

Abilene Christian University

## Digital Commons @ ACU

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

11-2020

# Exploring North Texas Elementary Principals' Viewpoints Regarding the Influence of Culturally Responsive Teaching on School Climate and School Culture

Monica Latrice Tatum  
mlt17a@acu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Elementary Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Tatum, Monica Latrice, "Exploring North Texas Elementary Principals' Viewpoints Regarding the Influence of Culturally Responsive Teaching on School Climate and School Culture" (2020). Digital Commons @ ACU, *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 267.

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU.

This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the College of Graduate and Professional Studies of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

## **Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership**



---

Dr. Joey Cope, Dean of the  
College of Graduate and  
Professional Studies

Date: 10 / 19 / 2020

Dissertation Committee:

*Linda Wilson-Jones*

---

Dr. Linda Wilson-Jones, Chair

*Jenifer Williams*

---

Dr. Jenifer Williams

*Clementine M. Msengi*

---

Dr. Clementine Msengi

Abilene Christian University  
School of Educational Leadership

Exploring North Texas Elementary Principals' Viewpoints Regarding the Influence of Culturally  
Responsive Teaching on School Climate and School Culture

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by  
Monica Latrice Tatum  
November 2020

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my late grandmother, Ellen Tatum, who I wish was here to witness me reach my lifelong dream. I hope I am making you proud. I also dedicate this dissertation to my mother Donna Tatum-Green, who supported me in this educational journey, while also being my greatest cheerleader and confidante. You continue to see the very best in me. I truly am a reflection of you and my grandmother.

To my son Jordan Taylor, I strive each day to become a better role model for you than I was the previous day. I hope that this dissertation is a symbol to remind you that you can do anything through hard work, grit, a growth mindset, and dedication to the process.

To my family, it is my deepest honor to continue setting an example of steadfast determination. I will always aim to make you proud.

To my accountability partner and friend Nakia Alford-Sunday, thank you for planting that little seed of me obtaining my doctorate, which eventually blossomed into an unimaginable goal coming to fruition. You continuously encouraged me to persevere when things got tough. I am grateful for your friendship.

To my mentor Dr. Tracie Brown, you may not know this, but watching your body of work as an educational leader sparked a flame in me many years ago at Tatum Elementary that has pushed me through many career triumphs. I appreciate your passion for developing others, and yes, growth is mandatory.

To all of my family and friends, your support sustained me when I did not know how I would accomplish this feat, and for that, I say thank you.

## **Acknowledgements**

I humbly and sincerely extend my deepest thanks to the following people:

- My dissertation chair—Dr. Linda Wilson-Jones—for supervising and coaching me through this process as I developed and conducted my research.
- My dissertation committee—Dr. Jenifer Williams and Dr. Clementine Msengi—whose expertise is greatly respected and reflected in this work.
- The principals who dedicated their time to participate in this research.
- My many colleagues who always took the time to check in on me and my progress throughout this dissertation journey.

Your willingness to provide feedback and guidance to me throughout this project has made both the process and the completion of this dissertation an enriching and rewarding experience.

## **Abstract**

Public schools in the United States have become more diverse due to immigration and the mass exodus of the White population to the suburbs. Growing demographic changes and a consistently White educational labor force raise concern regarding how schools address the needs of their diverse student populations. Much research exists concerning teachers' implementation of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices. However, a void remains in the literature regarding the role of school leadership in this process. An understanding of culturally competent principals' perspectives on CRT needs more attention to address how school leaders create safe and equitable environments for diverse student populations that promote positive academic outcomes for all students at the elementary level. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore elementary school principals' viewpoints on CRT and its influence on school climate and school culture. The purpose of this study was also to examine how elementary school principals promote the knowledge and implementation of cultural competence among their staff. Cultural difference theory was the primary theoretical framework for this study. Gay's components of CRT was the conceptual framework that guided this study. This qualitative narrative study explored the perspectives of school principals from multiple elementary campuses regarding culturally responsive teaching. Interviews were the sole method for data collection. The researcher also analyzed schoolwide data for each principal's school provided by the Texas Education Agency. Ten elementary public-school principals participated in the study. Each principal participated in two phone interviews, which consisted of 14 questions per protocol. The researcher also analyzed each principal's school data as an indicator of their school culture and school climate. Principals believed that teachers understand students' backgrounds and build relationships with them and their families, while utilizing instructional practices that

target their students' learning styles and needs. Principals also developed an equitable vision with their staff that they model for teachers to follow and welcomed all stakeholders to play an essential role in educating students to establish positive school climates and school cultures.

*Keywords:* culturally responsive teaching, cultural competence, school climate, school culture

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
List of Tables .....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	3
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Research Questions .....	5
Definitions of Key Terms .....	5
Organization of the Study .....	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	8
Literature Search Methods .....	8
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework Discussion .....	9
Cultural Difference Theory .....	9
Geneva Gay's Four Components of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) .....	10
Literature Review .....	13
Growing Diversification of Schools in the United States .....	13
Influence of No Child Left Behind and the Every Student Succeeds Act on Accountability .....	15
Academic Disparities Among Student Groups .....	19
Racial Congruence .....	21
Racial Identity-Context Congruence .....	24
School Racial Climate .....	25
Cultural Competence .....	26
Summary .....	30
Chapter 3: Research Method .....	32
Research Design and Method .....	32
Population .....	34
Study Sample .....	35
Materials and Instruments .....	42
Data Collection and Analysis Procedures .....	43
Interviews .....	43
Schoolwide Data .....	44
Data Analysis Procedures .....	44
Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness .....	46
Researcher Role .....	49
Ethical Considerations .....	49
Assumptions .....	50
Limitations .....	50



Delimitations .....	51
Summary .....	51
Chapter 4: Results .....	52
Sample and Population Description .....	53
Data Analysis and Prevalent Themes .....	58
Coaching Through Reflection .....	58
Implementing Professional Development and Diversity Training .....	64
Prioritizing the Acknowledgement of Various Cultures .....	69
Lack of Sufficient Training Opportunities .....	71
Understanding Students' Backgrounds .....	74
Building Relationships .....	81
Targeting Instructional Practices .....	89
Communicating a Vision .....	93
Welcoming All Stakeholders .....	98
Improving Student Academic Achievement .....	105
Summary .....	118
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....	119
Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature .....	120
Interpretation of Principals' Responses .....	121
Limitations .....	125
Recommendations .....	126
Implications for Change .....	126
Recommendations for Future Research .....	127
Conclusions .....	127
References .....	129
Appendix A: Interview Protocol 1 .....	142
Appendix B: Interview Protocol 2 .....	144
Appendix C: Student and Teacher Ethnic Demographic Data .....	146
Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter .....	147

## List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographics .....	54
Table 2. School Student Demographic Data.....	55
Table 3. School Teacher Demographic Data .....	56
Table 4. School Achievement Data: Reading .....	57
Table 5. School Achievement Data: Math .....	57
Table 6. School Achievement Data: Sciences .....	58
Table C1. Student Ethnic Demographic Data.....	146
Table C2. Teacher Ethnic Demographic Data .....	146

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Public schools in the United States are rapidly becoming more diverse due to immigration and the mass exodus of the White population to middle-class suburbia (Kye, 2018; Crowder et al., 2011). The educational landscape of middle-class suburbia is also transforming, with significant numbers of minority students matriculating through majority White suburban schools as their families begin to migrate further from the inner city (Chapman, 2014). The prevalence of minority student populations in urban schools and the influx of ethnic minorities into suburban campuses raises a unique concern. These changes come with consequences, namely the experiences of Black students in these urban and suburban school environments. Notably, Black students achieve at lower rates than their White counterparts (Gregory et al., 2010) with lower achievement scores in reading and math (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017). According to Fryer and Levitt (2004), once students enter kindergarten, that gap begins to grow. Growing demographic changes, coupled with a consistently White educational labor force, raise questions about how schools can address the needs of their rapidly changing student populations.

The school's racial climate is an integral factor in the experiences of Black students (Golden et al., 2018). In a study of third- through fifth-grade elementary students, Black students reported more peer victimization from classmates than their White student counterparts (Wang et al., 2016). These students reported more incidents of being bullied or excluded by other children in social interactions (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). These negative encounters can make school less enjoyable and more stressful for students, interfering with their success (Wang et al., 2016). According to the work of Scott et al. (2019), Black students are more likely to receive

disproportionate negative feedback from their teachers for behavior equal to that of White students.

Further research suggests that Black students are also more likely to receive harsh disciplinary consequences, such as out of school suspension, which leads to lost instructional time (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Gregory & Roberts, 2017). Bottiani et al. (2017) asserted that racial disparities in the distribution of out-of-school suspensions are related to Black students' experiences of unsupportive school climates. These inequitable disciplinary practices are also related to Black students' adjustment problems that manifest in their behavior (Bottiani et al., 2017). This racial disparity in the use of severe discipline is also associated with adjustment problems and lower perceived levels of school equity and cultural inclusion for Black students (Bottiani et al., 2017). Consequently, Black students who see their educational environments as less fair and equitable have negative perceptions of their academic performance, which impacts their self-esteem (Golden et al., 2018). In trending fashion, perceived levels of caring from teachers were also lower for Black students (Bottiani et al., 2016). Experiences, such as inequitable disciplinary practices and a lack of caring from teachers, result in Black students feeling disconnected and disengaged from their educational environment.

Black students also have a high probability of encountering teachers of another race as their instructor. In 2015-16, the teaching workforce was predominantly White, creating a cultural gap in classrooms across the country (NCES, 2019). According to Sleeter (2001), although White teachers anticipate teaching students from different cultures, they enter the teaching profession with limited knowledge of cross-cultural teaching. Many of these teachers also appear to have stereotypical beliefs about urban children, which can be problematic. These racial stereotypes and negative racial dynamics within the school environment correlate with Black

students' lack of effort in school (Golden et al., 2018). Research also shows that teachers have lower perceptions of educational attainment for their low-income students of color due to the cultural gap that exists between them (Mahatmya et al., 2016). These teacher expectations for students can become self-fulfilling prophecies, affecting the future of their educational careers (Carter Andrews & Gutwein, 2017). Thus, the very nature of the teacher-student dynamic creates a sense of urgency for educators to utilize culturally responsive teaching practices to understand and effectively educate their students. According to Carter Andrews and Gutwein (2017), marginalized students, who experience negative academic stereotypes, "need to know that teachers authentically care for them and will cultivate their success in the classroom by providing equitable treatment and assessing them on the quality of their performance, not on inaccurate and misinformed assumptions about their cultural background" (p. 13). Therefore, a culturally relevant curriculum can enhance students' acquisition of cultural pride and identity while also positively affecting academic achievement (Okoye-Johnson, 2011).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) has the potential to impact students in various facets of their educational journey. Students can interact with teachers who foster respect for their differences and integrate their unique contributions into the curriculum (Bonner et al., 2018). Preservice teacher training prepares educators to incorporate multiple perspectives, deepen awareness of diverse learners to plan instruction, and foster respectful verbal and nonverbal communication skills for different students and their families (Chiu et al., 2017). This preparation coincides as teachers reflect on their own cultural biases that they may hold (Chiu et al., 2017). This comprehensive approach prepares teachers for the increasingly diverse schools that they will eventually serve. Educators who practice CRT understand the power of diversity

and place culture as the focal point of their quest to improve performance for ethnic minorities (Bonner et al., 2018). These teachers “purposefully incorporate the experiences and cultural orientations of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds into their teaching strategies” (Bonner et al., 2018, p. 701) as they exercise their ability to implement the four components of CRT: caring, communication, curriculum, and instruction.

A study of elementary and middle school teachers found an association between teachers’ use of culturally responsive, proactive behavioral practices and positive student behavior (Larson et al., 2018; Debnam et al., 2015). This correlation could have implications for disciplinary practices. Educators must attempt to understand the cultural factors that contribute to student behavior to enable them to address issues that arise. For this reason, teachers should consider students’ cultures when planning their classroom management strategies (Lew & Nelson, 2016). Much research exists regarding the preparation of preservice teachers to implement CRT practices as well as the CRT implementation of current teachers. However, a void remains in the literature regarding the role of school leadership in this process (Davis et al., 2016). An understanding of culturally competent principals’ perspectives on CRT needs more attention to address how school leaders create safe and equitable environments for diverse student populations that promote positive academic outcomes for all students at the elementary level.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore elementary school principals’ viewpoints on CRT and its influence on school climate and school culture. The purpose of this study was also to examine how elementary school principals promote the knowledge and implementation of cultural competence among their staff. This information can

provide suggestions for schoolwide improvements that will create safe and equitable campuses that can create positive outcomes for marginalized populations, specifically Black students.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1. What are North Texas elementary school principals' viewpoints on the professional development strategies for culturally responsive teaching?

RQ2. What are North Texas elementary school principals' viewpoints on the advantages of culturally responsive teaching in relation to school climate and school culture?

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

This section defines critical terms used in the study. Descriptions of these terms provide clarity and meaning on recurring terms used throughout the study. Knowledge of these terms facilitates a better understanding of the research.

**Cultural competence.** Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate with, and interact with people across different cultures. Cultural competence includes an awareness of one's world view, the development of positive attitudes regarding differences, and the acquisition of knowledge of different cultural practices and global perspectives (Chiu et al., 2017).

**Cultural gap.** Cultural gaps are systematic differences between the cultures of the teacher and their students, which hinders mutual understanding or relations between members of the respective groups (Villegas et al., 2012).

**Culturally responsive teaching (CRT).** Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the various cultural backgrounds of students while intentionally acknowledging and embracing their differences to provide them with access to an equitable education (Ford et al., 2014).

**Disparity.** Disparity is the presence of a significant difference between groups (Hartney & Flavin, 2014).

**Exclusionary discipline.** Exclusionary discipline is any type of school disciplinary action which results in the removal of a student from their usual educational setting. Examples of exclusionary discipline include expulsion and suspension (Liang et al., 2019).

**Implicit bias.** The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner (Kirwan Institute, 2015).

**Implicit race bias.** The assumption that our unconscious negative and positive associations regarding people of different races are formed through various processes of socialization and can correspond with and impact conscious race-based interactions (Kempf, 2020).

**Preservice teacher.** Preservice teachers are students enrolled in educator preparation programs to become competent practicing teachers (Sleeter, 2001).

**Racial congruence.** Racial congruence is the match between an individual's race and the majority race of the organization or community in which the individual is situated (Davis et al., 2016).

**School climate.** School climate is the quality and character of school life based on patterns of school life experiences of students, parents, and school personnel. School climate reflects the school's norms, goals, values, teaching and learning practices, interpersonal relationships, and organizational structures (National School Climate Center, 2016).

**School culture.** School culture is the way teachers and other staff members work together as well as the set of beliefs, values, and assumptions they share (ASCD, 2019).



**White.** A White person is someone having origins in Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 introduced the reader to the demographic changes taking place in America's educational system. These transformations provided context that supports the need to address education's most marginalized student populations. The statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and an introduction to the research questions assisted the reader in understanding the study's significance. Chapter 1 also included definitions of essential terms related to CRT. Next, Chapter 2 will introduce the reader to the theoretical framework that influences the research study. Additionally, Chapter 2 provides details of the racial disparities in education, the components of CRT, and an in-depth look at cultural difference theory. In conclusion, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review. Chapter 3 gives the methods for collecting data, such as data collection procedures, data analysis, research design, and description of participants. Chapter 4 reports the findings and the recurring themes generated from the interview responses of the participants, and Chapter 5 gives the conclusions, implications for change, and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Public schools are responsible for educating all students from diverse backgrounds in a changing world. The gradually expanding representation of ethnic minority groups on campuses continues to change the scope of the educational system (Davis et al., 2016). In urban areas, this transformation is especially prevalent where many campuses are becoming more populated by Black and Hispanic students. With the continued diversification of schools by ethnic minorities amidst increasingly robust accountability standards and disparate achievement gaps, racial congruence that is representative of the transforming student population, a healthy racial climate that is conducive for diversity, and cultural competence are elements that could become essential to success for marginalized student groups. The purpose of this study was to explore elementary school principals' perceptions regarding culturally responsive teaching and its influence on school climate and school culture as well as how elementary school principals facilitate the acquisition of cultural competence among their staff.

This chapter begins with the identification of the literature search methods followed by a discussion of the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. The conclusion of this chapter addresses the current knowledge regarding school diversification, federal legislation affecting accountability, academic disparities among student groups, racial congruence, racial identity-context congruence, school racial climate, and cultural competence.

### **Literature Search Methods**

The review of the literature incorporated in this chapter employed the use of multiple online academic search engines from the Abilene Christian University Library and Google Scholar. The majority of the literature is dated post-2010 with some research occurring beforehand. The most frequently searched terms included *cultural competence*, *culturally*

*responsive teaching, multicultural education, racial disparity, achievement gap, pre-service teachers, exclusionary discipline, school culture, and school climate.* The initial search regarding culturally responsive teaching yielded an abundance of literature about the challenges facing student minority cultures. This information encouraged further searches regarding race-specific academic and disciplinary disparities. The discovery of a new term in the research, *racial congruence*, also influenced further exploration of student-staff matching. While the literature established the causes of these student challenges, what remains unclear is the school principals' perception of how to navigate these issues through the development of culturally competent teachers and how they impact their schools' climate and school culture.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework Discussion**

Cultural difference theory serves as the primary theoretical framework for this study. Derived from Geneva Gay's CRT components, I reviewed the concepts of culturally responsive caring, culture and communication in the classroom, cultural congruity in teaching and learning, and ethnic and culturally diverse curriculum and content within the context of cultural difference theory. These concepts regarding CRT are interconnected with the essential tenets of cultural difference theory. Existing research links CRT concepts and cultural difference theory to improved student outcomes (Bonner et al., 2018).

#### ***Cultural Difference Theory***

Cultural difference theory prioritizes the strengths and resilience of the cultures, families, and communities of students that come from diverse racial and linguistic backgrounds (Wang & Gordon, 1994). According to this ideology, disconnects between home and community cultures of ethnic minorities play a significant role in low academic achievement (Bonner et al., 2018). Discontinuities between economically disadvantaged students and the greater school culture also

result in subpar academic performance (Bonner et al., 2018). Traditionally, public schools have viewed culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) and disadvantaged communities as from a deficit perspective (Ford, 2004). Therefore, this cultural gap necessitates the charge for educators to utilize and respect students' cultural strengths and language (Bonner et al., 2018). Hammond (2015) asserts that when teachers practice a pedagogy of listening, not just for words but also for the emotional quality of the conversation, it communicates a sense of respect for and an interest in the student's contributions to the class. Effective communication and engagement between teachers, families, and community resources is a valuable tool for establishing a partnership for student success (Ford et al., 2014). This paradigm shift is a significant deviation from previous perspectives that view students' cultural capital as limited, and the primary factor influencing their low achievement in school (Bonner et al., 2018). This charge encourages teachers to establish authentic bonds with their CLD students by acquiring in-depth knowledge about them while networking in their communities to incorporate relevant resources and experiences into their classroom practices (Ford et al., 2014). As a result, the home-school-community gap can begin to close as educational outcomes for CLD students begin to improve through the delivery of meaningful services (Ford et al., 2014). This dynamic, along with the use of resources with knowledge about multicultural students' backgrounds and experiences, is essential for the home-school-community structure to support the empowerment of the families of CLD students (Ford et al., 2014).

### ***Geneva Gay's Four Components of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)***

Gay's components of CRT was the conceptual framework that guided this study. CRT uses "cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of

ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Culturally responsive teaching consists of four components:

- Culturally responsive caring
- Culture and communication in the classroom
- Cultural congruity in teaching and learning
- Ethnic and culturally diverse curriculum and content

Culturally responsive caring calls for teachers to build relationships with their students. Caring is a continuous process in which teachers establish a rapport with their students and use the knowledge gained through that rapport to inform their pedagogy while reflecting on teaching and learning to better understand the student (Thomas & Berry III, 2019). As a result, teachers have a better grasp of students’ interests and strengths as unique opportunities for learning (Gay, 2010). Culturally competent teachers utilize these opportunities to intrinsically motivate student learning as they integrate their personal interests into the curriculum. Culturally responsive caring positions teachers in a unique emotional and academic partnership with students that is anchored in affirmation, mutual respect, and validation, creating the belief that marginalized students can and will improve academically (Gay, 2010).

Culturally competent teachers also understand how culture affects students’ communication and give them the chance to feel validated as they share ideas via cooperative learning (Gay, 2010). These teachers know that students’ cultures can impact how they learn and process information (Gay, 2010). Culturally competent teachers research ways to improve their communication with students as they compare their own styles of communication with those of the students (Gay, 2010).

One of the most critical elements of CRT is that it empowers students by connecting content knowledge to their lives. Culturally competent teachers achieve this by making learning relevant to the students' cultures and by involving them in curriculum decisions (Gay, 2010). Context plays a crucial role in making these connections, as teachers gain knowledge regarding their students' home life, communities, and neighborhoods to build a bridge to the educational setting (Thomas & Berry III, 2019). Immersion is critical to this task as teachers immerse themselves in the cultures of their students to develop an understanding of their way of life (Nuby, 2010).

According to Thomas and Berry III (2019), CRT recognizes the significance of racial and cultural diversity in learning in various ways. Through CRT, educators incorporate instructional strategies and multicultural resources and curricula that validate students' cultural heritage (Thomas & Berry III, 2019). CRT develops communal learning structures and supports that assist learners in keeping their cultural identities while engaging them extensively with cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives (Thomas & Berry III, 2019). By design, CRT is a transformative practice that creates structures for students to fight prejudices, racism, and other forms of oppression (Thomas & Berry, 2019). CRT is emancipatory and liberating, as it challenges the belief that knowledge is permanent (Thomas & Berry III, 2019). Ultimately, CRT can result in self-determination and empowerment for students as their teachers hold them to high academic and social expectations (Thomas & Berry III, 2019). The previous components of this literature review implicate the necessity and importance of CRT in today's schools to address marginalized student groups.

## **Literature Review**

This section of the chapter focuses on contemporary research literature regarding the various factors that affect school culture and climate. The literature review covers the shift in school demographics, the effects of educational legislation on school accountability, academic disparities between student populations, and racial factors that impact student performance. Furthermore, this chapter addresses the need for cultural competence among faculty and staff members in diverse school settings.

### ***Growing Diversification of Schools in the United States***

The rapid transformation of public schools' demographics has become an inevitable reality for educators. During the postwar period of the 1950s and 1960s, American cities experienced significant social change as nearly four million African Americans moved from the rural South to cities across the country (Rury & Rife, 2018). The majority of these migrants settled in central city neighborhoods characterized as ghettos marked by segregation, overcrowding, and poverty (Rury & Rife, 2018). Simultaneously, affluent White families sought higher standards of living and left the cities for suburban communities that included larger, newer homes and superior school systems compared to urban institutions in a phenomenon known as White flight (Rury & Rife, 2018). Later, during the 1990s, Blacks began migrating to suburban communities outside central-city core counties, and Hispanics began moving to new rural, suburb, and nongateway community destinations, resulting in the diversification of populations that were previously predominantly White (Johnson & Winkler, 2015; Lichter & Johnson, 2009). These population shifts led to the metamorphosis of communities in the urban-rural continuum across the United States (Lee et al., 2012). As the dynamics of American

communities continued to change, so did their institutions of learning. Schools began to diversify, reflecting their respective neighborhoods.

According to the NCES (2017), the percentage of school-age White students decreased from 62% to 51% between 2000 and 2017, while the rate of Black students also decreased by 1% (15% to 14%). On the other hand, percentages of student enrollment from other ethnic groups increased with Hispanic children growing from 16% to 25%, Asian students narrowly expanding from 3% to 5%, and children of multiracial slightly rising from 2% to 4% (NCES, 2017). By the fall of 2015, “approximately 30 % of students attended public schools in which the combined enrollment of minority students was at least 75% of total enrollment” (NCES, 2017, p. 4). Of these students, 4.9 million were English language learners (NCES, 2017). By 2023, students of color are projected to make up 55% of the school population (NCES, 2013).

One of the most significant factors influencing changes in the population of U.S. public schools is immigration, with an overwhelming majority of immigrant students being people of color from Latin and Asian countries (Goodwin, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2015). The latest wave of immigration deviated from the traditional destinations of states, such as California and New York, to gateway communities in the Midwest and Southeast (Hopkins et al., 2015, p. 408). This breakaway from past trends in immigration poses new challenges for more districts across the country. They must educate all children who will undoubtedly require academic supports and a curriculum deemed responsive to their specific needs while combating roadblocks, such as limited instructional resources, teaching expertise, and cultural competence (Goodwin, 2017).

Immigration offers additional challenges. An abundance of diversity exists within ethnic or racial groups of individuals coming to the United States. Each racial or ethnic group consists of unique variables, such as the multitude of languages, national origins, cultures and traditions,



immigration pathways, levels of education, and English language proficiency of its members (Goodwin, 2017). According to the NCES (2018), 14% of total public school enrollment in cities consists of English language learners, followed by 9% in suburbs, 7% in towns, and 4% in rural areas. This widespread distribution of immigrants' backgrounds and experiences will require a differentiated approach to addressing the needs of students as they enter U.S. classrooms. The growing prevalence of an immigrant population within U.S. schools juxtaposed with unchanging educator demographics continues to raise questions regarding how to navigate the complex demands of teaching students from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

***Influence of No Child Left Behind and the Every Student Succeeds Act on Accountability***

Federal legislation has guided various aspects of educational reform. Among the national policies that have historically evaluated schools are the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). These laws played a vital role in shaping the landscape of educational reform.

**No Child Left Behind.** The federal government delivered educators difficult and demanding expectations in 2001. The creation of a statute focused solely on eradicating longstanding achievement gaps between subpopulations of students became the guiding force for this legislation, otherwise known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). These goals targeted reading and math achievement gaps based on students' ethnicity, race, and language (Adler-Greene, 2019). As ambitious as they were, NCLB failed to meet one of its loftiest goals of having 100% of students to reach 100% proficiency by the 2013-2014 school year (Adler-Greene, 2019). According to Adler-Green (2019), testing requirements of NCLB became known as a one-size-fits-all approach for closing the achievement gap between students from different financial backgrounds, ethnicities, and ability groups.

Another staple of NCLB was its requirement for teachers to be highly qualified (Adler-Greene, 2019). Teachers new to the profession had to possess a bachelor's degree as well as full state certification and a demonstration of content area competency in subjects, such as math and English (Adler-Greene, 2019). To receive Title I funds at low income schools, districts had to prove that they employed significant amounts of highly qualified teachers to serve their students (Adler-Greene, 2019). Transparency was a focal point of this legislation, as districts also had to inform parents if their children attended a school in need of improvement or if their child received instruction from a teacher identified as not highly qualified for 4 weeks or more (Adler-Greene, 2019).

NCLB is one of the most significant educational policies to date, requiring states to meet student achievement targets of adequate yearly progress (AYP) based on annual state-determined assessments (Heise, 2017). Meeting AYP required that schools test at least 95% of the various subgroups within their district including students with disabilities and limited English proficiency (Adler-Greene, 2019). Instead of administering a common test nationwide, states developed their assessments and submitted them for federal approval (Heise, 2017). The federal government imposed punitive sanctions on schools failing to meet AYP, such as identifying them as needing improvement (Husband & Hunt, 2015). However, the mandate for states to reach 100% AYP toward English proficiency in reading and math was unrealistic as states faced federal sanctions for failure to do so, resulting in reduced state assessment baselines, which defeated NCLB's policy objectives (Heise, 2017). Low performing schools faced challenges that came with disadvantaged students and their diverse backgrounds that they brought into the classroom that middle-class schools did not have to worry about (Ladd et al., 2017). This approach was unfair and contributed to NCLB's demise (Ladd et al., 2017).

NCLB has left negative impressions on the field of education. Although it held teachers more accountable for providing their students with a quality education, its restrictions made teachers feel forced to teach to the test (Adler-Greene, 2019). Schools' fears of suffering the consequences of not meeting AYP unintentionally incentivized teachers to narrow the scope of their curriculum to prioritize test scores (Adler-Greene, 2019). These consequences included parents moving their child to a school of their choice, the state taking full control of the school's operations, and schools shutting down completely (Adler-Greene, 2019). According to Wun (2014), NCLB did not rectify, but instead, worsened inequalities among student groups, especially in school discipline and punishment. Wun (2014) argued that NCLB increased subgroup disparities, while reproducing images of Black students as problematic. Additionally, marginalized schools serving poor students of color suffered stigmatization, making highly qualified teachers less likely to take vacant job assignments at those campuses which needed them the most (Darling-Hammond, 2007). This flight of highly qualified teachers away from low-performing schools only amplified the disparities that existed between them and their higher-achieving counterparts.

Although NCLB was unsuccessful, it was not without its positive takeaways. One of the byproducts of NCLB was the generation of large amounts of rich data. These data on all students was an excellent resource for researchers and policymakers (Ladd et al., 2017). NCLB also allowed for the provision of flexibility and choice regarding how schools use federal funding to address their individual school improvement needs (Husband & Hunt, 2015). Another critical component of NCLB was the allocation of school choice for parents of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Husband & Hunt, 2015). Under NCLB, the parents of students in underperforming schools have the option to send their children to better-performing schools in

their district or even a charter school (Husband & Hunt, 2015). Schools must also use research-based teaching methods in their school improvement plans, professional development, and Title I instruction (Husband & Hunt, 2015). Perhaps the most significant benefit of NCLB was that it held schools accountable for the average test scores of subgroups that they usually overlook (Ladd et al., 2017). This focus on subpopulations of students shined the spotlight on typically marginalized ethnic minorities. This aspect of NCLB still reverberates in education today, as teachers and schools strategically plan and target their instructional practices to benefit specific student groups. The comprehensive accountability of NCLB has left an indelible impact on education reform.

**Every Student Succeeds Act.** The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) deviates from the previous legislation of NCLB. One significant way in which this change occurs is through the increase of the states' power to build new accountability and improvement systems (Heise, 2017; Elgart, 2017). In stark contrast to NCLB, ESSA further delegates authority to the states to develop, test, and measure challenging academic standards (Heise, 2017). The flexibility granted by ESSA allows for schools to improve while maintaining ambitious learning goals and opportunities that affect all students (Elgart, 2017). When dealing with test results, ESSA requires potential federal sanctions and state intervention on only a small set of schools in the bottom 5% of the state (Heise, 2017). This targeted approach gives states the power to focus on the schools that need the most attention (Heise, 2017). According to Heise (2017), this gives states more freedom regarding the development of standards and the deployment of consequences regarding schools' test results.

Instead of focusing on 100% proficiency for students in reading and math, consideration for school climate, attendance, and access to advanced placement courses is also an essential part

of a school's performance (Adler-Greene, 2019). ESSA requires the prioritization of English language learners and their success as states must show how they will improve students' English language acquisition in their accountability plan (Adler-Greene, 2019). The allocation of Title III funds for supporting English language learners further reinforces this goal, which NCLB overlooked. Under ESSA, school districts are required to allocate 20% of its Title IV funds to programs supporting a well-rounded education, such as music and arts, foreign languages, counseling, history, accelerated learning, and environmental activities (Adler-Greene, 2019). In accordance with this philosophy, ESSA also necessitates that schools show how they will develop optimal environments for learning while utilizing programs that address bullying and harassment (Adler-Greene, 2019). In essence, ESSA evaluates schools and districts with a holistic approach, diverging from the strictly academic lens of its predecessor while moving beyond the narrow approaches of test results (Elgart, 2017).

In stark contrast to NCLB, ESSA eliminated the requirement for schools to obtain highly qualified teachers and eradicated the sanctions that come with failing to meet AYP (Adler-Greene, 2019). Notification to parents regarding teacher quality is no longer mandated, nor is a report of highly qualified teachers needed to receive Title I funds (Adler-Greene, 2019). Instead, Title I requires that teachers and paraprofessionals who work in schools that receive Title I funds meet state certification and licensure requirements (Adler-Greene, 2019).

### ***Academic Disparities Among Student Groups***

Academic achievement of students is at the heart of every school's existence. More importantly, all students must perform at their utmost potential. Nowhere can this be seen more than when observing data for specific student groups.

When looking at national reading data, it is evident that this production is not occurring among all student groups. As stated in a report by the NCES (2018), fourth-grade White students outperformed American Indian/Native Alaskan students by 30 points, Black students by 26 points, Hispanic students by 23 points, Pacific Islander students by 20 points, and students of multiracial by 5 points. Asian students performed better than White students by 9 points in reading. From 1990 to 2017, White students scored higher than their Black and Hispanic counterparts in each academic year (NCES, 2018). However, the gap between White and Black students did narrow from 32 points in 1992 to 26 points in 2017 (NCES, 2018). This 25-year change was marginal at best. Unfortunately, this trend did not follow suit for White and Hispanic students, as the gap of 23 points between the two groups did not change significantly between 1992 and 2017 (NCES, 2018).

National math data yield similar trends to the reading. Fourth-grade White students outperformed Black students by 25 points, American Indian/Native Alaskan students by 21 points, Hispanic and Pacific Islander students by 19 points, and students of multiracial by 4 points (NCES, 2018). Asian students performed better than White students by 12 points in math (NCES, 2018). From 1990 to 2017, White students scored higher than their Black and Hispanic counterparts in every assessment year (NCES, 2018). However, the gap between White and Black students did narrow from 32 points in 1992 to 25 points in 2017 (NCES, 2018). Again, this change was marginal, considering that it occurred over 25 years. Unfortunately, this trend did not follow suit for White and Hispanic students as the gap of 19 points between the two groups did not change significantly between 1990 and 2017 (NCES, 2018).

The persistent underperformance of ethnic minority groups in reading and math compared to their White peers is concerning. This notion is especially critical when considering

that the demographic data are rapidly shifting in a direction that moves these students from the minority to the majority among enrolled students. If ethnic minorities are consistently performing at a standard that is lower than that of their peers, schools must take the proper steps in ensuring that they position their marginalized students to be more successful. These measures include educating teachers on multicultural issues to assist them in serving diverse student populations while also showing their students how to deal with individuals from different backgrounds (Vittrup, 2016).

### ***Racial Congruence***

One concern regarding diversity in school concerns the leadership of its continually changing student body guided by principals. According to Davis et al. (2016), principal-student racial congruence is what “exists in a school when the race of the head principal matches that of the majority race among the student population” (p. 556). The race of the educator is a factor when assigning administrators and teachers to campuses with diverse student bodies (Davis et al., 2016). The need for heterogeneity in the administrative ranks is more pressing when considering that the future of the nation is becoming more demographically diverse (Davis et al., 2016).

Contrary to the previous assertion, many school contexts consist of educational leaders being the racial minority compared to their students, with White principals leading 73.4% of racially incongruent schools (Davis et al., 2016). According to the NCES (2013a, 2013b), 80% of public-school principals were white, 10% were black, and 7% were Hispanic. They served student populations that were 54% White, 15% Black, and 22% Hispanic, respectively, during the 2011-2012 school year. Therefore, a disconnect exists between school leadership and student ethnicity. This claim does not argue that principals cannot effectively lead schools that they do

not match with racially, as some school leaders accept that challenge and potentially overcome it. However, some students stand to benefit from having a leader with whom they can relate based on ethnic similarity (Davis et al., 2016). These advantages include advocacy for students, lower rates of principal turnover, and school climate (Davis et al., 2016). This relationship warrants further investigation.

Principal-student congruence and faculty-student congruence could also affect a student's perceived racial climate. Wright et al. (2017) found that students who have a teacher of the same ethnicity have better ratings of externalizing behaviors in a study of kindergartners nationwide. These behaviors include physical aggression, destruction of property, cheating, and stealing. Yiu (2013) postulated that race is a predictor of teacher-student relationships with Black teachers feeling closer to Black students than students of other ethnicities. Lindsay and Hart (2017) asserted that the subjection of Black students to exclusionary disciplinary consequences decreases, while their reading achievement increases when they have a Black teacher. This dynamic suggests that teachers may have an urgency to advocate for students from similar backgrounds, or that they may understand them better than teachers from different backgrounds. Building relationships is an intangible factor in connecting students to school life, and having similar backgrounds to the teacher is advantageous, especially for students of color. According to the NCES (2017), "The percentage of minority teachers was highest at schools that had 90% or more minority students (55%) and lowest at schools that had less than 10% minority students (2%)" (p. 3). This threshold for schools aligning their staff demographics to their student population is extremely high, as many diverse schools might not reach those numbers for minority representation in their student body.



According to research conducted by Atkins et al. (2014), an association exists between increased representation by minority teachers and higher expectations of college graduation by minority students. Hispanic students also felt closer to teachers who felt responsible for their learning as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) individuals (Yiu, 2013). This positive relationship between a staff member and student assists in the building of interpersonal connections for ethnic minority students. This dynamic also develops an acceptance of certain behaviors that might otherwise appear intolerable or misinterpreted by teachers from different ethnic groups (Gay, 2010). However, Atkins et al. (2014) found that Latino/a teacher representation is more likely to influence all student minority groups' sense of connectedness to school. Having teachers on the staff who can relate to students could further promote tolerance as they strive to acknowledge and communicate cultural differences in the handling of behavior, engagement, social-emotional learning, and academics to their colleagues. More research on the relationship between principal-student and faculty-student racial congruence and student achievement could also contribute to the existing body of literature. Findings could potentially assist districts as they strive to strategically hire principals and staff members to meet the various needs of their learners. However, although racial congruence may appear to be a solution to addressing minority student needs, the likelihood of attaining it is minimal. Other research suggests that the hiring and retention of diverse teachers has been problematic as White teachers make up the most significant recruits, resulting in poor, urban public schools receiving unequal access to adequately qualified teachers and quality teaching (Sleeter, 2001; Ingersoll et al., 2019). Furthermore, White teachers generally claim colorblindness when dealing with students of color, which denies the students' negative racial experiences, rejects their cultural heritage, and invalidates their unique perspectives, inevitably doing those students a disservice (Jackson,

2019). Therefore, the continued disparity in racial congruence on campuses creates cultural gaps, reiterating the need for the implementation of culturally responsive practices among culturally competent staff to bridge a divide that continues to grow.

### ***Racial Identity-Context Congruence***

According to Byrd and Chavous (2015), African American youth who perceived favorable attitudes regarding race from staff members reported higher rates of intrinsic motivation. They attributed this finding to students being in environments where individuals valued all races and experienced positive intergroup contact between ethnic groups (Byrd & Chavous, 2015). Students need to know that they matter and that they bring experiences to the classroom environment that are of unique value. More importantly, they need to learn how to acknowledge and accept the differences that exist between themselves and their peers as they practice tolerance in preparation for their introduction to a diverse world. Davis et al. (2016) supported this assertion further, positing that principals need considerable training in cultural competence to address the rapidly changing student body as they continue to deal with issues of social justice. Coleman and Stevenson (2013) postulated that “the power of racial questioning in contributing to one’s sense of belonging may not be that these questions are always answered but that as a learning environment, support for these questions reflects a safer atmosphere of intellectual inquiry and openness to change” (p. 562). Acknowledging ethnic minorities’ concerns is a critical step in the process of allowing individuals to feel that their sense of belonging and racial identity have value. Additionally, “faculty, students, and parents of color may be particularly sensitive to the difficulty in raising these questions” (Coleman & Stevenson, 2013, p. 562). Therefore, the role of the principal is critical in ensuring that dialogue about

diversity and implementation of its tenets is an intentional and integral part of the school's culture.

### ***School Racial Climate***

School racial climate examines the function of race regarding school values, practices, and norms within the school environment, and it includes several dimensions: stereotypes and race relations, interpersonal interactions, and fairness and racial equity. In their study, Golden et al. (2018) discovered an association between each of these dimensions and the academic outcomes of African American adolescents. Similarly, Griffin et al. (2017) found an indirect relationship between students' perception of racial justice and their educational ambitions mediated by higher cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement. Stereotypes and race relations also shared positive associations with student academic outcomes (Golden et al., 2018). On the other hand, interpersonal interactions shared negative associations with educational outcomes (Golden et al., 2018).

According to Golden et al. (2018), Black students perceiving themselves as targets of racial stereotypes and negative racial dynamics reported putting forth less effort in school. Black students also accounted for unfavorable perceptions regarding their educational outcomes if they encountered a less fair and equitable school environment (Golden et al., 2018). Both assertions are sensible ones, as these students may feel that the odds are against them, leading to a lack of motivation to try and obtain positive outcomes. Additionally, results of Voight et al. (2015) revealed that "different student racial subgroups within a particular middle school may have significantly different experiences of safety, connectedness, relationships with adults, and opportunities for participation" (p. 263). This argument is a sobering one, emphasizing the marginalization that certain groups of students may feel when compared to others in the same

school. The underrepresentation of Black students in gifted programs, as well as their overrepresentation in special education programs, emphasize the need for evidence-based learning for culturally and linguistically diverse students in inclusive classrooms (Ford et al., 2014). To give students an equal opportunity to receive a quality education, they must have a comparable environment in which to thrive. An inclusive school racial climate that embraces differences, fairness, and civil discourse about race could prove beneficial to everyone involved, including individuals in minority and majority ethnic groups.

### ***Cultural Competence***

Davis et al. (2016) advocated for higher degrees of cultural competency among principals. Furthermore, Davis et al. (2016) posited that principals who are culturally proficient and culturally competent “could maximize any positive impact of principal-student racial congruence while simultaneously limiting the negative effects of dissonance” (p. 567). The necessity for authentic school leaders who are intentional in their practice of cultural competence is crucial to developing an environment in which students experience positive attitudes toward going to school. To establish a safe environment for students, principals who identify as antiracist leaders actively identify and eradicate racial prejudices and enable their staff to do the same (Davis et al., 2016). Teachers experience empowerment toward cultural competence by focusing on the barriers that aid in the resistance to change (Kelly, 2017). These barriers include the presumption of entitlement and privilege, lack of recognition of institutional racism and its policies and procedures, and teachers not seeing the need to adapt to a changing world (Kelly, 2017). However, overcoming these barriers is impossible without educators acknowledging them and assessing their own beliefs accordingly.

Kempf (2020) argues for the use of implicit race bias (IRB) analysis with teachers as an anti-racism strategy. IRB assumes that our unconscious associations with people (both positive and negative) of other races develop through multiple socialization processes that affect our race-based interactions (Kempf, 2020). According to Kempf (2020), implicit biases are both automatic and unintentional, making them more likely to occur in hurried moments. Teachers are often prone to situations that illicit the use of implicit biases in the fast-paced classroom environment. Jackson (2019) postulated that these learned biases dilute the learning environment. Kahneman (2011) posited that engagement in deliberate, mindful processing helps prevent our implicit biases from emerging to determine our behaviors. However, this process is difficult as it challenges teachers to break out of a fixed binary mindset and understand that they can sincerely pursue equity while acting against it at the same time (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). Instead of distancing themselves from racism, Benson and Fiarman (2020) assert that teachers have to draw nearer to it as they seek to learn how it operates in society and in themselves. This practice has many implications for in-class interactions as teachers become authentically open to reducing potentially negative ramifications for minority students (Kempf, 2020; Benson & Fiarman, 2020). Hence, a deep and systematic understanding of students' experiences is essential for understanding the effects of bias (Benson & Fiarman, 2020).

Byrd and Chavous (2015) posited that a school's racial climate aligned with youths' positive racial beliefs is crucial to their development of positive relationships, which makes school more meaningful for them. The research continues to support the need for the implementation of cultural competence on campuses, suggesting that "there are elements within the school environment that are uniquely impactful for the development of racial minority youth, but not taken into consideration in traditional school climate literature" (Golden et al., 2018, p.

63). Teachers need the opportunity to dialogue with colleagues about their experiences with cultural diversity as well as making sense of their own behaviors for improvement (Gay, 2010). According to Kempf (2020), implicit race bias approaches allow White teachers an entry point to engage in critical conversations regarding race and racism that do not shift the burden to ethnic minorities. The school administrator can help facilitate the development of cultural competence in their teachers and students by providing professional development on policies, procedures, and multicultural topics while addressing cultural responsiveness systematically (Minkos et al., 2017). This mitigation of implicit race bias requires teachers to thoroughly expose false senses of objectivity in the teaching and learning relationship (Kempf, 2020). However, conversations about racism and diversity are difficult and stressful, leaving school leaders feeling reluctant and unequipped to acknowledge the inequities in the system (Coleman & Stevenson, 2013). Alleviating the effects of implicit bias require that teachers question their own identities and narratives while thinking deeply and purposely about their individuality, presumptions, and interactivity (Kempf, 2020). This process helps teachers understand why and how they assess students differently according to their race (Kempf, 2020). According to Kempf (2020), IRB exercises “may provide valuable pedagogical entry points for race learning and critical practice, reflection, and reflexivity for enacting racial justice at the individual, institutional, structural, and systemic levels” (p. 129). Mitchell et al. (2017) support this argument, asserting that schools that devote professional learning time to discussing implicit bias, culturally responsive pedagogy, and Black youth’s experiences throughout history effectively teach Black students.

Cultural competence practiced at the leadership and faculty level could also have a profound impact on the students. According to Byrd (2015), a relationship exists between students’ perceived opportunities for multicultural learning and a greater sense of inclusion.

Voight et al. (2015) support this finding, arguing that schools creating norms respecting diversity by training their staff in multicultural competencies, representing students' ethnicity in the curriculum, and prioritizing the closing of achievement gaps had students who experienced a more favorable school climate. Kempf (2020) discovered that teachers' views on race, racism, and their own racial identities evolved over time to include more complex understandings of race in education as well as a greater sense of what needs to be done in their own classrooms to better facilitate racial justice and equity. When schools see Black students and focus on their needs, it enables them to "have the conversations, do the learning, build the relationships, and create the empowering environments that allow Black students to thrive" (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 29). The development of these environments requires an understanding of students' differences while considering student preferences toward learning in teachers' instructional practices (Ford et al., 2014). Golden et al. (2018) also postulate that having classmates with moderate values is essential for youth's academic success regardless of their hardships or lack of support, neutralizing the threat of a negative school environment. These results suggest the need for more inclusive classroom cultures where teachers and students celebrate differences and welcome challenges as opportunities for learning. A supportive environment where teachers instill these values in students could have a different influence on student effort. Therefore, cultural competence could have profound implications for both students and staff members alike. Understanding how race impacts interpersonal interactions and institutions begins early for African American students, stressing the school's role in critically analyzing and reflecting on race issues because of its symbolism as a place to examine race relations through the interactions of teachers and students (Hope et al., 2015).

How school leadership handles diversity is an essential factor in creating an equitable institution of learning for students from all walks of life. School cultures indicative of CRT at their core can influence racial congruence, or the lack thereof, as well as racial climate and cultural competence. CRT has the potential to make a lasting impact on how principals assure that all students receive access to learning with the support needed to be successful. However, teachers need sufficient background knowledge and applicable information to understand how to apply culturally responsive tools and strategies in the classroom (Hammond, 2015). Learning about the social, political, and economic conditions that produce inequitable educational outcomes for students helps teachers develop that background knowledge (Hammond, 2015). Change is the constant that education must always keep in the foreground of its practice, and diversity will continue to perpetuate that change.

### **Summary**

The exploration of the literature provided information on the current state of public-school education. Various studies highlight the dramatic demographic shifts taking place within student populations and the implications of such change. A historical review of educational policy adds context to the urgency of dealing with the transformation of demographic groups and the residual effects of NCLB. The literature also exposed the glaring academic disparities that continue to exist between student groups over time. Pertinent information about student-school racial congruence emphasize the benefits of students having teachers with similar backgrounds as themselves while also sharing how students' racial experiences shape their attitudes toward the school's culture. The literature also identified the role of cultural competence in creating environments that are conducive for student learning across cultural backgrounds and its connection to CRT. While much of the research focused on the effects of CRT on academic



achievement from the teacher's perspective, little research exists that determines the impact of CRT on school culture and climate. The literature also lacks regard for principals' viewpoints of CRT's effectiveness. These voids inspired the need for this study. The primary goal of this study was to see how principals influence the knowledge and implementation of CRT among their faculty to create school environments that bridge the gaps between marginalized student groups and develop positive social and learning experiences. Chapter 3 addresses the research methodology, research design, and data analysis used in this study.

### **Chapter 3: Research Method**

School leaders' perspectives on CRT are essential for creating environments in which students from all backgrounds can experience safe spaces for learning. These viewpoints are an integral component for developing campuses consisting of culturally competent teachers and staff that produce positive climates and cultures. In this study, I sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What are North Texas elementary school principals' viewpoints on the professional development strategies for culturally responsive teaching?

RQ2. What are North Texas elementary school principals' viewpoints on the advantages of culturally responsive teaching in relation to school climate and school culture?

This chapter provides pertinent information regarding the method for which the research occurred. I define the applied methodology for the study, followed by the identification of the population and setting of the research study. This chapter also addresses methods for establishing trustworthiness and reliability. Additionally, in this chapter I identify the materials, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and analysis procedures I used to conduct the research. I also address ethical considerations and provide a summary of the research design.

#### **Research Design and Method**

In this qualitative narrative study, I explored the perspectives of school principals from multiple elementary campuses regarding CRT (Baxter & Jack, 2008). According to Moen (2006), the narrative approach is a collaboration between the researcher and their subjects. In narrative inquiry the researcher understands the relationship that exists between humans involved in the inquiry (Clandinin, 2007). The essence of who the researcher is and what gets researched also emerges in the interaction (Clandinin, 2007). The researcher and the researched exist in a

context, each bringing their own history and world view, with growth and learning as a part of the process (Clandinin, 2007). Particularly, this approach is collaborative and dialogic in nature due to its focus on the relationship between the researcher and his or her subjects (Moen, 2006). Moen (2006) asserted that narrative studies frame the study within the personal stories shaped by the experiences, values, knowledge, and feelings of the people who share them. I conducted this narrative study through the lens of cultural difference theory and Gay's components of CRT. Since my intent was to gain information about what principals perceived and decided in relation to social context, a narrative study was optimal for this design (Moen, 2006). This method also gave voice to the principals' perspectives (Moen, 2006).

Due to the study's purpose of focusing on the experiences, perceptions, feelings, and interpretations of principals regarding CRT, interviews were the sole method for data collection (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), in-depth interviews allow participants to describe their experiences without having to observe them in their natural environment. This approach allowed the researcher the ability to understand participants' experiences and reconstruct events in which they had no part as a result of their rich responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Qualitative interviews also look at personal issues while shedding light on old problems (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The research topic regarding CRT is not new to education, but the existing literature lacks the principal's perspective on the effectiveness of CRT. Interviews are also a standard research method in education, so this approach seemed appropriate for this study (Kvale, 2008). In qualitative interviews, the interviewees' firsthand experience creates the information that researchers gather and synthesize as they look for keywords and themes in the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

I conducted interviews for this study via phone and emailed the interview questions to participants who agreed to take part in the study before the interview for their convenience. I transcribed the narrative interview responses into textual data. My analysis of the discussions occurred through coding and triangulation to condense the data and determine common patterns or themes that arose (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). The combined use of coding and analytic memos also helped me integrate codes and participant quotes into personal narratives for evidentiary support (Saldana & Omasta, 2018).

### **Population**

According to Watson (2018), qualitative research methods are not heavily dependent on sample size. Small sample groups can generate meaningful results. Qualitative techniques also yield more insightful data that can highlight underlying reasons and patterns within the phenomena (Watson, 2018).

The elementary principals selected were leaders from culturally diverse campuses in North Texas school districts. The principals came from Title I campuses composed of high-achieving marginalized student populations that are potential exemplars for CRT. Their experiences helped me to gain valuable insight from their perspectives on CRT practices from across various campuses, which helped me determine if the findings are site-specific or more broadly based (Saldana & Omasta, 2018).

Purposive sampling deliberately guided my selection of participants to seek out the best subjects for the study to gain a greater understanding of principals' views about CRT across various campuses (Patton, 2015). I extended invitations to 25 principals to ensure that I met the targeted sample of principals. I selected principals based on predetermined criteria relevant to the research objective (Guest et al., 2006). The participants consisted of 10 elementary public-school

principals representing multiple backgrounds in gender, years of service, ethnicity, and age to produce a diverse sample. I recruited participants via a personal invitation. I solicited participants from the public records of school principals, which I then actively contacted via email regarding their interest in the study. Selection concluded with careful vetting of their background information and school demographics to produce a diverse sample. I gave careful consideration to potential participants. Selection criteria consisted of the following:

- Principals had a minimum of 3 years of service in leading their school.
- Principals came from schools in which student demographics consisted of at least 51% combined minority groups: Black, Hispanic, Asian, and English language learners.
- Principals came from schools with Title I designations (40% of their students qualified for free or reduced lunch programs).
- Principals came from schools that utilized CRT.

Once I selected principals, a thorough review of their school data preceded their interviews with attention to multiyear trends of overall school performance under their leadership.

### **Study Sample**

Principal A is a former teacher with instructional experience in multiple grade levels in their current district. Principal A later served the district as an academic specialist before moving into an administrative role as an assistant principal for 2 years before becoming the principal of School A. Principal A has been the principal of School A for 6 years. School A is a K-5 campus serving 667 students. Economically disadvantaged students comprised 87% of the student population. The student demographics of School A were as follows: 78% Hispanic, 10% White, 6% American Indian, 5% African American, and 1% Asian. However, the teaching staff

demographics was quite the opposite as follows: 50% White, 48% Hispanic, and 3% African American. Males comprised 5% of teachers, and females made up 95% of teachers at School A.

At School A, students had a 97.7% attendance rate and a 12.6% mobility rate. Teachers averaged approximately 10 years of experience with an average of 8 years of experience coming from within the district. Nearly 78% of teachers at School A had a bachelor's degree, and the remaining 22% also held a master's degree. The average class size at School A consisted of 17 students to every teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, there were 42 in-school suspensions and 22 out-of-school suspensions. School A received a grade of a B from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the 2018-2019 school year as well as a distinction for student achievement in comparative academic growth.

Principal B has over 15 years of experience in education. He spent 6 years in the classroom as a first-grade and third-grade teacher. He later ventured into administrative roles as an assistant principal for approximately 6 years before becoming the principal at School B. Principal B has served as the principal of School B for 5 years. School B is a K-5 campus of 640 students. Economically disadvantaged students made up 73% of the student population. The student demographics of School B were as follows: 67% Hispanic, 17% African American, 9% White, 4% Asian, and 2% American Indian. The teacher demographics at School B included: 44% White, 43% Hispanic, 11% African American, and 3% Asian instructors. Of the teachers at School B, 11% were males, and 89% were female.

At School B, students had a 97.3% attendance rate and a 18.7% mobility rate. Teachers averaged approximately 8 years of experience and 6 years of experience in the district. Approximately 76% of teachers at School B held a bachelor's degree, and 24% of teachers had a master's degree. Class sizes averaged nearly 17 students per teacher. During the 2018-2019

school year, School B saw 56 in-school suspensions and 12 out-of-school suspensions. School B earned a grade of a B from TEA for the 2018-2019 school year. School B also earned distinctions for student achievement in mathematics, science, comparative academic growth, and closing the gaps.

Principal C has over 20 years of experience in the educational field. She served students as a classroom teacher for 13 of those years prior to embarking on administrative duties before becoming the principal of School C. Principal C has been the principal of School C for 3 years. School C is a K-5 campus serving 709 students. Economically disadvantaged students accounted for 76% of the student population. The student demographics of School C were as follows: 77% Hispanic, 13% White, 5% African American, 2% American Indian, and 2% Asian. The demographics of teachers at School C were as follows: 56% White, 32 % Hispanic, 7 % African American, 2% Asian, and 2% multiracial. Males made up 5% of the teaching population, and females made up 95% of the population at School C.

Students at School C had 96.8% attendance rate and a 10.9% mobility rate. Teachers at School C averaged 11 years of experience and 9 years of experience in the district. Nearly 75% of teachers had bachelor's degrees, 20% had master's degrees, and 5% had doctoral degrees. Class sizes were an average of 17 students per teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, School D had a total of six in-school suspensions and 12 out-of-school suspensions. School C earned a grade of a C from TEA for the 2018-2019 school year.

Principal D has over 20 years of experience in education. During that time, Principal D's roles have included that of classroom teacher and instructional specialist. Principal D joined the administrative ranks as both an assistant principal and principal in her current district before becoming the principal of School D. Principal D has served School D as the principal for 4 years.

School D is a K-5 campus of 826 students. Economically disadvantaged students made up 77% of the student population. The student demographics of School D were 62% Hispanic, 27% African American, 6% White, 2% American Indian, 2% Asian, and 1% multiracial. Teacher demographics at School D consisted of: 51% Hispanic, 24% African American, 23% White, and 2% Asian. At School D, males made up 15% of teachers, and females made up the other 85% of teachers.

At School D, students had an attendance rate of 96.5% and a mobility rate of 23.9%. Teachers at School D averaged 9 years of experience with 6 years of experience within the district. Approximately 75% of teachers had a bachelor's degree, and 25% also had a master's degree. Class sizes averaged 18 students per teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, School D had a total of 25 in-school suspensions and 43 out-of-school suspensions. School D earned a grade of a B from TEA for the 2018-2019 school year. School D received a distinction for comparative academic growth.

Principal E has led School E for 6 years. School E is a Pre-K-5 campus serving 1,103 students. Economically disadvantaged students accounted for 98% of the student population. The student demographics of School E were 53% Hispanic, 39% African American, 6% White, 2% Asian, and 1% multiracial. Teachers at School E were 50% African American, 32% Hispanic, 13% White, 2% Asian, 2% Pacific Islander, and 2% multiracial. At School E, 16% of teachers were male, and 84% of teachers were female. School E saw 64% of its teachers return for the 2018-2019 school year.

At School E, students had an attendance rate of 95.6% and a mobility rate of 30.2%. Teachers at School E averaged 10 years of experience with 7 years of experience within the district. Approximately 77% of teachers had a bachelor's degree, 21% also had a master's



degree, and 2% had a doctoral degree. Class sizes averaged 16 students per teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, School E had a total of four in-school suspensions and 148 out-of-school suspensions. School E earned a grade of a D from TEA for the 2018-2019 school year.

Principal F has several years of service in education. He rose quickly through the ranks of administration as an assistant principal and a principal. When Principal F arrived at School F, the campus was on the verge of closure due to failure to meet state standards. Principal F's efforts eventually earned him the title of Principal of the Year for his district. Principal F served School F as its principal for 3 years. School F is a pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade campus serving 659 students. Economically disadvantaged students comprised 99% of the student population. The student demographics of School F were as follows: 57% Hispanic, 41 % African American, 1% White, 1% American Indian, and 1% multiracial. Teacher demographics were 50% African American, 35% Hispanic, 8% White, 5% multiracial, and 3% Asian. Males comprised 20% of the teaching population, and females made up 80% of the teaching population at School F. Nearly 65% of School F's teachers returned for the 2018-2019 school year from the previous year.

At School F, students had an attendance rate of 96.4% and a mobility rate of 31.8%. Teachers at School F averaged 12 years of experience with 8 years of experience within the district. Approximately 58% of teachers had a bachelor's degree, and 40% also had a master's degree. Class sizes averaged 17 students per teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, School F had a total of 49 in-school suspensions and 82 out-of-school suspensions. School F earned a grade of an A from the TEA for the 2018-2019 school year. School F also received campus distinctions for student achievement in reading, mathematics, science, academic growth, closing the gaps, and postsecondary readiness.

Principal G also has several years of experience in the educational field. That experience began in the classroom before later moving into the role of math instructional coach. He later ventured into administrative responsibilities in his current district as an assistant principal and principal before becoming the leader of School G. Principal G has been the principal at School G for 5 years. School G is a pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade campus that serves 590 students. Economically disadvantaged students comprised 96% of the student population. The student demographics at School G were 58% Hispanic, 37% African American, 2% White, 2% multiracial, and 1% American Indian. Teacher demographics were as follows: 61% African American, 27% Hispanic, 11% White, and 3% multiracial. Of the teachers at School G, 34% were male, and 66% were female. Approximately 74% of teachers returned to School G for the 2018-2019 school year.

At School G, students had an attendance rate of 96.9% and a mobility rate of 23.2%. Teachers at School G averaged 16 years of experience with 13 years of experience within the district. Approximately 63% of teachers had a bachelor's degree, and 37% also had a master's degree. Class sizes averaged 16 students per teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, School G had a total of two in-school suspensions and 62 out-of-school suspensions. School G earned a grade of a B from TEA for the 2018-2019 school year. School G also received campus distinctions for student achievement in reading, mathematics, science, academic growth, closing the gaps, and postsecondary readiness.

Principal H has several years of administrative experience. Prior to her assignment at School H, Principal H also spent 9 years in campus administrative roles in other districts. Principal H has served School H as principal for 4 years. School H is a pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade campus with 568 students in attendance. Economically disadvantaged students made

up 89% of the student population. The student demographics of School H were 62% Hispanic, 22% African American, 9% White, 4% Asian, and 3% multiracial. Teacher demographics consisted of 49% White, 32% Hispanic, and 18% African American instructors. Of the teachers at School H, 16% were male, and 84% were female.

At School H, students had an attendance rate of 96.3% and a mobility rate of 21.2%. Teachers at School H averaged 9 years of experience with 6 years of experience within the district. Approximately 72% of teachers had a bachelor's degree, and 28% also had a master's degree. Class sizes averaged 13 students per teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, School H had a total of 69 in-school suspensions and 32 out-of-school suspensions. School H earned a grade of a C from TEA for the 2018-2019 school year.

Principal I has led School I for 10 years. School I is a pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade campus that serves 485 students. Economically disadvantaged students accounted for 97% of the student population. The student demographics of School I were 58% Hispanic, 37% African American, 4% White, and 1% multiracial. Teacher demographics were as follows: 55% African American and 45% Hispanic. Of the teachers at School I, 9% were male, and 91% were female. School I saw 88% of its teachers return from the previous year for the 2018-2019 academic year.

At School I, students had an attendance rate of 95.6% and a mobility rate of 24.3%. Teachers at School I averaged 12 years of experience with 8 years of experience within the district. Approximately 74% of teachers had a bachelor's degree, and 26% also had a master's degree. Class sizes averaged 15 students per teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, School I had a total of two in-school suspensions and 59 out-of-school suspensions. School I earned a grade of a B from TEA for the 2018-2019 school year. School I also earned distinctions for

academic achievement in reading, comparative academic growth, comparative closing the gaps, and postsecondary readiness.

Principal J has been the leader of School J for 4 years. School J is a pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade campus that serves 669 students. Economically disadvantaged students comprised 84% of the student population. The student demographics of School J were as follows: 87% Hispanic, 11% African American, and 2% White. Teacher demographics consisted of 46% African American, 42% Hispanic, 10% White, and 3% multiracial. Approximately 83% of teachers returned to School J for the 2018-2019 academic year from the previous year.

At School J, students had an attendance rate of 96.8% and a mobility rate of 11.3%. Teachers at School J averaged 12 years of experience with 10 years of experience within the district. Approximately 67% of teachers had a bachelor's degree, 31% also had a master's degree, and 2% had a doctoral degree. Class sizes averaged 17 students per teacher. During the 2018-2019 school year, School J had a total of 14 in-school suspensions and 18 out-of-school suspensions. School J earned a grade of an A from the TEA for the 2018-2019 school year. School J also earned distinctions for academic achievement in reading, science, and postsecondary readiness.

### **Materials and Instruments**

The interview protocol consisted of two separate interview processes (Appendix A and Appendix B). The first interview included 14 open-ended questions addressing elementary school principals' viewpoints on professional development strategies for CRT (the first research question of the study). The second interview included 14 questions addressing elementary school principals' viewpoints on the advantages of CRT in relation to school climate and school culture (the second research question of the study). An expert in the field of educational leadership

validated the interview protocol to ensure that all interview questions would give me the appropriate responses to answer the research questions. Any research question the expert reviewer deemed to be close-ended was either revised to reflect that of an open-ended question or deleted.

All 10 participants took part in two semistructured interviews. Each interview consisted of 14 questions for a total of 28 questions combined. Each question shared a connection to one of the two research questions to discover how CRT affected school climate and culture as well as how principals encouraged cultural competence among their staff. I conducted all interviews one-on-one via phone. I recorded the interviews and hired a transcription service to transcribe them. Once transcribed, I reviewed the transcription versus its recording for accuracy. Following revisions, each participant had the opportunity to review their transcript for coherence, additions, or grammatical structure to ensure accurate representation of their thoughts.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

I collected and analyzed primary and secondary data for this study. My analysis included multiple processes following the transcription. The processes included several coding passes prior to the development of themes that I used to interpret the data.

#### ***Interviews***

Interviews served as the primary component for collecting data. I interviewed public school principals on their viewpoints concerning CRT and its influence on school culture and school climate. The participants responded to interview questions on two separate occasions, which is a suggestion of Saldana and Omasta (2018) when dealing with a small population. The semistructured interviews consisted of a predetermined list of interview questions to capture an

in-depth understanding of principals' views of CRT and its influence on school climate and school culture.

### ***Schoolwide Data***

I also utilized schoolwide data. I analyzed the schoolwide data for each principal's school. The data were provided by the TEA since this information is in the public record. This secondary data assisted me in determining the school culture and school climate.

Data for schoolwide culture consisted of student achievement, student attendance, and staff data. Achievement data reflected student performance and progress in third grade through fifth grade based on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in reading, math, writing, and science. Student attendance data included average daily attendance information to denote their connection to school. Staff data related to culture included teacher recruitment and teacher quality, such as years of service and highest degree obtained.

Schoolwide climate data included disciplinary data, student mobility rate, and class size. Discipline data consisted of the number of in-school suspensions and the number of out-of-school suspensions distributed throughout the student population. Staff climate data included teacher retention and demographics.

### ***Data Analysis Procedures***

Narrative thematic analysis was the approach taken with the data in this study. Content within the text was the primary focus of this approach (Butina, 2015). Narrative thematic analysis consisted of five steps: (1) organization and preparation of the data, (2) obtaining a general sense of the information, (3) the coding process, (4) categories or themes, and (5) interpretation of the data.

**Organization and Preparation of the Data.** Transcribing audio from the interviews was the beginning of the organization and data preparation stage (Butina, 2015). I transcribed participants' narrative responses from the interview questions into textual data verbatim to preserve a complete record of their thoughts for accuracy (Leavy, 2017). The textual data resulted from the use of an online transcription service. I compiled transcripts from both interviews into one document per participant and eliminated nonnarrative lines, such as casual conversation and participant identifiers (Butina, 2015). I also assigned participants with pseudonyms (Butina, 2015).

**Obtaining a General Sense of the Information.** I added the participants' demographic information to provide a better picture of their experiences during the preparation for coding (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). After organizing and preparing the data via transcription, I noted any rudimentary or basic themes in the margins of the transcript (Butina, 2015). These basic notes aided me in the initiation of coding passes.

**Coding Process.** Coding allowed for the reduction and classification of the interview data, which can be extensive (Leavy, 2017). According to Butina (2015), during the coding process, I read each of the transcripts multiple times to identify recurring words, patterns, or ideas that emerged from the data. I then developed corresponding codes to identify the recurring words or ideas (Butina, 2015). I constructed a master code list from the first transcript with additional codes being created and added, if necessary, from additional transcripts (Butina, 2015). I then applied the codes to successive transcripts from the master list if applicable (Butina, 2015).

I then used process coding to identify forms of participant action, reaction, and interaction suggested by the data through descriptions of what they were doing or what was

happening within the experiences they shared (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). As principals reflected on the CRT of teachers on their campuses, it allowed me to discern the conditions, contexts, causes, and consequences of life in their respective organizations (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). An analysis of values codes was also necessary for this study due to its nature of examining principals' value systems in conjunction with their perceptions of teachers' cultural competence. Values coding was particularly appropriate for this qualitative study because it allowed me to explore cultural values (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). My analysis of values codes included an exploration of the interrelationship between principals' values, attitudes, and beliefs. This information revealed how principals embedded their beliefs in their values, how their attitudes reflected their beliefs, and how their values influenced their attitudes to work together as a value system for principals (Saldana & Omasta, 2018).

**Categorization or Themes.** I placed codes from the various passes of the transcripts into explicit, logical categories (Butina, 2015). The categories reflected the apparent themes that represented the major findings of the study (Butina, 2015).

**Interpretation of the Data.** Along with the coding of interview transcripts, I wrote analytic memos to make sense of the collected data. The analytic memos also documented the emergence of impressions, ideas, and new knowledge or understanding that gave additional insight into the data (Leavy, 2017).

### ***Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness***

Although the sample size was not large, access to multiple participants and data sources allowed for data triangulation. I closely reviewed schoolwide data prior to each principal's interview to triangulate their responses to the interview questions as it related to their school context. This part of the analysis also compared the interviews between a range of principals. I



verified their viewpoints and experiences against others, providing a rich picture of the attitudes, needs, or behavior of the participants under investigation (Shenton, 2004). Site triangulation, consisting of informants from various organizations, also helped me determine if the effects of the study were peculiar to an institution or more widespread (Shenton, 2004). As a result, this process determined if any patterns or themes emerged consistently across principals' interview data (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). All the analytical components combined led to the culminating interpretation of the data. The establishment of trustworthiness also occurred through the careful identification of researcher bias and subjectivity (Glesne, 1999). Consideration for subjectivity during data collection helped me monitor it, although it cannot be adequately controlled (Glesne, 1999). This process made me more aware of how bias can distort the research findings (Glesne, 1999). Some of my anticipated biases associated with CRT included the following:

- Principals and teachers who are ethnic minorities have an innate ability to utilize CRT strategies, or they are more likely to implement CRT.
- White principals and teachers should rely on CRT more than their counterparts based on the differences between the students and themselves.
- Teachers who implement CRT can build relationships with students in order to teach them more effectively.
- Understanding and tackling implicit bias is the most important aspect of learning how to become more culturally responsive.

I established credibility using member checking to verify the validity of findings while assessing the effectiveness of the data analysis (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). The member checking process involved sending copies of the interview transcripts to each participant for their review. This gave the participants an opportunity to review and edit what they said as

well as add necessary information to ensure that a thorough representation of their interview was analyzed (Brit et al., 2016). Triangulation of data also enhanced credibility by the assessment of data sources against one another to cross-check data and interpretation (Krefting, 1991).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability arises from the researcher's provision of thick descriptions that allow others to transfer the findings to their own site. This technique required that I provide robust and detailed accounts of their experience while connecting it to the social and cultural contexts that frame the data collection. Therefore, transferability could occur.

Dependability concerns the stability of the data over time. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that dependable studies need to be consistent and accurate. This study achieved dependability through code-recode procedures and triangulation of data sources (Krefting, 1991). This process involved me returning to recode the same data approximately 2 weeks after the original coding pass to compare the results. Triangulation also enhanced the dependability of the study by using alternative data-gathering methods to compensate for the weaknesses that may have occurred in other data collection methods (Krefting, 1991). In this study triangulation compared the interview responses and information gathered from schoolwide data sources.

Confirmability concerns the level of objectivity throughout the study. I ensured that the findings of the study were a result of participants' experiences and ideas rather than their own (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation also affected confirmability by reducing investigator bias (Shenton, 2004). Transparency of the researcher through the admittance of their own predispositions was a key criterion for establishing confirmability as well (Shenton, 2004). The final tool for confirmability, the audit trail, traced the research path step by step including the decisions made by the researcher and the procedures described (Shenton, 2004).

### ***Researcher Role***

My role in this qualitative research study was an immersive process as I was the research instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). According to Austin and Sutton (2015), I reflected before and after the research process to provide context and understanding for readers. I attempted to access the thoughts and feelings of participants while safeguarding individuals and their data (Austin & Sutton, 2015). I established a theoretical standpoint from which to interpret the data making it easier to explain the narratives of participants. I also transcribed the interview responses and began coding to understand the participants' perspectives before final codes presented the findings in a coherent way (Austin & Sutton, 2015). I derived a synthesis and presented the findings from participants' quotes, thus showing the reader that the themes emerged from the participants' interviews rather than from my mind (Austin & Sutton, 2015).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Before data collection began, Abilene Christian University's (ACU's) Institutional Review Board (IRB) issued a letter of approval (Appendix D). The research aimed to understand principals' perceptions of CRT and its impact on school climate and culture. This line of inquiry guided me toward an expedited review due to the anticipated minimal risks for participants. The sole risk of participant identification was mitigated by anonymous responses to protect their personal information. According to regulations and ethical guidelines for the protection of human research participants, the methodology presented no psychological, physical, social, legal, economic risks, or risks to vulnerable populations.

I obtained informed consent from participants via consent forms. These forms included language that was easy for participants to understand. This approach ensured that participants were aware of what their inclusion in the study entailed as well as the risks and benefits

involved. Participants also received information communicating what I would be doing with the data or information gathered. I facilitated confidentiality by using codes to identify participants' information, separating that identifying information from its linked data, and also storing files away in a locked location to prevent public access. Participants also understood that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they choose to do so without penalty.

### **Assumptions**

Several assumptions regarding cultural difference theory and Gay's components of CRT were essential to this study. One assumption was that a school-home connection between the cultures of ethnic minorities facilitates higher academic achievement (Bonner et al., 2018). These established connections between home and school culture can also positively affect economically disadvantaged students (Bonner et al., 2018). Another assumption in this study was that teachers who built relationships with their students while understanding how they processed information could create meaningful learning opportunities for them in the classroom (Gay, 2010). The connection of learning to students' daily lives was also a decisive factor in producing student academic outcomes (Gay, 2010). If principals held values that aligned with the tenets of CRT, the assumption is that their campuses created inclusive school climates and cultures as well as increased student achievement.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study included the relatively small sample size. The sample size made it difficult to validate the findings of this study. This lack of ability to test the conclusions for statistical significance versus chance added to the lack of generalization (Atieno, 2009). Data collection also occurred only via interviews and schoolwide data. This method lacked an

opportunity for the researcher to observe the behaviors of participants in their natural environment to corroborate findings further.

### **Delimitations**

The scope of this study was limited to 10 elementary school principals in North Texas school districts. Each principal represented a Title I school with a vast majority of their students in the economically disadvantaged category. Their schools also consisted of diverse populations representing multiple ethnicities for this study. The study was also delimited to principals' perceptions about CRT, and how it relates to school culture and school climate.

### **Summary**

This chapter outlined the method for the proposed research to occur, which studied elementary school principals' perceptions regarding CRT and its effects on school climate and school culture. I defined the applied methodology for the study and identified the population and setting. I also discussed the development of trustworthiness and reliability of the method in this study. This section also mapped out the materials, instruments, data collection procedures, analysis procedures, and ethical considerations needed to conduct the study.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

For this qualitative narrative study, I explored the experiences of 10 elementary public-school principals working at Title I campuses that had at least 51% minority students. The purpose of this study was to explore elementary school principals' viewpoints on CRT and its influence on school climate and school culture as well as how elementary school principals promote the knowledge and implementation of cultural competence among their staff. With public school principals as participants, the expectation was to provide strategies for schoolwide improvements to create safe and equitable campuses that can create positive outcomes for marginalized student populations. The study set out to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What are North Texas elementary school principals' viewpoints on the professional development strategies for culturally responsive teaching?

RQ2. What are North Texas elementary school principals' viewpoints on the advantages of culturally responsive teaching in relation to school climate and school culture?

Based on participants' responses in relation to RQ1, the following themes emerged: (a) coaching teachers through reflection, (b) implementing professional development and diversity training, (c) prioritizing the acknowledgement of various cultures, and (d) lack of sufficient training opportunities.

Based on participant's responses in relation to RQ2, the following themes emerged: (a) understanding students' backgrounds, (b) building relationships, (c) targeting instructional practices, (d) communicating a vision, (e) welcoming all stakeholders, and (f) improving student academic achievement.

This chapter includes the results of this qualitative narrative study and includes the following subtopics: sample and population description, data analysis and prevalent themes, and a summary and preview of the next chapter.

### **Sample and Population Description**

Ten public school principals participated in this study. Qualitative research methods are not heavily dependent on sample size as small sample groups can generate meaningful results and yield more insightful data that can highlight underlying reasons and patterns within phenomena (Watson, 2018). I invited 25 public school principals working in Title I schools with majority minority student groups to participate in this study.

Out of the 10 participants selected to participate in this study, eight are current campus-based principals of Title I schools. Two participants were principals of Title I majority minority campuses who have decided to support their respective districts in broader central administrative capacities. The participants represented three major North Texas area school districts serving students in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade.

As shown in Table 1, the participants ranged in age from the late 30s to late 50s. Collectively, all participants have worked on their current campuses as the lead principal for a total of 50 years. Three of the participants were male, and the remaining seven participants were female. Seven participants identified as Black, two participants identified as White, and one participant identified as Hispanic.

**Table 1***Participant Demographics*

Participant Pseudonym	School Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Participant's Age	Years as Principal at Current Campus
Principal A	School A	F	White	38	6
Principal B	School B	M	Black	40	5
Principal C	School C	F	Hispanic	52	3
Principal D	School D	F	Black	48	4
Principal E	School E	F	White	51	6
Principal F	School F	M	Black	40	3
Principal G	School G	M	Black	49	5
Principal H	School H	F	Black	57	4
Principal I	School I	F	Black	48	10
Principal J	School J	F	Black	49	4

As shown in Table 2, participants' school data exhibited a snapshot of the student demographics. These data include the student population total and percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged. The data also revealed students' attendance rates, mobility rates, and the school's accountability rating, which further implicated the school's climate. Specific data regarding students' ethnicities can be found in Table C1 in Appendix C.



**Table 2***School Student Demographic Data*

School	Accountability Rating	Number of Students	Economically Disadvantaged	Attendance Rate	Mobility Rate
School A	B	667	87%	97.7%	12.6%
School B	B	640	73%	97.3%	18.7%
School C	C	709	76%	96.8%	10.9%
School D	B	826	77%	96.5%	23.9%
School E	D	1,103	98%	95.6%	30.2%
School F	A	659	99%	96.4%	31.8%
School G	B	590	96%	96.9%	23.2%
School H	C	568	89%	96.3%	21.2%
School I	B	485	97%	95.6%	24.3%
School J	A	669	84%	96.8%	11.3%

As shown in Table 3, teacher quality was represented by their level of education obtained and their years of service in the profession. Class size was also provided. These data gave me insight into each school's culture. Specific data regarding school teachers' ethnicities can be found in Table C2 in Appendix C.

**Table 3***School Teacher Demographic Data*

School	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree	Average Years of Experience	Average Class Size
School A	78%	22%	*	10	17
School B	76%	24%	*	8	17
School C	75%	20%	5%	11	17
School D	75%	25%	*	9	18
School E	77%	21%	2%	10	16
School F	58%	40%	*	12	17
School G	63%	37%	*	16	16
School H	72%	28%	*	9	13
School I	74%	26%	*	12	15
School J	67%	31%	2%	12	17

*Note.* Fields with an asterisk denote that no teachers are included in that category.

Student achievement data also implicated each school's culture. Table 4 shows each school's reading data displayed to reflect the percentage of students passing the State of Texas

Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in third through sixth grades. Table 5 shows STAAR math data for each school's students in the third through sixth grades, and Table 6 reports STAAR science data for each school's fifth-grade students. These data denote each school's commitment to a culture of high academic achievement or student progress.

**Table 4***School Achievement Data: Reading*

School	Third Grade	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade	Sixth Grade
School A	69%	67%	82%	*
School B	77%	70%	74%	*
School C	70%	68%	86%	*
School D	62%	70%	84%	*
School E	57%	41%	68%	*
School F	71%	72%	83%	*
School G	60%	62%	87%	*
School H	65%	57%	80%	65%
School I	67%	77%	85%	*
School J	79%	72%	95%	*

*Note.* Fields with an asterisk denote that there is no student data for the designated grade level.

**Table 5***School Achievement Data: Math*

School	Third Grade	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade	Sixth Grade
School A	84%	79%	91%	*
School B	76%	73%	85%	*
School C	77%	71%	87%	*
School D	73%	67%	82%	*
School E	48%	58%	73%	*
School F	83%	82%	90%	*
School G	70%	73%	86%	*
School H	61%	64%	73%	85%
School I	77%	82%	94%	*
School J	91%	85%	96%	*

*Note.* Fields with an asterisk denote that there is no student data for the designated grade level.

**Table 6***School Achievement Data: Science*

School	Fifth Grade
School A	72%
School B	73%
School C	69%
School D	65%
School E	53%
School F	71%
School G	73%
School H	67%
School I	63%
School J	87%

**Data Analysis and Prevalent Themes**

I used participants' interview responses to develop codes for the purpose of identifying themes. Participants contributed a wealth of experiences, information, and expertise in response to the interview questions. Although participants provided rich responses, I did not present all of those responses in the findings. Likewise, while participants shared profound narratives, I did not use all responses to determine prominent themes. Each principal shared their own unique experiences aligned to the purpose of the study. The following topics represent the recurring themes that emerged from the interview responses. Textual evidence also provided support for the findings.

***Coaching Through Reflection***

Principals stated that coaching through the reflection process helped them assist their teachers who experienced difficulty building relationships with their students. They also utilized coaching to inform their teachers about cultural sensitivity as they attempted to transfer their educational philosophies to their staff and promote sensitivity and inclusion. Principals stated

that they modeled behaviors that are conducive to the wellbeing of all students as teachers followed their lead. They also engaged teachers in conversations to address concerns that arose regarding stereotypes.

Principal D stated:

Usually that manifests itself in classroom management, or many office referrals, or complaints from the parents, because the student is going home complaining that the teacher is mean, or they do not like me, or something like that. So, one of the things you have to do is just hit it head on. You have a conversation with a teacher about either what the teacher is saying about the students, the difficulty of the student in the classroom, or what the parent's concern was, and then really allow the teacher to reflect on, while I understand that parents complain all the time, is there any validity to what the parent is saying, or do you see . . . I know that he is very high needs. A high needs student that takes a lot of time, but is there anything? What can we do to get him to where he or she likes school? So, what do you know about this student? Sometimes they do not know much of anything about the kids, so sending them back out to really take some time to learn about the child, talk to them when they are not in trouble. That is part of giving the teacher an action plan of, "Okay, so tomorrow what I want you to do is I want you to sit down and just talk to him or her when they are not in trouble. Just take a couple of minutes to ask them about what they did last night, or how their day is, or what they did over the weekend, just so that you can start to build that relationship." So, you have to have that conversation with them so that they know, if a kid likes you, there is nothing that they will not do for you, but if they do not like you, they will do everything they can to you. So, to make your life easier, you want to make sure that you are building a

relationship with those students. So, have the conversation, and then create an action plan, or two or three little things that the teacher can go back and do to help build that relationship with that student and their parents, just to show that they care. So, that is usually where we start, just little bitty things.

If I hear something a teacher says that is stereotypical or insensitive, or a parent complains about something that a teacher says or does, then it is just a conversation. And then you want to create an environment in the school where teachers are not afraid to come and ask questions before they say things, or before they teach a lesson that they are unsure of. So, I am thinking specifically about maybe 2 years ago. I had a fifth-grade teacher who told the kids not to speak Spanish. She happened to be a White teacher. So, the kids were all up in arms because the teacher told them not to speak Spanish. So, I just asked her, “Hey, let’s talk about what happened today and kind of tell me what happened.” So, she told me, “I was telling them not to speak Spanish during class.” She said, “Because what they were doing is, the other kids told me they were using curse words. And because I do not speak Spanish, I do not know what they are saying.” I said, “Well, I really want you to understand how that came across to an 11-year old is that you do not want them to speak Spanish. That is their native language. Another Hispanic teacher who spoke Spanish could have said the exact same thing that you said, but because it is coming from a White lady, it was taken differently.”

So, you just have to recognize and acknowledge that things that you say to someone may be offensive. When you may hear someone else say it and it may not seem as offensive. So always challenge them to having those difficult conversations, and taking those conversations like learning experiences, because we can always get better all the

time. So, we want to create an environment of risk taking, and one that welcomes questions that are related to cultural differences. So, the next time you have a question, I do not want you to think, “Oh my gosh, she chewed me up and spit me out because I asked the question about X, Y and Z.” I want you to feel comfortable coming to me about the black experience, because I have been black for the last 48 years. So, I can tell you many things about being black, that you may not understand if you are not black. Make those types of awkward conversations learning opportunities.

Principal F stated:

I think first is setting that expectation. And again, that practice is with anything. If you do not set a clear expectation, it does become harder for teachers. And then you have to model that relationship. So those restorative practices would also be a conversation between the student and the teacher. So, the student has an opportunity to share with the teacher what is happening, and then the teacher has an opportunity to listen to the students. Try to be proactive as possible, once you are not seeing that. Then you respond with modeling. Then, if you feel like your modeling has been supportive enough, and you have tried to create the environment, you have those honest conversations about the relationship and our values. We have three core values at our school, which are inspiring relationships, having a growth mindset, and high expectations for all, and if things did not align to those core values, and we clearly expressed that to teachers, and that if we found that we could not coach you and model and support you that way, then we begin the documentation process. You cannot teach kids that do not like you.

Principal I stated:

We had a teacher that had a hard time understanding or building relationship with a set of kids that come from a particular apartment complex. They have rezoned our area, so we got a lot of kids from another school. Of course, my kids know how I operate. Well, the first day these babies get off the bus they are off the chain. The second day of school, the teacher was up to her ears with complaints. So, I selected a teacher to go with me over to a particular child's house. This child was a handful. The first thing that we noticed was that there was a mom and dad in the house, but the mom was taking up for the child, and the dad was standing back not doing anything. We sat on the couch, and I was too afraid to put my purse on the couch, but I did it. I was afraid to sit on the couch because of the smell. So, with saying that, what I am saying is because I was over there, I was able to be in their surroundings. I had to come back and tell that teacher, "You know what? You are the only safe haven that this child has. What I need you to do is this. Within a certain span of time I need you to come back and talk to me about how it worked. If it did not work, then we need to try something else. But this child needs us." And I just think putting ourselves in their situation and helping the teacher to see that you are the safety net, you are the only role model that this child has, has helped. I have to give them examples, and that is why I go to the home. And if the teacher wants to go with me, then that is fine. But most of the time it is me, my counselor, and if the teacher wants to go, they can too.

Principal J stated:

Well, you have to really sit that person down and just lay it out there and talk about the situation. This is what is happening. What could you have done differently? How would this have worked if you already knew that this student had this concern? Maybe if you



already talked to the student, you would know that the reason that they did not turn in their homework was because they were at the hospital the night before, or something like that. I think you just have to show them that yes, you want your work turned in. You want them to do it right, but sometimes there are some other situations that are going on, and if you have not built that relationship, they are not going to share it with you. But if you build that relationship they will come in and they will say, “Hey, Miss Such-and-Such, I did not get my homework turned in. I did not finish my homework because we were at the hospital last night.” Then as the teacher, you have to be flexible and say, “Okay, well, turn it in tomorrow or sit down over here and finish this work.” But you just have to lay it out and show them how to be flexible, and that is not easy because some teachers are just stuck in their ways. They want it their way. But during this COVID closure, a lot of my teachers had to learn how to be flexible like that because yes, you wanted your assignment, but you are not going to get your assignment at 9:00. You may not get your assignment turned in until 4:00, 5:00, 6:00, 7:00, 8:00 at night because the parents were not home, and the only time they could get connected was at that time. So, you have to build those relationships and find out what is going on, and then be flexible. If I notice or observe stereotypes, I will have a conversation with the teacher, and we will talk about it. I know that I have had conversations with a teacher in regard to continuing to have a little bit of bias toward her African American students. I laid out the referrals and expressed that there are some other kids doing the same things, but I do not see anything from them. So, I know I laid that out so that they can see.

### ***Implementing Professional Development and Diversity Training***

Principals stated that they implemented professional development training with their staff about diversity to encourage teachers to learn about the cultures present on their campus.

Teachers on their campuses also engaged in book studies, reading articles, and other trainings regarding multiculturalism offered by various staff members, such as the school counselor.

Professional development was also a means for principals to improve the learning environment to better serve their diverse student groups. Trainings targeted resources and best practices for meeting their students' varied needs while supporting teachers' efforts to create a culturally responsive curriculum and inclusive campus climate. Professional development also allowed principals to keep abreast of the latest research on diversity while being driven by what the data says concerning student performance. The administrative team, other staff members, or regional service centers delivered these professional development opportunities directly.

Principal A stated:

I knew the moment I got to School A that the focus was so hardcore on academics.

Before I worked at School A, there were all these rumors about this school. They were cheating, all these crazy things. And it's a 90 % economically disadvantaged school.

When I got there, I was like, "Oh my gosh, this is just like where I have been. It is not posh here." But I immediately saw a need for relationships. So, for the past 5 years, that is where we started. So, we did a Kids Deserve It study. We actually had the author work with us and did a book study with him. Then we moved on to the trauma-informed, restorative practices, which is a big deal on my campus. I created a little stir last year. Not everybody believes in that.

We did a trauma-informed series, and we really tied it into restorative practices. When you do that, you are also incorporating a lot about culture because it is about getting to know the kids and understanding the kids. Really when you break down being a trauma-informed teacher, you are really just getting to know the kiddo and how they grow up. So, technically, the trauma does not mean because they are in this culture, they are experiencing trauma, but being a trauma-informed educator makes you ask different questions.

Principal B stated:

This is a very diverse district and then each campus is diverse as well in its own way. So, I think from the onset at campus professional development, we do have a session on multiculturalism, how diverse the district is, and how diverse we as a campus are as well. So, just putting that on their minds when we start the year, reminding them that we are going to have different students from different cultures, and just encouraging them to get to know their students, learn their students, and build relationships with their students. That helps them want to know about the diverse backgrounds and how to deal with those students.

Well, as I spoke of a little earlier, we do have a session during campus in service, where we talk about the different types of cultures that we have and how we can be sensitive and inclusive with all those different cultures. So that is a yearly professional development session that we have. I think the district as well does cultural sensitivity training, or they have in the last couple of years. So, I think once the teachers, when they get it from the district level, and then we do a different version here on campus, I think that always keeps it at the forefront of everyone's mind on how we should be culturally

responsive. Then it bleeds over into the instruction because you have to learn the different cultures, and find out how those students learn best, and what is the best ways to reach them. So, teachers start planning lessons with being culturally responsive in mind, so that at the end of the day, we can reach our goal of making sure all of our students are successful and all of our students have grown.

Principal C stated:

The district's bilingual department might be the only one does a lot more culturally responsive teaching where they help the students, especially second language learners.

We did the Seven Steps to a Language Rich Classroom, and the district will provide some of those, but I do not know how much we do as a district and as a campus.

Principal E stated:

We had a cultural sensitivity training and it is something that is in my message every day. We are a family. I mean, I said that to the teachers and the students. Every day, it was my messaging of we are all one. Now, like I said, we used the counselors to do some training. Then, I had people from the Region 10 Service Center come in and do culture sensitivity training. They knew that was my mantra every day, that everybody is one here.

Especially nowadays, every year the district is offering culturally responsive training, social-emotional learning training, and dealing with kids and trauma. Even now, every year the district is providing something on culture, and it was not just refugees. It is African American children, Hispanic children. When you take the training there is always an expected outcome. Let us say we take the training, and they talk about learning something about the children. Let us say that first week after, in our staff meeting, I

might say, “Okay, what did you learn about this child? What did you learn about that child?” Just starting to open the doors, because at the beginning of the year, everything is always so new. If you have not been at our school for a while and already know most of the kids, then your first step is to get to know the kids. Our district is really pushing diversity training now. They are offering it for us, and then they are also pushing the social emotional learning, which I think is statewide.

Principal F stated:

We had our culture-climate rubric, and there were specific things that all classrooms had to have, whether it be the look of the classroom, how we greeted our students, how we interacted with them in the classroom, how we responded to them when things did not go the way that we wanted them to. We practiced those things intentionally at the beginning of our professional development sessions. I think that culture-climate rubric is a big piece of it, but also modeling those things with our teachers, modeling restorative practices, creating social-emotional learning spaces that were intentional in all classrooms, so we ensure that everybody was doing those same things.

I think we are doing better as a district. We have done some book studies. I am trying to think of some of the books. Without necessarily saying culturally responsive, we talked about how we engage students. Having a place where students feel that they are welcomed, they feel safe, they feel loved, and respected.

So, I always told our teachers, our students need three things in the classrooms to be successful. They need structure. The students have a routine, a procedure. They knew what they were going to do and how they were expected to do it. With clarity and clear expectations, students will be successful. Second would be engagement. If students are

engaged, whether it means it is relevant to them or they understand it, and they will continue to be involved with breaking, changing the pace of the lesson, all those different things to keep our students engaged. The last thing was love. Build those relationships with our students. Make sure that they know that when they make mistakes, that is an opportunity to learn from it. So that type of social-emotional learning was a way for all of our students to be engaged. Most of the time, if we did not address those three things, then we were not addressing the needs of our students, and we found that our students would have trouble at school. We also embrace the house system more.

Principal G stated:

We did a couple of book studies. That was one thing that we did. We did one about African American males. We have done a book study about teaching culturally. We have done a few book studies centered around that. We make sure that our counselor also does some professional development for teachers, and things of that nature. We just try to make sure that we give opportunities for us to learn about different cultures.

Principal I stated:

I think with the various holidays, the book clubs, the articles, and the resources that we have available, I think that is how teachers are encouraged. They are provided those materials so that they will learn because of where we are. It is embedded in what we do. It is not something separate. So, I provide them with articles. I provide them with resources like books. We do all kinds of book studies about the various cultures. And we also do celebrations, we celebrate the different cultures. So that has helped. We do a lot of professional development, whether it is here on campus, whether it is the district, or whether it is some state conference. I think that because we are a culturally diverse

campus, we have to keep updated, abreast of all the latest research in regard to diverse campuses. That is the way that we do it through professional development. Another thing we do is have speakers to come in and talk to the teachers about how students learn better, providing them with instructional strategies or resources that they can use in order to meet the students' needs.

Principal J stated:

I would say professional development is important. Our dyslexia teacher has provided our teachers with strategies to use to help students who are struggling. I have seen my teachers implement them, and they have seen growth with their kids. So, a lot of it is about just making everyone aware and looking at the data. If you look at the data, you can see, okay, this group of kids is not performing, so we need to make sure that we are addressing this group of kids. What are their needs, and what are we missing with a certain group of children? So, we let the data speak, and then I provide the professional development to assist.

### ***Prioritizing the Acknowledgement of Various Cultures***

I asked principals to describe how they encouraged teachers to learn about diverse cultures on their campus. Principals prioritized the acknowledgement of the various cultures on their campus through monthly celebrations, holidays, PTA programs, and cultural awareness nights. Although these principals' campuses participated in these activities, some have expressed that they needed to improve in this area as many of these practices are redundant and have not occurred as frequently or as consistently as needed.

Principal C stated:

We have some celebrations for students, and I know that might not be enough. We do not do very many cultural activities. I will tell you, we do a few, so that is what we have done so far. It is something we need to work on.

Principal D stated:

I think we could probably do a better job of this formally. I say, we, me, because right now it is really kind of a cursory. Every month we celebrate different cultures, but I do not feel like it is really infused into everything that we do every day. So, every January I walk down the hall, and I see Martin Luther King, and then every February I see Rosa Parks. And I am always thinking to myself, and I never stopped to say anything, but I am always thinking, "If I see one more picture of Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks . . .

Those are not the only black people who did anything in the United States." So, I think that I can do a better job of bringing that to the forefront with teachers about learning about diverse cultures, because they are very dependent on the curriculum. So, if it is in the curriculum, they will do it, but I rarely see them doing anything outside of the curriculum, and most of what they do is very surface level. So yeah, I think I can do a better job with that. We do have monthly celebrations. We have play programs, PTA nighttime programs where we recognize Hispanic heritage month and things like that.

Principal H stated:

So, we have done some things. I have a new parent liaison. So, in the last couple of years, we have really been trying to push. We have cultural nights, and different things like that bring all of our cultures together. This past year, even though we did not get to complete it, was probably one of the more diverse years because we had, not a lot, but we had way more white children than we have ever had since I have been there. So, I guess maybe



just allowing opportunities through listening, and supporting, and allowing people to do different things. Again, like what I mentioned, the multicultural night, and having awareness around programs and things like that during Hispanic heritage month.

Principal I stated:

I think with the various holidays, the book clubs, the articles, and the resources that we have available, I think that is how teachers are encouraged. They are provided those materials so that they will learn because of where we are. It is embedded in what we do. It is not something separate. So, I provide them articles, I provide them with resources like books. We do all kinds of book studies about the various cultures. And we also do celebrations. We celebrate the different cultures. So that has helped.

### ***Lack of Sufficient Training Opportunities***

Although principals referenced some professional development workshops offered by their respective districts and campuses, they believed that neither themselves nor their districts offer enough training opportunities for their teachers to become more culturally proficient. Some of the trainings that have occurred addressed topics of cultural diversity, sensitivity, inclusion, restorative practices, second language learners, social emotional learning, and CRT. Although the list of topics is extensive, principals mentioned that many of these training sessions are not current.

Principal A stated:

I thought for a minute there, the district was doing a better job with that. I was excited that we were going in that direction, but then I feel like that fizzled out. I do not feel like we have been as responsible in that area as we need to be. So as far as the district goes... Last year, I know that they had that one guy that everyone loved with the behavior, and I

think he touched on just different cultures and things too, and that was good, but I do not know that we have really had a huge focus there. I know that now they are going to have to think about that. I have not looked at the new courses or heard about them. As far as we go, our huge focus last year was the restorative practices. Now, within that it is natural to talk about cultures, and just getting to know the students, and then communicating high expectations for all of the kids. So, I think we need to do that professional development there.

Principal D stated:

Okay, so I cannot think of anything at the district level at this time. We used to have a session a few years ago called Cultural IQ. When I started in this district years ago, we were under some type of state watch or something, because we had too many African American males going to the alternative school. So, we did a districtwide, culturally responsive staff development. It actually got a lot of pushback from the school board at the time, so we ended up abandoning that, and then we did the Cultural IQ for a couple of years, but I cannot think of anything that we have done within the last 3 years as a district related to culturally responsive teaching, and I have not incorporated anything at the campus level for culturally responsive teaching. There have been no formal professional development opportunities.

Principal G stated:

Well I have to say that the district has not provided anything lately. I know we do have the MTSS department, and they come out and do some trainings, but it is not as in depth as I think it needs to be so that teachers are constantly really thinking about doing culturally relevant things in the classroom. I do try to do that in the classroom when we

do actually model lessons. Our coaches model lessons, and they really talk about, well which population of students do you think would be more excited by this lesson? We just talk about the things that we did to try to engage students by using some kind of culturally responsive teaching in the classroom. I do not think that we are going in depth enough on our campus or district wide to really address it though.

Principal H stated:

Now, as far as multicultural education, I have not done anything with that for professional development, and neither has our district. Not that I am aware of.

Principal J stated:

I really do not see a lot of culturally responsive professional development here in my district. I know that they started it one time a couple years back. I have a resource that I remember them providing for us, but there really is not a lot of professional development on that. I know that this year, that is a focus, and so I am expecting to see a lot more culturally responsive teaching practices, and different things imbedded into our year. The other question that you asked was about how do I include multicultural information into the school, multicultural teaching? I probably have not, and that is sad, but I probably have not really included that in any of our professional development sessions, but this year, that is a focus. I think I have been working on building the culture to a point where we are at a point now where teaching a multicultural curriculum, embedding those other pieces into the school will now be more widely accepted and easily implemented into the classroom, because if you have a culture of this is me and I am this and I am that, trying to infuse that in, in the beginning, it is going to be challenging. Now, we are at a point where we are ready to get along a lot better, and respect each other's opinions, respect

each other's cultures. So, now infusing that into the curriculum more will be more widely accepted and easily implemented.

### ***Understanding Students' Backgrounds***

Several principals stated the importance of teachers having an understanding of the backgrounds of their students, and most importantly, that teachers should demonstrate cultural sensitivity in closing the cultural gaps that often exist in the classroom. Many principals expressed that teachers lack the understanding of different cultures and kids' experiences that are necessary for relating to and empathizing with their students. Principals mentioned several aspects of culture including language, discipline style, communication, and customs of dress among their examples. Principals also expressed that some teachers are unaware of their deficit in cultural understanding, highlighting the need for teachers to address this gap through taking more initiative to learn about cultural diversity as they continue to grow as educators. Many stated that culturally competent teachers are lifelong learners who desire to learn about different cultures and ultimately understand how to integrate them into their classroom.

Principal A stated:

Well, my philosophy about that is that teachers need to be culturally responsive. They need to understand those kids with diverse backgrounds, and in order for them to do that, they are going to have to really get to know different cultures that they are teaching and interacting with. I think that is a lot of the problem that we encounter with a lot of our younger teachers, actually, a lot of older and more experienced teachers too. They just do not understand. How is this student living? What is the culture of this student? How does this student interact with people at home? Because if you are doing the complete opposite at school, then you are just going against the grain and you are creating problems and you

think it is this child acting inappropriately, when it is really a misunderstanding. So, I guess, it is really just more that the teacher needs to become aware of that before they can be the most effective. Just be aware of all the different cultures in the classroom. I think the biggest challenge teachers face is themselves. I think that people think that they know, and they are not doing enough learning. And that includes me. I thought, "Oh, I am fine. I understand these cultures," But really, deep down, do I really? No, I really need to do some more research. So, I really think that we are the first people to get in the way of that. Then, really focusing on some of the professional development and your own learning in that area, because right now it is so important. So, I really think the biggest challenge is that, and not understanding all the little things that make a culture what it is. So, the different types of discipline, the different means of how we communicate, what is valued in this culture, just that kind of stuff. I think it is really all about what we are learning as educators.

The most challenging aspect I think is really just getting the teachers to understand what it means to be culturally responsive, and I do think the initiative with what we did last year helped out with that. So, the challenges that I have seen with that are...You know, in a classroom it is such a mix that you really have to be a master of getting to know all those kids, and all their different ways, and all their different families, and understanding how to make that flow. I think that is the biggest thing, behavior, how you deal with each child differently, the way you talk to each child differently. You can talk to one of my kids, my own kids. You can tell one of them very directly when you do not like something. The other one needs you to sit down and have a conversation about it or feelings are hurt. I think it takes a master to do that in a classroom. I think that is a

huge thing, and just also getting everyone to really get to know the families is the biggest challenge, on my campus at least.

Principal B stated:

I think one of the biggest challenges is understanding all of the different cultures. The last time I checked, there are 56 different languages spoken just in this district. So, when you think about that, and you think about maybe half of those being on one campus or a third of those being on a campus, I think that is a challenge in and of itself, being able to know all of the different cultures that you will be interacting with, and just understanding and learning about those cultures so that you can know more about your students.

I think the most challenging aspect of a diverse academic community would be the large number of different cultures and ethnicities that you would have on campus or in a district. It is one thing if you have, maybe just a couple, but when you have double digits of diversity within your groups on campus, I think that presents a huge challenge because within each one of those different student groups, culture-wise, that is a different group that you have to learn and understand how they learn best. You have to understand what motivates them and how you can reach them. So, that would be one of the most challenging aspects.

Principal D stated:

When we go back to content, you cannot teach what you do not know, right? So, we are talking about students with diverse backgrounds. You have to know them as well, so it is important to really understand and know the characteristics of the students you serve. So, we cannot just jump right into content, we really have to get to know the kids and their race, their ethnicity, their socioeconomic background, and all that stuff is part of getting

to know them so that you can teach them. So yeah, I guess that you cannot teach what you do not know also applies to who they are as a person, and not just the content.

The most challenging thing for me is that the community gets more diverse each year. So, being able to know who is coming into the community and the little nuances of each culture is difficult for me because you do not want to seem as if you are harping or highlighting the differences, but you do want to know the way different cultures experience things and what they need to support them. That is what is challenging, just not knowing most of the time who is coming into the school and how we can support them, and when I say support, I mean what type of academic setting we will need to impact instruction or even just the environment of the school that would be supportive for them. So, where do I get that information from?

Principal E stated:

I think one of the major things is, as Americans, we already have this preconceived idea of what it should be like. My school is unique because we did have so many cultures represented. For example, when I first started teaching, I was at a school that had a lot of cultures. I had a lot of Asian kids, and they would never look at me in the face. I always said, "Look at me." Come to find out, it was a matter of respect. So, learning what it means in their culture and having an open mind to understanding, I had to learn to understand they were not being disrespectful. That is a sign of respect that they do not look the teacher in the eye.

Principal F stated:

It is important for teachers to build a relationship and know the background of their students, understanding that their diverse backgrounds not only include their ethnicity,

but also their upbringings and what they are dealing with from home. So, really getting to know their students, build relationships, and differentiate their classroom environments and relationships to their student's backgrounds as well.

Principal G stated:

My philosophy is that we should provide equity and excellence for all students. So, I think that they do have to have some kind of background knowledge to appreciate someone's background or the diversity that comes into the classroom, so that they are not just tolerating students, but really can empathize with students.

Sometimes we have teachers who might not have been in the same situation as some of our students. They might not really understand and know how to empathize with a child that might be going through something because they cannot imagine how it feels because they have never been in that situation. I think that might be something that impedes our teachers, just not being able to relate or being able to empathize with students.

Principal I stated:

Basically, what I tell my teachers is that they need to know where the students come from before they are able to teach them. So, they have to know a little about the students, it does not have to be a lot. So, maybe they can do some type of student interest survey, or even in the mornings when they are doing their morning circle, that is a great opportunity for them to find out about the students, even in a writing prompt. I just feel like if they understand where the kids are coming from, they are better able to serve them, whether it is through building a relationship, just talking with them, or developing lessons that



interests them. It can happen through just chatting too, talking about who they are and where they come from, it really helps the teachers to meet their needs.

I think most culturally competent teachers are empathetic, but not sympathetic. They generally care about the children. They try to make a connection with the children. I just think that they have a different understanding. The ones that understand where the kids are coming from, the different cultures, they have an understanding of the kids. So, let me give you a prime example. So, one thing is the word, ma'am. With my bilingual students, they like to call the teachers, ma'am, not Ms. Jackson, and most of my teachers understand that it is a sign of endearment, that it is a sign of respect when they call you ma'am. It is not that they do not want to call you by your name. That is just their culture. I had a teacher where it was an issue because she did not want to be called ma'am. She wanted to be called by her name. So that is when the conversation had to take place between me and her. I let her know, "Hey, it is not a sign of disrespect. I am not disrespecting you. It is not like they call you by your first name. It is not that they do not know your name. That is just part of their culture. They are calling you ma'am as a term of endearment. That is still the same amount of respect as if they called you Ms. Jackson or Ms. Smith." So, just helping the teachers to understand that also, but I think that empathy comes in understanding because the teachers have to understand where the kids are coming from in order for them to be culturally competent, for them to understand that culture. I think that they are more willing to accept the different cultures. I also think that they take that as a learning piece for them. That is a growth mechanism for them to learn about that culture.

Principal J stated:

My most culturally competent teachers recognize that there are differences in children. They do not just say that all children are the same. They know that there is a difference, and they know that they may have to support this child differently based on what they have learned from the families, or from just knowing that there is a need to support some children differently. I see that characteristic in them. I see that they have a desire to work with all children. They are not afraid. I do not know if that is a good term to use, but let us say, for example, if they are a Hispanic teacher working with an African American student. They are not afraid to work with that African American student because they may never have worked with that child before. They want to work with all kids and make sure that they achieve, that they ensure that each child is respected for their own respective culture.

One of my teachers last year wanted all the kids to dress up in what she considered Sunday dress to do a presentation. So, when the student came in, he came in jeans and a top, a flannel top or something. She was really upset because to her, Sunday dress was a suit, a tie, all of this type stuff. So, the parents were upset. I guess they were not upset, but they wanted to understand it a little bit better. Why did she hold that against him on his rubric, that he did not dress appropriately? So, we had the conversation and afterwards. I said, "You have to realize that different people wear different things to church. Everybody does not wear what you think people should wear to church. So, when you say Sunday dress, that looks different for everyone. To their family, that was their Sunday dress. So, you have to be more accepting of other cultures." I think for her, that was eye-opening, but at the same time, she was still like, "No, that is what Sunday dress is to me." So, I think what makes it challenging is that you have an

idea in your mind of what you expect, and you never thought about the fact that someone else may look at it differently.

### ***Building Relationships***

Principals stated the importance of building relationships with parents to bridge the gap between home and school life. The modes of contact included principals and teachers reaching out to introduce themselves to parents at the beginning of the school year, making home visits to families who are difficult to reach, hosting meet and greets with the staff in students' communities, and holding virtual office hours during the COVID-19 pandemic. They stressed the need for teachers to build relationships with their students as they encouraged teachers to honor the uniqueness of each of their students and motivate them while focusing on each student on a singular level. Principals stressed that the development of teacher-student relationships is the foundation for creating a caring classroom environment of equity and trust that facilitates positive student interactions, learning, and performance. They also stated the importance of teachers knowing students' names and background information as well as making themselves available to students outside of school time during extracurricular activities such as sports. Their example influenced their staff to do the same. Principals also cited building relationships as a contributor toward student academic achievement on their campuses. They described teachers who have the ability to build relationships with their students as engaging, caring, and knowing how to motivate their scholars to do their best while setting high expectations for them. Also, teachers having personal knowledge of their students and how they learn allows the teacher to more effectively reach them, which minimizes the amount of time that students have to disrupt the class.

Principal A stated:

I feel like the most important thing is learning a kiddo, not just dismissing a kid, but really thinking it through. This kid is not being bad. This kid is doing what they do. They are funny. They have a good sense of humor, and they might be a comedian someday. Consider all the unique little things and modeling that on my campus. I know most of the kids on my campus. This will be my seventh year there, so I probably know 600 of the kids' names. So, I think, my leadership team and I modeling how we all get to know them has been the best thing to honor each kiddo.

At my school, when we have success, I really feel like it is the teachers. It really does have a lot to do with how they are building those relationships and getting to know those kids. So, that is a huge positive contributor to that. Then, it is also the high expectations for all kids. I think it is true that in the back of your mind, sometimes when you are a fresh teacher that you worry about this certain group of kids, or that certain group of kids.

Principal B stated:

I think first and foremost, what positively contributes to student academic achievement is the staff's ability to build relationships with the students, from the beginning of the year. Like I said earlier, students do not really care about how much you know until they know how much you care about them. So, our teachers do a great job of building those relationships with the students and then, having those high expectations and motivating students. That contributes to their academic achievement. Not only that, but our teachers do not look at their individual groups of students as only their students. They are willing to step in and have a team approach and make sure that if another teacher has a group of students that are not really performing well on a certain skill, then another teacher will

volunteer to step in and provide some intervention to ensure that those students are successful, as well. So, basically the relationships, and a team approach make sure the students are successful.

Principal D stated:

Reach out to the parents. We always ask the teachers at the beginning of the school year to reach out to the parents. Some of the teachers require a little more guidance when it comes to that, because they are not really sure what they are supposed to talk to the parents about. So, we tell them just to listen. So, you are not calling them to tell them about anything that you are going to be doing, and the homework, and classwork, and being on time. You are not calling about those types of things. You are calling to find out about the child, and about what is best for them, the kid, and how you can best serve the students. So, parents appreciate that, when you call and find out, “Hey, tell me about Monica, what she likes, what she dislikes, and what kind of learner she is.” They are the people who know the child the best. So, when you humble yourself and call the parents and ask them these things in the beginning before you start having trouble with them, and I do not care what you have heard about the kid in the past, you have to start new, really be genuine, and show the parents that you care about their child. When you do that, they are going to support you throughout the school year. You cannot be afraid. When the trouble does arise, they are afraid to call the parent because, “I heard that she is a yeller,” or whatever. So, then they do not want to call, and then months go by, and now I am having to call. Then the parent is upset because when I say, “Well, this problem has been happening multiple times,” the parent does not know about it because. Sometimes they lie, but sometimes they are right, because the teacher has not kept them in the loop as to

what is going on in the classroom. So, if you start that in the beginning, it is much better, but sometimes we have to go back and have parent conferences where I sit side by side with the teacher. I have done that before.

I think having teachers who are engaging, and caring is important. If the students and the parents can feel that there is a true partnership between the school and home, those are things that positively contribute, of course, to student achievement. Also, the teacher should know their content and be knowledgeable about the best strategies for the students who are sitting in front of them. I think that will positively contribute.

Principal E stated:

My first year there we had 452 suspensions. My last year, we had 13. I believe it is because I finally got a group of teachers that were open to diversity and who knew relationships were the key. We have been able to stabilize the culture with teachers and administration because that was the school that had new administration every 2 years and was turning over teachers every year. With the stability now and true teachers that were invested, we had a great environment. I mean, there was very little classroom management problems. What we did notice this last year was that the kids who we were having the most problems with were new to our school. So, if you have been with us for a while, we did not have problems with you because someone in the building had a relationship with you. So, let us say you had a problem in this class. Well, the person you had a relationship with could take you for a few minutes, talk to you, and then put you back in class, but the brand new kids that no one knew were the ones we had the most problems with.

We use data day-in and day-out, and I do not even think you look at it culturally. We look at it just student by student. Now, obviously we look at trends, and unfortunately our Black children are struggling. So, we are figuring out what are we doing wrong because obviously if the whole group is not succeeding, then it is us. So, that is how we would look at it. Then we really break it down kid by kid and look at what their individual needs are, and how we need to address them because some kids have some terrible home lives, and we cannot tackle that, but we can build that relationship to make them feel secure. So, we find out what each kid needs, and what makes them want to do better. Then we feed off of that to help them, and that in turn will make our data better.

Principal F stated:

We did not use home life as an excuse. We were clear about what our students were dealing with and made sure that we hired people that understood that, those that could have those expectations that all students could learn if we put in the right system before them, but where teachers tried and still were running into gaps, we got to know those parents as well through being the ones that were the first greeters. We went to do home visits. We made sure that we made contact with those parents and set up opportunities for the parent and teachers to build those relationships. Also, we encouraged our teachers in the first 3 weeks to reach out to all parents before we ran into anything that may have been a concern. Let us go ahead and meet our parents before. So, they hear the positive news or have a positive interaction with our teachers. So, when we were trying to reach out about something that may be a concern, there is a relationship built there as well. So again, that is just being proactive. Try to make those phone calls prior to any issues happening.

I will go back to my quote that I give them every day. People do not care what you know until they know that you care. Those kids did not care. They responded to the relationships. Once kids felt like they had someone that would listen to them, felt like there was someone that cared about them, but also had a place where they felt safe, the kids responded to it. The kids will always respond to it. I think that is a key element to getting our struggling students who want to do. It is not about them wanting to learn to read and write. It is about living up to the adults that are in front of them. If they have that adult in front of the students, they will run through a wall for them. So, relationships are most important.

Principal G stated:

Well, one thing that we try to do is create opportunities for our parents to learn. Just as kids come to the class to learn, we try to provide at least once a six-week, an opportunity for parents to learn from our teachers. In addition, once every 6 weeks, we go out to those locations, in particular, the apartments, and try to have a meeting there, where parents can come and eat and socialize with us and get to know us. I think building those relationships with parents makes it easier for us to be able to communicate with them because then they know that we really care. If they know that we really care and have their child's best interest at heart, I think that kind of dissipates or makes that gap disappear.

I just think it is just important because the more you understand about the person that you are trying to teach, the better you know how to teach that student. You know how they learn. You know what excites them. You know what is important to them. You know what can shut them down. You just have a better understanding of the person that



is in front of you. I think when a student knows that you really are interested in who they are, I think that motivates them. They know that you care about them, and they want to do things to please you, and they want to make you proud of them.

If students feel that they are important and they are a part of the learning environment, and that the teacher cares and really plans to do things in the classroom that inspire them, that they are interested in, it keeps them engaged. When we take time to have small group instruction for those students who are struggling because they might be behind, it curves their behavior because I think most students want to learn. I would say all students want to learn. It is just that sometimes the doors are closed to students who struggle the most, and they act out because they feel like the people in the classroom or people in general at home may just sit them in the corner and ignore them and the struggles that they are having, or ignore how they are feeling, or ignore what they really enjoy doing. So, I think because we take time to really try to make sure that everybody feels included in the learning environment, it makes that discipline go down. If I want to give you some numbers from my teachers when I got here, on our climate survey, we were at 42% positive responses on unruly children, and equity, and the way that we handled discipline, and we moved to 90% this past year. We went up about 50 percentage points in 5 years.

Principal H stated:

That actually is one of our core beliefs at our campus. Relationships and trust impact learning. You cannot do it. You really cannot do it. I feel like once that is achieved, some of the other things will take care of themselves because you will do it because you have a relationship with that person, and the student will do what they need to do because they

have a relationship with the teacher. The family will get involved because they have a relationship with the school. So, the relationship piece is huge in helping teachers to understand that it sometimes can be a struggle.

Relationships contribute to student achievement. It is a two-sided coin. It either promotes it or it is very detrimental too. So, I think relationships are what positively contributes to student academic achievement. I mean, it does. The relationships you have with teachers impact the way they interact with students and how they are willing to learn and grow and do all of those same things. To have the relationship in the classroom with the student, you see the same thing happening. If there is a connection there, the kids will learn. If there is no connection there, it is very difficult, and it works the same way with me. If I do not have a connection with the teacher, it is very difficult for me to help the teacher learn and grow. The same thing happens in the classroom. So, the roadblock is people who struggle with building relationships, authentic relationships that benefit learning.

Principal J stated:

I know in the beginning, I have the teachers reach out to all of their students just for a quick, "Hello, I'm Miss Such-and-Such. I am going to be your child's teacher. Are there any concerns that you may have or any questions?" to reach out to them individually and to not make that their only phone call. Do not only reach out once they are in trouble, and you have not talked to that parent before. Do not send me a referral and you have never connected with the family. So, they have to reach out and keep a parent log of conversations with parents.

You know how you have that old quote about students. They do not care about what you know, but they basically care if you care. That is the basic gist of it, and so at the end of the day, if you want results out of your kids, you have to build those relationships. You cannot wait until the week before STAAR and start trying to pump them up, give them candy, and all that type of stuff. You have to start day one building the relationship so that they will perform for you, and so if you have some feedback to provide them that may not be positive, they are willing to accept it because they know you are coming from a good place. You have to start that from day one.

I think what positively contributes to student academic achievement is that we do build relationships with kids. We recognize them for their achievements. Even if it is a little bitty lollipop, our teachers recognize them, and they build those relationships.

### ***Targeting Instructional Practices***

Principals stated that diversity challenges educators to work harder and learn about targeted pedagogy and methodology to support students. As teachers reflect on their instructional practices, students and educators have the opportunity to grow. When observing CRT practices, principals attested to seeing teachers integrate students' cultures into their lessons by selecting books that represent the kids in their classrooms, discussing current events that are relevant to students, using language that is culturally specific, and incorporating music that their children listen to as a part of the learning. According to principals, students were more excited and engaged in the lessons. They were also able to make more connections to the learning to build an understanding of the concepts being taught.

Principal C stated:

I have a teacher that is just phenomenal. She will bring the student's culture in, and she will bring in the parents. Her relationship with parents is so strong. She goes and visits the parents. She will do things that the kids respond to in regard to what she is reading in the classroom. She will select books, things that maybe students have not been exposed to. So, she will give them that knowledge, and then she will share with a parent. I will say, the kids respond to what she does. I can give you an example. She was teaching them about community. I think it was community workers. A lot of the kids did not realize all of the community workers, other than a fireman and a policeman, but she told them, "No, we have a mayor and governor!" The kids and her wrote a poem about the governor or the mayor. I cannot remember exactly, but the kids connected what they were learning about the community with a poem that they created on their own. I will tell you she was very good with that.

Principal E stated:

I think that goes back to the teacher that always had books that made sure they included the kids' faces or how they were. The kids were so excited to see that because unfortunately, typically it is little white kids or whatever. She always made the connection to the home like, "Okay, your Baba." I think that was in one of the cultures they called the dad. They were so excited to hear her speak words they knew. I think it made them more receptive to her teaching.

Principal F stated:

I think a benefit of diversity is that it pushes us to think outside our box and comfort zones, which makes us grow and makes our students grow because they are being exposed to different things. I think that is the greatest benefit. When you are challenged

to do something outside of your comfort zone and you grow, it only leads to higher student achievement. I guess, the challenge would be once you are being successful at something, you are having to find new ways as you address the diversity.

I am going to go back to our text practice where we did relevant texts or current events and seeing teachers implement that in the classroom. Often times it was about students or people around students' backgrounds that they can relate to. So, you may have text about young students who graduated from Harvard at 14 and 15 years old. We are sharing that with students. So, I am thinking about texts like that. So, we shared those kinds of texts with the students. And I think teachers and students made a great connection with that. I think it has helped students to see themselves not only just in text, but also see themselves as someone that they can become.

Principal G stated:

Diversity challenges us because if we do not know what to do for certain kids based on their backgrounds, it makes us work harder, and we have to continue to learn as educators what is the best mechanism in terms of pedagogy and methodology to support those students. So, I think it helps everyone become smarter. It just pushes us to go to the next level in terms of being great educators.

I saw a teacher using music and movement in her lesson because some kids need that movement, and music really inspires and motivates them in the classroom. What I did see is the amount of engagement in the classroom increased. Students who normally might be sitting there, kind of staring off into space were more energetic, they were more ready to learn, and they were more actively engaged in the lesson.

Principal I stated:

One time when I was in a classroom, I saw a teacher give examples. When she was talking to this group, an African American group, she gave an example from their culture. Then she talked about the same exact thing, but she provided an example from the Hispanic culture. I think that is the best way that I have seen teachers be culturally responsive. Also, the students understand more. They can connect and build a bridge to what she is talking about. There is a connection there. That way you are not having kids to have a disconnect because they understand, because that is something they have seen, or heard, or done.

Principal J stated:

I think for my campus, the challenge to student outcomes is that you have to stop and take a look at what you are doing as a teacher that may not benefit the student. So, if you stop and look at the fact that maybe this is a bilingual child that does not know the language. They are just coming from another country, then, as staff members, we have to figure out what we can do to ensure that the child is included also, so that they do not feel isolated, because if they feel isolated, then they are not going to achieve. So, I think the benefit is that we are learning from each other and learning what we have to do to provide student achievement for all children.

I have a teacher who has used a lot of culturally responsive practices, call and response, talking to each other, getting up and walking around the room, being able to communicate in groups. It worked very well. She has high scores, but in general, the kids are happy to be in her classroom. She does not have very many behavior problems because she uses both practices. We know that when you are talking about culturally responsive teaching, most kids in minority environments like to be together. They like to

talk, all that type of stuff. So, she makes sure that she has activities throughout her lessons that will allow kids to be able to engage with each other, and they respond well.

### ***Communicating a Vision***

Principals stated that they develop a vision for their campuses rooted in equity. They established clear expectations for their staff and model those expectations. The vision drove the decisions of the school while consistently reminding teachers of the expectations. They modeled their vision of inclusivity by creating safe places for their staff and students to talk honestly and take risks. They took the time to get to know their teachers, which inspired their teachers to spend time learning about their students, families, cultures, and classroom resources that represent all students. Principals also celebrated cultural differences by representing students throughout the school, intentionally hiring candidates of diverse backgrounds, and utilizing students' and parents' native languages as an asset for making connections.

Principal A stated:

I really do try to work hard at this. I think this is one of my biggest goals, and it always has been for an environment that is inclusive of everyone and welcomes all the differences. I really do want that. So, I think the biggest thing is modeling, learning, and modeling the learning. So, teachers know that I am reading. I am on Twitter pretty heavy. Or I was. I have not been for a little bit now, but just saying, "Hey, I am reading this. What are you guys reading? Are you reading this? Did you get your book?" Modeling the learning is really important too, and also that your leadership team is with you in that. I think that is really important, just creating this comfortable place where people know that you are there for people and not just for test scores. I think that is a huge thing. I think

people are more apt to say, “Hey, let us focus in on the whole child,” whenever the principal is doing it, if that makes sense.

I have been trying to just question the thinking. So, I do not want to tell teachers. This is me. I am a White principal in a diverse school, and if I am just telling you to be receptive to diversity, you are going to be like, “What are you talking about, lady? You are crazy.” But I think it is really more about the modeling and the question asking. Have you gotten to know the family? What is their culture like, especially if they are from another country? We have families from different places. There are differences. Salvadorian kids and Mexican kids have huge differences in their cultures, but the teachers that are blurring that are not seeing them. Why is this group of students responding differently to how I am teaching than this group of students? I think they really have to start thinking about it, and I do promote it in that way.

Principal B stated:

I think it goes back to the first question you asked. Once it is an expectation that you treat the students as if they were your own students, you can make sure that you are not impartial to any group of students. I think once you continually practice that and you continue to try to learn your different cultures and the different students that you are serving, then it becomes the culture of the campus to where everyone starts to foster a climate that is receptive to diversity. Here in my district, it is kind of hard to get away from diversity. As I spoke about earlier, we have so many different groups of students here in the district and on campus that you almost have to be receptive to diversity by default. Doing the different things that I have spoken about earlier kind of helps to be able to do that.



Principal D stated:

I am pretty intentional about interviewing candidates that have diverse backgrounds because I want to create an environment where all people are comfortable seeing people who look like them, and then creating an environment to where people are free to feel comfortable talking and taking risks, talking about issues that concern them. Being a really good listener and asking for help when I need it, modeling those examples, modeling that example of I do not know everything. If I have a question about something culturally sensitive, I always ask because that is my goal. I ask people questions all the time. I ask for their input because I always tell them, "My goal is to make our school a great place to teach and a great place to learn." And I have to have their input to make that happen. So, if I do not know something, I have created an environment where people are not afraid to ask for help or to have a conversation about anything. We have not really had a lot of conversations around diversity, but I think that our school environment is definitely a place where that can happen. Yeah.

It is simply not just about inclusion and diversity but just about everything. We have a very open policy practice on our campus where people can talk about anything. I think that the diversity topic will come up a lot this year, and I think I am at a good place where people are willing to talk about that. I think as far as the administrator, the leader of the school, I have to create that environment, so people are open and honest and willing to ask for help when they need it.

Principal E stated

I think I am very real, and I had very hard conversations. I do not look badly on anybody if this is not your calling, but you have to know who you are. We took teachers to home

visits because once you see their home, if you have any kind of heart, you will start to realize more, especially the ones that are coming over here as refugees. I mean, you have like 10 people living in a one-bedroom apartment, and they do not know how to work the system. It is very eye opening. Like I said, I just have real conversations with them and let them know, do you think this is something you want to do because you have to have a kind heart and that is the beginning of the relationship, and if you do not, then this is not the place for you. Some chose to leave, and some chose to stay.

Principal F stated:

You start with your vision, the words that we say and the actions we take. I base my actions on getting to know everyone. The idea of your vision, equitable access for all, lays out what the plans are, and then we create clear expectations for everyone. Practice those expectations with everyone. Where do we practice? How do we respond when those expectations are not met? I think part of that also has to be being courageous. So, when things are not aligned to that vision, or are not aligned to that idea that we are all equal and we share this diversity, we make sure that we address it. There is constant communication about why. Let me just be the model of it. That would be one of the highest leverage points. Then you have your things like social emotional learning, the cultural practices that bring us all together. So, we may address our diversity, but we bring ourselves together to be one and just create our own culture or school pride.

Principal G stated:

It is all about talking. It is all about creating spaces where people can talk and share how they feel. As a leader on the campus, you have got to be approachable. It is not saying that you have to say yes to everything that someone brings to you, but you have to listen.

I think that is important. One thing that you have to do is make sure that when people do make suggestions or want to see change, you have to make sure that it is rooted in the vision that you all created together. If you create a vision together with your staff and everybody is on board, and they are excited about that vision, everything that happens in that school should be centered on that vision and centered on student success. So, if teachers and staff members know that whenever we talk about change or improvement or trying to implement something new, if it is not rooted in that vision or student success, it is something that we should not talk about. So, really making sure that everybody understands that it has to be tied back to our vision.

As I always say, it starts with me. I set the tone, so my actions really define how teachers will interact with others. I make sure that the things that I do are really inclusive, and I consider every one of my staff. I get to know them by. I do make sure that I schedule in my calendar times that I go and just chat with teachers so that I can get to know more about them. The more I know about them, the more I can make sure that I am not biased in the way that I interact with people on the campus. I think that inspires them to act differently, be creative, and be inclusive with other students when they work with them.

Principal H stated:

I think the biggest thing that I think I have done is help the staff create those core beliefs. The first one is all, which means everybody has got to contribute because no one person is going to have it all. So, I feel like that has helped to welcome diversity because if we are going to do well, then everybody has got to pitch in, and we have got to go all out to

make it work. I do not know that I have done anything specific, but I know that that is the flavor of my campus, working together so that all will be successful.

Principal J stated:

It is all about me being welcoming and inclusive. It starts with me. Everything starts at the top. So, I have to be welcoming. I have to include everyone, so that my teachers will do the same thing. If I am not inclusive, if I am not welcoming of diversity, they are going to follow my lead. So, it just starts with me.

I know for me, because my school is predominately Hispanic, some of my parents that volunteer in our school speak Spanish. They do not speak a lot of English, and we still communicate. I do not know how to explain that, but we are still able to communicate with each other, even with the parents who speak Spanish. I may have a translator, but I am talking directly to that parent, even if I am speaking English. I am not talking to the translator. I am talking to the parent. I think that is how I let my staff know that it is important to respect everyone. Just because I do not speak the language does not mean that I cannot take care of my parents and my children. I think that they see that and so it lends itself to that environment of being inclusive.

### ***Welcoming All Stakeholders***

Principals shared that their stakeholders felt welcome in their schools and had a sense of pride regarding the campus. They attributed these findings to parents positively interacting with teachers and staff, actively participating in their child's educational journey, and the campuses' increase in student academic achievement. They also expressed that students were more open to coming to school and learning because they felt a sense of belonging and saw a diverse staff that looks like them.

Principals invited their students and parents to become involved in the learning community by participating in various academic and nonacademic activities. Students participated in extracurricular activities, such as the National Elementary Honor Society and student council, which allowed them to engage in community outreach and service. Parents also participated in the learning community as members of committees, such as the Parent Teacher Association, the Site-Based Decision-Making Committee, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee, or the Campus Improvement Committee, where they collaborated with educators on issues that affect the school. Principals also mentioned that their staff members facilitated parent classes and campus learning walks to equip parents with the tools necessary to assist their child at home. The benefits of these practices include stakeholders having a greater sense of school pride as well as greater academic and social success for the students.

Principal A stated:

I would say because our focus for the past 5 or 6 years has been to be more inclusive and be more open to building relationships, that the parents love our school. They feel like it is a welcoming place, even our most difficult parents. What I tell my teachers is that, “Hey, you just have to meet them where they are a lot of the time.” You know teachers are scared of the parents. I guess I have learned to not be scared and to meet them where they are, and then you can have that conversation with them. I think that has been really good, because I feel like sometimes the parents are intimidated by educators. They are intimidated to come and talk to the principal. They are intimidated to talk to the teacher because they might feel like we are looking down on them, or we are judging them, but I think once they see at our school that we do not do that, I think that it has made the environment so much better for dialogue, for kids, for families, for everybody.

Principal B stated:

Well, one thing I do appreciate about this district, is that each campus has a parent liaison for this specific reason. We utilize our parent liaison in this way, for students and parents to be active participants in the learning community. So, one of the things that I like about that position is that they can facilitate classes with the parents, so that they can help their students with different things and find out what is going on, on campus. Another thing that we do to help parents or students be active in the learning community, is we make it a point to celebrate all of our cultures throughout the year. When I first started, we had segmented committees, as far as African American history committee, the Hispanic heritage committee, things like that, but after I started looking at the different cultures that we have on campus, we wanted diversity there. So, we started having a multi-cultural committee and the multi-cultural committee was put in charge of making sure we celebrate all of the cultures that we have here on campus and not just singling out different groups as we did in the past.

I can say the students have benefited from it because their instruction is targeted. Their instruction is tailored to them, what meets their needs, and what will engage them. I think, the staff benefits from it because they get a better understanding of their students. They get a better understanding of their backgrounds. They get a better understanding of the tools that they need to utilize to reach their students and make sure that students are successful. I think parents benefit from it because the students are learning, they have a better relationship with the teachers and the staff, and then overall, the student achievement starts to improve, which makes the campus look good. Then, the parents have a bit more pride in the school their child attends because when the school starts to

be recognized and wins awards and because of student achievement, then it causes a sense of pride with the parents that their students are learning and are having a great learning environment.

Principal D stated:

We have National Elementary Honor Society. That is for, of course, our students who qualify for that program. They are invited to be a part of that group, and then they focus on different things on campus centered around their four pillars of the NEHS, service, leadership, responsibility, and scholarship. They do different community outreach programs. One of the events that they did was collecting toiletries to pass on to homeless shelters. It is not a big to-do, but that is one of the things that they did. We have, of course, our LPAC and our CIC meetings, parent opportunities for them to volunteer for that. This year we did implement a Papa Bruins. In other schools I have done it in, we called it Watch DOGS, but because we did not have the official licensing for Watch DOGS, we just made up our own where we invited dads to come into the school to spend time volunteering, do cafeteria duty, recess duty, morning and afternoon duty. That was really helpful. A lot of the kids enjoyed seeing the different dads there and even invited their dads to come up to volunteer so that we could get more fathers into the school. I think that one of the other things that we did this year was starting the house system with our third, fourth, and fifth graders. Each house system has two student ambassadors, house ambassadors. So, they are the leaders of that house. What those students do, one of their jobs, is to welcome new families to our school. So, when we get new students in, they will come down and welcome them to our school. So, we are just trying to find a

way to make the students more engaged and prouder of their building and of their school and just being more involved, so that they show a little pride.

Principal F stated:

Our parents utilize things like SBDM (site-based decision making) and PTA to give their input and take advantage of opportunities to see what we are doing on our campus. They give us feedback. Also, we give them opportunities to be involved in learning walks to see what is happening on our campus, and again, to give us feedback. We keep them abreast of the data, keeping communication open. For students, we had different student council groups for their involvement. I also put data in students' hands, creating that student agency, so students get more focused on and driven on what they are doing. I will not necessarily say personalized learning but using some of those skills and expectations of personalized learning within daily instruction. Small groups and exposing our students to culturally relevant texts are some of my strategies.

Academically, we definitely have been successful, but I also think it has brought more pride to the campus. I think it has brought the community together. As I look at the students just socializing, it is not split like it used to be, where bilingual classrooms and Gen Ed did not mix or mingle, or African Americans stayed away from the Hispanics. The students laugh and joke with each other. They got to know each other. Same for parents, when they think about this, to be an academic success. Of course, going from 15 years as an *Improvement Required* campus to an A-graded campus in 2 years would be the overall most successful piece of that work.



Principal G stated:

One thing we do is have our teachers perform professional development for parents once every 6 weeks to preview what students will be learning, so that they do not feel helpless when supporting their kids at home. We do have the parent engagement department from the district come to the campus, and they have literacy professional development to help our English language learners learn English through literacy. So, we have done things of that nature to try to help parents be smarter about what they are doing with their students. Of course, I always have coffee with the principal, or we have muffins with mom, doughnuts with dad to have opportunities to talk with parents and see what their struggles are, to see if there are some things that we can address to support them based on what they feel like they need more support with. We also have opportunities for parents to go and learn in the classroom twice a semester with their child. After one of my coffees with the principal, I let parents go into the classroom, sit with their kid for 30 minutes to an hour, so they can be a part of the classroom. It gives them an opportunity to see what teachers are doing, what students are doing, and what they should be trying to do at home to help their kid. In most cases, with those parents who are involved and engaged, you can see that their students are more academically and socially successful at our school. I think they benefit from it because student achievement has gone up. We have gone to become a B school. Actually, we were points away from an A. I think we got an 89. We were like one or two points away from being an A school with TEA's metrics. But we were a little lower when we added in the district's metrics. This year, we had more parents involved in the learning process, more parents volunteering, more parents doing things such as giving gifts to teachers, gifts to students, and snacks. They were just doing

things to try to make the environment feel good, a positive energy in the building, more positive narrating of what students were doing. We focused more on what the students were doing right, so that they can feel good about being at the school. I think because of that, we created an environment that was better for students, and if you look at the parent survey, the parents felt more welcomed in the school and felt like they had a voice in what happened at school.

Principal I stated:

They are more open to come to school. When kids feel like they are equal partners in the educational environment, that they have a voice, I think that it makes it more open to learning. When they have an opportunity to talk and to collaborate in their own language. At some schools, they say, "Oh, it's English time. You can only speak English." Well, that is true when it is dealing with math, but if I cannot understand what you are talking about and you want to tell it to me in Spanish, then that is okay, as long as you tell it to me also the best you can in English. Just making sure that the two-way communication process is there and that the kids feel like that they belong has helped us tremendously. They have a sense of belonging.

Principal J stated:

We still have the traditional math nights, reading nights. The past couple of years, we have had a night specifically for pre-K and kindergarten, where we bring the parents in to actually create work boards. Those boards will have daily things that the kids can go through with their parents. It may have the numbers on there, calendar, sight words, colors. The parents create the board, so they take that big science board and create it. We provide all the materials, and the teachers are there to help them and let them know what

would work well for their particular students. That is benefiting our school because we are getting our parents involved, and we are letting them know that it is important for them to be involved in their child's learning at home. So, we do a lot of that.

We are just better people. I do not know how to explain it. Everybody is better because we are able to respect each other's differences and learn from each other. So, like I said, I think now we have a lot more acceptance, but it takes time. I am into year five. So, we have a lot more acceptance of diversity and being inclusive than what we had in the past.

### ***Improving Student Academic Achievement***

Principals expressed that CRT ensures that students learn, grow, and perform academically at high levels. They emphasized the importance of their staffs researching what students need and adjusting their strategies to meet the students where they are to make them academically successful. Principals revealed that a curriculum connected to students' lives positively impacts the level of student learning that occurs as they begin to gravitate toward the learning, relate to the learning, and personally apply it to their own lives. One principal conveyed that connecting new learning to students' lives makes the information easier for them to understand. Based on the principals' responses, teachers studied and analyzed student achievement data to determine student groups for targeted support and intervention. Principals stated the significance of their role in monitoring student performance at both the group and individual levels. They also mentioned the role of professional learning communities in utilizing student data to facilitate conversations with teachers around learning gaps and instructional practices as they address areas of opportunity that emerge from the data regarding their students' performance. Principals also stated that the use of a culturally responsive curriculum emboldens teachers to develop action plans for increasing academic achievement and closing learning gaps

between student groups. Principals believed that a culturally responsive curriculum requires teachers to think about effective practices and instructional approaches as they determine how to eliminate disparities between student groups and their data. They also believed that diversity benefits educators as it improves student academic achievement on their campuses. This result may come as a byproduct of the intentional practices referenced to individualize instruction for students in an attempt to close the achievement gaps that persist from one campus to another.

Principal B stated:

We have two types of goals each year. The first goal plays throughout the whole campus, and it is a goal that all of our staff members know. That is the goal to make sure that your students grow academically, at least a year from where you see them at the beginning of the year. Our second goal, those are more based on the data from the previous year and based on what kind of STAAR results that we are shooting for. So, if you are culturally responsive in your teaching practices, then that is going to ensure that your students learn, and in turn, that is going to make sure your students grow. So, if they grow, then we are automatically meeting our first goal. Then, depending on how much they grow, we are well on our way to meeting those STAAR goals and those metrics that we were shooting for, for STAAR performance and other testing goals.

When you have a curriculum that is connected to students' lives, then I think students will automatically learn because they can actually relate to the content and to the information that's being presented to them. I think it is very important for teachers to look at the curriculum and develop lessons according to the students that they are serving, so that those students can relate and make some personal application to it. If they do that, then student learning will occur because students are able to relate to what is being

presented, and they can identify with some of the skills and things that they need to know to be successful.

Diversity definitely does challenge student learning outcomes, but again if you approach everything with the mindset of, “We are going to make sure that all students learn,” then you can overcome that challenge. Diversity benefits the learning outcomes, because you are planning those lessons, you are monitoring the student performance, and you are creating intervention and enrichment plans to make sure students are successful. Once you do that year after year, then student achievement starts to improve, and then everything just starts to get better.

Principal C stated:

Well, I can only speak from our last three goals. It is very relevant because our mission and our vision is that we are going to ensure that all students learn at high levels, and how we do that is by selecting the standards that we know students will be able to master, but at the same time, bring real life experiences, their life experiences into the learning so that they are able to apply it.

One thing that we did last year, and of course, we are going to focus on it again this year, is just looking at the STAAR data. Of course, explaining what index one, index two and index three are, but one thing that I shared with our staff this past year was that we were a targeted support school. What that meant was that our White population was not meeting the state percentage or standard in the *Meets* category. So, we broke it down by the students whose parents had identified them as White, and we said these are the students. Not just those, it is also about these other ones we got to focus on because within the last few years they had not made growth. So that is the one way how we

address the achievement. Another one is again, just being consistent with intervention like, “Okay, let us look at it as a grade level, but now let us look at it as just a teacher. What are the gaps in? What did teacher A do that had lots of success that they can share with Teacher B?” That was something that we did to address it.

Well, I think the one way that diversity could challenge the student learning outcomes would be not relating it or not making it relevant, but the benefit would be that we are responding to every student for them to be able to make growth and close the gap. Principal D stated:

Well, we always look at data, and then we look at the different sub-pops [subpopulations] and how they compare to the larger demographic. For us, Hispanic is our largest demographic. We are about 65% Hispanic and maybe 30% African American. So, I always check to see where those sub-pops are performing, and if there is a large discrepancy, then we have conversations with the teachers. We share that data all the time with parents for those who choose to look at it, but it has never really been highlighted. One year we had a big discrepancy with African Americans and science for STAAR. I did share that information at the first campus improvement committee (CIC) meeting, but it has never really been highlighted. I just shared it. I did not go into why. Sometimes I feel like when the African American students are underperforming, and as an African American woman, when I start to really question those things, it makes people uncomfortable. So, I had a parent ask about that in the CIC meeting. She was an African American lady as well, and I did not feel comfortable addressing it there in front of other people. So, while we do look at those achievement gaps, we have never done anything about them outside of individual conversations. When I was a teacher in another district

many years ago, I think we did go *Needs Improvement* because of our African American math scores. We had a meeting and invited all the African American families that evening to discuss the scores. I do not know how I feel about that or how I felt about it at the time, but knowing is half the battle, right? As a parent, I would want to know that there is a big discrepancy with how the African American students are performing. Being able to have those conversations and being able to explain those things are difficult, but you just have to be able to address them because if you do not address them, then it will just get worse. It is definitely an uncomfortable conversation to have because you do not want to feel like you are just worried about the Black kids. You have got all kids. Well, I am not worried about the just the Black kids, but clearly there is an issue here with the Black kids and their performance. So, what can we do? What do we need to do? Maybe that conversation will be easier too based on the current situation. So, maybe that will be an easier conversation to have.

We really work with the PLC process. As we are looking at data, if we see that there are significant discrepancies in the data between different sub-pops, we talk about that. There are times when I am building a classroom and I just know that a student will do better with another teacher just because of their ability to relate to students who are of a certain ethnicity. Sometimes I do it with one of my teachers. I have a kindergarten teacher, and I do find myself putting more of the Indian, non-Christian students into her classroom simply because I know that they will have a better experience in her classroom. When the parents come in to meet the teacher and they see someone who is dressed similarly, I think that they feel more comfortable. They feel like it is going to be okay. So, it eases some of their concerns that they may have when they walked into the

building. When it comes to data, I guess that is some of the data that we use to make sure that students are placed with the right teacher or the teacher we think will be the best fit. If we have students who are not performing when we are looking at our PLC data, a lot of times if my other teacher is doing well with students of a different ethnicity, then we make sure to ask that teacher, “What are you doing? How are your students performing? How are your African American students performing or your Hispanics? How are you able to get your students to master this concept at a higher percentage, and what information can you share with the other teacher?”

Principal F stated:

You have to make connections. We call it mirrors and windows. The students can see themselves in it, or they can see themselves through it. They make a tighter connection, and they can live through learning. It is not so far from what they have experienced or what they can see themselves going through. So, it has definitely impacted their success. I think that is when our students can buy into the learning. When our students can relate, it makes them want to learn more about it.

I just talked about this this morning. And the funny thing is, when I am asked this question, because we were successful at it, I go back to the same answer, which is start with what your vision is of equal access, equitable access, and then how do you address for those that need the most support. So instructionally again, create schedules that say that, “We are going to deliver whole group instruction, but there is going to be time that we are going to address the needs of our individual students.” So, we are not going to teach 90 minutes of reading. We are going to teach 30 or 40 minutes of reading. We are going to do a lot of small groups. We are going to be intentional about looking at our data



for students not reading on grade level, and then we are going to stop and focus on those students. So, we are going to do what we have to do. We are going to plan in our PLCs. A lot of times teammate gaps are created based on what is delivered. So, we want to make sure that we have effective teaching practices, and then turn around and go in and give feedback to those that are delivering their instruction. Have your own data. So now, we are looking at individual students. I think a big improvement in accountability was in domain three and domain two. When you start looking at those, you are having them look at individual students, and that makes you start to really focus on who each student is and how they count. So, when you are being that intentional, it transfers to the teachers, and teachers have to think about who they have in the classroom, practices such as aggressive monitoring, and using multiple response strategies also, because you cannot let a student opt out of learning. So, one of the things I always tell my teachers is, we do not do hand raising. Hand raising allows the students opt out of learning. It may look good to you, but that is an opportunity for a student not to be engaged. Focus on our engagement strategies to ensure that the only time we were worried about if the student can do it alone, is on a test. Any other times, students are working together, they are learning from each other, and they are always focused on collaboration in the classroom. I would say the strongest piece, is the data piece. Having those data meetings where you are looking deep down into the individual students, comparing that student work to what the teacher intended, then creating your re-teaching practices, have been some of our stronger and higher leverage pieces.

I think a benefit of diversity is that it pushes us to think outside our box and comfort zones, which makes us grow and makes our students grow because they are being exposed to different things. I think that is the greatest benefit. When you are challenged to do something outside of your comfort zone and you grow, it only leads to higher student achievement. I guess, the challenge would be once you are successful at something, you are having to find new ways to address the diversity.

Principal G stated:

Well, it is part of our campus improvement plan, and it is definitely under our climate and culture goal, to make sure that we create an atmosphere or an environment that is conducive for students to learn. I think if students feel like they are included, because if you think about Maslow's hierarchy, one of those things is that kids need to feel like they belong. If they do not feel like they belong or their culture is relevant in the classroom or at the school, they are not going to engage as much. So, it is important to keep students engaged to know that they feel included in what is going on at the school. They feel a part.

I think that is universal. If you feel that what you are learning is relevant and that you can implement it right away into what is happening in your present situation, you are more apt to listen and gravitate to the learning because you know that you can use it. So, when it is something that you know that is relevant and you can use it in real life, you are definitely going to make sure that you retain that information. You might even be more curious and be inspired to learn more about certain things because of that.

Well, we have what we call power meetings. Those power meetings start with our administrative team looking at data, looking at what we have been successful doing, and looking at where we struggle. Then we think about, “Well, how can we help our teachers see that? And what can teachers do in the classroom to improve in those areas where we are low?” What we do then is meet with teachers. We try to make sure that we understand the guaranteed curriculum that is supposed to be taught to students. So, we unpack it. We unpack what should be taught in the classroom. We script what we are going to teach students, and we rehearse it. We give each other feedback in the moment, so that we are not experimenting in the classroom with students for the first time. We get a chance to practice in front of our colleagues and get feedback. Then once we go into the classroom. We have someone come and observe the teacher and give them feedback once they are in front of the class. Then we just create a culture of feedback and really look at tracking student data. So, creating a culture of feedback, tracking student data, and making sure that we are aggressively monitoring what is happening in the classroom addresses the achievement gap. I would say at my school, the achievement gap between our African Americans and our Hispanic students has decreased by about 12 points really, because in our campus improvement plan, we made a goal that focused on our students who struggled the most, which was our African American students. So, we felt like if we made a plan to really help our African American students, it would help all students, because if we cannot help our lowest students, we are not doing what we are supposed to do. That is how we addressed the gap. We really focused on that gap, making sure that we were being intentional about what we do in the classroom, and making sure that we have small group instruction.

Principal H stated:

I think student learning is definitely impacted because if it is connected to their lives, then it is relevant to them. That is with anybody. If I see a connection, then I am interested.

So, if you use things that are relative to them in the teaching process, and then you allow people to make mistakes and grow from those mistakes, I feel like that is it right there. If you can do that, if you can impact that curriculum, connect it to their lives and make it relevant, then they will carry the learning on. Then as a kid in the next grade level, they are making more and more connections.

Principal I stated:

Our goals are to make sure that students are reading at, and above grade level, that they have math proficiency, and that we have parent and community involvement. I think that all of that plays back to that second question where it is almost an open-door policy, where parents are receiving invitations to come in, but also making sure that the teachers understand that their teaching has to meet the needs of the students that they serve. When they are teaching, they just cannot teach one way. They have to have a backpack of strategies that they use to make sure that our kids are reading on grade level, to make sure that our students have math proficiency, to make sure that they understand the science vocabulary, and to ensure that they are writing proficiently and receiving scores of threes and fours. I think that there is a connection between meeting the students where they are and our campus goal. They have to teach the kids where they are.

When I first got here, it continues now, the Hispanic population has always outperformed our African American population. Those are the two primary populations we have here. They have always carried the school. So, we had some experiences where

some teachers were saying that this group of teachers are friends, and they should not test their kids and so forth. One year I switched up the testing to see what was really happening. The kids still outperformed. They still did the same great job if this teacher tested them or that teacher tested them, or another teacher tested them. So, that eliminated some of those issues about, “Oh, this teacher is cheating or helping their friends.” Once I addressed that, then I could address the achievement gaps. We just put the data out there. I am one that puts the teachers’ names next to the data. This is your data. If you do not want your data to be low, then you need to teach your kids because this is your class, and these are your scores. So, I just make sure that information is public. Also, we go in and help those teachers figure out what is going on. We do the progress monitoring piece. We do a tracking piece also. We do 6 weeks exams. We should not get to testing and not know how kids are going to perform. What we are doing in between is looking at the TEKS that the kids did not master and intervening. It is almost like we have a system where we assess, we progress monitor, we intervene. We assess, we progress monitor, we intervene. It is a cycle. It goes on and on. Hopefully, by continuing that cycle, it will help our students alleviate some of those achievement gaps.

This is going to cause for me just to be honest and not necessarily politically correct, but with my Hispanic students, I might have two or three Hispanic students that do not have that eagerness to learn. Then I might have 50 African American students that I have to motivate. I think because I have so many Hispanic students that are self-motivated, we spend a lot of time trying to cater to the African American students, because there are a lot of gaps. I think sometimes when I am posting that data and they kind of see how one class is outperforming another, or if we have some type of incentive

for a score, what I found is that sometimes classes benefit because they want to be like that other class that is getting a treat. The challenge is because we have so many African American students who are under performing, it takes a lot of time to remediate for them and to get them just to see some growth. Regarding diversity, the challenges are that we still have this particular group that is outperforming this other group, but we have students in one subgroup that is trying to outperform the highest group. That can be a benefit. They are trying to get there, so they are working harder. They are being better students. They are doing their homework. They are doing all the things that this particular student group is doing to perform.

Principal J stated:

Well, of course, our goal is to continue to be an A campus, and the only way we are going to do that is if we respond culturally to the students' needs. So, we have to have culturally responsive teaching practices in order to reach our campus goals. We cannot have children just sitting in rows and not communicating with each other. Now it is going to be different because of COVID. We are going to have to do it in a different way, but even with COVID, on Zoom, you can go to breakout rooms. So, there are different things that we can do to continue to provide that culturally responsive teaching so that we can reach our campus goals.

I think having a curriculum that connects to students' lives is huge. I know I am an elementary principal, but I have been talking to people about middle and high school practices, particularly when it comes to English Language Arts. I really believe that we need to come away from some of the books that we are reading in middle and high school and pull in books that are relevant to the students' culture or relevant to things that are

happening with them. I believe everyone should read the autobiography of Malcolm X because I do not think people really understand his whole life, how he started. He was on the streets. He had all kinds of things going on. He went to jail. I think that it is important for our children to see his path and know that you do not have to stay where you are, but we do not teach that. We do not bring those type of books into school. Even Barack Obama's autobiography. Those things are important because he was raised with a different family. His father was not there, but he became the president. Some of our kids are in these situations, and I think that if we were able to put those type of pieces into our curriculum, you would not have so many children in middle and high school going by the wayside because now they can see that there is a path for them. Just because they did not grow up with their father does not mean that they cannot be successful. So, I think it is huge.

Well, as I stated earlier, we look at the data. For me, as a principal, I probably monitor my student groups closer than my teachers because if I start to notice that in one particular class, the majority of your African American students are failing, then I know I need to talk to that teacher about his or her responsive teaching practices. What are you doing to address the needs of children? Have you built the relationships? Have you even reached out to the parents? Things like that so that we can close the gaps. I can say that, on our campus, the majority of our African American students do very well. They do very well, and I think it is because of the fact that we monitor all of our student groups. Our special education kids are growing, showing some growth, and that is because I have some special education teachers who are all about including the kids in everything. You

are expected to do this just like the other kids are. So, we look at the data and make decisions based on the data.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I shared the results of this qualitative narrative study, and I also included a description of the sample and population of the study as well as the interview protocol. I conducted the data analysis and discussed prevalent themes that emerged, supported with participants' textual evidence. The themes and textual evidence also addressed the research questions that guided the study.



## **Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This chapter concludes the research with a summary of the study, implications for change, and future research recommendations. It also revisits the purpose of the study and connects its results to the literature review. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore elementary school principals' viewpoints on CRT and its influence on school climate and school culture, as well as how elementary school principals promote the knowledge and implementation of cultural competence among their staff. In this qualitative narrative study, I utilized interviews followed by coding the data to identify emerging themes and categories that represent the significant findings. I collected data through interviews with 10 elementary public-school principals, three males, and seven females. Two principals were White, one principal was Hispanic, and seven principals were Black. The 10 principals shared their experiences related to CRT's influence on school climate and school culture and how they promoted cultural competence with their staff.

The principals were from North Texas and represented three school districts there. The principals' years of experience at their current campuses ranged from 3 to 10 years. They also took various routes to get to their current position as principal.

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are North Texas elementary school principals' viewpoints on the professional development strategies for culturally responsive teaching?

RQ2. What are North Texas elementary school principals' viewpoints on the advantages of culturally responsive teaching concerning school climate and school culture?

Based on the responses of principals in relation to RQ1, the following themes emerged: (a) coaching teachers through reflection, (b) implementing professional development and

diversity training, (c) prioritizing the acknowledgment of various cultures, and (d) lack of sufficient training opportunities.

Based on the principals' responses in relation to RQ2, the following themes emerged: (a) understanding students' backgrounds, (b) building relationships, (c) targeting instructional practices, (d) communicating a vision, (e) welcoming all stakeholders, and (f) improving student academic achievement.

### **Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature**

Data analysis and interpretation generated several recurring themes. The themes aligned tightly with the tenets of cultural difference theory and Gay's four CRT components. According to the findings, understanding student backgrounds, relationship building, strategic instructional practices, an equitable vision, and providing a welcoming campus all contributed to establishing a positive school climate and school culture (Gay, 2010). Findings are also congruent to cultural difference theory founded upon the principle that students, their families, and their communities are regarded as assets to the school as they become emboldened to help increase student academic achievement (Wang & Gordon, 1994). The study's findings also indicated the necessity for professional development and coaching about diversity and multiculturalism to develop teachers' cultural competence.

The final chapter of this dissertation summarizes principals' viewpoints regarding the influence of CRT on school climate and school culture and how elementary school principals contributed to the knowledge and implementation of cultural competence among their staff. The 10 participants in this study shared their experiences about the impact of CRT on school climate and school culture and the professional development practices they used to develop culturally competent teachers. The data gathered from this study help principals implement schoolwide

improvements to create equitable campuses and safe places that are inclusive and develop positive outcomes for marginalized student populations. The data collected from this study could also serve as a template for creating professional development programs that help teachers become culturally competent.

### ***Interpretation of Principals' Responses***

The principals who participated in the study shared their professional development strategies for CRT and the advantages of CRT on school climate and school culture. The following recurring themes emerged as experiences shared by the principals. They will be explored throughout this discussion: a) coaching teachers through reflection, (b) implementing professional development and diversity training, (c) prioritizing the acknowledgment of various cultures, (d) lack of sufficient training opportunities, (e) understanding students' backgrounds, (f) building relationships, (g) targeting instructional practices, (h) communicating a vision, (i) welcoming all stakeholders, and (j) improving student academic achievement.

**Coaching Teachers Through Reflection.** Participants felt that meeting with teachers to discuss concerns and reflect on their practices was necessary for developing cultural sensitivity in their unaware teachers. These conferences helped principals build teachers' cultural competence as they tackle barriers that facilitate resistance to change in their mindsets and behaviors toward students from different ethnic groups (Kelly, 2017; Kahneman, 2011; Kempf, 2020). They utilized these opportunities to address stereotypes about race, insensitive language, and disparities observed between student groups while also developing manageable action plans for teachers to implement. These practices are congruent with the findings of Davis et al. (2016) as principals actively seek out appropriate occasions to identify and dispel racial injustice while empowering their teachers to do so as well. Statements from one principal revealed the

importance of creating an environment where teachers feel safe to ask tough questions about race.

**Implementing Professional Development and Diversity Training.** The principals expressed that they were intentional when considering professional development training for their staff centered around diversity. They looked at their student data as a guide for making professional development decisions that target specific student groups. They also used their school personnel to deliver professional development through various training and book studies regarding multiculturalism, cultural sensitivity, and inclusion at the campus level. These practices allow the principal to develop their teachers' cultural competence through a comprehensive professional development system regarding multiculturalism and cultural responsiveness (Minkos et al., 2017).

**Prioritizing the Acknowledgement of Various Cultures.** Participants shared that they engaged their teachers in multiple opportunities to learn about diverse cultures. They prioritized cultural diversity education through multiple programs, celebrations, and learning nights that showcased various groups throughout the school year. Principals also conducted book and article studies during the school year to promote learning about different student cultures present on their campuses. Participants often shared that these practices did not occur as frequently as they should. This revelation is a stark contrast to Nuby's (2010) findings that emphasized the need for teachers to submerge themselves in their students' cultures as they absorb a better understanding of how they live.

**Lack of Sufficient Training Opportunities.** Principals felt that their teachers were not provided sufficient professional development opportunities by their schools or their respective districts. This finding is congruent with Davis et al. (2016) that expresses the need for cultural

competence training to address student bodies that continuously change. Participants consistently referenced cultural proficiency training that occurred several years ago but not recently. They also expressed that, while their districts have addressed a breadth of professional development topics regarding cultural sensitivity and inclusion, there was still a need for more in-depth training at both the district and campus levels to impact teachers effectively.

**Understanding Students' Backgrounds.** Principals expressed the belief that understanding students' backgrounds is an essential quality for culturally proficient teachers to possess. Culturally competent teachers are open to learning about different cultures as they seek to leverage students' differences as assets to contribute to their classrooms. According to Ford et al. (2014), this willingness to learn about students creates an empowering environment for them to thrive as teachers utilize their learning preferences and differences to facilitate the necessary change in their instructional practices. They know about their students' cultural differences, their home lives and how they communicate, which allows them to make informed decisions and teach students more effectively (Gay, 2010).

**Building Relationships.** Principals expressed a need for teachers to build relationships with their students to contribute to their success positively. They stated that acknowledging students' individuality is a gateway to understanding what motivates them to perform at a high level in the classroom (Thomas & Berry III, 2019). Principals mentioned getting to know students on a personal level and attending their extracurricular activities to accomplish this task. Principals also felt that it is essential to build relationships with students' families to effectively build a home-to-school connection (Thomas & Berry III, 2019; Ford et al., 2014). They mentioned the necessity of reaching out to families at the beginning of the school year to inquire about students' needs, home visits to accommodate parents who are not easily accessible, and

various meetings within the community to reach parents conveniently. These practices allow their teachers and their schools to create trust partnerships that they can maintain throughout the school year.

**Targeting Instructional Practices.** Principals expressed the belief that diversity creates opportunities for teachers to grow and develop their instructional pedagogy as they are pushed out of their comfort zones to seek ways to teach all students effectively. Congruent with Gay's (2010) findings, teachers are selective with their instructional resources to ensure that they are representative of their students and pique their interest in the academic content. They communicate with students in a way that is familiar to them and incorporate real-world events that are relevant to students (Gay, 2010). These methods allow students to make meaningful connections to the learning resulting in better understanding and retention of content knowledge (Gay, 2010).

**Communicating a Vision.** Principals felt that having an equitable vision was essential to their school's success. According to Coleman and Stevenson (2013), openness to questions about race creates a safe environment that facilitates change management. Although principals agreed with this philosophy, some mentioned the difficulty of addressing racial questions (Coleman & Stevenson, 2013). Explicitly modeling the expectations outlined in the vision was paramount in communicating them to the staff. Principals stated that they are intentional in modeling their continuous learning. They also show an interest in getting to know their staff as a prototype for their teachers to follow when learning about their students. Principals expressed the critical need for inclusivity in all decision-making processes, which influences their teachers to be inclusive in their classrooms.

**Welcoming All Stakeholders.** Principals expressed that their stakeholders feel appreciated on their campuses. Students feel more connected to school, and parents have multiple opportunities to participate actively and collaborate with educators in various aspects of their children's education (Wang & Gordon, 1994). These opportunities include serving on many school committees, participating in parent classes, and campus learning walks with the instructional leadership team. Involving parents in these practices, coupled with increased student academic achievement, create a sense of pride as they share a strong connection to the school's success (Ford et al., 2014).

**Improving Student Academic Achievement.** Principals expressed the belief that CRT positively impacts student academic achievement on their campuses. As teachers and principals analyze student data in professional learning communities, they confront the disparities between student groups and converse with their teams about the best instructional strategies to utilize to close achievement gaps. Teachers research what specific student groups need to be academically successful and attempt to meet those demands through a culturally responsive curriculum, targeted instructional practices, and a continuous cycle of progress monitoring (Gay, 2010).

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study included the relatively small sample size, which made it difficult to validate the findings of this study. The lack of ability to test the study's conclusions for statistical significance versus chance added to the lack of generalization regarding the study's findings (Atieno, 2009). Data collection occurred only through interviews and an analysis of schoolwide data, which lacked an opportunity for me to observe participants' behaviors in their natural environment to further corroborate the study's findings. Perspectives also focused only on administrators' perspectives regarding the impact of CRT and its impact on their school's

culture and climate rather than a global school approach, which could include teachers, other staff members, parents, and students.

### **Recommendations**

Many of the practices shared by the participants are practical solutions to the woes that many schools face on a daily basis when trying to effectively reach and teach their diverse student populations. However, it is essential that principals provide the necessary time to develop intentional school processes to arrive at those solutions. School districts will also need to be an integral role player in some of those processes to further support their campuses as they strive to become more inclusive for all stakeholders.

### ***Implications for Change***

1. Principals should establish a diversity or multicultural committee representing all grade levels. The committee should be tasked with developing cultural programs, studying the school's demographic data on an ongoing basis, and identifying targeted student groups to focus on during the school year. The multicultural committee could also engage in professional development and dialogue about multiculturalism before conducting workshops with the entire staff.
2. Principals should incorporate a goal into their campus improvement plans that addresses diversity, inclusion, CRT, or cultural competence. Having a concrete goal centered around these issues can hold the staff accountable to ensure that they utilize targeted steps to reach the goal.
3. Districts should consistently conduct culture and climate surveys that incorporate teacher, student, and parent perspectives on how each school conducts daily responsibilities and how they meet the needs of their stakeholders. This information



- could yield robust data for principals regarding their school's authentic culture and climate as a concrete measurement tool for their success.
4. Districts should provide continuous professional development to principals and teachers regarding diversity and multiculturalism. District initiatives focused on these issues, and ongoing learning opportunities emphasize its importance while giving educators the support they need to address stressful and complicated topics about race.
  5. In the age of COVID-19, districts should develop initiatives specifically targeting CRT practices, including engagement of students and cultural sensitivity toward students during remote learning.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

1. I recommend that future studies focus on schools with teachers that are identified as racially incongruent in their student demographics to explore the nature of CRT in racially unmatched environments.
2. I also recommend that future studies focus on comparing schools that utilize CRT with those that do not. Factual data could emerge that illustrates the magnitude of its correlation to student achievement.

### **Conclusions**

Principals shared narratives of their personal experiences regarding CRT and how they believe it affected their school climate and school culture. According to the principals, teachers understood students' backgrounds and built relationships with them and their families. They strategically utilized instructional practices targeting their students' learning styles and needs. Principals developed an equitable vision with their staff that they modeled for teachers to follow.

Their campuses were also welcoming for all stakeholders to play an essential role in educating all students. These processes contributed to establishing a positive school climate and school culture.

Ever-changing diversity in schools is a continuous challenge and opportunity that public-school principals face. Additionally, growing concern regarding the Black Lives Matter movement has brought social justice and inclusiveness, both centered around diversity, to the forefront of the nation's consciousness. America's longstanding institutions are now openly confronting these issues in its policing and employment practices. The school setting is one of the most critical institutions charged with ensuring that diversity issues are addressed as educators work to mold and develop students who can think globally and positively contribute to society.

## References

- Adler-Greene, L. (2019). Every student succeeds act: Are schools making sure every student succeeds? *Touro Law Review*, 35(1), 11–23.  
<https://digitalcommons.tourolaw.edu/lawreview/vol35/iss1/4>
- ASCD (2019). *School Culture and Climate*. <http://www.ascd.org/research-a-topic/school-culture-and-climate-resources.aspx>
- Atieno, O. P. (2009). An analysis of the strengths and limitation of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 13, 13–18.  
[https://scientiasocialis.it/pec/files/pdf/Atieno\\_Vol.13.pdf](https://scientiasocialis.it/pec/files/pdf/Atieno_Vol.13.pdf)
- Atkins, D. N., Fertig, A. R., & Wilkins, V. M. (2014). Connectedness and expectations: How minority teachers can improve educational outcomes for minority students. *Public Management Review*, 16(4), 503–526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2013.841981>
- Austin, Z., & Sutton, J. (2015). Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and management. *Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, 68(3), 226–231.  
<http://doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v68i3.1456>
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544–559.  
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/2/>
- Benson, T. A., & Fiarman, S. E. (2020). Unconscious bias in schools: A developmental approach to exploring race and racism. Harvard Education Press.
- Bonner, P. J., Warren, S. R., & Jiang, Y. H. (2018). Voices from urban classrooms: Teachers' perceptions on instructing diverse students and using culturally responsive teaching.

*Education and Urban Society*, 50(8), 697–726.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517713820>

Bottiani, J. H., Bradshaw, C. P., & Mendelson, T. (2016). Inequality in Black and White high school students' perceptions of school support: An examination of race in context.

*Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 45, 1176–1191.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-015-0411-0>

Bottiani, J. H., Bradshaw, C. P., & Mendelson, T. (2017). A multilevel examination of racial disparities in high school discipline: Black and white adolescents' perceived equity, school belonging, and adjustment problems. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 4, 532–545. <http://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000155>

Brit, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1802–1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>

Butina, M. (2015). Focus: Conducting qualitative research: A narrative approach to qualitative inquiry. *Clinical Laboratory Science*, 28(3), 190–196.

<https://doi.org/10.29074/ascls.28.3.190>

Byrd, C. M. (2015). The associations of intergroup interactions and school racial socialization with academic motivation. *Journal of Educational Research*, 108, 10–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2013.831803>

Byrd, C. M., & Chavous, T. (2011). Racial identity, school racial climate, and school intrinsic motivation among African American youth: The importance of person-context congruence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(4), 849–860.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2011.00743.x>

- Carter Andrews, D. J., & Gutwein, M. (2017). "Maybe that concept is still with us": Adolescents' racialized and classed perceptions of teachers' expectations. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 19(1), 5–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2016.1263960>
- Chapman, T. K. (2014). Is integration a dream deferred? Students of color in majority White suburban schools. *Journal of Negro Education*, 83(3), 311–326. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7709/jnegroeducation.83.3.0311>
- Chiu, C. L., Sayman, D., Carrero, K. M., Gibbon, T., Zolkoski, S. M., & Lusk, M. E. (2017). Developing culturally competent preservice teachers. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 19(1), 47–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2017.1267515>
- Clandinin, D. J. (2007). *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. Sage Publications.
- Coleman, S., & Stevenson, H. C. (2013). The racial stress of membership: Development of the faculty inventory of racialized experiences in schools. *Psychology in the Schools*, 50(6), 548–566. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21693>
- Crowder, K., Hall, M., Tolnay, S. E. (2011). Neighborhood immigration and native out-migration. *American Sociological Review*, 76(1), 25–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122410396197>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2007) Race, inequality and educational accountability: The irony of 'No Child Left Behind', *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 10(3), 245–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320701503207>
- Davis, B. W., Lippa, A. P., Lehr, M., Gooden, M. A., & Dinh, T. V. (2016). Conceptualizing principal-student racial congruence. *Journal of School Leadership*, 26(4), 554–579. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/105268461602600401>

- Debnam, K. J., Pas, E. T., Bottiani, J., & Cash, A. H. (2015). An examination of the association between observed and self-reported culturally proficient teaching practices. *Psychology in the Schools*, 52(6), 533–548. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21845>
- DeMatthews, D. E., Carey, R. L., Olivarez, A., & Saeedi, K. M. (2017). Guilty as charged? Principals' perspectives on disciplinary practices and the racial discipline gap. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 53(4), 519–555. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17714844>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. (2003). The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Elgart, M. A. (2017). Can schools meet the promise of continuous improvement? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(4), 54–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721717745546>
- Ford, B.A. (2004). Preparing special educators for culturally responsive school-community partnerships. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 27, 224–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088840640402700302>
- Ford, B. A., Stuart, D. H., & Vakil, S. (2014). Culturally responsive teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century inclusive classroom. *Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, 15(2), 56–62. [https://www.iase.org/Publications /2014 JIASE TOPICAL EDITION FINAL.pdf](https://www.iase.org/Publications/2014%20JIASE%20TOPICAL%20EDITION%20FINAL.pdf)
- Fryer, R., & Levitt S. (2004). “Understanding the Black-White test score gap in the first two years of school. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86, 447–464. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003465304323031049>
- Gay, G. (2010). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers*. (2nd ed.). Longman.

- Golden, A. R., Griffin, C. B., Metzger, I. W., & Cooper, S. M. (2017). School racial climate and academic outcomes in African American adolescents: The protective role of peers. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 44(1), 47–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798417736685>
- Goodwin, A. L. (2016). Who is in the classroom now? Teacher preparation and education of immigrant children. *Educational Studies*, 53(5), 433–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2016.1261028>
- Gregory, A., & Roberts, G. (2017). Teacher beliefs and the overrepresentation of Black students in classroom discipline. *Theory Into Practice*, 56, 187–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2017.1336035>
- Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09357621>
- Griffin, C. B., Cooper, S. M., Metzger, I. W., Golden, A. R., & White, C. N. (2017). School racial climate and the academic achievement of African American high school students: The mediating role of school engagement. *Psychology in the Schools*, 54(7), 673–688. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22026>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Method*, 18(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Hamilton, L. & Corbett-Whittier, C. (2013). Approaches to data analysis. In L. Hamilton, & C. Corbett-Whittier (Eds.), *BERA/SAGE research methods in education: Using case study in education research* (pp. 134–146). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473913851>

- Hammond, Z. (2015). Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students. Corwin.
- Hartney, M. T., & Flavin, P. (2013). The political foundations of the Black-White education achievement gap. *American Politics Research* 42(1), 3–33.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X13482967>
- Hawker, D. S., & Boulton, M. J. (2008). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 41, 441–455. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-7610.00629>
- Heise, M. (2017). From no child left behind to every student succeeds: Back to a future for education federalism. *Columbia Law Review*, 117, 1859–1896.  
<https://doi.org/10.31228/osf.io/kdfje>
- Hope, E. C., Skoog, A. B., & Jagers, R. J. (2014). “It’ll never be the White kids; it’ll always be us”: Black high school students’ evolving critical analysis of racial discrimination and inequity in schools. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 30(1), 83–112.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558414550688>
- Hopkins, M., Lowenhaupt, R., & Sweet, T. (2015). Organizing English learner instruction in new immigrant destinations: District infrastructure and subject-specific school practice. *American Educational Research Journal*, 52(3), 408–439.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24546737>
- Husband, T., & Hunt, C. (2015). A review of the empirical literature on no child left behind from 2001 to 2010. *Planning and Changing*, 46(1/2), 212–254.



[https://www.academia.edu/23670890/A\\_Review\\_of\\_the\\_empirical\\_literature\\_on\\_No\\_Child\\_Left\\_Behind\\_from\\_2001\\_to\\_2010](https://www.academia.edu/23670890/A_Review_of_the_empirical_literature_on_No_Child_Left_Behind_from_2001_to_2010)

Ingersoll, R., May, H., & Collins, G. (2019). Recruitment, employment, retention, and the minority teacher shortage. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(37), 1–42.

<https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3714>

Jackson, R. (2019). Becoming the educator they need: Strategies, mindsets, and beliefs for supporting male Black and Latino students. ASCD.

Johnson, K. M., & Winkler, R. L. (2015). Migration signatures across the decades: Net migration by age in U.S. counties, 1950–2010. *Demographic Research*, 32(38), 1065–1080.

<https://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol32/38/>

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Kelly, M. E. (2017). The argument for using the cultural proficiency continuum to develop culturally responsive pre-service teacher candidates. *National Teacher Education Journal*, 10(1), 53–58.

<https://encompass.eku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=etd>

Kempf, A. (2020). If we are going to talk about implicit race bias, we need to talk about structural racism: Moving beyond ubiquity and inevitability in teaching and learning about race. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture & Education*, 19(2), 115–132.

<https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/taboo/vol19/iss2/10>

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. (2015). *Understanding Implicit Bias*.

<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/>.

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(3), 214–222. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.45.3.214>

- Kvale, S. (2008). *Doing interviews*. Sage Publications.
- Kye, S. H. (2018). The persistence of White flight in middle-class suburbia. *Social Science Research*, 72, 38–52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.02.005>
- Ladd, G. W., Ettekal, I., & Kochenderfer-Ladd, B. (2017). Peer victimization trajectories from kindergarten through high school: Differential pathways for children's school engagement and achievement? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 109(6), 826–841. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000177>
- Larson, K. E., Pas, E. T., Bradshaw, C. P., Rosenberg, M. S., & Day-Vines, N. L. (2018). Examining how proactive management and culturally responsive teaching relate to student behavior: Implications for measurement and practice. *School Psychology Review*, 47(2), 153–166. <https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-0070.V47-2>
- Leavy, P. (2017). Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches. The Guilford Press.
- Lee, B. A., Iceland, J., & Sharp, G. (2012). Racial and ethnic diversity goes local: Charting change in American communities over the decades (Census brief prepared for US2010 Project). <http://www.s4.brown.edu/US2010/Data/Report/report08292012.pdf>
- Lew, M. M., & Nelson, R. F. (2016). New teachers' challenges: How culturally responsive teaching, classroom management, and assessment literacy are intertwined. *Multicultural Education*, 23(3/4), 7–13. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1119450>
- Liang, C. T. H., Rocchino, G. H., Gutekunst, M. H. C., Paulvin, C., Li, K. M., & Elam-Snowden, T. (2019). Perspectives of respect, teacher-student relationships, and school climate among boys of color: A multifocus group study. *Psychology of Men and Masculinities*. Advance online publication. <http://doi.org/10.1037/men00002399>

Lichter, D. T., & Johnson, K. M. (2018). Immigrant gateways and Hispanic migration to new destinations. *International Migration Review*, 43, 496–518.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2009.00775.x>

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Lindsay, C. A., & Hart, C. M. D. (2017). Exposure to same-race teachers and student disciplinary outcomes for Black students in North Carolina, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(3), 485-510. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373717693109>

Mahatmya, D., Lohman, B. J., Brown, E. L., & Conway-Turner, J. (2016). The role of race and teachers' cultural awareness in predicting low-income, Black and Hispanic students' perceptions of educational attainment. *Social Psychology of Education*, 19, 427–449. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11218-016-9334-1>

Minkos, M. L., Sassu, K. A., Gregory, J. L., Patwa, S. S., Theodore, L. A., & Femc-Bagwell, M. (2017). Culturally responsive practice and the role of school administrators. *Psychology in the Schools*, 54, 1260–1266. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22072>

Mitchell, D., Hinueber, J., & Edwards, B. (2017). Looking race in the face: Schools that achieve strong results with Black students address race directly and teach in ways that empower students to learn. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 98(5), 24–29.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721717690361>

Moen, T. (2006). Reflection on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(4), 56-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500405>

National Center for Education Statistics (2013). *Racial/ ethnic enrollment in public schools*.

[http://nces.ed.gov/pro-grams/coe/pdf/coe\\_cge.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pro-grams/coe/pdf/coe_cge.pdf)

National Center for Education Statistics. (2013a). *Total number of public school principals and percentage distribution of school principals, by race/ethnicity and state: 2011-12.*

[https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112\\_2013313\\_pls\\_001.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_2013313_pls_001.asp)

National Center for Education Statistics. (2013b). *Percentage distribution of K-12 students in public schools, by sex, race/ethnicity, and affiliation: 2011-12.*

[https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112\\_2013312\\_s2s\\_003.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_2013312_s2s_003.asp)

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2017* [Data file]. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017051.pdf>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *English language learners in public schools.*

[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cgf.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp)

National Center for Education Statistics (2019). *A slightly more diverse public school teaching workforce* [Data file]. <https://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/post/a-slightly-more-diverse-public-school-teaching-force>

National School Climate Center. (2016). *Comprehensive school climate inventory.*

<http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php>

Nuby, J. (2010). An awakening through an inner-city immersion experience. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 12(1), 42–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15210961003641427>

Okoye-Johnson, O. (2011). Does multicultural education improve students' racial attitudes? Implications for closing the achievement gap. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(8), 1252–1274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934711408901>

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

- Pew Research Center. (2015, September 28). Modern immigration wave brings 59 million to U.S. driving population growth and change through 2065: Views of immigration's impact on U.S. society mixed. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/>
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Rury, J. L., & Rife, A. T. (2017). Race, schools and opportunity hoarding: Evidence from a post-war American metropolis. *History of Education*, 47(1), 87–107.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2017.1353142>
- Saldana, J., & Omasta, M. (2018). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life*. Sage.
- Scott, T. M., Gage, N., Hirn, R., & Han, H. (2019). Teacher and student race as a predictor for negative feedback during instruction. *American Psychological Association*, 34(1), 22–31.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000251>
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63–75.  
<http://iospress.metapress.com/content/3cctm2g59cklapx/?p=1dc0853516d0424baa3147a00c250f29&pi=0>
- Sleeter, C. E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of Whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(2), 94–106.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487101052002002>
- Thomas, C. A., & Berry III, R. Q. (2019). A qualitative metasynthesis of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching: Unpacking mathematics teaching practices.

- Journal of Mathematics Education at Teachers College*, 10(1), 21–30.  
<https://doi.org/10.7916/jmetc.v10i1.1668>
- U.S. Census Bureau (2018, January 23). *About Race*.  
<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>
- Villegas, A. M., Strom, K., & Lucas, T. (2012). Closing the racial/ethnic gap between students of color and their teachers: An elusive goal. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 45(2), 283–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.656541>
- Vittrup, B. (2016). Early childhood teachers' approaches to multicultural education and perceived barriers to disseminating anti-bias messages, *Multicultural Education*, 23(3/4), 37-41. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1119398.pdf>
- Voight, A., Hanson, T., O'Malley, M., & Adekanye, L. (2015). The racial school climate gap: Within-school disparities in students' experiences of safety, support, and connectedness. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 56, 252–267.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-015-9751-x>
- Wang, F., Leary, K. A., Taylor, L. C., & Derosier, M. E. (2016). Peer and teacher preference, student teacher relationships, student ethnicity, and peer victimization in elementary school. *Psychology in the Schools*, 53(5), 488–501. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21922>
- Wang, M. C., Gordon, E. W. (Eds.). (1994). *Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Watson, L. (2018). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. White Press Academic.
- Wright, A., Gottfried, M. A., & Le, V. (2017). A kindergarten teacher like me: The role of student-teacher race in social-emotional development. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 78–101. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216635733>

Wun, C. (2012). The anti-Black order of No Child Left Behind: Using Lacanian psychoanalysis and critical race theory to examine NCLB. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46(5), 462–474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2012.732011>

Yiu, H. L. (2013). The influence of student–teacher racial match on student–teacher closeness: A focus on Asian and Asian American students. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 4(2), 126-135. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027785>

### **Appendix A: Interview Protocol 1**

1. What is your philosophy regarding how teachers interact with students from diverse backgrounds?
2. How is your philosophy for dealing with diverse student populations transferred to your staff?
3. What characteristics do you observe in your most culturally competent teachers? How would you describe them?
4. How have you supported teachers' efforts to create a culturally responsive curriculum and inclusive campus climate?
5. How do you address a teacher who has trouble building relationships with their students?
6. How do you support teachers in bridging the gap between home and school life?
7. How are teachers encouraged to learn about diverse cultures on your campus?
8. What are some of the challenges that teachers face as they develop their cultural competence?
9. How do you encourage teachers to honor the uniqueness of each student? How do you challenge stereotypes and promote sensitivity and inclusion?
10. Describe a time that you observed a teacher using culturally responsive teaching practices in their classroom? How did students respond?
11. How do you work with teachers and staff under your supervision to foster a climate receptive to diversity?
12. What kind of professional development opportunities does your campus or district provide to teachers in the area of culturally responsive teaching? In what ways have you integrated multicultural education as part of your professional development?



13. Approximately what percentage of your teachers use culturally responsive teaching strategies in their daily interactions with students?
14. Why do you think that it is important for teachers to build relationships with their students?

## **Appendix B: Interview Protocol 2**

1. What do you see as the most challenging aspects of an increasingly diverse academic community? What initiatives have you taken to meet such challenges on your campus?
2. Describe how you and your staff create opportunities for students and parents to be active participants in the learning community. How are these processes benefitting your students, parents, and the school?
3. How is culturally responsive teaching relevant to your campus goals?
4. How do you think student learning is impacted by curriculum that is connected to their lives?
5. What do you think positively contributes to student academic achievement on your campus? What are some the roadblocks that hinder student academic achievement on your campus?
6. How do you seek opportunities to improve the learning environment to better meet the needs of diverse student groups?
7. Describe how you work to create a school environment that is inclusive and welcomes diversity.
8. Describe your experience addressing achievement gaps on your campus.
9. What experiences or trends do you think have attributed to the need for teachers on your campus to become more culturally competent?
10. How has a culturally responsive curriculum impacted classroom management on your campus?
11. How has utilizing a culturally responsive curriculum affected the way that teachers use data to drive instruction?

12. Explain how your students, staff, and parents have benefitted from a campus environment that is diverse and inclusive?
13. How does diversity challenge and benefit student learning outcomes or performance on your campus?
14. To what degree would you say that culturally responsive teaching is a necessary pedagogy for teachers to master in today's classroom and why?

## Appendix C: Student and Teacher Ethnic Demographic Data

**Table C1**

*Student Ethnic Demographic Data*

School	Hispanic	African American	American Indian	Asian	White	Multiracial
A	78%	5%	6%	1%	10%	*
B	67%	17%	2%	4%	9%	*
C	77%	5%	2%	2%	13%	*
D	62%	27%	2%	2%	6%	1%
E	53%	39%	*	2%	6%	1%
F	57%	41%	1%	*	1%	1%
G	58%	37%	1%	*	2%	2%
H	62%	22%	*	4%	9%	3%
I	58%	37%	*	*	4%	1%
J	87%	11%	*	*	2%	*

**Table C2**

*Teacher Ethnic Demographic Data*

School	Hispanic	African American	Multiracial	Asian	White	Pacific Islander
A	48%	3%	*	*	50%	*
B	43%	11%	*	3%	44%	*
C	32%	7%	2%	2%	56%	*
D	51%	24%	*	2%	23%	*
E	32%	50%	2%	2%	13%	2%
F	35%	50%	5%	3%	8%	*
G	27%	61%	3%	*	11%	*
H	32%	18%	*	*	49%	*
I	45%	55%	*	*	*	*
J	42%	46%	3%	*	10%	*

## Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter

**ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**  
*Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*  
 Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
 320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103  
 325-674-2885



May 11, 2020

Monica Tatum  
 Department of Education  
 Abilene Christian University

Dear Monica,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Exploring North Texas Elementary Principals' Viewpoints Regarding the Influence of Culturally Responsive Teaching on School Climate and School Culture",

was approved by expedited review (Category 6 & 7 ) on 5/11/2020 (IRB # 20-059 ). Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

*Megan Roth*

Megan Roth, Ph.D.  
 Director of Research and Sponsored Programs