI training	Education system criticism	Organizational structure
Ambiguity	Education/training	Organizational support
Analysis	Educational attainment	Overload/Burnout
Anonymity	Educational background	Overwork
Appreciation	Educational constraints	Participant Information
Appreciation for diverse perspectives	Educational equity	Pattern recognition
Asking for feedback	Educational instruction	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
Asking for information	Educational reforms	Pedagogy
Assessment methods	Educational resources	Perceived lack of action
Assimilation	Effective communication	Perceived lack of support
Authenticity	Effectiveness	Personal development
Autonomy	Effectiveness of teaching resources	Personal growth
Awareness	Emotional support	Personal growth and development
Bias	Empathy	Personal teaching style
Building relationships	Encouragement	Phonetics
Building relationships with students	Enrichment	Phonics
Building trust	Equal access to growth opportunities	Planning
Career	Equality	Positive feedback
Career achievement	Equity	Positive influencer
Career change	Ethics	Positive view on anonymous feedback
Career development	Ethnicity	Poverty
Career Experience	Evaluation	Practical application
Career progression	Examples	Preference for hands-on experience
Challenges	Expectations	Preference for parental involvement in sensitive topics
Challenges in implementing DEI training	Experience	
Challenges in teaching diverse populations	Experience sharing	
Challenging efforts	Expertise	
Challenging the status quo		

Change	Exploration	Preference for privacy
Child Development	Fact-finding	Preference for visual aids
Clarification	Family engagement	Prejudice
Clarification needed	Family involvement	Prioritization
Clarification requested	Feedback	Privacy
Clarity-seeking	Feelings	Problem identification
Classroom routine	Follow-up action	Problem solving
Closure	Formality	Professional Development
Collaboration	Frustration	Professional experience
Commitment to growth	Frustration with current resources	Professional growth
Communication	Frustration with lack of focus on education	Professionalism
Communication barriers	Future of education	Questioning
Communication breakdown	Gender	Questioning effectiveness
Communication difficulties	General Education	Race
Community analysis	Generalization	Race/ethnicity
Community building	Goals	Racial diversity
Community Engagement	Gratitude	Racial identity
Community involvement	Group work	Racism
Community outreach	Growth	Reassurance
Community resources	Growth mindset	Recurring events
Community support	Help-seeking behavior	Redefining
Comparing/relating ideas	High expectations	Redundancy
Completion	High turnover rate	Reflection
Comprehensive approach	Higher-level vocabulary teaching	Relationship-building
Concern about impact on children's learning	Hope	Request for clarification
Concerns	Human capital	Request for elaboration
Confidence	Identifying areas of improvement	Request for examples
Confidentiality	Impact evaluation	Request for explanation
Conflict management	Impact of student demographics on teaching	Request for further input
Confusion	Impact of technology in teaching	Request for information
Consent	Impact on learning	Request for suggestions
Consequences	Importance	Request for Suggestions or Feedback
Consistency	Importance of cultural awareness	Request for support
Continual Improvement	Importance of diversity and inclusion	Requesting Feedback
Continuous improvement	Importance of education	Requesting information
Criticism	Importance of explanation	Research ethics
Criticism of PD format and content	Importance of knowing students	Research methodology
Critique of training programs	Importance of practical learning	Research-based teachings
Cross-cultural communication	Importance of work	Resistance
Cultural awareness	Improvement	Resistance to Change
Cultural awareness/competence	Improvement ideas	Resource allocation
Cultural barriers		
Cultural changes		

Cultural competence	Improving communication	Resource availability
Cultural competence education	Improving the environment	Resources
Cultural competence training needed	Inadequacy	Respect
Cultural Competency	Inadequate leadership	Respect for diversity
Cultural differences	Inadequate resources	Respectfulness
Cultural diversity	Inadequate Training	Responsibility
Cultural education	Inappropriate content	Responsiveness
Cultural identity	Inclusion	Retention
Cultural insensitivity	Inclusion and diversity	Role confusion
Cultural mismatch	Inclusion of suggestions	Role model
Cultural relevance	Inclusive education	Routine
Cultural responsiveness	Inclusivity	Rules
Cultural sensitivity	Ineffective teaching methods	Schedule
Culturally responsive instruction	Ineffectiveness	Scheduled activities
Culturally responsive teaching	Ineffectiveness of DEI initiatives	School administration
Culturally responsive teaching	Inequality	School reform
Culturally responsive teaching strategies	Inequity	Seeking clarification
Culture	Information request	Seeking explanation
Culture awareness	Information-seeking	Seeking information
Culture shock	Informed Consent	Self-awareness
Curiosity	Injustice	Self-confidence
Curriculum	Innovation	Self-doubt
Curriculum evaluation	Inquiry	Self-evaluation
Cynicism about people's attitudes towards education	Inquiring	Self-improvement
	Inquisitive	Self-reflection
Data analysis	Inquisitiveness	Sensory-based learning
Data collection and analysis	Institutional failure	Skepticism
Data management	Instruction	Skill development
Dedication	Instructional effectiveness	Skill enhancement
Dedication to student success	Instructional methods	Skills development
Defining terms	Instructional quality	Social class
DEI	Instructional resources	Social justice
DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion)	Instructional support	Social structures
DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) efforts	Insufficient training	Social support
Demographic	Integration of disciplines	Social-emotional learning
Demographics	Integrity	Societal inequalities
Desire for change	Interest in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	Societal issues
Desire for clarity	Internalization	Socioeconomic class
Desire for feedback/evaluation	Interview	Socioeconomic status
Desire for more action	Interviewing	Special Education
Desire for more job training and professional development	Investment in students	Stability
Desire for more proactive efforts	Job	Statistics
	Job-related stress	Structural change

Desire for more resources	Lack of application	Structural Education System
Desire for organization	Lack of clarity	Structure
Desire for practical support	Lack of communication	Structured learning
Desire for visual aids	Lack of Confidence	Struggle
Differentiated instruction	Lack of Inclusion	Student diversity
Difficulty in defining objectives	Lack of information	Student engagement
Difficulty Remembering	Lack of information sharing	Student feedback
Difficulty understanding	Lack of instruction	Student needs
Disadvantages in education	Lack of knowledge	Student outcomes
Disappointment	Lack of knowledge/skill	Student progress
Disapproval	Lack of preparation	Student support
Disapproval of curriculum/content	Lack of Progress	Student well-being
Disapproval of decisions	Lack of resources	Student-centered
Discipline	Lack of support	Study requirements
Disconnection	Lack of support from administration	Success
Discontent with education system	Lack of training	Suggesting a solution
Discrimination	Language acquisition	Suggestion
Dislike of changes	Language barrier	Suggestion for improvement
Dissatisfaction	Language barriers	Suggestion or feedback
Dissatisfaction with administration	Language development	Suggestions for improvement
Dissatisfaction with educational program	Leadership	Support
Dissatisfaction with management	Learning	Supportive environment
Diversity	Learning & development	Surveys
Diversity and Equity Inclusion (DEI)	Learning and development	Teacher effectiveness
Diversity and inclusion	Learning assessment	Teacher support
Diversity and Inclusivity	Learning from experience	Teacher training
Diversity and multiculturalism	Learning from others	Teacher-student relationship
Diversity awareness	Learning opportunities	Teaching
Diversity of perspectives	Learning style	Teaching challenges
Diversity training	Legal consent	Teaching dynamics
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)	Legal obligation	Teaching effectiveness
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	LGBTQ+ community	Teaching efficacy
Doubt	Life-long learning	Teaching methodology
Early childhood education	Limited communication	Teaching schedule
Education	Literacy	Teaching strategies
Education (2)	Long-term relationships	Teamwork
Education (2): Classroom instruction	Memory Loss	There is no clear question in the provided text, therefore I cannot answer a question
Education (2): Cultural immersion	Memory recall	Time management
	Mentorship	Time management difficulties
	Missed opportunities	Training
	Misunderstanding	Training & Development
	Multicultural experience	Training and Development
	Multiculturalism	

Multitasking	Training and professional development opportunities
Need for feedback	Transition
Need for further clarification	Trauma sensitivity
Need for improved communication and dissemination of information	Trust
Need for more help/manpower	Turnover
Need for training	Uncertainty
	Uncomfortable conversations
	Underappreciation
	Understanding
	Value of training programs
	Voluntariness
	Voluntary participation
	Wasted effort
	Willingness to learn and improve
	Work-life balance
	Workplace communication
	Workplace culture

Appendix C: Secondary Codes

Secondary Codes/Categories	
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):	Training:
DEI training	Training and professional development opportunities
Diversity and multiculturalism	Inadequate Training
Cultural awareness/competence	Need for training
Cultural sensitivity/responsiveness	Personal Development:
Acknowledgement of cultural differences	Personal growth and development
Racial diversity	Self-awareness
Ethnicity	Self-confidence
LGBTQ+ community	Resource Management:
Respect for diversity	Resource allocation/availability
Cultural Competence Education:	Lack of resources
Cultural education	Research and Data Analysis:
Cultural competence training needed	Research methodology
Culturally responsive instruction/teaching	Data analysis/collection
Culture shock	Ethics and Consent:
Education:	Ethics
Academic performance evaluation	Confidentiality
Education quality	Informed Consent
Education reform	Voluntariness
Education inequality/equity	Emotional Aspects:
Education access	Emotional support
Educational resources	Empathy
Child Development	Frustration
Early childhood education	Disappointment
Teaching and Instruction:	Confidence
Teacher support/training	Inequality and Social Justice:
Instructional effectiveness	Socioeconomic class/status
Teaching methodology/strategies	Poverty
Pedagogical Content Knowledge	Social justice
Differentiated instruction	Inequity
Teacher effectiveness	Discrimination
Student engagement	Challenges and Difficulties:
Career Development:	Challenges in implementing DEI training
	Difficulty understanding/remembering
	Challenges in teaching diverse populations
	High turnover rate
	Requests and Suggestions:
	Asking for feedback/information
	Request for clarification/elaboration/explanation

Career change/progression	Suggestion for improvement
Career development/experience	Behavior and Attitudes:
Professional Development	Bias
Community Engagement:	Skepticism
Community	Cynicism
building/engagement/involvement	Doubt
Family engagement/involvement	Resistance to change
Organizational Dynamics:	Relationship Building:
Administrator support	Building relationships/with students
Organizational culture	Building trust
Organizational support	Relationship-building
Communication:	
Communication	
barriers/breakdown/difficulties	
Effective communication	
Language	
barriers/acquisition/development	
Feedback and Evaluation:	
Feedback	
Assessment methods	
Evaluation	
Self-evaluation	
Impact evaluation	

Appendix D: Initial Theme Analysis

Secondary Codes and Categories	Initial Themes	Sample Responses
DEI training, Diversity and multiculturalism, Cultural awareness/competence, Cultural sensitivity/responsiveness, Acknowledgement of cultural differences, Racial diversity, Ethnicity, LGBTQ+, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	Cultural Respect and Recognition	(T1)" ..there needs to be some very deep, explicit models of how to take a lesson and modify it, and provide the extra support needed for the kids in our class."
Education quality, Education reform, Education inequality/equity, Education access, Educational resources, Teaching and Instruction, Education	Equity in Education	(T6)" it would be beneficial to look at the community structures and really build off of those structures to ensure equitable access."
Community building/engagement/involvement, Family engagement/involvement, Community Engagement	Inclusive Community Engagement	(T9) "so we are able to connect more with our students and our families and we are having a better understanding of how they're living."
Communication barriers/breakdown/difficulties, Effective communication, Language barriers/acquisition/development, community	Culturally Informed Communication	(T5)"..it needs to be the expectation that we are communicating with families in their native languages."
Teacher support/training, Instructional effectiveness, Teaching methodology/strategies, Differentiated instruction, Teacher effectiveness, Student engagement, Teaching and Instruction	Professional Development for Culturally Responsive Teaching	(T7) "I am a member of DEI and I'm the DEI rep for my school and last summer we did a helpful book study."
Feedback, Assessment methods, Evaluation, Self-evaluation, Impact evaluation, Feedback and Evaluation	Assessment and Feedback within the Culturally Responsive Teaching Framework	(T3) "it would be interesting to also apply those numbers, some of those subsets and see if there are any patterns"
Socioeconomic class/status, Poverty, Social justice, Inequity, Discrimination, Inequality and Social Justice	Addressing Social Inequality and Justice	(T10) "if you were at risk, if you were white, or if you're Black, you kind of just were on the wayside."
Administrator support, Organizational culture, Organizational support, Organizational Dynamics	Adapting Organizational Structures for Culturally Responsive Teaching	(T3) "I have expressed concerns to admin and receive no response or action"

Cultural education, Cultural competence training needed, Culturally responsive instruction/teaching, Cultural Competence Education	Inclusive and Responsive Curriculum Design	(T2) “What is appropriate in the classroom if there’s a classroom full of Asian students, and we have only black or white students’ pictures posted, is that appropriate? ...the Asian students, would they feel included?”
Building relationships/with students, Building trust, Relationship Building	Building Culturally Sensitive Relationships	(T9) “I think the most important part of teaching kids and educating them is building a relationship with them.”
Resource allocation/availability, Lack of resources, Resource Management	Resource Management	(T11) “I feel like we need to figure out a way to make those resources equitable for all of our district.”
Research methodology, Data analysis/collection, Research and Data Analysis	Research and Data Analysis	(T11) “I think it would be helpful to have a tool that could measure the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching.”
Challenges in implementing DEI training, Difficulty understanding/remembering, Challenges in teaching diverse populations, High turnover rate, Challenges and Difficulties	Challenges and Difficulties	(T1) “we’re not going to make any difference until we start talking about it more as to like, what our what our personal actions are actually doing.”
