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Kelly Ballard

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Elementary Teachers' Support of Positive Development of Immigrant Africans in an Urban School District

by

Kelly M. Ballard

MS, St. Joseph's University, 2006

BA,William Paterson University, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2016

Abstract

The Walter Pope School District (WPSD), a predominantly African American district, has experienced a new wave of immigrant students arriving from African nations such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. Many students arrive with little or no formal education, and they are not achieving academic success. This purpose of this study was to discover successful instructional strategies that academically, socially, and culturally support the immigrant students. Guided by Portes and Rumbaut's segmented assimilation theory, this study examined the experiences of WPSD African immigrant learners and explored instructional approaches to reinforce their learning. The research questions focused on teachers' perceptions of factors that influence immigrant students' success and of their effectiveness in working with this population. The participants were teachers in the district with two or more years of teaching experience. A case study design was used to capture the insights of seven participants through individual interviews. Emergent themes were identified from the data through open coding and findings were developed and validated. The key results were that teachers have a desire to engage with their peers to create collaborative learning opportunities, literacy rich environments, and positive peer interactions and that they desire meaningful and relevant professional development to support instruction for African immigrant learners. Findings indicated that teachers need to receive resources, recognition, and appreciation for their efforts to positively impact their immigrant students. Implications for positive social change are that African immigrant students will benefit from teachers being provided with improved instructional strategies that align with best teaching practices.

Elementary Teachers' Support of Positive Development of Immigrant Africans in an Urban School

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BA, William Paterson University , 2000

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to Tommy Kabo. Over ten years ago I met this shy, wonderful, and curious 13 year old boy on the first day of school, only 2 months after his arrival from Sierra Leone. He impressed me with his passion to learn and determination to overcome the challenges of an unwelcoming community in and outside of our school. He would say that I was his hero, the only friendly face that greeted him every day, and often the reason he was even able to force himself to come to school to deal with the negativity that was his constant experience throughout his first year in our school. Over the years I have tried to impress upon him that he, in fact, is my hero, the reason I strive to improve the lives of our diverse and dynamic African immigrant students. Thank-you “my son” for inspiring me to be the teacher I am today, and for giving me the courage to continue on this journey of investigating how best to support our African immigrant learners.

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I would like to take the opportunity to thank Dr. Jennifer Seymour for her on-going support and guidance during my doctoral journey. Without her I would not have had the courage or discipline to complete this exciting chapter of my academic career. I would also like to thank my family. My daughters, Caroline and Emma for their unending support and for often having to take a back burner to working on my doctorate. My husband, Kevin, for his encouragement and understanding through this complex and overwhelming process. I can't imagine what it would be like not to have him in my corner. Lastly, I would like to thank my father, George W. Shown, Jr. for fostering within me a love of learning and a strong desire to pursue my advanced degrees.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

With the changing faces of classrooms today, addressing the academic, social, and cultural needs of immigrant learners becomes a challenge and necessity for many teachers and administrators alike. Over the last several years the Walter Pope School District (WPSD; note all school names are fictional but the schools themselves are real) has experienced a new wave of immigrant students arriving from Africa. Many students arrive with little or no formal education and find themselves navigating a school district that is minimally prepared to address their academic, social, and cultural needs. This study seeks to document WPSD elementary teachers' successful strategies for improving African immigrants' academic, social, and cultural development in order to inform the entire WPSD community of these strategies for wider use.

Within the WPSD, African immigrant learners are experiencing low academic performance and cultural tensions that are exacerbated by misunderstandings between them and the predominant African American student population. African immigrant students struggle with the assimilation process (Piedra & Engstrom, 2009), and this can lead to cultural tensions with African American students that may on occasion manifest in subjection to bullying, disparaging comments, and discriminatory acts. As a result, many African immigrant learners find themselves struggling to achieve academic success and cultural acceptance without losing their own racial–ethnic identity (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2008).

Within the crucible of experience, school personnel have struggled to learn ways in which they can help to meet the African immigrant students' academic, social, and cultural needs. The lessons learned by these teachers are often not shared outside the limits of their

particular educational setting as there is no vehicle for such sharing. This study attempts to be that vehicle by collecting information about the African immigrant situation including (a) what teachers observe in their classrooms, (b) what they consider to be the important factors, (c) the successful strategies they have learned, and (d) the resources they believe are necessary to prepare teachers to support the academic, social, and cultural needs of African immigrant students.

The school district community's structural capacity to meet students' needs has to date been unable to do so. Supporting African immigrant learners academically requires a collective investment of district funding, personnel, and teaching staff. Within WPSD there are minimal resources invested in the English as a second language (ESL) program and little to no support within the classrooms in which immigrant students have been mainstreamed. Support systems to help facilitate social harmony and satisfaction of both the African American students and the African immigrants are insufficient in number and effectiveness as evidenced by continued altercations between the two groups. Although African immigrants are significantly diverse culturally from the remainder of the school population, their level of support within WPSD is not commensurate with this diversity. Many people in my experience have expressed a desire for newcomer services to establish lines of communication and two-way support between parents and the schools to address the tension and conflicts. However, among the many needs to which they must attend, some teachers have developed strategies that are successful at the classroom level in doing so. While the structural capacity may not change significantly, this research may provide some tools for teachers to improve the academic, social, and cultural development of African immigrants within the classroom.

One structural deficiency that is significant and important for which to provide background is the ESL program. In order for a child to qualify for ESL instruction as an English language learner (ELL), the student is identified during the registration process as a new student. A home language survey (Appendix A) is given to the parent or guardian to complete. According to the ESL office, often the parent incorrectly indicates that the home language is English. It appears that parents do this because they are ashamed often of having their child identified as different. Furthermore, while they may speak English, it is often a dialect and not Standard English; however, the parents do not understand the difference. The survey does not measure English language competencies that could be utilized to determine specific needs regarding a potential language barrier (Duran, 2008). Therefore, despite the fact that English is spoken at home, the cultural dialect spoken by the diverse African immigrant families is significantly different than Standard English spoken within the general community and classroom. If identified as an ELL, the student is provided educational supports by means of a "pull-out" program whereby the student is removed from English class and instructed in a self-contained ESL class.

There are continued ELL challenges for this group of students as they are then mainstreamed into their science and social studies courses and left to digest content that is presented on grade level without consistent instructional support. Those African immigrant learners who are not identified as ELL students find themselves with limited academic support as they are mainstreamed into regular education classrooms without additional instructional or transitional support. Section 2 discusses in detail the research regarding the capacities and

structural needs of schools that should be met in order to support high academic, social, and cultural success amongst immigrant learners.

Meeting the diverse needs of immigrant learners, their families, and the receiving school community can often be a monumental task. Currently, WPSD does not have a formal newcomers' program to assist immigrant students and their families with their transition to the school and greater community. Effective newcomer's programs provide a critical outreach, not only to immigrant students and their families, but to the receiving school community by providing an avenue for education and cultural understanding of its newest members (Chu, 2008). Successful newcomer programs not only address English proficiencies of immigrant learners within content areas, but also social services to support immigrant families (Maxwell, 2012). Without this network of support, immigrant students and their families are often on their own to make sense of the American school experience. This can make the challenges that immigrant learners and their family encounter even more difficult to navigate (Zimmerman-Orozco, 2011). Section 2 of this paper examines research regarding the value of newcomers programs and the role they play in the academic and social success of immigrant learners.

Teacher preparedness is critical to the academic and social success within the classroom (Shodavaram et al., 2009). Professional development of school staff should include not only diversity training specific to the cultures represented within their school, but also multicultural instructional strategies that support the academic, social, and cultural transition of immigrant learners within the school community (Njue & Retish, 2010). In addition to professional development in the area of traditional instructional strategies for immigrant learners, research and professional development should also be invested into nontraditional means of engaging and

providing a voice to African immigrant learners. Section 2 of this paper will reveal critical components of effective professional development for teachers of immigrant learners.

Overall, there are important reasons to obtain an on-the-ground assessment of the immigrant African students' plight. Currently these include, but are not limited to, scant ESL services, mainstreaming of ELL students, minimal family newcomer support, and the lack of sufficient professional development for the teachers. Thus, this research may give the WPSD teachers who have had success a voice to share what they have learned. This may improve the situation of WPSD African immigrant learners.

Problem Statement

Within the WPSD, educational staff are experiencing a significant problem of how to best address the academic, cultural, and social needs of their African immigrant learners so that those students may achieve high academic success. For example, as measured by the Pennsylvania System School Assessment (PSSA) at Allen Elementary School, only 8% of the immigrant learners (which comprises 25% of the student population) are proficient (performing on grade level) in reading (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2012). There is a discouraging difference between this African immigrant population and the general population of which 54% test as proficient in reading (PDE, 2012). This may be due to the disproportionate number of ELL students who are African immigrants; there are only 6 students in ELL who are not from an African country.

Unfortunately, African immigrant learners are accorded limited opportunities for academic success while socially experiencing treatment from their fellow classmates, school faculty, and staff that may suggest they are culturally incompetent (Rogers-Sirin & Sirin, 2009).

There are many possible factors contributing to this general problem. Among the challenges are (a) the difficulties of assimilation, (b) limited financial investment in ESL programs, (c) minimal professional development for teaching faculty and staff in the areas of diversity and instructional strategies to support immigrant learners, and (d) the absence of a widespread district newcomer's program designed to effectively facilitate the transition of immigrant learners and their families (Nur & Hunter, 2009). This study contributes to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem in its examination of WPSD elementary school teachers' perceptions of the academic, social, and cultural challenges experienced by African immigrant learners. Furthermore, the study examined successful strategies that teachers have used to help African immigrants achieve academic success and advice on the training that teachers need in order to prepare them to assist their immigrant learners in overcoming challenges.

Nature of the Study

This case study sought to garner an in-depth understanding of WPSD elementary school teachers' perceptions of the factors influencing the academic success, social development, and cultural acceptance of African immigrant learners. The study was designed as a means to better understand the dynamic in multiple classrooms. Of particular interest were the strategies teachers had successfully used and resources they felt was necessary to decrease the achievement gap between African immigrant learners and the general elementary school student population in the WPSD.

I am an eighth grade English teacher who works at the Walter Pope Middle School (WPMS) and was on an educational sabbatical during the course of the 2014-2015 academic school year. I decided to not pursue the investigation at the middle school in order to avoid the

drawbacks of researching at my own place of work including challenges to objectivity due to friendships and lack of anonymity for participants. This also precluded the likelihood of biased responses from participants due to the them hearing about the study prematurely and/or having a personal agenda to meet through participation.

The research was conducted at the elementary level across several schools to increase the anonymity and decrease the likelihood that I would be known to the participants. Furthermore, to increase confidentiality and allay concerns of perceived coercion to participate, I asked the principals of the elementary schools to all sign a confidentiality agreement. The participants were selected purposefully based upon their willingness and their principals' recommendations for teachers who support the African immigrant students well. Participants came from Allen Elementary School, Birch Elementary School, and Creek Elementary School within the WPSD (all names are pseudonyms). Each principal recommended six potential teachers. I randomly choose four from each school to e-mail, call, and then visit to determine interest in participating in this study. At the visit, I reviewed all consent forms and requirements for participating in the study. Participants chose to sign consent forms at that time or take them home to consider. If they then chose to participate, they signed the forms at the beginning of the interview meetings in the public library.

Once the school district, principals, and IRB approved the study, I confidentially met participants at the local library and interviewed them about their perceptions of the challenges experienced by African immigrant learners. Structured interviews were conducted with an interview guide (Appendix B) comprised of open-ended questions addressing factors impacting the academic, social, and cultural success of African immigrant learners.

Section 3 of this study provides significant detail of the methodology utilized to facilitate this study. Below are the four research questions investigated in the study.

Research Questions

1. What are WPSD teacher's perceptions of factors influencing the *academic* success of African immigrant elementary school learners?
2. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the *social* success of African immigrant elementary school learners?
3. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the *cultural* success of African immigrant elementary school learners?
4. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness in meeting the *academic, social and cultural* needs of African immigrant elementary school learners?

Purpose of the Study

This study examined WPSD elementary school teachers' perceptions of the factors that positively influence African immigrant students' academic, social, and cultural needs. The ultimate goal was to help decrease the significant achievement gap between African immigrant elementary school learners and the elementary schools' general student populations. The findings of this study may provide a window into the experiences of students as perceived by their teachers, particularly in terms of teachers' successful strategies for assisting immigrant African children. Finally, the study captured the teachers' perception of preparation and additional resources necessary for teachers. The long-term goal was to foster high success within the WPSD for the African immigrant population across all grade levels.

Conceptual Framework

There are numerous challenges for immigrant students and for the teachers who serve them from cultural differences to, at times, limited skill sets. Immigrant students seek to find a balance of "fitting in" yet not losing their own cultural identity. Additionally, teachers struggle to accommodate lesson plans to meet academic needs and provide culturally rich and diverse opportunities for their new students, within the confines of the era of Common Core Standards and high-stakes testing. In order to begin to discover how WPSD teachers perceived the factors influencing the academic success of African immigrants, I interviewed some of the teachers whom the principals believed are more successful at supporting their students. This case study was facilitated by the following conceptual frameworks: segmented assimilation theory (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) and racial–ethnic self-schema theory (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2008)., 2003).

Segmented assimilation theory provides an extensive framework that addresses the complexities of the immigrant experience. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) suggested that immigrants assimilate into different elements of society based on what life and work experiences they possess (human capital), as well as how the new country is prepared to receive the newcomer. The school environment is a microcosm of this experience. As new immigrant learners arrive into the school environment they will assimilate to various segments of the school learning community. The knowledge and skill sets they already possess and the climate of the receiving school will determine the level of assimilation and success that the immigrant students will secure (Altschul Oyserman, & Bybee, 2008)., In addition to the conceptual framework of segmented assimilation theory, racial–ethnic self-schema theory provides a necessary

supplementation to inform this study. This theory suggests there is a positive correlation between an individual's level of identification with their racial–ethnic selves and their success in other racial–ethnic relationships. As such, the more satisfied a person is with their racial–ethnic selves, the more positive their connection to the broader society and to their academic performance. If an immigrant learner maintains a connection to their racial ethnic selves and are able to connect and assimilate to the broader school community, they will likely achieve a higher level of academic success (Altshul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2008). This framework was used specifically to understand how students' cultural and social needs were being met or not within each teachers' classroom. Did they feel welcomed for who they are? Did valuing them as an ethnic person affect their ability to perform well academically? It is important to note that the classroom is a reflection of the racial–ethnic selves, which are complex. For example, within WPSD the African immigrants hail from various countries in Africa, and although significantly different culturally, their shared segmented assimilation experience provides them a social solidarity necessary to survive the often hostile peer environment of the larger numbers of African American counterparts. The African immigrant students find a safe haven within their combined African social group as it allows them to have the security of each other as they venture out to assimilate into the broader school community. In addition, the African American students are not by any means of a single ethnic–racial identity, and their education for cultural integration must also be attended to within the framework of ethnic–racial self-schema theory.

Utilizing both segmented assimilation theory and racial–ethnic self-schema theory as an integrated theoretical framework provided the critical lens in which to analyze the experiences of WPSD African immigrant learners as portrayed by each teacher.

Definition of Terms

Academic Success: Defining and measuring academic success can be a challenge for many educators and researchers. Newmann (2007) suggests there are two ways to identify and measure academic success: first, standardized tests that assess the students' ability to meet state generated academic benchmarks, and second, assessments that allow students to demonstrate "in-depth understanding, analysis, and elaborated forms of communication" (p.34).

Segmented assimilation: "Immigrant groups assimilate into different segments of American society depending on both individual (human capital) and contextual (the host country's political, social, and economic climates, as well as presence of a co-ethnic community) factors" (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, as cited in Altschul,2008, p. 303).

Racial-ethnic identity: The strength in which an immigrant student positively or negatively identifies with his/her racial–ethnic self (Altschul, 2008).

Immigrant learner: The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) identified 2.84 million foreign-born U.S. residents under the age of 18. Chu (2008) revealed that one in five students in the classroom are children of immigrants. After examining numerous articles addressing the needs of the immigrant learner, McBrien (2008) encompassed both the definitions of voluntary and involuntary immigrants. McBrien (2008) suggests that voluntary immigrants are those immigrants who choose to leave their home country to reside in the United States.

Limitations

The ability to generalize the findings was limited because the study had only seven participants and the sample was not random. One of the more significant limitations was not investigating the participants' individual students' academic performances and social

experiences. Finally, the bias that may be present from the researcher as middle school teacher within the WPSD was addressed so that it did not affect the quality of the results of this study.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study involved a multiple site collective case study research strategy that discovered WPSD elementary teachers' perceptions of the academic, social, and cultural situations of African immigrant learners. In addition, it documented the teachers' perceptions of their own level of preparedness to address the immigrant students' academic, social, and cultural needs. The study was facilitated at a meeting room within the local library. Participants consisted of a confidential sample of seven out of 12 recommended teachers from three elementary schools with WPSD: Allen Elementary School, Birch Elementary School, and Creek Elementary School. The criteria utilized for the selection process of the participants has been discussed above and will be elaborated on in the Methodology section of this paper.

It is recognized that the scope of the study is narrowed to a few elementary teachers in a large district including middle and high schools. Investigating the views of additional teachers at all levels would improve the usefulness of the strategies for more teachers. Also, it would be ideal to incorporate immigrant student interviews that may provide their view of what would help them the most, as well as allow them to elaborate on specific first-hand accounts of their experiences within the school environment. Additionally, facilitating classroom observations that focus on instructional practices that support immigrant learners' academic success could also provide an additional means of data collection that the fiscal and temporal delimitations do not allow.

Significance of the Study

This multiple site collective case study is potentially significant for several reasons. First and foremost, information from the study may provide a useful perspective from the teacher participants, as they represent the stakeholders with the most experience with the local problem of how best to support African immigrant learners. The findings could provide many teachers across the district's schools with valuable hands-on strategies for improving the lived experiences of the African-immigrant students. Findings may provide school districts with information that may be professionally applied to program development designed to support the cultural identities and academic success of their immigrant learners. Additionally, the findings of this study may provide educators and researchers additional research to further their interests and studies related specifically to how to best support immigrant learners.

Finally, the findings of this study may promote positive social change for the African immigrant learners and the entire community of WPSD by documenting successful instructional strategies that teachers within the district are utilizing to foster academic achievement and minimize social and cultural challenges experienced by African immigrant learners. Beginning with strategies that were attempted and proven successful by other teachers in the district, new ideas for effective support of these students may flourish and spread across the school district community. Understanding the teachers' perceptions of the factors influencing the academic, social, and cultural challenges experienced by this particular group of students may inform the development of effective instructional, social, and culturally sensitive learning environments, thereby offering the possibility for personal and professional success.

Summary

Examining teachers' perceptions of the academic, social, and cultural challenges experienced by African immigrant learners within WPSD and their level of preparedness to address those needs will provide teachers and administrators critical data to inform both instructional practice and professional development in order to best support immigrant students. This case study, which was embedded within the theories of segmented assimilation and racial–ethnic self-schema, sought to garner a better understanding of how the participants perceived their ability to meet the academic, social, and cultural needs of this population. Section 2 of this paper will provide an extensive review of the literature. Critical components of effective learning environments for immigrant learners will be examined. Additionally, the theoretical perspectives of segmented assimilation and racial–ethnic self-schema and their impact on academic success of immigrant students will also be discussed. Finally, a thorough analysis of this literature is provided indicating a gap within the research that supports the necessity for this multiple site collective case study.

In future sections, I lay out the plan to pursue this study. The literature review provided the backdrop for the research questions that are stated above and explained in full in the Methodology section. Furthermore, the Methodology section details the specifics of the setting, sample, the data collection, and analyses methods.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction of the Literature Review

Upon examining the research of the factors affecting immigrant learners and their academic success, commonalities were identified. There are many critical factors when approaching how to foster effective learning environments that support academic, social, and cultural success for immigrant learners. Many search terms were used in the Education Full Text database. Some of these search terms included: *immigrant students*, *enculturation of immigrants*, *ELL learners*, *classroom strategies for ELL students,* and *African immigrants*. Saturation was determined as articles about the same topic were being collected that stated primarily the same findings. The research highlighted within this literature review was procured from both professional journals and books and is summarized below. The concepts that organized the literature are located below in Table 1.

In the first section, a thoughtful consideration of the theoretical perspectives on segmented assimilation and racial–ethnic self-schema and their effects on academic success provided a critical lens to view the experience of the immigrant learner as it relates to their academic, social, and cultural success.

The review of the literature follows. Cultural competency and professional development is the first subheading in the literature review and are also listed separately following Table 1, with all of the subheadings in the review of the literature. Professional development that provides effective instructional strategies and fosters cultural competency of all school staff is paramount (Williams, 2013). Instructional strategies for immigrant learners are detailed next. Finally, peer

interaction and social development are reviewed. This section outlines opportunities that promote positive peer interactions that support social acceptance. This is beneficial to immigrant students as well as native students as it promotes a productive social learning community necessary for academic success. To help the reader conceptualize the structure of the literature review, Table 1 lists the organizing concepts, and the implications for practice suggested by the literature.

Table 1

Literature Review Concepts and Implications from Research regarding Effective Learning Environments for Immigrant Learners

Concept	Implications from research
Cultural competency	This should be included in all professional development to improve instructional strategies, parent engagement, and positive peer interaction.
Professional development	This should include different sessions about cultural competency, instructional strategies, parent engagement and positive peer interaction
Instructional strategies	This should be aligned with cultural competence, thereby supporting positive peer interaction and parent engagement.
Parent engagement	This should be culturally competent and diverse, reach out to parents at a district, school, and classroom level.
Positive peer interaction	Positive Peer Interaction should be the primary focus of all of the above themes so that students can learn within a safe welcoming community of learners.

Cultural Competency and Professional Development

The responsibility of the receiving school district and its faculty is to support the immigrant learner's ability to transition smoothly into the American classroom. This is critical for the success, not only of the child, but for the overall learning community as well. When a district is not prepared to receive immigrant learners academically, socially, and culturally, then the responsibility of educating this group of students may seem more like a burden (Nur &

Hunter, 2009). In order to translate this perceived burden into an opportunity to effectively meet the needs of immigrant learners, the school and teacher capacities must be addressed (Lee, 2012).

Teachers often view their immigrant students within a deficit model; focusing on what skills the students do not possess. Martin, Liem, Mok, and Xu (2012) recognize that immigrant learners enter American schools with numerous skill sets. Teachers need professional development in the area of identifying critical skills that may not be related to traditional curricula in order to be able to tap into the skills that will enable the immigrant learner to feel confident to take on unfamiliar content. Martin et al. highlight problem-solving skills as one such skill. Fostering this skill-set can provide immigrant learners the ability to navigate unfamiliar content successfully.

Cultural competence of a teacher is the level at which the teacher is knowledgeable and prepared to work with culturally diverse students (Rogers-Sirin & Sirin, 2009). Cultural competence is necessary for all school personnel to welcome immigrant learners within their new learning community. Williams (2013) explains that there is a need for a high level of cultural competence within the work of determining how to best support fostering Mohawk cultural competency amongst the non-native staff. Williams' study revealed that the more culturally competent the non-native teacher was, the more successful the native students were academically (Williams, 2013). How can teachers engage immigrant learners without engaging what makes the students who they are? The challenge for teachers in the world of high-stakes testing and limited hours in the day for instruction is to try to also make time to integrate multicultural teaching and learning opportunities. Agirdag (2009) suggests that teachers add to

their cultural repertoire in the classroom. Providing areas around the classroom and within the school building that highlight and welcome the diversity of the school in a both overt and covert ways can do much to foster a welcoming climate for immigrant learners. Agirdag (2009) believes that teachers' preparedness and professional development in the area of cultural competency is critical to the success of immigrant learners. Lonnquist, RB-Banks, and Huber (2009) highlight a challenge with obtaining a proficiency in the area of cultural competency. Many teachers may know what the issues are as they relate to diversity and acceptance; however, some teachers struggle with the application of that knowledge in real classroom exchanges. Some culturally competent strategies were revealed in the research. For example, Obiakor and Afolayan (2007) suggest that teachers gradually immerse the immigrant child into the new culture so that there will be minimal cultural discontinuity. To ensure cultural competence amongst school personnel, professional development must provide the strategies for teachers to encourage ethnic retention, a strong connection with one's ethnicity, in the classroom so that academic success can be achieved (Akiba, 2007).

Instructional Strategies

There are numerous mistakes often made by school districts when they are determining how to best deliver instruction to their ELL population (Lee, 2012). An undercurrent of misconceptions regarding the appropriate educational environment often pervades the learning community and may cause more harm than good. Lee (2012) underscores one such misconception and the potential damage it may cause by revealing a common idea that ELL students are unable to learn content specific material unless they have a mastery of the English language. The unintended outcome of this practice is complete isolation from critical academic

content that leaves immigrant learners ill-prepared to achieve high academic success when they are effectively mainstreamed into a general education. Knight (2008) promotes a different notion, one that stems from the premise that English language learners deserve respect and the recognition that knowing more than one language is a benefit, not a detriment. Utilizing instructional approaches that rest within this ideology will offer the opportunity for student success.

Fortunately, there has been significant research completed identifying effective instructional strategies that offer immigrant learners the opportunity for academic success while supporting cultural and ethnic retention. Allison and Rehm (2011) identified and defined the following effective instructional strategies that benefit the academic progress of English Language Learners: visual aids, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and alternative assessments. These strategies and scaffolding, discussed in the following paragraphs, are listed and exemplified in Table 2 below.

According to Allison and Rehm (2011), the use of visual aids provides an immigrant learner an illustrated context for the information that they are learning. Additionally, visual depictions offer immigrant learners the opportunity to have a common understanding of the content by aiding recognition of the native counterpart. Peer tutoring offers immigrant learners the opportunity to learn from a peer in a nonthreatening way. It provides the immigrant student a safe opportunity to learn eligible content while practicing necessary social skills. Cooperative learning utilizes flexible grouping that fosters collaboration and development of communication skills necessary for immigrant learners to be successful academically and socially. It also provides the opportunity for students of diverse backgrounds to develop a cultural understanding

of each other that fosters an appreciation of differences, not a rejection of differences. Utilizing nontraditional assessments that measure students' learning enables the immigrant learner to demonstrate mastery of critical skills without the limitation and intimidation of a traditional paper test.

Table 2

Effective Teaching Strategies for English Language Learners

Teaching Strategies	Implementation
Visual aids	Offering pictures and labeled objects throughout the learning environment
Cooperative learning	Facilitating cooperative learning groups with varied performance levels to support the social and academic learning of all students
Peer-to-peer tutoring	Fostering learning amongst students in a non-threatening manner to allow the students to become the teacher.
Alternative modes of assessment	Pair or Group projects, presentations, oral tests, etc., to provide an alternative to paper and pencil tests.
Scaffolding	Providing the background knowledge necessary for understanding of newly introduced material.

In order for academic content to be digested by identified ELL immigrant students, scaffolding, building prior knowledge a student requires to learn new material, should be in place (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Scaffolding provides the necessary foundation for all students who may have knowledge gaps that prevent them from learning new material. Beck (2008) reveals one of the largest challenges for immigrant learners is to understand the cultural context of the vocabulary or ideas that are introduced. The immigrant learner may understand the vocabulary

and/or ideas in isolation, but as they relate to the overriding concepts being taught, the immigrant learner is often left at a disadvantage. Teachers must have the necessary skills to effectively implement scaffolding as a strategy to support both content and language proficiency needed by immigrant learners to achieve academic success. Lopez, Scanlon, & Gundrum (2013) highlighted this point in their study. They recognized the importance of the tandem instruction of content and the development of English proficiency. Scaffolding provides the opportunity for understanding newly introduced content while exposure to new vocabulary can support proficiency in language skills.

Mabry and Bhavnagri (2012) offer scaffolding as a means to help mitigate both language and knowledge limitations by providing the cultural context of the information being provided. One example may be explaining the many spoken American English idioms and slang as such words and phrases come up in class discussions. This strategy will not only support the immigrant learners in understanding new concepts but also help provide nonimmigrant learners with the perspective of immigrant students from various countries. This is especially effective in English/language arts classrooms but can be generalized to other content areas. For example, in mathematics classes, students of all ages are often shocked by the fact that people around the world do not use the same algorithms for addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division as we do in the United States. Both populations can learn from having immigrant students illustrate their methods a few times and then explain the reasons behind them. With the immigrant students' help, the teacher can help explain how the methods are the same or different as American methods. Finally, American students can be given an assignment to use the immigrant strategy on a number of problems (J. Seymour, personal communication, February 3, 2015).

Providing accommodations for ELL students and modifications to their assessments may also help minimize the impact a language barrier may have on demonstrating knowledge of content (Lopez, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2013). In addition to traditional formal assessments that measure student learning, informal assessments such as journal writing can offer a means for immigrant learners to develop English language writing skills while expressing themselves without the pressure of a traditional summative assessment (Cawthon, Highley, & Leppo, 2011). Creating opportunities for immigrant learners to write both formally and informally will support immigrant learners with their English language development and demonstrating understanding of content introduced.

In addition to the common instructional and assessment strategies listed above, other supportive strategies to assist immigrant learners in assimilating to their new environment and fostering language acquisition were examined. Rosborough (2014) investigated the critical role of teacher and student gesturing and its relationship to creating meaning and understanding. Incorporating gesturing in conjunction with verbal communication can support the learning of new concepts. Incorporating the regular use of learning centers whereby the use of newly acquired vocabulary could be utilized was strongly suggested (Gillanders, Castro, & Franco, 2014). Giving immigrant learners the opportunity to practice their vocabulary in a nonthreatening academic environment such as learning centers fosters both academic and social success. Lastly, in conjunction with in-class activities, providing opportunities for immigrant learners to participate in authentic field trip experiences will support the development of diverse cultural understandings of their community environment (Goldschmidt, Ousey, and Brown, 2012). For example, taking immigrant learners on a walking tour of their new local community

can provide them a safe way to practice social skills necessary for navigating and understanding social and cultural norms.

Fostering Opportunities for Positive Peer Interactions

In order to support the academic success and social and cultural acceptance of immigrant learners, school staff, especially teachers, must provide an environment that cultivates positive self-efficacy amongst immigrant learners and promotes cultural sensitivity for all students (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Having a safe learning environment, allows positive peer interactions to occur. Kelly (2011) suggests that social learning opportunities within the classroom can foster supportive friendships within the walls of diversity. Positive peer relationships can provide a foundation for social acceptance that plays a critical role in academic achievement (Parke, 2008).

In addition to the classroom, there are supplemental ways in which a school can support the development of positive peer interactions. Peguero (2011) illustrates school-based extra-curricular activities allow immigrant students to participate on a leveled playing field whereby their skills are measured outside of the classroom. This builds confidence and self-esteem that translates to the classroom as increased academic performance. School sponsored clubs and activities also support positive peer interactions. Bakerson and James (2009) suggest, having a mentor/mentee reading club which may provide the opportunity for positive peer interactions while providing necessary literacy skills in a nontraditional, engaging and social experience for immigrant learners and native speakers. Kelly (2011) emphasizes that providing safe opportunities for immigrant learners to demonstrate skills they already possess will support their endeavors in mastering their developing academic skills with confidence. Along with the more traditional means of fostering positive peer interactions, Farris (2011) promotes the creation of a

playgroup that would provide both immigrant and non-immigrant students to learn American and immigrant games in a constructive and supportive environment. Fostering an opportunity for immigrant students to learn American games in a safe environment may minimize anxiety and offer the opportunity for immigrant students to impart their own cultural experiences through the game of play.

Socially supporting ELL students within the classroom provides opportunities for immigrant learners to experience positive social experiences, but also encourages and positively develops non-ELL learners within the mainstream classroom. Cho (2012) suggested that not only do ELL students reap the benefits of a culturally competent classroom but non ELL students were also found to improve in their interpersonal skills due to exposure of working with culturally diverse students. Fostering positive peer interactions amongst immigrant and nonimmigrant students can offer benefits beyond the classroom walls for all students.

Engagement and Support of Immigrant Families

Regardless if a student is a recent immigrant or not, parental involvement is critical to their academic success (Vera et al, 2012). In order for true educational partnership to exist, teachers need to be able to discuss the concerns and successes specifically related to the child with their parent(s). The challenges that immigrant parents encounter are vast: cultural differences, language barriers, financial challenges, and so forth (Gaytan, Carhill, & Suarez-Orozco, 2007). These challenges may limit parents' accessibility to teachers. In order to best serve immigrant students and their families, school districts must not only become a resource for parents, but they must also diversify their means of communication to meet the variety of needs of this community.

Many school districts are ill-prepared to meet the needs of the families of immigrant learners. Maxwell (2012) highlights several gaps within districts that serve these students and their families and ways to bridge those gaps. Providing district materials in languages other than English can support effective communication between home and school. Additionally, offering professional development for staff from experienced personnel who have experience working with diverse immigrant families can bolster the relationships between home and school. Lastly, actively seeking bilingual staff to support the growing immigrant population can also assist families as they navigate the often confusing school system. Sobel and Kugler (2007) examined an exemplar school district:

> In an immigrant-rich environment, parent engagement strategies clearly must move beyond business as usual. From the inception of the Parent Leadership Initiative in 2004, school leaders at Annandale high, including established parent leaders, looked for new ways to connect with immigrant parents. The effort began with the recognition that new strategies to target the needs of the diverse immigrant community were called for. (p.63)

Evolving the school district into an educational resource for parents and students alike will provide immigrant families the additional support they need for their child to succeed (Zimmerman-Orozco, 2011). In order to accomplish this providing a meeting place for immigrant families and the school community members to meet can provide an avenue of support for fostering effective immigrant parent engagement (DaSilva-Iddings, 2009). The critical role parents play in their child's academic success cannot be overlooked. Often immigrant parents may not appear as involved or interested in their child's education; however, this is not the case. Immigrant parents desire a better future for their children and respect the

roles that teachers and the larger educational system play in the academic success of their child (Stratton, T. et al., 2009). Encouraging positive communication between the school community and immigrant families will provide a strong tenet of support for immigrant learners. King-Yin Wong (2015) identified several barriers to immigrant parents and their ability to participate in school activities. The most common barrier identified was time. Offering alternative, non-traditional times for parents to participate in school activities may support additional engagement. Another simple, yet critical means to support communication and engagement with immigrant families is by providing resources in their home-language. In so doing, this will minimize the challenges of the immigrant students and the transition of their family unit as a whole. It will support immigrant learners within the school walls while supporting their familial ties (Patel & Kull, 2011).

Analysis of the Literature

The research sheds light on critical factors affecting immigrant learners' academic social and cultural success. The process of segmented assimilation, support of racial–ethnic self-schema, and the importance of a culturally competent school staff are evident. Providing an academic environment that supports the retention of ethnic identity while offering positive, culturally sensitive means for assimilation into the greater school community is a challenging task, yet critical for immigrant learners to maintain a positive cultural identity.

As with all students in the classroom, the needs of African immigrant students must be addressed with a holistic approach. Obiakor and Afolyan (2007) did illuminate the importance of supporting cultural continuity amongst African immigrant learners and to minimize "negative

assumptions about Africa and Africans" (p.267). Examining and implementing these strategies will support academic and social success, as well as cultural acceptance.

Teacher preparation for specifically instructing African immigrant learners was not available; however, generalized instructional strategies for immigrant learners were examined (See Table 2). The need for an extensive repertoire of instructional strategies were identified: visual aids, cooperative learning opportunities, peer-to-peer tutoring, and scaffolding were highlighted. Incorporating alternative means of assessment, both formal and informal were also reviewed, including journal writing. One significant nonverbal instructional strategy identified to support creating meaning and understanding was the use of gestures by both the students and the teacher (Rosborough, 2014).

The critical role that parents play in the academic success of their children was recognized. Engagement and district support of immigrant learners and their families can provide a strong foundation for a successful newcomer program. Creating opportunities for immigrant families to engage with the school community is paramount and establishing nontraditional means of parental engagement were highlighted especially as it relates to removing barriers for immigrant parents to participate, such as time (King-Yin Wong, 2015).

Although there is significant amount of literature addressing the critical factors affecting immigrant learners' academic success, there is a significant gap identified in terms of African immigrants. Due to the very recent influx of immigrants arriving from African countries, there are very few articles and research studies addressing these specific populations. There needs to be a significant increase in the formal study of African immigrant students and their learning experiences within the classroom. This is especially true in an often unwelcoming peer climate

of a dominant African American student population. Furthermore, the interesting collision of two black skinned populations that are very different is unique and worth better understanding. This is conflated by the fact that there is animosity between both the low SES African American and very low SES African immigrants. Without proper support and considerations for their individual needs, immigrant Africans may very well fall through the institutional cracks. Section three, which is next, will address in detail the research methodology specific to investigating factors affecting African immigrant learners' academic success in this district to assist in filling the research gap identified in this review of the literature.

Section 3: Methodology

Introduction

This research study was designed to investigate the central research questions being examined. Discovering teachers' perceptions of the academic and sociocultural challenges experienced by African immigrant middle school learners as well as their level of preparedness to meet those challenges is qualitative in nature. Facilitating a multiple site collective case study design provided a methodological approach that allowed for an in-depth analysis of the academic, social, and cultural factors affecting African immigrant learners as viewed through the lens of those who work most closely with them, their teachers.

Design of the Study

The selection of a multiple site collective case study design provided a qualitative methodology that allowed for a thorough examination and understanding of the research problem. Janesick (2004) argued, "The case study is a legitimate form of social inquiry because it is instrumental in furthering the teacher-researcher's understanding of a given problem" (p. 32). The problem identified for this study was to examine what academic, social, and cultural challenges African immigrant learners are experiencing that impact their academic success and what successful strategies elementary school teachers can implement to mitigate those challenges. The multiple site collective case study allowed for the problem to be examined through the perceptions of African immigrant students' teachers and how those teachers perceive their own effectiveness to meet and overcome the academic, social, and cultural challenges. Utilizing this qualitative tradition enabled the opportunity for a deep understanding of the

problem and discovery of themes that surfaced that may inform instructional decisions as well as professional development.

The multiple site collective case study design was critical to the purpose of the problem being investigated. Utilizing narrative research would enable a sharing of the experiences of teachers and their encounters with teaching African immigrant learners, but it would not have necessarily allowed for an analysis or reflection of why African immigrants are experiencing academic and social challenges. A phenomenological study could have been utilized if the participants were the African immigrant learners and I was investigating the shared school experiences of this population.

Additionally, neither grounded theory nor ethnography would have been appropriate qualitative traditions to utilize because there was no search for what core theoretical issues are at work in the schools. The specific examples and questions that were asked to document the problem being investigated were revealed through the lens of the African immigrant learners' teachers (Creswell, 2007). Ethnography would have required a significant amount of additional interviews of information regarding the African immigrant parents and students' experiences, the documents related to the students' history at the school, and observational data of the students in their regular daily routine. The information would not have shared what teachers have experienced, learned, and still need to know in order to serve the immigrant African students, which could be pursued using the specific interview questions for the teachers (Appendix B). Ultimately, the qualitative multiple site collective case study tradition allowed for rich and descriptive text that offered information that may contribute to the improvement in the school community's approach to meeting the needs of this population (Merriam, 2002).

Although the students themselves were not participants in this study, their voices can be heard through their teachers. Yin (2014) argued that the case study design provides an opportunity for exploratory research but is also explanatory as well, enabling multiple perspectives to be revealed. The academic experiences of African immigrant students are not isolated experiences devoid of cultural interactions. The multiple site collective case study design allowed varying teachers' perspectives from multiple elementary schools to be shared regarding the academic, social, and cultural needs that African immigrant learners have. Also collected were teachers' perceptions of their own abilities to meet those needs. This case study design offered an opportunity for further discussion regarding creative ways to meet the cultural and academic needs of this population (Shin, Daly, & Vera, 2007).

Research Questions

This multiple site collective case study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the *academic* success of African immigrant elementary school learners?
2. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the *social* success of African immigrant elementary school learners?
3. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the *cultural* success of African immigrant elementary school learners?
4. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of their level of effectiveness in meeting the academic, cultural, and social needs of African immigrant elementary school learners?

Context of the Study

The context of the study was facilitated within the WPSD. Over 73% of the student population in the district qualifies free or reduced lunch. Ninety-three and a half percent of the student population is African American, .8% is Asian, 1% Hispanic, .4% American Indian, 4.3% European-American, and .1% undeclared. The ESL population comprises 5% of the 93.5% African American population, with 50% of the ESL population from various countries in Africa.

The purpose of using Allen Elementary School, Birch Elementary School, and Creek Elementary School as the contexts of the study was two-fold. The primary reason for this selection was derived specifically from the problem being investigated: Why are African immigrant learners underperforming in comparison to their African American counterparts? Secondly, the lens by which this problem was investigated was facilitated through a multiple site collective case study whereby the participants were WPSD teachers. Utilizing Allen, Birch, and Creek Elementary Schools as the contexts of the study provided an environment that supported a thorough, in-depth investigation of the challenges encountered by African immigrant learners along with their teachers' perceptions of their level of effectiveness in meeting and overcoming those challenges.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

The ethical protection of the participants of this multiple site collective case study was paramount in the successful implementation of the study as well as in maintaining the integrity of my professional working relationships with the participants. It was critical that I was able to develop and maintain a professional relationship with the participants that rested on a foundation of trust. Trust was necessary due to the sensitive nature of the information that was divulged

during the interviews. This was especially true as it related to African immigrant learners and the participants own perceptions of their level of effectiveness in meeting the academic, social, and cultural challenges experienced by this student population (Hatch, 2002)

In addition to adhering to strict confidentiality on behalf of the participants by providing pseudonyms for each participant, I made every effort to provide the care and respect that each participant deserved. I demonstrated professionalism and recognized each participant for the importance of their position as teachers. I acknowledged the dedication that each participant showed for their students and the school community. Furthermore, I provided the participants opportunities to be interviewed outside of the public school environment to avoid any concern about being questioned by the administration of the school and to minimize any questions from other staff. Lastly, I communicated consistently with the participants, keeping them abreast of each of the steps of the study.

I secured all necessary approvals to ensure the protection of all participants within this study. First, I collected signed confidentiality agreements with the principals who then supplied six names of teachers they felt were successful at supporting the development of African immigrants in each school. I formally completed the IRB application and waited for approval from IRB before securing the letter of cooperation from the superintendent of WPSD. Upon receiving final approval from the IRB to collect data, the participant consent form was presented in person and discussed with each of the selected potential participants. The participants had the option of signing it at that time, or signing and returning it at the beginning of their first and only scheduled interview. I had additional copies of the consent form at the interview to remedy the possible event that the participant forgot to bring their copy. No interviews took place until the

necessary consent forms were received from the voluntary participants. All necessary measures for the ethical protection of participants were followed (Creswell, 2007).

Role of the Researcher

I have worked as an eighth grade English teacher on behalf of the students of Walter Pope Middle School (WPMS) within the WPSD for over 12 years. WPMS is located in the Eastern United States near an urban center. The location and school exemplify the challenges associated with low-income urban schools. My interest in African immigrant learners began 12 years ago as I saw the impact of a school district unprepared to meet the needs of the African immigrant group of students, both culturally and academically. This was exacerbated by the immediate and significant waves of immigrant arrivals. I had a dual role of both teacher and house leader that assumed the responsibility of in-class and student support to my professional learning community(a team of seven content teachers and 200 students), by facilitating team meetings and strategizing a team approach to resolving barrier to student achievement. At the time the study was implemented, I had taken an educational sabbatical for the entire spring semester in order to complete my dissertation work. I did not work with the participants, which established greater objectivity and more accurate results as all information is self-report. I actively fostered a professional trust that created an opportunity to ask critical questions necessary to address the research questions posed in this study. I was aware that the potential for bias was present and took the necessary measures to ensure quality and validity of the research by incorporating multiple strategies: excluding participants from the school in which I was assigned, triangulation, member checking, and a rich, thick description of the findings (Creswell, 2009).

Sample Population

The sample population for this multiple-site collective case study was comprised of seven WPSD elementary school teachers who have been working in the district for a minimum of two years at the commencement of the 2014-2015 academic school year. In order to investigate varying perspectives on factors affecting African immigrant students' academic performance I utilized purposeful sampling based on the criterion of prior and current work with African immigrant children (Creswell, 2007). Each of the three principals purposefully provided a list of six teachers they believed were successful in fostering the development of African immigrant children. I then randomly chose four of the six from each building to approach for participation in the study for a total of 12 participants. I was able to secure the lowest sample size of seven participants to adhere to Walden guidelines.

Rationale for Selection of Criteria

The criteria utilized for the selection process of the participants was developed from the central research questions. I considered which potential participants worked consistently and nearly daily with African immigrant learners, both concerning their literacy instruction as well as potential exposure to the cultural element of those students. With these critical factors in the forefront I invited the principals to suggest any teachers working within Allen, Birch, and Creek Elementary Schools that had prior and current experience working directly with African immigrant learners. Historical perspectives of the participants were necessary as well. The rationale of requiring a minimum of two years of employment with WPSD provided an opportunity to view their experiences with their African immigrant learners over time.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place during the spring of 2015. I conducted one scheduled interview with each participant and allowed follow-up interviews to take place (Creswell, 2009). Interviews were conducted at the participants' convenience in the local library. Utilizing the interview guide (Appendix B), participants responded to open-ended questions focused on both the academic and sociocultural aspects of their African immigrant learners. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. All data were audiotaped and transcribed for accuracy. Member checking was utilized to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Follow-up interviews were not required. For triangulation, I asked the teachers to supply an artifact of student work with no identifying markings to illustrate how their strategies have helped African immigrant children. In addition, I conferred with Ms. Smith, my peer debriefer, who has over 6 years of experience working with the African immigrants and possesses a master's degree of experience of completing research so she understood the means by which research was appropriately conducted. Before the meeting, Ms. Smith, my peer debriefer, was given a coding scheme to read and make notes on. The materials included the code, key words, and a description of what the code means. The peer debriefer, Ms. Smith, was asked to take the coding scheme and apply it to one interview. I selected an interview that had a wide variety of codes so that more codes were evaluated by Ms. Smith. Ms. Smith and I met at the public library. We went through the interview that Ms. Smith coded. We went through the parts of the coding scheme not already discussed. The peer debriefer and I continued discussing all codes and we reached consensus. The committee Chair was not needed to assist in coming to consensus.

Data Analysis

In order to effectively analyze the data collected from the interviews, the data was coded. Rubin and Rubin (2005) provide a clear, step-by-step process to analyze data from interviews transcriptions. Utilizing the interview guide, I investigated the specific responses to interview questions for evidence related to central research questions about academic, social, and cultural success. Some expected themes included challenges, district preparedness, school preparedness, classroom support, classroom effective support, and how to provide effective support.

As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005), the transcriptions were read and reread to support "recognition" of concepts and themes that were added to the concrete data codes that were derived from interview guides. Following the recognition process and establishment of additional codes, a correlation between the codes was identified. Rubin and Rubin (2005) referred to this as a "coding structure." An ongoing analysis of the codes, code structure, and how they related to the problem being investigated was a continuous iterative task. Upon completing the analysis, including revealing and enhancing themes, I demonstrated how the themes addressed the research questions and determined from the data, support for further research (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

This data was specifically analyzed and interpreted using sequential coding one question at a time for all teachers. Before this, each interview was transcribed and read through before detailed coding began. As I read, I made notes regarding themes I observed and interesting quotes from individual teachers.

At the end of this first pass through of one question, general themes of teachers' responses were then summarized in a coding table. As sections of conversation were coded with

particular sub-codes, I noted different sub-codes of responses within the general theme. For example, for just question three (academic section) all teachers' data was coded for one theme such as barriers to academic success, which included sub-codes such as language, lack of teacher preparation, and low cultural competency. The themes and sub-codes were derived from the responses from the teachers. To facilitate my focus and memory, all of the teacher's answers to a single section (e.g. the academic section is second) of questions was coded first. Data results were drafted at the end of each section's analysis. This was followed by the social, and then the cultural sections of the interview. Finally, the teacher's perception of their effectiveness, the district's help, and the resources still necessary were coded and results were drafted.

Next, I read the drafted analyses for each section, the codes for each section, and compared them with the completed coding to improve accuracy and consistency of applying the coding scheme. Modifications to the coding scheme and the written data results were made at this point. Non-peer debriefing discussions and interrater discussions with the advising professor were held in order to improve the trustworthiness of the study. The data coding scheme and results were modified at this point as well.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity and trustworthiness were critical components to this multiple site collective case study and the results I revealed. In order for the results of this study to be considered credible validity had to be established. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the study I incorporated the following validation strategies identified by Creswell (2007):

1. Building trust with the participants: As a colleague of the participants, I have an established working relationship whereby trust is part of the foundation of our working relationship.
2. Incorporating Triangulation: I collected data from interviews with participants from three different elementary schools, conducted member-checking and debriefing sessions with each participant, and used a peer debriefer from a different school other than those included in the sample, but who was familiar with the district's situation. Finally, the participants provided student work artifacts as data to support investigation results of research problem.
3. Peer Debriefing was utilized: I solicited the evaluation of the coding scheme by a respected peer to challenge and identify areas of the study that were unclear to ensure that I remained honest in my facilitation of the study and its results.
4. Identifying Researcher Bias: Any bias that I may have possessed was revealed and explained throughout the study to ensure that there was minimal impact on the data collection, analysis, and results of the study.
5. Member Checking: Each transcription of the interviews was subject to participant evaluation and clarification for accuracy.
6. Rich, Thick Description: The results of the study were thoroughly examined and articulated so that they may be transferred to other settings.

Utilizing the various "validation strategies" outlined above supported the validity and trustworthiness of the study and its results (Creswell, 2007, pp. 207-209). Threats to quality were minimized by addressing the bias I brought to the study, establishing significant time for

thorough interviews, implementing member checking to ensure accuracy of interview data, as well as providing rich, and thick description to convey the findings of this study (Creswell, 2009, pp. 191-192).

Summary

Utilizing the research questions as the foundation of the multiple site collective case study provided a thorough examination of elementary school teachers' perceptions of the academic, social, and cultural challenges that African immigrant learners experience within the WPSD. In addition to committing to the strictest measures of ethical protection for the participants involved, the emphasis on anonymity was exercised. I fostered trust and provided the necessary assurances to the participants so that they were confident while participating in the data collection process. The data were collected utilizing an interview guide, measures were taken to ensure the validity, and trustworthiness of the data were maintained. Lastly, the data were analyzed and results and recommendations were provided with the ultimate goal of fostering positive social change on behalf of this particular group of students.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this multiple-site collective case study was to research strategies that elementary school teachers say have supported positive social, cultural, and academic development of their African immigrant elementary school students. Barriers to the successful development of these students were also researched. Finally, teachers' perceptions of their own levels of preparedness and school district support to meet the social, cultural, and academic needs of these students were also examined.

The data collection and analyses were organized by the academic, social, and cultural needs. The research questions roughly followed this pattern as research question one focused on the academic supports, research question two focused on social supports, research question three focused on cultural supports, and research question four focused on elementary school teachers' perceptions of their level of preparedness to meet the academic, social, and cultural needs of their African immigrant learners. Research question four also encompassed the participants' perceived level of support that they received from WPSD to meet those identified needs of their African immigrant students. The interview questions were organized by the research questions, and the data analyses for each research question was reported in this pattern. At the beginning of each results section, there is a table (see Table 4) that reflects this organization with details about coding and example quotes. For example, research question one was: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the academic success of African immigrant elementary school learners? The interview questions were: (a) Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that were academic- it can be a success or

challenge, and (b) What factor(s) influence the academic success of African immigrant learners in your classroom? The results under each research question, including all interview question data, are shared in three sections: academic, social, and cultural. Included in this data are African immigrant student artifacts supporting the strategies identified by the participants that are positive supports for the academic, social, and cultural development.

Data Generation

Upon receiving IRB approval number 04-16-15-0139295 to begin my study, I contacted the three building principals located at each of the sites selected for my study. I met with each principal separately to review and sign their confidentiality agreements. They presented me with their list of six teachers, each purposely identified for their experience of positively supporting African immigrant learners. From this list I randomly selected four teachers from each site using a random number generator to invite to participate in my study. Over the course of three weeks, I e-mailed each potential participant and received seven responses accepting my invitation. I followed up with an e-mail sharing the consent form for their review and explaining that we would sign the consent form together prior to beginning our interview. I exchanged e-mails with each participant to establish our time and date to meet at the local library meeting room. Table 3 highlights participant demographics.

Collection, Recording, and Transcription of Data

Upon each scheduled interview, I arrived at least 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled time to ensure I had ample time to set up and prepare for each participant. Upon their arrival to the library meeting room, I took a few moments to thank the participant for taking time out of their schedule to participate in my study. I then asked unrelated questions about their school day

so that the participant felt comfortable with me as the researcher and offered them a bottle of water. We then transitioned to discussing the consent form. We reviewed the consent form together, addressed any questions, and signed the form. Before beginning the formal interview process, I discussed confidentiality and asked them if there was a pseudonym that they would prefer I use or if they would like for me to choose one. Each participant defaulted to me for a pseudonym.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Assigned participant number	Assigned pseudonym	Gender	Current instructional grade level	Years teaching/ elementary school assignment	Total years teaching
1	Miranda	Female	1st Grade	14 / Creek	20
2	Laila	Female	6th Grade	8 / Creek	8
3	Audrey	Female	1st Grade	16 / Allen	24
4	Bria	Female	4th Grade	9 / Birch	23
5	Charla	Female	2nd Grade	5 / Allen	13
6	Anna	Female	Kindergarten	6 / Birch	9
7	Katrina	Female	6th Grade	8 / Allen	11

Note: One of the participants was male, but all are listed as female to protect his anonymity.

The interview was semi-structured using my interview guide (see Appendix A) as a framework and incorporating follow-up or probing questions as the interview progressed. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes, with one interview lasting nearly 70 minutes. I

utilized three digital recording devices: one Sony digital recorder as a primary device and two phone recorders for backup.

The first interview question revealed the teaching experience of the participants. Table 3 illustrates the gender, number of years teaching, and number of years specifically teaching within WPSD of each participant. All participants are listed as female, but there was one male participant. In order to protect his anonymity, I refer to and listed all as female. As each interview progressed, I took purposeful notes in my research log, which consisted of one legal notepad. I noted key points that I referred to later during data analysis or for follow-up questions, if needed. Upon the conclusion of the interview, each participant provided and reviewed with me de-identified student work artifacts to be utilized for triangulation during the analysis of my data. The participants shared the relevance of the artifacts to their instructional objectives and the particular challenges or successes the immigrant students demonstrated within their work. As each interview ended, I provided the participant with an envelope that included a small compensation of a $25 Target gift card and a note thanking them, once again, for their time.

The transcription process was completed for each interview. I downloaded each interview onto my computer, and I transcribed each interview by listening to the interview playback. To assist in this process, I used Transcribe, available free on the internet at https://transcribe.wreally.com/app. I typed each transcript into a Word document. As I transcribed the interviews, I preliminarily evaluated the transcripts and informally coded the data for emerging themes. I wrote those themes on my legal pad to refer to later and then placed a time stamp within my copy of the transcript where I identified evidence to support the potential theme. Upon the completion of this process I e-mailed the completed unmarked transcript to the

participant for member-checking of the transcript for accuracy only. All participants reviewed their transcripts and sent me follow-up e-mails stating that the transcripts were accurate. Once this process was completed, I transferred their interviews from my computer to a flash drive and deleted the interview file from my hard drive.

As I received the validation of accuracy from each participant, I assigned them a participant number and began the process of coding and analyzing my data. The first step in my analysis was to evaluate and code each transcript individually. I read the transcript in its entirety without pause. I then reread each transcript and assigned a level one code (Yin, 2014). For example, if a participant discussed anything related to parental engagement (PE) I indicated in the margin the letter code PE. As I reread the transcript for a second and third time, I assigned a level 2 code for each emerging theme. For example, under parental engagement, one level 2 code was Barriers to Parental Engagement, which was coded as BPE (Yin, 2014). I utilized different letter codes to identify each theme (level 1) and each corresponding subtheme (level 2) that was revealed throughout my analysis of each transcript. I used highlighting to mark quotes in transcripts that provided support for the subthemes. Throughout the analysis of the data, 16 themes emerged, and their corresponding subthemes were identified. I organized each theme and related subtheme, and I highlighted data and participant frequency within a matrix created in Microsoft Word (Appendix C). Once the table was completed, I reread all transcripts one final time to ensure that I did not overlook a theme or subtheme (see Appendix C for complete theme and participant response matrix).

Findings

The findings of this study are illuminated in the participants' recommendations for student, parent, and teacher support in fostering positive academic, social, and cultural development of African immigrant elementary school learners. These findings stem from the problem of low academic achievement experienced by African immigrant elementary school learners within WPSD. The research questions were derived from the problem and the data collected emanated from the purpose of this study: to investigate elementary school teachers' perceptions of factors affecting the positive social, cultural, and academic development of their African immigrant learners. Numerous themes and related subthemes emerged from the analysis of my data and from the participants' responses. As shown in Table 4, each section provides a review of the research questions at the core of my study, identifies specific interview questions that addressed each research question, and highlights corresponding data from participant responses.

Participants' Recommendations for Student, Parent, and Teacher Support

This section will share highlights from the data to give the reader an idea of what the data will share in detail in terms of participants' recommendations for student, parent, and teacher support in fostering positive academic, social, and cultural development of African immigrant elementary school learners. The next section will be organized by interview questions and the academic, social, and cultural responses related specifically to the research questions and sub-questions.

In order to support African immigrant students, the participants would recommend creating a safe and welcoming learning environment whereby the immigrant learners feel

comfortable to make mistakes. Assigning a buddy to the newcomer as well as offering numerous collaborative learning opportunities is also suggested. Instructional strategies that incorporate all five senses as well as a literacy rich environment such as vocabulary cards and labeled classrooms would additionally be recommended to support immigrant students. Giving the immigrant students an opportunity to showcase their talents in non-academic environments, such as a class garden, is also suggested. Developing meaningful student/teacher relationships as well as providing opportunities for students to foster cultural pride, such as incorporating a culture day is encouraged as well.

In order to provide parent support, participants would recommend partnering parents from the same countries in order to foster a network of support within the school and greater community. Looping with the child over two years also would develop continued support for the parents as the teacher would remain the same for two years in a row. Incorporating a cultural liaison to bridge the cultural gap between the immigrant parents and the schools is also suggested as a means to support parents. Improving means of communication by providing school forms in the immigrants' native language is recommended to support parents and increase their engagement.

The participants' recommendations for teacher support begin with the need for the school district to recognize the challenges associated with supporting immigrant learners within the district. The participants suggest valuing the teachers' experience and allowing for flexibility with material utilized to instruct the students. The participants also call for meaningful professional development in order to prepare teachers to meet the needs of immigrant learners, such as increasing cultural competencies of communicating with parents from different

countries, and appropriateness of teacher/parent contact. Additional recommendations are technology improvements and supplemental multicultural materials to support the teachers' instruction.

Interview Questions and Data for Academic, Social and Cultural Success.

Interview question 1: Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that was academic? It can be a success or a challenge.

Academic. Although the participants had the opportunity to share a success or challenge, all of the participants discussed the academic challenges experienced by their African immigrant learners. Mastery of the English language as a barrier to academic success was reported by participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7. Participant 2 explained the challenges of having her African immigrant student tested for academically talented placement; this was a student she was sure would qualify. Initially her student did not qualify. Participant 7 reported, "I said, 'There is no way. There was a language barrier. You have to take her back and retest.' So the psychologist retested her. And here it was; there was a language barrier and that is what prevented her from being identified. I am hearing she is doing wonderful things at the high school."

A significant challenge was identified by Participants 1, 3, and 5 related to African immigrant students' understanding of directions. Whether it was instructions for homework or for a class assignment, the difficulties experienced by the students made accomplishing the work an arduous task. Participant 5 illustrates this difficulty, "he did not have functional speaking, but he understood things…. he was very emotional, it became frustrating for him…he would try to do the work, but then often he would shut down because it was too much.

Table 4

Research Question 1, Interview Questions, Emerged Themes, and Data Highlights

Research Question 1: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the academic success of African immigrant elementary school learners?	
Interview Questions	
Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that was academic? It can be a success or a challenge. What factor(s) influence the academic success of African immigrant learners in your classroom?	
Emerged Themes	**Data**
Supports for Parental Engagement	"I've paired parents up to help each other so if I have two parents from or two parents from there I would pair them up." Miranda
Barrier to Parental Engagement	"I don't know what is culturally appropriate for parent contact." Charla
Employed Supports for Academic Success	"Speaking slower and using the vocab cards. Also a lot of background information, providing them the background information that they would need to do an assignment." Miranda
	"Every time we got a new student, I gave the students magazines and I had them pick out things that I though and the students thought would be important to a 9 year old coming to America for the first time." Anna

Barriers to Academic Success	"If I had that experience with him again in that grade level (immigrant student) I would do that a lot differently. He needed more support." Charla "A lot of parents have expressed to me they are afraid to put another language on their registration form because they are afraid there will be a negative stereotype. And they are afraid to send them to ELL classes because of what other people who have been in America longer than them have told them. They feel like it's a special education stigma that would be attached to them and it is very hard sometimes to explain to them that their child needs the extra resources to learn." Anna

Although six of the total seven participants reported insufficient English literacy skills as a barrier to academic success, Participant 6 shared a different perspective:

> The two girls I had from the Ivory Coast were twins. They did not speak English at all. The one day we were doing math, and we were doing fractions. And it was pretty hard. I looked over and the two of them are doing the fractions on their desk. And I don't know how to ask them, 'You know how to do this?' and then someone looked over and said 'Oh, Vanessa* and Valerie* are doing fractions!'…And we learned that day that math is a universal language.

Within the data collected from this interview question, the theme, Employed Supports for Academic Success, was also revealed. Participants 4 and 7 emphasized the importance of scaffolding which they defined as providing background knowledge of a specific subject being taught. Scaffolding helped the students to be successful when attempting to learn the new content. Participant 4 presented the importance of scaffolding as she discussed her teaching of writing to a picture prompt:

> I did have a student one time and the lesson had to do with a helicopter and she did not know what a helicopter was and was not familiar with the word at all so we had to look at a lot of pictures and see how they moved and everything because that knowledge was needed in order to write the paragraph.

Participant 7 also identified scaffolding as critical in supporting mastery of new writing skills, "Why I did so much scaffolding this year is because argumentative [writing] was new this year. And it's a switch from the persuasive [writing] which they did from 3rd to 5th grade." Providing visual models and scaffolding new models provide a foundation for learning the newly introduced skill/concept, according to the participants. Additionally, Participant 7 emphasized the need to repeatedly model the skill she was introducing so that not only did she provide the background information, but she also provided the visual expectation through modeling as well.

Offering a literacy rich environment was highlighted by Participants 1 and 3. The emphasis was on providing labeled classrooms, the word bathroom on the bathroom door for example. A similar strategy was to use picture/word flash cards to support African immigrants in fostering literacy skills that support academic success. Participant 3 illuminates this strategy, "I use picture cards [labeled] with the kids…The tutor goes over the cards with the students." Participant 1 offered a similar support, "I would give him a ring of words to help him with his words."

Social. Pairing African immigrant children with a native English-speaking student offers a socially integrative means of providing both supports for academic success and social acceptance. The strategy of providing a buddy or partner was implemented by both Participants 1

and 7. Participant 7 examined the benefit of utilizing peer-learning opportunities for African immigrant students:

> So with the ELL's I had them working together or with a partner. There is a lot of group work. They are getting information from other kids, they are hearing the language, and they are looking at the format of how things are to be done.

Providing a buddy or partner as a support for academic success is presented by participant 1, "If I thought there was a language issue I would give them a buddy. One of the kids who were calmer and patient I would make them as a buddy." Selecting an appropriate buddy, whose demeanor would facilitate a positive relationship with the newcomer, was emphasized as well.

Cultural. The data suggests cultural differences can provide barriers to academic success. Participant 5 discussed the challenges cultural differences can present as they relate to the understanding of the role of school versus the role of the immigrants' home countries:

> It's interesting because the parents were also struggling. So they had certain expectations based on their background. One boy came from Ghana and they have a certain educational system so [his] mother came here and had a different understanding of what our school should be.

Participant 6 discussed cultural challenges and their influence on academic success. She described how she and her class of students helped to overcome this challenge:

> Every time I got a new student, I gave the students magazines, and I had them pick out things that I thought, and the students thought, would be important to a 9 year old coming to America for the first time. So there was pizza, sneakers, basketballs, and French fries.

We made a book out of them. And every time I got a new student, the kids would ask if we could make a book for them.

Providing the new students with this type of support helped to anticipate and mitigate some of the cultural challenges that a new immigrant might experience. In contrast to providing a student designed hand book on American culture, Participant 4 reported, conversely, that immigrant students' cultures support their academic success, "Recently we have had a few students [African immigrants] come…just the one student, just his seriousness about his education, when he would answer the question he would stand up to answer the question. And he was so proud to answer the question."

Interview question 2: What factor(s) influence the academic success of African immigrant learners in your classroom?

Academic. There were several academic factors that were presented by the participants that influence the academic success of African immigrant learners. Participants 1 and 3 recognized the challenges of lack of prior knowledge as a barrier to academic success. Participant 1 stated, "Providing background information that they would need to do an assignment. Fairy tales, Rhymes, they do not have an understanding of. Things you would think they would know. I would tell the parents to have them watch Sesame Street." There are similar challenges recognized in mathematics as it relates to identifying U.S. money and coins. Participant 3 shared, "For math we always use number lines like this. They can also have counters too…. I find though that with math they are good with concrete addition/subtraction but the money… I sing songs with them to help them."

Social. Opportunities for social learning experiences are important factors for positively affecting academic success according to both Participants 4 and 7. The importance of having another student to share ideas with, or ask questions of, was expressed by Participant 4, "They tend to do better when they have a buddy or a partner they can work with just to bounce questions off of, if they have questions that they don't understand." Participant 7 reflected upon the nurturing classroom community approach for supporting her African immigrants:

> Cooperation with other kids, as you know, at least at the elementary level they love to be helpers so the native speakers are very eager to help and be the mom and show this is what we need to do with our ELL students. It is pretty amazing. We also have a lot of IAs [Instructional Assistants] who will bring many clothes and stuff for ELL students.

Providing a welcoming classroom environment that is socially accepting of African immigrants is a critical factor in their academic success, according to participants. In addition to her students' and her classroom instructional assistants' social support of her African immigrant students, Participant 7 shared a personal story of how she, too, supported one particular student John* from the Ivory Coast, which turned out to be an indirect factor in his academic success:

> My one [student], I love this kid so much, I will be so sad to see him go. He came in maybe November or December and he was at Allen* for maybe a month. He was getting the bus at Birch* and a teacher over there called and told me he has not had a coat on since he had been here. I contacted the guidance counselor, and they didn't have anything. So I thought, hold on, I know my son has an old coat. I brought it in for John* and told him to try it on and he wore it every single day. He kind of came up to me, he

> didn't hug me because that would have been inappropriate, but he came up to me shoulder to shoulder, and kind of leaned into me. He wore that coat every single day.

Participant 2 emphasized the importance of parental engagement and a safe learning environment as factors that influence the academic success of African immigrant learners. She said, "Parental engagement and providing the kids with a safe learning environment and what I mean by that they feel that is okay to make mistakes." She continued by offering the need for learning activities that require high level thinking skills, "They need to be provided challenging activities, and thinking outside the box; problem solving. That kind of stuff that the curriculum doesn't always touch upon."

Participant 5 also recognized parental engagement as a factor affecting academic success, "I think that the strategies or keys to success academically are those students who have a lot of home support. It seems to be even more so with African immigrant students and the impact that has on their academic growth…. I think that those students who have the most parental involvement are the most successful." Although Participant 5 identified the importance of parental engagement as a social factor in supporting African immigrants' academic success, she also illuminated some of the challenges with involving immigrant parents:

> It wasn't like the parent didn't care but instead [she] was at a language disadvantage...My concern is that, for me…. I didn't meet these parents until parent conferences…And I think that even if you don't speak the language there should be the initial meeting. I have seen some instances even when the child is the translator. So you know to give specific things to the child to relate to the parent.

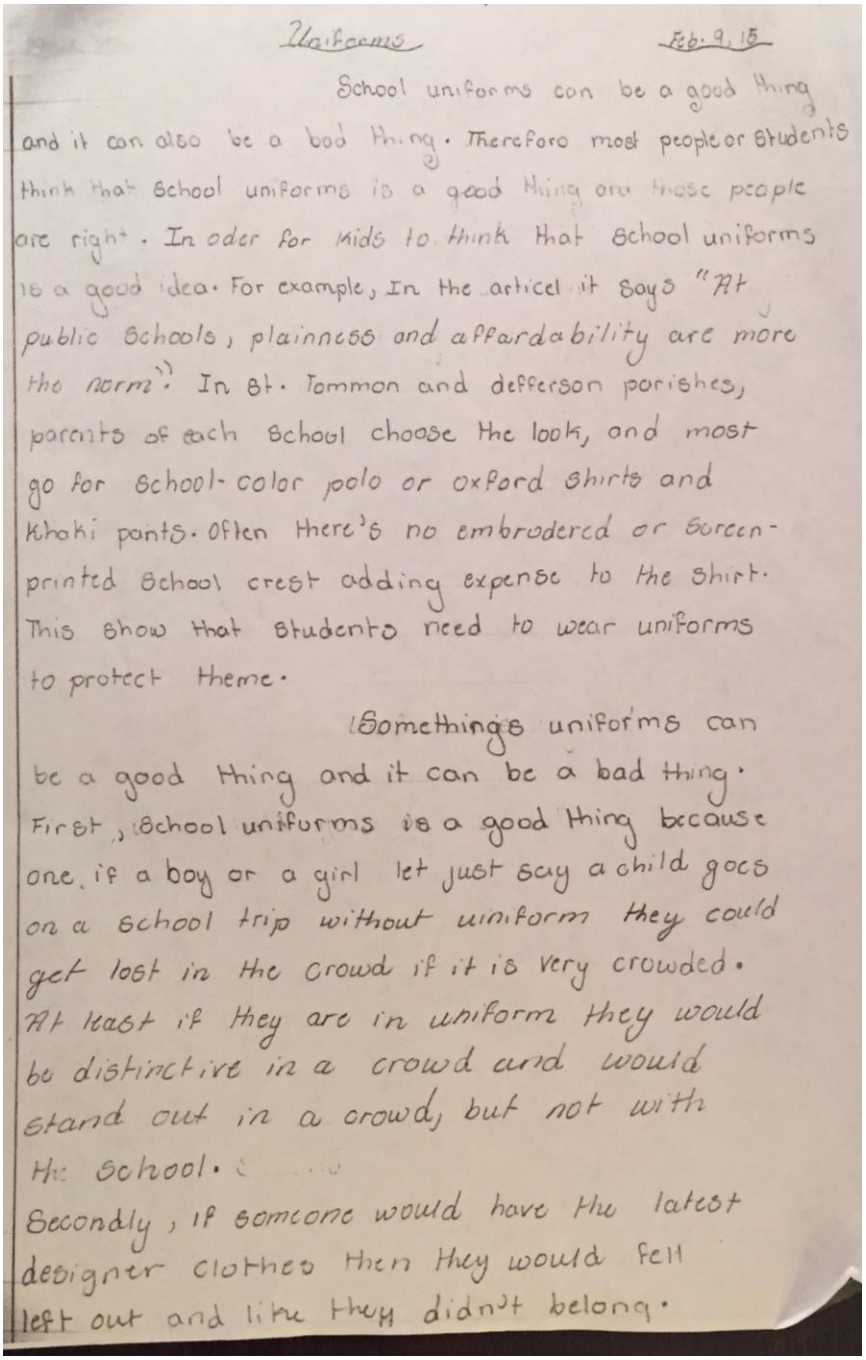
Cultural. The role that culture plays as a factor in the academic success of African immigrant students was examined by Participant 4, "They value education more…just bringing out the importance of them being proud of their culture. When I say things about their culture I think that helps." Providing a welcoming environment that accepts and celebrates African immigrants' cultural backgrounds establishes a comfortable environment for learning.

One of the challenges that concerns teaching staff is low cultural-competency of the various African immigrant cultures represented in their classrooms. This challenge presents itself in engaging immigrant parents as is examined by Participant 5, "I am not on the phone calling - the [immigrant] parents because I don't have a wealth of knowledge of what is culturally acceptable to call home. Maybe they don't accept teacher calls…. I don't know what is culturally appropriate for parent contact." She continued by discussing the limited options in school to home communication as well, "I am surprised that in 2015 we don't send home multiple language announcements or flyers. They are only in English. A lot of places are at least doing it in English and Spanish." The primary African languages of students in the district are Liberian Kreyol, Hausa, Igbo, and French.

Artifacts Supporting Data. The student artifacts illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the importance of the role of scaffolding. Participant 7 modeled and integrated significant scaffolding for her African immigrant students. The first artifact (see Figure 1) demonstrates a student's work who had only been in the country two weeks and through scaffolding was able to produce this piece of work. The second artifact (see Figure 2) is from another African immigrant student who had the benefit of writing scaffolds for the entire year.

Research question 2: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the social success of African immigrant elementary school learners?

The subquestions related to research question 2 examined the participants' observations of and/or experiences with African immigrant learners and their social interactions with peers, the participants themselves, and other school staff within their corresponding buildings. Two main themes were identified: employed supports for social success and barriers to social success (see Table 5). The data received from the participants revealed the challenges that many African immigrant elementary school students experience. It also revealed those strategies that the teachers employ in order to foster successful social relationships amongst their immigrant and nonimmigrant students.



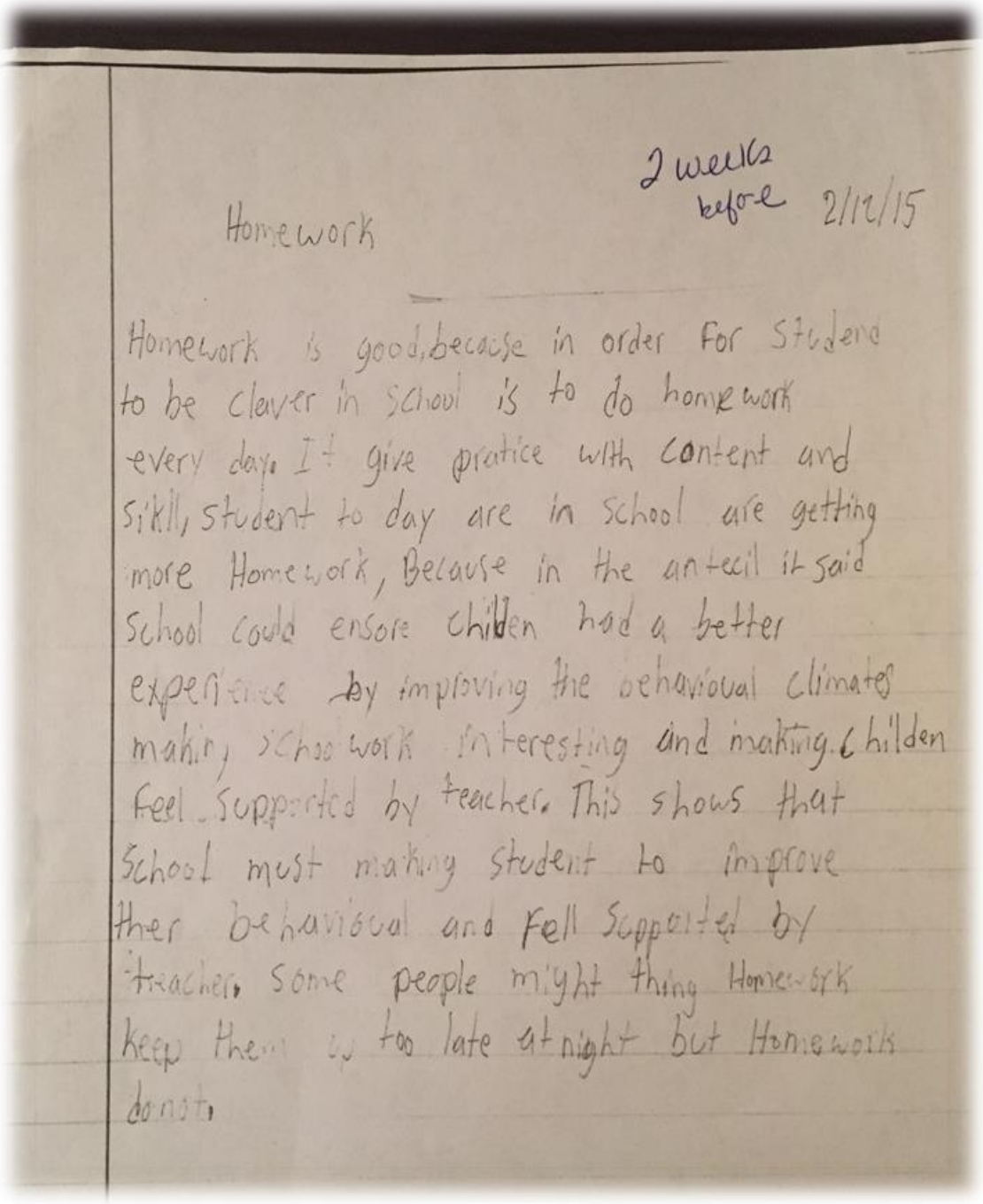
Uniforms Feb. 9, 15

School uniforms can be a good thing and it can also be a bad thing. Therefore most people or students think that school uniforms is a good thing and those people are right. In oder for kids to think that school uniforms is a good idea. For example, In the articel it says "At public schools, plainness and affardability are more the norm". In St. Tommon and defferson porishes, parents of each school choose the looks, and most go for school-color polo or oxford shirts and khaki pants. Often there's no embrodered or Soreen-printed school crest adding expense to the shirt. This show that students need to wear uniforms to protect theme.

Somethings uniforms can be a good thing and it can be a bad thing. First, school uniforms is a good thing because one, if a boy or a girl let just say a child goes on a school trip without uniform they could get lost in the crowd if it is very crowded. At least if they are in uniform they would be distinctive in a crowd and would stand out in a crowd, but not with the school.

Secondly, if someone would have the latest designer clothes then they would fell left out and like they didn't belong.

Figure 1. Example of scaffolding social success.



2 weeks before 2/12/15

Homework

Homework is good, because in order For Studend to be clever in school is to do homework every day. It give pratice with content and sikill, student to day are in school are getting more Homework, Because in the antecil it said School could ensore chilben had a better experience by improving the behavioual climates making school work interesting and making chilben feel supported by teacher. This shows that School must making student to improve ther behavioual and Fell Supported by teacher, Some people might thing Homework keep them up too late at night but Homework do not.

Figure 2. Example of scaffolding supporting student's academic success.

Table 5

Research Question 2, Interview Questions, Emerged Themes, and Data Highlights

Research question 2: What are the WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the social success of African immigrant elementary school learners?

Interview questions

Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that was social- it can be a success or challenge?

What factor(s) influence the social success of African immigrant learners in your classroom?

Emerged themes	Data highlights
Employed Supports for Social Success	"I think they feel comfortable enough to be curious about each other's culture." Laila
	"I have seen, and I don't know if it's related, but *John* has totally come out of his shell so much more in the past 3 weeks to a month which corresponds to the time that he started working in the garden. He's animated… They may have done this in their home country too and this may be second nature to them. And *David* who never said anything to me, will now come up and say things to me because I have given him this responsibility." Katrina
Barriers for social success	"Although a lot of our kids have nothing, they will make fun of children who have less than they do." Audrey
	"By 5th grade they suddenly see the cultural difference. In my opinion, if I could attribute the change, it would be because they are able to go outside of their house by themselves, at home….I remember crying when my kids went into 5th grade and I saw two of the kids were fighting that were best friends in 4th grade. I said to them, Why are you fighting? And he said, "Because he is a dirty African." Anna

Interview question 3: Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that was social? - It can be a success or challenge.

***Academic*.** A common strategy that has been utilized to support academic, cultural and social success that has been shared by many of the participants throughout the data collection process is introducing a buddy to the new immigrant. Participant 5 focused on the benefit of this social support as a means to academic success, "So when he [African immigrant] came to class I assigned him my other student from Africa who is proficient. He sat next to him and showed him the ropes…The kids received him, he kind of was enveloped into the class." Participant 5 continued by emphasizing the importance of the teacher's role in supporting the social transition of African immigrant learner, "I think that any teacher role, whether it's my grade level partners, and then even me as part of that, if we foster an environment that is nonthreatening, that everybody is valued, that your opinions matter…the kids will do it."

***Social*.** Participants highlighted both positive and negative social interactions between the African immigrant learners and the general student population. Social successes were found most frequently when there were shared experiences between the immigrant and nonimmigrant students. Participant 6 shared the following anecdote:

> The boys were out there playing soccer and they were nine and 10 and they all got along. The one little boy John was from Africa…. John was really good at soccer and the boys were like "you are really good at soccer. Can you teach us?" John can you teach them how you learned to play soccer, can you teach them the drills? He said, "No we don't really do that." So I asked him, "How did you learn to play," and he said, "I played with

> the big boys in the lot." Then there was one boy who did learn how to play, so he was teaching John the fundamentals. And John taught him how he played. John was in charge of all of the soccer games…It was an ice-breaker. It was a commonality between them and it was about this time of year that they were comfortable enough to say...they were good at something.

Participant 4 also recognized the benefit of having a shared experience or commonality in supporting the social success of African immigrant learners.

> I find that in my grade level, kids unfortunately tend to be mean, so they tend to mock them [African immigrants] because of the way they speak. So the students are less likely to engage in conversation with the other African American students. But on the basketball court they fit right in. I have this one student…he wouldn't really talk to the students, but when it was time to go to recess he would be down there playing basketball with them.

According to the participants, a shared activity supported the social success between immigrant and non-immigrants.

Although many positive social interactions were shared, Participant 6 reflected on the significant changes that occurred amongst the immigrant and non-immigrant students as they crossed the threshold from 4th to 5th grade,

> By 5th grade they suddenly see the cultural difference. If I could attribute the change, it would be because they are able to go outside of their house by themselves, at home. So now your older cousin who already has that "barrier" [unwelcoming of African students] built because they are in the middle school or the high school…you are listening to what

> he/she is saying to other people while you are there…. I remember crying when my kids went into 5th grade and I saw two of the kids were fighting that were best friends in 4th grade. I said to them, 'Why are you fighting?' and he said, 'Because he is a dirty African.'…. I would tell them all of the time, 'You have the choice to remain friends no matter where you come from. Are you going to do what everyone else says? Or are you going to remember that this kid gave you a pencil when you didn't have one? Helped you with your homework when you didn't understand it? Played with you at recess when no one else was around?'… Now they are in 6th grade and they aren't friends anymore.

According to the participants, once the elementary students were exposed to an older generation who did not share their same values of acceptance, there seemed to be a negative impact on the social successes that once existed.

Cultural. Cultural differences can impact the social success of African immigrants, not only with their peers but also with their teachers. Participant 2 illustrates this point, "The eye contact, I am pretty big on that. It took me a while to get comfortable with them [African immigrant] not making eye contact. They were showing respect. I know that now. But that comes into play with educating me on that because had I not known that I would think they were being disrespectful." The participants overall would appreciate more cultural awareness to help them build those bonds between students.

Interview question 4: What factor(s) influence the social success of African immigrant learners in your classroom?

Academic. Academic success can be affected by a child's self-esteem. Participant 6 discussed how "hair" impacted one of her student's self-esteem and academic progress. She said:

> This is the first year I have seen kindergarteners with weave in. Less and less clips and ballies and more and more big girl hair. I have one little girl, she is always so happy and the last two weeks she has been miserable because of her hair, because it's not done. And you can tell that every day it is affecting her self-esteem. She is getting quieter. She thinks her hair smells.

Participant 1 proposed that the right environment must be offered to new immigrants in order to enable social success fostering a welcoming environment. "I think they need to feel safe. They have to feel safe that they can share even if their English isn't so polished." Allowing African immigrant students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in a socially safe environment fosters positive social interactions and academic progress, according to the participants.

Social. Many of the participants felt that providing African immigrant students the opportunity to have social success is critical to both their academic success and cultural acceptance by their non-immigrant counterparts. Participant 7 demonstrated this in the following:

> I started a school garden this year and it has kind of been a 6th grade project because I really don't know what I'm doing. So I wanted to keep it small…. We have two raised beds and we have another area where we have lettuce, spinach, kale, Swiss chard, onions, peas, beans all planted. So I wanted all of the 6th graders to become a part of this. They were really excited about this. And the two that have stood out leaps and bounds above everyone else are "John" and "David" who don't speak. They are not successful in the classroom really; you know they haven't been here long enough. And they both seem to speak English, they are just not comfortable speaking. It's the accent and the dialect. John

> and David have taken this garden and they could literally run the show… and have really been leaders in all of this…. It has been such a positive thing for them and they are leaders.

Providing students the opportunity to show their strengths allowed them to build their confidence in a socially safe environment, according to the participants. Participant 7 later continued, "I have seen…John has totally come out of his shell…. He's animated. They may have done this in their home country too…. And David who never said anything to me, will now come up and say things to me because I have given him this responsibility."

Cultural. A significant challenge for teachers and non-immigrant students is a lack of knowledge and understanding of the new immigrants, their cultural differences and experiences, and its impact on the social success of the African immigrant student. Both Participant 1 and Participant 4 examined these multilayered challenges when referencing disparaging remarks made by students to African immigrants. Participant 1 shared the following: "Once in a while you will hear the kids say, he is so dark, but not really. Usually they don't say much, because if they do I will say something." Participant 4 continued,

> I know the one they typically say is 'African Booty Scratcher'. I don't even understand. They are making fun of the way they speak. Sometimes they say, 'They're eating that African food.' … they do say things like, 'That African girl is different; she's strange.' And I will say, 'What do you mean she's strange?' and the student will say, 'She is copying off my papers.' And I said, 'She's probably copying because she is unsure and you know kind of maybe try to help her.'

Participant 4 discussed the social challenges that African immigrants may encounter with their nonimmigrant peers as a result of experiences the immigrant students may have had in their home country:

> This same student, her younger sister was afraid to go into the cafeteria. She would stand outside and was shaking. I have cafeteria duty and I see this little head peek around the corner and I am like, what are you doing? She was just like, 'No, No'. It's loud in the cafeteria and I think it was too much. So I said, 'Ok, you don't have to eat in there.' And her sister is in the first grade. And I said, 'I will take you in there and you can eat with your sister.' And while she was eating, her younger sister was standing in front of her like protecting her. I was like, 'What is going on here?' and we don't know what happened to them where they came from.

From the data, it appeared that not having a cultural understanding or awareness may interfere with positive social experiences and success of African immigrant learners.

Artifacts Supporting Data. The first student artifact supports the development of social success by having the student reflect on what is fair so that they can develop the skills necessary to collaborate effectively in and out of the classroom (See Figure 3). The second student artifact is an example of collaborative learning within the classroom to support understanding of math concepts in a nonthreatening environment (See Figure 4).

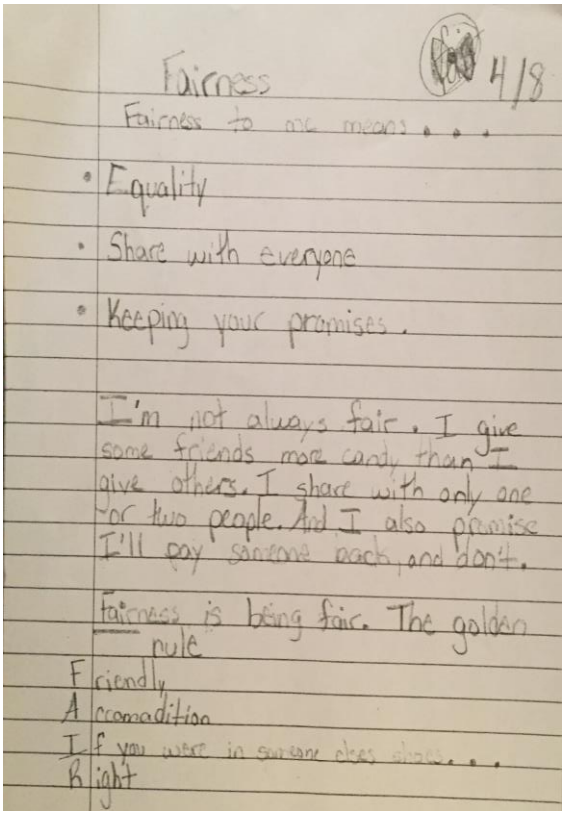
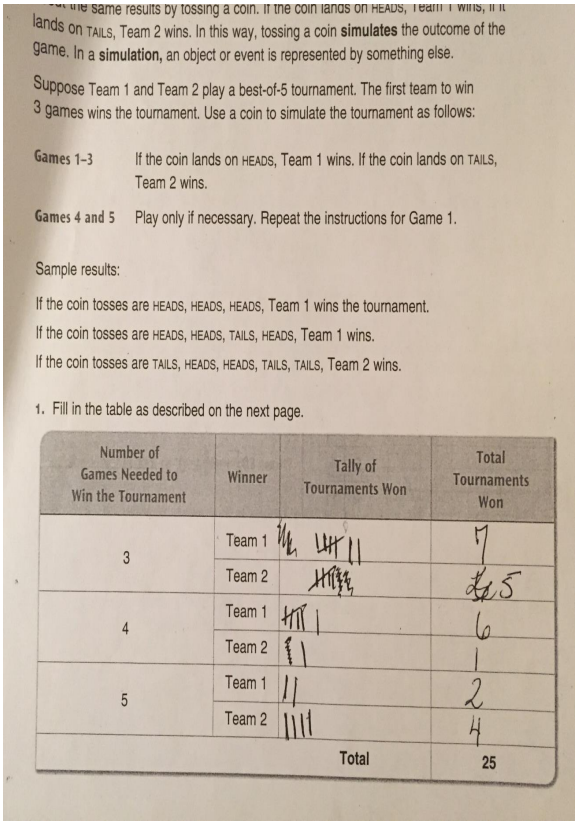


Figure 3. Example of student social and cultural development



...the same results by tossing a coin. If the coin lands on HEADS, Team 1 wins, if it lands on TAILS, Team 2 wins. In this way, tossing a coin **simulates** the outcome of the game. In a **simulation,** an object or event is represented by something else.

Suppose Team 1 and Team 2 play a best-of-5 tournament. The first team to win 3 games wins the tournament. Use a coin to simulate the tournament as follows:

Games 1–3 If the coin lands on HEADS, Team 1 wins. If the coin lands on TAILS, Team 2 wins.

Games 4 and 5 Play only if necessary. Repeat the instructions for Game 1.

Sample results:

If the coin tosses are HEADS, HEADS, HEADS, Team 1 wins the tournament.

If the coin tosses are HEADS, HEADS, TAILS, HEADS, Team 1 wins.

If the coin tosses are TAILS, HEADS, HEADS, TAILS, TAILS, Team 2 wins.

1. Fill in the table as described on the next page.

Number of Games Needed to Win the Tournament	Winner	Tally of Tournaments Won	Total Tournaments Won
3	Team 1	𝍸 |||	7
	Team 2	𝍸 𝍸 |||	5
4	Team 1	𝍸 |	6
	Team 2	||	1
5	Team 1	||	2
	Team 2	||||	4
		Total	**25**

Figure 4. Example of student social and academic development

Research question 3: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the cultural success of African immigrant elementary school learners?

The sub-questions related to research question 3 examined the participants' observations and/or experiences with African immigrant learners and their cultural interactions both with peers as well as themselves and other school staff within their corresponding buildings. Two main themes were identified: employed supports for cultural success and barriers to cultural success (see Table 6). The data received from the participants revealed the cultural challenges that many African immigrant elementary school students experience as well as revealed those strategies that the teachers employ in positively develop cultural success.

Interview question 5: Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that was cultural-it can be a success or challenge?

One of the most significant cultural challenges identified by Participants 3 and 4 was their lack of knowledge regarding their African immigrant students' family dynamic. Participant 4 stated, "I think that something that is tough is that some of the African children are not with their parents. I haven't quite figured it out." Participant 3 examined this point further,

> The two young ladies that came recently, I had met the dad, or who I assumed was the dad, which I later found out was the sponsor. He was telling her, you need to listen to Miss Jones, you need to learn, you need to listen. And I was like, something is not right. She wasn't very verbal; she didn't talk a lot. So I went to the records, and she had only been in our country for a couple of months. It was long enough to get your shots and get registered and I just assumed he was the dad, but was the sponsor. She is his brother's

child, and the brother still lives in, I am not sure, but I think he is in Liberia. So mom and dad are still in Africa and any time we mention Mom or Dad her eyes would tear up. And I guess, I am sure they feel they [the parents] are giving them more opportunities, but they [the students] are also missing their family.

Table 6

Research Question 3, Interview Questions, Emerged Themes, and Data Highlights

Research question 3: What are the WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the cultural success of African immigrant elementary school learners?	
Interview questions	
Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that was cultural- it can be a success or challenge? What factor(s) influence the cultural success of African immigrant learners in your classroom?	
Emerged themes	Data highlights
Employed supports for cultural success	"I think find what interests these kids, getting to know them. That is the basis for everything, it's forming a relationship with your kids no matter where they are from." Katrina
Barriers for cultural success	"I am thinking of a family. The one girl *Allie* she wasn't in my class; we knew something wasn't right. She was another one we had that did not talk…It was nice that her class took her under their wing, because she would wander off and she would never speak and when she did speak it was almost like a bird chirping. But the kids would say, "Oh, she talks." She was telling the kids that she saw her sister beheaded in Liberia and that seemed odd for us that she wouldn't necessarily make this up. And her sister who is in 4th grade is so, so angry." Katrina

The challenges of being an immigrant learner are magnified by the lack of familial support in the home. Although the children may be with adults who are sponsoring them, and they may be extended family, it does not replace the connection of parent.

When teachers don't have any knowledge of prior cultural or traumatic experiences that immigrant learners' have had can inhibit the child's transition into the classroom and detour the

teacher's ability to determine the underlying causes of academic and social challenges. Participant 7 illuminated this problem,

> I am thinking of a family, one is in 7th now and one is in 4th grade. I feel their situation, they were from Liberia, it was very traumatic and we have had a lot of difficulty with them. So the one girl last year *Allie*, she wasn't in my class, we knew something wasn't right. She was another we had that did not talk. She was general ed last year and it was nice in that she wasn't in my homeroom, but, it was nice that her class took her under their wing, because she would wander off and she would never speak, and when she did speak it was almost like a bird chirping. But the kids would say, 'Oh, she talks.' She was telling the kids that she saw her sister beheaded in Liberia, and that seemed odd for us. That she wouldn't necessarily make that up. So I am sure that is true and her sister who is in 4th grade this year is so angry. She is so, so angry and I don't think there's a lot of tolerance for her, so we know now. We think we know what this family has gone through.

Not having knowledge or understanding of a child's prior experiences can inhibit teachers' ability to provide them the necessary supports needed for their success. The challenge is compounded when the prior experiences include a traumatic event.

Academic. No data was reported by Participants.

Social. Social norms vary from country to country. Participant 5 revealed the challenge of not having the necessary cultural competency to support appropriate social interactions with parents and students,

> I have an experience when I can't speak to women when they come in for meetings. I have reached out to shake hands and realized I shouldn't have done that…you have to learn as you go. Even when it comes to the classroom, you have to know who is Muslim. So you are like, ok I don't want to exclude you. Instead of mother's day I will have them make a card for your mom saying, 'Mom I love you'. It's unfortunate because it's something we can do in school. We can build those bridges for cultural consciousness with these students and cultural sensitivity, as far as us participating. Instead of saying I read about Sierra Leone or Ghana, to actually have an understanding of where they are from. It would be interesting for schools in this county to offer an on-going training for teachers about the specific ELL students.

According to participants, providing professional development in the area of social norms and practices of the diverse immigrant population would support them. They would like to have a proactive approach for promoting cultural competency that would allow for appropriate social interactions to occur between teacher, student, and immigrant family. It could also mitigate the challenge highlighted by Participant 5 of "learning as you go".

Cultural. Encouraging students within the classroom to embrace African immigrant learners and their diverse cultural backgrounds can become a hurdle. Participant 6 recognized this hurdle, "I know that we aren't allowed to teach Christmas anymore. So I tried to do a multicultural day. We tried to do a dish, clothing, picture. I tried to do it in a day, but it couldn't be. It was too much of an overload and too different. And the kids couldn't handle it. Everything was funny, everything was weird. So note to self."

Cultural acceptance is not something that can occur immediately and must be integrated into the culture of the classroom. Helping teachers plan for and manage inter-culture celebrations could be a step forward.

Interview question 6: What factor(s) influence the cultural success of African immigrant learners in your classroom?

Academic. No data was reported by Participants.

Social. Participant 6 recognized the limitation of having a culture day be the means for her students to embrace the cultural diversity within her classroom. She also recognized the benefits of having more time to incorporate opportunities for cultural exchanges,

> More time to do it [cultural exchanges]. It would take more time away from math and reading. If kids could learn more about their families and their beliefs, why wouldn't you accept it for the most part? They couldn't handle that my parents are white. They looked at my parents and they said no they aren't. 'Ms. P you are not white.' Then we had to have a big talk. So if they couldn't accept me, how are they going to accept whatever else is different. More time and chances to understand the different cultures would help.

Time invested in activities other than academics can be frowned upon by administration. Participant 1 highlighted the importance of social activities as a support for cultural success,

> So usually in the beginning of the year, and I've had classes where this has had to go on for months, we would have a morning meeting. [I] Have the kids share things or draw things. I had a class that was really angry with each other, with me, they were just an angry group of children. I said to my principal, 'I know that this may be viewed as taking time away but we have to do this every morning. We have to shake each other's hand and

> say good morning.' And it worked wonders for that group. So I think laying the foundation in the beginning, getting to know the kids, having them working with each other.

Investing the time in the beginning of the year can develop a positive social atmosphere within the classroom. This teacher illustrated they can support the acceptance of all differences, not just those differences brought by African immigrant learners.

Cultural. Providing opportunities for African immigrant students to share their culture in a safe and welcoming environment may promote cultural success within the school and amongst their classmates. Participant 2 illuminated her successful strategy supporting this critical factor,

> I would say finding out their strengths and anything they do outside of academics. And really being enthusiastic about them somehow teaching, showing in the classroom. For example, I had one of my students, I guess she was doing some kind of African dance outside at recess. My whole class was like, 'You've got to see this; you have to see this!' Then I put up on the board on my projector. I YouTubed a video of it, of what it was, and played the music, and she did it for us. So I said, 'You have to do this for the whole school.' And she was like, 'I can't. I don't think I can.' So I said, 'Would you feel more comfortable if your cousin did it with you?' and she said yes and did it! And just that little thing; she was on cloud nine. She had a difficult time at another building and had a really tough time adjusting to our school socially. She said she didn't have a good group of friends where she was, and she didn't trust a soul. She just wanted to be here, do her stuff and leave. I told her you matter, you belong and to see that transformation is so great!

Giving students the opportunity to express their cultural backgrounds and to foster acceptance within the classroom and greater school community are critical factors in supporting the cultural success of African immigrant learners.

Artifacts Supporting Data. The first student artifact in Figure 5 supported the development of self-acceptance and valuing their own individuality, including their cultural identity. The second artifact focused on the importance of maintaining cultural ties with family members who share the same culture as the student (See Figure 6).

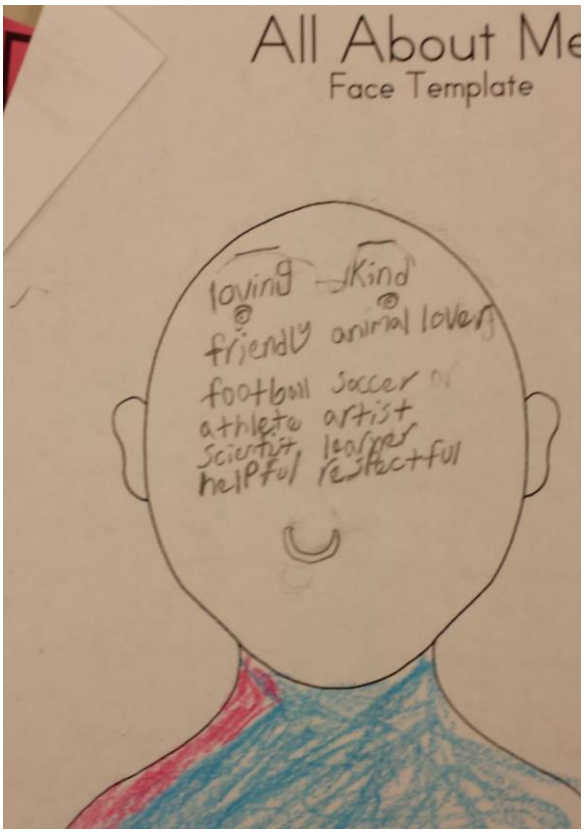


Figure 5. Example of student building social skills and understanding.

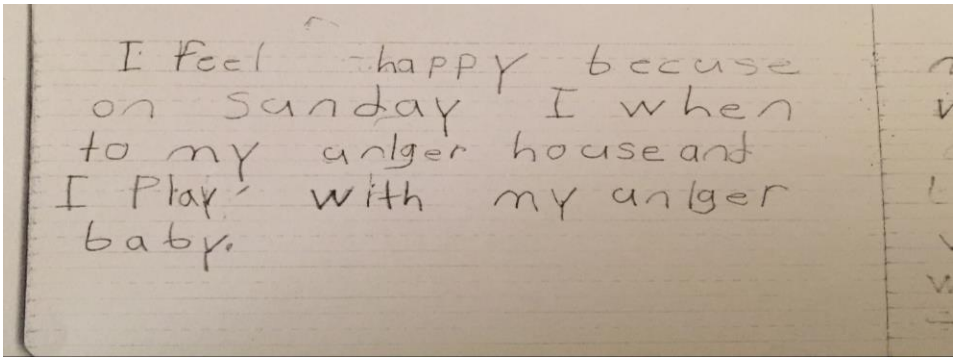


Figure 6. Example of importance of family connections to immigrant students.

Research question 4: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of their level of effectiveness in meeting the academic, cultural, and social needs of African immigrant elementary school learners?

There were 10 subquestions related to research question 4. The data elicited from those questions revealed eight themes: perception of preparedness to positively support academic success, perceived required resources for academic success, perception of preparedness to positively support social success, perceived required resources for Academic Success, to name a few (See Table 7). The data revealed the Participants perceptions of their abilities to positively support the academic, social, and cultural success of African immigrant learners as well their perceptions of the resources required to meet these challenges. The data also revealed the teachers' perceptions of the level of support that they receive from the WPSD in order to positively support the academic, social and cultural successes of these students.

Table 7

Research Question 4, Interview Questions, Emerged Themes, and Data Highlights

Research Question 4: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of their level of effectiveness in meeting academic, cultural, and social needs of African immigrant elementary school learners?

Interview Questions

Is there anything you have learned to do to support academic success that you would like to share with other teachers?
As an educator what resources do you feel are required to meet the academic needs of African immigrant learners?
Based on the answer to your last question, how prepared to you feel to meet the academic needs of these learners?
Is there anything you have learned to do to support social success that you would like to share with other teachers?
As an educator what resources do you feel are required to meet the social needs of African immigrant learners?
Based on the answer to your last question, how prepared to you feel to meet the social needs of these learners?
Is there anything you have learned to do to support cultural success that you would like to share with other teachers?
As an educator what resources do you feel are required to meet the cultural needs of African immigrant learners?
Based on the answer to your last question, how prepared do you feel to meet the cultural needs of these learners?
In what ways has the WPSD prepared its teachers to meet the needs of African immigrant learners?

Emerged Themes	Data Highlights
Perception of Preparedness to Positively Support Academic Success.	"I always feel like I could learn more. Obviously we use the strategies that we want to remediate the students who are struggling, but is there something more culturally based to help students who are struggling?" Bria
Perceived Required Resources for Academic Success	"I don't think that things are important but I think it is the training that goes into preparing teachers for this." Katrina
Perception of Preparedness to Positively Support Social Success.	--
Perceived Required Resources for Social Success	A good social curriculum is what is needed and it has to be a consistent thing and it can't be too convoluted." Audrey
Perception of Preparedness to Positively Support Cultural Success.	"I don't feel as prepared as I want to be. I have experiences and background that I have that I can bring to the table helps, where not everyone has that. Could it be a district thing that is provided; maybe not about a specific kid, but about the different cultures would help. I think the district should celebrate the cultures." Laila
Perceived Required Resources for Cultural Success	"We should have a culture night. We are not ready. We need to adapt to what students we have instead we are making them fit to what we do." Charla
Personal Needs to Support African Immigrant Learners	"There is not even an awareness that there is an issue. We need to recognize that there is a problem supporting our immigrants, and I think that this is a real issue not just with our immigrants, but with our general population that is not being recognized and we are in crisis mode, our kids aren't doing well, our parents aren't doing well, and everyone is admiring 'how great this is". Katrina
District Preparation of Teachers to Support African Immigrant Learners	"I don't think it's been a priority. I think they realize they now have to do something. But what the "that" is they have not yet identified it and if they have they haven't sent it down with the troops. The push-in services are a nice pair of socks, the pull-out services is a nice hat. But the students need more than that." Charla.

Interview question 7: Is there anything you have learned to do to support academic success that you would like to share with other teachers?

Academic. Several instructional strategies and materials were identified to support the academic success of African immigrant learners. Participant 3 emphasized the use of a listening center to support language development, "Another thing I do with them is my listening center. They don't have anyone reading to them at home…I feel that this is one of the most important strategies. They are listening to the story; they are seeing the words." The importance of exposing African immigrant learners to a literacy rich environment was also suggested by Participant1, "Speaking slower and using the vocab cards. Also…providing them the background information that they would need to do an assignment. Fairy tales, rhymes, they do not have understanding of. I would tell the parents to watch Sesame Street."

In addition to specific strategies to support academic success, Participant 7 highlighted an overall approach to instruction, "As basic as it seems, the more concrete the better…I picture myself if I was just kind of transplanted, and I didn't speak, to see things and to hold things, and to be as concrete as you can about things would be the most helpful." According to the participants, providing African immigrant learners with learning within a concrete context can support their overall academic success.

Social. Participant 2 identified a strategy that is often over-looked, but is critical to the success of African immigrant learners. She said, "You don't want the kids to be afraid. I think it is something so small, but how you talk to the kids can make a difference. Sometimes I wish that teachers could voice-record themselves and then see that maybe you could get a different outcome. As teachers we are to model the behavior we want to see." Interacting with students in

a positive way will support the development of a positive student-teacher relationship that lays the foundation for academic success.

Cultural. Participant 4 reflected on the importance of cultural acceptance as a means to support academic success, "I think maybe getting to know them and their culture…Just letting them know that you are proud of their culture and that they should be proud of their culture. The relationship is important." The data clearly shows, that acknowledging their culture and celebrating their cultural differences strengthens the teacher-student relationship providing that security for the immigrant students to take academic risks.

Interview question 8: As an educator what resources do you feel are required to meet the academic needs of African immigrant learners?

Academic. Commonalities amongst the required resources were shared. Both Participant 3 and Participant 1 referred to the need for additional staff and smaller class sizes. In addition to smaller class sizes, Participant 3 and 6 highlighted critical materials necessary for academic success. Participant 3 stated, "I think we need more picture books." Participant 6 shared the need for additional staffing resources and materials, "I think we need more teachers as resources…I think ABC mouse and Star Fall because they are repetitive…I think we need more center time and material for the centers." The importance of integrating a multi-faceted approach that incorporates physical and intellectual capital to support academic growth and success amongst African immigrant students cannot be minimized according to the participants.

Social. No data was reported by participants.

Cultural. Although most of the participants presented instructional strategies and materials to support academic success and they will be examined below. Participant 7, however,

highlighted a different approach to what resources are required to support the academic success of African immigrant learners. She said:

> I don't think that things are that important but I think it is the training that goes into preparing teachers for this…. There was a half-day professional development but we need more than that and on a consistent basis. It was about a half-day, but it wasn't really a training, but [instead] articles to bring awareness to the new circumstances. I think we should, before we get into "things", we need training.

In conjunction with professional development and training, Participant 1 suggested that a cultural liaison would be beneficial to support the teachers in developing their cultural competencies so that parental engagement can be supported,

> I think we definitely need to have a liaison person or team up with a community center or cultural center…. There was one father and his little boy had a lot of issues. At first he was nice and then he kind of turned. I am not sure how much it was because he was African, but he had a hard time with a woman telling him what to do, or a woman giving suggestions. We would have these meetings and it was me, the female guidance counselor, his wife who sat like "this" (indicating eyes down), and I couldn't address the wife and I think it would have been really helpful to have a male that he could speak to or relate to because the father heard nothing…. I think we need to acknowledge as a district that there are so many cultures in our district and the issues that we are having within the district. There seems to be an ignorance that these kids exist and we know that the kids are not fine.

According to these participants, developing cultural competency and providing more than one cultural liaison within the school district would provide the African immigrant families an avenue of support and understanding necessary to support their children in their academic success, which hinges on parent-teacher communication.

Interview question 9: Based on your response to the last question, how prepared do you feel to meet the academic needs of African immigrant learners?

The participants' responses to this question had an undercurrent of low self-efficacy in\their abilities to meet their African immigrant learners' academic needs. Participant 2 clearly stated, "I do not feel prepared to meet them. I would say that I am not familiar…I do talk to my kids and try to get to know them, but I don't get to know their cultures or traditions that I could bring to my class that would help me, that could be in my "backpack" then I would be comfortable and I would be able to bring that into a math problem or something else." Participant 4 concurred with the impact of her limited cultural competency:

> I always feel like I could learn more…I would like to learn more strategies. Obviously we use the strategies that we want to remediate the students who are struggling, but is there something more culturally based to help the students who are struggling? That is what I would like to learn.

Participant 3 reflected on the inconsistency of preparedness that she feels:

> I think that it is hit or miss every year…When you raise your voice a lot them put their heads down…A lot of them look like they are working. A lot of them adapt to the school behaviors that are expected but not the content.

The African immigrant students are able to mimic the behaviors of successful students, writing, appearing to read, working, but when the work is examined the African students are not meeting the standard.

Interview question 10: What have you learned to do that supports social relationships that you would like to share with other teachers?

Academic. No data was reported by the Participants.

Social. Many of the participants identified the importance of providing a buddy for the new immigrant as a strategy they found works in supporting social relationships. Participant 3 described her implementation of this strategy, "I have tried to make the kids [non-immigrant students] ambassadors and so they are a buddy with somebody…. I find that having an ambassador makes that person a buddy…. I think making them buddies is really important." Participant 1 emphasized the importance of having a buddy along with creating a climate of safety as a means for supporting social relationships, "Having a buddy and making them feel safe."

Participant 7 focused on the importance of the effect of a positive relationship between student and teacher and its effect on the students' social success:

> I think finding what interests these kids; getting to know them. That, I think, is the basis for everything. It's forming a relationship with your kids, no matter where they are from. And you can find out what they enjoy. And you can partner them up with kids who have the same likes. I think that everyone is really overwhelmed, I am sure, but getting to know the kids, I think that's huge. I feel like the teachers that are coming in, I feel like they are fresher and kind of willing to try things. And I think, I mean I have seen teachers

> regress, where I feel like in the past they did a good job getting to know their kids, and now they are done, they're done. And that's when you see the behaviors. And I see that after Christmas it's much easier, I think people are more willing to invest in the front end. I see after January 1st, everyone is tired, high stressed, frazzled. It's not easy.

Participant 2 also placed the onus on the teacher as the means to assist African immigrant students in the development of their social success, "I think it starts with the teacher and the expectations the teacher holds. There have been times that kids will come up and say, 'So and So was playing by themselves and we went over and played with them.'" Both Participants recognized the value of the teacher leading by example, whether the students see the teacher taking the time to get to know the new immigrants or the teacher expecting students to include everyone when they play, it is clear that the role of the teacher is important.

Cultural. Showing interest in the cultural backgrounds of students may also support their social success. Participant 3 discussed the importance of this strategy, but also the challenge that can present itself. She said, "I also try to talk about where we come from in the world and a lot of the immigrants don't know where they come from. They will say something like, 'I come from far away'. They don't have a connection or knowledge of the country." In spite of the importance of welcoming students and their cultural differences as a means to support social success, there is a barrier to utilizing this strategy: especially if the African immigrant is unclear of what country or culture they left.

Interview question 11: As an educator what resources do you feel are required to meet the social needs of African immigrant learners?

Academic. No data was reported by participants.

Social. Providing the students with a safe environment to voice concerns and celebrate successes offers an important resource that fosters social success. Participant 6 illustrates this point:

> I made sure I did the class council every Friday…You come in and you sit down and make sure everyone can see each other. All week long you are able to write it on a piece of paper if something good happened, someone gave you an apple, etc., they are compliments. They would read five to 10 compliments and they can hang them on the wall. Then it was my turn. I would share three things they did really well this week. Then the kids would talk to a partner about why I think they did well. Then I would say now you talk to your partner about something we can improve on, a problem you are having.

According to the participants, it is important for students to feel they have a voice and can share concerns in a safe-environment. Participant 6 suggested, "The relationship is very important [to social success]."

Cultural. Participant 1 argued the importance of having professional development in the area of Cultural Diversity as well as specific training on the African cultures represented within the school district is a critical means to support the social success of African immigrant learners. She detailed ways the district might proceed:

> At our in-services we could have people come in and talk about Cultural Diversity. Also having a Culture Day in our school. We sent home a survey and had the parents fill out the form and the majority of our kids are from Sierra Leone and Liberia and if we could have someone at our in-services speak specifically about those cultures it would help. Not

> just in general, but specifically about those since they are significant in number…The little things are so important.

Participant 2 emphasized the importance of a deeper cultural understanding and its role in the social success of African immigrant learners. She explained:

> I would just say…knowing their culture and knowing what they come over with…. Just having a conversation with the kids about their cultures, knowing that the little bit can make a difference. It could change maybe how you treat the child or at least take into consideration those experiences more than if you didn't know.

Participants believed that creating an environment that allows the students to understand that you accept them and their cultural differences, will support the development of the confidence the students need to foster their own social success.

Interview question 12: Based on your response to the previous question, how prepared do you feel to meet the social needs of African immigrant learners?

There was a wide range of perceived level of preparedness from the participants relating to meeting the social needs of African immigrant learners. Of all seven participants, only Participant 5 and Participant 7 felt with confidence they were prepared to meet the social needs. Participant 5 reflected on this as one of her strengths, "I feel that is the one thing I do well. I may not know how to do their academics all the time, but their social I feel I do that really well." Participant 7 acknowledged her own strengths as well, "I feel pretty good. I mean every kid is different, I mean have I had 100% success, no, and there are tough cookies, but yes, I feel prepared. Even the one who had a really difficult 5th grade year, they had a good year this year." Participant 2 and Participant 4 emphasized that although there are some instances whereby they

are prepared to meet the social needs of African immigrant learners, there are times they could use more support. Participant 4 candidly shared, “Sometimes I feel like I am not doing a good job, I feel like you can’t be everywhere all of the time.” Participant 2 revealed her wavering confidence, “I think I could do it, but don’t think I feel as confident as I would if I had information or resources.” Participant 1 shared simply her lack of self-efficacy in meeting the social needs of African immigrants, “I don’t feel prepared really at all.”

Interview question 13: Is there anything you have learned to do to support cultural success that you would like to share with other teachers?

Academic. Participant 3 emphasized the importance of listening centers and tutoring in crossing the cultural divide between African immigrant home countries and American culture:

> I had a child who did not speak any English. I put him on listening centers. I found the listening center really helped. The next year he went to a different school and he was there and he was doing so much better. I really feel the listening center and he had a kid come and tutor him [really helped].

Social. According to Participant 1, the importance of parental engagement and how to best support immigrant families is critical to immigrant student success. This is so that parents can be a resource, “I’ve paired parents up to help each other so if I have two parents from *‘here’* or two parents from *‘there,’* I would pair them up.”

Cultura*l.* According to Participant 4 encouraging African immigrant learners to share their culture with their classmates will support their cultural success, “Asking the students to share about themselves or bring in pictures of themselves and where they are from.” Conversely Participant 3 acknowledged a challenge to cultural success: the loss of the novelty of the

newcomer. This was highlighted in her recollection of the excitement of her former students ten years ago would have when a newcomer would arrive. She compared this to how her students respond today:

> The kids definitely accepted him and they were curious about him and wanting him to speak English with them. I think what happens now is that culturally there are so many kids now and now it isn't a novelty anymore and their cultural identity is not embedded in them anymore.

Interview question 14: As an educator what resources do you feel are required to meet the cultural needs of African immigrant learners?

Academic. According to Participant 6, investment in technology supports the cultural success of her students:

> I think it goes back to technology. I had a computer cart outside of my class. I had essentially a whole cart, some didn't work but they [the students] could work with a partner. But then I had to buy USB memory sticks. I also think that DVDs or library of resources, like a Netflix for education and the different websites that we are allowed to use but some require membership. This year I used Brain Pop Jr. We have a Brain Pop junior when we were learning about caring for animals. I can tell you that you need to give your animal food and water but they got to see 8 minute clips they are cartoony. Even the girl who didn't talk answered. More resources that are now and relevant.

The data suggests that integrating a technologically rich environment will support hesitant immigrants to engage in their learning.

Social. Participant 4 highlights the importance of establishing time outside of the traditional learning environment to foster cultural success, "Finding time to get to know them. And maybe some solo time away from other people like an after school club, or mentorship where you can get to know them." Participant 7 also emphasizes the importance of social interactions and their positive effect on cultural success:

> I think the meetings [morning meetings] work and their interaction is really powerful for them to be able to talk and for them to be able to share. I think when I share things with them that really opens up conversation and fosters them to share things with you and each other.

Cultural. According to Participant 5 offering an opportunity for diverse cultures to be celebrated would be an effective strategy in supporting cultural success. However, she also examined the administrative challenges to supporting cultural success:

> Because we have so many, we should have a cultural night. We are not ready. We need to adapt to what students we have, instead we are making them fit to what we do. Sometimes I think, unfortunately, the drum has been banged so long that we have a sense of everything is going to cost us something so that is not our priority to do some of these things…but I think they [district personnel] think that without even exploring options. Even one more staff person whose background is in ESL would help. Someone who could coordinate. It's not always that sense of money. Even the suggestion that an expense causes us to step back [and not try to solve the problem] and I think that drum has been banged too long.

Participant 5 expressed the frustration of district decision makers assuming there are costs that can't be paid for and therefore shut down the opportunity to even investigate options to meet the cultural needs of students. She also revealed her perception that staff may not even inquire for assistance or additional resources because the district has "banged the drum" of having limited funds for so long that staff wouldn't even consider asking for support.

Interview question 15: Based on your response to the previous question, how prepared to do you feel to meet the cultural needs of African immigrant learners?

The participants expressed moderate confidence in their perceptions of their level of preparedness to meet the cultural needs of African immigrant learners. Participant 1 emphasized her diverse educational and instructional backgrounds as well as her ability to collaborate with other teachers as her reasons for feeling prepared. She said, "I feel prepared because I've had a diverse background in education, my own experience that I bring to the table and collaborating with my colleagues, I feel that gives me confidence." Participant 3 shared that she would feel more prepared if there were structural supports and additional resources available to support her, "A smaller class size. I think that is the biggest thing. When you have 7 children [African immigrants] in a class of 28 that is a lot. If anything, I think having an ESL teacher in each building would be helpful." Participant 4 examined her lack of confidence in how prepared she feels within the larger context of understanding where the African immigrants are coming from and the challenges they experienced prior to their arrival in her school. She said,

> It is very difficult, I think. Even having visited the countries [African countries where many of her students come from] I was only there for 11 days and it was 3 countries in 11 days. I went there with a friend who is building schools. We brought pens and soccer

> balls and flip flops. In some places in countries we visited you can go to school if you have a pen, so the children would come up to you and say, 'Bic, Bic'. Now we weren't bringing Bic brand, but it didn't matter. That is why some of the African kids can't understand why the other kids act the way they do in school because you don't always get to go to school after a certain grade level and you often have to pay for school.

Participant 2 also emphasized her limited cultural understanding as a reason for her limited confidence in her ability to meet the cultural needs of her African immigrant learners. She shared:

> I don't feel as prepared as I want to be. I have experiences and background that I have that I can bring to the table, where not everyone has that. Could it be a district thing that is provided; maybe not about a specific kid, but about the different cultures would help. I think that the district should celebrate the cultures.

The data suggests an investment in cultural competencies as a means to meet cultural needs of African immigrant learners.

Interview question 16: What do you feel you need personally to be successful in supporting our African immigrant learners?

Academic. Participants 1, 4, and 6 advocated for academically-based supports. Participant 1 expressed the importance of a climate that supports the craft of teaching, "I would think having a little more freedom with what we can teach and how we can teach it that would probably be most helpful." Participant 4 emphasized her need for reliable technology and for on-going professional development within the confines of the work day, "I need more technology, and more reliable technology, more professional development. Maybe in the afternoon, it doesn't

have to be all day." Participant 6 desired functional supports and expressed her frustration with not having her needs as a teacher met:

> I need organization. Organization is key. I need student support in organizing my classroom. I need organized materials. I need to know where my materials are coming from because I need professional development. I need teacher-chosen professional development. We would benefit so much if our whole county did professional development. Varying perspectives or ideas on classroom management or reading instruction, [and] how to make social studies textbooks understandable. I don't need to go to a PD on how to foster relationships or behavior management. I do need to go to a PD on how to teach kindergartners how to read…Give me ideas. I have 4 kids who still don't get how to do addition. Instead of this, it's what SFA [Success For All] year 2 will look like. It's not relevant. Give me something I need. We are shot down anytime that we suggest something.

The data demonstrates the need for teacher input in designing professional development opportunities that support meeting the needs of African immigrant learners.

Social. According to Participant 7 there needs to be time allotted for opportunities to foster positive relationships amongst students and teachers, "I think time to do these other projects. I am doing a lot of stuff I think for my own sanity. That is why I did the running program, that's why I am doing the garden. But to have time to have those extra things to interact with the kids on a very different level."

Cultural. According to Participants 2 and 5 professional development is critical to meeting the cultural needs of African immigrant learners. Participant 2 emphasized the

importance of professional development specifically related to cultural awareness, "Some professional development and maybe a 'did you know in your building you have kids from here and here and here.'" Participant 5 advocated for a generalized approach to meeting the needs of African immigrants, "Professional development is critical." Participant 3 suggested the need to foster understanding amongst all students and parents as it relates to cultural awareness. She said, "I think the children need some type of awareness. They need an awareness of ESL and how to treat the kids from other countries too…They don't have the understanding. Having to educate the parents is [also] needed."

Interview question 17: In what ways has the WPSD prepared its teachers to meet the needs of African immigrant learners?

According to each of the participants there is a shared perception that the WPSD has neglected this population and the teachers who serve them. Most of the participants emphasized this perceived reality without criticism of the WPSD, but instead emphasized it as more of an observation. Participant 1 stated, "I don't think it has truthfully. And I don't mean it to be a criticism but I think it's that it hasn't even noticed that there is a huge number of a different population arriving here and the challenges aren't being addressed." Participant 7 expressed her concerns:

> There is not even an awareness that there is an issue. We need to recognize that there is a problem supporting our immigrants, and I think that this is a real issue not just with our immigrants but with our general population that is not being recognized. And we are crisis mode, our kids aren't doing well, our parents aren't doing well.

Participant 4 stated simply, “I don’t think that we have caught up to what we need. The language surveys need to be in their dialect. We have them in Spanish but what about all of the African dialects?”

Both Participants 2 and 5 responded frankly about the lack of preparation they have received. Participant 2 clearly stated the method has been, “Placing us in a classroom and having us work it out.” Participant 5 was more reflective:

> I don’t think it has been a priority. I think they realize they now have to do ‘something’ but what the ‘that’ is they have not yet identified it and if they have they haven’t sent it down with the troops. The push-in services are a nice pair of socks, the pull-out service is a nice hat. But the students need more than that. If a kid is 500 words [reading] and in 3rd grade he needs more than that, she needs more than that, the teacher needs more.

Participant 3 and 6 were more critical of the WPSD in their lack of support in preparing their teaching staff to meet the needs of African immigrant learners. Participant 3 responded:

> None. They have never told me once. The first day of school in my new school year they told me I was the ESL class. The ELL kids were being pulled and the Special Ed were getting pulled at another time…I received no preparation. And that year they just kept coming. Now you get 24 hours’ notice when you get a new kid and you still don’t know where they are from. I feel like they don’t give you anything, they only tell you that they all get pulled for 45 min a day.

Participant 6 expressed her frustration with the lack of preparation and support from the various levels of administration:

> We had one, one hour in-service and that was about it and it wasn't really a good in-service. We have not been professionally developed. I do what I do to survive to have the kids thrive. My goal is to have them reading when they leave my classroom. You realize that in 10 years there is not one person that is up top [administration] that has been here longer than 10 years. Besides that there is not one person at the top that has been here [Allen Elementary] …The teachers are the ones that stay. I've been here for 16 years and have had 15 principals…The other thing is that there are so many PDs that are not worth a thing. A lot of PD feels like punishments. It's sickening, one of the principals said if you don't like it, there's the door. I stay, I am the one here giving the kids food, I am the one giving the kids books, coats, book bags. It's not the Admin so it's insulting to us. Not everyone has the same ethics. Unless you have someone who is a visionary with ethics and who is also going to insist people do things. Our district has gone to nit pick things. There is a sign outside my door [referencing SFA reading program requirement], that doesn't make me a good teacher…. I would to love to have a principal come in, sit down at my desk, and sign my plans…put notes on them or in my mailbox about what I was doing in my classroom.

The data is clear, according to the participants, there has been limited preparation provided by the WPSD to meet the needs of African immigrant learners.

The research questions and their corresponding subquestions provided the participants the means to examine how to best support the positive academic, social, and cultural development of African immigrant elementary school learners. The data provided by the participants highlighted the barriers to academic, social, and cultural success of African immigrant learners and identified

successful strategies utilized by the participants to overcome these barriers in order to support the positive academic, social, and cultural development of these students. The findings illuminated from the themes and sub-themes offered recommendations by the participants in order to best support students, parents, and teachers so that African immigrant elementary students of the WPSD can consistently experience academic, social, and cultural success.

Evidence of Quality

Validity and trustworthiness are critical components of this multiple site collective case study. I ensured the results of this study would be credible by establishing the validity of my results. I accomplished this by incorporating critical validations strategies identified by Creswell (2007). The foundation of my study rested upon the trust that I fostered between myself and my participants. From the initial point of contact to the final thank you, I worked hard to have an appreciative and professional stance toward my participants. It began with the invitation to participate in my study, establishing a convenient time and library for their interviews to take place, ensuring confidentiality of their participation and data that was collected. Later I demonstrated my care of their well-being during the interview by offering them water, and lastly showing my gratitude for their time and contribution by offering a compensation of a $25 gift card, allowed me to demonstrate my respect of my participants, thereby building the foundation of my study on trust.

In addition to fostering a trusting relationship between my participants and myself, I also incorporated triangulation to support the trustworthiness and validity of my results. I collected data from interviews with seven participants, each possessing over eight -20 years teaching experience, from three different elementary schools, across five different grade levels. To ensure

the accuracy of our interview data, upon completion of the interviews I implemented the validation strategy of member-checking whereby each participant received a copy of their transcript via e-mail in which they could identify any errors or misinterpretations of their responses. All participants reviewed their transcripts and responded via e-mail that their transcript was accurate.

My second measure of triangulation to support the trustworthiness and validity of my results was to solicit a peer reviewer to evaluate my coding scheme and data. Ms. Smith, my peer reviewer, is a respected ESL teacher within the WPSD who does not work within the three elementary schools utilized for my study. She met with me on August 21, 2015 to intensely review my coding scheme and data. During this time, we went through the interview that Ms. Smith coded. We went through the parts of the coding scheme not already discussed and continued discussing all codes until we reached consensus. Upon the conclusion of our peer review session, Ms. Smith acknowledged the accuracy of my coding scheme and corresponding data (J. Smith, Personal Communication, August 21, 2015).

My third means of triangulating the findings of my study was incorporating student artifacts identified and provided by the participants. The artifacts demonstrated evidence of the strategies the participants implemented that foster academic, social, or cultural success. Some chose artifacts that highlighted the challenges experienced by African immigrant students. A sampling of student artifacts, which support the strategies identified within the data, are presented after each research question's results. Additional artifacts are located in Appendix E as additional information to add richness to the account.

Along with identifying my own potential for bias as a teacher within the WPSD and maintaining a cognizant approach of the potential for bias throughout my study, I also invested a significant amount of time incorporating rich, thick descriptions of the findings of my study. These findings were thoroughly examined and clearly articulated in order to support the possible transfer of these to results to other settings (Creswell, 2007).

Lastly, a summary table located in Appendix D identifies research questions, related themes and subthemes, data highlights, as well as the source of participant responses. Evidence of quality can be found within the consistency and repetitive themes that emerged from the data. For example, providing opportunities for students to foster cultural pride can be found in employed supports for academic success, social success, and cultural success. Another example is assigning a buddy can be found not only in employed supports for academic success but also within employed supports for social success. A third example is that of collaborative grouping as an employed support for academic, social and cultural success. The repetitiveness and consistent nature of the data garnered from my study provides additional evidence of quality.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This multiple site collective case study began as an investigation to examine what academic, social, and cultural challenges elementary African immigrant learners are experiencing that are impacting their academic success. It is also an investigation of the positive supports implemented to mitigate those challenges. The multiple site collective case study allowed for the problem to be examined through the perceptions of their teachers along with how their teachers perceive their own effectiveness to meet and overcome those academic, social, and cultural challenges. The data revealed 16 themes resting upon the foundation of the four central research questions:

1. What are WPSD teacher's perceptions of factors influencing the academic success of African immigrant elementary school learners?
2. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the social success of African immigrant elementary school learners?
3. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the cultural success of African immigrant elementary school learners?
4. What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness in meeting the academic, social and cultural needs of African immigrant elementary school learners?

After a thorough collection and analysis of the data it is clear that instructional strategies focused on integrating a literacy rich environment with collaborative learning opportunities best supports African immigrant students in the positive development of their academic, social, and cultural success. Additionally, the findings suggest it is essential that teachers work on fostering

safe and welcoming classroom environments that concentrate on developing nurturing student–teacher relationships. Also important are positive peer interactions in nontraditional academic exchanges (e.g., gardening) which provide opportunities for African immigrant learners to build their confidence in social situations so that they may be more comfortable with taking academic risks within the classroom. Lastly, increased cultural competency and professional development specific to various African cultures represented within WPSD were also identified as critical strategies. In order to support teachers, the district should invest in helping teachers develop background knowledge of the diverse student population within their classrooms. These participants were chosen because they are skilled at supporting the immigrant students, but they want support for themselves and for others so that they can be more prepared to address the strengths and areas for growth that their African immigrant students bring to the classroom.

Interpretation of Findings

The literature examined and reviewed in preparation for my study revealed instructional strategies as well as strategies to support and develop the social and cultural success of immigrant learners. Throughout the process of analyzing my data, several parallels can be drawn between the themes that were revealed in my data and the literature reviewed. There were a total of 16 themes that emerged from the data analyses. These are subsumed under the four research questions. For each research question supports and barriers were discussed. In terms of academic success, teachers had many strategies but were concerned about the barriers to parental engagement as well as the lack of skills with which students arrived. Social success was fostered primarily through the buddy system and extracurricular activities. Barriers were due to the mental shock many immigrant students experience and the different cultural norms that children

use to define their differences. Cultural success included having students share their cultural backgrounds and norms via dance, stories, and sports. Cultural success was also identified by positive relationships fostered between parents and teachers, students and teachers, and the importance of the cultural competencies of the staff working with African immigrant learners. Indeed, teachers were very clear about their need for professional development regarding cultural competency and parental engagement, among other topics. In the next sections I will provide support for the interpretation of each of the 16 themes found in the data summarized here.

Research Questions

Research question 1: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the academic success of African immigrant elementary school learners?

Theme 1: Supports for parental engagement. Zimmerman-Orozco (2011) emphasized the importance of engaging immigrant families as a means to support their child's academic performance. According to the data, parental engagement and its role in the academic success of their children was also identified. In addition to reaching out to immigrant parents, Participant 1 demonstrated her role as a facilitator to connect parents from similar countries in order to foster a positive support for them outside of the school community as well. With the absence of a formal newcomer's program that supports African immigrant learners and their families within WPSD, Participant 1 found a way to generate community connections and support on her own.

Theme 2: Barriers to parental engagement. The findings of this study illustrate the numerous challenges of establishing and maintaining parental engagement. In addition to the limited cultural competency of what is deemed culturally appropriate for parental contact, communication is limited to Spanish and English forms only. Maxwell (2012) suggested

providing district materials in languages other than English can support effective communication between home and school. With the numerous languages represented within WPSD, communication is a significant barrier. This was compounded by the fact that teachers did not know if their African immigrant students were living with their parents or sponsors, and whether sponsors were family members or others. Not understanding the relationship between their African immigrant students and those responsible for them at home adds an additional barrier to fostering positive communication between themselves and the students' caregivers.

Theme 3: Employed supports for academic success. The data revealed from the participants demonstrate significant supports employed to foster academic success amongst their African immigrant learners. In addition to a literacy rich environment with numerous visual aid and study cards, the findings suggest that scaffolding is critical to supporting African immigrant students understanding of newly introduced material. Both Participant 4 and Participant 7 emphasized the importance of literacy scaffolding as a support when developing the writing of their students (Lucas & Villegas, 2008).

Using cooperative learning opportunities as a means to cultivate academic success amongst African immigrant learners was frequently highlighted throughout the data. In the literature, Allison & Rehm (2011) acknowledge this strategy as a critical factor in developing the academic success of immigrant learners. The findings reveal that offering purposeful collaborative learning opportunities encourage African immigrant students to take academic risks within the safety of their groups or partners. The findings also demonstrated that the strategy of assigning a buddy to the newcomer helps to mitigate those initial fears and anxieties that they may experience. This strategy also encourages the classmates to take ownership of the new

student's arrival. Participant 6 discussed at length the important role the students played in welcoming the newcomers by creating books that introduced the African immigrants to American culture.

Although there was not a significant amount of literature found in the area of fostering positive relationships between African immigrant learners and their teachers, the findings of my study reveal the critical importance the student/teacher relationship plays in African immigrant students' academic success. Participants 2, 4, 6, and 7 emphasized this critical factor. The findings also indicated clearly that taking time to truly get to know the students and the cultures from where they came can assist them in generating appropriate comments that can foster students' cultural pride and support their academic performance.

Theme 4: Barriers to academic success. Within the literature review, Beck (2008) reveals one of the largest challenges for immigrant learners is to understand the cultural context of the vocabulary or ideas that are introduced. The findings of my study identifies language barriers as a significant challenge with a minimum of eight African countries and many dialects it is a challenge. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 5 identified languages as a significant barrier to the academic success of African immigrant learners. This barrier also transferred to the homes of these students, as Participant 1 acknowledged that parents are unable to provide homework support for them at home due to their own limitations with English proficiency. Participants 1, 4, 5 and 6 further discussed the challenges of their own lack of training, preparation, and experiences to support African immigrant students with their academic endeavors and the lack of professional development provided to support the students. Participant 7 reflected on the potential of teaching staff to support African immigrant students if they had district guidance, "I

feel like we all could be doing a better job. But we need a vision, a plan. What can we be doing to help get these kids adapted to their new environment?"

Problems then involve language barriers, lack of training and professional development, and no clear vision or plan to support African immigrant learner from the district. In addition, African immigrant parents often misunderstand the role of schools within American culture in comparison to the role that schools may have played in their home country. For example, in Ghana physical discipline occurs in school so they don't understand why there are discipline problems here in the United States. In addition to these misunderstandings, there is also a hesitation or mistrust on behalf of the parents to identify their children ELL upon registration within the school district. Participant 6 explains:

A lot of parents have expressed to me they are afraid to put another language on their registration form because they are afraid there will be a negative stereotype. And they are afraid to send them to ELL classes because of what other people who have been in America longer than them have told them. They feel like it's a special education stigma that would be attached to them and it is very hard sometimes to explain to them that their child needs the extra resources to learn.

This can delay the services for their children who are in need of English language support services which may directly impact their academic success.

Research question 2: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the social success of African immigrant elementary school learners?

Theme Five: Employed supports for social success. The literature examined the strategies to support social success of immigrant learners. Kelly (2011) suggests that social

learning opportunities within the classroom, can foster supportive friendships within the walls of diversity. The findings of this study revealed a similar outcome. Participants 1 and 4 identified purposeful collaborative learning opportunities as a strategy to support the social success of their African immigrant learners. Again, assigning a "Buddy" to the newcomer was highly encouraged by Participants 1, 3, 4 and 5 for the benefit of both social learning and offering at least one person the immigrant student could identify as a friendly support.

In addition to in-class supports for developing the social success of their African immigrant learners, Participants 4, 6, and 7 highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for extra-curricular/social activities. Participant 7 revealed the benefits of her class garden and its impact on her African immigrant students' social interactions:

> I have seen, and I don't know if it's related, but *John* has totally come out of his shell so much more in the past 3 weeks to a month which corresponds to the time that he started working in the garden. He's animated… They may have done this in their home country too and this may be second nature to them. And *David* who never said anything to me, will now come up and say things to me because I have given him this responsibility.

The findings suggest that offering opportunities for African immigrants to demonstrate their individual talents and strengths will foster the opportunity for social success.

Theme 6: Barriers to social success. The review of the literature promoted the importance of providing opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds to develop a cultural understanding of each other that fosters social and cultural acceptance of immigrant learners (Lucas & Villegas, 2008). Although this may be the goal, the participants identified numerous barriers to the social success of African immigrant learners. Many of the participants identified

the cultural differences and lack of understanding on behalf of the native students. Unwelcoming comments from the nonnative students to the African immigrants were acknowledged by Participants 1, 6, and 7 with an emphasis on the darker complexion of the African students in comparison to the native students (who are predominantly black students). The additional barrier to the social success of African immigrants is the greater community in which the students reside. Participant 6 shared a very personal story about the impact of the adult community on the relationships between the older African Americans and the African immigrant students,

> By 5th grade they suddenly see the cultural difference. In my opinion, if I could attribute the change, it would be because they are able to go outside of their house by themselves, at home…. I remember crying when my kids went into 5th grade and I saw two of the kids were fighting that were best friends in 4th grade. I said to them, 'Why are you fighting?' And he said, 'Because he is a dirty African.'

There were also barriers to social success attributed to the African immigrant students themselves. Participant 3 highlighted the social ignorance of her African immigrant students not understanding social norms, such as personal space and personal hygiene, as a barrier to their own success.

Research question 3: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the cultural success of African immigrant elementary school learners?

Theme 7: Employed supports for cultural success. According to the literature, Agirdag (2009) suggests adding to the teacher's cultural repertoire within the classroom. In addition to professional development opportunities as a means to add to the cultural repertoire, Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 identified fostering and creating opportunities for students to share their culture

as a means to support their cultural success. Participants 1, 2, 4 & 7 also recommend fostering a positive teacher/student relationship, considering it as critical factor in supporting the cultural success of their students. Participant 7 reflects on this strategy, "I think, find what interests these kids, getting to know them. That is the basis for everything, it's forming a relationship with your kids no matter where they are from." Participants 2 and 4 shared a similar strategy, value students' cultural backgrounds. These findings suggest giving the students the opportunity to share and develop pride in themselves for who they are and where they come from will positively support cultural success.

Theme 8: Barriers for cultural success. The literature illuminated barriers for supporting the cultural success of African immigrants. Lonnquist, RB-Banks, and Huber (2009) acknowledged that obtaining a proficiency in the area of cultural competency is a significant challenge. Many teachers may know what the issues are as it relates to diversity and acceptance; however, some teachers struggle with the application of that knowledge in real classroom exchanges. The findings of the study revealed this as well. Minimal cultural competency was identified as a barrier for cultural success by Participants 1 and 2, not just on behalf of the teachers, but also on behalf of the native students as well. Participant 7 shared the barrier of not knowing students' prior experiences; what may have happened to them or what they may have witnessed while in their home country. Not having this knowledge can limit a teacher's ability to understand how to meet the students where they are, academically, socially, and culturally.

Research question 4: What are WPSD teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness to meet the academic, social and cultural needs of African immigrant elementary school learners?

Theme 9: Resource Needs for Academic Success. Within the review of the literature Allison & Rehm (2011) identified critical instructional strategies to support the academic success of immigrant learners: visual aids, cooperative learning opportunities, peer-to-peer, and alternative modes of assessments. Several parallels to these strategies are found within the results of this study. Participants 5, 6 and 7 identified the collaborative learning opportunity of Learning Centers as a means to foster positive social learning. Along with centers, Participant 6 emphasized the importance of facilitating small group instruction to provide the remediation. Participant 4 also discussed remediation but within the context of culturally relevant remediation. Another parallel to the strategies found in the literature was offered by Participant 3. She suggested to provide both a literacy rich labeled environment, and the use of picture books as a bridge to support those African immigrant students who are on a pre-primer reading level. Professional development was again presented as required resource by Participants 6 and 7, not only in the area of instructional strategies but also in the area cultural competency as well.

Theme 10: Perception of Preparedness to Positively Support Academic Success. The findings suggest that the participants possess moderate confidence levels in their abilities to support the academic success of their African immigrant students. Of the seven Participants, only two felt they were prepared to meet students' academic needs and they both had significant experiences outside of the WPSD that they discussed as their reasons for why they felt confident. The remaining five participants expressed their concerns about their abilities to meet their African students' needs. If there are minimal levels of support and preparedness amongst the teaching staff, it also decreases the opportunities of African immigrant students to properly assimilate within the school culture. The conceptual framework that informed this study,

segmented assimilation theory, suggested that immigrants assimilate into different elements of society based on what life and work experiences they possess (human capital), as well as how the new country is prepared to receive the newcomer (Portes & Rumbaut 2001). The knowledge and skill sets they already possess and the climate of the receiving school will determine the level of assimilation and success that the immigrant students will secure. If the district was able to facilitate the means to increase teachers' self-efficacy for meeting the needs of their African immigrant students, then it could mean a smoother transition and assimilation into the overall school community.

Theme 11: Resource needs for social success. Within the literature review, strategies to support the social success of immigrant students was discussed. Farris (2011) suggested opportunities whereby both immigrant students and non-immigrant students could exchange social capital. One strategy was to have immigrant students teach native students games they were familiar with, and then give the native students the opportunity to share a game so that the interaction supported mutual positive social development. Evidence of this is identified within the findings of the study as well. Several participants discussed the benefits of non-academic interactions as a means to support the social success, and ultimately academic success, of their African immigrant students. Participant 4 discussed the importance of finding activities that both immigrant and native students can do together; activities that would promote a common interest. Participant 6 focused on the importance of the class council meetings whereby all students could discuss the concerns and strengths of their class. Participant 6 was committed to investing the time to ensure that these meetings were a priority, even over academics at times.

Theme 12: Perception of preparedness to positively support social success. Viewing the findings of this study through the lens of the conceptual framework: segmented assimilation theory, offers a perspective and understanding of the lack of preparedness perceived by the participants to support the social success of their African immigrant learners (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee 2008). Most of the participants expressed they only felt somewhat prepared to support the social success of these students. Participant 4 shared her own limitations in being able to protect African immigrants from disparaging remarks, "Sometimes I feel like I am not doing a good job, I feel like you can't be everywhere all of the time." Participant 1 reflected on social challenges amongst her students and how prepared she feels to support positive social exchanges saying frankly, "I don't feel prepared really at all."

In addition to Participant 4 and 1, Participant 2 expressed her desire to have more resources to support her ability to support the social success of her African immigrant students, "I think I could do it, but I don't think I feel as confident as I would if I had information or resources." If the climate of the receiving school suggests they are ill-prepared to support immigrant students, then they are left to rely on their own knowledge and skill sets to support their success: academic, social, and/or cultural.

Theme 13: Resource needs for cultural success. The review of the literature examined critical resources for ensuring the cultural success of immigrant learners. Professional development of school staff should include diversity training specific to the cultures represented within their school. It should also include multicultural instructional strategies that support interaction between the various cultures to advance the academic, social, and cultural transition of immigrant learners as members the school community (Njue & Retish, 2010). The findings of

this study revealed similar and additional resource needs. Participants 1, 6, and 7 advocated for more time to implement strategies and extracurricular activities to support the development of cultural success. Professional development was also highlighted as a critical need to increase the teachers' cultural competencies. Additionally, Participant 5 suggested a shift in perspective of how best to support African immigrants in addition to establishing a culture night, "We should have a culture night. We are not ready. We need to adapt to what students we have instead we are making them fit to what we do."

Theme 14: Perception of preparedness to positively support cultural success. Within the findings of this study, the participants overwhelmingly express their lack of cultural competency as it relates to the diverse range of African cultures represented by their African immigrant students as they come from a variety of countries, including Liberia, Ivory Coast, Sudan, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and others. Of the 7 participants only Participant 1 expressed feeling prepared to meet the cultural needs of her African immigrant students. She perceived her level of preparedness to be related to her 3 years of working as a teacher on a Navajo Reservation, to which she generalized her skillset to her current diverse population. Participant 4 spent 11 days traveling through 3 African countries in which several of her students hail from. Despite that, she has reservations about feeling prepared to meet the cultural needs of her students, "It is very difficult, I think. Even having visited the countries I was only there for 11 days and it was 3 countries in 11 days."

The supplemental conceptual framework this study was facilitated within, racial–ethnic self-schema theory, suggests there is a positive correlation between one's level of identification with their racial–ethnic selves and their success in other racial–ethnic relationships. As such, a

more satisfied a person is with their racial–ethnic selves, the more positive their connection to the broader society and their academic performance (Altshul, Oyserman, & Bybee 2008). If the teachers are ill-prepared to foster the cultural success of their African immigrant learners, the students may not perform as well academically and may have difficulty developing a positive connection to the overall school community.

Theme 15: Personal needs to support African immigrant learners. The literature review highlighted the importance of professional development that provides effective instructional strategies and fosters cultural competency of all school staff (Williams, 2013). Each participant voiced their concerns about the lack of meaningful professional development, specifically as it related to preparing them to meet the academic, social, and cultural needs of African immigrant learners and most participants identified meaningful, relevant professional development within this specific theme. Participants 6 emphasized the importance of having teacher-driven professional development that is relevant, "Give me something that I need. We are shot down anytime that we suggest something." These findings suggest that effective and relevant professional development in the areas of supporting African immigrant students is paramount. The participants unilaterally thought they needed information about African immigrants that professional development could offer.

Theme 16: District preparation of teachers to support African immigrant learners. Zimmerman-Orozco (2011) suggest evolving the school district into an educational resource for parents and students alike will provide immigrant families the additional support they need for their child to succeed. The findings of my study clearly show that the WPSD is not yet evolving

into the resource that is needed by African immigrant students and their families. Participant 5 analyzed the WPSD limited support:

I don't think it's been a priority. I think they realize they now have to do something. But what the 'that' is they have not yet identified it and if they have they haven't sent it down with the troops. The push-in services are a nice pair of socks, the pull-out services are a nice hat. But the students need more than that."

While the participants all wanted professional development, but Participant 7 alluded to a greater concern:

> There is not even an awareness that there is an issue. We need to recognize that there is a problem supporting our immigrants, and I think that this is a real issue not just with our immigrants, but with our general population that is not being recognized and we are in crisis mode, our kids aren't doing well, our parents aren't doing well, and everyone is admiring 'how great this is'.

The data revealed specific successful strategies to meet the academic, social, and cultural needs of African immigrant students. Providing literacy rich environments, opportunities for collaborative academic learning experiences as well as non-academic social experiences for African immigrants to develop confidence with their peer relations were emphasized by the participants. Additionally, the data highlighted the importance of fostering opportunities for cultural awareness and pride amongst the diverse African immigrant students and developing cultural understanding amongst their peers as a means to encourage acceptance by their peers and social success.

Although these academic, social, and cultural supports were examined and specific strategies highlighted, there were significant needs identified to improve the participants' ability to support their African immigrant students. In addition to learning materials and improved technology, there was a critical need for professional development related to meeting the needs of African immigrants as well as having the district recognize the challenges related to supporting the African immigrant learners: improving parental engagement and communication, significant achievement gap between their African immigrant students and the non-immigrant population.

Summary

Each of these 16 themes that emerged from the data analyses and were subsumed under the four research questions. For each research question supports and barriers were discussed. Teachers perceived at least seven factors that influence the academic success: parental engagement, literacy rich environments, vocabulary cards, scaffolding, cooperative learning groups, partnering with a buddy, and positive student-teacher relationships. Although academics are still a challenge, the participants perceived success while employing these strategies and other teachers may benefit from hearing about them. Teachers perceived four factors that influenced students' social success: purposeful collaborative grouping, assigning a buddy, participating in extra-curricular activities, and community projects like a class garden. This indicates that the sphere of influence for social success is wider than the classroom, yet the greater community still poses a barrier with a reality of social tensions and must account for the child's living situation. Teachers perceived three critical factors that influenced cultural success: providing opportunities for students to share their cultural backgrounds, on-going professional

development related to the cultures represented in their classrooms, and positive student-teacher relationships. This indicates that students' cultural success is not within the realm of everyday classroom instruction; but there are moments teachers can incite appreciation of their students' diverse cultures. Teachers perceived four significant needs as factors influencing their ability to support their students: meaningful professional development related to instructional strategies and cultural competency, instructional materials, district support, and parental engagement. This indicates that teachers' have limited support and many needs. This is troubling because even the teachers who principals said are the best at supporting African immigrant students still experience significant dissatisfaction in their own abilities. In other words, although these identified teachers are experiencing success at meeting African immigrant students' needs, they are doing it in spite of limited support. In the next sections I will provide support for the interpretation of each of the 16 themes found in the data summarized here.

Implications for Social Change

This multiple site collective case study is potentially significant to social change agents for several reasons. The teacher participants represent the stakeholders with the most experience with our local problem of supporting our African immigrant learners in achieving academic, social, and cultural success. The findings may provide many teachers across the district's schools with actionable strategies, and give strength to teachers who may feel they are alone with addressing these challenges. There are many valuable instructional and socialization strategies from the participants that will be disseminated in order to improve the experiences of the African-immigrant students. For example, the participant's success with improving academic success by first improving social success through gardens, games, or dancing. School districts

may have data to support garnering funding for professional development designed to support the cultural identities and academic success of their immigrant learners. Importantly, the findings of this study may provide educators and researchers seeking to find ways to support African immigrant learners with excellent research-based information to further their interests and studies. When I began this research it was difficult to find 6 articles that were relevant to the African immigrant experience. This research is a valuable contribution to the literature and the people wanting to help African immigrants succeed in American schools.

Finally, the findings of this study will be shared with the district and thus may promote positive social change for the African immigrant learners and the entire community of the WPSD. Of special interest will be the successful instructional, socialization, and cultural support strategies teachers within the district are utilizing to foster academic achievement and minimize social, and cultural challenges experienced by African immigrant learners. Social change may occur rapidly as successful strategies from this research are attempted and proven successful by other teachers in the district. The most positive social change would be that a tsunami of effective teacher and student support may grow and flow over the community. Even greater change may occur when district employees read all of the research findings and gain a full understanding the teachers' perceptions of the factors influencing the academic, social, and cultural challenges experienced by this dynamic group of students.

The most important use of these findings will be each day, each moment, when African immigrant students experience success academically, socially, and culturally. The data from this study is inspirational; the effective instructional, social, and culturally sensitive learning environments are wonderful. These classrooms are rich with text and pictures, with students

eager to welcome immigrant children with personal books of American pictures and text, of teachers working to repair 4th grade student relationships broken by racism and cultural discrimination in 5th grade, and teachers sharing YouTube videos of Africans dancing who are able to encourage a child to get up in front of everyone and share her culture. The positive social change is in the moments when teachers across the district, and others with African immigrant children, will experience personal and professional success with African immigrant students thereafter.

Recommendations for Action

Student, Parent, and Teacher Support.

In order to best support African immigrant learners within the WPSD, the data clearly showed that the teachers want to be better supported. Effective and consistent professional development that focuses on the cultural differences amongst their African immigrant students is a solid beginning. Also important are effective remediation strategies that are culturally grounded will provide the teachers with the skillsets they need to devise and implement an instructional plan that meets the social, cultural, and academic needs of their students. The findings also indicate that opportunities for all students to participate in nonacademic activities that provide African immigrant learners the opportunity to develop social success outside of the traditional learning environment may translate into success within the classroom. Carving out time from the rigor of instruction should be considered.

The Superintendent, key administrative staff, education committee of the Board of Education and principals must garner support within or outside of the school system that recognizes the changing faces of the district so that they can support their staff and students.

Based on the teachers' frustration of not even knowing who is caring for their students at "home," further discussions regarding the establishment of a Newcomers Program should be held. Ideally, this program would support not only the immigrant students but offers a site and structure for families to come and share in their immigrant experiences with others similar to themselves. This recommendation is based on the participants' practice of connecting parents of children in their classroom.

Lastly, an overview of the findings of this study will be disseminated to the participants, principals, the Superintendent. I have already received an invitation from the Superintendent of Schools to present at the Education Committee of the Board of Education once my degree is conferred. It is there that I will present an overview of my findings, acknowledge what strategies are currently working and recommend, based on the findings, what we can do to positively develop the academic, social, and cultural successes of the African immigrant students in the WPSD. At this meeting I will also suggest and request approval for methods to share the strategies to teachers across the district possibly including graphic design e-mails, brochures, and the videotape of my presentation to the board.

The most important recommendation I would make based on this research is that teachers be given resources, recognition, and appreciation for their efforts to positively impact the academic, social, and cultural success of African immigrant students. Valuing these teachers can only encourage them to persist in making a valiant effort in the face of giant challenges such as a child consumed by anger after watching her parents beheaded, flown across the world to a bizarre world, and sent daily to a school she feels very isolated in (not to mention the fact that she can't speak or understand the language). As other teachers emotionally desperate to find a

way to do a better job for her African immigrant and African American students witness teachers who are having success with strategies from this study, they have hope. They too can try the strategies, experience success, and gain the self-efficacy that comes from seeing a boy grab her pants, look up at her, and ask a question in English the best he can. Positive social change will come from this research, because it can inspire the WPSD district to improve.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study gathered a significant amount of data regarding positive supports for the social, cultural, and academic success of African immigrant elementary school students. There were also additional topics for further study were revealed. One of the more pressing challenges that many African immigrant learners experience within the WPSD is the separation from the parents and siblings as they are placed with sponsors while they await their remaining family's arrival. What impact does this have on their ability to succeed? Are there additional challenges for African immigrants who are not with their biological parents as opposed to those who arrive with their biological parents? Are there differences in performance levels between these two sub-populations? How might the WPSD support African immigrant students to help mitigate the challenges of being separated from their parents? Although the exact number of African immigrant students experiencing this challenge has not yet been identified, the data suggests this to be an area of concern for many of the African immigrants and their teachers.

Another topic that may warrant further study is the impact of ethnic retention in terms of its relationship to African immigrants' academic success amongst the students within the WPSD (Akiba, 2007). The participants in this study were very clear that the child's academic success followed their social and cultural success. Is there a correlation between the cultural and social

success level and their academic achievement level within the WPSD? Are there similarities across diverse African cultures and gender within those cultures and specifically amongst those students who attend the WPSD? Investigating both of these topics may benefit both the local students in the WPSD and perhaps those school districts with a similar demographic profile.

Summary

Reflection

At the heart of my study and my desire to complete it are the numerous African immigrant learners within the WPSD who are not reading on level, not writing on level, and not proficient in on-grade level mathematics. These students are also experiencing challenges both socially and culturally based on who they are and where they come from. Over the 12 years of teaching in my school, I encountered many African immigrant students and watched them struggle; many were able to overcome challenges, but some did not achieve success. I began my study to investigate how to best support those African immigrant learners within my school district. I knew, based on the performance data, there were some African immigrants who were succeeding and I wanted to find out what teachers were doing that fostered those academic, social, and cultural successes with ultimate hope of sharing those strategies with other teachers so that success may breed success.

Working as a teacher in our school district's only middle school, I knew I would not want to utilize my school as the site in which I facilitated my study. I knew what my personal experience had been with our African immigrants and the challenges they experienced would cause me to be biased regarding the data I received. I chose three elementary schools for the sites of my study due to the fact that as a middle school teacher I only interacted with those teachers

on the secondary level. I would minimize the chance of interviewing a participant I already knew from previous workshops, in-services, or curriculum committee members. I also didn't want to risk interviewing a teacher from the high school that may have a student that I previously taught as this may affect my ability to stay unbiased as I collected the data over the course of my interviews.

Upon receiving IRB approval, I was quick to reach out to the principals of each of the elementary schools. I was impressed with the support they provided me and the availability they offered me to ensure I was able to garner the participants needed for my study to be a success. I reached out to the sample of participants and was incredibly fortunate to have 7 agree to participate in my study, especially because it was at the end of what we call "test season" and teachers are overwhelmed with close of the year activities and instructional goals.

My first interview was not as "smooth" as the rest. I was a little nervous and wanted to make sure that I asked every question with a neutral tone, didn't make guided comments that may skew the participants' response, or physical movements that may indicate I was agreeing with them, etc. By the time I started my second interview I felt confident and settled in with the process. I went into each interview with a "clean slate" approach to help me facilitate each interview as if it were my first and I was gathering the data for the very first time. I did this purposefully because I did not want to anticipate any answers. I wanted to do my best to "hear" each response for the first time. The challenge came when I was transcribing the data. I had planned on using a program Dragon Naturally Speaking to record and automatically transcribe the data, but found that it would not work with multiple people. The program has to be taught to

hear each person's speech. As such, I had underestimated the amount of time needed to transcribe each interview but persisted.

The analysis stage of my study was an arduous task and at times felt that I may not finish. The last 8 weeks have been my greatest struggle, yet proudest moments of my study. With the guidance and support of my doctoral chair I completed my findings and interpretation of those findings. I was surprised by the overwhelming evidence that suggested the need for professional development in understanding the academic, social, and cultural needs. I anticipated it would be brought up by at least one participant; however, all 7 participants recognized this as a something that is required and it was a sub-theme throughout all of the themes revealed. I was also impressed with the reflective nature of my participants, particularly Participant7 who highlighted the fact that not only are our African immigrants not doing well, our native students and our parents are not doing well. As a district we need to recognize this fact and consider that it may be the first step in mitigating these challenges.

Throughout the last seven years that I have been working on my doctorate and the last 3.5 years on my study, I kept a picture of my very first African immigrant learner close to my computer as I worked. Yesterday, as I was writing my dedication page, tears rolling down my face, I felt as if what I couldn't do for him over 10 years ago, I now am able to do for so many of his African brothers and sisters. I can offer real strategies to their teachers to positively support them in developing their academic, social, and cultural success with the hopes of fostering a future full of hope and opportunity. It was a proud and emotional moment for me. This journey, the sacrifice my family has made, the support I have received, and the joy that so many of my

African immigrant students have provided me over the years left me with a feeling of such gratitude.

As I look to the last stage of my study, I am excited to defend my dissertation, and to share a summary of my results with critical stakeholders within the WPSD as that will be the next step once my degree is conferred.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggested that the strategies highlighted throughout the review of the literature not only apply to the immigrant populations discussed in the literature review but also can be generalized to African immigrant learners, thus filling the gap identified in the literature. The emphasis on collaborative learning opportunities, literacy rich environments, and positive peer interactions outside of the traditional classroom environments were also revealed as critical strategies of support. From each of the participants, a desire to have meaningful and relevant professional development on how to support the academic, social, and cultural success of African immigrants was strongly emphasized. With the reality of less than ten percent of African immigrant learners reading on grade level, there is an urgent need to mitigate the academic, social, and cultural challenges experienced by this group of students. It will require all critical stakeholders and community members to recognize this problem and provide the professional development and training necessary to ensure all teaching staff are prepared to foster the positive development of academic, social, and cultural success amongst these students. The time is now, as 90% of the African immigrant learners are not prepared to meet the demands of the future that is waiting for them (PDE, 2012).

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Appendix A: Home Language Survey

Note: This survey will not be used in the data collection for this research. Rather it is the survey used by the school district to identify children for LEP status and services. It is discussed in the paper above.

The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requires that school districts/charter schools/full day AVTS identify limited English proficient (LEP) students in order to provide appropriate language instructional programs for them. Pennsylvania has selected the Home Language Survey as the method for the identification.

School District: Date:

School:

Student's Name: Grade:

1. What is/was the student's first language? _____

2. Does the student speak a language(s) other than English?

(Do not include languages learned in school.)

□ Yes □ No

If yes, specify the language(s): _____

3. What language(s) is/are spoken in your home? _____

4. Has the student attended any United States school in any 3 years during his/her lifetime?

□ Yes □ No

If yes, complete the following:

Name of School State Dates Attended

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

Person completing this form (if other than parent/guardian):

Parent/Guardian signature:

*The school district/charter school/full day AVTS has the responsibility under the federal law to serve students who are limited English proficient and need English instructional services. Given this responsibility, the school district/charter school/full day AVTS has the right to ask for the information it needs to identify English Language Learners (ELLs). As part of the responsibility to locate and identify ELLs, the school district/charter school/full day AVTS may conduct screenings or ask for related information about students who are already enrolled in the school as well as from students who enroll in the school district/charter school/full day AVTS in the future.

*www.portal.state.pa.us/.../updated_**home_language_survey**_form*.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

GENERAL

1. Why don't you start by telling me a little about yourself - where you are from, how you got into education, how long you've been in the school system." (Hatch, 2002, p.103).

2. Describe in general your experience over the last ___ years working with immigrant learners.

ACADEMIC

3. Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that was **academic**— it can be a success or challenge.
   Specificity Probes: What did **you** say? What did *they* say?
   What did **you** do? What did *they* do? Show me?

4. What factor(s) influence the **academic** success of African immigrant learners in your classroom?
   a. Is there anything you have learned to do to support **academic** success that you would like to share with other teachers?

5. As an educator what *resources* do you feel are required to meet the **academic** needs of African immigrant learners?

   a. Based on your response to the last question, how prepared do you feel to meet the **academic** needs of African immigrant learners?

SOCIAL

1. Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that was **social**— it can be a success or challenge.
   Specificity Probes: What did **you** say? What did *they* say?
   What did **you** do? What did *they* say?

2. What factor(s) influence the **social** success of African immigrant learners in your classroom?

3. What have you learned to do that supports **social** relationships that you would like to share with other teachers?

4. As an educator what *resources* do you feel are required to meet the **social** needs of African immigrant learners?

    a. Based on your response to the previous question, how prepared do you feel to meet the **social** needs of African immigrant learners?

CULTURAL

5. Would you please share a specific anecdote about your experience with African immigrant learners that was **cultural**— it can be a success or challenge.
    Specificity Probes: What did **you** say? What did *they* say?
    What did **you** do? What did *they* say?

6. What factor(s) influence the **cultural** success of African immigrant learners in your classroom?
    a. Is there anything you have learned to do to support **cultural** success that you would like to share with other teachers?

7. As an educator what *resources* are required to meet the **cultural** needs of African immigrant learners?

    a. Based on your response to the previous question, how prepared do you feel to meet the **cultural needs** of African immigrant learners?

TEACHER NEEDS

8. What do you feel you need personally to be successful in supporting our African immigrant learners?

9. In what ways has the William Penn School District prepared its teachers to meet the needs of African immigrant learners?

10. "Is there anything you wish to add to our conversation today?" (Janesick, 2004, p.77)

Appendix D: Themes

Research Questions, Emerged Themes Sub-themes, and Data Highlights

Research Question	Theme	Sub-Themes and Source Participant Numbers in parenthesis	Data Highlights
1	Supports for Parental Engagement	A. Partnering Parents from similar countries. (1) B. Looping with their child. (1) C. Building Positive Rapport (2,4)	"I've paired parents up to help each other so if I have two parents from or two parents from there I would pair them up." Miranda
1	Barriers to Parental Engagement	A. Language Barriers (1,3) B. Lack of Cultural Competency (1, 5) C. Sponsor vs Parent (3, 4) D. Illiteracy (4) E. Forms in English Only (4,5) F. Fear (6)	"I don't know what is culturally appropriate for parent contact." Charla
1	Employed Supports for Academic Success	A. Slower Rate of Speech (1) B. Repeat Directions (1) C. Assign a Buddy (1,3,4,7) D. Card Ring of Sight Words (1,3) E. Vocabulary(1,3 6) F. Scaffolding (providing background knowledge). (1,3,4,7) G. Using teaching techniques and learning activities that use all 5 senses. (1) H. Advocating (2,4) I. Parental Engagement (2,4,5,6) J. Positive Student/Teacher Relationship. (2,4,6,7) K. Critical Thinking Activities (2,3) L. Social Skills Curriculum (2,3) M. Picture Cards/Books	"Speaking slower and using the vocab cards. Also a lot of background information, providing them the background information that they would need to do an assignment." Miranda "Every time we got a new student, I gave the students magazines and I had them pick out things that I though and the students thought would be important to a 9 year old coming to America for the first time." Anna "Parental engagement and providing the kids with a safe learning environment and what I mean by that they feel that is okay to make mistakes." Laila "Another thing I do with them is

		(1,3,6) N. Tutor (1,3) O. Listening Center (3) P. Labeling the room (3,6) Q. Picture Dictionaries (3,6) R. Utilizing Immigrant students' strong desire to learn.(1,2,4,7) S. Collaborative learning.(1,2,3,4,7) T. Fostering Cultural Pride (2,4) U. One-on-one instruction (5,6) V. High Expectations (2,5) W. Videos/Educational TV Shows (1) X. Repetitive Phonics Activities (6) Y. Positive peer relationships (2,6,7)	my listening center. They don't have anyone reading to them at home. I constantly have them at the listening center. Now it is one kid one book at the listening center. I try to get all of my ELL learners through it every day." Audrey
1, 3	Barriers to Academic Success	A. Challenges with sending homework home. (1) B. Lack of prior knowledge/experiences.(1, 3, 4) C. Low-Cultural Competency (1) D. Acknowledgment from Administration (1) E. Curriculum (1, 2, 7) F. Language (1,2,3,5) G. Parental Experience with schools in home country. (4,5) H. Immigrant students' prior schooling experience in home country. (4,5,6) I. Lack of teacher preparation	"I feel like we all could be doing a better job but we need a vision, a plan, what can we be doing to help get these kids adapted to their new environment." Katrina "If I had that experience with him again in that grade level (immigrant student) I would do that a lot differently. He needed more support." Charla

		(1,4,5,6) J. Minimal pull-out support. (3, 5) K. Minimal push-in support (5) L. Parents' fear of child being stereotyped. (6) M. Testing/Assessments to determine eligibility.(5,6) N. Technology(6,7)	"A lot of parents have expressed to me they are afraid to put another language on their registration form because they are afraid there will be a negative stereotype. And they are afraid to send them to ELL classes because of what other people who have been in America longer than them have told them. They feel like it's a special education stigma that would be attached to them and it is very hard sometimes to explain to them that their child needs the extra resources to learn." Anna
1	Resource Needs Required for Academic Success	A. Cultural Liaison (1) B. Cultural Center (1) C. High Level of Cultural Competency (1,2) D. Picture Books (3) E. Smaller Class Size (3) F. Opportunity for remediation (4) G. Videos (5) H. Centers (5, 6, 7) I. Small Group Instruction (6) J. More ESL teachers (5,6) K. Technology (4,6) L. Professional Development (6,7)	"I don't think that things are important but I think it is the training that goes into preparing teachers for this." Katrina "I think we need more teachers as resources. We need more ESL teachers as a resource." Anna
4	Perception of Preparedness to Positively Support Academic Success.	A. Not Prepared (N/A) B. Somewhat Prepared (1,4,5,6) C. Prepared (2)	"I always feel like I could learn more. Obviously we use the strategies that we want to remediate the students who are struggling, but is there something more culturally based to help students who are struggling?" Bria
2	Employed Supports for Social	A. Counteracting students' unwelcoming comments. (1,2)	"Once in a while you will hear the kids say, he is so dark, but not really. Usually, they don't say much

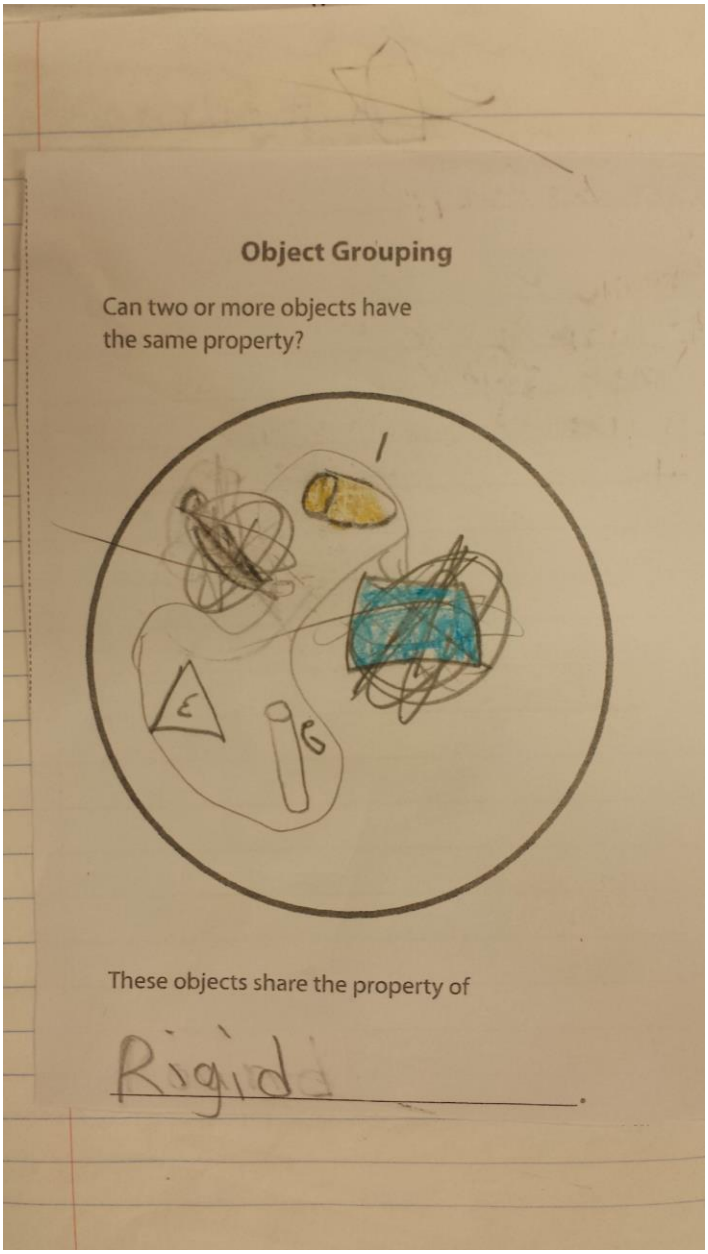
	Success	B. Fostering positive socialization opportunities. (1,2) C. Fostering a welcoming environment. (1,2) D. Providing a safe environment. (2,5) E. Assigning a Buddy((1,3,4,5) F. Modeling how to treat students. (2,3,5) G. Clubs that offer opportunity for shared experiences.(4,6,7) H. Purposeful Collaborative Learning Opportunities (1,4) I. Harnessing non-academic strengths of immigrant students (1,6,7) J. Community Building Activities (6,7)	because if I hear something then I will say something. I will say, 'How fantastic that he came from there, and this is what he did there, and I've never been there, and you've never been there.' And then it becomes this positive because they are still such people pleasers." Miranda "I think they feel comfortable enough to be curious about each other's culture." Laila "I have seen, and I don't know if it's related, but **John** has totally come out of his shell so much more in the past 3 weeks to a month which corresponds to the time that he started working in the garden. He's animated… They may have done this in their home country too and this may be second nature to them. And **David** who never said anything to me, will now come up and say things to me because I have given him this responsibility." Katrina
2, 3	Barriers to Social Success	A. Unwelcoming comments regarding skin color.(1,6,7) B. Unwelcoming comments regarding home country (6) C. Unwelcoming comments regarding how African immigrants speak. (3) D. Lack of prior social experiences with "American foods". (3) E. Lack of awareness of social norms such as personal space, etc. (3)	"Although a lot of our kids have nothing, they will make fun of children who have less than they do." Audrey "By 5th grade they suddenly see the cultural difference. In my opinion, if I could attribute the change, it would be because they are able to go outside of their house by themselves, at home….I remember crying when my kids went into 5th

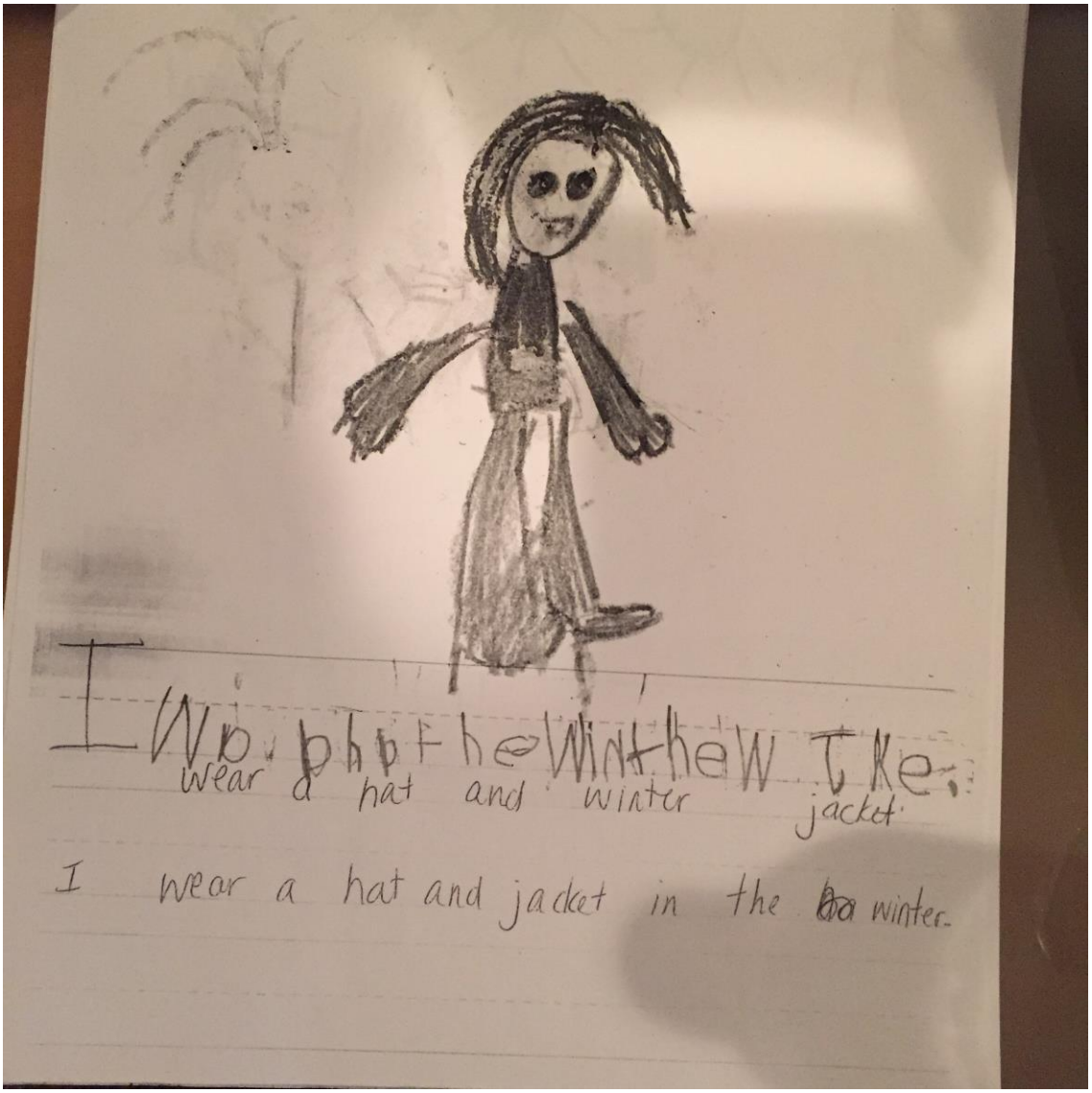
		F. Economic disparity of African immigrant students. (3) G. Gender Difference (3) H. Unknown backgrounds/experiences of immigrant students. (4) I. Exposure to the greater community.(6)	grade and I saw two of the kids were fighting that were best friends in 4th grade. I said to them, Why are you fighting? And he said, "Because he is a dirty African." Anna
2, 3	Resources required for Social Success	A. In-services discussing cultural diversity. (1) B. Having a Culture Day. (1,2) C. Support from Administration(1) D. An effective Social Curriculum (3,6) E. Common Interests (4) F. Collaboration/Share what's working in each other's class rooms. (7)	"A good social curriculum is what is needed and it has to be a consistent thing and it can't be too convoluted." Audrey
4	Perception of Preparedness to Positively Support Social Success.	A. Not Prepared (1) B. Somewhat Prepared (2,4,5) C. Prepared (6,7)	"Sometimes I feel like I am not doing a good job, I feel like you can't be everywhere all of the time." Bria
3	Employed Supports for Cultural Success	A. Teacher Initiated research of activities. (1) B. Positive Teacher/Student relationship. (1,2,4,7) C. Valuing students' cultural backgrounds. (2,4) D. Fostering opportunities for students' to share their culture. (1,2,4,6,7) E. Purposeful collaborative groups. (7) F. Morning meetings with students. (6,7)	"I think find what interests these kids, getting to know them. That is the basis for everything, it's forming a relationship with your kids no matter where they are from." Katrina

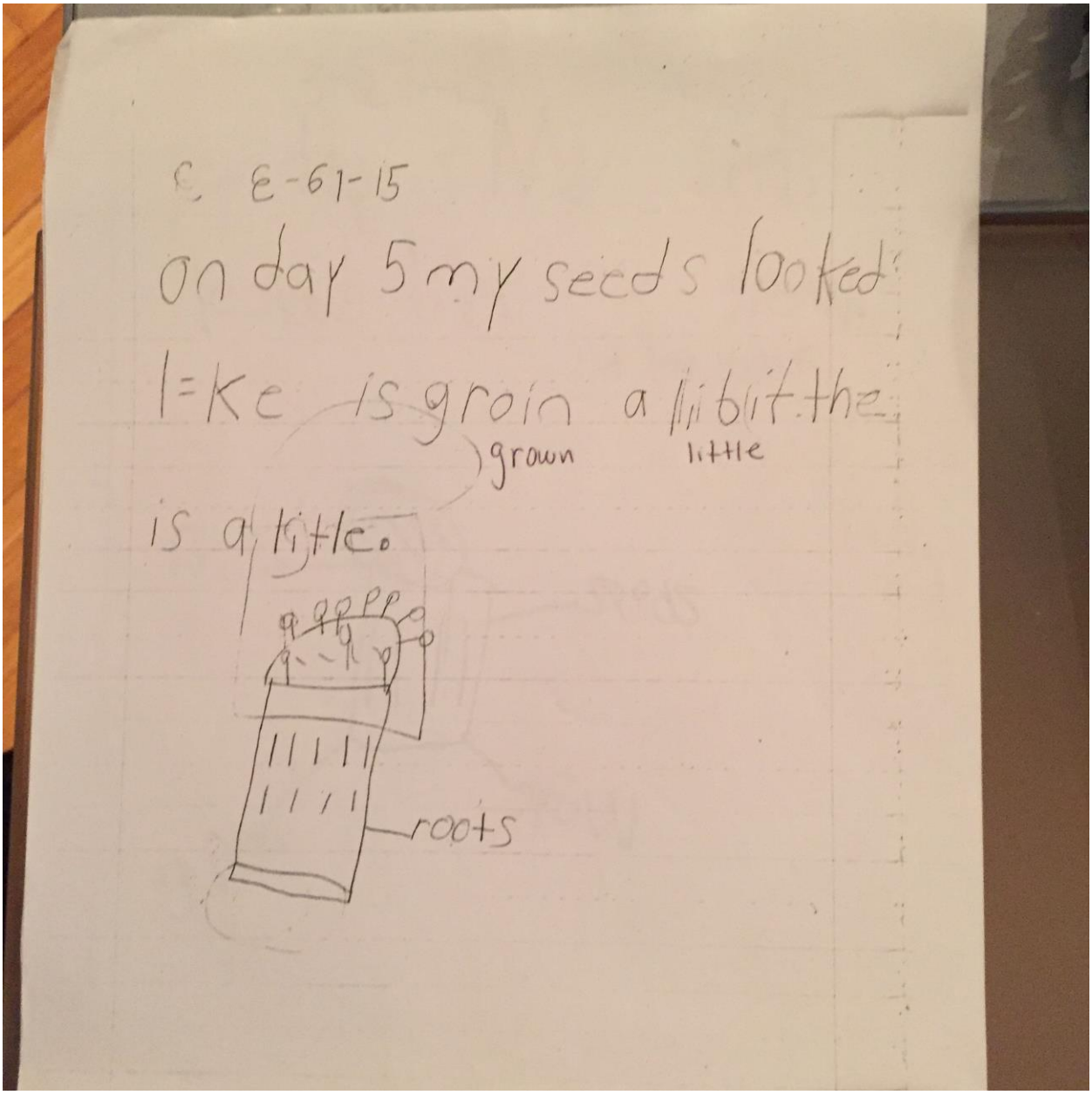
3	Barriers to Cultural Success	A. Minimal Cultural Competency on behalf of teachers and native students. (1,2) B. Lack of knowledge about one's own home country. (3) C. Sponsors vs Parents (3,4) D. Lack of native student interest in immigrant students' cultures.(3) E. School community rejection of immigrant students being "bused" to school.(3) F. Not enough time. (6) G. Not knowing student's prior experiences. (7)	"I am thinking of a family. The one girl **Allie** she wasn't in my class, we knew something wasn't right. She was another one we had that did not talk…It was nice that her class took her under their wing, because she would wander off and she would never speak and when she did speak it was almost like a bird chirping. But the kids would say, "Oh, she talks." She was telling the kids that she saw her sister beheaded in Liberia and that seemed odd for us that she wouldn't necessarily make this up. And her sister who is in 4th grade is so, so angry." Katrina
3	Resources Required for Cultural Success	A. More Time (1,6,7) B. Professional Development (1,2) C. Collaborating with Colleagues (1) D. Culture Night (5) E. Technology (6) F. Current/Relevant Resources (6)	"It would be interesting if schools in this county offer an on-going training for teachers about the specific ELL students' (backgrounds)." Laila "We should have a culture night. We are not ready. We need to adapt wo what students we have instead we are making them fit to what we do." Charla
4	Perception of Preparedness to Positively Support Cultural Success	A. Not Prepared (N/A) B. Somewhat Prepared (2, 3,4, 5, 6) C. Prepared (1)	"I don't feel as prepared as I want to be. I have experiences and background that I have that I can bring to the table helps, where not everyone has that. Could it be a district thing that is provided; maybe not about a specific kid, but about the different cultures would help. I think the district should celebrate the cultures." Laila
1, 2, 3,	Personal	A. More flexibility with	"Professional development is

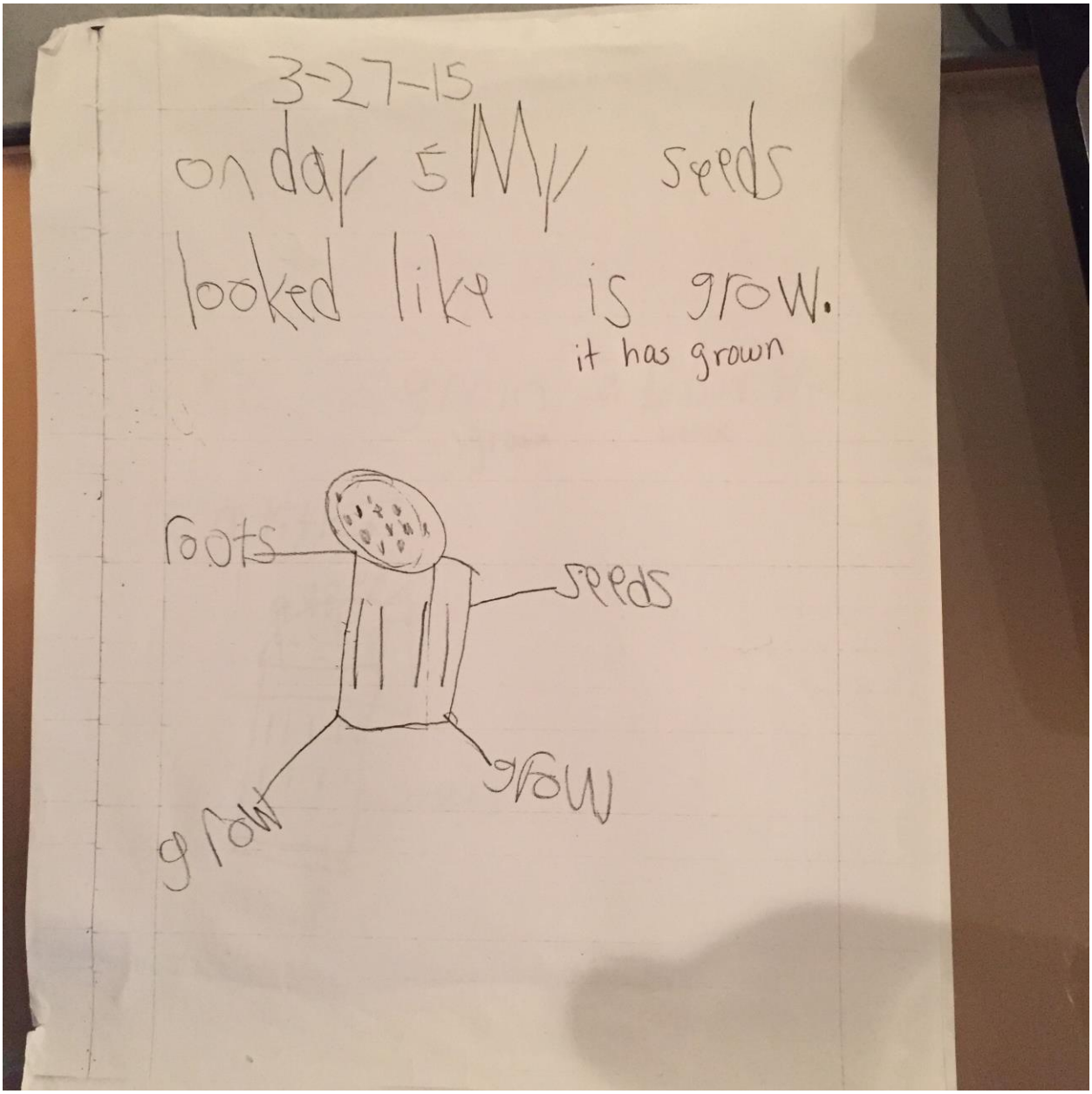
	Needs to Support African Immigrant Learners	materials utilized to instruct. (1) B. More flexibility with method of instruction. (1) C. Multicultural Books (1) D. Professional Development (1,2,3,4,5,6) E. Value teachers experience. (3,6) F. District Recognition of Challenges related to immigrant students' needs. (1,2,3,7) G. Reliable Technology (4) H. Organization (of materials) (6) I. Teacher chosen professional development. (3,6)	critical." Charla "There is not even an awareness that there is an issue. We need to recognize that there is a problem supporting our immigrants, and I think that this is a real issue not just with our immigrants, but with our general population that is not being recognized and we are in crisis mode, our kids aren't doing well, our parents aren't doing well, and everyone is admiring 'how great this is". Katrina
1, 2, 3, 4	District Preparation of Teachers to Support African Immigrant Learners	A. No Preparation (1,2,3,4,6,7) B. Limited Preparation (5) C. Preparation (N/A)	"I don't think it's been a priority. I think they realize they now have to do something. But what the "that" is they have not yet identified it and if they have they haven't sent it down with the troops. The push-in services are a nice pair of socks, the pull-out services is a nice hat. But the students need more than that." Charla.

Appendix E: Student Artifacts




I Wear a hat and winter jacket.
I wear a hat and jacket in the winter.


E-61-15
on day 5 my seeds looked
like is grain a litbit the
grown
little
is a little.
roots


3-27-15
on day 5 My seeds
looked like is grow.
it has grown
roots
seeds
grow
grow

...the same results by tossing a coin. If the coin lands on HEADS, Team 1 wins, if it lands on TAILS, Team 2 wins. In this way, tossing a coin **simulates** the outcome of the game. In a **simulation,** an object or event is represented by something else.

Suppose Team 1 and Team 2 play a best-of-5 tournament. The first team to win 3 games wins the tournament. Use a coin to simulate the tournament as follows:

Games 1–3 If the coin lands on HEADS, Team 1 wins. If the coin lands on TAILS, Team 2 wins.

Games 4 and 5 Play only if necessary. Repeat the instructions for Game 1.

Sample results:

If the coin tosses are HEADS, HEADS, HEADS, Team 1 wins the tournament.

If the coin tosses are HEADS, HEADS, TAILS, HEADS, Team 1 wins.

If the coin tosses are TAILS, HEADS, HEADS, TAILS, TAILS, Team 2 wins.

1. Fill in the table as described on the next page.

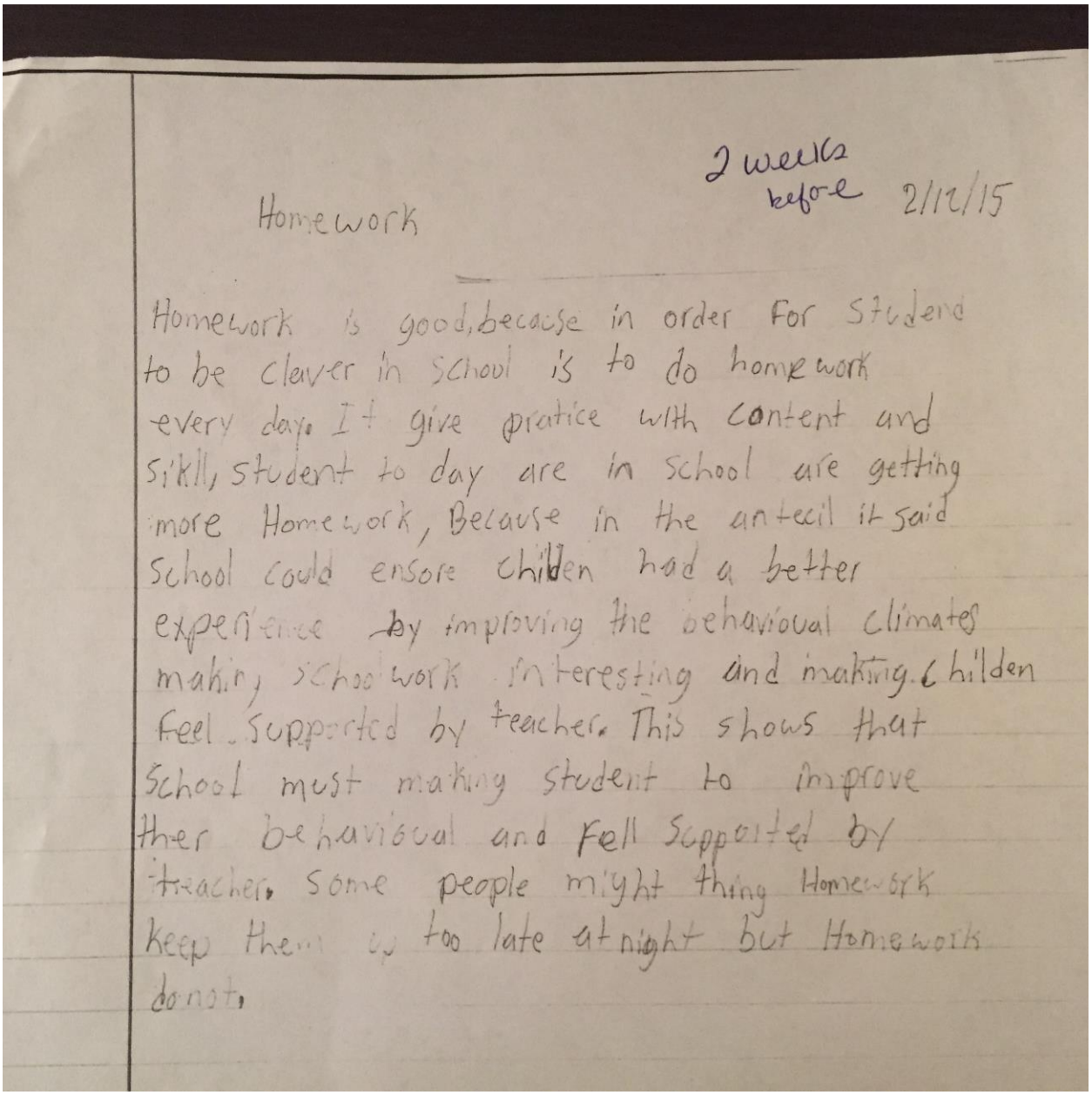
Number of Games Needed to Win the Tournament	Winner	Tally of Tournaments Won	Total Tournaments Won
3	Team 1	𝍸 𝍸 ||	7
	Team 2	𝍸 𝍸	~~6~~ 5
4	Team 1	𝍸 |	6
	Team 2	|	1
5	Team 1	||	2
	Team 2	||||	4
		Total	**25**

Uniforms Feb. 9, 15

School uniforms can be a good thing and it can also be a bad thing. Therefore most people or students think that school uniforms is a good thing and those people are right. In oder for kids to think that school uniforms is a good idea. For example, In the articel it says "At public schools, plainness and affardability are more the norm". In St. Tammon and defferson porishes, parents of each school choose the look, and most go for school-color polo or oxford shirts and khaki pants. Often there's no embrodered or sorcen-printed school crest adding expense to the shirt. This show that students need to wear uniforms to protect theme.

Somethings uniforms can be a good thing and it can be a bad thing. First, school uniforms is a good thing because one if a boy or a girl let just say a child goes on a school trip without uiniform they could get lost in the crowd if it is very crowded. At least if they are in uniform they would be distinctive in a crowd and would stand out in a crowd, but not with the school.

Secondly, if someone would have the latest designer clothes then they would fell left out and like they didn't belong.



2 weeks before 2/12/15

Homework

Homework is good, because in order For Studend to be clever in School is to do homework every day. It give pratice with content and sikll, student to day are in School are getting more Homework, Because in the antecil it said School could ensore childen had a better experience by improving the behavioual climates making schoolwork interesting and making childen feel supported by teacher. This shows that School must making student to improve ther behavioual and Fell Supported by teacher. Some people might thing Homework keep them up too late at night but Homework donot.

Time

LESSON 7-3

Using Random Numbers *continued*

2. Use coin tosses to play a best-of-5 tournament. Make a tally mark in the Tally of Tournaments Won column of the table on page 254. The tally mark shows which team won the tournament and in how many games.

3. Play exactly 24 more tournaments. Make a tally mark to record the result for each tournament. Then convert the tally marks into numbers in the Total Tournaments Won column.

4. Use the table on page 254 to estimate the chance that a tournament takes

   a. exactly 3 games. 48 %

   b. exactly 4 games. 28 %

   c. exactly 5 games. 24 %

   d. fewer than 5 games. 76 %

2 2 1
12 5
24

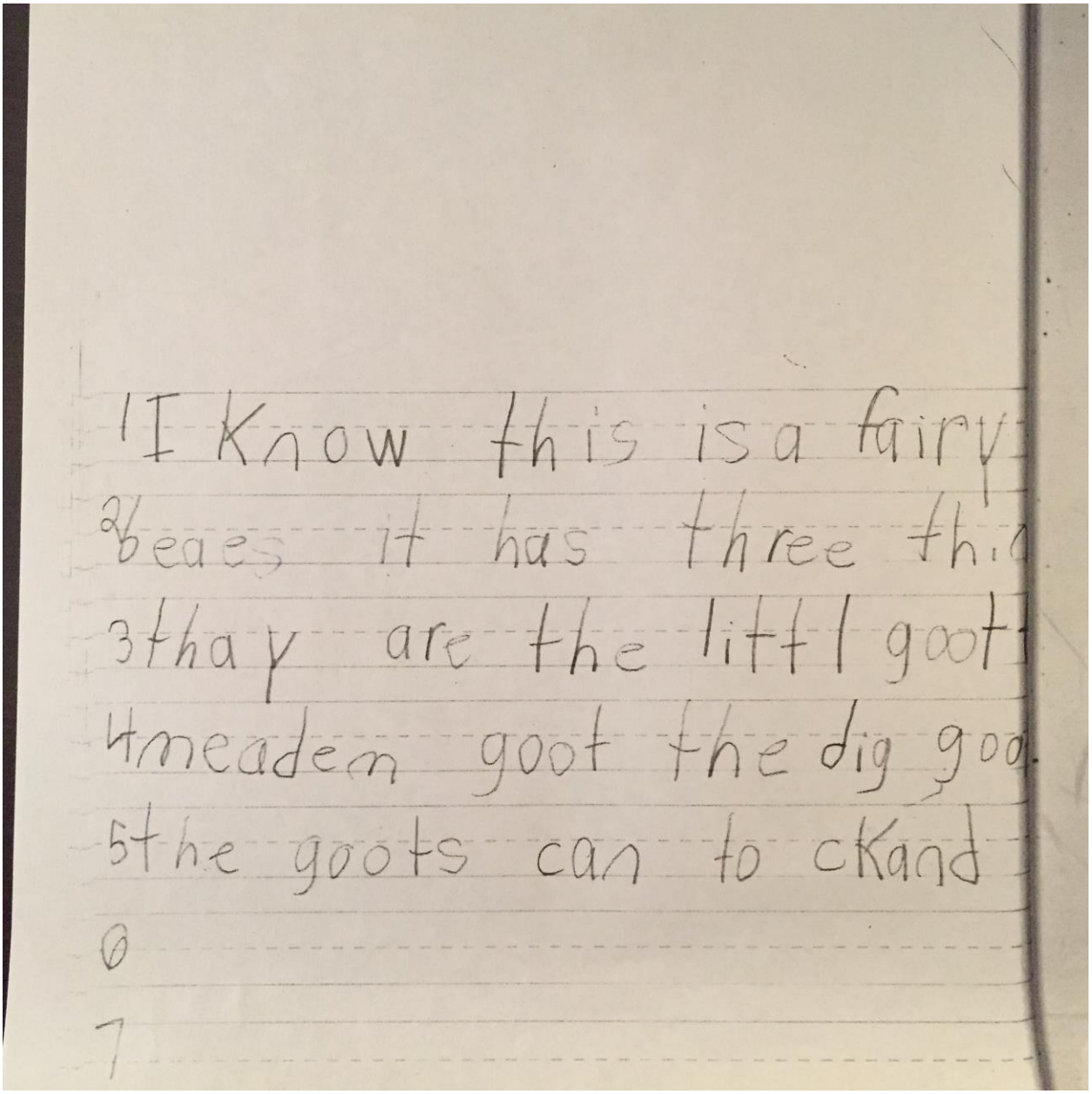
Discuss the following situations with a partner. Record your ideas.

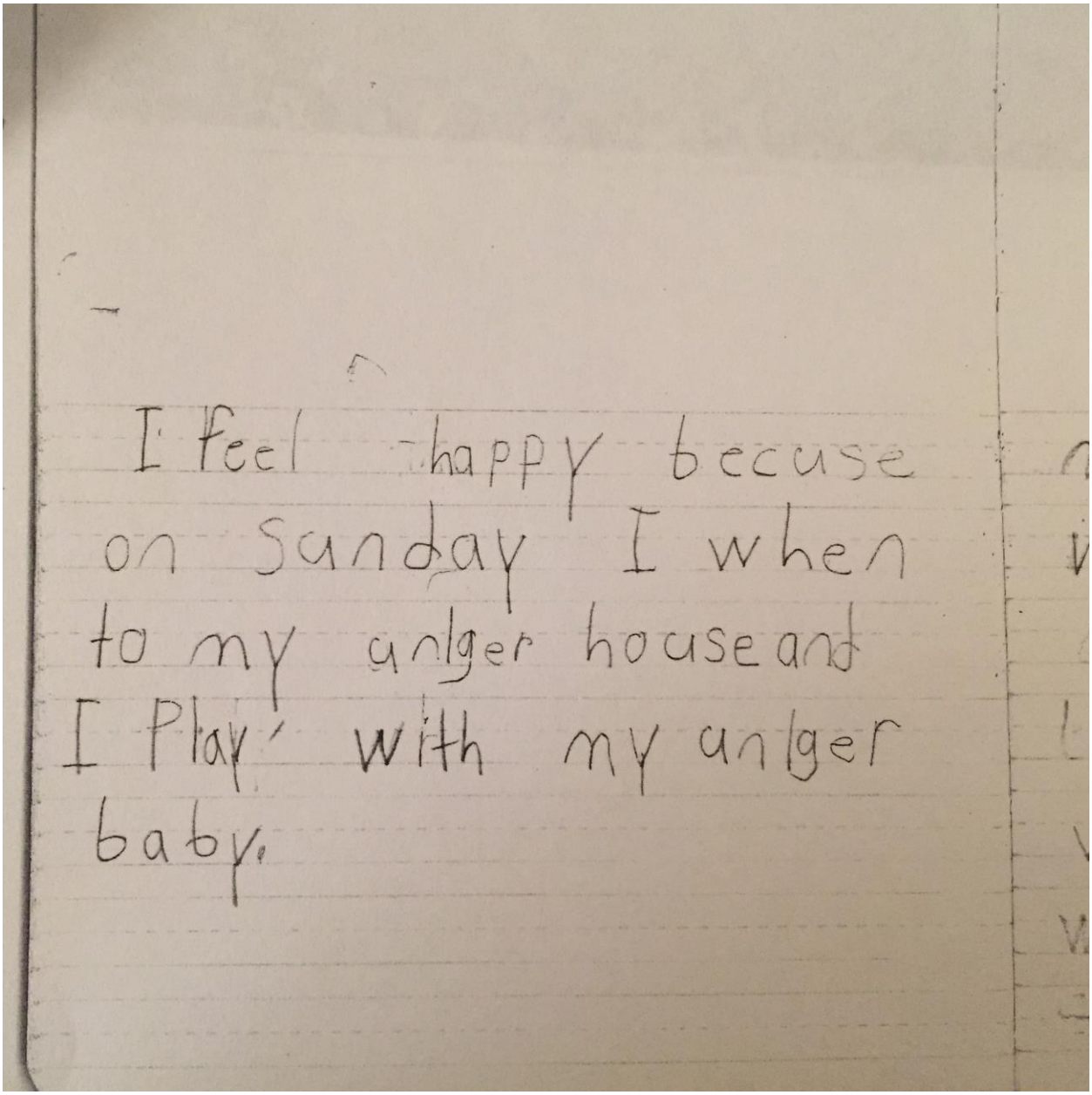
5. Suppose there is a list of jobs that need to be done for your class (such as distributing supplies, collecting books, and taking messages to the office). How might you use random numbers to assign the jobs, without using any pattern or showing favoritism?

Each student gets a number. Which ever number gets picked is the student that gets the job.

6. You want to play a game. The directions are: *Roll 2 dice and add the numbers. Move your marker ahead that many spaces.* You do not have any dice. How can you use number cards to play the game?

You can pick 2 cards, then add it up and move that many spaces.


1 I know this is a fairy
2 beaes it has three thi
3 thay are the litt l goot
4 meadem goot the dig goo
5 the goots can to ckand
6
7


I feel happy becuse
on Sunday I when
to my anger house and
I Play with my anger
baby.