FOSTERING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN BEGINNING TEACHERS

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By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

FOSTERING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN BEGINNING TEACHERS

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Many Beginning Teachers struggle to appropriately manage their classrooms and their students' behavior. Research has shown that this difficulty with classroom management negatively impacts the academic achievement of students and disproportionately impacts minoritized students and students experiencing poverty. This action research study aims to improve the classroom management skills of Beginning Teachers through professional development and mentoring in Culturally Responsive Classroom Management. Pre- and posttest data were collected in the form of efficacy scales, survey responses, and personal reflections. Qualitative data was coded to develop themes, and quantitative data was analyzed using a paired sample *t*-test. The results showed a significant increase in teachers' self-efficacy around classroom management and themes of awareness, relationships and expectations, and online learning emerged. These results suggest that the program of professional development and mentoring is effective at improving Beginning Teachers' confidence in managing their classrooms in a Culturally Responsive manner; however further research is needed to determine if this increased efficacy translates to change in the classroom.

THE DISQUISITION

The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED; n.d.) was developed as a means to redesign the Doctorate in Education (EdD) to prepare educational leaders in a new way. According to the CPED website, institutions engaged in this model follow six primary guiding principles to develop scholar-practitioners who "blend practical wisdom with professional skills to name, frame, and solve problems of practice" (Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, n.d.). Rather than a traditional dissertation, scholars engage in a "dissertation in practice," or disquisition, in which they attempt to address a problem in their context of work. As a member of the CPED, Western Carolina University embraces these principles in their EdD program (Lomotey, 2018).

Unlike traditional researchers, the disquisitioner is uniquely situated in the context of the research and plays dual roles as both a scholar and practitioner in the design and implementation of the project. The disquisitioner must identify a problem of practice, thoroughly research potential causes and the larger context, design an appropriate intervention, and monitor its effectiveness. Simultaneously, the disquisitioner is working within the context of the research and actively implementing the intervention with the help of a design team. This action research methodology is designed to prepare leaders who are not only experts in their research topic but are prepared to continue to address future problems of practice as they arise (Lomotey, 2018).

Positionality Statement

I began this work from the lens of an instructional facilitator: someone who was hired to ensure that teachers had and knew what they needed to be effective in the

elementary classroom. Over my 6 years in this position, I had the opportunity to observe and mentor a number of dedicated, thoughtful professionals who were willing to go above and beyond for their students. Despite their efforts, our school's test scores remained low, and pressure from above to improve them was constant. Teachers continued to teach their hardest and I strengthened my skills of modeling and offering feedback, but student performance did not significantly or consistently improve. Especially concerning was the persistent gap in test scores between White students and students of Color, and between middle-/upper-class students and their peers experiencing poverty.

Over time, I began to realize that in most classrooms, it was not the curriculum that was the problem; rather, the problem was that our students were not receiving it. In some classrooms, I observed excellent math lessons, but many of the students were talking amongst themselves rather than engaging in the work. In other classrooms, I saw students sitting silently unengaged while teachers lectured. To be clear, in many classrooms, I saw excellent teaching, engagement, relationships, and management. However, some teachers, especially those new to the classroom, simply did not have the tools they needed to effectively manage their classrooms and engage their students. Chaotic classrooms led to teachers constantly reacting to negative behavior rather than teaching, and some classrooms were orderly out of fear rather than engagement. As a White woman working in a building of mostly White teachers teaching a diverse student body, I suspected that a cultural mismatch between teachers and students was part of the problem; some White teachers didn'*t* seem to be able to truly connect with their students of Color. To learn more, I began to read the works of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Zaretta

Hammond, Laura Pinto, Lisa Delpit, and Geneva Gay. I wanted to find a way to share their work with the teachers, who are incredibly dedicated and open and could use this information to impact so many lives. This disquisition is my effort to bring these works to the classrooms of beginning teachers; it is my hope that this work continues in the school/district and impacts an increasing number of teachers

Introduction and Problem of Practice

Beginning Teachers, defined by the state as teachers in their first three years, face a wide range of new responsibilities when they start their first teaching job. Learning the layout of the school, the details of the curriculum, and the names and histories of their students is challenging enough. In addition to these challenges, the Beginning Teacher (BT) must effectively manage their classroom so that learning can take place. Even for veteran teachers, classroom management consistently ranks as a top concern (Martin et al., 2006; Melnick & Meister, 2008; Ritter & Hancock, 2007). Among minoritized teachers who left the profession due to dissatisfaction with the job, 61% cited student discipline as the primary cause (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Struggles with classroom management and student behavior are among the top concerns for new teachers (Dicke et al., 2015; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Hong, 2012; Headden, 2014; Melnick & Meister, 2008), and research into teacher turn over has shown that 23% of BTs who quit teaching in the first 5 years list classroom management and student behavior as a primary cause for their leaving (Ingersoll, 2002). In a meta-analysis of 16 studies, Aloe et al. (2014) found a moderately strong correlation between teacher's beliefs about their ability to manage their classroom and their susceptibility to burnout. Classroom management skills are so important that The New Teacher Project lists it as a fundamental skill that must be

developed before new teachers can focus on instructional strategies (Mulhern & Wexler, 2013).

Since many BTs do not have adequate classroom management skills, they must spend classroom instruction time responding to disruptive behavior rather than teaching. This means that students in their classrooms are not receiving adequate instruction, which adversely impacts their academic performance. This is particularly a problem in urban and low-income areas, where students experiencing poverty are more likely to have a BT than their suburban, middle-class peers (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Mayer et al., 2001). Both nationally and in this state, minoritized students are much more likely than White students to have a BT lead their class (Clotfelter et al., 2005; Goldhaber et al., 2015; Kalogrides & Loeb, 2013). In Little City Schools, where nearly 40% of students are racially minoritized, and 40% receive free and reduced lunch, a quarter of all elementary teachers are BTs. Little City Schools' current induction program does not do an adequate job of preparing BTs to manage their classrooms in an effective, culturally responsive manner. This negatively impacts the students in the district socially, emotionally, and academically. This paper will describe an intensive mentoring program designed and implemented to help BTs meet the needs of their students by improving their overall management skills with an explicit emphasis on culturally responsive practices.

Defining Classroom Management

Classroom management is a broad term that is used to include many aspects of life in the classroom. The field of classroom management has been studied much less than other areas of education (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006), possibly because of the negative connotations of the phrase; historically, it has been associated with the teacher

attempting to control students into "sheer compliance" (McCaslin & Good, 1998, p. 170). Despite these notions, strong classroom management is much more than a discipline policy. It is generally considered to include establishing rules and expectations for behavior, organization and physical layout of the classroom, motivating students, providing clear instruction, and explicitly planning for instruction in behavior (Darch & Eaves, 2005; Pankake, 2006). A literature review by Simonsen et al. (2008) describes five major and commonly described components of classroom management: structure, expectations, engagement, acknowledgment of appropriate behavior, and a predetermined continuum of responses to undesired behavior. Evertson and Weinstein (2006) define classroom management simply and yet inclusively as "the actions teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning" (p. 4). They go on to enumerate multiple components that must be included, reaffirming that there is more to classroom management than discipline and control. For the purposes of this study, I defined classroom management to include building relationships with students, establishing routines, establishing the physical environment, and maintaining clear expectations and fair consequences.

Building Relationships. One element that is common throughout research on classroom management is the role of the relationship between students and their teachers. Teachers who successfully held high expectations for students by consistently demonstrating real care for their students are referred to as warm demanders (Hammond, 2015; Kleinfeld, 1975). These teachers' ability to build a real relationship with their students and to leverage that relationship to improve student outcomes has been found to be effective in diverse settings, especially in urban schools and with African American

students (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Delpit, 2012; Milner, 2006; Ware, 2006). Trust and rapport development are critical components of what Hammond (2015) calls the "learning partnership" (p.75). Building strong relationships and maintaining unflinchingly high expectations of students are, therefore, a key component of classroom management in any context.

Routines. Classroom routines are another important component of classroom management. Teachers need to teach and reinforce routines for innumerable mundane tasks, from getting a sharpened pencil to turning in last night's homework. Without these routines, materials easily become misplaced and disorganized, valuable instructional time is wasted, and misbehavior is more likely to occur. In *The Classroom Management Handbook*, Wong and Wong (2018) proposed a list of more than 50 routines to keep a classroom running smoothly. Other routines and rituals in the classroom, such as chants and poetry recitation, can be an essential part of culturally responsive teaching and serve to emphasize classroom community and to connect students emotionally (Hammond, 2015). Attention-getting signals and a predictable posted schedule support students as they become more independent learners. In addition to these procedural routines, academic routines are an important component of classroom management. These routines, such as opening each math lesson with choral skip counting, help children transition between activities and serve as a signal of what is expected next. Both instructional and non-instructional routines are critical to classroom management and must be explicitly taught, rehearsed, and reviewed throughout the year (Lester et al., 2017).

Physical Environment. The physical environment is another important component of classroom management. Teachers must carefully arrange the room to allow for the flow of traffic and to create areas conducive to various classroom activities. For example, an elementary reading teacher might place low shelving with popular books and several beanbags under a window to encourage quiet reading. Careful arrangement of desks, student versus teacher areas, and materials can help to maximize student engagement (Richards, 2006). Classroom decorations and instructional posters should be created with, rather than for, students, and displays should be carefully considered to ensure they do not exclude any students (Pinto, 2016).

Expectations and Consequences. For any classroom to function and for learning to occur, the teacher must establish clear expectations. Teaching these expectations requires a significant amount of time at the beginning of the year and constant review as the year progresses. Expectations must be discussed with students, agreed upon, and demonstrated. Examples and counter-examples of meeting expectations help students to understand and own the expectation (Hertz & Mraz, 2018; Wong & Wong, 2018). Setting clear expectations has been found to have a strong impact on positive student behavior (Dunlap et al., 2010), especially when combined with culturally relevant teaching practices (Larson et al., 2018). Gay (2010) argues that successful culturally responsive educators must set rigorous expectations for both themselves and their students and insist that students meet them. Examples of clear expectations differ from class to class, but at an elementary level may include items such as definitions of voice levels during different activities and safe use of playground equipment (Hertz & Mraz, 2018).

Despite the teacher's efforts to set clear expectations, it is inevitable that misbehavior will occur and conflict will arise in the classroom. In order to be prepared for this, effective classroom managers have clearly outlined consequences. It is important here to note the difference between *consequences* and *punishment.* As described by Responsive Classroom (2011), punishment is intended to train children out of behaviors for the fear that they might be punished or out of shame. This is rarely effective, builds resentment and division between students in the classroom, and is especially dangerous in a setting where White teachers are disciplining Black students. Bryan (2017) posits that this sort of inappropriate discipline of Black students, particularly males, is a factor in the school-to-prison pipeline and even increases racial bias in other students. Strict and "zero tolerance' discipline policies have been found to be associated with increased discipline referrals and a more negative school climate (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Contrary to punishment, logical consequences help children identify what they have done that is harmful to themselves or others and what they can do to make it right. The goal is to build reflection, empathy, and thoughtfulness. Critically, appropriate consequences must be paired with an educational component for the student; otherwise, compliance in the moment may increase, but the same behavior may be repeated (Smith et al., 2015). In order to apply these classroom management strategies effectively and fairly to minoritized students, teachers need to understand how to build upon and engage with their students' culture and make their instruction relevant to the learners. Culturally responsive practices and pedagogy help teachers be successful in this area.

An Overview of Culturally Relevant/Responsive/Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy, developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) is an equity-based pedagogy (McGee Banks & Banks, 1995) first developed as a counter to deficit-based theories of the ’80s and ’90s, which blamed lack of culture among African American students for academic achievement discrepancies. Ladson-Billings posited that culturally relevant pedagogy has three primary components: “an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness” (p. 483). She argued that a framework of culturally relevant pedagogy was critical to helping teachers of all races build on their students’ culture and knowledge to help students construct academic knowledge. Geneva Gay (2000) developed the concept of “culturally responsive teaching,” a pedagogy designed to use and build upon the cultural characteristics of students. This work has been built upon by other researchers such as Zaretta Hammond (2015), who uses brain research to demonstrate how mimicking students’ cultural learning style leads to deeper academic understanding. Paris (2012) builds on this work through the introduction of culturally *sustaining* pedagogy. Paris argues that relevance and responsiveness are insufficient and that educators should seek to actively preserve/sustain their students’ culture and language through teaching. Paris and Alim (2017) build on this theory in their book *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* and provide numerous real-life examples of teachers using culturally sustaining pedagogy in classrooms. In 2014, Ladson-Billings embraced this change in terminology as a means of going beyond simply building on culture to the active promotion of student culture. The materials used in this study drew

from many of these sources, and participants were exposed to the terms Culturally Responsive and Culturally Relevant frequently. In causal use, teachers often use the terms interchangeably without fully understanding the differences between them. In the context of this study, I chose to use the term "culturally responsive" because it best describes the style of classroom management the BTs were expected to implement. Additionally, it is the primary term used in the source materials for the study.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) is a method of managing classrooms that expands upon the principles described above. Bondy et al. (2007) describe their observations of "novice' teachers' efforts to manage their classrooms in culturally responsive ways. Three major areas emerged from their research: developing relationships, establishing expectations, and communicating in culturally responsive ways. While the first two are typical of classroom management strategies, communicating in culturally responsive ways is unique to CRCM. To do this, teachers must use verbal and nonverbal communication that is familiar to the students and is kind but firm (Brown, 2003). Weinstein et al. (2003) posit three precursors to CRCM: recognition of culture, acknowledgment of cultural differences, and understanding of how societal structures and discrimination are perpetuated by the school system. They go on to describe five primary actions steps teachers can take to become culturally responsive classroom managers:

> (a) creating a physical setting that supports academic and social goals, (b) establishing expectations for behavior, (c) communicating with students in culturally consistent ways, (d) developing a caring classroom environment, (e)

> working with families, and (f) using appropriate interventions to assist students with behavior problems. (Weinstein et al., 2004, p. 270)

According to Milner and Tenore (2010), culturally responsive classroom managers understand equity, the self as it relates to others, and student power relations; immerse themselves in students' worlds while inviting students into their worlds, view the school as a family. Much of the literature on CRCM strategies focus on the teacher as a warm demander and on developing that skill in new and urban teachers (Bondy et al., 2013; Brown, 2003; Ross et al., 2010).

Classroom Management Related to Academic Outcomes

Classroom management is critical for BTs to master because evidence-based classroom management practices increase student engagement, which in turn increases student learning (Gage et al., 2018). This logical inference is backed by solid research; in a meta-analysis of 54 studies, Korpershoek et al. (2016) found that classroom management interventions led to increased academic performance of elementary students. This analysis found that interventions focused on social-emotional skills of students and those focused on positive, proactive management skills of teachers led to the strongest academic outcomes.

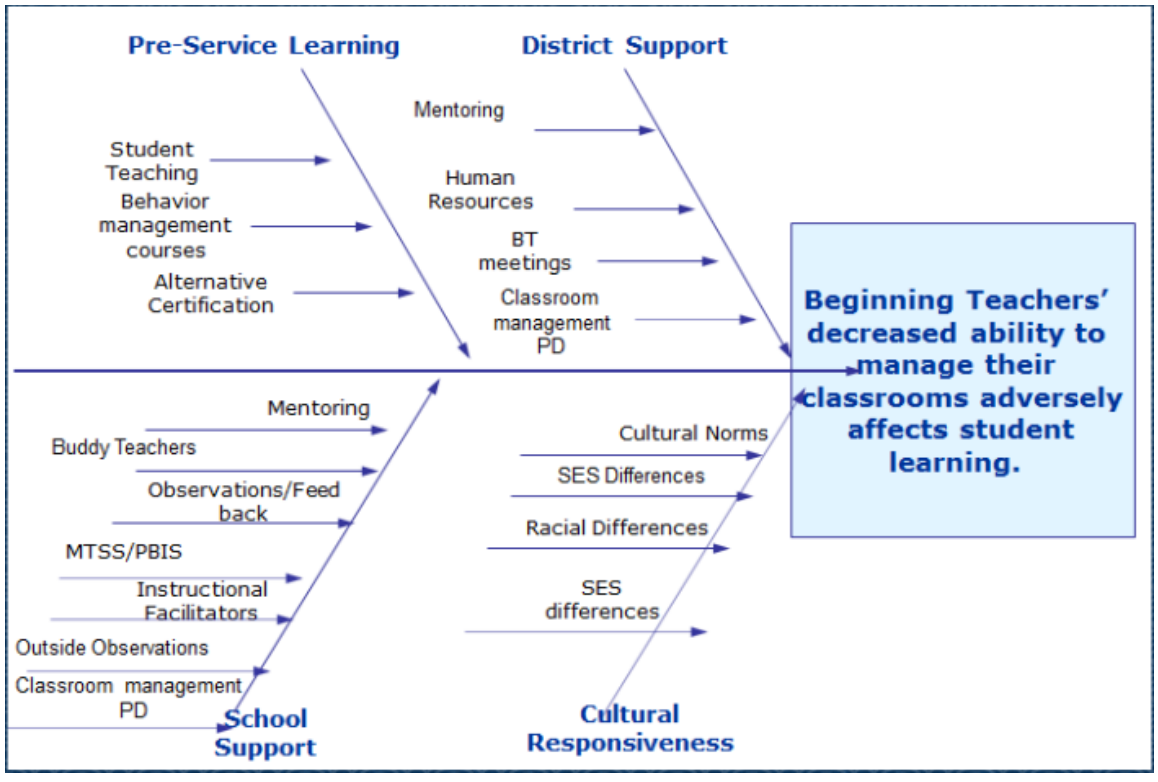
On the whole, BTs' difficulty with appropriate, culturally responsive classroom management negatively impacts their students, and this impact is greatest felt by poor and/or minoritized students. The outcome is evident in high suspension rates and lower academic achievement. The causes of this problem are myriad and are systemic in teacher preparation programs and in the local context of Little City Schools. A thorough analysis of these causes follows.

Causal Analysis

An Ishikawa Diagram, also called a Fishbone Diagram, is a tool that is used to help identify a broad, comprehensive set of causes for a problem. Root causes of BTs' difficulty with appropriately managing their classrooms were identified using the Ishikawa Diagram shown in Figure 1. These causes were identified based on research and in collaboration with a team of educators, including 4 BTs, a principal, and three instructional facilitators. The factors explored include preservice learning, district-level support, school-level support, and cultural responsiveness, each of which is explored thoroughly in this section.

Figure 1

Fishbone Diagram of Causes of Beginning Teachers' Inability to Manage Their Classrooms



Preservice Learning

Learning classroom management skills begins at the university level, but few teacher preparation programs offer stand-alone, comprehensive behavior management courses, and many do not focus on research-based strategies (Greenberg et al., 2014; Landau, 2001). Teachers who enter the profession through alternative certification programs such as Teach for America find their training in classroom management to be insufficient to meet their needs and the needs of their students (Platt, 2017). While traditional teacher preparation programs, especially those preparing special education teachers, teach basic classroom management skills, few alternative programs do so, and little more than half of all programs teach specific strategies to reduce specific behaviors (Flower et al., 2017).

A large-scale study of teachers in Ohio found that preservice teachers are significantly less confident that they know appropriate strategies for managing disruptive behavior than in-service teachers are, indicating a need for additional preservice training (Rosas & West, 2009). Without this explicit training, new teachers do not have self-efficacy around their ability to manage their classrooms, especially if they are teaching a population from different backgrounds than their own. Preservice training in CRCM is especially uncommon but has been shown to be effective in increasing novice teachers' willingness to teach and work in urban schools (Ross et al., 2010).

Traditionally prepared teacher candidates have the opportunity to observe and learn classroom management skills during their student teaching, but not all potential teachers are paired with strong classroom managers. Most BTs in one study felt prepared

for classroom management as a whole by their student teaching but did not hold self-efficacy around "managing behaviors,' which they ranked as their weakest area (Lee et al., 2012). One study in Texas found no significant difference in office referral rates between BTs who underwent student teaching and those who entered the profession through an alternative certification program, indicating that student teaching is not impactful to BTs' classroom management skills (Uriegas et al., 2013).

District and School Level Support

In this state, each BT is provided a mentor for their first three years on the job. This mentor, typically a veteran teacher at the school, is encouraged to provide them with information about the school, the curriculum, interacting with parents, etc. Most of the supports provided are low-intensity supports described by Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000), such as a required orientation and utilization of veteran teachers to serve as collegial mentors. While the district does provide a series of professional development sessions for BTs, they do not offer any defined support specifically in classroom management. Recently, there has been an explicit emphasis on incorporating background information about the racial history of the city and district in these sessions. This training is intended to help teachers, many of whom are from other areas, understand the larger context of their teaching. A detailed analysis of district and school-level support is offered below in the analysis of the local context.

Racial and Cultural Differences

In American schools, there is a large racial disparity between teachers and their students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, as of 2017, 80% of all teachers were White (Musu, 2019). Meanwhile, racial diversity in the United States is

projected to continue to increase, with White Americans projected to fall below 50% of the population while the number of Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and multi-racial Americans is projected to increase greatly (Colby & Ortman, 2014). The racial gap between teachers and students is especially wide in urban and urban-like schools, which are most likely to have students of color (DiAngelo, 2012). For many Black students, this means that they will rarely have the opportunity to learn from teachers who are also Black. Having a largely White teaching force negatively impacts student achievement because students have been found to prefer teachers of their own race (Dee, 2005; Egalite et al., 2015), be rated higher by teachers of their own race (Ehrenberg et al., 1995) and to have more positive opinions of minority teachers in general (Cherng & Halpin, 2016).

Cultural differences and teachers' implicit bias can lead to inappropriate discipline practices, including increased rates of exclusionary practices. Stereotypes of Black males as disengaged from education and being aggressive and dangerous fuel both implicit and overt racial bias (Rudd, 2014), with the result that teachers are likely to punish or refer Black students for the same behaviors they ignore in other students (Butchart & McEwan, 1998). Black students are also more likely than White students to be punished for subjectively defined offenses such as loitering, disrespect, excessive noise, or threats (Cagle, 2017). On the whole, Black students are much more likely than their White counterparts to be referred to the office for behavior issues (Anyon et al., 2014). This effect is greatly reduced when Black students have Black teachers, especially around the referral category of defiance (Lindsay & Hart, 2017). These national disparities in racial representation, ongoing biases against Black students, and inequitable

use of disciplinary measures against Black students are all present in Little City Schools, as outlined below.

The Local Context

Little City Schools (LCS) is a pseudonym for a small city school district located in a small city in the South Eastern United States. The region is predominantly a White (88%) area. Although Little is a small city, its population of approximately 100,000 makes it the 12th largest city in the state (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The total student body of LCS is under 5,000 students, with an operating budget of over $60 million.

The focus school in this study was Salem Elementary. Salem is the second smallest school in the district and, according to local data, currently serves about 300 students in grades Pre-K through 5. The school is "urban characteristic," meaning the students and their backgrounds are representative of an urban setting despite the school being located in a neighborhood setting in a small city (Milner, 2012, p. 559).

The school district itself is magnet rather than neighborhood-based, meaning any child in the city can go to any of the elementary schools. All schools teach the same core curriculum, but each school has a theme that anchors its teaching. Salem's theme is STEAM, which stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics. The student application for the magnet schools is non-competitive and simply asks the parent to rank their school preference; transportation is provided to any school from almost any neighborhood in the city. Although, in theory, all schools are open to all students, historically, the schools have been very unbalanced racially and economically. Salem consistently has the highest poverty rate; in 2007, it was triple the rate of another

school just 2.3 miles away, although that gap is slowly closing. Salem also has the highest percentage of minoritized students of any school in the district.

The neighborhood surrounding the school is simultaneously diverse and very segregated. While White and Black families are both present, rarely do they live on the same street. In addition, the neighborhood (and city as a whole) has undergone tremendous change in the last decade. Median home prices have skyrocketed, with developers tearing down older homes to build new ones and older, larger lots being subdivided. Many low-income White families have retreated to the county, where prices are lower and mobile home parks offer affordable housing. Existing public housing complexes remain in the city limits and are populated primarily by Black families who were displaced due to racial covenants, redlining, and neighborhood "revitalization' in the mid-20th century. For example, across the street from the school, a small ranch house was recently torn down and replaced with an $895,000, five-bedroom home. Meanwhile, it is less than half a mile to the nearest public housing complex. The net result of these city-wide demographic changes is an increasing stratification of wealth along racial lines. Poor White families have moved out of the neighborhood, middle- and upper-class White families have moved in, and poor Black families have remained.

Although the neighborhood has traditionally been low income, it has many opportunities and assets for families of all backgrounds (Green, 2015). Like most Southern cities, there is an abundance of churches in the area that provide varying levels of support. There is also a church that meets in the school itself and has "adopted' the school as its main focus for volunteerism. The school has partnered with the YMCA and a local foundation to provide free/low-cost after-school care. The YMCA also brings a

food truck monthly with fresh, free produce. The neighborhood is also home to many locally owned businesses that support the school and the community at large. Community centers anchor the different neighborhoods and are a source of fun and support to residents.

District data shows that 60% of students at Salem received free or reduced lunch in 2017. This is a significant reduction from 2007 when over 80% of students received free or reduced lunch. School-level data show racial demographics also changing; the percentage of students who are White is steadily increasing. This means that students of Color are increasingly marginalized and are more isolated from their peers than in the past. Their teachers need clear, explicit training in providing teaching and classroom management that is relevant to them.

Backgrounds of Teachers

As in many urban school settings, there is a mismatch between the demographics of the teachers and the students. For this study, an informal survey of the 18 homeroom teachers was conducted. Results indicated that only three of them are from the region, and only one actually grew up in the city. Of the 18 teachers, 13 are White, one is Hispanic, and three are Black. The implication of this is that, unless they make a concentrated effort to do so, many of the teachers do not have a strong understanding of their students' backgrounds and cultures. This leaves students vulnerable to suffering the consequences of their teachers' implicit racial biases. Implicit biases against Black students, especially males, are rooted in a deep and complicated history of slavery, oppression, Jim Crow laws, and segregation. These biases persist in the minds of White Americans, including teachers (Carter et al., 2017). Some overtly racist White teachers

harm Black students with explicit biases. Other White teachers (largely unknowingly) perpetuate discrimination in the classroom by failing to examine and actively counter their own implicit biases.

Many teachers, especially BTs, have recently moved to the city and have a preconceived, unrealistic notion of the city (typically from tourism advertisements). These new teachers are frequently shocked by the student behaviors they encounter and are not prepared to handle them appropriately and responsively. As one veteran teacher observed, "they come in thinking "it's -----, how bad could they be?' They have no idea the trauma these kids have been through" (M. Walberg, personal communication, June 24, 2018). While this teacher was referring to the recent trauma of several shootings in the neighborhood, it is also true that students suffer trauma at the hands of the school system itself through generations of punitive interactions with teachers who are not trained in CRCM.

Initiatives for Equity

In the past, the district attempted to compensate for this cultural mismatch by providing training in the Ruby Payne Frameworks of Poverty. For several years, the school board required all teachers to complete a set number of hours of "poverty training" to renew their license. As Payne's work has been widely discredited as racist, classist, and not evidence based (Bomer et al., 2008; Dworin & Bomer, 2008; Gorski, 2008), the district has dropped this requirement. Beginning in 2016, the district began a four-year contract with Integrated Comprehensive Systems of Support (ICS). This ambitious effort to reduce bias and promote equity through teacher education was the focus of much district-wide staff development but was implemented inconsistently in different

buildings. In the 2019-2020 school year, the district chose to drop this outside contract and instead focus on building a district-level equity team.

Because the district was in between superintendents, the 2019-2020 district equity team set short-term goals to focus on intentional instruction, practical strategies, and responsiveness to staff needs. A long-term plan was not developed. The team consisted of central office staff and school-level representatives.

Salem Elementary has its own school-level equity team. This team, consisting of teachers and administrators, meets as a component of the school improvement plan. In the 2020-2021 school year, while this study was ongoing, they provided awareness training about implicit biases, developed action steps to improve school relationships with the community, and led a book study for all staff on Hammond's (2015) work *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. Additionally, this team works with the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) team to implement a consistent morning meeting protocol across the school to help teachers build relationships with and between their students.

In addition to the general equity team, the district and school each have an Equitable Discipline team. These teams were developed in response to the excessively exclusionary and disproportionate discipline referral rates identified in the district. At the district and school level, teams began in October 2020 to analyze trends in referrals and make plans to address inequities. The district partnered with a local scholar who is an expert in this area to provide training sessions to school and district administrators in reducing exclusionary discipline and reducing inequity in discipline practices.

Finally, the district is taking action around equity with Exceptional Children (also known as Special Education). Local data shows that 8.1% of White students have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), while a staggering 25% of Black students have an IEP. The district has been found to have "significant disproportionality" in the area of suspensions and identification of students with Emotional Disabilities. As a result, the district is required to divert 15% of IDEA funding towards addressing these disparities. To do so, the district has hired an Early Interventionist to support teachers and school-level teams in providing appropriate instruction to avoid unnecessary referrals to Exceptional Children, especially for students of Color.

District and School Support for BTs

The week before each school year begins, Little City Schools holds a BT Orientation week. BTs are required and paid to attend. At this training, the BTs spend time learning about Human Resources policies and the reading and math curricula in the district. Although the curricular trainings contain embedded instruction in classroom management to support teachers in teaching these curricula, there is no component that focuses explicitly on classroom management. Stakeholder interviews reveal that BTs feel the district trainings that start the school year are "overwhelming" and "not practical" (J. McConnell & R. Jacobs, personal communication, February 2019).

The State Board of Education mandates that the district provides a mentoring program for new teachers. The district provides an "excellent, experienced, and qualified" mentor for the first three years of teaching. In Little City Schools, mentors are veteran teachers who were trained by central office staff to be mentors. They are required to meet with their BT weekly the first year and twice a month for the second and third

years. The mentors are paid a small stipend for this time. Mentors are provided a list of approximately 80 suggested topics of conversation and are required to report on their meetings monthly to the district BT coordinator. Neither mentors nor BTs are provided with classroom release time to observe each other's classrooms. In addition to the mentoring, throughout the school year, BTs attend monthly group meetings held by the Human Resources department. At these meetings, BTs are given the chance to network with each other, to learn about district initiatives, and to receive professional development. Through the mentoring and meetings, BTs are supported in their efforts to collect the documentation needed to submit to the state to earn their continuing teacher license.

At the school level, BTs are not offered formal training in classroom management. All schools in the district implement School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (SW-PBIS). Funded by the United States Department of Education, PBIS is a school-wide program designed to help schools and teachers define clear behavioral expectations, implement positive teaching of behavioral expectations, and acknowledge appropriate behavior (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2017). Each school has its own procedures for implementing PBIS and may or may not provide formalized training for BTs at the beginning of the year. In the state, PBIS now falls under the umbrella of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). This model is intended to provide differentiated instruction and problem solving for both academic and behavior needs at the school and classroom level. Both PBIS and MTSS implement a three-tiered system of support. Each building has an MTSS coach; however, support for teachers is undefined and school dependent.

Based on observations of classroom teaching, BTs may be given feedback on their management procedures by a building-level administrator. Each elementary school also has a full-time instructional facilitator (IF) who offers support in implementing the curriculum. The IFs are former teachers who have been taken out of the classroom and tasked with supporting the school as a whole. This role varies by school but includes training teachers on district curricula, conducting classroom walkthroughs, modeling lessons, and giving feedback to teachers. In some cases, the IF helps BTs with classroom management and behavior support; however, there is no formalized system for this support, and it can vary widely from school to school.

Classroom Management in BT Classrooms

Office referrals are intended to document serious, unsafe, or repeated infractions of school rules. When a referral is written, a school administrator reviews it, conferences with the student and/or parents, and determines a consequence for the behavior. School-level data from Salem show that in the 2018-2019 school year, there were five BTs. On average, each BT wrote over 76 office-level referrals while experienced teachers (those beyond their third year) wrote just 16. It is important to note that this data is skewed by one teacher who wrote a stunning 88 referrals that year. With her data removed, the average rate drops to 25.5 referrals per BT. This data indicates that BTs are less able than their more experienced peers to proactively manage their classrooms and maximize instructional time. This outsourcing of behavior management to the office reduces instructional time for students and undermines the authority of the teacher.

Rationale

The problem of inadequate support and training for culturally responsive classroom management for BTs is a pressing one in the community. Interviews with BTs and IFs reveal a consensus that the training and mentoring offered to BTs is inadequate. School-level data from Salem in 2018 showed that Black students made up 24% of the population but received 39 % of the office referrals written. Multiracial students made up 13% of the population and received 34% of all referrals. White students, who made up 50% of the population, received only 23% of office referrals. This problem is certainly not limited to Little City Schools; nationally, Black students are more than twice as likely as White students to be referred to the office for discipline reasons (Anyon et al., 2014).

Boys, regardless of race, who account for slightly less than 50% of the population but 76% of office referrals, would also benefit from improved classroom management. Although Intersectionality Theory was developed to explore the compounding impact of race and gender on Black females, we can also extrapolate that male students of color would benefit the most from this project (Crenshaw, 1989). Research has shown that poor, Black students who are not reading on grade level at the end of third grade have only a 66% graduation rate (Hernandez, 2011). Using intersectionality theory as a lens to analyze this information, we see that students who are Black, male, and living in poverty are the most at risk of not completing their education.

After reflecting on the causal analysis, the disquisitioner felt that issues identified in the fishbone analysis could contribute to a lack of self-efficacy in CRCM. Professional development could lead to improved self-efficacy, and improved culturally responsive classroom management skills will allow for additional instructional time for these

vulnerable students. The mission statement of LCS includes a focus on equity for students in the district. By failing to provide proper support and training for our BTs, the district is failing to meet its mission.

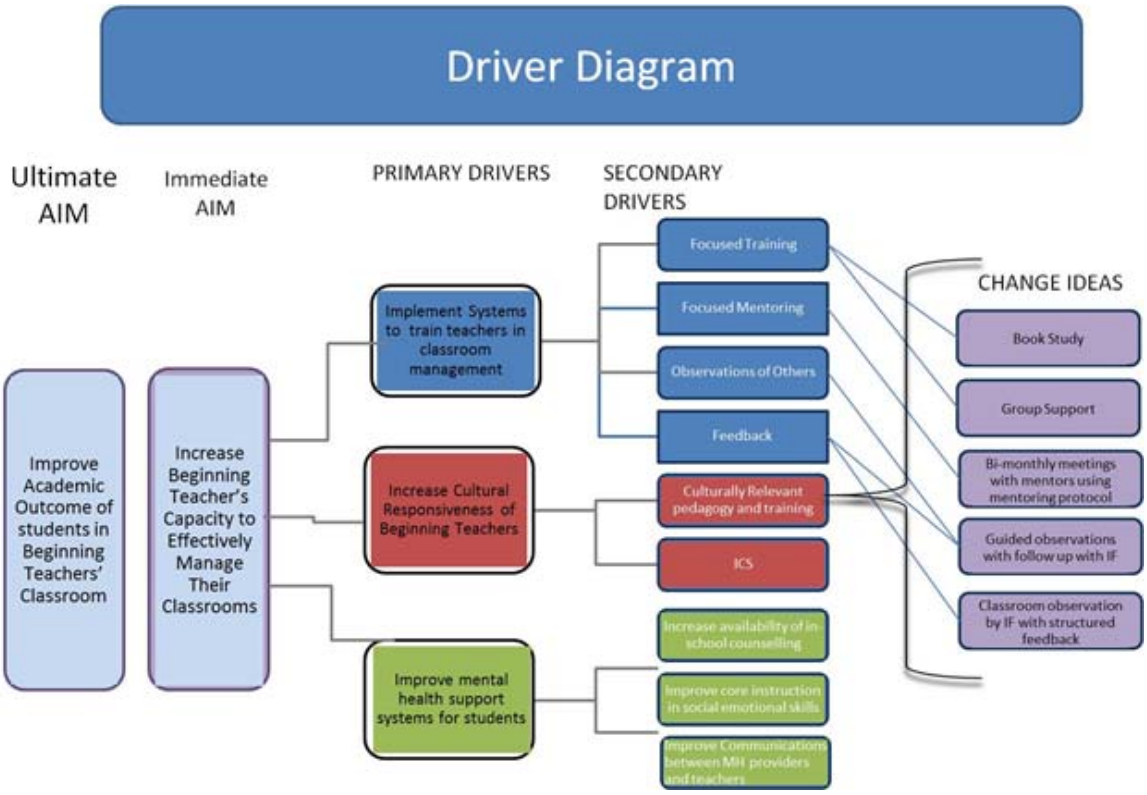
Theory of Improvement and Proposed Improvement Initiative

The driver diagram below (see Figure 2) shows a logical model for improvement (Byrk et al., 2015). Given the time and logistical limitations of this study, it was not possible to explore every possible change idea. Improving mental health supports for teachers and students is a larger-scale project that was not within the scope of this research. Teacher cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching methods and classroom management are intertwined and critical to the success of minority students (Gay, 2006) and are more than worthy of being a standalone intervention. However, if BTs do not have fundamental classroom management strategies in place, they will not be capable of implementing them. For these reasons, the disquisitioner chose to blend implementing systems to train and support teachers in classroom management with systems to reduce bias. In short, the aim is to develop classroom management skills with an explicit lens of cultural competence. Specific action steps and readings are described below in Improvement Methodology.

Although the State defines BTs as being in their first three years of teaching, for the purposes of this intervention, teachers in their second to fourth years of teaching were considered. This decision was made by the design team due to the timeline of the intervention beginning in August. Due to the time commitment required, the team felt that having first-year teachers participate would be burdensome to them and would negatively impact their teaching.

Figure 2

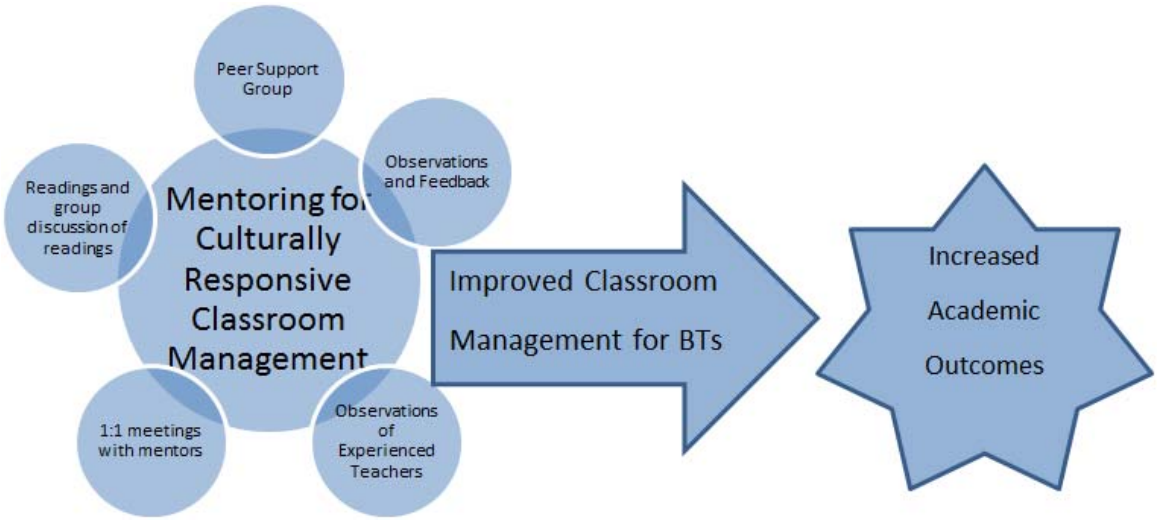
Driver Diagram of Possible Change Ideas



At the start of this disquisition, the theory of improvement held that formalized support and training, conducted by on-site mentors (IFs), will improve the ability of beginning teachers to implement strong, consistent, culturally relevant classroom management. Improved classroom management skills will allow for improved engagement in instruction, thus increasing academic outcomes for students in these classrooms. Figure 3 includes all components of the original intervention and shows how the individual components of the proposed mentoring program would come together with the ultimate aim of increased academic outcomes for students.

Figure 3

Components of Original Intervention



This project was originally proposed, defended, and approved in late February 2020. As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, it became clear that the original project would not be possible to implement as described. As the opening of the school year approached, it was unclear if the 2020-2021 school year would open virtually, in person, or a hybrid of both models. It was also unknown whether teachers would work remotely or in the school building if school were to be virtual. Due to these uncertainties, the disquisitioner collaborated with the design team to adjust the implementation of the study to remove observations of BTs and of veteran teachers as components of the improvement initiative. Both implementation plans are included in the "Improvement Initiative" section below.

Literature Supporting Theory of Improvement

Literature pertaining to the proposed theory of improvement was reviewed by the disquisitioner. Literature from educational leadership, teacher preparation, and other

social science was reviewed. Topics reviewed included the impact of training on professional's cultural responsiveness, mentoring, targeted professional development, and a support group.

The Impact of Training on Cultural Responsiveness

While there is an extensive amount of literature defining cultural responsiveness and its benefits, there are few empirical studies showing the effectiveness of targeting training in this area on teacher performance (Bradshaw et al., 2018). One such study, comparing teachers in a professional development (PD) program to those in a PD and coaching intervention found that teachers who received both PD and coaching around culturally responsive practices referred Black students to the office less often than those who received PD alone. Participants in the PD and coaching model implemented "better' classroom management, and all teachers receiving the PD reported higher classroom management efficacy scores (Bradshaw et al., 2018). When trained on explicit culturally responsive practices, high school science teachers demonstrated positive change in their methods of teaching diverse students (Brown & Crippin, 2017), and teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) showed reduced deficit mentality towards their students (Mellom et al., 2018). Teachers who participated in an intensive training program significantly increased their use of culturally responsive instructional practices in the classroom (Powell et al., 2016).

Critical self-reflection, including identification of one's own culture and bias, is often identified as a first step toward understanding cultural responsiveness (Hammond, 2015; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Milner et al., 2019; Weinstein et al., 2003). Culturally responsive school leaders must engage in critical self-reflection (Khalifa, 2018), and this

reflection must include "emotional and intellectual work around race, institutional racism, and Whiteness" (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011, p.1338). Ladson Billings charges teacher education programs with leading beginning teachers in similar self-examination in order to adequately prepare for teaching Black children and posits that such reflection is the only way that the impact of power and oppression on Black students can be understood (1998, 2000).

Mentoring. The primary component of the improvement project was mentoring. Mentoring for teachers has a strong research base. In a review of 15 empirical studies, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that teacher induction programs, including mentoring, had a positive impact on teacher retention, classroom instructional practices (which includes behavior management), and student achievement. Mentoring programs where the mentor is located in the same building, available during the day, and holds an evaluative role in the building are most effective (Polikoff et al., 2015). Evertson and Smithey (2001) showed gains in classroom organization and student engagement when mentors are specially trained to support BTs in classroom management. Knight (2009) also listed classroom management as one of the "Big Four" areas that can be positively impacted by instructional coaching, which in Little City is within the role of the IF.

The mentoring component was planned to include two types of observations: (a) observations of veteran teachers followed by debriefing sessions with the IF and (b) focused observations of the BT with feedback. Observation of veteran teachers can provide an opportunity for BTs to collect ideas for their classroom, witness effective classroom management strategies, and deepen their content knowledge. Observation also helps teachers to know each other's practice, one of six conditions described by Donohoo

(2017) as a prerequisite for developing Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE). John Hattie, as referenced in Visible Learning (n.d.), found CTE to have the largest effect size of any area studied on student achievement. In one small study, peer observation, which includes observation of veteran teachers, was found to be effective at helping teachers develop new skills and gain new ideas (Hirsch, 2011). Peer coaching protocols, which involve two teachers observing each other and offering each other feedback, were found to improve teaching performance and were described as a "powerful experience" (Bruce & Ross, 2008, p.365) by one participant. Observing peers has been found to cause a change in practice in both the observed and the observer (Munson, 1998; Tenenberg, 2016). In addition to the BTs observing veteran teachers, the IFs would observe the BTs and provide clear, direct feedback. In their research on the effectiveness of feedback to students, Hattie and Timperley (2007) define feedback as "information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding (p. 81)." Both veteran teachers and BTs benefit from feedback, just as students do. Teachers need explicit feedback from observers who are knowledgeable about the content in order to apply the feedback to make changes (Liu et al., 2019). A correlational study showed what teachers feel are important regarding feedback: the usefulness of the feedback, the accuracy of the feedback, the credibility of their evaluator, and their access to resources. Of these, the credibility of the evaluator was found to be most important (Cherasaro et al., 2016). Both of these results imply that the most valuable feedback could be from a mentor who is knowledgeable of the subject, credible as a teacher, and has the ability to provide feedback in a timely manner.

Targeted Professional Development. In a review of 35 studies, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identified several key features of effective professional development for teachers. Two of these features are providing an opportunity for feedback and reflection and providing professional development that is sustained and ongoing. These best practices were considered when developing the monthly professional development sessions led by the IFs. Through these sessions, participants will engage in several readings. Book studies are widely used in schools around the county to deepen teachers' knowledge on any number of professional topics (Keller, 2008). They have been effectively used in areas as diverse as helping parents understand their gifted child (Franklin & Henry Collins, 2018), helping graduate students connect online (Stonehouse & Splichal, 2015), and helping preservice teachers consider culturally relevant pedagogy (Eick & McCormick, 2010).

Support Group. The final component of the intervention is a pseudo-support group. This group is not intended as a means of delivering educational content to the BTs, but is intended to provide them with an in-person network of peers. Over time, this group can become a valuable place for BTs to seek input, bounce ideas, and commiserate during trying times. This group will function as a community of practice, which in educational settings are increasingly being used to support peer-to-peer learning (Wenger, 2011). Online communities of practice, often called "professional learning networks," are currently on the rise and help for BTs cope with stress and manage their classrooms (Will, 2016). Providing a collaborative setting for learning is a best practice for effective professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

The major components of this intervention (support group, observations, feedback, readings, discussions, and 1:1 mentoring) will combine to provide the BT with a comprehensive means of improving their classroom management. The readings, reflections, and feedback will also provide the BTs the opportunity to increase the cultural responsiveness of the instruction and their management. All components are carefully designed in conjunction with the design team so that implementation will add to teacher practice and competencies.

Improvement Methodology/Design

Design Team

The design team for this improvement project consisted of district leaders, IFs, and the disquisitioner. At the district level, the team included two key personnel. These personnel ensured that the improvement design was in alignment with district goals and initiatives. The first district representative on the team was Emily Jones, the current Human Resources Coordinator. Dr. Jones is a former LCS elementary principal and currently oversees BT training in the district. The second member of the team was Morgan Claude. Ms. Claude is an accomplished elementary principal whose current title is Director of Elementary Education. In her role, Ms. Claude works to ensure that all elementary teachers, including BTs, have the resources and training they need to be successful in the classroom. Having both Ms. Jones and Ms. Claude on the team was invaluable, as they are largely responsible for any training or initiatives related to BTs.

The design team also included two elementary IFs. The IFs were a critical component of the design team as it is through this job role that the intervention was implemented. Celeste Chapman has been the IF in an LCS elementary school for two

years. She has extensive experience with international teaching, which gives her a unique perspective on the role cultural understanding can play in the classroom. Ms. Chapman holds a Master's degree in Educational Technology. Also on the team is Janet Millsap, IF at Hart Elementary since 2017. Ms. Millsap, who is currently completing a Master's degree in Urban Education, has done extensive work on equity at her building and brings an important lens to the table. Because the disquisitioner is the immediate supervisor of participants, the two IFs conducted all sessions and led all communication with participants. This move was intended to remove bias and improve the validity of the results.

Improvement Initiative

The improvement initiative was focused on 1:1 and group mentoring. Within the area of mentoring were several major components, including training the mentors themselves, an initial startup meeting at the beginning of the school year, four additional professional development presentations, a facilitated support group, and observations of BTs. Each component is described thoroughly below.

Implementation Plan. The ultimate aim of this study's improvement initiative was to improve the academic outcomes of students in BT's classrooms. An intermediate desired outcome towards this aim was to increase BT's capacity to effectively manage their classrooms in a culturally responsive manner. With this outcome in mind, the goals for this intervention were to improve the classroom management skills of BTs by 50% and their confidence in managing their classrooms by 50%. Unfortunately, the outbreak of COVID-19 led to the school being conducted virtually throughout the fall 2020 semester. The researcher was forced to reconsider the plan for this study and modify the

content to meet the realities of virtual learning. Within the novel context of virtual learning, there were no longer "experienced' teachers for the BTs to observe. The design team agreed that arranging and conducting observations during this time would cause undue stress on both the BTs and the experienced teachers and was unlikely to yield useful information and strategies for the BTs. The instrument designed to measure CRCM in the research proposal was not applicable in the virtual setting. For these reasons, the measurement of improving classroom management was dropped as a goal and teacher efficacy in classroom management was re-centered as the focus. To achieve this goal, the team modified the original plan (see Figure 4) and worked using the timeline outlined below (see Figure 5). The figure is divided into two major sections, detailing the work of the design team and the timeline of the intervention itself.

Figure 4

Proposed Intervention Timeline

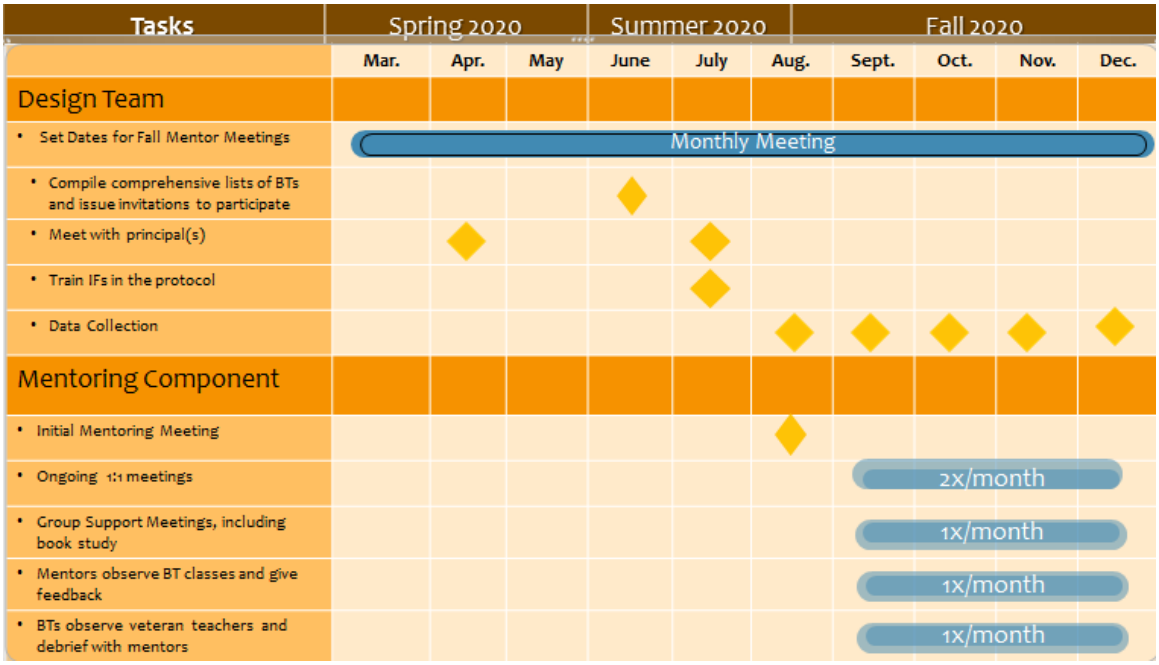
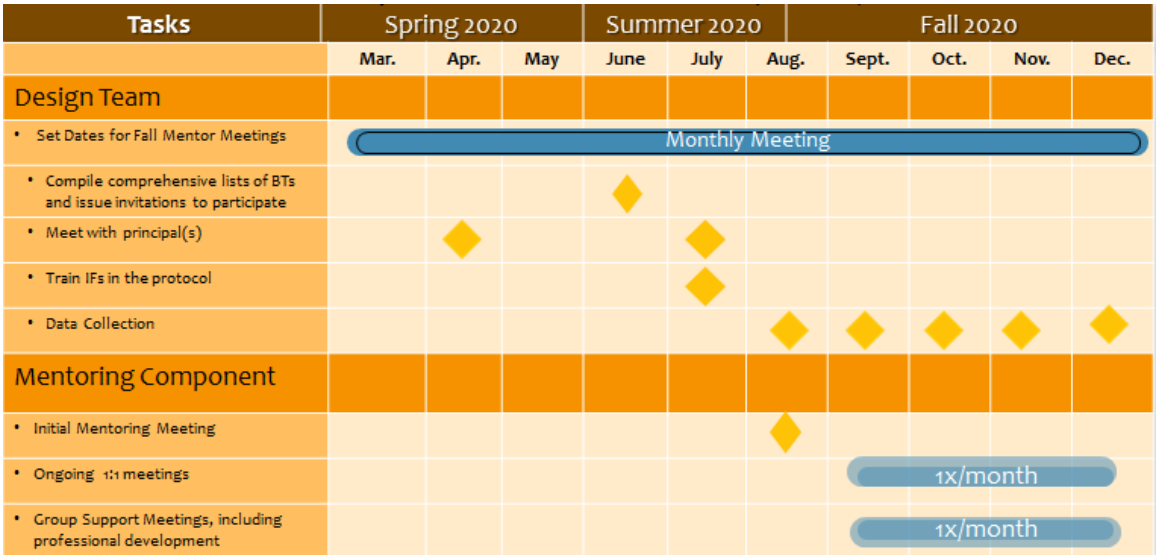


Figure 5

Actual Intervention Timeline



Work of the Design Team. The design team convened in May 2020, after IRB approval was granted. At the initial meeting, the team set monthly meetings for the duration of the project. Not all members of the team attended each meeting as different meetings focused on different components of the project. The first decision the design team made was narrowing the field of participants. Because the design team decided that first-year teachers are frequently overwhelmed and that participation in this project would be detrimental to them, the team selected only those teachers entering their second through fourth year of teaching. Initially, the design team planned to meet with elementary principals to determine if any schools in addition to Salem would participate. As the spring progressed, it became clear that school would probably be virtual for at least part of the Fall 2020 semester. The team was very concerned about the feasibility of a multi-school project being conducted virtually, so participation was limited to teachers at Salem Elementary.

In June 2020, the team monitored the hiring of Salem Elementary and determined that none of the new hires were eligible to participate. In July, the disquisitioner met with the two IFs, Ms. Milsap and Ms. Chapman, and trained them in the components of the study, data collection, and confidentiality requirements. Throughout the implementation component, the design team continued to meet monthly to monitor progress towards goals and make any needed adjustments (see "Formative Evaluation of Improvement Methodology" below for details).

The disquisitioner consistently worked with the two IFs to ensure that the study was conducted in accordance with the plan. At the July training, they reviewed the goals and implementation timeline of the intervention. The IFs reviewed the primary materials used to support the BTs in this study: *Kids First From Day One* (Hertz & Mraz, 2018), *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* (Hammond, 2015), *These Kids are Out of Control* (Milner et al., 2019), and Culturally Responsive Classroom Management: Awareness into Action (Weinstein et al., 2003). The IFs supported the disquisitioner in selecting chapters for the BTs to read in anticipation of each support group meeting. Next, the IFs reviewed the Classroom Management Efficacy Scale which was used as the formal initial, medial, and summative measure in this study (see Appendix A). Finally, the IFs used a jigsaw to examine several other key pieces of literature (Bondy et al., 2007; Brown, 2003; Weinstein et al., 2004) around Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM). These specific works were selected due to their practicalities in application to the classroom.

Participants

All teachers at Salem Elementary in their first through fourth years of teaching were invited to participate, and all accepted. Each participant selected their own pseudonym to be included in this disquisition and self-identified their gender and race. Of the 6 participants, five identified as female and one as male. Three of the six participants identified as White, one as Black, and one as Hispanic. A brief overview of participant demographic information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Pseudonyms and Demographics

Name	Gender	Race	Years of experience
Oliver	Male	Black	2
Allison	Female	White	3
Leah	Female	White	4
Meg	Female	Hispanic	3
Becky	Female	White	2
Colette	Female	White	2

Note. Years of experience is inclusive of the current (2020-2021) school year. Gender and race were self-identified.

Timeline and Description of the Intervention

The timeline of the intervention, including pre- and posttest data collection, was from August 2020 to December 2020. Within this timeline was a pattern of a group meeting followed by 1:1 meetings between the IF and the BT. There were five group meetings and four 1:1 sessions with each participant planned. Professional development

topics of each meeting were organized loosely following the work of Weinstein et al. (2003), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Dates of Sessions and Professional Development Topics

Date of meeting	Professional development topics
August 27, 2020	Overview of study and topics in following sessions.
September 23, 2020	Organizing the classroom environment: schedules, routines, and procedures
October 22, 2020	Relationships, high expectations, and the warm demander
November 23, 2020	Culturally consistent communication and working with families
December 10, 2020	Dealing with difficult moments, responding appropriately to students

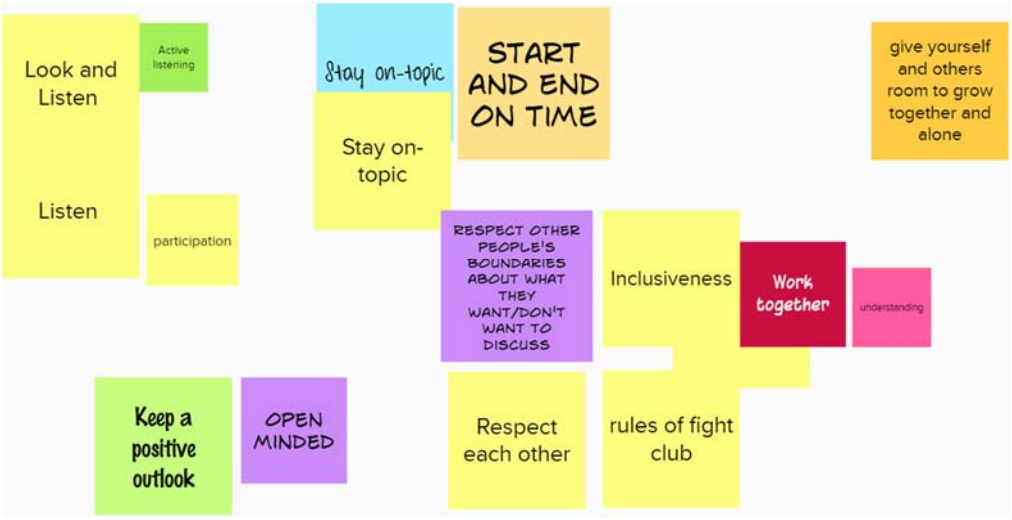
Initial Meeting (August 2020). The intervention began in August when BT "back to school" professional development is offered. As part of this training, BTs who agreed to participate in the mentoring program were gathered together, and the IFs briefly reviewed the goals of the program with the BTs. BTs were asked to bring their copy of the book *Kids First from Day One* (Hertz & Mraz, 2018). This book was selected because of its emphasis on building structured yet empathetic classrooms where student voices and needs are valued. The clear, easy-to-read format of the book makes it a great choice for busy beginning teachers to read. 4 out of 6 participants were familiar with the book as it was used in their district BT work in previous years.

Because only Salem Elementary teachers were invited to participate and no new teachers were included, all participants knew each other and had worked together for a minimum of two years. However, they only knew Ms. Millsap from district events. The

team felt that a bonding ice-breaker would build trust, so as an opening activity, the participants and IFs divided into two groups and played a round of the board game Taboo. An older version of the game with dated cultural references was deliberately selected to provide a shared experience where participants' background and culture overtly impacted their participation. After the ice-breaker, the BTs worked together to establish group norms for their ongoing meetings (Learning Forward, 2013). Using an online note collection system, participants developed the norms shown below in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Norms Developed by Participants During the First Session



Using a prerecorded video, the IFs shared with the participants the researcher's "why" of choosing this topic for her doctoral research. Participants were encouraged to think of their own "why" and share them verbally with the group. They self-reported that they felt this topic was important and relevant to their current work. Participants were able to draw the connection between the Taboo activity and the idea that each person's

background and implicit biases impact everything they do, including teaching. This work served as their first step towards identifying their own biases. Written reflections on this topic were collected to be analyzed qualitatively. Results are discussed in Summative Evaluation of Improvement Initiative below.

The IFs then shared a brief overview of the fundamentals and importance of CRCM. Participants were given a copy of *Culturally Responsive Classroom Management: Awareness into Action* (Weinstein et al., 2003). This article highlights five areas as critical to establishing culturally responsive classroom management: Recognition of one's own cultural lens and biases; knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds; awareness of the broader social, economic, and political context; ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate management strategies; and commitment to building caring classroom communities. Participants silently read the introduction of the article and highlighted section titles as the presenters gave a brief overview of each component. The purpose of this activity was to establish a shared understanding of the work ahead. Goals of the study, data to be collected, and a schedule of meetings for the remainder of the intervention period were shared with participants. Finally, participants took the initial survey Classroom Management Efficacy Scale (see Appendix A) to establish baseline data.

August 1:1 Meetings. Ms. Chapman, the IF assigned to Salem Elementary, met 1:1 with each participant between the August and September sessions. In these meetings, she worked with participants as they worked around identifying their own culture, how their identity provides (or does not provide) privilege, and how their personal cultures

impact their teaching and their relationships with children/families. After discussing this with Ms. Chapman, participants also wrote about it in their journals.

Second Session (September 2020). The second session was focused on schedules, routines, and procedures. Participants were taught about two types of routines: those for building community and those for management. They reflected on routines that had gone well and gone poorly in the past and were asked to keep an unsuccessful routine in mind during the session. The importance of routines was taught through the lens of Hammond, who wrote that rituals prepare our brains for what is to come. She gave the analogy between church, where incense, music, and chanting prepares the brain to "connect with the divine" (Hammond, 2015, p. 147), and school, where classroom routines and rituals cue the brain that it is time to learn. Participants learned first about general routines and procedures, including the CHAMPS (Sprick et al., 1998) method and the school-wide PBIS matrix, both of which are used to set extremely clear and consistent expectations for success. Then, participants were led in a discussion of PBIS. They discussed their experiences with the program and how it can be problematic when the behavioral matrix at school does not align with expectations at home and the community. Using an activity from the Culturally Responsive Field Guide (Leverson et al., 2019), participants mock-created a "personal behavior matrix" that they could use with students. This matrix is intended to bridge the gap between the cultures of school and home and help teachers identify areas of cultural difference in the classroom.

After routines and procedures, the session covered the physical layout of the classroom. Ideas were drawn from *Kids First From Day One*, and participants reflected on their own classroom setup. Communication, community, and collaboration were all

discussed through the lens of the physical layout. Participants were also asked to reflect on the components of their virtual classrooms and what connections could be drawn from them. Finally, participants were given a case study to read and discuss. This discussion was recorded, transcribed, and coded as part of the summative evaluation of the program, discussed below.

September 1:1 Meetings. In the September 1:1 sessions, participants discussed how they could apply what they learned about creating a responsive classroom environment to their current virtual classrooms. They reflected on the layout of their previous classrooms, analyzed them from a student-centered lens, and wrote notes on what they plan to do differently when school resumes.

Third Session (October 2020). The third session focused on building relationships and holding high expectations, which led to the analysis of themselves as warm demander. In the first section, participants learned about the value of demonstrating care for, rather than about, their students (Gay, 2010). Using lists of suggestions from Khalifa (2018) and Hammond (2015), they highlighted ideas for building relationships, trust, and community in the classroom. Participants then analyzed which of these ideas were applicable in the current virtual setting. The facilitators presented research from Milner (2019) describing how low expectations, low rigor, and over-scaffolding are interpreted by students as distrust and disrespect.

This section concluded with an in-depth analysis of the warm demander. Participants then reflected on their relationships with students and their teaching style through examination of the "warm demander chart" (Hammond, 2015, p. 99). This tool is reprinted in Appendix B. They were then given time to closely read the article "The

Teacher as Warm Demander" (Bondy & Ross, 2008). In their journals, they recorded what attributes of the warm demander they wanted to describe them and how they could move towards that goal (these journal entries, along with others, are analyzed below). Finally, after the group discussion, participants completed the mid-point data survey before leaving.

October 1:1 Meetings. Due to scheduling conflicts, Ms. Chapman was unable to meet with participants 1:1 between the October and November sessions. Participants were instead instructed to continue their writings from the October session to capture their feelings on what they learned about the Warm Demander and to document their next steps.

Fourth Session (November 2020). The fourth session tackled culturally consistent communication with students and working with families. Participants grappled with the quote, "Culturally responsive managers recognize that differences in discourse style can have a direct effect on students' behavior" (Weinstein et al., 2003, p.272), and re-read the communication section of this article. They discussed concrete ways of improving communication with students, including being cognizant of their students' cultural communication styles by eliminating coded language such as "would you like to sit down for math now?" Participants integrated their new learning with the previous sessions by connecting communication with community and relationship building and analyzed how respectful, two-way dialogue is foundational to a functioning classroom.

After examining communication with students, participants turned their attention to communicating with the parents and families of their students. Drawing from the work of Milner et al. (2019), participants considered tips for communicating openly with

parents and for handling conflict appropriately and supportively. Participants were given a brief overview of the concept of "funds of knowledge," or the existing capacities, skills, and knowledge all people hold as a result of their lived experiences (González et al., 2006). Thinking specifically of their students, participants identified ways they could authentically capitalize on families' funds of knowledge and integrate families into the learning community at the school. After role-playing challenging conversations with families, participants considered specific families with which they have had difficult relationships and discussed strategies they could implement to improve.

November 1:1 Meetings. During this time, the school building was unexpectedly closed due to COVID-19, and all staff were directed to work from home. This prevented Ms. Chapman from meeting with the participants, so a prompted audio journal asking them to reflect on their major learning so far was collected instead.

Fifth Session (December 2020). The fifth and final session focused on dealing with difficult moments with students and responding to student behavior supportively rather than punitively. Participants learned the S.O.D.A. strategy (Stop, Observe, Detach, and Awaken) developed by Hammond (2015) as a method for teachers to step back and avoid overreaction to student behavior. After learning this strategy for de-escalating themselves, participants learned strategies to avoid escalating situations with students, such as "Get to Yes" (Hertz & Mraz, 2018, p. 99). Participants discussed alternatives to punishment such as restorative practices and discussed these strategies in the context of the Cradle to Prison pipeline, the culmination of societal and structural racism, and other factors that result in Black American males being incarcerated at the highest rate of any population in the world (Milner et al., 2019). At the conclusion of this discussion,

participants reviewed what they had learned over the course of the study and discussed how they could implement what they learned in their current and future classrooms.

Formative Evaluation of Improvement Methodology

Proposed and Final Goals of the Study

As originally planned, the ultimate goal of this study was for the students of BTs to have improved academic outcomes. As a step towards this goal, this study aimed to improve culturally responsive classroom management skills of BTs so that the students in the classroom have the opportunity to benefit from academic instruction. There were two initial overall goals for this study:

1. A pre- and posttest comparison will show a 50% improvement in BT classroom management skills by January 2021 as measured by the Classroom Environment/ Management Observation Tool.
2. A pre- and posttest comparison will show a 50% improvement in BT's confidence in their classroom management abilities by January 2021 as measured by the Classroom Management Efficacy Scale.

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent decision by the district to keep all learning virtual from August 2020 to January 2021, the first goal was removed from the implementation plan as the design team felt it would not be possible to conduct fair or comprehensive observations of teachers' classroom environment/management in a wholly virtual setting. At the time, teachers were reporting extremely high levels of stress about returning to the school building during the pandemic and around learning to teach in a whole new way. The team was concerned that potential participants would opt not to participate in the study if it meant being observed in the new virtual setting. To determine

participant progress towards the goals, this study utilized multiple methods of study with data integration across qualitative and quantitative data.

Assessments Used

Classroom Management Efficacy Survey. Qualitative data in the form of a Classroom Management Efficacy Scale (see Appendix A) was collected in August, October, and December. Self-efficacy describes the belief one has about their ability to cause a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977). A synthesis of over 40 studies concluded that a teacher's sense of efficacy is positively correlated with numerous positive outcomes in the classroom, including academic outcomes of students and teachers' resiliency and ability to avoid burn-out (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Using an efficacy scale was selected because teacher self-efficacy has been found to be a predictor of success in the classroom, and changes in self-efficacy are most notable in the early stages of learning. (Bandura, 1977; Hoy & Spero, 2005). While efficacy can be difficult to measure (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), building teachers' efficacy scores in the area of classroom management could lead to a reduction in disparate discipline outcomes among students (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). Student teachers in urban settings have lower efficacy scores around classroom management than their peers in suburban schools. This is important because as teachers become more efficacious, they are less likely to blame students and families for difficult situations and are more likely to view themselves as capable agents of change in the classroom (Knoblauch & Chase, 2015). Thus, improving the efficacy of teachers who work with urban and/or minority students is especially critical to reduce academic, discipline, and outcome disparities.

The Classroom Management Efficacy Scale was adapted for this study from the work of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). Sometimes referred to as the "Ohio State teacher efficacy scale," or OSTES, this scale was found to be a valid and reliable measure of teacher efficacy in three areas: engagement, instruction, and management. Teachers rate their perceived ability to manage their classrooms on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from "nothing" to "a great deal." Although the survey utilizes deficit-based language such as "defiant" and "disruptive" to describe students, the wording of the questions was not changed to preserve their validity. For this intervention, only the eight questions related to efficacy in classroom management were used. In addition to the baseline and post data, monthly data was completed throughout the interventions. For this formative data, each BT completed a brief digital survey designed to capture progress towards effective classroom management. This survey, called the Brief Management Efficacy Survey (see Appendix B), is comprised of 4 key questions taken from the longer Classroom Management Efficacy Scale. The shorter form allows for more practical measurement within a limited time for observation.

Assessment Timeline

Figure 7 outlines the original assessment timeline for the proposed project, including formative, summative, process, and balancing measures. Due to the previously discussed changes to the study as a result of COVID-19, a new assessment timeline, shown in Figure 8, was developed. Each component of this timeline is discussed in detail below.

Figure 7

Proposed Assessment Plan

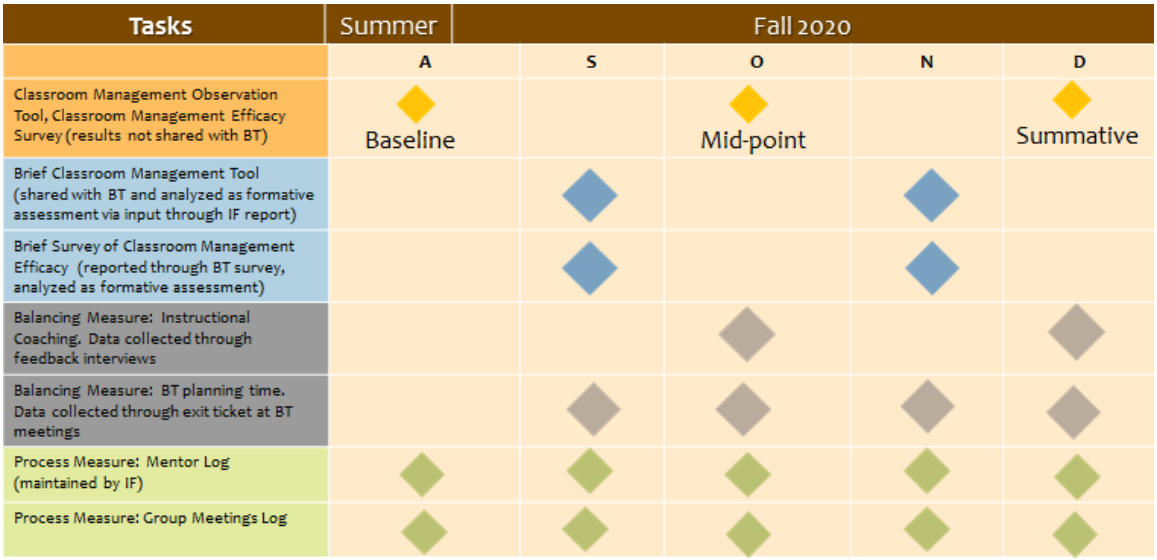
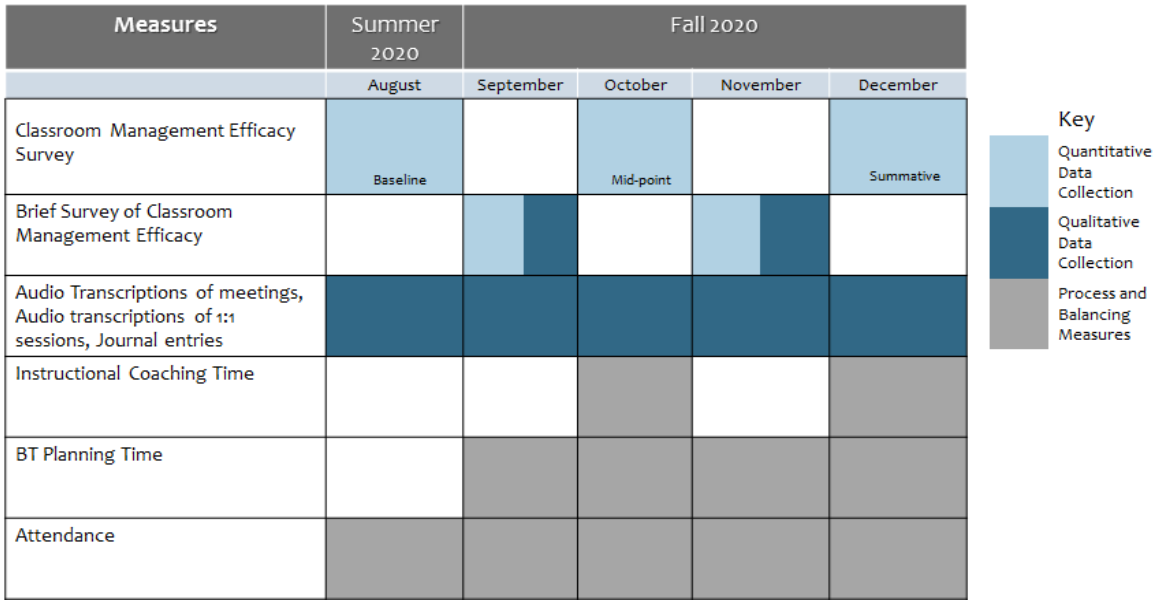


Figure 8

Actual Assessment Plan



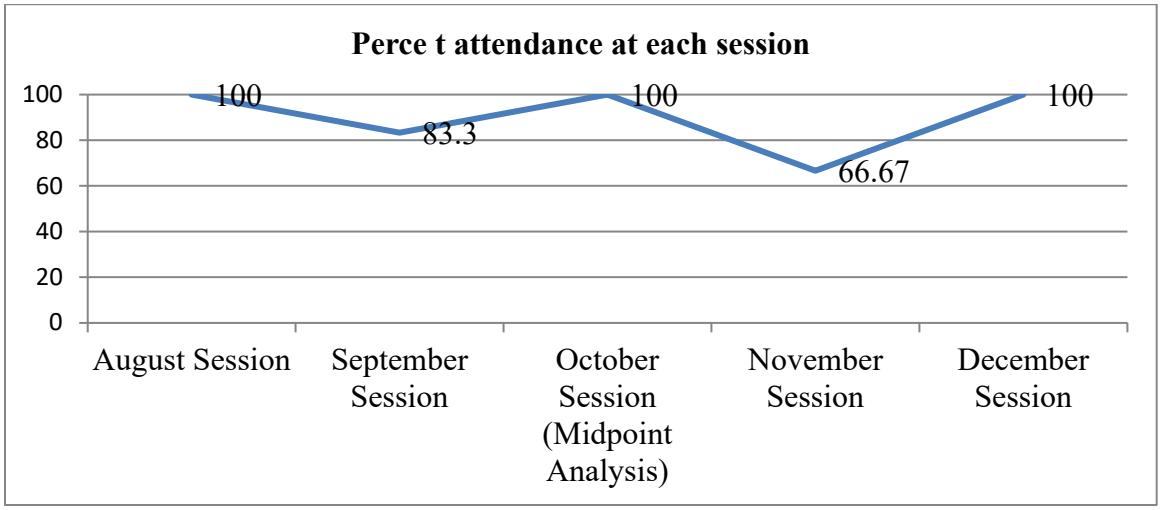
Process and Balancing Measures. In addition to collecting data to determine the effectiveness of the intervention, formative assessments included items on process measures and balancing measures. As described by Langley et al. (2009), process measures determine the fidelity of implementation while balancing measures attempt to account for unintended consequences of implementation. These measures are in place to ensure that the intervention happens as planned and to monitor that the overall functioning of the system is not negatively impacted (Hinnant-Crawford, 2019).

In this study, process measures were in place to determine fidelity. All group BT meetings included a sign-in sheet that documented attendance at each meeting and the length of the meeting. If any BT had arrived late or left early, the IF would note this on the sheet. This data was collected monthly for the duration of the study and plotted on a run chart. The original goal was for 90% of the participating BTs to receive 90% of the intervention as intended. Plotting the data on the run chart ensured that trends are analyzed appropriately, and astronomical data points (those markedly higher or lower than the trend) are not the cause of correction (Perla et al., 2011).

When the final sample size of only 6 participants was determined, the original goal of having 90% of participants attend 90% of sessions was determined to be implausible by the design team, and a new goal of 80% at 80% of the sessions was determined. This goal was exactly met, as shown in Figure 9, below. After reviewing the data, the team felt that a make-up session from November would be beneficial to the two participants who missed it; however, time restraints prevented the session from being conducted.

Figure 9

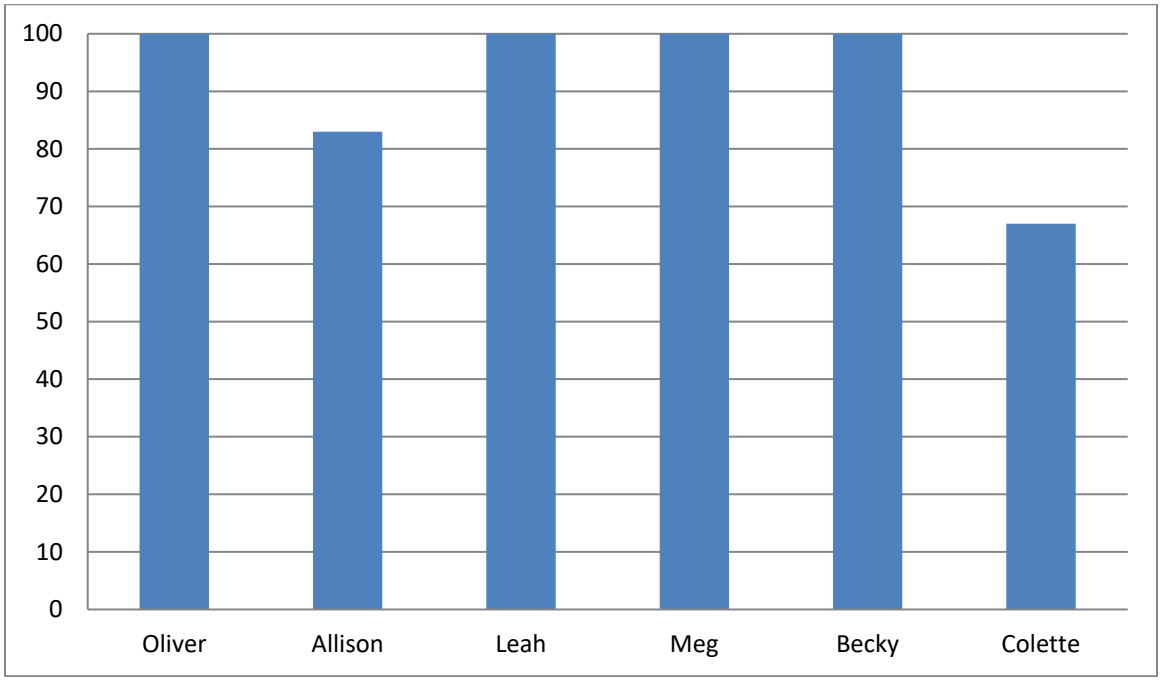
Percent of Participants Attending Each Session (N = 6)



At the end of Cycle 1, after the October session, the team reviewed attendance by participant, as well. At that point, only one participant had missed one session and attendance was determined to be acceptable. At the end of the study, after Cycle 2, the disquisitioner reviewed attendance data again. Final results show that four participants (66.67%) attended all six sessions, one participant (16.66%) attended five sessions, and one participant (16.66%) attended just four sessions. The final results of Colette, who only attended four sessions, should be considered interpreted with this in mind and is further discussed in the results.

Figure 10

Percent of Meeting Each Participant Attended



The design team focused on two primary balancing measures throughout the study. In addition to their needs around classroom management, BTs need extensive training on district curricula and on district/state initiatives. Because both BTs and IFs have limited time, it was possible that the increased focus on classroom management would preclude them from the time needed to focus explicitly on pedagogical/curriculum concerns. At the mid-point and end of the study, IFs were asked to reflect on this issue and provide feedback to the design team through an informal group interview. Mid-point data showed that this program did not negatively impact the IFs who implemented it. Ms. Chapman noted that "the conversations go with what we would be talking about anyway: building routines and content." (C. Chapman, personal communication, October 26, 2020). At the end of the study, Ms. Millsap noted that, while the study had taken a

significant amount of her time, it was worthwhile. Neither IF reported that the study was detrimental to their work.

The second balancing measure was the use of BT planning time. While the intervention was intended to help BTs, it was possible that the additional demands on their time (mentor meetings, observations, group sessions) would limit their planning time, cause them to miss other required meetings, and generally add to their level of stress. To account for this, the BTs were asked to complete a brief exit ticket (Appendix C) at the end of the September, October, and November group meetings. This exit ticket asked a few questions to determine BT's opinions of the effectiveness of the program and also include a short response component to allow BTs to share any conflicts that have arisen. The design team reviewed these responses to see if adjustments were needed to reduce the negative impact on BTs. In September, one participant answered "no," while four did not respond. Based on this information, the survey was adjusted to make this a required question. In October and November, all participants responded "no." Results of these surveys did not indicate that the study created a burden for any participants.

Formative Evaluation

This action research project study was conducted using a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model for improvement described by Langley et al. (2009). Using a formative evaluation cycle allows for continual improvement to the research itself and ensures that the research is not having any unintended negative consequences on the participants or the system. The PDSA cycle is a simple yet powerful method of constantly evaluating whether the goals of the study are being reached (Langley et al., 2009). In the "Plan" stage, the design team met and ensured that all elements are in place, as described above

in the Implementation Plan. During the "Do" phase, the mentoring and observation components began. The "Study" phase is what sets this methodology apart from more traditional research. Rather than wait until the end to determine effectiveness, the design team met monthly to monitor progress. While most of these meetings were informal in nature, in October (halfway through the study), a more comprehensive meeting was held. These meetings and their impact on the design of the study are described below.

Cycle 1. After the initial session in August, the facilitators noted that the participants were very engaged in the study and seemed interested in the topic. The participants enjoyed the Taboo activity and the resulting conversation about point of view and cultural context. The disquisitioner and the facilitator discussed ways of keeping the participants in this mindset throughout the study. No changes to the study were made as a result of this meeting.

After the September meeting, the facilitators reported that the BTs participated in the session but that they did not seem as engaged in the work. Questioning revealed that they had just learned that progress reports were due sooner than expected and were distracted by this news. Additionally, one participant missed this session due to a conflicting IEP team meeting. The implementation team agreed that the scheduling of future meetings needed to be reconsidered to be sure that conflict was not created and that participants could focus completely on the task at hand. The schedule for the remaining meetings was reviewed and shared with participants to prevent future conflict.

During the October session, participants were very engaged. They were intrigued by the concept of the warm demander and eager to analyze ways they could consciously

improve in this area. A technical error resulted in there being no audio recording of the session. No changes to the study were made based on the results of this session.

Midpoint Analysis. Members of the design team came together to analyze the results of the October data collected from the Classroom Management Efficacy Scale. Table 3 shows the arithmetic mean score and percent change for each participant (from a scale of 1-9) at the beginning and midpoint of the study.

Table 3

Midpoint Percent Change in Overall Efficacy Scores by Participant

Participant "name"	Beginning efficacy rating	Midpoint efficacy rating	% change beginning to midpoint
Leah	7.25	7.125	-1.72
Allison	6.875	8	16.36
Meg	6	5.125	-14.58
Colette	6.75	6.625	-1.85
Oliver	6.25	7.5	20.00
Becky	5.875	7	19.15

Note. Beginning and Midpoint scores indicate the arithmetic mean of each participant. Scores range from 1-9, with 9 being the highest.

It was quickly evident that the initial goal of 50% improvement (25% by mid-point) was not met by any participant. Three participants showed an increase in their reported abilities but did not meet the 25% goal, 2 showed a nominal change, and one showed a significant decrease. The team discussed these results at length. For most participants, their initial self-rankings indicated a high degree of skill in this area, making a 50% improvement improbable and, in some cases, mathematically impossible. The team posited that the participants such as Meg, who showed significant decreases,

possibly did so due to an increased understanding of the topic rather than a loss of skill. To investigate this, the facilitator had a conversation with this participant about her experiences so far. Meg reported that, before participating in this study, her understanding of CRCM was "environmentally based…[such as] letting students be a part of creating their own learning atmosphere, decorating, designing, and deciding procedural elements". This response confirmed the team's suspicion that her lower mid-point score was a result of a more nuanced understanding of the topic, indicating that the study may be positively impacting her in the classroom despite lowered scores.

The team also analyzed the percent change on individual questions (table 4) to determine if participants had noted improvement in discrete areas even if they were not apparent in their overall mean scores.

Table 4

Percent Change in Score by Question for Each Participant and Average Change for all Participants From Beginning to Midpoint of Study

"Name"	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Colette	-14.29	-12.50	12.50	0.00	40.00	16.67	0.00	-37.50
Oliver	75.00	0.00	16.67	40.00	20.00	33.33	33.33	-11.11
Becky	40.00	16.67	0.00	16.67	40.00	0.00	16.67	40.00
Leah	-14.29	0.00	0.00	16.67	0.00	0.00	-16.67	0.00
Allison	14.29	0.00	60.00	33.33	14.29	33.33	14.29	-11.11
Meg	20.00	-14.29	-42.86	-14.29	-16.67	-16.67	-20.00	0.00
Average change	20.12	-1.69	7.72	15.40	16.27	11.11	4.60	-3.29

Note. Q = question. Figures presented are percentages.

Initial participant rankings of Question 2 (*To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?*) showed a mean score of 7.833 (out of 9). This left little room for growth in this area and indicated that participants entered the program with confidence in their ability to set clear expectations. Contrary to Question 2, which only asked about teacher ability, the other questions all required participants to analyze their students' behavior and their interactions with the students. That is, Question 2 asked how well they can set expectations, while the other questions asked how well they can get their students to actually follow those expectations. In that context, Oliver and Becky's growth on Question 1 (*How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?*) is remarkable. It is possible that their participation in the study helped them gain knowledge and skills to draw from, increasing their confidence in their ability to actually follow through on classroom expectations. Four of the participants reported growth in their efficacy on Question 4 (*How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?*) and Question 5 (*How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?*), indicating progress towards confidence in their ability to begin moving from setting to holding high expectations.

After analyzing the quantitative data, the design team turned to the feedback given by participants on the open-ended sections of the survey. Overall, all participants gave positive feedback about the study in the comments section. Two participants mentioned their appreciation for the time to talk with their peers about what they are learning. Several also mentioned that the study is prompting them to think deeper about their practice, with Oliver commenting, "The study has opened my eyes to things I do that I am not cognizant of." Based on this feedback from participants and the inconsistent

quantitative data, the team decided to continue the study as planned despite not reaching the 25% improvement rate initially desired.

Cycle 2. Following the Mid-Point analysis meeting, there were two final sessions in November and December. The week of the November meeting, the school building was unexpectedly closed and the meeting was forced to be conducted online. Some members of the design team met to adjust the original plan for the session, which had involved partner work that was impractical virtually. After the session, the facilitators reported that the adjustment to the session (switching partner work to a facilitated role-play) was moderately effective and the participants appeared to be engaged; however, it was not as effective as partner work may have been. Based on this feedback, partner work was eliminated from the December session and replaced with verbal reflection prompts.

Summative Evaluation of Improvement Methodology

Summative evaluation of the project was completed utilizing both quantitative and qualitative measures. The use of both types of data collection allows for a more robust understanding of the effectiveness of the intervention. Data integration was used to consolidate the results for meaningful analysis. Overall results are provided separately for each method, followed by the integrated analysis.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data collection was conducted as a means of building upon participant responses to quantitative surveys, adding context to their responses, and identifying patterns in their thinking. Data was collected in the form of participant journals (both paper-pencil and audio), notes of conversations with the facilitators, open-ended

questions on participant surveys, and audio recordings of the group discussion portion of the sessions. This wide variety of source material was deliberately selected in order to provide as robust a representation of the participant experience as possible. Audio recordings were transcribed using an online service, and handwritten journal entries were photocopied for analysis. First cycle coding was conducted twice, once using an "In vivo" method and once using a "descriptive" method. In vivo coding uses direct quotes from the corpus and was selected to represent the voices, phrases, and ideas of the participants, while descriptive coding was used to identify major topics from the corpus (Saldaña, 2016).

Quantitative Data Collection and Results

Pre- and postintervention quantitative data were collected using an online survey at the end of the first and last session. Results were analyzed to determine a percent improvement for each participant, as shown in Table 5. Improvement percentages ranged from 8.62% to 44.68%.

Table 5

Endpoint Percent Change in Overall Efficacy Scores by Participant

Participant "name"	Beginning efficacy rating	Endpoint efficacy rating	% change beginning to endpoint
Leah	7.25	7.875	8.62%
Allison	6.875	9	30.91%
Meg	6	7.375	22.92%
Colette	6.75	8.375	24.07%
Oliver	6.25	8.625	38.00%
Becky	5.875	8.5	44.68%

Note. Beginning and endpoint scores indicate the arithmetic mean of each participant's scores on eight questions. Scores range from 1–9, with 9 being the highest.

Additionally, the percent change for each question was analyzed by participant, and an average percent change was found for each question, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Percent Change in Score by Question for Each Participant and Average Change for All Participants From Beginning to End of Study

Name	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Colette	28.57	12.50	0.00	14.29	60.00	50.00	40.00	12.50
Oliver	100.00	-11.11	50.00	80.00	60.00	50.00	50.00	0.00
Becky	80.00	50.00	28.57	50.00	80.00	28.57	16.67	40.00
Leah	0.00	0.00	0.00	16.67	16.67	0.00	0.00	50.00
Allison	28.57	12.50	80.00	50.00	28.57	50.00	28.57	0.00
Meg	40.00	28.57	28.57	0.00	16.67	16.67	40.00	20.00
Average change	46.19	15.41	31.19	35.16	43.65	32.54	29.21	20.42

Note. Q = question. Numbers presented are percentages.

Overall results were analyzed using a paired-sample *t*-test. The paired sample *t*-test is used to determine the significance of the difference in the mean between two sets of scores. This measure is appropriate to compare the results of repeated measures taken from the same sample (Warner, 2012). Results from this test, shown in figure 11, show a higher efficacy score at the end of the intervention (mean = 8.2917, *SD* = .57915) than at the beginning of the intervention (mean = 6.5, *SD* = .54199). Results show a significant difference in the score for overall efficacy in classroom management $t(5) = 5.963$, $p = .002$. These results suggest that the mentoring and professional development components of the intervention contributed to an improvement in BT's sense of efficacy around classroom management.

Table 7

Results From Paired Sample t Test of Overall Results

	Pretest		Posttest		*t*(5)	*p*
	M	*SD*	M	*SD*		
Pre-/posttest	6.50	.54	8.29	.58	-.59	.002

In addition, paired-sample *t* tests (see Appendix D) were also run for each of the eight individual questions in the Classroom Management Efficacy Survey. Results were significant for six of the eight questions, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Results From Paired Sample t Test of Each Question

	Pretest		Posttest		*t*(5)	*p*
	M	*SD*	M	*SD*		
How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	5.833	1.33	8.17	.98	-3.79	.013
To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	7.83	1.17	8.83	.41	-1.732	.144
How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	7.00	1.41	8.83	.41	-2.80	.038
How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	6.17	.75	8.17	.98	-3.16	.025
How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	5.67	.82	8.00	.89	-4.72	.005
How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	6.67	1.21	8.67	.82	-3.87	.012
How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	5.833	.75	7.50	1.22	-3.95	.011
How well can you respond to defiant students?	7.00	2.00	8.17	1.33	-2.44	.058

Overall Analysis of Results

The overall statistically significant improvement on the Classroom Management Efficacy Scale and the improvement on six of the eight individual questions is encouraging and seems to indicate a real improvement in the BT's sense of efficacy around classroom management. Despite this, no participant met the initial goal of a 50% improvement in their score. In retrospect, it is clear that this was a result of the initial

goal being unrealistic and not based on an accurate estimate of participant baseline data. Despite not meeting the initial quantitative goal, it appears that there was an overall positive impact on the efficacy of the participants. It is also possible that the participants became more confident as a result of experience, time, success in the classroom, or other factors not related to the intervention. However, given the unique circumstances of virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, these outside factors have been greatly reduced. This indicates a stronger likelihood that the intervention was responsible for the improvement noted in final scores. Further investigation paired with classroom observations would be needed to determine if this improvement in efficacy results in actual change in the classroom.

Statistically significant improvement was not noted on two questions (*To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?* and *How well can you respond to defiant students?*). In both cases, significant improvement was difficult to achieve due to high initial ratings by the participants. This indicates that the BTs felt confident in their abilities in these areas before beginning the program. Participants' confidence in making expectations clear is unsurprising and is possibly the result of this topic being included in nearly every book, seminar, and training directed toward BTs (Hertz & Mraz, 2018; Wong & Wong, 2018). Participants' high confidence in their ability to respond to students who defy the rules was unexpected by the disquisitioner and is incongruent with school-level discipline reports indicating that 19.7% of office referrals are for "disrespect" and "disruptive behavior." It is possible that there is some variation in interpretation of the phrase "responds to" in the question. While the disquisitioner assumed a meaning of independent response, it is possible that participants

interpreted it differently. Perhaps they viewed sending a student to the office as a method of "responding to" defiant students. Further investigation and study would be needed to fully explore and interpret these results.

Analysis of Results for Selected Participants

As shown in Table 6, the participant who showed the most growth in efficacy ratings was Becky, a White female teacher in her second year of teaching. As the study unfolded, she continually reflected on her background and the impact that background had on her adult life and on her teaching. She noted that her hometown was predominately White and middle class and that the previous schools where she was employed had a large Black population but were racially and economically homogenous. She was surprised at the "much wider range of home life [sic]" at Salem Elementary. Becky was able to reflect critically on her expectations of students, saying that she "hold[s] their hand a little bit when I maybe shouldn'*t*." Rather than blaming students for poor academic outcomes, Becky saw that it was her own low expectations that needed to be addressed.

The second-highest efficacy improvement was shown by the only male and only Black participant, Oliver. As Gay (2010) points out, being Black does not guarantee an ability to respond to students in a culturally responsive manner any more than speaking English ensures an ability to be an English teacher. Oliver reflected several times that the study moved him toward awareness of his own practice and that it "opened my eyes to things that I do that I am not cognizant of." Over the course of the study, he pushed himself to fully engage in the role of the warm demander, saying that he needed to continue to relate better to students so that "we're able to push through with academics."

Oliver appears to hold competing thoughts about his relationships with his students. In one reflection, he noted that his relationships with students are a key part of his ability to control the classroom environment while simultaneously identifying himself on the warm demander chart as "keep[ing] a professional distance from students unlike himself." Oliver showed the largest improvement in Questions 1 (*How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?*) and 4 (*How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?*), indicating that he was working through this dissonance and seeing the connection between relationships in the classroom and managing student behavior. He was beginning to implement managing student behavior through relationships and personal affiliation and not relying solely on being an authority figure (Bondy et al., 2007). As with Oliver, the paired *t* test analysis of Question 1 showed a higher efficacy score at the end of the intervention (mean = 8.1667, *SD* = .98319) than at the beginning of the intervention (mean = 5.833, *SD* = 1.32916). These results were significant $t(5) = 3.796$, $p = .013$. This was also true for Question 4, which showed a higher efficacy score at the end of the intervention (mean = 8.1667, *SD* = .98319) than at the beginning of the intervention (mean = 6.1667, *SD* = .75277). These results were significant $t(5) = 3.162$, $p = .025$.

The smallest change in efficacy came from participant Leah, the most experienced teacher in the study. For five of the eight questions, Leah rated herself with identical pre- and posttest scores. On two questions, her efficacy score increased by one point. Leah was confident going into the study, with a mean score of 7.25 at the pretest. Unlike other participants, her score was consistent at the mid-point, indicating that her initial confidence was based on a clear understanding of the topic. In her reflection, Leah twice

referred to the presentations as "a good reminder." Despite this, she did note at the midpoint that she reflects on her practice continually, so reflecting in the sessions as well was somewhat "exhausting." It is possible that her existing habit of critical self-reflection made the study's reflection redundant; however, without corroborating classroom observations, it is difficult to tell. For the final question (*How well can you respond to defiant students?*), her efficacy score increased from a 6 to a 9, showing her increased confidence in this area. Because dealing with problem behaviors was the topic for the last session (just before the posttest was administered), it is possible that the increased score in this area was a result her recent attention to the topic rather than a true improvement.

Analysis of Major Themes

The descriptive and in vivo qualitative coding techniques described previously yielded three major themes: Awareness, Relationships and Expectations, and Lessons from Virtual Learning. Each theme is described with connections to the quantitative findings.

Awareness. A major theme that emerged from the qualitative analysis was awareness. Participants demonstrated an increased awareness of their own culture (and in some cases, Whiteness) and how that culture has shaped their experience in the world. In one reflection, participant Becky wrote, "My background does not look the same as the backgrounds of all my students. I have to continue to open my eyes to the rest of the world and learn from it." One participant reflected that their White identity provided "opportunities and privileges in [her] life" and acknowledged the impact this has had on their worldview. This critical self-reflection shows that participants are taking the first

step toward culturally responsive teaching and classroom management (Hammond, 2015; Milner et al., 2019; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Weinstein et al., 2003).

At the initial meeting, participants noted that they were interested in this topic and felt it was relevant and worthwhile. As evidenced by the preintervention efficacy scales, participants thought that they were familiar with CRCM; however, as the intervention continued, they became more aware of the nuances. In reflection, participant Oliver wrote that "this study has opened my eyes to things that I do that I am not cognizant of" and that he previously "never really thought about cultural relevancy within the classroom" until participating in the study. Interestingly, one of the primary source materials used for the intervention was *Culturally Responsive Classroom Management: Awareness into Action* (Weinstein et al., 2003). The assumption in framing the work around this source was that participants had a base layer of awareness and were ready for action. From the data, however, it seems that the study was also successful in moving participants from ignorance to awareness. In interviews, Hammond (2015) has noted that culturally responsive teaching is in danger of becoming yet another piece of oversimplified education jargon. It is likely that Oliver and other participants had heard the phrase in other contexts without deeply exploring the meaning. After participating in the study, the BTs were more aware of the true meaning of the concept rather than just as a buzzword.

Relationships and Expectations. Another major theme to emerge from the qualitative data was the importance of relationships and trust. In a group discussion response to a case study, one participant advised the hypothetical teacher in the case study to "just talk with them…[so they] feel like they're cared for." Meg noted that "relationships are the hallmark of everything we ask and everything we do with

students." She went on to say, "I'm trying to work on that and develop stronger relationships." Participants also reflected on their relationships with parents, saying, "I'm going to have to put more continual work into this relationship with this parent." This shows that participants came to the conclusion that not only are relationships critical but that the onus of building the relationship lies with the teacher. This focus on relationships as the foundation of learning is supported by a bevy of literature, including but not limited to Milner et al. (2019), Hammond (2015), Ladson-Billings (1995), and reflects an understanding of the fundamentals of culturally responsive teaching.

Some participants made the connection between building these relationships and increased academic rigor for their students. Oliver noted that it is worthwhile to continue to deepen relationships with students "so we're able to push through with academics." Colette grappled with this when thinking about her students who are Black and identified as having intellectual disabilities, saying:

> One thing I keep going back and forth on and kind of working out in my own brain and my own teaching is how to maintain high expectations for my students and demand and insist that…my students kind of work to their highest abilities without overly simplifying or overly scaffolding.

In this reflection, Colette unknowingly echoed the findings of Pringle et al. (2010), who found that African American students perform best for teachers who are "most challenging, but fair" (p. 37). This understanding reflects a mental shift from the advice often given to new teachers, "they don'*t* have to like you to respect you." Colette's beginning understanding of this shows their first steps toward becoming a warm demander.

Becky, reflecting on Hammond's (2015) warm demander chart (see Appendix B), felt her relationships were strong but reflected that she might be inadvertently holding some students to lower standards. Leah echoed this sentiment, saying they were "striving to be a combination…having high expectations and reinforcing those expectations, but also being caring." Their willingness to examine their own practice in order to consciously move towards higher expectations and rigor is a critical step towards bridging the gap between awareness and action (Hammond, 2015; Milner et al., 2019).

Several of the questions from the efficacy survey related indirectly to teachers' ability to build relationships with students. Results from Question 5 (*How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?*) show a higher efficacy score at the end of the intervention (mean = 8.0000, *SD* = .89443) than at the beginning of the intervention (mean = 5.6667, *SD* = .81650. These results were significant $t(5) = 4.719$, $p = .005$. Results from Question 6 (*How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?*) show a higher efficacy score at the end of the intervention (mean = 8.6667, *SD* = .81650) than at the beginning of the intervention (mean = 6.6667, *SD* = 1.21106). These results were significant $t(5) = 3.873$, $p = .012$. Results from Question 7 (*How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?*) show a higher efficacy score at the end of the intervention (mean = 7.5000, *SD* = 1.22474) than at the beginning of the intervention (mean = 5.8333, *SD* = .75277). These results were significant $t(5) = 3.953$, $p = .011$. This data, combined with the reflections of the participants, indicates that the interventions' focus on relationships and the concept of the warm demander positively impacted the participants' confidence in their ability to manage their classrooms in a culturally responsive manner.

Lessons From Virtual Learning. Participant reflections consistently related to how they could apply their new knowledge to the current virtual setting. An unexpected theme to emerge was the positive relationship between virtual schooling and time. Several participants separately commented that virtual teaching afforded them additional time to process, reflect on, and react to their students' actions. Leah noted, "I have time to actually think about what I'm doing and apply [what I'm learning]." Allison reported that "it's actually been really good for me to explore all the different elements of CRCM this year [of virtual teaching]." Participants commented that they now felt available to respond to individual students without having to be concerned about what the rest of the class was doing. Virtual schooling provided a sort of "training ground" where participants could practice implementing what they were learning in a calmer, slower-paced environment than a regular classroom.

Participants were also aware of how the virtual setting allowed them to form stronger connections with students and their families. Many noticed a shift in their understanding of students and their families due to being "in" the students' homes during class time. Participant Meg became "more aware of their environments and their situations" as a result of virtual learning. Leah reported that "talking to their parents a lot has given me a lot of context." The participants' increased understanding of the role culture plays in learning was cemented by their first-hand observations of their students' home lives and their increased communication with families. In the teachers' eyes, students and families were humanized (Khalifa, 2018) through these atypical interactions.

While virtual learning played a surprisingly positive role in the participants' experience, it is possible that it was a contributor to low improvement in efficacy shown

in interview Question 8 (*How well can you respond to defiant students?*). Results show a higher efficacy score at the end of the intervention (mean = 8.1667, *SD* = 1.32916) than at the beginning of the intervention (mean = 7.0000, *SD* = 1.89737). While there was an improvement in scores, the results were not statistically significant $t(5) = 2.445$, $p = .058$, indicating that the change was probably not a result of the intervention. While the initially high mean of 7.00 (on a scale of 9) left little room for significant growth, it is also possible that the participants simply did not face any defiance from their students during virtual learning. Because attendance was via virtual meetings, students who were likely to be defiant in a typical class could opt to simply not attend class. Additionally, reduced demand and frequent breaks in the virtual class may have lessened the opportunity for defiance among students who did attend. These factors may have contributed to participants' reduced efficacy in this area as they did not have the opportunity to implement what they learned.

Results from Question 3 (*How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?*) show a higher efficacy score at the end of the intervention (mean = 8.8333, *SD* = .40825) than at the beginning of the intervention (mean = 7.0000, *SD* = 1.41421). These results were significant $t(5) = 2.803$, $p = .038$. These results indicate that even in the virtual environment, participants were able to improve their ability to implement routines in the classroom. As they became more accustomed to the new environment and the new tools required of online learning, they were able to integrate their knowledge from this intervention with their daily activities in the classroom.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations

As with all research, this study had several limitations. One minor limitation of the study was the user error in the virtual meeting that resulted in the discussion from the November session not being recorded. It is impossible to know if this data would change or validate the qualitative findings of this study. Another limitation of this study was the sample of participants. Although all eligible teachers at Salem Elementary participated, the sample size of six was small. Results may have varied if more BTs participated or if there was greater diversity in age, race, or teaching context between the participants. While a larger scale was outside the scope of this study, increasing sample size and participant diversity is a recommendation for further study.

A major limitation of this study was the mid-course adjustments that were made due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shift to virtual schooling. As discussed previously, this forced the design team to remove the observational components of the study, which removed the opportunity to determine if participants' increased efficacy resulted in changes in the classroom. Additionally, Social desirability bias has been found to impact participant self-reporting on many scales designed to determine attitudes toward cultural understanding (Larson & Bradshaw, 2017), and thus, this study was particularly vulnerable to it. Without corresponding observations, it is impossible to determine the extent to which participant respondents were impacted by social desirability bias, or their desire to put the "right" answer

Recommendations for the Current Context

The disquisitioner recommends that this work be continued in the current context. The current participants should continue to meet to discuss what they have learned and analyze their practice. As a next step, the program could be continued and possibly even repeated when students return to the building. This would give the participants the opportunity to implement what they are learning in real-time and benefit from their reflections in doing so. This intervention was designed to be a first step for beginning teachers, to provide them the skills they need to manage their classrooms so that rigorous instruction can occur. As a next step, participants should do more in-depth work around Culturally Responsive Teaching itself. This will help bridge the gap between the immediate goal of improved classroom management and the ultimate aim of improved academic outcomes for students.

In addition to continued work for the current participants, it is recommended that this intervention be applied to other teachers and staff in the building. This would provide a common language and expectation in the school for classroom management and would be a foundational step towards shifting instruction to be more culturally responsive in general. This school-based training should include all school staff to include custodians, cafeteria staff, assistants, and others. If appropriate, future trainings could build on the knowledge and lived experiences of these staff members, who are much more likely than the classroom teachers to be life-long residents of the area. A challenge for this recommendation would be determining which teachers should be included in subsequent iterations of the intervention. As indicated in the pretest results, teachers might rate themselves highly without fully understanding the implications of what they are being

asked. A school-level design team would need to carefully consider which teachers the full intervention would be appropriate for and which might benefit from a modified program.

Qualitative data analysis revealed a significant amount of personal reflection and attention to building relationships with students. As a next step, teachers could engage in an in-depth analysis of their relationships with their students. Hammond (2015) suggests using a checklist and a curious mindset to monitor overall rapport with the class and to improve relationships with certain students. If a group of teachers together engaged in this kind of comprehensive, objective analysis, it is probable that relationships with students would improve, further setting the stage for improved academic outcomes.

Moving forward in the context of Little City Schools, the district should consider implementing this intervention for all BTs as part of the standard induction program. This would increase sustainability and would guard against the knowledge lost that comes from turnover in administrative and teaching personnel. Results indicate that the intervention was successful in improving BTs' efficacy around CRCM. Additionally, qualitative data indicated that the participants in the study had lower levels of knowledge and competency in CRCM than was originally presumed by the design team. This indicates an even stronger need for a program such as this one to ensure that BTs continue to develop their skills in this area. Beyond the BTs, it stands to reason that all school and district employees would benefit from this or similar training. Expanding the training throughout the district should be relatively simple since initiative supports and complements current district priorities such as equitable discipline and the closing of the gap in outcome scores between White and Black students.

Within the context of Little City Schools, the disquisitioner recommends that CRCM be examined as a means of reducing disparate referral rates to programming for Exceptional Children (often referred to as Special Education. Little City Schools is currently on a federal watch list due to the overrepresentation of Black students in the areas of Learning Disability, Emotional Disability, and Intellectual Disability. Klingner et al. (2005) propose that unnecessary referrals could be avoided by systematically implementing Culturally Responsive practices in the classroom and through PBIS. Culturally Responsive Response to Intervention (RTI) is also suggested as means of reducing disparate referral rates (Harris-Murri et al., 2006). It stands to reason that CRCM might have an ameliorating effect as well, especially in the area of Emotional Disability, which is more subjectively defined due to the partial reliance on teacher observation and rating scales for placement.

Finally, the disquisitioner recommends that Little City Schools apply the lessons learned from virtual learning to ongoing PD for BTs. BTs showed that they felt more confident in applying their skills when they had additional time to reflect on their students' behavior. School and district leaders can build on this lesson by deliberately creating additional time and space for BTs to reflect on their practice. This time could be created through strategically placing instructional assistants, utilizing shared planning across grade levels, or adjusting the master calendar to provide for additional planning time. BTs also indicated that they felt closer than ever to their students and families during virtual learning. School and district leaders should deliberately build on these new relationships to solidify the school to community connection and as a first step toward community empowerment (Khalifa, 2018). This can be the first step towards recognizing,

honoring, and capitalizing on the funds of knowledge families hold and "connecting [them] as classroom assets" (Milner et al., 2019).

Recommendations for Other School Leaders

The disquisitioner recommends that other school leaders consider implementing this initiative as a first step towards implementing culturally responsive practices in their building. Bandura shows that "efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to level of motivation and performance" (1977, p. 61). In other words, if teachers believe that they can manage their classrooms through culturally responsive techniques rather than through control-based techniques, they will be motivated to do so even when it is challenging. School leaders need to provide the time and space for their staff to build the relationships that are critical to culturally responsive teaching, which can be challenging in a climate that is focused on pushing for "results" such as improved test scores. If leaders wish to change practices in their building, a program such as this one would be a strong starting point. It could also be customized to meet the individual needs of a specific school. For example, if the school leader has noticed that communication is an area of frustration between parents and teachers, that leader could emphasize the role culture plays in communication and begin problem-solving with that lens.

Recommendations for Continued Scholarship

The primary recommendation for continued scholarship is that the intervention be implemented as originally designed, utilizing a combination of efficacy and direct observations as data toward effectiveness. Research could also explore the longer-term implications on students in these classrooms and their future academic performance. Additionally, this study was conducted in a small, urban-like setting with a racially

diverse student body. Further research could be conducted in rural and fully urban environments and in schools with less racial diversity and/or more linguistic diversity to determine if similar results were found. The impact on experienced teachers is worthy of study as well. As described in the limitations, future research could also focus on larger numbers of BTs with greater diversity in age, race, and teaching context.

As discussed, American schools have an unprecedented mismatch in the cultural and racial demographics between students and teachers. Schools need to make shifts away from older, White-normative practices such as compliance and punishment and towards practices that affirm relationships and promote engagement and responsiveness. Utilizing culturally responsive methods improves engagement in learning and builds the opportunity for rigor (Hammond, 2015). Further research could examine these practices closely and deconstruct further the various aspects of culture that are most important for building engagement. This research could examine how schools and teacher preparation programs could prepare BTs by teaching about these cultural components without falling into stereotypes and overgeneralizations.

On a larger scale, research could build on this work to examine the relationship between teachers' cultural responsiveness and the impact on systemic racism in schools and society. As part of training in cultural responsiveness, teachers first examine their own bias. It is possible that this examination of bias and systemic racism could lead individual teachers to attempt to disrupt the system's reproduction of itself and actively work to break down institutional barriers. Further research could investigate the role that this sort of training plays in leading BTs to be disruptors rather than perpetuators of existing systems.

Conclusion

The outcome of any program focusing on culturally responsive teaching practices is difficult to measure, and the true impact on teachers and students might not be apparent for years. In reality, the benefits of improved classroom management might lead to a myriad of long-term gains that are impossible to analyze or define. What if, on the day she was not suspended for being "disrespectful," a young Black female engages in a classroom discussion that sparks a life-long interest in debate and a career in law? What if being a part of a school that focuses on social justice and the disruption of the school to prison pipeline leads White and Black students to ongoing activism and engagement in social discourse?

In the shorter term, ongoing analysis of the classroom behaviors of the participating teachers would be needed to further define success and progress towards the ultimate aim of improved academic outcomes for students. While this study has shown that efficacy can be improved through professional development and coaching, it has not shown how this efficacy translates to classroom practice. Culturally responsive classroom management is but one piece of the much larger puzzle of reform that is needed to change outcomes for vulnerable students. The lessons learned in this study are the first step in the ongoing reflection, discourse, and action necessary to move schools and students toward a more just and equitable future.

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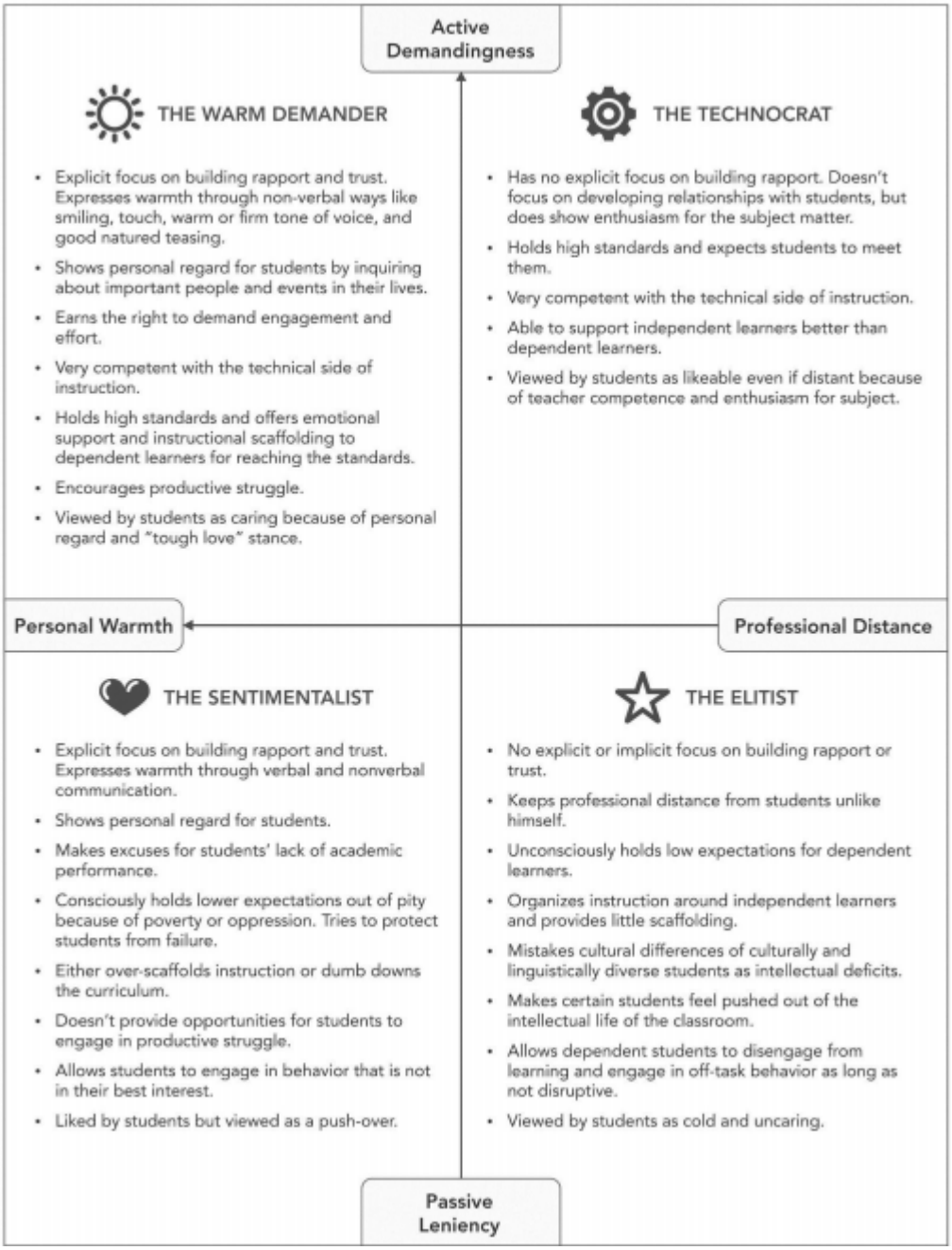
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Classroom Management Efficacy Scale

	Nothing		Very little		Some influence		Quite a bit		A great deal
1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8. How well can you respond to defiant students?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Appendix B: Warm Demander Chart



Note. Adapted from *Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain*, by Z. Hammond, 2015, Corwin Press, p. 99.

Appendix C: Brief Management Efficacy Survey

	Nothing		Very little		Some influence		Quite a bit		A great deal
1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Appendix D: BT Exit Ticket

On a scale of 0–5, please describe how participation in this study has changed the following aspects of your practice.

	Not at all					Quite a bit
Implementation of new management skills	0	1	2	3	4	5
Deliberate inclusion of culturally responsive practices	0	1	2	3	4	5
Talking about culturally responsive practices with colleagues	0	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness of your own biases	0	1	2	3	4	5

Has this study created any unexpected burdens for you?

Is there anything you would like us to know?