Establishing Culturally Responsive Classrooms in High School English Courses

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Abstract

The American demographic is constantly changing from the prominently white, Anglo-Saxon population to a diverse, multicultural, multilingual dynamic. According to the United States Census Bureau, the non-Hispanic white population is projected to shrink over the coming decades, from 199 million people in 2020 to 179 million people in 2060 - even as the U.S. population continues to grow. Regardless of such national trends, many teachers are not prepared to teach Latinx students because they have not been provided nor participated in the professional development of culturally responsive classrooms. This improvement science initiative holds that by increasing knowledge and building the capacity of teachers to create culturally responsive classrooms, the literacy performance of Latinx students will improve. This initiative aims to see growth in the literacy achievement of Latinx students as measured by North Carolina English II End of Course assessment scores.

Keywords: culturally responsive teaching, deficit ideology, Latinx students, literacy performance, positionality

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The Problem: Literacy Performance of Latinx Students Compared to Other Ethnic Groups

A National Issue

The current student and teacher demographics in public education illustrate stark disproportionality between public school teachers of color and students of color (Burns, 2020). These demographics, in addition to the lack of recognition for cultural backgrounds and a lack of professional development, create educational settings that can have a negative impact on the literacy performance of Latinx students (Antoszyk, 2020; Bates & Glick, 2013; Redding, 2019; Sung, 2020).

It is important for all students to have teachers and school leaders who are representative of their demographics; however, that is currently not the case across the nation (Burns, 2020; Milner, 2017). Teachers of color are grossly underrepresented in public schools compared to the number of students of color. As a result, the lack of faculty and staff diversity in a school system can have a negative impact on Latinx students. Such an under-representation for students of color can often be linked to disparate outcomes for those students (Antoszyk, 2020; Bates & Glick, 2013; Redding, 2019; Sung, 2020). Thus, proportional representation among school leaders, teachers and other school employees is important for all students but especially important for students of color (Milner, 2010). While school systems need to amend traditional hiring practices and seek to recruit educators of color, school systems must support students of color in other ways. This would include providing white teachers with training in culturally relevant pedagogy because an overwhelming majority of teachers come from white, middle-

class backgrounds with limited interaction among individuals of other cultures and languages (Fenwick, 2015). Training would assist teachers in creating classrooms where instruction is inclusive of all student cultures and backgrounds (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive pedagogy not only recognizes the various cultures academically, but it also helps students of color experience a sense of belonging in a school system where student and employee demographics are far from proportional (Delpit & Ladson-Billings, 1996; Ladson- Billings, 1995b, 2001).

While the American demographic is changing from a predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon population to a diverse, multicultural, multilingual dynamic, these same population changes are being reflected in student populations as well. The number of Latinx students in public education currently represents one in four children, and that ratio is steadily increasing (Bachman et al., 2020). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2021) stated the percentage of Latinx students in public schools has increased from twenty-two to twenty-seven percent over the past ten years while the population of white students has declined from fifty-four to forty-seven percent during the same. Additionally, the percentage of students who are Black has decreased from seventeen to fifteen percent. More recently, according to the NCES, between the Fall of 2000 and the Fall of 2017, the percentage of White public-school students decreased from sixty-one to forty-eight percent, Black public-school students decreased from seventeen to fifteen percent, but Latinx public-school students increased from sixteen to twenty-seven percent. This census data illustrates the majority-minority demographic of the United States has and continues to transform into what is becoming known as the browning of America (Cormier, 2020). With non-white children expected to represent the majority of students in public schools at 54% by 2024, teachers must be prepared in cultural diversity and culturally responsive teaching practices (Collins, 2006; Kena et al., 2016).

The disproportionality between teachers of color and students of color results in a lack of racial and ethnic diversity in general education classrooms even though a greater degree of student diversity is occurring in schools (Childs, 2019). This disproportionality between teacher and student demographics is due in part to the Latinx student population growing quicker than the number of teachers of color being employed in public schools. According to the NCES, in the 2017-18 school year, 80% of public-school teachers were white, 7% of public-school teachers were Black, and 9% of public-school teachers were Hispanic. As these changes in population demographics continue, the needs of the educational community continue to change as well. Cultural differences between white, middle class, female teachers and their students of color can cause concern due to the belief that white, middle class behaviors and attitudes are considered 'the norm' (Schmeichel, 2012). Schmeichel also noted how interactions between teachers who expect 'the norm' from students can be problematic and contribute to the academic failure of students of color.

Furthermore, Latinx students, consistently perform lower, across the board, on state mandated standardized assessments in comparison to their white counterparts. According to Leo and Wilcox (2020), there have been recent academic gains; however, Latinx students are still not performing at the same rate as other groups on specific measures of academic attainment. Additionally, Latinx students face considerable challenges in meeting the academic literacy requirements needed for successful high school completion. Nationally speaking, 27% of all 12th grade students but only 11% of Latinx 12th grade students scored proficient or above proficient in writing which is a significant component of literacy performance.

It is becoming increasingly important for public education institutions to examine the educational needs and experiences of Latinx students (Johnson, 2007). Unfortunately, in

addition to not having enough teachers who are representative of growing student demographics in public education, there is a lack of cultural recognition and responsiveness in schools and classrooms. This lack of cultural responsiveness results in a misalignment among the cultural, linguistic, ethical, and racial needs of students and the number of adults who fully understand those needs (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). The negative impacts of teacher and student demographic misalignment can go beyond one test or one classroom. When the representation of cultures and backgrounds of students and teachers are disproportionately represented, it can result in adverse effects on student performance and school culture while also creating microaggressions between teachers and students (Antoszyk, 2020; Bates & Glick, 2013; Redding, 2019; Sung, 2020).

Teacher misconceptions are critical components to consider when tearing down the systematic barriers that students of color currently face because teachers are not instructionally prepared to teach to the demographics of students currently enrolled within the public schools (Hall, 2019). Gay (2010) explained significant changes are desperately needed in teaching African, Asian, Latino, and Native American students (p. xxi). A study of teacher candidates found, "White pre-service candidates are fairly naïve and have stereotypic beliefs about urban children, such as believing that urban children bring attitudes that interfere with education" (Sleeter, 2001, p.94).

Literature Review

This literature review contains research on topics related to Latinx student performance in public schools. These topics include teacher preparation programs, deficit ideology, and the Leandro case in North Carolina. The Latinx community is not a monolithic culture, however, we will discuss Latinx using general language to represent many Hispanic students who include

but are not limited to immigrant youth in schools. Gorski (2016a) emphasized Latinx students are enormously diverse in the same way that all racial groups experience diversity because there is no shared culture or single dimension to Latinx students.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher education programs traditionally prepare future educators to teach subject-specific content, standards, and objectives. However, many marginalized groups are often omitted from discussions and decision-making centered on teacher preparation and curriculum (Kohli et al., 2022). In public education, academic focal points have historically lacked any connection to the personal and cultural knowledge that students bring with them to their classrooms daily (Escamilla, & Nathenson-Mejía, 2003). Hilaski (2020) explained teachers are not being taught to bridge a student's home and school life which hinders their academic successes, especially the academic successes of culturally diverse students. Gibson and Carrasco (2009) also noted despite the discourse of academic achievement and college preparation for all, data driven decision making, student participation and required teacher certification, the reality is many immigrant children end up with poorly prepared teachers to address the cultural, linguistic and academic needs of immigrant students. When teachers gain insight into the background information of their students, they enhance communication between students, families, and the school. Therefore, teachers must be prepared to create an educational environment where they can begin to understand their students' cultures, traditions, and knowledge of their home life (Delpit & Ladson-Billings, 1996; Hilaski, 2020; Ladson- Billings, 1995a, 2001).

Deficit Ideology

Deficit ideology positions students who are experiencing poverty, non-English speaking, and students of color as being at fault for their situation rather seeing them as victims of inequitable systems (Gorski, 2016b). Robinson and Clardy (2011) shared the importance of teachers being encouraged to challenge deficit thinking that pertains to culturally diverse students. Bucholtz et al. (2017) explained deficit ideology regards students as "the notion that youth of color lack the language, the culture, the family support, the academic skills, even the moral character to succeed and excel" (p. 43). Individuals can be biased and judgmental about different cultures due to ideas that were acquired through a lifetime of misinformation from media and social circles. Therefore, it is not uncommon for deficit-based ideology to be associated with immigrants (Leo & Wilcox, 2020). It is important for educators to understand deficit ideology as well as the immigration history of students and families because immigration issues and concerns can impact student experiences in the school setting (Nelson & Guerra, 2014).

The recent wave of immigrants has been widely diverse—by race, ethnicity, region of origin, and socioeconomic status. According to Crosnoe and Turley (2011), social and behavioral research on education over the past twenty years has revealed that educational disparities vary across the immigrant population. Many, but by no means all, immigrant children are socioeconomically disadvantaged. For example, twenty-four percent of immigrant students are from low-income families, compared to fifteen percent of children with U.S. born parents, and fifty percent of Latinx immigrant children have no parent with a high school degree, while eight percent of U.S born children have no parent with a high school degree. Not

surprisingly, such group differences in socioeconomic status are linked with differences in educational outcomes.

Zhao (2016) stated depending on the deficit ideology teachers may have, students can be allotted different opportunities, resources, instruction, and peer groups. Zhao continued with the belief that deficit ideology also affects the actions and attitudes of school leaders, teachers, and parents in their response to those with perceived deficits which are more likely to be children from poor and minority families as opposed to wealthier and Caucasian peers. This deficit-driven form of education focuses on what students do not have and cannot do instead of focusing on skills and strengths they do have in addition to what they can do (Gorski, 2016b).

Research by Gaitan (2012) and Nelson and Guerra (2014) indicated that educators who have negative beliefs about any student's home life fail to recognize that language and culture play a pivotal role in students' learning and academic successes. These deficit-based ideologies also affect communication between students and teachers. Gaitan (2012) noted school employees' negative perception of parents who do not attend school events and how this lack of attendance is viewed as disinterest in their child's education even though the parents may not have access to the form of communication utilized by the school. Furthermore, when schools begin to blame students, families, cultures, and customs for the disproportionately poor academic performance of students of color, it does not help establish or implement any new reforms to begin to reverse the current educational trends (Gay, 2010). Instead of identifying areas of deficits in minority students and their families, school leaders and teachers need to begin identifying areas of deficits in the educational system.

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The Leandro Case in North Carolina

The Leandro case is an example of inadequate funding in the state of North Carolina (NC). *Leandro v. State*, 488 S.E.2d 249 (N.C., 1997) was composed of several school districts in low-wealth, rural NC counties that filed a lawsuit. This lawsuit alleged that students in these rural low-income counties were being denied their right to a sound basic education under the NC constitution. Governor Roy Cooper signed an Executive Order stating that "the State of North Carolina must also identify additional, specific resources necessary to ensure that all children, including those at risk, have an opportunity to receive a sound basic education, no matter where they live in the state" (Exec. Order No. 27, 2017). In the end, it was determined it is the state's responsibility to provide a sound, basic education for all children. According to the Public Schools First NC, "the Leandro case affirmed that inequitable and inadequate school funding bars access to a sound, basic public education, particularly for students of color and those from families with low incomes" (para. 1, 2020). Marginalization has affected and continues to affect rural education, leaving students, especially those students of color, in a less than equitable educational opportunity in comparison to those within the urban setting (Adams & Fansworth, 2020). This hinders student achievement and continues to put Latinx students at a greater disadvantage than their white peers.

Theoretical Framework

Our theory of improvement held that by increasing knowledge and building the capacity of teachers to create culturally responsive classrooms, the literacy performance of Latinx students would improve. The existing theoretical framework was defined as an intentional teaching approach to realize, tap into, and build upon all students' cultural knowledge, prior learning experiences and familiar points of reference. Culturally responsive pedagogy delineates

three major teaching applications: teachers' investigation of students' prior knowledge; teachers' recognition and inclusion of students' prior knowledge and voices in their curriculum/instruction; and teachers' adjustment made during the teaching process to engage and motivate students to participate in the learning process (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The rationale for prioritizing professional development on creating culturally responsive classrooms was the academic performance of Latinx students, as it was reflected in state assessment data. In the K-12 setting, literacy performance of Latinx students falls behind their white peers, in part, because teachers are not familiar with how cultural differences impact learning in the classroom (Irizarry, 2015; Spiess & Cooper, 2020). Therefore, schools and school systems must build the capacity of teachers to implement culturally responsive learning environments because the demographics of teachers do not reflect the demographic of students enrolled in the schools (Adams & Fansworth, 2020).

A Local Context: Mountain Heritage High School and Whiteville High School

Our problem of practice was situated in two different contexts within North Carolina: Columbus County and Yancey County. Columbus County is in the eastern part of the state while Yancey County is in the western region of North Carolina. Both counties are geographically rural and mirror the national data trends of increasing Latinx populations.

Community

At the time of this initiative, Columbus County had a population of 58,000 residents, with 6,000 residents residing in Whiteville. The city's racial makeup was 60.51% white, 36.67% African American, 0.64% Native American, 0.74% Asian, 0.04% Pacific Islander, 0.56% from other races, and 0.84% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 0.93% of the population. There were two school districts within Columbus County, with

Whiteville City Schools serving the students of Whiteville. Whiteville City Schools had one primary school (Prekindergarten–Grade 2), one elementary school (Grade 3–5), one middle school (Grade 6–8), and one high school (Grade 9–12). Whiteville City Schools had an enrollment of 2,200 students. Of those students, 42.8% were Black, 38.7% white, 10.7% Hispanic, 6.3% Multiracial, and 1.5% two or more races.

At the time of the initiative, Yancey County had a population of 18,000 residents. According to the *United States Census Bureau* (2021), 96.4% of Yancey County residents were white, while 5.5% were Hispanic or Latino. Additionally, between 2014 and 2018, 4.4% of households reported a language other than English being spoken in their home. Yancey County Schools included two Prekindergarten–Grade 5 elementary schools, two Kindergarten–Grade 5 elementary schools, two Grade 6–8 middle schools, one Grade 9–12 high school, and an early college shared between itself and two other counties. Yancey County Schools had an enrollment of 1998 students. Of these students, 83% of the student population was white, 15% was Hispanic, and the remaining 2% was Black, Asian, American Indian, or two or more races.

According to the United States Census Bureau data from July 1, 2019, Whiteville City had a Hispanic population of 4.1%, with Columbus County having a Hispanic population of 5.6% while Yancey County had a Hispanic population of 5.5%. Previous census data indicated a steady increase in the Latinx population within the city of Whiteville. The total percentage of increase during the last twenty years was 273% (US Census Bureau, 2021). Fortunately, both communities and school systems recognized the need to support Latinx students and families as this population continued to grow.

Demographics

During this time, Whiteville High School in Columbus County had an enrollment of 750 students. Whiteville High School had seventy Hispanic students enrolled which represented 10.6% of the student population, and the school employed one Latinx teacher, who taught English as a Second Language. At the school level, Whiteville City Schools had a migrant coordinator who helped students and families but only those families that were identified as migrant or working in agriculture. Additionally, each of the four schools had a parent liaison who helped all families, but their time was not specifically designated for assisting Latinx families. Whiteville City Schools English teachers and tutors were immensely helpful in providing support services for younger Latinx students. However, by the time these younger students reached high school most of them were exited out of the English Learner program or were only being provided consultative services.

During this time, Mountain Heritage High School in Yancey County had an enrollment of 630 students. There were ninety-four Hispanic students which represented 14.8% of the student population. During the initiative, Mountain Heritage High School employed one Latinx individual in a non-certified role. The Yancey County Board of Education was and continues to be committed to supporting Spanish speaking students and families by allocating federal funds to employ an English Learner (EL) Parent Liaison. This individual served Spanish speaking students and families. This liaison would clarify and supplement information regarding school and/or district expectations to language minority families, assist with families' requests and/or concerns, and assist with referrals to other community agencies, while coordinating multiple school and community outreach programs. The teachers, counselors, and social workers

collaborated with the EL Parent Liaison to organize parent workshops and informational sessions in the community and at the school.

Stakeholders

Both Columbus County and Yancey County have strong community partnerships in place to provide support and services for Hispanic families. Columbus County and Whiteville placed a strong emphasis on early education for all students but also focused on Spanish speaking students and families. Niños Migrant Head Start Center provided strong foundational skills for students prior to their entrance into the K-12 public education setting. For adults, Columbus County Literacy Councils provided English language tutoring. While these programs helped both adolescents and adults, there were very few programs that were established to help youth and school-age students. Yancey County placed a strong emphasis on providing resources and support for Hispanic families by building partnerships between the school system, the Blue Ridge Partnership for Children, and the Yancey County Cooperative Extension Office. Collaboration between these district agencies resulted in ongoing parent education offerings for Spanish-speaking families. The Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors) program was an evidence-based comprehensive training program developed by and for Latino parents. The program engaged parents in interactive sessions focusing on understanding their significant role in the development of and long-term impact on their children's educational outcomes. Yancey County also worked hard to put other services in place to assist families in acclimating to the community while also maintaining their own culture and values. Other community agencies that supported the Latinx community include Mountain Community Health Partnership; Celo Health Center; Bakersville Dental Clinic; Toe River Health Department including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); Rural Health

Alliance; Ally's House; Reconciliation House; Yancey County Head Start; Dig In! Yancey Community Garden; and TRACTOR Food & Farm. Each of these agencies provided specific services and/or support to Spanish speaking families in Yancey County, and in conjunction with one another helped meet the needs of Latinx families to mitigate language and cultural barriers.

History and Review of the Problem at Mountain Heritage High School and Whiteville High School

Latinx students in Whiteville City Schools and Yancey County Schools consistently performed lower on English II End of Course state assessments compared to their white peers. Even though the population of Hispanic students in both school systems represented between 10-15% of the overall student population, at least 40% of Hispanic students were not proficient on state mandated assessments. Table 1 details four years of student performance on the North Carolina English II End of Course (EOC) Assessment by Whiteville High School students. Table two details four years of student performance on the NC English II EOC by Mountain Heritage High School students. In both tables, the data are disaggregated by white and Hispanic student performance. As indicated in these tables, white students consistently scored more proficient and college and career ready on the state assessment in comparison to Hispanic students. Most recently, during the 2021-22 school year Whiteville High School had 11% of Hispanic students complete the English II EOC Assessment with only 4.7% scoring proficient. During the same school year, Mountain Heritage High School had 13% of Hispanic students complete the English II EOC Assessment with only 3.7% scoring proficient.

Table 1

English II End of Course Performance Data for Whiteville High School

Academic Year	Student Population	Percent Proficient	Percent College & Career Ready
2017-18	Hispanic	33.3	8.3
	White	71.7	56.5
2018-19	Hispanic	53.8	46.2
	White	80.3	67.6
2020-21	Hispanic	46.7	20.0
	White	75.0	47.7
2021-22	Hispanic	61.5	30.8
	White	74.2	51.6

Note. Adapted from "North Carolina School Report Cards" by North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2022. https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/school?school=241316&year=2022

Table 2

English II End of Course Performance Data for Mountain Heritage High School

Academic Year	Student Population	Percent Proficient	Percent College & Career Ready
2017-18	Hispanic	31.6	26.3
	White	69.4	56.0
2018-19	Hispanic	29.4	11.8
	White	65.3	52.5
2020-21	Hispanic	40.0	20.0
	White	58.6	38.3
2021-22	Hispanic	25.0	12.5
	White	77.0	50.4

Note. Adapted from "North Carolina School Report Cards" by North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2022. https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/school?school=241316&year=2022

Each school district had made previous attempts to provide training and implement initiatives which would address early literacy and provide support to non-English speaking students. Unfortunately, the effort and focus on literacy instruction had been minimal with no professional development directed specifically toward literacy for Latinx students. One of the most recent literacy initiatives at Whiteville High School was the Keys to Literacy professional development. This professional development focused on research-based literacy practices, with the focus being on early to emergent literacy. There were no improvement initiatives that focused on literacy practices solely within the secondary context. The bulk of professional development funding for the district was directed toward the K-2 setting when students are first introduced to reading and writing. Another reason for the focus on K-2 literacy was Read to Achieve, the statewide initiative that focuses on third-grade literacy proficiency. Furthermore, Whiteville High School did not have professional development regarding equitable teaching practices. In the past, the district offered the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training for a select number of educators, specifically English Language Learner teachers. SIOP is a research-based instructional model that has proven effective in addressing the academic needs of English Learners by teaching subject area curriculum using techniques that make the content materials accessible and help develop students' second language skills (Short et al., 2011). The SIOP Model consists of eight interrelated components: lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review and survey (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2018). By using instructional strategies connected to these eight components, teachers can design and deliver lessons that address the academic and linguistic needs of English Learners. The most recent SIOP professional development for Whiteville City Schools was completed in the Fall of 2016. Unfortunately,

many of the teachers that took that training are no longer teaching or employed in the school district.

Much like Whiteville High School, Mountain Heritage High School did not have an improvement initiative focused solely on literacy during the time of the initiative. Furthermore, most literacy programs in the district were provided and implemented at the elementary level. A common literacy professional development offering in Yancey County was Reading Research to Classroom Practice, formerly known as Reading Foundations. In the three years prior to the initiative, no high school teacher participated in this professional development offering. Regarding initiatives focused on English Learners, Yancey County Schools offered SIOP training at least every other year. These trainings were facilitated by the district's two English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. During these training sessions, teachers from each school are selected for mandatory participation. During the five years prior to the initiative, approximately 82% of Mountain Heritage High School teachers received SIOP training. Each year new faculty members were included in a cohort, and refresher courses are held on a four-year rotating basis. Unfortunately, neither the Reading Research to Classroom Practice nor the SIOP training specifically address culturally responsive classrooms.

Over the course of the three years prior to the initiative, Yancey County Schools implemented Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) training. GLAD professional development is an instructional model that incorporates research-based and highly effective instructional strategies. While originally developed for English Language learners by teachers Brechtel and Haley in the 1980s, GLAD benefits all students by using high-level thinking and academic language, as well as cross-cultural skills (O'Donovan, 2008). Teachers are trained to deliver academic content and language while using an integrated, balanced literacy approach.

Several teachers from each school participated in this professional development, and three of the seven schools within the district implemented school-wide training for individual teachers in their schools. However, Mountain Heritage High School was not one of the schools that implemented school-wide training.

Our Roles and Positionality

We were keenly aware of their role as facilitators through the improvement initiative process, a role which allowed us to have a deep interest in each design team's overall success while also providing guidance as needed. As one of two assistant principals at Whiteville City Schools' only high school and as the Assistant Superintendent of Yancey County Schools, we were in roles which allowed us to serve as change agents and enabled us to observe and collect data that guided the focus of our research. As instructional leaders within our organizations, we were aware of our legitimate power and influence as well as the importance of building a rapport with the design teams by establishing trust, understanding, and mutual respect while upholding the values and beliefs of an effective scholar practitioner. An essential aspect that was considered during the improvement process was our identity and positionality as both educational leaders and research practitioners. We did not want these identities to influence relationships and interactions with our design teams and participants during the research process. Throughout our professional careers, we have had the fortunate opportunity to work alongside numerous school employees and many members of the Latinx community as a result of serving our school district at all levels and in a range of roles from classroom teachers to administrators.

As educational leaders within the local school context, we realized some of the systemic barriers the Latinx community faces and recognized that we have different identities than our

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Latinx students who we are trying to help make academic gains. Both of us are white, thirty-
and forty-year-old females who hold master's degrees. We were born, raised, and continue to
live in the same communities where our respective Latinx families live. We are also students in
the EdD program at Western Carolina University and come from similar middle-class
backgrounds. We have each held professional positions that have enabled us to work alongside
the Latinx community within our geographical region. Previously one of us served as an ESL
teacher for three years in the district while the other served as the ESL Program Coordinator for
the district for five years. Additionally, both of us had common beliefs and ideals regarding the
importance of student equity which included the standards and values for student success,
education, and the desire to increase academic growth and achievements for all students. It is
worth noting, each of us also had individual experiences in our personal and professional lives
that influenced our relationships, actions, and decision-making and made us different from one
another.

A Causal Analysis

In this section, we provide a causal analysis of the identified problem. We start with a
description of causal analysis as an improvement tool then follow with supporting literature
along with a figure that identifies four primary causes of our identified problem. Causal analysis
is defined as a process for identifying and addressing causes and effects of an identified
problem or challenge (Crow, Hinnant-Crawford, Spaulding, 2019). This improvement tool helps
identify the root causes, instead of addressing symptoms of a problem, so that the symptoms
become less influential.

Our causal analysis identified four primary causes which may have negative impacts on
student achievement, specifically the literacy performance, of Latinx students. Those causes

include a disparity between teacher and student positionality, a lack of inclusive learning environments, inadequate culturally relevant teacher materials, and ineffective school and community connections.

Disparate Teacher and Student Positionalities

A component of addressing the academic needs of Latinx students includes teachers being trained to recognize their positionality because their own experiences and identities shape what they know about the world and how they teach. Positionality is how one's values, race, gender, social class, and other aspects of their identity shape their understanding of the world (Kibler & Chapman, 2018). Teacher perceptions play a significant role in the general culture of the classroom and the relationships between teachers, students, and families (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). Positionality plays a role in teaching practices, especially when teaching students of various backgrounds, languages, and cultures (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Russell & Russell, 2014). When teachers can examine positionality and personal teaching philosophies, they can see the impact those beliefs have on their teaching practices (Terrill & Mark, 2000). Teachers can successfully teach students from different backgrounds if they are trained to acknowledge the culture of those students and learn how to adjust pedagogy to engage their students (Goldenberg, 2014). Teachers who fail to recognize the significance of other cultures different from their own can have a negative view of student ability. Therefore, it is important for teachers to consider their positionality so they can be aware of how they approach teaching all students of color. This includes looking at the current curricula and materials and creating lessons to focus on and meet the needs of Latinx student.

Lack of Inclusive Learning Environments

Children's introduction to and learning of literacy begins at home, long before students enter school. Initially, students learn the deep context of acquiring specific language skills and their basis of knowledge before they ever attend school (Hilaski, 2020). Young children are exposed to print from plain packaging of items, TV commercials, and individuals speaking to them and speaking to one another. Latinx children are exposed to literacy at similar rates of English-speaking students (Hwang et al., 2020). In fact, by the time Latinx students reach the secondary level, they are often multilingual but experience a cultural mismatch between home and school because schools have repeatedly failed to consider the unique experiences that Latinx students bring to the classroom environment (Hilaski, 2020). Horsford et al. (2019) cited an examination of how race can influence American systems and institutions resulting in an unequal distribution of resources which can limit equal opportunities for all. Flores et al. (2019) noted how Eurocentric culture is predominant and pervasive in educational institutions. Eurocentric culture assumes that Eurocentric norms are "wise" and that assimilation to these norms should be the desirable outcome for all stakeholders. Thus, Latinx students who come to American educational institutions wanting to learn in Latinx culturally reflexive ways are often perceived to be less capable and, therefore, not taught in an equitable way.

Research supports the importance of connecting students' cultural, linguistic, and experiential knowledge to their educational expectations because a lack of such connection often results in superficial student work (Sosa & Bhathena, 2019). However, students of color are frequently asked to complete school tasks without drawing from their experiences, resulting in a lack of understanding on the student's part (Hilaski, 2020). This serves as an indication that many teachers do not fully understand the culturally responsive teaching that needs to occur for

students to be successful. Because of this lack of training, they do not realize that being culturally blind and unresponsive can hinder academic achievement (Nelson & Guerra, 2014).

The absence or limited availability of culturally relevant resources in the classroom is another academic experience of Latinx students. Culturally relevant literacy resources connect to a child's life experiences and cultural backgrounds; thus, choosing culturally relevant literature provides an opportunity for students to draw on their life experiences and narrate family and personal stories, while developing their literacy skills (Gay, 2010). Ebe (2012) discovered reading benefits of using culturally relevant literacy resources with students as a result of connecting with literature on a deeper level and understanding the authors' messages because students' cultures play an important role in the connections and interpretations made by the readers. When culturally relevant literacy resources are included in the classroom, students have a foundation for interacting with the literature because it mirrors their daily life (Marquez & Colby, 2021).

Inadequate Culturally Relevant Materials

At the state level, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) currently does not have teaching standards or expectations regarding culturally responsive classrooms. NCDPI also does not have any information on its website regarding professional development on culturally relevant pedagogy or culturally relevant literacy practices. However, the NC Department of Public Instruction website does have a section on Culturally Responsive Instructional Resources for Teaching American Indians. The professional development information is defined as culturally responsive instruction with a student-centered approach to teaching that embraces and uses each student's culture in the classroom while ensuring students

have fair access to the learning content which builds on the foundation of respect and relationships (NCDPI, n.d.).

In the Documents section of the North Carolina Department Public Instruction website, a World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Focus Bulletin from September 2019 on Language and Culture is available. WIDA is one of the largest education research centers in the world. The organization provides language development resources that support the academic success of multilingual learners by offering a comprehensive, research-based system of language standards, surveys, professional learning and educator assistance. WIDA Focus Bulletins are newsletters provided by the organization about a variety of topics in the field of multilingual education. These bulletins are written for teachers, administrators, parents and policy makers.

The September WIDA Focus bulletin presents information on promoting a culture of success for multilingual learners and the importance of students navigating comfortably in the school community as it is the foundation for achieving language proficiency and acquiring content knowledge. The document also states the importance of a school-wide effort to create an environment in which multilingual learners can identify with and take pride in their cultural identity (NCDPI, n.d.). The document goes on to further share that unlike traditional school cultures that overlook a student's heritage and result in feelings of alienation, a school culture focused on cultural relevance encourages student acceptance of and pride in their background, which builds confidence.

Ineffective School and Community Connections

Olivos & Mendoza (2010) addressed the effects of institutional obstacles in public education and how those obstacles overshadow the positive qualities and contributions of

families. Oswald et al. (2017) noted parent and family engagement are directly connected to gains in cognition, language, and social-emotional development as well as children's self-esteem, emotional self-regulations and self-perceptions of academic competence. Rivera and Li (2019) found that a connection between Latinx parents and their children's educational and school activities are more influential in their students' academic performance and educational attitudes than just teacher empowerment alone. However, many times when Latinx parents attempt to be involved in their child's education, they may not be considered as equal contributors due to actions and mannerisms which reflect different cultural identities than those of many educators. Gaitan (2012) stated, "Rather than trying to change poor or ethically different families into the mainstream culture, educators should attempt to create a common culture with families - a culture based on conditions that allow all to participate and express themselves in meaningful ways" (p. 309).

When cultures are not considered, it creates a divide between a student's home life and their school life. Therefore, it is important to note, language barriers do not equal a lack of initiative on the part of Latinx parents or students. Within the context of the Latinx community, Smith et al. (2008) stated, "the most important obstacle to Hispanic parents becoming involved with schools is the language barrier" (p. 9). Communication can be a barrier not only to attendance at school and school events but also a barrier to engagement by Latinx students, parents and families (Semke & Sheridan, 2012). Limited forms of communication on the school's behalf can result in poor engagement on the families' behalf. For example, if announcements are delivered solely via phone calls, parents who may not have phone service would be excluded from the invitation. Clear communication between teachers and families is essential because it allows all parents and families to have a "voice" at the school level which

creates opportunities for engagement and contributions by students and families (Sliwka &
Istance, 2006).

Nelson and Guerra (2014) found very little consideration is given to the social aspects of
schooling, which formulate the relationships with both students and families from different
cultures. Nelson and Guerra completed a study of one hundred eleven educators, seventy-three
educational leaders and thirty-eight classroom teachers, in two school districts in Michigan and
Texas. Of the one hundred eleven educators who participated in the study, it was found that
only one teacher was culturally responsive, three teachers were culturally aware, forty-five
teachers had some type of general awareness, forty-three teachers had very little understanding
of culture, and fifteen had no appearances of being culturally aware at all. Additionally, 72% of
the one hundred eleven educators who participated in the study held at least one or more deficit-
based beliefs about students from culture that was different than their own. Such a disconnect
between students' home and school lives can negatively impact a student's academic
performance, so improving the PreK-12 educational institution as it relates to parent and family
engagement means creating greater access for all students and families. In Figure 1 below, the
fishbone diagram (Ishikawa, 2018) depicts four identified causes of lower academic student
achievement.

Figure 1

Fishbone Diagram for the Causes of Latinx Literacy Performance
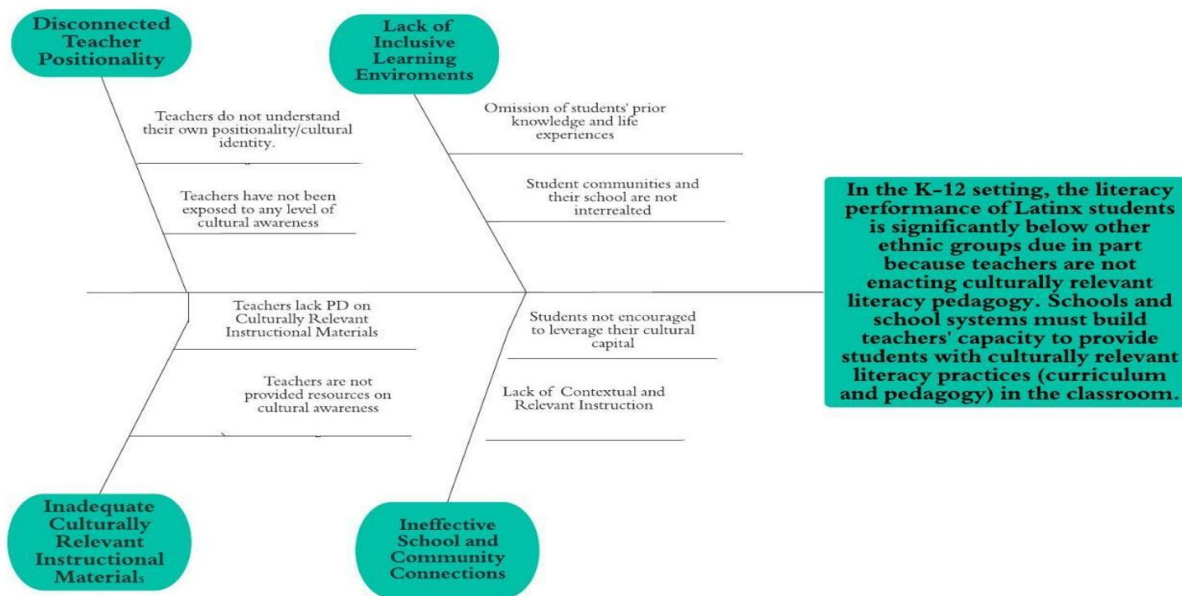
Professional Development: A Proposed Improvement Initiative for Literacy Performance

Our improvement initiative consisted of four modules that were delivered in a face-to-face format. To support the face-to-face delivery of the professional development series, as well as continuity between research settings, we created a website to house the professional development content. A visual of the online platform interface is included as Appendix A. The design team collaborated and created the website so the professional development series could be delivered with flexibility regardless of presenter or venue. The website design also resulted in uniformity of content while allowing for individualized, contextualized learning for participants within individual school contexts. Each module was designed using a Google classroom/website with a Google slideshow to guide participants through the professional development. We felt participants would be familiar with this platform because most North Carolina schools utilize Google classroom(s). This delivery design also allowed for presentation

consistency within both districts while allowing participants access to the module information and materials.

Improvement Initiative Modules

Improvement science is the process of ensuring quality improvements within an organization based on evidence that involves research methods, data collection and analysis. The improvement science process is intended to be an iterative process carried out over a period of time which provides researchers with evidence to help determine what works, whom it works for, and under what conditions it works, while allowing identified improvements to change the trajectory of problems and provide continuous improvement over time (Bryk, et al., 2017).

According to Langley et al. (2009), three fundamental questions drive the improvement model. Those questions include: 1) What are we trying to accomplish? 2) How will we know that a change is an improvement? 3) What changes can we make that will result in improvement? The improvement science model of test cycling is the most efficient and effective method to inform organizations of improvements over an extended period (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2014). In public education, there is generally an overwhelming need to identify and remedy problems with little aspiration to make systemic changes for improvement (Bates & Glick, 2013). However, by utilizing these questions as guidelines and implementing a data collection and analysis process, we believed systematic changes could be made in our respective districts by providing teachers with training on creating culturally responsive classrooms.

The professional development series provided teachers with information on positionality and deficit ideology, Latinx relationships and experiences in schools, and culturally responsive teaching. Each professional development module was scheduled for at least two hours, and the four modules were delivered over the course of four months from August through December.

Table 3 below identifies definitions that will clarify the implementation of this improvement

initiative.

Table 3

Improvement Initiative Definitions

Term	Definition
Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)	Culturally Responsive Teaching is teaching that keeps students at the forefront. It includes a reflection of one's own identity, relationship building, trust, reflection, and refines practices in classrooms. It unites families, schools, and communities (Abacioglu, C. S., Volman, M., & Fischer, A. H., 2020).
Culturally Relevant Texts	Culturally Relevant Texts are literary forms that connect with a student's cultural background and prior experiences. These literary forms reflect the cultural heritage of students (Collins, 2006).
Culturally Relevant Pedagogies	Defined by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1992), as the belief that all educators should have high expectations, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.
Deficit Ideology	A term used for blaming marginalized groups and identifying them as being the problem. This ideology discounts any systematic conditions as being part of the problem (Nelson & Guerra, 2014).
Implicit Bias	When individuals are indirectly unaware of biases. This is something both subconscious and usually spontaneous in nature (Escamilla, K., & Nathenson-Mejía, S., 2003).
Positionality	Positionality describes how social position and power ultimately shape our identities among society (Ladson- Billings, 1995a).

Module 1: Positionality and Deficit Ideology

The first module addressed positionality and deficit ideology. This module provided a foundation for teachers to understand these concepts while recognizing their own positionality. The module also explored how deficit ideology and implicit bias are presented in society and can play out in the classroom. According to Briscoe (2005), teacher positionality is the "privileged location in the social, political, and economic hierarchies that grant them greater access to power" so it critical that educators are cognizant of how their experiences and positionality shape their reactions, responses, and pedagogical approach (p. 9). Greenfield (2007) described positionality as a significant force that shapes the epistemological and pedagogical beliefs of teachers thus affecting what teachers think and how they teach. Fortunately, the leadership role teachers possess with their positionality places them in a situation where they can deconstruct standard assumptions brought into their classrooms while becoming more aware of identity matters and how to best meet the needs of their learners. When designing and implementing professional development opportunities for staff members, we decided to both acknowledge and address deficit ideology as well as positionality. Upon completion of the first module, we aimed for teachers to develop the willingness to actively examine their positionality.

Module 2: Latinx Relationships and Experiences in Schools

The second professional development module focused on the relationships and experiences of Latinx students in schools. This module provided specific cultural and background information about the Latinx families the participants teach. This included information such as a description of regions families were from, how the families came to the area, and common misconceptions about Latinx culture. It is important for teachers to gain

insight into the motivation for and bravery of Latinx families who come to the United States which includes the complex adjustment to a new culture in addition to the anxiety of immigration policies (Gibson & Carrasco, 2009). The English-only culture of most public education institutions contributes to rigid language hierarchies where an immigrant student's home language is viewed as a deficit rather than an asset, and where being bilingual is rarely celebrated or rewarded (Leo & Wilcox, 2020). Unfortunately, traditional school cultures can result in immigrant students, all too often, developing a sense of academic failure and a belief that achievement gaps are due to their own inadequacies rather than to school policies, programs, and practices. Furthermore, schools generally believe they promote participation and belongingness for all students, but immigrant students often feel unsupported, marginalized, and silenced (Gibson & Carrasco, 2009). Competence and content knowledge in the classroom are essential but being knowledgeable of life experiences is foundational for having a personal understanding of others. By understanding the lived experiences of students and families, relationships can be created and fostered to a higher degree. These relationships are the backbone of education and student achievement because the affective, more so than the cognitive, factors impact learning (Greenfield, 2007). When learning about students and their path to America, it is important that teachers address any cultural preconceptions and misconceptions about the Latinx population.

Module 3: Culturally Responsive Teaching

In the third professional development module, we provided participants with information on culturally responsive teaching and what culturally responsive classrooms look like. We also provided examples of culturally responsive lessons and guided teachers through the implementation of those lessons. Culturally responsive teaching is a research-based

approach to teaching that connects students' cultures, languages, and life experiences to their learning in school. Ladson-Billings (1995a) stated, "most approaches to culturally relevant or culturally responsive instruction described in the multicultural education literature not only utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning, but also teach students how to develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that enables them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162). Culturally responsive teachers are those who: a) have a sociopolitical consciousness; b) affirm views of students from diverse backgrounds; c) are both responsible for and capable of bringing about educational change; d) embrace constructivist views of teaching and learning; and e) build on students' prior knowledge and beliefs while stretching them beyond the familiar (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). A component of culturally responsive teaching is teachers understanding their own biases and the experiences they bring to their classrooms so they can continually monitor conscious and unconscious teaching practices that can create feelings of inequity in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). By incorporating the history, values, and cultural knowledge of their students' culture and communities in the curriculum, teachers can create an environment for all students to feel valued and like they are a contributing member (Adams & Farnsworth 2020).

Module 4: Culturally Responsive Teaching Work Session

In the fourth and final module, we provided participants with time to reflect on the previous modules and work on lessons and instructional materials. We intentionally created this time so teachers could revise and create culturally responsive lessons. We worked with teachers individually, in small groups and as a large group to identify lessons that could be altered or crafted to be inclusive of all students, specifically our Latinx population at each school.

Teachers who teach the same grade level worked together to align lessons and ensure the incorporation of culturally responsive literature. During this time, lesson plans were created, and teachers actively researched relevant literature to include in future lessons. We facilitated this work session to provide support and guidance while keeping teachers on task. Even though culturally relevant literacy resources are beneficial for all students, instructional practice is especially promising for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Kibler & Chapman, 2018). Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the lives of their students, so they incorporate appropriate culturally relevant resources into their instruction. Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2010) described culturally relevant texts as those that meet the needs of diverse learners using language, ethnic referents, cultural artifacts, and cognitive and linguistic contexts that are familiar to those students. Literacy outcomes for students are improved using culturally relevant literacy resources because these resources anchor the students' identities, experiences, and norms so that students can align the literature with their culture which makes it relevant to them (Sharma & Christ, 2017). Culturally responsive lessons and resources aid in providing relevancy to the curriculum which results in increased student achievement because students are better able to interpret what they read, make connections, and monitor comprehension. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that students are more engaged in learning and experience greater success in school when they feel they belong and find their realities reflected not only in conversations within the school but also in the curriculum (Shields, 2004). Below, Figure 2 describes each of the four modules' focus and content.

Figure 2

Professional Development Module Content

Module 1: Positionality & Deficit Ideology

Explore one's own positionality

Understand positionality as it relates to teaching

Explore and understand social power and positions

Module 2: Latinx Relationships & Experiences in Schools

Explore Latinx youth experiences in schools

Examine Lantinx families experiences within schools

Support the needs of Latinx students and families within the school

Module 3: Culturally Responsive Teaching

Learn to activate students' prior knowledge

Develop contextual leanrning skills

Explore and create positive student relationships

Module 4: Cultural Responsive Teaching Work Session

Design culturally relevant lessons

Implement curriculum changes

Support resources across English II Classrooms

Theory of Improvement

Our theory of improvement held that by increasing knowledge and building the capacity

of teachers to create culturally responsive classrooms the literacy performance of Latinx

students would improve. Abacioglu, Volman, and Fischer (2020) noted the positive impact on

students when teachers embrace the various elements of students' culture including family experiences, values, traditions, and language then incorporate that knowledge into the instruction by giving students opportunities to share personal experiences in classroom discussion, asking students to write stories about their lives, and relating learning material to student backgrounds. Therefore, our professional development for teachers focused on integrating students' life experiences into the classroom's instructional content.

As US schools continue to struggle with creating inclusive learning environments for all students, many teachers are not aware of the importance of helping Latinx students develop a sense of belonging, resulting many times in these students frequently feeling lost, depressed, alienated, lonely, fearful and abandoned (Gorski, 2016a). Therefore, teachers should be trained on the aspects of culturally responsive classrooms. This type of professional development includes learning to understand and delve into backgrounds and experiences different from their own. Professional development would also guide teachers in incorporating the cultures and communities of their students into their teaching, regardless of teacher race, background, or socio-economic status. Robinson and Clardy (2011) pointed out how it is unlikely that teachers will fully reach their students of color if they do not value or have experiences around cultural diversity. When students see and hear their culture and backgrounds being incorporated into their classrooms, they feel empowered because the school setting is about more than transmitting and acquiring academic knowledge. The school setting also serves as a platform where students develop their own identity and establish their sense of belonging. By increasing the presence of Latinx culture in classrooms, there is a decrease in the sense of alienation Latinx students may experience (Gray, 2009).

The driver diagram for proposed change in Figure 3 below illustrates our theory of contributing factors to achieve the improvement initiative. As indicated, leading staff through authentic and comprehensive culturally competent training, helping staff understand positionality, and providing culturally responsive teaching strategies will result in professional development that will positively impact the literacy performance of Latinx students. As previously stated, our causal analysis identified four primary causes, specifically a disparity between teacher and student positionality, a lack of inclusive learning environments, inadequate culturally relevant teacher materials, and ineffective school and community connections, that may have negative impacts on student achievement, specifically the literacy performance of Latinx students (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010; Sampson et al., 2010). While looking at the causal analysis and the four primary causes, these primary causes have resulted in a lack of culturally responsive pedagogy (Ishikawa, 2018). Hunsberger (2007), Irvine and Armento (2001) and Nieto (2013) agreed that teachers are not typically trained in culturally responsive pedagogy. In order to promote change and reach the aim of this initiative, participants attended a professional development which provided teaching strategies intended to increase the understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Figure 3

Driver Diagram for Proposed Change
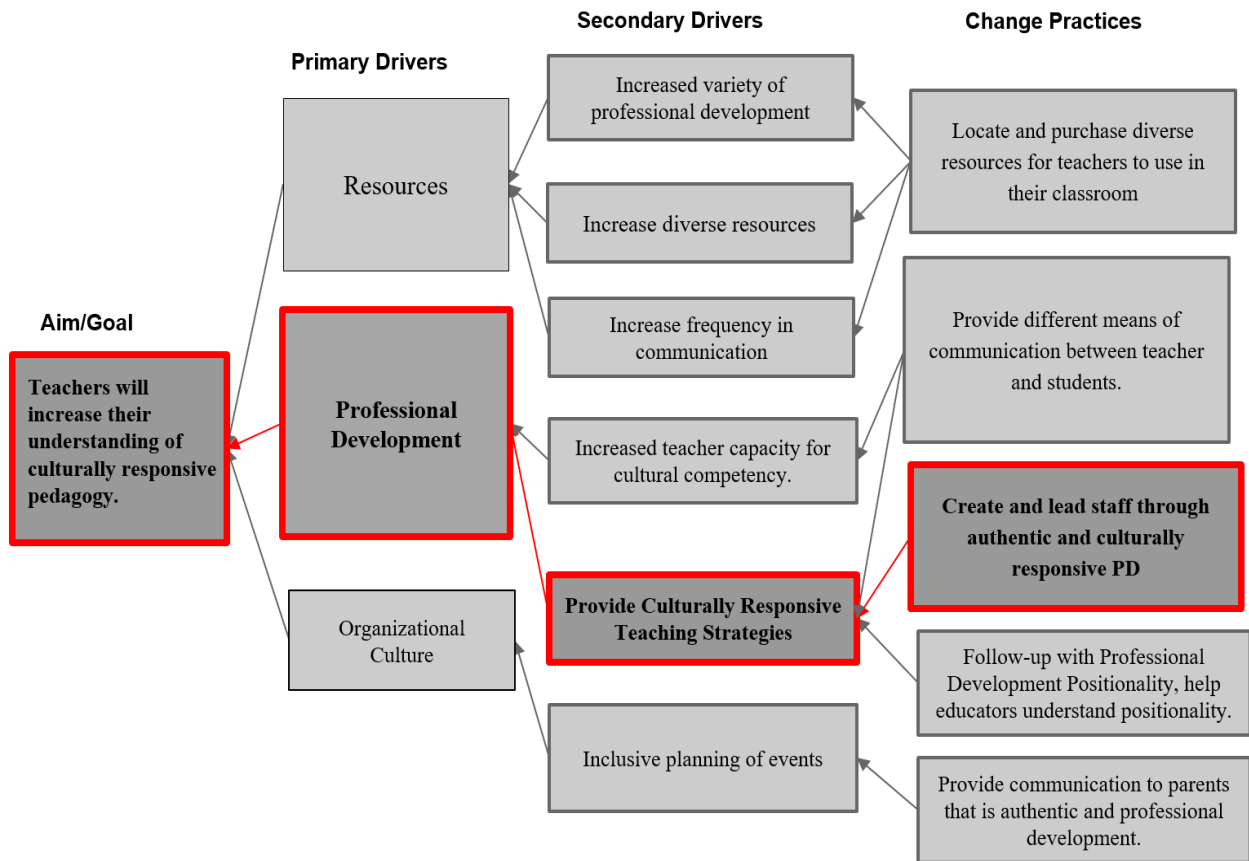
Improvement Initiative Design

During this disquisition work, we created and presented a professional development

series for high school English teachers which included four different modules on creating

culturally responsive classrooms (Appendix B). During the professional development, we

provided training on positionality and deficit ideology, Latinx relationships and experiences in

schools, and culturally responsive teaching. The first module focused on positionality and

deficit ideology. This module included an introduction to positionality, exploring one's own

positionality, and understanding how positionality impacts relationships. During this module,

participants also explored social power and positions along with deficit ideology in society. The

second module focused on Latinx relationships and experiences in schools. During this module, participants learned how to support the needs of Latinx students by creating relationships with their Latinx students and families. The third module focused on culturally responsive teaching. During this module, participants learned how to activate students' prior knowledge and integrate culturally relevant pedagogy into instruction. The fourth module was a reflective meeting and work session on the information that was shared during previous modules. This module allowed participants time to reflect on how previous lessons could be revised to ensure future lessons were culturally responsive. This module included teachers analyzing their current lessons, instructional texts, and other instructional resources. Specifically, this involved teachers reviewing classroom novels, poems, and other reading selections to determine how to revise current lessons or how to create more culturally relevant lessons so they could be implemented in their classrooms.

Design Teams

We wanted to create a networked improvement community which would serve as a community of inquiry focused not just on the strategies for improvement but also the process for collective improvement and how individuals become part of the improvement (Bryk et al., 2017). Therefore, both researchers assembled a design team at our school site. The design teams were composed of stakeholders who possessed various areas of expertise that contributed to the improvement initiative. When developing our design team, we wanted to ensure the team was composed of individuals who were vested in creating structures that supported Latinx students and families (Norris, 1997). We also wanted our design team members to represent a variety of roles in our schools which would bring varied experiences and perspectives. We asked design team members to provide feedback on the improvement initiative and oversee implementation

while also providing input throughout the improvement initiative process. The design team at Whiteville High School included the researcher who is one of the assistant principals at the high school, the school's English Learner (EL) teacher, the high school principal, the school nurse, the school counselor, and a Latinx parent. The design team at Mountain Heritage High School included the other researcher who is the district's Assistant Superintendent, two district EL teachers, and two Latinx parents. The various backgrounds and experiences of each team member provided the foundation for a positive implementation of the improvement initiative. Some design team members also served as co-presenters and facilitators for the professional development modules.

Regarding positionality, we kept in mind that many members on our individual design teams had similar backgrounds and experiences to our own. Most members of the design teams were white, highly educated, and lifetime community residents. Three team members, two of which were parents, from Mountain Heritage High School spoke fluent Spanish and were members of the Hispanic community. By having Latinx parents participate as design team members, their aspirations, life experiences and knowledge were incorporated into the improvement initiative. This incorporation of the Latinx perspective was a valuable contribution throughout the process as these are the very students we seek to serve. We wanted to ensure that members of each design team had a vested interest in serving Latinx students and the community. The design team needed to be conscientious of any biases they may have toward Latinx students and families because remaining impartial during the research process was vital to implementing the improvement initiative. Additionally, each design team member needed to recognize any personal barriers that might hinder the design team from moving forward with their improvement work such as not regularly being able to attend design team meetings.

Implementation Timeline

After successful defense of the improvement proposal and approval from Western Carolina University's Institutional Review Board, we convened a design team for each of our schools so we could set meeting dates for the duration of the improvement initiative. Each team leader facilitated the development and design of the improvement process while addressing any questions posed or concerns shared by other members of the design team. Initial planning with the design team began in June 2022. During this time, we set future meeting dates with the design team, educated the design team on the improvement process, and shared the improvement initiative including the desired outcomes of the initiative. The following month we reconvened with the design team to share the module content with the group so members could review and revise the professional development modules and training materials. The design team also planned the implementation of the professional development series including identifying roles within the team.

In August 2022, we administered a Qualtrics pre-survey to all participants which served as baseline data (Appendix C). That data included perceptions and beliefs regarding culture, personal experiences and connections of one's cultural and personal experiences to the classroom environment. Upon completion of the pre-survey, participants were presented with the first module of the professional development series on creating culturally responsive classrooms. The following three modules were planned to be presented respectively during the months of September, October, and November. Prior to implementation of each module, the design team began a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) reflection cycle which allowed the design team to plan each module, deliver the content for each module, study feedback on each module, then make any revisions or changes based on participate feedback (Langley et al., 2009). The

design team completed four PDSA cycles in total, one for each professional development module. At the conclusion of the professional development series, participants completed a Qualtrics post-survey (Appendix C). Qualtrics is a web-based survey software program. In total, the initiative process lasted for five months with the pre-survey being administered in August and the post-survey being completed in December. The timeline for the improvement initiative is illustrated in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4

Timeline for Improvement Initiative

Implementation Plan/Timeline: By building the capacity of teachers to create culturally responsive classrooms, the literacy performance of Latinx students will improve.	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022
Develop design team and set future meeting dates; scholar practitioners educate design team on the improvement process; scholar practitioners share the identified problem and the improvement initiative including desired outcomes	✓					
Scholar pracitioners share module content with design team; design teams reviews proposed module content and makes any needed revisions to training materials; design team plans implementation of professional development series including identification of roles within the team		✓				
Pre-Survey (baseline) distributed to teachers for summative data collection			✓			
Module 1 Training for Teachers / Teachers Complete Module 1 Survey			✓			
Module 1 Formative Assessment/PDSA Cycle			✓			
Module 2 Training for Teachers / Teachers Complete Module 2 Survey				✓		
Module 2 Formative Assessment/PDSA Cycle				✓		
Module 3 Training for Teachers / Teachers Complete Module 3 Survey					✓	
Module 3 Formative Assessment/PDSA Cycle					✓	
Module 4 Training for Teachers / Teachers Complete Module 4 Survey						✓
Module 4 Formative Assessment/PDSA Cycle						✓
Post-Survey distributed to teachers for summative data collection						✓

Analysis Plan for the Improvement Initiative

In this section, we describe the PDSA cycles along with driver, process, balancing and outcome measures. The first step of the Improvement Process was the design team planning portion of the cycle. The planning phase of the PDSA cycle is when organizations hold meetings for participants who have direct, in-depth knowledge of the situation to come together to discuss the problem, including identifying the issue, brainstorming causes, and interventions (Crow et al., 2019). After each module PDSA cycle, results were reviewed, and any identified refinements were made which was followed by implementation of new changes. Individual PDSA cycles were completed within one month or approximately thirty days. The PDSA cycles provided information for not only summative survey purposes, but we also used the PDSA cycles for formative survey purposes which included evaluating each training module for participant understanding prior to introducing content for the following module. Figure 5 below describes each step of the PDSA cycle.

Figure 5

PDSA Cycle of Professional Development Modules
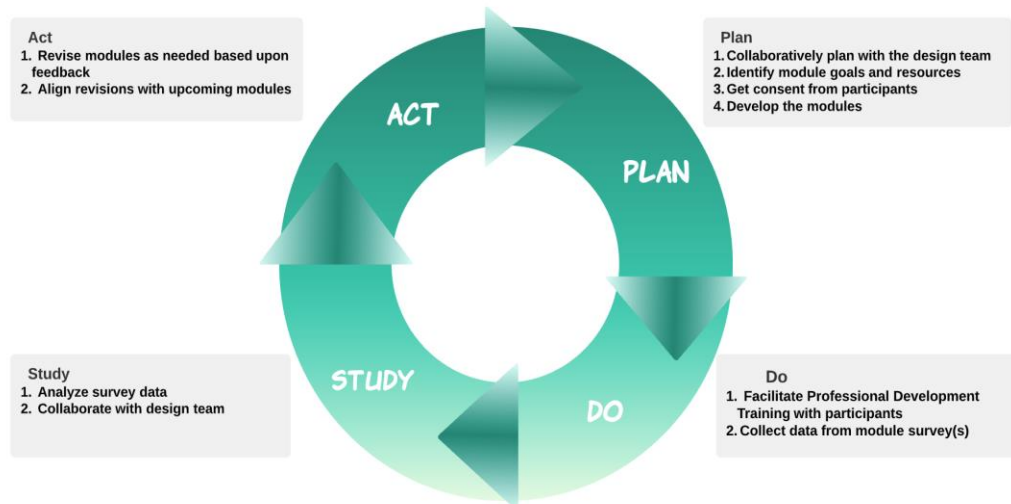
Practical measures operationalized the theory of improvement to determine if desired outcomes and aims were being met. These types of practical measures include driver, process, balancing, and outcome. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT, 2019) and Crow et al. (2019) described driver measures as those associated with primary drivers or the main change agents, process measures as those that provide feedback as to how specific processes are performing under different conditions, balancing measures as those that ensure changes are not causing new problems in other areas, and outcome measures as those that determine if progress is being made toward the intended aim. Table 4 below includes an overview of the practical measures that were utilized during the improvement initiative.

Table 4

Improvement Initiative Practical Measures

Type of Measure	Type of Data Collected	Frequency	Number of Actions
Driver	Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale - Participant pre-survey on perception of culture, personal experiences, and connections	Once at the beginning of the professional development series to establish baseline of teacher perceptions	1
Process	Module content measured by individual module surveys	Upon completion of each module	4
Balancing	Reflective impact questions measured by individual module surveys	Upon completion of each module	4
Outcome	Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale - Participant post-survey on perception of culture, personal experiences, and connections	Once at the end of the professional development series for baseline comparison of teacher perceptions	1

Data Collection

During the data collection process, we collected both quantitative and qualitative data from participants throughout this improvement initiative. Eleven high school English teachers

participated in this study. Six teachers were from Mountain Heritage High School while the other five teachers were from Whiteville High School. Participation in this professional development was mandatory. Participation in the research and data collection was voluntary; however, all eleven participants in the training chose to participate in the research study. A consent form was provided to participants prior to any data collection (Appendix D). Seven of the eleven educators were female and four were males, while ten of the educators were white, and one educator was Black. See Table 5 below for a detailed summary of the participants.

Table 5

Snapshot of Participants

Participant	Gender/Ethnicity	Number of Years Teaching	Nationally Board Certified	Highest Level of Education
MHHS Teacher A	Female/White	14	Yes	Masters
MHHS Teacher B	Male/White	30	Yes	Bachelors
MHHS Teacher C	Male/White	20	Yes	Masters
MHHS Teacher D	Female/White	10	Yes	Bachelors
MHHS Teacher E	Female/White	24	Yes	Masters
MHHS Teacher F	Female/White	11	Yes	Masters
WHS Teacher G	Female/White	24	Yes	Masters
WHS Teacher H	Male/White	24	Yes	Masters
WHS Teacher I	Male/White	2	Yes	Bachelors
WHS Teacher J	Female/Black	12	Yes	Masters
WHS Teacher K	Female/White	14	Yes	Bachelors

Mountain Heritage Teacher A is a white female educator. She was originally hired by the district as an ESL teacher. After serving in that role for several years, she began teaching high school Language Arts. Teacher A has fourteen years of experience. She has her master's degree, is a National Board certified teacher, and served as department chair during the data collection period. Mountain Heritage Teacher B is a white male educator. He was hired by the district as a high school English teacher, the position in which he still serves. Teacher B has thirty years of experience. He has his master's degree, is a National Board certified teacher, and teaches Advanced Placement courses for the department. Mountain Heritage Teacher C is a white male educator. He was hired by the district as a high school English teacher and still serves in this position. Teacher C has twenty years of experience. He is a National Board certified and has previously served as department chair for several years. Mountain Heritage Teacher D is a white female educator. She was originally hired by the district as a French teacher and continues to teach at least one section of French each semester. Teacher D was a high school graduate of Mountain Heritage, has ten years of experience and is a National Board-certified teacher. Mountain Heritage Teacher E is a white female educator. She was hired by the district to teach Theatre Arts and high school English. She has a master's degree, is Nationally Board certified and has twenty-four years of teaching experience. Mountain Heritage Teacher F is a white female educator. She was a graduate of the school and returned to teach in the English department. Teacher F has eleven years of experience and recently began teaching some Advanced Placement courses.

Whiteville High School Teacher G is a white female educator. She is a graduate of the school and returned to teach at Whiteville High School twenty-nine years ago. She has a master's degree, teaches English Language Arts and Spanish, is bilingual and tutors ESL

students after school. Whiteville High School Teacher H is a white male. He has been teaching for twenty-four years. He is nationally board certified and has served on several committees on campus and throughout the community. He is also bilingual and has a strong personal connection to the current Latinx population within the community. Whiteville High School Teacher I is a white male. He has been teaching for two years and previously worked in a community college setting. He is eager to start his career in education and brings a plethora of new ideas into the classroom. He is currently taking classes to obtain his master's degree in English. Whiteville High School Teacher J is a Black female. She has been teaching for twelve years, three of which are at Whiteville High School. She has a master's degree, is National Board certified in Grades 6-12 Language Arts and serves as the department chair. Whiteville High School Teacher K is a white female. She has been teaching for 14 years and was currently working towards a master's degree in business administration. She left Whiteville High School at the end of the semester and continued in education at the community college level as an academic advisor.

Throughout the disquisition process, surveys were the primary data analysis technique utilized. We used a within group design for this improvement initiative (Tanner, 2012). All data collected throughout the professional development process was completed using a Qualtrics instrument, and all collected information was securely stored electronically. Data analysis for each practical measure was completed by the researchers.

As part of the improvement science process, practical measures help researchers answer questions relating to improvement efforts for an identified problem while providing guidance on how to develop, collect and analyze data. These measures address possible solutions by asking the following four questions: 1) Did it work? 2) Is it working? 3) How is it working? 4) Is it

working as intended? (Crow et al., 2019). The practical measures collected during the improvement science process are collected and analyzed frequently so action can be taken quickly.

Driver Measures

The design included a one group data collection model where all participants completed a pre-survey prior to the implementation of the first professional development module. We created the pre- and post-survey instrument using the Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale (Dillon & Navarro, 2010; Spanierman et al., 2011) along with essential elements for culturally proficient practices (Lindsey et al., 2020). The survey instrument was intended to measure participants' cultural awareness and multicultural teaching attitudes. The fifteen-question survey focused on the following: knowledge of one's own positionality; how one's positionality affects their interactions with others; cultural resources available within the community; the understanding of various cultures, characteristics of various cultures and instructional strategies for supporting cultural awareness; and how instructional systems affect students from different cultures. For confidentiality purposes, each participant was randomly assigned a numeric identifier. The Qualtrics pre-survey link was emailed to participants once they completed their informed consent forms. We estimated the time to complete the pre-survey would be no more than fifteen minutes, which was the case.

Process Measures

At the end of each professional development module, time was provided for participants to complete a brief survey on the content of the module. Each module survey was an eight-question instrument focused on the content, quality, and delivery of the module. We, along with the design team, used the data from these surveys to make any needed revisions to the modules.

Each module survey is included as Appendix E. These module surveys were administered using Qualtrics software. Links for each module survey were shared with participants upon completion of each professional development session. We estimated the time to complete the individual module surveys would be no more than ten minutes, which was the case. This data was analyzed to provide us with feedback on participant understanding of the module content. This continuous feedback model resulted in PDSA cycles for each module and allowed us, along with the design team, to make any necessary revisions to upcoming modules (Crow et al., 2019). Frequent collection of data helped to determine whether positive changes were in fact occurring when proposed improvements were put in place. Individual PDSA cycles were completed within one month or approximately thirty days. Feedback on each module's content was important for the purpose of this improvement initiative because we wanted to create a high-quality professional development product. A long-term goal is to use this professional development throughout our districts with all grade levels and content areas.

Balancing Measures

Two of the eight questions on the module surveys were reflection questions. These two questions served as balancing measures for the improvement initiative. Balancing measures help to ensure an improvement in one area is not negatively impacting another area (CFAT, 2019; Crow et al., 2019). The first question asked how the module content has impacted the participant's thinking while the other question asked for input regarding improvements or suggestions for the module. Thus, participants completed a total of eight reflection questions, two per module. We used evaluative coding to analyze this data.

Outcome Measures

Participants completed the post-survey upon completion of the final professional development module. The post-survey instrument was identical to the pre-survey which allowed for comparison of change of participants' perceptions of cultural awareness and multicultural teaching attitudes. Each participant was randomly assigned a numeric identifier which allowed us to match pre- and post-survey data. The Qualtrics post-survey link was emailed to participants once they completed the final module. We estimated the time to complete the post-survey would be no more than fifteen minutes, which was the case.

Data Analysis

In this section, we will explain the data analysis procedures used when analyzing our practical measures as they related to the continuous improvement of the initiative. We used formative and summative evaluations throughout the initiative process which allowed the design team to make necessary adjustments to the professional development series. The evaluation process included quantitative and qualitative measures which assisted in completing the initiative's summative evaluation. This process allowed us to begin each session by revisiting any areas of concern or questions that were shared by the participants during the previous module surveys. During the module PDSA cycles, we were able to make necessary changes because of this data collection method which we will explain in our Results section.

Driver Measures

The driver measure was the pre-survey instrument that collected data on participant perceptions of culture, diversity and connections between school and home prior to any professional development or information on the professional development. The pre-survey collected quantitative, formative data that would be used as a baseline measure for comparison

to post-initiative data. This driver measure in conjunction with the outcome measure was analyzed using a paired sample t-test.

Process Measures

Process measures were intended to allow us to determine whether the goals of each module were met upon completion of each module presentation. These measures gauged familiarity of the module content, relevance to teaching, assistance in relating to students, impact on instructional practices, quality of the module and interest level in the content.

Each of the four module surveys were used as the process measure. Specifically, the first six questions of each module survey were used to collect process data. These six questions were specific to how the participants received and perceived the content of the module. This qualitative, formative data was extremely useful when integrated into the PDSA process because it allowed us to identify any areas where the module content may have been lacking or confusing for participants. If such areas were identified, then we would be able to incorporate clarifying and reinforcing information into the beginning of the next module. This process measure was useful for ensuring the needs of participants were met. The measure was also useful to the overall professional development product we wanted to create for more extensive use in our school districts.

Balancing Measures

We used two balancing measures. The module surveys were used as one type of balancing measure. The final two questions of the survey were reflection questions which collected information on personal impact to the participant, further implementation by the participant, and suggestions for module improvement. This formative, qualitative data was important because it allowed us to understand participant thinking and to identify any changes

to the modules if needed. Evaluative coding was utilized as the analysis strategy for this measure. Another balancing measure was the rate of module survey completion by participants. This quantitative data was used to collect attendance and engagement. This balancing measure allowed us to ensure participants were attending the professional development while also continuing to participate in the data collection process. Both balancing measures enabled us to monitor any unintended consequences of the improvement initiative (Crow et al., 2019).

Outcome Measures

The outcome measure was post-survey data which was collected using the same instrument and measuring the same perceptions as the pre-survey. This instrument collected summative, qualitative data to determine the individual and overall impacts of the professional development on participants. The outcome measure was compared to the driver measure using a paired sample t-test when comparing pre- and post-survey data of Likert scale questions to determine outcomes (Crow et al., 2019).

Results

PDSA analysis for each module is included in this section, as well as a discussion of the results of each practical measure associated with the improvement initiative.

Driver Measures

The purpose of the pre-survey in serving as the driver measure was to allow us to determine how familiar participants were with the professional development content and to determine their perceptions regarding multicultural teaching competencies. Overall, the pre-survey results indicated participants rated themselves with a moderate percentage, 58% for each question, in strongly agreeing or agreeing in their answer choices. These results indicated that most participants felt they are aware of and/or in favor of culturally responsive teaching. In

regards to instruction, over 90% of participants indicated their curriculum integrated topics and events from racial ethnic minority populations; over 60% consulted regularly with colleagues or administrators to understand multicultural issues related to their instruction and examined their instructional materials for any racial or ethnic biases; 100% of participants integrated the cultural values and lifestyles of these same minority groups into their teaching; over 90% felt they were knowledgeable about particular teaching strategies that affirm the racial and ethnic identities of all students; but only 62% agreed that they had a clear understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy. As far as relationships with students and integrating student cultures into the classroom, 82% of participants strongly agreed they integrated the cultural values and lifestyles of their minority students into their teaching while the remaining participants agreed to this integration; 55% agreed to planning activities that celebrated diversity in their classroom; only 27% strongly agreed they established strong, supportive relationships with minority parents while almost 25% agreed to establishing these relationships; 82% of participants agreed to understanding various communication styles among different minority students in their classes; 72% of the participants agreed they could identify ways the school culture is different from their students' home culture; and over 60% indicated they agreed to being able to minimize the effects of the mismatch between these cultures. Regarding overall cultural awareness, the survey results indicated the area where most participants needed support was being knowledgeable of community resources with only 45% of participants indicating they agreed. At least half of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed to being knowledgeable of racial and ethnic identity theories while over 50% strongly agreed and 27% agreed to being knowledgeable about their own cultural identity. Figure 6 below presents a detailed analysis of the pre-survey results.

Figure 6

Pre-Survey Participant Responses

Pre-Survey Results

I am knowledgeable about my own cultural identity.		
I am able to implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture.		
I am able to identify ways that the school culture (e.g., values, norms, and practices) is different from my students' home culture.		
I am knowledgeable about the various community resources within the community that I teach.		
I understand the various communication styles among different racial and ethnic minority students in my classroom.		
I am knowledgeable about racial and ethnic identity theories.		
I have a clear understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy.		
I am knowledgeable about particular teaching strategies that affirm the racial and ethnic identities of all students.		
I establish strong, supportive relationships with racial and ethnic minority parents.		
I often include examples of the experiences and perspectives of racial and ethnic groups during my classroom lessons.		
I examine the instructional materials I use in the classroom for racial and ethnic biases.		
I consult regularly with other teachers or administrators to help me understand multicultural issues related to instruction.		
My curricula integrate topics and events from racial and ethnic minority populations.		
I plan many activities to celebrate diverse cultural practices in my classroom.		
I integrate the cultural values and lifestyles of racial and ethnic minority groups into my teaching.		

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Module 1 PDSA Cycle

Module 1 addressed positionality and deficit ideology. This module allowed teachers to understand these concepts, recognize their positionality, and explore how deficit ideology and implicit bias are presented in society and can play out in the classroom (Abaciogly et al., 2020). (Milner et al., 2017). Through dialogue and open discussions at both locations, most participants said that the module content was not only relevant to interacting with students but also to the content in which they teach. We determined that Module 1 was effective and appropriate based on 10 out of 11 participants responding they would grade this Module with an A while Participant #6 scored it as a B. Participant #6 stated, "this was a solid instruction, but

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it's difficult at this time to understand fully where it's going to go from here. I am interested though".

Plan

Prior to the first professional development session, we collaborated with the members of the design team at each school. During that time, four professional development sessions were designed to support teachers' understanding of culturally relevant teaching practices in the classrooms. The original sessions included Positionality, Latinx Relationships and Experiences in Schools, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Culturally Relevant Literacy Resources.

Do

During the Do phase of the first PDSA cycle, participants were given an introduction and overview of the entire professional development program, as well as the goals and objectives that were going to be in the first module.

Study

Upon completion of Module 1, the design team reconvened to review survey results and discuss the implementation of the module material. The results indicated that 73%, or 9 out of the 11 participants, had a strong interest in learning more about the topics that were discussed within this professional development. Participant #2 considered themselves to be highly familiar with the content while two participants had little familiarity and the remaining 70% of participants were moderately familiar with positionality and deficit ideology. Regardless of limited prior familiarity, over 70% of participants indicated the information had a strong relevance to their teaching while the other 30% indicated a moderate relevance. All but one participant indicated the module content would help them relate to their students. This participant was also neutral regarding the content impacting their instructional practices. The

remaining ten participants indicated the content would impact their instructional practices as follows: 45% strongly agreed, 36% agreed and 9% somewhat agreed. 90% of participants graded the module as an A. Overall, these results revealed participants were open to the module content and indicated it could impact their instruction. The design team found that even though participants indicated a clear understanding of positionality based on pre-survey results, they in fact were not aware of the full extent of positionality. This finding came out during group conversations held at the end of the module. During this reflection time, participants shared how they were not aware of each aspect that encompassed the definition of positionality. During discussion, participants indicated their pre-survey responses were due to surface and superficial knowledge. An example of this came from Participant #7 who indicated that, "I am now able to view my background, education, and cultural identity in terms of relatability and positionality". Participant #4 stated Module 1 was a "solid introduction" to this professional development. Participant #9 stated that, "It has caused me to consider my position within the content of the classroom." Participant qualitative data is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Module 1 Participant Feedback

Question	Participant Responses
How has this module assisted in your understanding of your own positionality?	I need to be aware at all times that my experience is not all my students' experiences.
	Very much!
	It is REALLY helpful for me to be reminded of the many privileges I have had in my life. I feel like a lottery winner in so many areas.
	A good reminder that we do not know home life - especially at the high school level.
	Being born and established in community and life, it is easy to forget the privilege and position you have. This professional development was a great reminder of considering others' position as I teach.
	I believe that I will be more conscious of it in my interactions with students.
	It has caused me to actually consider my own position within the context of the classroom.
	I have always understood socioeconomic status and race as part of my classroom culture and used that information to better understand my students, but not so much religion, parental abilities, and many other factors.
	This was a solid introduction, but it's difficult at this time to understand fully where it's going to go from here. I am interested, though.
	I am able to now view my background, education, and cultural identity in terms of relatability.
What suggestions do you have for this module?	None. It was great so far. Looking forward to the remaining modules.
	I can always use ideas about how to best assist students from different positionalities.
	Excellent content and definitely relates to my classroom.

Act

During this portion of the cycle, the design team discussed ways in which professional development could be changed. The designed team discussed the feedback during the professional development that was given during Module 1. During this phase, decisions were made to include more examples of positionality. Another suggestion generated by the design team was to have participants create and share out their positionality statement if they felt comfortable doing so. This practice would allow participants the opportunity to become

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comfortable vocalizing their positionality and normalize identity reflection and learn from others within the professional development.

Module 2 PDSA Cycle

The second professional development module focused on the relationships and experiences of Latinx students in schools. This module provided cultural and background information about Latinx families. Specifically, we each shared specific backgrounds and cultures of the Latinx students and families living in our district. For example, in Whiteville a large percentage of Latinx families located within the coastal plain area of North Carolina are from the coastal areas of Mexico. These families bring their own unique experiences as fishery and wildlife as part of their daily lives; therefore, these families continued with that work here in the U.S. It is important for teachers to gain insight into the motivation of Latinx families who come to the United States, which includes the complex adjustment to a new culture and the anxiety of immigration policies (Gibson & Carrasco, 2009).

Plan

For Module 2 the design team from each school met and discussed ways in which they could best present on Latinx relationships and experiences in schools. We decided each school would use information that related to the families that were at their current school. Many of the Latinx families that are located within Whiteville High School work in the same type of labor/work that they did in their previous country of origin such as fishery and field. This is not uncommon since they were accustomed to this type of work and brought that skill level with them. Whereas at Mountain Heritage High, many of the Latinx families are from the mountainous regions of their country of origin which is very similar to the terrain of Yancey County. It is important for teachers to gain insight into the motivation of Latinx families who

come to the United States, which includes the complex adjustment to a new culture and the anxiety of immigration policies (Gibson & Carrasco, 2009)

Do

Module 3 addressed at each school which included open discussions and sharing of information about the Latinx community within each geographical area. In addition, the module's goal was to gain a greater and deeper understanding of the culture of the students within the school and understand the challenges they and their families may continually face Consideration was given to the cultural differences that might affect students' academic needs in school. One respondent remarked that religious holidays need to be discussed with teachers, as well as family working conditions that may affect students' daily performance.

Study

Based on the module survey, Module 2 was well received by the participants. Only three out of the ten participants indicated high familiarity with the module content while four participants indicated moderate familiarity and the remaining four participants revealed they had little familiarity. Even though familiarity with the module content was not particularly high, participants indicated the content was extremely relevant to their teaching and very helpful in relating to their students. 100% of participants reported a strong relevance to their teaching while 82% strongly agreed the content would help them relate to their students. 64% of participants strongly agreed and 36% agreed the module content would impact their instructional practices. 100% of participants graded the module as an A while 91% indicated a strong interest level. Overall, there were minimal changes that needed to be made to this module.

During discussions, each design team unanimously decided that Module 2 was highly relevant based on participants' feedback. At the end of the module, participants expressed their deep appreciation for specific information on the backgrounds of Latinx students and families. Participants indicated they realized they had overestimated their knowledge of their students' cultures in the pre-survey after hearing the module information. Upon completion of the module when participants were sharing feedback, they also encouraged us to share this information district-wide with all educators and administrators due to the importance and relevance of the content. Overall, based on participant feedback, more time and focus should be spent on Module 1 and Module 2. Participants identified the importance of the teacher's positionality and learning about the background of students and their families as the main factors in creating culturally responsive classrooms. Modules 1 and 2 survey results regarding interest level in learning more about content topics are displayed in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7

Additional Interest Level in Module Content

Question 6: Rate your Level of Interest in Learning More about the Topics in this Module.
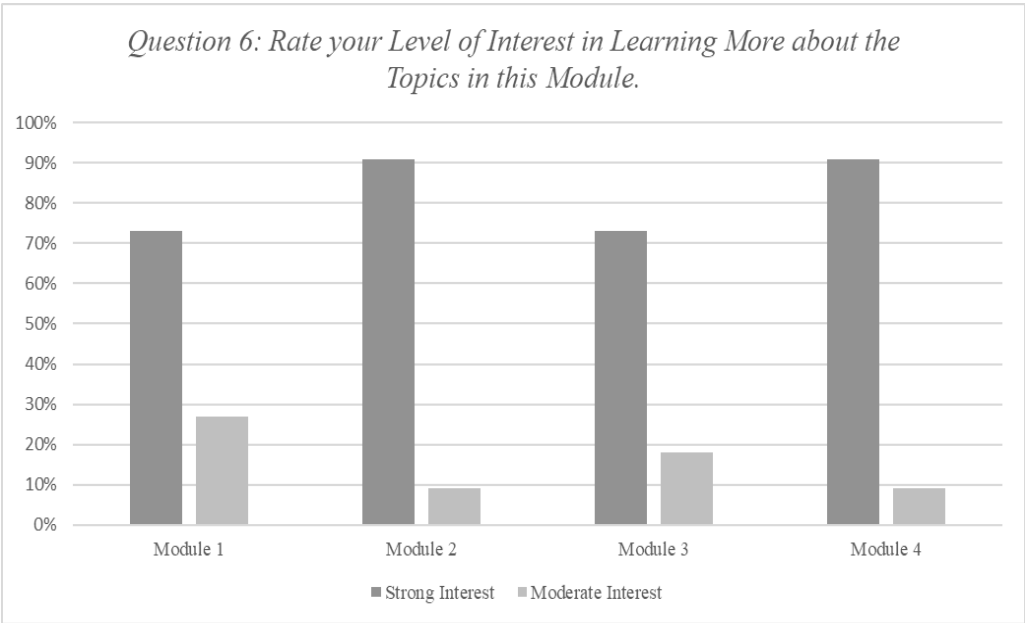
Participants also expressed how grateful they felt to be aware of struggles and difficulties their students and families have faced since immigrating to the U.S. Participant #8 stated, "This module helped me to understand a greater aspect of the culture of many of my students. I understand the challenges they and their families have faced. I will have more empathy as I work with my students". Additionally, Participant #13 stated Module 2, "Brought to light that many of our non-English speaking students have a variety of backgrounds that impact their academic lives." Participant #8 stated they "…fail to consider the hardships that the families of Latinx students have endured. I will need to remember to be compassionate to those backgrounds." Participant qualitative data are presented below in Table 7.

Table 7

Module 2 Participant Feedback

Question	Participant Responses
How has this module challenged or changed your thinking regarding student and family relationships and experiences within our schools?	I'm glad I now understand more about my student's culture and home life.
	I really believe that connecting through diversity is key to successful education. Knowing more about students' different perspectives helps us serve them better.
	It reminded me to take greater consideration of cultural differences (i.e, holiday and home life practices) that might affect a student's ability to complete tasks outside of class.
	Inspires more empathy...I think I've always been a sympathetic teacher, but a larger awareness really helps with planning for an even more sensitive lesson/unit.
	This module helped me to understand a greater aspect of the culture of many of my students. I understand the challenges they and their families have faced. I will definitely have more empathy as I work with my students.
	I think that I will be more cognizant about my Hispanic students' issues with regard to homework and how much they are needed at home. I am grateful to know how difficult it can be for our students to immigrate to the US.
	I fail to take into consideration the hardships the families of LatinX students have had to endure. I will need to remember to be compassionate of those backgrounds.
	I am able to understand the challenges that my students face better.
	It brought to light the fact that many of our non-English speaking students have a variety of backgrounds that impact their academic lives.
	My wife is from Mexico, so I was very knowledgeable in many aspects of this. I do need to be more aware of how current EL students relate to many of these things-I know more about how their parents reacted to this.
	Family experiences influence student learning , performance, and interanlization.
What suggestions do you have for this module?	It was really good; more detailed info on Honduras would be great.
	None, this was awesome!
	Continue presenting great information and ideas!
	I would be interested to hear about how families deal with living so far away from grandparents, as well as how many families are sending money to family members back home.

Act

The design team decided Latinx parents or community members would serve as more effective individual when delivering the cultural background information in this module. The first-person perspective would be more impactful than school personnel presenting the

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information. These narratives would provide participants with a firsthand account of how families came to our area (Vloet & van Swet, 2010). The design team acknowledged the module should be revised to include Latinx community resources based on participant feedback. As a result, the design teams collaborated with community partners to obtain information about available resources. This included identifying community partners and organizations, as well as specific services available to Latinx families.

Module 3 PDSA Cycle

We provided participants with information on culturally responsive teaching in the third professional development module. Culturally responsive teaching is a research-based approach that connects students' cultures, languages, and life experiences to their learning in school. Ladson-Billings (1995a) stated, "most approaches to culturally relevant or culturally responsive instruction described in the multicultural education literature not only utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning, but also teach students how to develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that enables them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162). Upon completion of Module 3, the design team participated in the PDSA cycle to review survey results and discuss implementation of the module material.

Plan

After Module 2, the design teams met and discussed how to introduce culturally relevant teaching and present how it could be incorporated into daily lessons. The objectives included (a) evaluating your own classroom and school libraries for cultural appropriateness, (b) synthesize what you have learned by evaluating one book in depth, and (c) create a plan for improving your classroom environment and curriculum.

Do

      During this module, one of the primary goals was to critically evaluate materials and resources for classroom use. Participants shared how they could incorporate more cultural awareness topics in their classroom literature while not being afraid of classroom discussions that could result from those topics. Participants also shared how they could create intentional conversations and discussions centered on diverse cultures and personal experiences of students. Both the incorporation of topics and intentional conversations would enhance instruction according to participants.

Study

      After the professional development, the design team met and discussed survey results. It was during this time, the design team determined participants should have been asked to bring a sampling of their lesson plans and instructional materials with them to the professional development session so it could be utilized during the group discussion segment. This was indicated within the results collected as 27% of participants felt that the module only somewhat helped them relate to the students that they were currently teaching. Therefore, the design team decided that based on the data collected, a small sampling of lessons and instructional materials would provide a more positive approach to the professional development in the future (Holloway, Doxsee, 2021; Mellom, et al., 2018). Module 3 survey results showed 73% of participants were moderately familiar with culturally responsive teaching. Like Module 2 data, 100% of participants reported a strong relevance to their teaching while 82% strongly agreed the content would help them relate to their students. Participants did indicate this module would impact their instructional practices slightly more than Module 2 with 73% of participants strongly agreed and 27% agreed the module content would impact their instructional practices.

91% of participants graded the module as an A while the remaining participant gave the module a grade of B. 82% of participants were highly interested in the module content while 18% indicated a moderate interest. The participants responded to the open-ended question by stating they need to "bring more diverse sources of literature from more diverse cultures to the attention of my classes" and to "not only implement more varied cultural worlds in my lessons but to also try to gear current lessons towards more cultural relevance". Participant qualitative data for Module 3 are presented below in Table 8.

Table 8

Module 3 Participant Feedback

Question	Participant Responses
What is one way that you can and will incorporate Culturally Relevant Teaching in your classroom?	Sharing stories and pictures from experiences in other countries.
	I would like to incorporate at least one short story and one poem by a Hispanic author.
	I'm excited to have students research different cultures while learning new material.
	Choosing and discussing literature that will incorporate more culturally aware topics and ideas. Not being afraid of discussions about culture and personal experiences will enhance classrooms.
	I will try to incorporate more culturally diverse music and words in my everyday speech and lessons.
	Poetry and Creative memoirs, daily instruction, more choices
	Having two non-English speaking students in my class, I can not realistically learn Spanish in one semester, but try to find ways to include the Spanish language and ELD supports into my class. Also to bring in their culture as much as possible.
	I can and will bring more diverse sources of literature from more diverse cultures to the attention of my classes.
	By providing books and texts that come from other cultures
	Try to not only implement more varied cultural works in my lessons, but to also try to gear current lessons towards more cultural relevance.
	I will review my current novels and poems to see how I can make them more culturally relavent.
What suggestions do you have for this module?	Loved the opportunity to listen to colleagues' ideas! Keep that up.
	I thought that it was great. I don't have any recommendations for improvement.
	N/A... wonderful discussions and ideas shared.

Act

The biggest outcome of the PDSA cycle for Module 3 was to reconstruct Module 4 from what it was originally intended to be. The original intent for Module 4 was to provide participants with cultural texts which they could incorporate into their instruction. These texts would represent Latinx students to see themselves included and reflected in their curriculum. We realized, however, that participants needed more time to reflect on the information provided to them while assessing their current instructional materials. This revision to the module would allow participants to constructively critique lessons while generating and implementing ideas on how to revise the lessons to become culturally responsive. Based on verbal feedback by participants at the end of Module 3, they already began analyzing their lessons and instructional texts. Therefore, this revision allowed them time to continue reviewing classroom novels, poems, and other reading selections to determine how to create and implement more culturally relevant lessons and instructional materials.

Module 4 PDSA Cycle

Even though culturally relevant literacy resources benefit all students, the instructional practice is auspicious for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Kibler & Chapman, 2018). Module 4 was teacher lead and focused on supplementing and revising current lessons in the classrooms.

Upon completion of Module 4, the design team reviewed survey results and discussed implementation of the module material. We decided for future training sessions, participants would be asked to identify and bring at least three lessons with them to the session. The design team wanted the participants to have dedicated and uninterrupted time to revise or recreate

lessons to be culturally responsive. This addition to the module would result in participants having ready-to-implement lessons.

Plan

As a result of the PDSA process for Module 3, it was determined teachers needed more time to reflect on and implement information gained from Modules 1-3. Therefore, Module 4 was created to become a work session which allowed participants time to reflect on previous modules while revising and creating culturally responsive lesson plans. Reflection and revision are an expectation for all educators in North Carolina based on Standard 5 of the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System. The standard expects teachers to reflect on their practice by thinking critically and systematically about learning in their classroom, as well as actively investigating and considering new ideas that improve teaching and learning. The revision to Module 4 allowed teachers the time and space to be reflective educators.

Do

During this time, the working sessions were facilitated at each school with open discussion of the current English curriculum and how individuals can align their lessons to culturally relevant teaching practices. Some of the participants discussed how to use culturally relevant teaching to reinforce taught concepts across multiple grades.

Study

The design team analyzed data that was collected after the completion of Module 4. Module 4 results indicated 91% of participants were at least moderately familiar with the module content. One hundred percent of participants reported this module was relevant to their current classroom while 73% indicated they strongly agreed the information would help them relate to their students. 82% also felt the session would impact their instructional practices. All

participants graded the module as an A and 82% indicated strong interest. The open-ended

questions from the Module 4 survey indicated participants need to "engage students of diverse

backgrounds and encourage students from other backgrounds to take an interest in their peers"

and need to "engage students' interest by making text connections to World Literature, text-text,

text to self, and text to the world". One participant shared they would like to see examples from

other schools. Participants reported that integrating the new content and strategies will be

beneficial to students, and they plan on adapting lessons to use more culturally diverse texts.

Table 9 below displays participant qualitative data for Module 4.

Table 9

Module 4 Participant Feedback

Question	Participant Responses
What ways can you utilize and use Culturally Relevant Text within your curricula?	Include thee new texts that we discussed on our document today in my class.
	I plan on adapting my lessons to add more culturally diverse texts.
	As a literature teacher, I can always bring in alternative cultural viewpoints!
	Exploring and applying new content and strategies to my classroom will be beneficial. Having time to find and discuss new texts/content is needed regularly.
	I can add a short story and poetry by Latinx authors. The short story should be set in a Latinx community and reflect Latinx values and cultures.
	Today, within our rhetoric unit, students will send Spanish commercials with subtitles. English commercials with Spanish subtitles
	In the English classroom, any text that is grade level appropriate would be of benefit, however, culturally relevant texts help other students to better understand their peers.
	Engage student interest by making text connections to World Literature . Text- text, text to self, text to world etc.
	Students will be able to make a connection to the text that they read, draw on their personal experiences, and read stories that interest them.
	Engaging students of diverse backgrounds and encouraging students from other backgrounds to take an interest in the backgrounds of their peers.
	Traditionally, 10th grade English focuses on various cultures, so it is full of culturally relevant texts. Utilizing CRT in other classes will help to strengthen scaffolded works and reinforce taught concepts across grades...
What suggestions do you have for this module?	Excellent program. It just needs to be presented to a wider audience.
	Allowing time for discussion of new content and sharing ideas is always helpful.
	I don't have any suggestions for this module.
	Some best practices examples/exemplars from other schools

Act

The design team met and discussed the effectiveness of the participant work session. The design team decided the session was an effective use of time for participants to review, revise and create lessons and instructional resources. The session also afforded participants time to collaborate with one another, which included horizontal and vertical planning with colleagues. The design team also decided that going forward this professional development training could be delivered as a half-day session covering Modules 1-3. This would allow for a more dedicated and focused session where all the information could be shared in a more cohesive fashion. A half-day follow-up work session would then be scheduled later. By creating time between the presentation of the information and scheduling a follow-up session, participants would have an opportunity to complete an instructional audit of their lessons, materials, and resources. They would also have time to implement revised or newly created culturally relevant lessons which could be shared during the follow-up session.

Outcome Measures

The initiative's outcome measure was collected through post-survey summative data which measured teacher perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy. The study included data collection from eleven high school English teachers (n=11) who participated in professional development on creating culturally responsive classrooms. While participation in the professional development training was mandatory, participation in the research study was voluntary. All eleven participants elected to participate in the research study. When analyzing this data, we identified an overall increase in the average, not only for each individual question, but also from the beginning until the end of the professional development. We calculated the average of each question to determine the overall change in participant perceptions. The average

of the pre-survey responses was 3.78 while the average of the post-survey responses was 4.34. These results indicated a positive change in participant perceptions and understanding of cultural competency and culturally responsive pedagogy. Figure 8 below illustrates the average of each question for the pre-survey and the post-survey.

Figure 8

Comparison of Pre- and Post-Survey Averages
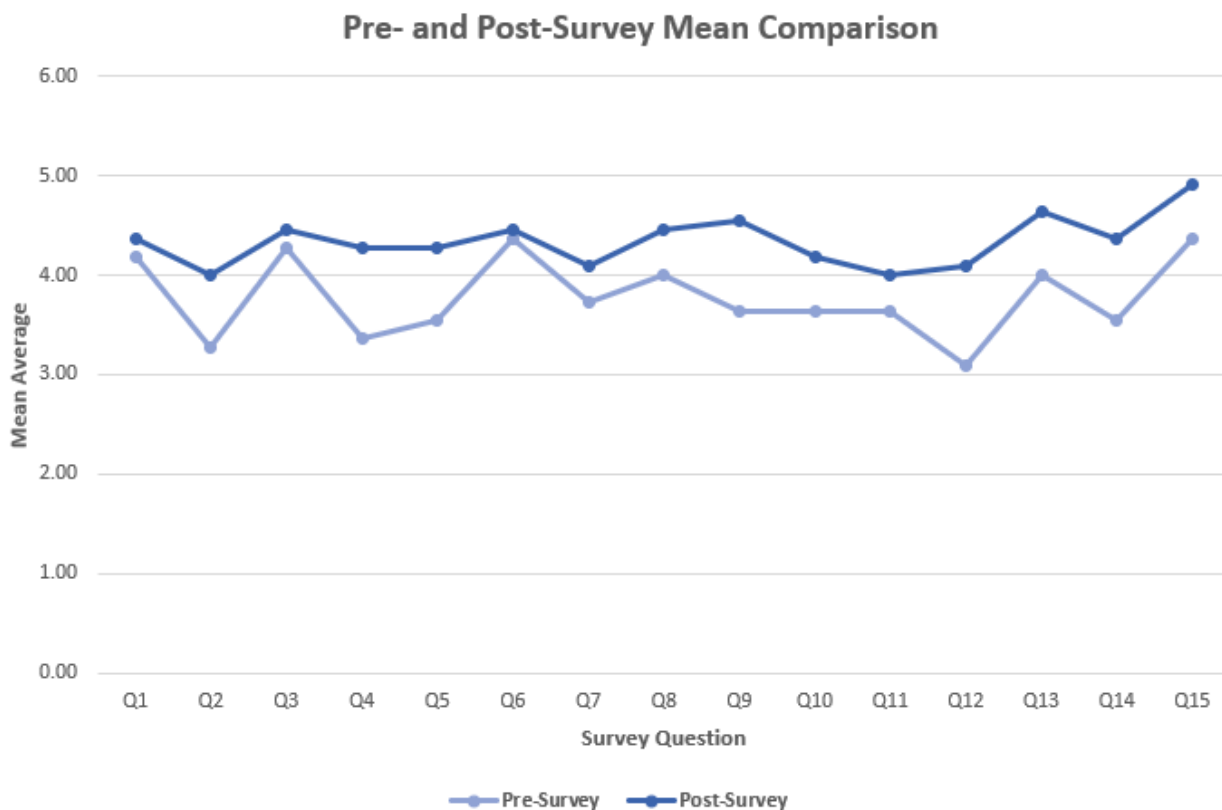
Pre-survey data around instructional practices revealed some participants disagreed with statements relating cultural awareness and instructional practices; however, post-survey data indicated all participants agreed with this relationship. For example, during the pre-survey 63% of participants strongly agreed they consulted with colleagues or administrators regarding instruction and multicultural issues. The remaining participants were neutral or did not agree. During the post-survey 27% of participants strongly agreed and 73% agreed to this instructional

collaboration. This analysis indicated participants began having instructional conversations with their peers around incorporating multicultural issues into their instructional practices. A comparison of pre- and post-survey results specific to establishing relationships with students and families also indicated participant growth. For example, pre-survey results indicated the following regarding participants being able to identify ways the school culture was different from students' home culture: 18% strongly agreed, 73% agreed and 9% disagreed. Post-survey results revealed 64% of participants strongly agreed and 36% agreed they could identify differences upon completion of the professional development. The survey instrument also helped to assess participant awareness of their own cultural identity. This is an area where survey results showed great gains. Prior to the professional development 55% of participants strongly agreed they were knowledgeable about their own cultural identity while 27% agreed and 18% neither agreed nor disagreed. Post-survey results showed 91% of participants strongly agreed and 9% agreed to being knowledgeable of their cultural identity because of the professional development.

An overall comparison of pre- and post-survey data revealed 100% of participants showed a positive statistical significance of increase in perceptions surrounding culturally responsive pedagogy based on individual pre- and post-survey results. However, when we analyzed the entirety of the data as a group, no statistical significance was evident. Based on the paired sample t-test, there was no significant difference in survey results from the pre-survey (M= 3.78, SD= 0.40) and the post-survey (M= 4.14, SD= 0.88); t(15)= -1.60; p=.132). Unfortunately, by looking at these results alone, they suggested the professional development training did not have a statistically significant impact on the participants' perceptions surrounding culturally responsive pedagogy.

We believe the small sample size served as a limitation on the significance of our t-test findings. We also believe that social-desirability bias factored into pre-survey results. Social-desirability bias is a type of response bias that represents a tendency of survey respondents to answer questions in a way that will be favorably viewed by others (Evans, 1982).

Implications for Practice

Our study informs the field of education in North Carolina and in the other context that seeks to increase culturally responsive teaching among educators with the ultimate goal of increasing literacy rates of Latinx students.

We were satisfied with the results and participant feedback from the training, but we also want to continue making improvements to the professional development training. These improvements include providing participants with time for implementation followed by a reflective follow-up session. Future professional development initiatives on creating culturally responsive classrooms should also ensure teachers are aware of the cultural background of their students and families. The incorporation of cultural background information could be shared by parents, family members, or community members as opposed to trainers sharing experiences and information that was not their own. At the district level, school administrators should be required to complete professional development training prior to the beginning of a new academic year. This training should occur before training with teachers so school leaders can serve as a resource and facilitate the creation of culturally responsive classrooms.

To foster sustainability, we will also advocate for district wide dissemination of the training. We will work with district leaders to develop this training into district initiatives which would include having designated professional development days for delivery of the professional development, as well as a mandated district wide professional development plan (PDP) goal for

all employees on culturally responsive classrooms. This PDP goal would reinforce district initiatives and focus. This PDP goal would be tied to the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System standards used to evaluate teacher effectiveness. The tool used in North Carolina for teacher evaluation is an online platform with standards and elements. Each teacher creates a PDP plan and is observed and evaluated based on these standards at a minimum of two times per academic year. When districts implement an initiative that includes culturally relevant pedagogy, that district can be sure educators are utilizing the tools provided during professional development in their classroom contexts during observations and daily lessons (Beall, 1999).

Recommendations

Provide a Safe Space and Support Vulnerability

Early on when we met with our design team prior to any implementation of the professional development, we acknowledged the importance of discussing sensitive topics such as poverty, wealth, childhood trauma, and personal beliefs surrounding immigration. Therefore, during professional development we were intentional in creating a safe and comfortable space for these topics by having more open discussions instead of lectures where the participants could, if they chose, be active participants. We realized that as leaders, we needed at times to listen to our educators rather than lead a discussion. With that in mind, we make some recommendations for going forward to provide a safe space and support the vulnerability of those participating in professional development. First, keep the sessions small and comfortable such as keeping participants within their subject level or grade level because familiarity of individuals can create a safe space. Also, choose a location where individuals already feel comfortable. The discussion can be very deep at times so privacy is a must as individuals share in dialogue. This may be in a classroom or office space that has minimal disruptions. Finally,

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allow individuals to voluntarily participate. While we recommend participants to be active during the modules, we also realize some participants may not want to verbally share.

Provide Time for Professional Development and Reflection

The foremost anticipated challenge of the improvement initiative was time. Teachers historically express concern over the lack of available time during the school year for professional development and the implementation of new initiatives (McGhan, 1995). This is also true for administrators as they strive to protect the instructional time of their teachers. Therefore, a highly anticipated challenge of this improvement initiative was designating time during the semester while protecting teachers' instructional time. This anticipated challenge held true.

When scheduling the professional development, we had to work around other teacher obligations such as meetings, duties, and coaching. To accommodate the schedules of those participating, a few suggestions can be made. This professional development could easily be transformed into a half-day PD that could be offered during the beginning of the school year or during a teacher workday. This timing would allow individuals to work together and, in the beginning, to create lessons that can be implemented during the academic year. Teachers also need to be provided with time to reflect and absorb the new knowledge and information, as well as to revise their curriculum which could be done after the PD. Allowing teachers the chance to collaborate and share lesson plans with each other or have someone else observe them and provide feedback would be helpful. Peer observers should specifically look for the use of culturally responsive pedagogy including a focus on cultural integration.

Positionality Matters

It is important for teachers to understand how their own positionality as well as the positionality of their students positively influences instruction. Participants reported on the pre-survey they understood and embraced their own positionality; however, during Module 1 teachers realized their positionality was complex and could be fluid. They also recognized the positionality of their students was much different than their own. Participants were eager to better understand the intersection of different positionalities and how those differences impacted learning in their classrooms.

A concern of the design team was teachers potentially feeling they were already meeting the needs of their Latinx students because of small school dynamics which could include the high likelihood of a teacher having taught other family members. During Module 2, participants quickly realized they were unaware of a large portion of their Latinx students' and families' cultural backgrounds. This original assumption served as an exceptional springboard for creating a desire to know more about students and families. The realization and desire for a deep understanding created a safe bridge between current practices and revision of instructional resources to help meet the needs of their Latinx students. Fortunately, the participants began to understand the complexity of culturally responsive classrooms and how it impacts instruction and student achievement.

Do Not Make Assumptions

When designing the initiative, Module 4 was created to focus on culturally relevant resources. The design team discovered that participants think the literature they are currently utilizing is adequate for integrating cultures into their lessons. We assumed requesting participants to include new instructional literacy resources could be perceived as

micromanaging the curriculum and instruction practices. In the end, this was not presented as a challenge.

In addition to instructional resources, participants expressed a desire to become more knowledgeable about community resources for Latinx students and families. They felt the community resources were just as important as the instructional resources and could help meet overall student needs as well. Do not assume educators are aware of outside resources. It is important to ensure educators are aware of community resources for students, parents, and families. It is also important that educators are aware of community partners who can support students, parents, and families.

Conclusion

Our theory of improvement was to increase teacher understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy which would in turn increase the scores of Latinx students who take the North Carolina English II EOC assessment. Based on previous state scores for Mountain Heritage High School and Whiteville High School, the proficiency percentage on the English II EOC was consistently lower for Latinx students compared to their white peers. Data analysis showed an increase in perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy for each participant in the study, and we will continue to analyze state assessment scores in the future.

Limitations

We note two limitations in our study. First, our study had a small sample size. The first limitation was the small number of participants. Because we only focused on one department within our high schools, the sample size was relatively small which created difficulty in identifying significant findings in the data. Although participant survey responses indicated the professional development was effective, the sample size proved insufficient for data analysis

purposes ultimately making it difficult to identify significant relationships in our data. A larger participant sample would have resulted in more reliable, generalizable results.

Second, there was not sufficient time between the administration of the pre- and post-survey instrument. This second limitation was due to implementation time constraints which resulted in a short time period between administration of the pre-survey and the post-survey. Given more time for the improvement initiative, we would have brought the participants back together and administered the post-survey once they had time to create and implement at least one culturally responsive lesson. We feel the actual planning and implementation of a lesson could affect their responses on a post survey. Fortunately, this time constraint enabled the design team to recognize more reflection, planning, and implementation time needed to be provided to participants. This additional time would then postpone the administration of the post-survey. Therefore, going forward necessary revisions can be made to the implementation of the professional development training because of this limitation.

Future Equity Related Work

The lack of professional development on creating culturally responsive classrooms is a contributing factor resulting in lower literacy performance of Latinx students compared to their white peers. Hunsberger (2007), Irvine and Armento (2001) and Nieto (2013) agreed that teachers are not enacting culturally responsive pedagogy. Therefore, schools and school systems must build the capacity of teachers to be trained on culturally responsive classrooms (curriculum and pedagogy) by providing professional development that will bridge the gap and address the misalignment of student performance schools are currently experiencing. Furthermore, classrooms must be guided by curricula that present opportunities for students to

inquire, reflect and evaluate, but more importantly, provide a curriculum that validates and affirms students' lived experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Through creating a professional development series on culturally responsive classrooms then collecting and analyzing data gained through the improvement initiative, we have had the opportunity to begin to create positive change in two North Carolina school districts. This improvement initiative will continue to be implemented throughout these districts at a wider scope to help build the capacity of all teachers and support students by establishing classrooms that are responsive and inclusive. We are proud to be part of this work and excited to see it continue.

Connection to Local and National Contexts

Before beginning this improvement initiative, we were not sure how participants would receive the information and training. We assumed the teachers may feel that they were already meeting the needs of their Latinx students and had established positive, working relationships with those students and their families. To our surprise and excitement, the teachers were extremely open, willing, and appreciative of not only the focus of the professional development but also the awareness for the need of the professional development. Once the teachers were made aware of the specific cultures and backgrounds of their Latinx students, they realized the cultural resources they had been incorporating into their curriculum could be refined further making it more applicable and inclusive to their own students. The teacher participants provided strong feedback that the professional development should be required for all other teachers in the district because of the significant impact it had on their understanding, belief, and practice. This recommendation by the participants is a unified voice in advocating for a district initiative.

American society and public education have never been more diverse linguistically, culturally, religiously, ethnically, and racially as they are now. As racial and ethnic demographics are changing, schools should be meeting needs and considering perspectives that students and families from diverse backgrounds bring to the educational environment. One strategy for meeting that need is to affirm students' home cultures in the classroom setting; therefore, experiences and curriculum that mirror students' home life and community should be present in every classroom. Teacher perceptions impact their expectations for student academic performance and how they interact with students and their families. These perceptions include beliefs about student cultures and backgrounds different from own. For educators, these perceptions can also influence what is or is not included in classroom lessons and instructional materials. Therefore, professional development on creating culturally responsive classrooms can have an immediate impact on student academic performance and relationships with Latinx students and their families.

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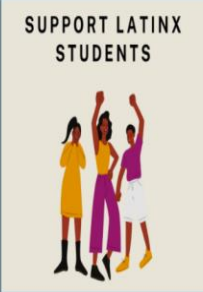
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Appendix A

Online Platform Interface

Appendix B

Module Content

Module 1: Positionality and Deficit Ideology

Quick Activity

Directions: Fold a paper into three different sections. Label each section accordingly.

- Myself
- Majority of Students
- Minority of Students

Answer the following questions. Answer in reference to you, then the majority of your students, and lastly, the minority of students you teach.

1. What is your age, the age of the majority of your students, the age of the minority of your students?
2. What is your race, the race of the majority of your students, the race of the minority of your students?
3. What is your socioeconomic status, that of the majority of your students, that of minority students?
4. What is the ability of yourself, that of the majority of your students, that of the minority of your students?
5. What is the language spoken at home by you and your family, the majority of your students, and the minority of your students?
6. What is your country of origin, the country of origin for the majority of your students, the country of origin for the minority of your students?
7. What is your religious background if any, the religious background of the majority of your students, the religious background of the minority of your students?

What is Positionality

According to Briscoe (2005), teacher positionality is the "privileged location in the social, political, and economic hierarchies that grant them greater access to power" so it critical that educators are cognizant of how their experiences and positionality shape their reactions, responses and pedagogical approach (p. 9).

Greenfield (2007) described positionality as a significant force that shapes the epistemological and pedagogical beliefs of teachers thus affecting what teachers think and how they teach.

Watch: If We Were Mirrors: Positionally and Our Lives

Positionality

What is Deficit Ideology

Bucholtz, et al. (2017) explained deficit ideology regards students as "the notion that youth of color lack the language, the culture, the family support, the academic skills, even the moral character to succeed and excel" (p. 43).

Deficit ideology positions students who are experiencing poverty, non-English speaking, and students of color as being at fault for their situation rather seeing them as victims of inequitable systems (Gorski, 2016b).

Watch: Deficit Ideology

Watch: Debunking Deficit Views

Completion Activities for Module 1

Please click the link below to complete the Module 1 survey and reflection questions.

Module 1 Survey

Module 2: Latinx Relationships and Experiences in Schools Presentation (Mountain Heritage High School Specific)

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Module 2: Latinx Relationships and Experiences in Schools

Instructional Goals and Learning Objectives

Goal: To understand what culturally responsive teaching is and how it applies to classrooms.

Objectives

Learners will:

- Understand ways that students' diverse backgrounds can influence teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Understand ways that teachers' diverse backgrounds can influence teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Understand the idea of culturally responsive instruction.

North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards

Standard 2. Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students

2a. Teachers provide an environment in which each child has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults. Teachers encourage an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible.

2b. Teachers embrace diversity in the school community and in the world. Teachers demonstrate their knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their role in shaping global issues. They actively select materials and develop lessons that counteract stereotypes and incorporate histories and contributions of all cultures. Teachers recognize the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other aspects of culture on a student's development and personality. Teachers strive to understand how a student's culture and background may influence his or her school performance. Teachers consider and incorporate different points of view in their instruction.

2c. Teachers treat students as individuals. Teachers maintain high expectations, including graduation from high school, for students of all backgrounds. Teachers appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment by building positive, appropriate relationships.

2e. Teachers work collaboratively with the families and significant adults in the lives of their students. Teachers recognize that educating children is a shared responsibility involving the school, parents or guardians, and the community. Teachers improve communication and collaboration between the school and the home and community in order to promote trust and understanding and build partnerships with all segments of the school community. Teachers seek solutions to overcome cultural and economic obstacles that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement in the education of their students.

Culturally Responsive Instruction

Culturally responsive instruction purposefully acknowledges, embraces and uses what each student brings culturally to the classroom in order for all students to have equitable access to the learning content.

It is built on a foundation of relationships and respect.

Culturally responsive teaching is one strategy to address issues in student performance.

Common Misconceptions

- ESL teachers speak native languages of students
- Only Spanish speaking students are in the EL program
- All students who speak Spanish are in the EL program
- Not all Spanish speaking individuals are from the same region/country - assuming such can be offensive
- Calling a person from Mexico a Mexican is offensive
- All Spanish speaking people speak the same Spanish language
- Individuals who speak Spanish can read Spanish
- Educational Spanish is the same as conversational Spanish
- All Spanish cultures are male dominate (machismo)

District & School Demographics

Category	# of Students
YCS Hispanic Students	323
MHHS Hispanic Students	105
YCS Students in EL Program	149
MHHS Students in EL Program	28

Background of EL Students

Most of our EL students' families originate from the region surrounding Cheran, Michoacan in Mexico.

In recent years, we have had an influx of students coming from various parts of Honduras.

Cheran, Michoacan

Cherán is one of a contiguous group of eleven *Municipios* that are demographically denoted as Purépecha. Inhabitants speak the Purépecha language, as well as the local variety of Spanish.

Cherán is noted for its unique style of government that followed a 2011 civil uprising over local concerns about corruption and crime. The area is now treated as a self-ruling indigenous community, largely free of federal intervention.

Cheran Industry

The average annual wage is estimated at about US $3,000 or less.

In 2007, agriculture and raising livestock accounted for 49% of Cherán's economic activity: corn, wheat, potatoes, beans and oats make up the bulk of the community's harvest while its local farmers raise cows, horses, pigs, sheep and goats. Wooden products, including furniture and furniture repair, and cork account for less than 19% of the economy. Commercial production of apples, peaches, apricots, pears and plums comprised 10% of Cherán's economic resources.

One estimate states that about half of the area's 17,000 hectares of forest have been lost to illegal logging. According to other sources, "about fifty thousand acres of forest were illegally cut between 2008 and 2011," and 200–250 logging trucks a day passed through the town.

Nahuatzen

The municipality of Nahuatzen is located in the Tarascan Plateau west of Lake Pátzcuaro at an elevation between 2,300 and 3,300 metres (7,500–10,800 ft). It borders the municipalities of Zacapu to the north, Erongarícuaro to the east, Tingambato to the south, Uruapan to the southwest, Paracho to the west, and Cherán to the northwest.

Nahuatzen

There are 10 localities in the municipality, of which five are classified as urban:

- the municipal seat Nahuatzen, which recorded a population of 10,283 inhabitants in the 2010 Census;
- **Comachuén**, which recorded a population of 4762 inhabitants in 2010;
- Turicuaro, which recorded a population of 3388 inhabitants in 2010;
- **Sevina,** which recorded a population of 3344 inhabitants in 2010; and
- Arantepacua, which recorded a population of 2707 inhabitants in 2010.

In the 2015 Intercensal Survey, 92.86% of people in the municipality identified themselves as indigenous. The 2010 Census recorded 9785 Purépecha speakers constituting 36% of the population in Nahuatzen.

Nahuatzen

In the 2015 Intercensal Survey, 92.86% of people in the municipality identified themselves as indigenous. The 2010 Census recorded 9789 Purépecha speakers constituting 36% of the population in Nahuatzen.

Baile/Danza de los Viejitos

Danza de los Viejitos is said have begun as a dance in the Purepecha Region. The men that perform this dance are known as "Danzantes" or "Dancers." This dance was danced by the Purepecha people with four men to represent fire, water, earth, and air.

The dancers ask El Dios Viejo (The Old God) for good harvest, communication with spirits, and to learn about the past or to predict the future.

https://photos.app.goo.gl/kKUeXQitr2tnkeSD9

Honduras

Honduras, officially the Republic of Honduras, is a country in Central America. The republic of Honduras is bordered to the west by Guatemala, to the southwest by El Salvador, to the southeast by Nicaragua, to the south by the Pacific Ocean at the Gulf of Fonseca, and to the north by the Gulf of Honduras, a large inlet of the Caribbean Sea. Its capital and largest city is Tegucigalpa.

Honduras

The nation's economy is primarily agricultural, making it especially vulnerable to natural disasters such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

Honduras is known for its rich natural resources, including minerals, coffee, tropical fruit, and sugar cane, as well as for its growing textiles industry, which serves the international market.

Photo of Tocoa, Colon, Honduras

101

Reasons for Immigration to US from Honduras

For many, **low wages, lack of jobs, and persistent poverty** push them to immigrate. Over 48% of Honduras' population lives in poverty, leaving many without the resources necessary to provide for their families and causing them to search for a better life elsewhere.

In 2012 Honduras had the highest murder rate in its history. It also had the highest murder rate in a non-war country. In 2012, 7172 homicides were recorded. On average, there were 20 homicides a day. There was a 6.2% increase in homicides compared to the previous year. 83.4% of these homicides were committed with firearms.

The main perpetrators of these crimes are young men between 15 and 34 years and who are typically members of gangs like the Mara Salvatrucha or Barrio 18. The main victims of these crimes have been young people as well. This targeted violence is the reason behind the rise in youth migration in the past years.

Reasons for Immigration from Honduras

"I'm a farmer — corn, coffee, beans. But I can't make enough to feed my family," Enrique said. "We have droughts and then we have floods. And there's the lawlessness. *Maras* [gangs] extort the smallest businesses. We're headed to Houston, asking God to guide us and protect us."

NPR.org "Why People are Fleeing Honduras for the US"

La Bestia--A Traumatic Journey

Many of the dangers posed by this journey result from the train itself and the process of climbing aboard and getting off moving trains. Because migrants board between 10 and 15 trains during their 1450-mile journey, which typically begins in Arriaga, Chiapas, the chances of sustaining a major injury are high before they even arrive at the Lecherias station in Mexico City, which serves as a sort of halfway point before the train route scatters into various directions that head closer to different points on the U.S. border. Often, migrants fall asleep while riding atop trains and are jolted off and onto the tracks where many are killed instantly by decapitation, blood loss, and shock. Because accidents often occur during the night and in rural areas, victims are often not found immediately.

As with all migrant routes, those who use freight trains are subject to high rates of violence and property crime. Mexican states crossed by the freight trains also experience very high rates of kidnapping. Due to fears of deportation, it is believed that the actual rates of such crimes are higher than reported.

Cultural Norms

- Mothers are very important and respected

- School Life versus Home Life

- Educational Opportunities

- Marriage at an Early Age

- Extended Holidays

- Siblings care for each other and/or parent for 40 days in Mexico after childbirth; do this here for 2 weeks

Module 3: Culturally Responsive Teaching Presentation

Instructional Goals and Learning Objectives

Goal: To critically evaluate materials and resources for use in classrooms.

Objectives

Learners will:

- Evaluate your own classroom and school libraries for cultural appropriateness.
- Synthesize what you have learned by evaluating one book in depth.
- Create a plan for improving your classroom environment and curriculum.

North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards

Standard 4. Teachers facilitate learning for their students.

4b. Teachers plan instruction appropriate for their students. Teachers collaborate with their colleagues and use a variety of data sources for short- and long-range planning based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. These plans reflect an understanding of how students learn. Teachers engage students in the learning process. They understand that instructional plans must be consistently monitored and modified to enhance learning. Teachers make the curriculum responsive to cultural differences and individual learning needs.

4c. Teachers use a variety of instructional methods. Teachers choose the methods and techniques that are most effective in meeting the needs of their students as they strive to eliminate achievement gaps. Teachers employ a wide range of techniques including information and communication technology, learning styles, and differentiated instruction.

Culturally Responsive Instruction

Culturally responsive instruction purposefully acknowledges, embraces and uses what each student brings culturally to the classroom in order for all students to have equitable access to the learning content.

It is built on a foundation of relationships and respect.

Culturally responsive teaching is one strategy to address issues in student performance.

Culturally Responsive Instruction in the Classroom

- School settings are about more than transmitting and acquiring academic knowledge
- Student-centered approach that embraces and incorporates each student's culture in the classroom
- Students feel connected and empowered when they see and hear their culture and backgrounds being incorporated into their classrooms
- Must be intentional because the demographics of teachers do not reflect the demographics of all students
- Teachers learning to understand and appreciate backgrounds and experiences different from their own

Major Teaching Applications

1. Teacher investigates students' prior knowledge.
2. Teacher recognition and inclusion of students' prior knowledge and their voices in the curriculum.
3. Teacher adjusts appropriately during the instructional process to engage and motivate students.

Gloria Ladson-Billings

Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies

1. Learn about your students (surveys, questionnaires, open discussions on experiences, interview students, etc.)
2. Make assignments/word problems relevant (include student & family names, link to student interests, reference other cultures)
3. Integrate cultural vocabulary/native language
4. Reinforce other cultures
5. Involve family and community members

Video: CRT

Group Discussion

What are some examples of lessons you can incorporate culturally responsive teaching strategies going forward?

What are some examples of lessons you can incorporate culturally responsive teaching strategies from previous lessons?
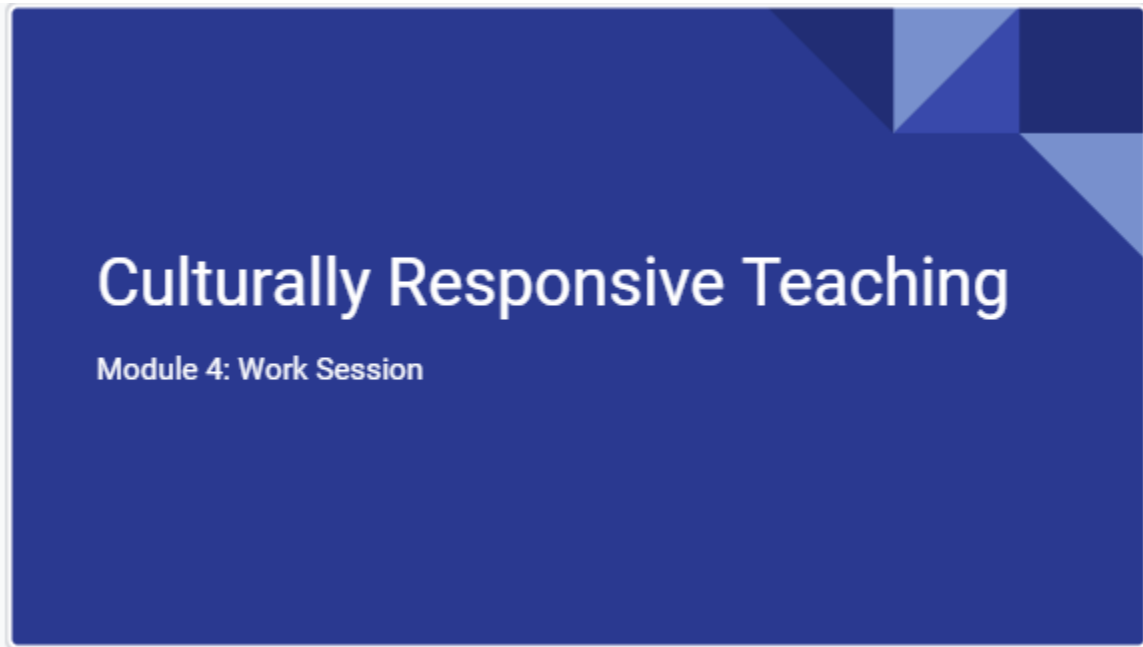
Completion Activities for Module 3

Please click the link below to complete the Module 3 survey and reflection questions.

Survey Link

Module 4: Culturally Responsive Teaching Work Session Presentation

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Module 4: Work Session

Instructional Goals and Learning Objectives

Goal: To reflect on previous understanding and implementation of culturally responsive teaching while creating and revising future lessons and instructional materials to be culturally responsive

Objectives

Learners will:

- Review previous lessons and instructional materials
- Reflect on previous teaching strategies
- Reflect on relationships with students and families
- Revise and create culturally responsive lesson plans and instructional materials
- Become familiar with and aware of community resources
- Collaborate with colleagues to align and support instruction
- Actively engage with students, families and community partners

Completion Activities for Module 4

Please click the link below to complete the Module 4 survey and reflection questions.

Survey Link

Appendix C

Pre- and Post-Survey on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

1. I integrate the cultural values and lifestyles of racial and ethnic minority groups into my teaching.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

2. I plan many activities to celebrate diverse cultural practices in my classroom.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

3. My curricula integrate topics and events from racial and ethnic minority populations.

   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

4. I consult regularly with other teachers or administrators to help me understand multicultural issues related to instruction.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

5. I examine the instructional materials I use in the classroom for racial and ethnic biases.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

6. I often include examples of the experiences and perspectives of racial and ethnic groups during my classroom lessons.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Neither Agree nor Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

7. I establish strong, supportive relationships with racial and ethnic minority parents.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Neither Agree nor Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

8. I am knowledgeable about particular teaching strategies that affirm the racial and ethnic identities of all students.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Neither Agree nor Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

9. I have a clear understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Neither Agree nor Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

10. I am knowledgeable about racial and ethnic identity theories.

    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Neither Agree nor Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

11. I understand the various communication styles among different racial and ethnic minority students in my classroom.
    ● Strongly Agree
    ● Agree
    ● Neither Agree nor Disagree
    ● Disagree
    ● Strongly Disagree

12. I am knowledgeable about the various community resources within the community that I teach.
    ● Strongly Agree
    ● Agree
    ● Neither Agree nor Disagree
    ● Disagree
    ● Strongly Disagree

13. I am able to identify ways that the school culture (e.g., values, norms, and practices) is different from my students' home culture.
    ● Strongly Agree
    ● Agree
    ● Neither Agree nor Disagree
    ● Disagree
    ● Strongly Disagree

14. I am able to implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture.
    ● Strongly Agree
    ● Agree
    ● Neither Agree nor Disagree
    ● Disagree
    ● Strongly Disagree

15. I am knowledgeable about my own cultural identity.
    ● Strongly Agree
    ● Agree
    ● Neither Agree nor Disagree
    ● Disagree
    ● Strongly Disagree

Western Carolina University
Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Establishing Culturally Responsive Classrooms in High School English Courses

This study is being conducted by: Kalee Hill, Assistant Principal at Whiteville City Schools and Heather Cox, Assistant Superintendent of Yancey County Schools

Description and Purpose of the Research: You are invited to participate in a research study about culturally responsive classrooms in high school English courses. By doing this study we hope to learn if establishing culturally responsive classrooms in high school English courses positively impact English 2 End of Course assessment scores.

What you will be asked to do: Teachers are required to participate in four professional development sessions on establishing culturally responsive classrooms. Teachers will also complete pre- and post-surveys on culturally responsive pedagogy to determine your level of comfort with diversity in the classroom and general attitudes toward cultural diversity in your classroom. The pre- and post-survey will be the same instrument. Module surveys on the content of each module will also be completed at the end of each module. Module surveys will serve as a process measure to ensure participants are understanding and acquiring knowledge of the module content prior to moving on to the next module. Each module will take no more than half a day to complete in a face-to-face setting. In total, teachers will be expected to attend four half-day trainings and complete a total of six surveys.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no anticipated risks from participating in this research; however, teachers will be expected to share their ideas, thoughts and beliefs which could result in social feelings of discomfort.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help research practitioners better understand how establishing culturally responsive English classrooms impact English 2 End of Course assessment scores for Hispanic students. As a participant in the professional development, you will gain knowledge and resources regarding creating culturally responsive classrooms and examples of culturally relevant texts that can be incorporated in their instruction.

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security: The data collected in this research study will be kept anonymous. Participation in research may involve some loss of privacy. We will do our best to make sure that the information about you is kept anonymous. Your personal information may be viewed by individuals involved in the research and may be seen by people including those collaborating, funding, and regulating the study. We will share only the minimum necessary information in order to conduct the research. Your personal information may also be given out if required by law, such as pursuant to a court order. While the information and data resulting from this study may be presented at scientific meetings or published in a scientific journal, your

name or other personal information will not be revealed. We will collect your information through Qualtrics surveys. This information will be stored in an encrypted cloud-based system. The research team will work to protect your data to the extent permitted by technology. It is possible, although unlikely, that an unauthorized individual could gain access to your responses because you are responding online. This risk is similar to your everyday use of the internet.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you choose not to participate or decide to withdraw, there will be no impact on your professional development experience.

Compensation for Participation: All teachers will be given Continuing Education Credits (CEU's) for their participation in the professional development. There will be no compensation for teachers who choose to participate in the data collection process of the research project.

Contact Information: For questions about this study, please contact Kalee Hill at klhill10@catamount.wcu.edu or Heather Cox at hmcox1@catamount.wcu.edu.

You may also contact Dr. Heidi Von Dohlen, the principal investigator and faculty advisor for this project, at hbvondohlen@wcu.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, you may contact the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board through the Office of Research Administration by calling 828-227-7212 or emailing irb@wcu.edu. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential to the extent possible.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

I understand what is expected of me if I participate in this research study. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and understand that participation is voluntary. My signature shows that I agree to participate and am at least 18 years old.

Participant Name (printed): _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Researcher Obtaining Consent: _____

Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you would like to receive a summary of the results, once the study has been completed, please write your email address (as legibly as possible) here:

_____

Appendix E

Module Surveys

Module 1: Positionality and Deficit Ideology

Please rate your level of familiarity with the content that was provided in this module.

○ No Familiarity
○ Little Familiarity
○ Moderate Familiarity
○ High Familiarity

The content in this module is relevant to my current teaching position.

○ No Relevance
○ Little Relevance
○ Moderate Relevance
○ Strong Relevance

This module has helped me relate to my current students.

○ Strongly Disagree
○ Somewhat disagree
○ Neither agree nor disagree
○ Somewhat agree
○ Strongly agree

This module will impact my instructional practices in my classroom.

○ Strongly disagree
○ Somewhat disagree
○ Neither agree nor disagree
○ Somewhat agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly agree

For this particular module, what grade would you give based on the quality of the professional development?

○ A
○ B
○ C
○ D
○ F

Rate your level of interest in learning more about the topics in this module.

○ No Interest
○ Little Interest
○ Moderate Interest
○ Strong Interest

What ways can you utilize and use Culturally Relevant Text within your curricula?

What suggestions do you have for this module?

Module 2: Latinx Relationships and Experiences in Schools Survey

Please rate your level of familiarity with the content that was provided in this module.

○ No Familiarity

○ Little Familiarity

○ Moderate Familiarity

○ High Familiarity

The content in this module is relevant to my current teaching position.

○ No Relevance

○ Little Relevance

○ Moderate Relevance

○ Strong Relevance

This module has helped me relate to my current students.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Somewhat agree

○ Strongly agree

This module will impact my instructional practices in my classroom.

○ Strongly disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Somewhat agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly agree

For this particular module, what grade would you give based on the quality of the professional development?

○ A

○ B

○ C

○ D

○ F

Rate your level of interest in learning more about the topics in this module.

○ No Interest

○ Little Interest

○ Moderate Interest

○ Strong Interest

How has this module challenged or changed your thinking regarding student and family relationships and experiences within our schools?

[   ]

What suggestions do you have for this module?

Module 3: Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey

Please rate your level of familiarity with the content that was provided in this module.

○ No Familiarity

○ Little Familiarity

○ Moderate Familiarity

○ High Familiarity

The content in this module is relevant to my current teaching position.

○ No Relevance

○ Little Relevance

○ Moderate Relevance

○ Strong Relevance

This module has helped me relate to my current students.

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Somewhat agree

○ Strongly agree

This module will impact my instructional practices in my classroom.

○ Strongly disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Somewhat agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly agree

For this particular module, what grade would you give based on the quality of the professional development?

○ A

○ B

○ C

○ D

○ F

Rate your level of interest in learning more about the topics in this module.

○ No Interest

○ Little Interest

○ Moderate Interest

○ Strong Interest

What is one way that you can and will incorporate Culturally Relevant Teaching (CLT) in your classroom?

[   ]

What suggestions do you have for this module?

Module 4: Culturally Responsive Teaching Work Session Survey

Please rate your level of familiarity with the content that was provided in this module.

○ No Familiarity
○ Little Familiarity
○ Moderate Familiarity
○ High Familiarity

The content in this module is relevant to my current teaching position.

○ No Relevance
○ Little Relevance
○ Moderate Relevance
○ Strong Relevance

This module has helped me relate to my current students.

○ Strongly Disagree
○ Somewhat disagree
○ Neither agree nor disagree
○ Somewhat agree
○ Strongly agree

This module will impact my instructional practices in my classroom.

○ Strongly disagree
○ Somewhat disagree
○ Neither agree nor disagree
○ Somewhat agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly agree

For this particular module, what grade would you give based on the quality of the professional development?

○ A
○ B
○ C
○ D
○ F

Rate your level of interest in learning more about the topics in this module.

○ No Interest
○ Little Interest
○ Moderate Interest
○ Strong Interest

What ways can you utilize and use Culturally Relevant Text within your curricula?

[   ]

What suggestions do you have for this module?

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