Student Engagement Action Research a Focus on Culturally Relevant Instructional Methods

Amia Dixon

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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ACTION RESEARCH: 
A FOCUS ON CULTURALLY RELEVANT INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS 

by 

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements 
For the Degree of Doctor of Education in 
Curriculum and Instruction 
College of Education 
University of South Carolina 
2022 

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DEDICATION

With tears of pride (and frustration), I dedicate this to my family: my husband and my children: Tud, Taj, Zae, and Nya

May this paper prove to you that all ideas are achievable

May this paper prove to you the start of a goal and the completion of the same

May this paper prove to you that having good friends to push you is better than any friend

May this paper prove to you that with God all things are possible

To my husband, thank you for believing in me and letting me take over your office

I never scratched you out my speech and I will never scratch you out my heart

I’m blessed to know you

and blessed to be loved by you

To my writing buddy, Nya. I feel like we did this together.

I hope one day you are greater than me

I hope one day this world is a better place because of us

To my sons, Be more than just the color of your skin

Be the one who doesn’t always fit in

Be the one that is driven
Special thanks to

my parents and my sister

for your encouragement and your interest

This journey has been a ride

A ride of passion, a ride of truth, a ride to open the eyes for our youth

a journey I’m glad I started

and one I’m even more glad to be ending
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to show my sincere appreciation to my coworkers who continued to support me throughout my journey.

I would like to thank my students that gave their full participation without hesitation.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action study was to determine the impact the use of culturally relevant instructional methods (researcher created term) would have on student achievement and student motivation. The use of culturally relevant teaching methods is rooted in culturally relevant pedagogy first introduced by Gloria Ladson-Billings and culturally responsive teaching practices first introduced by Geneva Gay. The study implemented an intervention cycle that modified the fourth-grade curriculum by differentiating lessons based on learning style, incorporating an “activator” that connects to the students’ culture and builds background knowledge, allowing student choice for instructional text, increasing the use of culturally relevant material, and offering direct and immediate feedback. Data were collected through observations, surveys, grade reports, and STAR reports. The data was analyzed to determine a positive, negative, or no impact to the use of culturally relevant instructional methods. The study included 19 student participants and two teacher participants from a Title 1 school in a rural county.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

One day, I received a text message from my principal that she needed me to stop by her office. This was not unusual; as an ESOL teacher I am in and out of the building, so I don’t always have impromptu encounters in the hall during which the principal could pass me a quick message. It was also not unusual for her to text me. She didn’t really care for e-mail and preferred text as her reliable method of communication. All the same, the feeling of “What did I do wrong?” crept into my thoughts. I was racking my brain with all the things I could have possibly done wrong that would end with me in the principal’s office. Had I missed an important e-mail? Did I forget to fill out a form? Was one of my students in her office? I was slightly nervous as I wheeled my cart and adjusted my back before heading down the long hallway to her door.

Upon my arrival to her the office, she was on the phone and simply motioned to a stack of book on the desk outside her door. I finally figured out that she wanted me to get the books. I was slightly puzzled as to why she wanted to me take the books. The instructional coach, whose office is next to the principal’s, then leaned out of her door and said, “We didn’t know what else to do with them. We thought you could use them for your students.” I didn’t know if the emphasis on “your” was intentional or if it just played in my mind that way. I just responded, “Oh … thanks.” I placed the books in my cart and walked to my room.
Once inside my classroom, with Christmas-morning excitement, I quickly begin examining the books. I realized why the books were for “my” students. There were words in Spanish. The books were not written in Spanish, in fact, the book was 90% English. It was a story about a girl and her abuela going shopping. The book was essentially several math lessons mixed within a narrative. Questions swirled in my mind: This book was perfect for a second-, third-, or even a fourth-grade class. It provided a great review/preview of math lessons within these grade levels that fit the Georgia performance standards. There were more than enough books for a class set.

Questions began to swirl in my mind: Why weren’t they given to one of those classes instead of me? Why didn’t she ask me to help plan a lesson for teachers so that the books could be utilized? Did she value the books? Did she really want me to use them? That’s when the topic of effective use of culturally relevant instructional methods first entered my mind. How can we ensure that there is equal representation in the classroom for ESOL students? When I began working in a different school, I realized that this unequal representation occurs in minority populations. I wondered if culturally relevant instructional methods could aid in increasing student engagement for minority students?

**Problem of Practice**

Factors that affect the success rate of students are an ongoing conversation in education. Researchers are always studying the factors that affect students’ progress, grade completion, and on-time graduation. “Student engagement at school has emerged as a critical factor across hundreds of dropout prevention and recovery programs in the United States” (Stout & Christenson, 2009, p. 17). Student engagement in classrooms
aids in the success rate of students. One way to enhance the educational experience of all students is through embedded use of culturally relevant instructional methods within the mainstream curriculum. According to Hill (2012), using multicultural literature that is authentic will ultimately increase literacy achievement and motivation among culturally diverse students. Culturally relevant reading material is described as “when a book is culturally relevant, the content is true to the lives of the children reading it. It reflects their everyday reality and is therefore immediately accessible to them” (Titone et al., 2012, p. 24). Furthermore, research indicates that there are specific teaching behaviors, which when implemented appropriately in classrooms, tend to increase student engagement and thus increase students’ academic achievement (Harbour et al., 2015). The purpose of this qualitative research is to prove that the embedded use of culturally relevant materials in the mainstream curriculum will increase students reading proficiency as well as improve students’ overall educational experience.

**Theoretical Framework**

The relationship between peers and adults has an effect on a student’s level of engagement and thus an effect on a student’s level of achievement. A student’s attitude, skills, behaviors, and engagement in school are affected by interactions with others. “According to the self-determination theory, for children to become motivated and engaged in school, their basic psychological needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy must be fulfilled” (Yang et al., 2018, p. 47). In recent years, there has been an increase in research related to the cognitive and non-cognitive influences on adolescents in school. Researchers have been exploring qualitative and quantitative factors that affect students’ performance and engagement in school. The self-determination theory
highlights the non-cognitive factors affecting engagement and performance in school. Niemiec and Ryan (2009) defined self-determination theory as a “macro-theory of human motivation, emotion, and development that takes interest in factors that either facilitate or forestall the assimilative and growth-oriented processes in people” (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009, p. 134). Proponents of self-determination theory agree that the need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy are essential for the achievement of students. “The need for autonomy is the need to feel one’s actions emanate from one’s own self; the need for relatedness is the need to care for and feel cared for by others; and the need for competence is the need to feel that one is effective in the world” (Wisniewski et al., 2018, p. 1). Each factor plays a role in cognitive and non-cognitive abilities of students. The blend of both abilities is necessary for students to engage with teachers and peers. “Students who reported higher levels of perceived competence and autonomous motivation were more engaged in school than their peers who reported lower levels of perceived competence and autonomous motivation” (Areepattamannil et al., 2018, p. 386).

Self-determination theory (SDT) offers the idea that students react to and with the stimuli that is presented in their environment. These reactions are based on satisfying their needs. The roles of the teacher are also redefined with the self-determination theory. Wisniewski et al. (2018) noted that teachers should be viewed as facilitators, guides, and supporters of development, instead of the traditional view as controller, monitors, and trainers. SDT indicates that the voice of the student is the driving force of their educational experience. If students are learning from each other and being influenced by their teacher, and their teachers in turn learns from their students, then an optimal
classroom environment is created. From that classroom environment can emerge fully engaged students with high levels of academic achievement.

The concept of self-efficacy within the classroom is crucial for effective classroom practices that yields an optimal learning environment. For a teacher to be able to act as a facilitator, guide, and supporter of development for students, their concept of self-efficacy must be examined. “A key component in improving teachers’ intercultural competences is their sense of self-efficacy” (Romijn et al., 2020, p. 59). The concept of teacher efficacy is rooted in cognitive theory and is defined by Bandra (1977) as “an individual’s judgement of capability to perform a particular action” (as cited in Romijn et al., 2020, p. 58). Self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in the teacher’s practice. A teacher’s confidence in their ability to teach a subject is projected during the implementation process. In other words, the relation between the teacher’s beliefs in their ability and actual teacher’s performance is reciprocal. Just as the teacher’s self-efficacy plays a significant role in the teacher’s presentation of information in content class, the same self-efficacy plays a significant role in cultivating a classroom that advantageous for diverse learners.

A study by Romijn et al. (2020) has proved that methods to improve self-efficacy for teachers yield positive returns in a diverse classroom. Thus, teachers who feel more “efficacious working with children with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds state that they are more often engaged in intercultural classroom practices” (p. 67). To build self-efficacy, it is necessary for teachers to practice intercultural classroom techniques. Romijn et al. (2020) concluded that improvement in intercultural classroom practices is gained through a “continuous yet targeted approach” (p. 68). This approach should
include professional development for pre-service, in-service, and veteran teachers to build a reciprocal relationship between “diversity-related domain specific self-efficacy” (Romijn, 2020, p. 68).

Notable research has been conducted under the terms “culturally relevant teaching” and “culturally relevant pedagogy.” Two of the most prominent names in the field of culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy are Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings. Geneva Gay is noted as the founder of culturally responsive teaching practices. Gay (2000) presented the term “culturally responsive teaching” in her book, *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*, as a means to improve the educational experience for ethnically diverse students. Culturally responsive teaching encompasses the use of cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as a means to enhance their educational experience. The practice also includes concern for marginalized students of color, including African Americans, Asians, Latino, and Native Americans. Lastly, the practice acknowledges the social consciousness that builds in White students. Research findings provided theoretical claims, practical experiences, and personal stories from educators who had worked with African, Asian, Latino, and Native American students. Gay’s (2002) research produced five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching: “developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity through instruction” (Gay, 2002, p.106).
Gay (2002) explained that it is imperative that teachers understand the cultural differences within various ethnic groups. It is important to the educational experience that factual information is disseminated about cultural differences. She also urged teachers to incorporate multicultural teaching in all subject areas. This can be done through the use of *societal curriculum*, a term coined by Cortes (1991, 1995, 2000). Teachers can counteract the images that are portrayed in the media, that may be flawed or prejudiced, and teach students to discern the facts. Gay (2002) also explained the use of *cultural scaffolding* as an effective means of culturally responsive teaching. Cultural scaffolding is the process of building upon a student’s cultural knowledge to generate new knowledge. The fourth element of culturally responsive teaching is understanding how to effectively communicate with various ethnic groups. Each group has a different set of conversational standards. A culturally responsive teacher will not only be aware of the standards represented in her class but also respect and shape interactions between teacher and student so that the educational experience is optimal for each student. The fifth element of culturally responsive teaching involves matching the instructional output with the diverse needs of the students. An understanding of the cultural characteristics will provide the criteria for selecting the instructional strategies that need to be utilized in the classroom. Utilizing culturally responsive teaching allows students to maintain their cultural identity while improving their academic achievement. Forcing students to adapt to the foreign cultural norms places a great burden on students and may negatively impact their educational experience.

Gloria Ladson-Billings is noted as the founder of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). The work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2006, 2014) focused on
the area of teacher posture and paradigm through culturally relevant pedagogy.

Throughout the cultivation of her work, she noted that there are three tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Recently, Ladson-Billings (2014) expanded culturally relevant pedagogy to include the ideals of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012). Paris (2012) explained the goal of culturally sustaining pedagogy is to sustain the “cultural and linguistic competence” of their native or home language while “simultaneously offering access to the dominant cultural competence” (p. 95). Ladson-Billings (2014) attributed the extension of her pedagogy to the sentiment that one should never stop learning and growing, “any scholar who believes that she has arrived, and the work is finished does not understand the meaning of scholarship” (p. 82). The ideals of culturally sustaining pedagogy have allowed for the inclusion of other global identities and other fields of learning, such as arts, music, athletics, and film. Educators and researchers have acknowledged the disparities that occur between minority populations and White students as illustrated through the continuously widening achievement gap, as illustrated by the report produced by the U.S. Department of Education (2011). People of color and underserved students have requested equitable education to combat the widening achievement gap.

Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching “as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (as cited in Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p. 31). Gay believed that there were four actions essential to implementing culturally responsive teaching (as cited in Aronson & Laughter, 2016). The first required replacing deficit perspectives of students and
communities. In the second, teachers must also understand the resistance to culturally responsive teaching from critics, so they are more confident and competent in implementation; Gay suggested methods, such as having teachers conduct their own analysis of textbooks, to investigate how different knowledge forms affect teaching and learning. Third, teachers need to understand how and why culture and difference are essential ideologies for culturally responsive teaching given they are essential to humanity. Finally, teachers must make pedagogical connections within the context in which they are teaching.

While Geneva Gay primarily focused on the teacher and the teaching process within the classroom to effectively build culturally responsive classroom, Gloria Ladson-Billings focused on the adoption of a pedagogy by the teacher that would be exemplified teacher’s posters influencing planning, instruction, and assessment. In Ladson-Billings:

development of culturally relevant pedagogy, she has demonstrated how the posture described by these three tenets [academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness] might be employed in various social contexts, with diverse students, with established curricula, through classroom instruction, during teacher education, and as a framework for educational research (as cited in Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p. 166).

These two units of focus aid in the commitment to social justice education, seeking for the classroom as a place for social change. The goal of culturally relevant teaching and practices are to “push teachers and students out into their communities and cultures” (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p. 167) as a means of gaining understanding of
each other to make lasting connections. A culturally responsive classroom can “support students’ reading development, foster a love of reading, help students form positive identities, and broaden their social consciousness” (Kiber & Chapman, 2018, p.741). A culturally responsive classroom is described as a classroom with culturally relevant text that represents the cultures within the classroom.

Critical literacy, first introduced by Freire (1970), involved a process of reading a text and thinking beyond the written words to find the meaning in the text. “Critical literacy encourages readers to question, explore, or challenge the power relationships that exist between authors and readers” (Norris et al., 2012, p. 59). Critical literacy uses literacy as a tool for social action as it works in reproducing the norms of society, gender, race, and even class. Critical literacy allows students to delve into a different world, one that is not of their own, a world in which students can find similarities and differences between their own experiences and the experiences of their peers. Critical literacy provides the stage for developing multiple viewpoints, discussing social issues, and helping to facilitate plans to impact their world through social change. Critical literacy provides the avenue for teachers and students to engage in thought-provoking discussions that will connect their lives to the text in which they are reading in class. This connection to the text enhances student engagement and creates students who are not only socially but also culturally aware (Norris et al., 2012). Critical literacy encourages students to move beyond the text to true action, which is also the goal of utilizing culturally relevant teaching methods.

Critical literary can be fostered through various strategies within the classroom. One strategy to foster critical literacy is using activators before reading a new text. An
activator is defined as “techniques to activate students’ prior knowledge through the use of engaging strategies designed to focus learning” (Schrock, 2021, p. 8). Activators include “activities to promote the retention of knowledge through the use of engaging strategies designed to rehearse and practice skills for the purpose of moving knowledge into long-term memory” (Schrock, 2021, p. 8).

**Purpose of the Study, Research Questions, and Rational**

This study looks at the use of culturally relevant instructional methods geared toward increasing student engagement for a culturally diverse fourth-grade classroom. This study will use qualitative and quantitative measures to measure the student’s response to the use of culturally relevant instructional methods within the classroom. The study will measure the response to the use of culturally relevant instructional methods through change in engagement and change in reading proficiency. This study will also measure the integration of culturally relevant instructional methods into the current curriculum.

Many teachers are faced with strict demands from their district. Some teachers have complete autonomy. Is it still possible to implement culturally relevant instructional methods (CRIM) while under the constraints of district set plans? This study will also examine if teachers have enough knowledge to find, utilize, and implement CRIM into their classroom. The race and background of the teacher plays a critical role in effective implementation of CRIM. “As White teachers and students of color, in some ways, possess different racialized and cultural experiences, and different repertoires of knowledge and ways of knowing both inside and outside the classroom, incongruence may serve as a roadblock for academic and social success (Milner &
Tenore, 2010 p. 565). Milner and Tenore (2010) continued to assert the importance of teachers acquiring “knowledge, attitudes, dispositions, beliefs, and skills necessary to meet the needs of and be responsive to their students, equitable classroom management and learning opportunities for all students are possible” (p. 565).

RQ 1: How does the use of culturally relevant instructional methods impact student engagement and classroom culture in a general education fourth-grade classroom?

RQ 2: How does the use of culturally relevant instructional methods impact reading proficiency in a general education fourth-grade classroom?

RQ 3: How were culturally relevant instruction methods integrated into the curriculum by general education and special education teachers?

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of culturally relevant instructional methods as they relate to student engagement, classroom climate, reading proficiency, and overall benefit for teachers and students. Research Question 1 examines the outcomes from the use of culturally relevant instructional methods. The answer to this question will determine if students demonstrate positive behavioral actions when culturally relevant instructional methods are used by general education and special education teachers in the general education setting. Research Question 2 examines the outcomes in reading proficiency of the students when culturally relevant instructional methods are implemented. Research Question 3 seeks to examine the impact and the frequency of use of culturally relevant instructional methods. The examination of how
often culturally relevant instructional methods are being used in the classroom is important. It is presumed by the researcher that the more often the methods are used, the more likely occurrence of positive student engagement, positive return in classroom climate, and higher reading proficiency levels.

**Researcher Positionality**

Positionality in action research is establishing the role you will play in the process of research. “Essentially, your positionality as a researcher means asking the question, who am I in relation to my participants and my setting?” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 37). The research must determine their relationship to the setting and the participants. The term outsider is used to refer to “action researchers [who] have been seen as outside change agents who either are contracted by an organization or community or receive grant funding” (p. 38) to solve a particular problem or evaluate a program. The outsider typically employs help from the insiders. The insiders are “practitioner researchers [who] see research as a way to deepen their own reflections on practice toward problem solving and professional development, as well as a way to generate knowledge of practice from the inside out” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 38). It is important to note that the relationship of insider or outsider is not exclusive and stagnant but rather fluid and on a continuum.

The issue of positionality is important in action research because it aids in determining the validity of the research. Herr and Anderson (2015) also pointed out that establishing positionality is important as it frames “epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues in the dissertation” (p. 39). The positionality frames how the researcher approaches the topic and conducts the research. My positionality is also framed by my
experiences as a student. As an African American student who attended a predominantly White institution (PWI), I understand the obstacles that non-White learners face. I share in the feelings of isolation and inadequacy felt by some. I have experienced the lowered standards of achievement set by teachers. I understand the lack of motivation sometimes displayed in the classroom. I also think about my son, who also attends a PWI. Knowing that he also faces similar obstacles of not seeing himself in his classroom helps contribute to my desire to improve the educational experience through the use of culturally relevant instructional methods.

**Research Design**

This action research design study will systematically manipulate the current curriculum and use culturally relevant teaching practices as a tool for intervention to determine the effect culturally relevant teaching practices have on reading achievement and student engagement in the fourth-grade English language arts (ELA) classroom. Action research is a “methodology for researchers (often teachers) to understand and generate knowledge about educational practices and their complexity” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 440). The purpose of action research is to bring about a change in a curriculum setting. A problem is identified that may involve people, a particular task, or a procedural guideline. Action research then sets about a method of solving that problem by looking for a set of solutions. Those solutions are then implemented to determine if a change has occurred. For some, the setting could be the whole school, the whole district, or a particular part or class within the school (Cohen et al., 2018).

Researchers over the years have set a methodology to performing action research. Bassey (1998) declared it be performed in eight stages, Moroni (2011) agreed with
Zuber-Skerritt (1996b) and set a five-step process. McAteer (2013) also set a process that involves five components but uses the label of stages instead of steps. Cohen et al. (2018) set an eight-stage process for action research. My action research plan followed the outline stages presented by Cohen et al. (2018).

Stage 1: Decide and agree on one common problem that you are experiencing or need that must be addressed. Stage 2: Identify some cause of the problem (need). Stage 3: Brainstorm a range of possible practical solutions to the problem to address the real problem and the real cause(s). Stage 4: From the range of possible practical solutions decide one of the solutions to the problems. Plan how to put the solution into practice. Stage 5: Identify some ‘success criteria’ by which you will be able to judge whether the solution has worked to solve the problem, i.e., how will you know whether the proposed solution, when it is put into practice, has been successful. Identify some practical criteria which will tell you how successful the project has been. Stage 6: Put the plan into action; monitor, adjust and evaluate what is taking place. Stage 7: Evaluate the outcome to see how well it has addressed and solved the problem or need, using the success criteria identified in Stage 5. Stage 8: Review and plan what needs to be done in light of the evaluation. (p. 449)

This study took place at Skyward Elementary School (pseudonym?), a school within the Beautiful County School District. The study includes 19 fourth-grade students and two teachers. One teacher is the special education teacher, and the other is the general education teacher. Although this study was set a specific plan of use of CRIM it is important to note that creating a culturally responsive classroom that utilizes culturally
relevant instructional practices is not a “set of predetermined skills, actions, ideas, or strategies” (Milner & Tenore, 2010, p. 570). Instead, it occurs through “the responsive nature of teachers” to “manage and facilitate classroom learning opportunities and reject attempts to control students” (Milner & Tenore, 2010, p. 570).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

I used multiple sources of information to collect data. The study employed the use of surveys, observations, grade reports, and STAR data reports. Participants answered questions related to their current classroom experience, current level of achievement, and current level of engagement. Interviews were used to collect data related to the participants’ biographical information. Data about their educational experience was addressed through the use of surveys. Students answered multiple choice and open response questions to provide a personal and narrative element to the case study. Observations were conducted before, during, and after the presentation of the culturally relevant instructional methods to gather first-hand accounts of the participants’ reactions to the method of teaching. Surveys were issued each week by the researcher. The survey was distributed to the teacher and the researcher to track the use of culturally responsive teaching and offer an opportunity for the teacher to ask for assistance in implementation process, if needed.

Methods of analysis were conducted during and after data collection incidences. Data was organized according to themes. “Themes are ideas, points of view, or experiences that run through the category (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 171). The themes were organized into categories of “positive behavioral impact,” “negative behavioral impact,” “positive achievement impact,” “negative achievement impact,” and “no
impact.” The term behavioral impact refers to data the research or participant describes as affecting behavioral outcomes such as motivation, self-esteem, attentiveness. The category Positive Behavioral Impact refers to data that the research or participant describes as a positive impact on the educational experience such as feelings of success, feelings of worthiness, or excitement about learning. The category Negative Behavioral Impact refers to data that the researcher or participant describes as a negative impact on the educational experience such as feelings of isolation, feelings of inadequacy, or apathy about learning. The term achievement refers to data the researcher or participant describes as having an effect on achievement levels such as grades or assignment completion time. The category Positive Achievement refers to data that the researcher or participant describes as positive impact on achievement such as increased grades or increased achievement level. The category Negative Achievement refers to data that the researcher or participant describes as negative impact on achievement such as decreased grades or decrease achievement level. The term No Impact refers to data that the researcher or participant describes as no change in regard to level of achievement or level of engagement.

Next, I used the categories to enable me to see the big picture. The patterns in the categories assisted in gaining answers to the research questions. “Looking at the overall picture without getting lost in the details allows you to discover what the data tell and the significance of the story for your research question” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 177). If the majority of the data indicates Positive Behavioral Affect, then the researcher can conclude that the use of culturally responsive instructional methods positively impacted the educational experience in the area of engagement for the participants. If the majority
of the data indicates Positive Achievement Affect, then the researcher can conclude that the use of culturally responsive instructional methods positively impacted the educational experience in the area of achievement for participants. If the majority of the data indicates Negative Achievement Affect, then the researcher can conclude that the use of culturally responsive instructional methods negatively impacted the educational experience in the area of achievement for participants. If the majority of the data indicates No Affect, then the researcher can conclude that the use of culturally responsive instruction methods had no impact on the educational experience for the participants.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this action research is to implement culturally relevant instructional methods (CRIM) in a fourth-grade ELA classroom. “Action research requires teachers to identity an area of concern, develop a plan for improvement, implement the plan, observe its effect, and reflect on the procedures and consequences” (Irvine, 2010, p. 61). This study examined the effects of CRIM on fourth-grade students’ reading achievement and level of engagement. Factors that affect the success rate of students is an ongoing conversation in education. Researchers are always studying the factors that affect students’ progress, grade completion, and on-time graduation. Georgia Partnership for Excellence (2018) has identified factors that influence graduation rates. Through their study on the dropout rate for students, they have identified several important factors that effect on-time graduation: reading on grade level, student demographics, retention, school attendance, student behavior, and poverty. Of those factors, researchers have agreed that some are more critical than others. Stout and Christenson (2009) explained that dropout prevention programs throughout the United States have identified student engagement as a critical factor leading to the rise in the number of students dropping out of school.

The lack of student engagement affects each subgroup of students in different ways. “Empirical studies have demonstrated that student engagement is related to a number of important outcomes, including greater academic participation, achievement,
school completion, greater effort in learning activities, a stronger sense of liking toward and connectedness with school, and more positive personal well-being” (Yang, 2018, p. 45). It is important that teachers employ various strategies to engage student learning. These various strategies work to activate the learning of the diverse population of the classroom. “The importance of effective pedagogical responses for students of color is especially important given the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. population” (Gallego et al., 2001, as cited in McKinley, 2010, p. 4). A lack of various strategies instructional strategies will greatly impact the achievement and engagement of students in a diverse classroom.

Culturally relevant instructional methods, which include the ideals of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings 1995a, 1995b), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002), have been identified as tools that can be used to effectively engage students in their educational experience and build cultural competence. It is imperative that teachers create classroom environments that are not only culturally inclusive but also culturally supportive (Hanus, 2016). It is presumed that a culturally inclusive environment allows all students to feel accepted by teachers and peers within the classroom. Hopefully, this feeling of acceptance leads to the students’ ability to effectively engage within the classroom setting, thus creating a positive educational experience.

**Research Questions**

The study sought to answer the following research questions:
RQ 1: How does the use of culturally relevant instructional methods impact student engagement and classroom culture in the general education fourth-grade classroom?

RQ 2: How does the use of culturally relevant instructional methods impact reaching proficiency in the general education fourth-grade classroom?

RQ 3: How were culturally relevant instruction methods integrated into the curriculum by general education and special education teachers?

The process to answer these research questions begins with defining student engagement and recognizing the current classroom culture. Student engagement for this study includes the following factors: assignment completion, time on task, and feelings of belonging. The process to answer these research questions continues by looking for methods to engage a diverse fourth-grade ELA classroom. Through my research, several effective pedagogical interventions were noted as a means to increase achievement. After examining the make-up of the fourth-grade ELA classroom and the current district-appointed reading curriculum, I looked for weaknesses in the curriculum and the greatest need of the fourth-grade ELA classroom. That greatest need presented as reading achievement, with 95% of students in the study scoring below the state of Georgia’s guidelines for grade-level expectations as measure by the STAR reading assessment. When student reading achievement was compared to Bibb County’s district guidelines for grade-level expectations, 74% of students in the study scored below grade-level expectations.
McKinley (2010) wrote about the process of decreasing the achievement gap between White and Black students. She found that through her implementation of culturally responsive strategies, the achievement gap was narrowed. Her research found that two important components contributed to this narrowing: professional development and increased focused on learning through the use of culturally responsive instructional methods. This study employed those two ideals to increase the reading achievement and level of engagement for this fourth-grade diverse classroom. Finally, the study noted how the methods were integrated into the already established reading curriculum.

**Literature Review Methodology**

I mainly used three search engines to obtain the peer-reviewed articles and research studies needed. I used the popular databases of Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, Education Source, and ERIC. Knowing that Ladson-Billings birthed the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy, I also searched the databases for her as an author. My search yielded several books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and websites dedicated to the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally relevant teaching as a means to enhance the educational experience of a diverse classroom. The search revealed the use of culturally relevant methods (this term is used to include culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant teaching) in preservice teacher programs and professional development for veteran teachers. Most frequently the search revealed the use of culturally relevant methods in the reading classroom as a means to connect families to the educational experience and as a means of providing equitable education for the diverse classroom. The search also revealed more specific uses of culturally relevant methods in STEM and/or STEAM
classrooms, in classrooms with majority African American students, and to support the educational experience of a diverse classroom. Although, my study does not focus on the use of STEM and/or STEAM, I thought it worth noting that my initial search revealed a specific need for the integration of STEM and/or STEAM for students of color.

**Theoretical Framework**

Culturally relevant teaching is a theoretical pedagogy in its own rite. Other theories that frame this study include culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000, 2002), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017), Noddings’ (2002) care-based education, which will be discussed in the “Goals of Culturally Relevant Teaching Methods” section, and critical literacy (Freire, 1970). Each of these theories acknowledges the impact cultural awareness plays in the role of the educational experience for all students. The U.S. public school classroom now includes a diverse collection of people. Enrollment for African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, and American Indian students are continuously increasing. The National Center for Education Statistics (2011) also reported an increase in enrollment of English language learners (ELL) since the fall of 2000. Enrollment numbers of ELLs reported in Fall 2017 were 10% greater in 10 or more states than numbers reported in 2010. The need for adequate engagement practices is necessary to address the needs of the diverse enrollment of students.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) was first introduced by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1990) after a 3-year research study involving teachers of African American
students. Ladson-Billings was looking for a solution to the disparaging performance of African American students in public schools. At the conclusion of her initial study, Ladson-Billings struggled to find connections between the chosen teacher participants. Further review of the teachers’ individual interviews and the final group discussion produced the connections she was missing. These commonalities and subsequent studies (1992a, 1992b, 1992c) helped create culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1995a) explained that culturally relevant pedagogy encompasses three specific criteria: “(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p. 160).

Culturally relevant pedagogy emphasizes academic excellence. Teachers must have clear goals of academic success for students. Teachers must cater to the specific academic needs of the students while getting students to realize the importance of academic knowledge. In addition to this focus on academic excellence, there must also be a focus on cultural integrity.

The practice of culturally relevant pedagogy encourages teachers to utilize the students’ culture as a springboard for learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Ladson-Billings’ initial study gave specific acts of cultural inclusion demonstrated by the teachers in that study. Ladson Billings reiterated that through the process of culturally inclusive acts, students were able to gain confidence in the classroom. One example of a culturally inclusive act is “artist or craftsperson-in-residence” program. Gertrude Winston demonstrated the importance of students seeing the value in their culture. This was accomplished through parent and community involvement within the classroom through
the teacher-created “artist or craftsperson-in residence” program. This allowed students to interact and learn from various professions with which the students were able to identify.

As students gain academic and cultural competence, they should also develop critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). This includes the ability to critique one’s own cultural bias and societal norms. Culturally relevant teaching pedagogy involves teaching practices that create students who will be actively engaged in the sociopolitical world. The teacher must first have an understanding of issues concerning race, class, and even gender, and then find ways to incorporate those issues into their teaching to create students who can critique the world around them (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Geneva Gay presented the term “culturally responsive teaching” in her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* (2000) as a means to improve the educational experience for ethnically diverse students. Culturally responsive teaching is defined as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p. 106). In essence, paying attention to the knowledge and skills students bring into the classroom and using both knowledge and skills gained from their life experiences to enhance their educational experience. Her research findings provided theoretical claims, practical experiences, and personal stories from educators who had worked with African American, Asian, Latino, and Native American students. Gay (2002) also provided five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching: (a) developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, (b) including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the
curriculum, (c) demonstrating cultural caring and building learning communities, (d) communicating with ethnically diverse students, and (e) responding to ethnic diversity through instruction.

The first essential element of culturally responsive teaching is developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity. Gay (2002) explained the importance of having teachers in the classroom that exhibit an understanding of the differences that exists within various ethnic groups presented in our world. She outlines three requirements to accomplish this understanding. The first requirement is understanding the cultural values of ethnic groups for the subject they teach. Next is having and disseminating factual information about ethnic groups. The third requirement is acquiring knowledge of the contributions of ethnic groups in the subject they teach. Teachers need to enter the classroom with an understanding of the cultural differences that are present within students. Developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity can be accomplished by offering teachers professional development as preservice, new teachers, and veteran teachers. Teachers need the opportunity to learn how to make school “more interesting and stimulating for, representative of, and responsive to” a classroom of diverse learners through course in “multicultural education theory, research, and scholarship” (Gay, 2002, p.107).

The second essential element of culturally responsive teaching is including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum. It is important to the educational experience that factual information is disseminated about cultural differences. Gay (2002) also urges teachers to incorporate multicultural teaching in all subject areas. This can be done through the use of societal curriculum, a term coined by Cortes (1979).
Societal curriculum is “that massive, ongoing, informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighborhoods, mass media, and other socializing forces that ‘educate’ us throughout our lives” (Cortes, 1979, p. 475). Cortes (1979) realized the impact society, and (at the time) television more specifically, was having on the perceptions of children. Children were developing prejudices and stereotypes from images portrayed in the media. This input from the media also had positive effects on children. Movies in the media, such as Roots, gave a rare glimpse into the experiences of Black Americans. Cortes (1979) gave four recommendations related to societal curriculum that should be incorporated into the education of children:

First, an examination of the societal curriculum should be an integral part of both teacher education and in-service training. Second, teachers should constantly consider the societal curriculum in the planning and implementation of the school curriculum. Third, teachers should use the societal curriculum as classroom material. Fourth, schools should help students become ‘literate’ in the societal curriculum. (Cortes, 1979, p. 477)

Cortes’s (1991, 1995, 2000) research and studies of societal curriculum continued to show that mass media often had a greater influence on students’ ideas of ethnic cultures than what was read in book or taught by their teacher. Cortes’s studies proved the need for effective instruction based in culturally responsive teaching practices, practices that will enable students to be “discerning consumers of and resisters to ethnic information disseminated through societal curriculum” (Gay, 2002, p. 109). These practices can counteract the images portrayed in the media that may be flawed or prejudiced and teach students to discern the facts.
The third element of culturally relevant teaching is demonstrating cultural caring and building learning communities. Gay (2002) explained the use of cultural scaffolding as an effective means of culturally responsive teaching. Cultural scaffolding is the process of building upon a student’s cultural knowledge to generate new knowledge. Teachers are able to do this by building relationships with students, understanding and teaching through their learning style, allowing opportunities for students to lead class discussions, setting high expectation and providing cooperative learning opportunities.

The fourth element of culturally responsive teaching is understanding how to effectively communicate with various ethnic groups. Gay (2002) explains how different ethnic groups have a different set of conversational standards. A culturally responsive teacher will not only be aware of the standards represented in her class but also respect and shape interactions between teacher and student so that the educational experience is optimal for each student. Understanding the communication style, which includes methods of participation within the classroom, is essential to the educational experience for students in a diverse classroom. This understanding helps “avoid violating the cultural values of ethnically diverse students in instructional communication; to better decipher their intellectual abilities, needs, and competencies; and to teach them style or code-shifting skills” (Gay, 2002, p.112).

The fifth element of culturally responsive teaching involves matching the instructional output with the diverse needs of the students. This is known as cultural congruity (Gay, 2002). This is accomplished through an understanding of the cultural characteristics will provide the criteria for selecting the instructional strategies that need to be utilized in the classroom. Gay (2002) suggests “integrating ethnic and cultural
diversity into the most fundamental and high-status aspects of the instructional process on a habitual basis (Gay, 2002, p.113). Utilizing culturally responsive teaching allows students to maintain their cultural identity while improving their academic achievement. Forcing students to adapt to the foreign cultural norms places a great burden on students and may negatively impact their educational experience.

**Self-Determination Theory**

Self-determination theory (SDT) was first proposed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in 1985. Since then, it has been widely accepted in the education field and other settings as a method of study for human motivation. Self-determination theory makes a distinction between “self-determined and controlled types of intentional regulation” (Deci et al., 1991, p. 326) The theory suggests that for optimal motivation, the environment must fulfill an individual’s three basic psychological needs: a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that a sense of autonomy can be fulfilled through a student’s sense of control of their learning. A sense of competence can be fulfilled through increased motivation to learn, and a sense of relatedness can be fulfilled through classroom discussions.

When self-determination theory is applied to the educational realm, it refers to the interest students show in learning, their value of education, and the confidence they exhibit. Intrinsic motivation is ignited in students when they are engaged in the learning activity, thus the learning activity becomes enjoyment instead of a mundane task. A task that a student engages in freely, without a reward or punishment, is a pure example of self-determination. Conversely, a task that a student engages in due to a consequence of engagement would be considered extrinsically motivated, which occurs in four different
types (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Optimally, students would demonstrate a self-determined
type of motivation to complete school assignments to achieve a conceptual
understanding, and thus a greater level of academic success.

**Critical Literacy**

Critical literacy was first introduced by Freire (1970) and involved a process of
reading a text and thinking beyond the written words to find the meaning in the text.
“Critical literacy encourages readers to question, explore, or challenge the power
relationships that exist between authors and readers” (Norris et al., 2012, p. 59). Norris et al. (2012) explains that critical literacy as a tool for social action as it works in
reproducing the norms of society: gender, race, and even class. Critical literacy provides
students an opportunity to explore their world from a different lens and challenge their
original notions, an opportunity to find similarities and differences in the experiences of
their peers and teachers. Critical literacy provides the stage for developing multiple
viewpoints, discussing social issues, and helping students to facilitate plans to impact
their world through social change. A study by Norris, et al. (2012) showed that the
preservice teachers found the implementation of critical literacy to be a valuable
classroom practice. The preservice teachers recognized the need to “move children
beyond comprehension into thinking more critically about texts” (Norris, et al., 2012, p. 62). The study also showed the major barriers that exists in implementation are the
teacher’s personal discomfort, parental opposition, confines of curriculum.

Critical literacy is important because provides the avenue for teachers and
students to engage in thought-provoking discussions that will connect their lives to the
text they are reading in class. The use of critical literacy allows students to bring their
life, their background, and their experiences into their classroom. This connection to the
text enhances student engagement and creates students who are not only socially just but
also culturally aware (Norris et al. 2012). Critical literacy encourages students to move
beyond the text to true action, which is a goal of culturally relevant instructional methods.
Norris et al., (2012) strongly suggested not waiting until high school to being expecting,
teaching, or asking students to think critically. Instead, we should begin at a young age.
“Teachers of young children can guide their students through early literacy using critical
literacy with the purpose of creating global thinkers who are comfortable dealing with
issues and who are actively working toward change.” (Norris, et al., 2012, p. 61).

**Historical Perspective**

The outcry for equitable education for all students has a long-standing history. The
desegregation of schools in the 1960s and 1970s shifted the look of the typical
classroom. That classroom is now full of people from diverse backgrounds, with a
diverse set of ideas and a diverse set of needs. Educators began researching effective
teaching practices to meet the needs of their students (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Anthropologists have conducted extensive studies over the past 15 years in an
attempt to connect a student's home culture with their school culture (Ladson-Billings,
1995a). Words such as “culturally appropriate” (Au & Jordan, 1981, as cited in Ladson-
Billings, 1995a), “culturally congruent” (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981 as cited in Ladson-
Billings, 1995a), culturally responsive” (Cazden & Legget as cited in Ladson-Billings,
1995a, 1981; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982 as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995a), and
“culturally compatible” (Jordan, 1985 as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Vogt, Jorgan,
& Tharp, 1987 as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995a) had the goal of identifying the
disconnect between the language of school and the language of home. The culminating results of the 15-year study by anthropologist indicated that incorporating a student's home language into the classroom can have profound results on the student’s experience of academic success (Ladson-Billings 1995a).

From this literature emerged two areas of focus: teacher practice and teacher posture and paradigm. The early work of Geneva Gay in the 1970s and 1980s, she argued “more for including accurate content about and comprehensive portrayals of ethnically and racially diverse groups and experiences in various subject matter curricula than about teaching” (Gay, 2013, p.49). This focus on accurate content was necessary due to the “negative discriminations and distortions perpetuated in conventional conceptions of knowledge and truth” (Gay, 2013, p.49). Gay’s innovated idea of culturally responsive teaching connects “in school learning to out of school living” (Gay, 2013, p.49). Gay (2013) found that this innovation was able to “promote educational equity and excellence; create community among individuals from different cultural, social, and ethnic background; and develop students’ agency, efficacy, and empowerment” (Gay, 2013, p.49). Gay (2013) found essential actions were necessary to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching practices. Those essential actions include removing negative stereotypes and perceptions about students, preparing teachers to face criticism, developing an understanding of the value of cultural awareness, and connecting teachers’ pedagogical ideals with their content (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

The work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2006, 2014) focused on the area of teacher posture and paradigm through culturally relevant pedagogy. Throughout the cultivation of her work, she noted that there are three tenets of CRE:
academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Recently, Ladson-Billings (2014) expanded culturally relevant pedagogy to include the ideals of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012). Paris (2012) explained the goal of culturally sustaining pedagogy is to sustain the “cultural and linguistic competence” of their native or home language while “simultaneously offering access to the dominant cultural competence” (p. 95). Ladson-Billings (2014) attributed the extension of her pedagogy to the sentiment that one should never stop learning and growing: “any scholar who believes that she has arrived and the work is finished does not understand the meaning of scholarship” (p. 82). The ideals of culturally sustaining pedagogy have allowed for the inclusion of other global identities and other fields of learning such as arts, music, athletics, and film.

Educators and researchers have acknowledged the disparities that occur between minority populations and White students, as illustrated through the continuously widening achievement gap in a report produced by the U.S. Department of Education (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). People of color and underserved students have requested equitable education to combat the widening achievement gap. Efforts to gain equality have occurred through acts of protest and acts of litigation. An appropriate education for Black students has been a topic of litigation for decades. Litigation surrounding the appropriate setting for students of color, including students who lack proficiency in English, include *Mendez v. Westminster (1947)*, providing bilingual education to students *Serna v. Portales Municipal Schools (1972)*, funding for undocumented immigrant children *Lau v. Nichols (1974)*, and appropriate and equitable education for ELLs *Flores v. Arizona (2008)*.
Litigation surrounding the appropriate education for students of color, including African American students, has been a long-standing part of American history. The inequitable access to education for African Americans began as “far back as 1740 and throughout the 1800s prohibited the education of black slaves” (Jones, 2019). Litigation such as Plessy v Ferguson (1896), which ushered the idea of “separate but equal,” continued the hinderance to equitable education for African Americans. Progress was finally made with Brown v Board of Education (1954), which ruled “separate but equal” to be unconstitutional. This litigation from the Supreme Court unanimously outlawed the segregation of schools based on psychological impact for African American students but African American students were centuries behind their counterparts. The fight for equality in education for students of color did not stop in 1954. The fight to create equitable educational experiences continues today through the “demand for new learning model that are equitable and inclusive…while the traditional way of approaching learning is becoming outdated and more unjust” (Jones, 2019, para.10). Throughout the history of the United States, there have been defendants as well as opponents of the educational experience for students of color. Some believed more needed to be done, while others believed too much was being done. Most agreed that more should be done but didn’t know what to do or how to fund it (Walsh, 2008).

Goals of Culturally Relevant Teaching Methods

The goals of culturally relevant teaching methods are not measured exclusively by test scores. Many of the outcomes of culturally relevant teaching methods happen intrinsically for the teacher and the student. Studies have shown that outcomes such as empowerment (Milner, 2011), increased cultural competences for students (Ladson-
Billings, 1995a, 1995b; Quezada et al., 2012), appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012), maximize student learning (Irvine, 2010), and creating a sense of belongingness for all students are just some of the results from the implementation culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching practices. One of the goals of culturally relevant instructional methods is to give students cultural competence to challenge the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). In many cases, this upheaval must start with educational leaders. The educator must be willing to confront the societal norms that aid in the blockage of the advancement of marginalized students. Removing that blockage can occur as schools and educators embrace culturally relevant teaching practices even creating culturally proficient schools that epitomize the ideals of removing negative stereotypes, understanding the challenges of language learning, and incorporating the cultures of all students into the curriculum (Quezada et al., 2012). Culturally relevant teaching methods allow students to grow a deeper understanding of one another, thus creating the cultural competence needed to enact change in societal norms. Appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity should be a typical occurrence in classrooms across the nation (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012). Cultural and linguistic diversity should be viewed as a valuable resource for educators and students alike. The teacher’s ability to recognize the benefits of this diversity is the first step to removing blockages for marginalized students. Culturally relevant teaching methods and caring, ethics-based approaches (Noddings, 2002) will lead to an equitable educational experience that creates students who will be capable of implementing societal reforms necessary to see all students succeed. Caring about others is important to a moral society;
it turns one’s attention to the lives of others and spurs on seeking justice for them even for distant others one does not know or might never meet. Additionally, students are allowed “to see their culture…and encouraged to maintain it” (Milner, 2011, p. 69). Underrepresented students are able to see how their ancestors contributed to the cultivation of our world. As students see themselves and other cultures within the curriculum, they are able to understand how others have contributed to the cultivation of the America we know today.

Another goal of culturally relevant teaching methods is the intended effect to maximize students learning. Utilizing culturally relevant teaching methods aids in the teacher’s ability to create effective instruction that helps learners make sense of new concepts and ideas. “Culturally relevant teachers create learning opportunities in which students’ voices emerge and knowledge and meaning are constructed from the student’s perspectives” (Irvine, 2010, p. 60). The use of culturally relevant instructional methods also produces empowered students. “Students are empowered to examine more intently what they are learning, to create and to construct meaning” (Irvine, 2010, p. 69). Students who feel empowered may be more inclined to succeed academically.

An additional goal of culturally relevant instructional methods is the created sense of belongingness in the classroom for all students. Students should be able to see themselves within the classroom. They should feel included and a part of the educational experience. One way to create a sense of belonging is through literacy. “They need to read or listen to stories about people like themselves in situations similar to their own” (Nodding, 2012, p.60). Stories could also be used to help student connect with differences. The use of culturally relevant text allows students to uncover new ethnic
groups and new cultures as some students find similarities while other students may find differences. This can lead to questioning and examination of cultural commonalities, of stereotypes and misappropriations, and even of new ways of being. Using culturally relevant text, students are able to understand new cultures or new ideals.

Another way to create a sense of belongingness in the classroom is ensuring relatedness in the classroom. Relatedness, perspective of the classroom, is “deeply associated with a student feeling that the teacher genuinely likes, respects, and values him or her” (Niemiec et. al., 2009, p. 139). Studies by Niemiec et al. (2009) show that students who feel a sense of relatedness are more likely to complete classroom assignments, participate in class, complete homework, and work cooperatively with peers than students who don’t feel a sense of belongingness.

**Related Research**

Research studies have proved a positive response from students when culturally relevant pedagogy practices are employed in the classroom. Students have demonstrated gains in reading fluency when presented with culturally relevant text versus non culturally relevant text (Barber et al., 2018). Culturally relevant texts are “texts that align with the students’ backgrounds and experiences” (Kibler & Chapman, 2018, p. 741). Students have demonstrated a greater connection to the text when presented with culturally relevant text (Rodriquez, 2014; Deoksoo, 2009). Students also demonstrated greater conceptual learning when presented with culturally relevant texts (Gronlnick & Ryan, 1987; De Naeghel et al., 2012). Students’ love of learning and level of engagement have been shown to increase with the use of culturally relevant texts. The use of
culturally relevant texts can also aid in positively shaping the identities of student while broadening their social consciousness (Kibler & Chapman, 2018).

Kibler and Chapman (2018) offered six tips for implementing the use of culturally relevant texts into the classroom. These tips are derived from the experiences of various teachers and literacy coaches. The first tip is to examine one’s positionality. “As educators, we must first examine our own positionality, or how values, race, gender, social class, and other aspects of our identity shape our understanding of the world” (Kibler & Chapman, 2018, p. 742). It is essential that the educator examine the prejudices and values they hold within themselves. Examining one’s race, gender, and social class is necessary to effectively guide discussions during the implementation process. The second tip is to create a safe learning environment. “It is imperative to provide voice and legitimacy to students” (Kibler & Chapman, 2018, p.742). It is essential that teachers develop relationships with students so that they feel safe within their classroom. The third tip is to get to know your students’ background. Getting to know your student involves going beyond their academic needs, one needs to know their interest, their personal histories, their strengths outside the classroom. Kibler and Chapman (2018) suggest visiting their neighbors and learn about the problems they are facing within their home communities. The fourth tip is to carefully select culturally relevant texts. It is important here not to confuse multicultural with culturally relevant. Kibler and Chapman (2018) suggest using a rubric when selecting text and allowing student choice of preselected text. The sixth tip is to extend beyond the text. It is in this step that critical literacy (Nodding, 2009) is applied. Kibler and Chapman (2018) assert that these six tips provide a starting point towards the journey of culturally relevant instructional practices. As the teachers
and students gain more experience in the practices, they will reap increased benefits of academic achievement and engagement.

Irvine (2010) provided one example of how culturally relevant pedagogy worked in a classroom. The textbook assignment was writing a business letter to a toy catalog to place an order for a Game Boy. The teacher realized that the students in her low-income classroom could not relate to buying such an expensive item. The teacher changed the assignment to writing letters to the mayor asking for changes that would make life better in the students’ neighborhood. She instructed students to ask people in their neighborhood, relatives, and other community members for their input. Students then “marched to the mailbox” to mail their letters to the mayor. After receiving the letters, the mayor called to talk to students about their concerns. Relating to the student’s cultural norms, resources, and experiences made a task meaningful and purposeful to students.

Milner (2011) analyzed the process one White teacher used as he implemented culturally relevant pedagogy within his science classroom in a diverse urban school. Milner (2011) investigated how Mr. Hall was able to build cultural competence, develop relationships with his students both inside and outside the classroom, and the effect his actions had on his teaching practices. Student identity, high expectations for learning, and understanding the needs of the students became central features of Mr. Hall’s work. Interviews and observation with Mr. Hall showed that he worked to “build solid sustainable relationships with each of his students as individuals as well as the collective” (Milner, 2011, p. 77). For example, if a student was causing a disruption to the learning environment, Mr. Hall valued providing that student multiple opportunities for success instead of an official referral. Milner (2011) noted that Mr. Hall’s relationship with
students seemed to foster a respect between teacher and student. Mr. Hall’s class was not void of misplaced interruptions or conflict; he simply used a cultural pedagogy approach to resolve conflicts. That pedagogy was also evident in the curricula used, the instructional methods employed, and classroom management decisions (Milner, 2011).

Mr. Hall also had to combat the matters of race as a White teacher in an urban school. For example, he was called a racist by his Black students. “Mr. Hall came to understand the importance of recognizing, confronting and addressing student identity, racial tension, and conflicts in particular that seemed to emerge between students and him” (Milner, 2011, p. 84). Although he didn’t believe that his actions were racist in nature, it was the perception of the students that mattered to him. To change this perception, Mr. Hall explained that it was “critical for his students to learn more about him and for them to understand some of the commonalities that existed between and among them in order for them to work through the issues that separated them” (Milner, 2011, p. 83). This bridge in experiences between teacher and student is part of the process of building cultural competence that made a positive impact on educational experience for Mr. Hall’s students.

**Challenges of Implementing Culturally Relevant Teaching**

Investment into properly educating preservice, new, and veteran teachers about culturally relevant pedagogy and teaching practices is essential into teachers’ abilities to effectively teach a diverse population of students (Quezada et al. 2012). As culturally relevant pedagogy has become more integrated into professional development programs, researchers point out the flaws held within this model. Critics find that even with adequate preparedness, teachers are still not able to translate the understanding of the
theory into practical application within the classroom (Austin et al., 2019). The model also faced criticism from dominate societal groups (Sleeter, 2012). The effectiveness of this theory heavily relies on the teacher participants. It requires them to identify their set of biases, critically reflect upon their experiences (Austin et al., 2019) and find resources outside of the curriculum. If adequate professional development is not provided to teachers on how to effectively teach a diverse classroom population in the general education setting, the result is disastrous effects to motivation and achievement for students of color.

Islam and Park (2015) conducted a qualitative study to explore ways to help teachers become proficient in differentiating instruction in an effort to create a classroom environment where diverse learners can gain the literacy comprehension necessary for academic success. The participants in this study included 16 voluntary graduate students enrolled in a graduate reading methods course as part of their university’s early childhood and elementary education program. Data was collected through reflective graded papers and group discussions in the school’s web-based environment. Findings indicate the importance of using culturally relevant teaching methods to create a supportive environment for all students. “From a culturally relevant teaching point of view, teachers must develop an ability to nurture and support all students’ cultural competence by implementing a variety of strategies” (Islam & Park, 2015, p. 40). Additional findings from the study indicate that “graduate students benefited significantly from the graduate reading methods course and learned how to differentiate strategies for students of diverse cultures” (Islam & Park, 2015, p. 42). Courses for graduate students and teacher candidates dedicated to teaching diverse learners are essential to effectively prepare
teachers for the diverse classroom environment. Implementing courses for teacher candidates, graduate students, and ongoing professional development is essential to provide teachers with instructional strategies and confidence that will enable diverse learners access to deep learning.

The push for equitable education has afforded the opportunity for more people of color to enroll in gifted and talented programs, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs, and honors and advanced placement (AP) courses. As there is little research on utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy in STEM and AP courses, teachers are unaware how to effectively teach the diverse population that now exists in their once monocultural classroom (Brown et al., 2018). Brown et al. (2018) conducted a study to examine how STEM teachers applied knowledge learned during CRP professional development into their urban elementary classroom of African American males. The study was conducted within a STEM charter school aimed at increasing participation in STEM activities for African American males. Findings of the study revealed that although teachers were aware of CRP, they did not fully understand how to incorporate CRP into their math and science curriculum. After professional development was provided for this group of teachers, they were able to weave cultural problems into their practical instruction. They were able to reframe their teaching to “cognitive apprenticeship teaching with a culturally relevant education (CRE) focus” and demonstrate a “dynamic application” of CRE teaching (Brown et al., 2018, p. 798).

Dement and Salas (2019) shared their self-reflection as they integrated culturally responsive teaching into an honors curriculum at a predominantly White university (PWI). Rebekah Dement and Angela Salas shared a faculty–mentor relationship. Dement
and Salas explained the risk-taking process of “challenging deeply ingrained mindsets” by integrating culturally responsive teaching practices (Dement et al., 2019, p. 43). An added barrier to implementation is the lack of diversity within the honors course. Jenkins (2016) believed that honors educators must first have a “disorienting learning and teaching encounter” (Dement et al., 2019, p.44) to create the motivation needed to overcome the risk and transform the educational experiences for students at PWI. Dement admitted that she was underprepared to deal with the issues of examining biases and privilege. With proper guidance from her mentor, Dement was able to grow from each disorienting experience and model vulnerability and openness to her students, so that all participants (faculty, students, and mentor) were able to grow in their cultural responsiveness at a PWI.

**Summary**

My action research looks at the impact of using culturally relevant teaching methods within the general education setting in an effort to improve the educational experience for a diverse fourth-grade classroom. An improved educational experience has the expected return long-term results of higher levels of success as indicated by on-time graduation, continuous academic progress, and the development of a critical conscience with a propensity for social justice for all. The short-term results that this study hopes to achieve is increased reading achievement and increase student engagement.

A lack of effective student engagement practices for marginalized populations has been linked to the growing number of dropouts. This study identifies culturally relevant teaching methods as an effective strategy to engage students, thus preventing dropouts. The use of culturally relevant teaching methods is rooted in culturally relevant pedagogy
and culturally responsive teaching practices. This literature review also found links to self-determination theory and critical literacy as theories related to improving the educational experience through culturally relevant instructional methods. Implementing culturally relevant instructional methods is linked to benefits for all students in a marginalized population. The benefits of cultural awareness can span across all populations of students, through all subjects of education and encroach into the realms of social reform. As educators implement these strategies, it would be naive to think change will happen seamlessly. There will be challenges throughout the implementation process. For many educators, the challenge will begin with identifying their own biases and creating unique cultural perspectives. The challenges may come from forces within the school building or outside of school. Despite the challenges, one must continue to fight for the improved educational experience of all students.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Factors that impact the success rate of students is an ongoing conversation in education. Researchers are always studying the factors that impact students’ progress, grade completion, and on-time graduation. “Student engagement at school has emerged as a critical factor across hundreds of dropout prevention and recovery programs in the United States” (Stout & Christenson, 2009, p. 17). Student engagement in classrooms aids in the success rate of students. One way to improve student engagement is through using culturally relevant instructional methods. The purpose of this study is to examine the use of culturally relevant teaching methods by general education teachers in a diverse classroom. The study sets to improve student motivation, thus increasing student achievement. The focus of this study is to improve reading achievement.

Research Design

This case study systematically manipulated the current curriculum and used culturally relevant teaching practices as a tool for intervention to determine the effect culturally relevant teaching practices had on reading achievement and student engagement. For years culturally responsive instruction has been accepted as a method of “raising the achievement of students from historically underrepresented populations” (Powell et al., 2016, p. 3). For the purpose of this study, the term culturally relevant instructional methods is used to encompass the broad use of tools recognized as effective
instructional methods related to culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), culturally responsive teaching (Gay & Banks, 2000), culturally congruent instruction (Au & Kawakami, 1994), and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning (Hollie, 2012). This study looked at the impact of using culturally relevant instructional methods (CRIM) as a method of student engagement for a diverse classroom.

The study examined the effect the use of CRIM had on student achievement level and student engagement. Student achievement for this study is defined as comprehension scores on graded Accelerated Reader assignments, accuracy of completion for classroom assignments, and reading proficiency level as measured by STAR. Student engagement is defined in this study as levels of belongingness as reported by the student, level of task completion, and rate of participation during classroom instruction, including whole group lessons, small group lessons, and independent assignments. Research shows that when students feel connected to the curriculum, they are more likely to attend to the material. “Organizing classroom learning so that the curriculum is connected to students’ lives, interests, aspirations, and their funds of knowledge encourages students to contribute to curricular discussion on the basis of their own experiences” (Haneda & Wells, 2012, p. 298). I presume this intervention of incorporating culturally responsive instructional methods into the curriculum will have positive effects on the educational experience for all students.

Before the study, student participants were given a socio-demographic survey to determine student’s perceptions of school, of their teachers, of their belongingness, and text interest. Students participated in learning styles surveys to determine their individual learning styles. A copy of the learning style survey can be found in Appendix A. After
learning styles surveys were analyzed, students were rearranged to sit in groups based on their learning style. I also conducted classroom observations and collected achievement data. The classroom observation and achievement data collected helped provide a baseline for comparison. The students were given permission slips to be signed by their parents to acknowledge and accept their student’s participation in the study. The students were only told that their teacher was creating learning activities and would like their participation to help earn her advanced degree. To ensure validity of results, the student were informed of the purpose and intended effect of the study.

Prior to the study, culturally relevant instructional methods were defined and explained to the teacher participants. The teacher participants received professional development to ensure appropriate use of culturally relevant instructional methods (CRIM). The teachers participated in a self-paced training developed by the researcher. The general education teacher and I needed to commit to using CRIM. CRIM training took place during school scheduled curriculum meetings. After training, the teacher and I planned the CRIM implementation into classroom practices by denoting the method on lesson plans. After the intervention cycle was completed, the student participants and the teacher participants were given post surveys that evaluated their experiences during the intervention cycle. The student and teachers completed the surveys separately to reduce the risk of contaminating the thoughts and feelings of the other.

Incorporating culturally relevant instructional practices for students encompasses many different components. The intervention cycle consisted of integrating the following culturally responsive instructional methods: (a) differentiating lessons based on learning style, (b) incorporating an ‘activator’ that connects to the students’ culture and builds
background knowledge, (c) allowing student choice for instructional text, (d) increased use of culturally relevant material, and (e) direct and immediate feedback.

Students’ learning styles were assessed and incorporated into instructional methods to enhance student engagement. Warren (2014) explained one method of incorporating culturally relevant strategies in the classroom is “learning students.” Learning students means “acquiring a student-level understanding of their preference for social interaction, learning styles, communication patterns, and issues that most matter to them” (Warren, 2014, p. 399). An “activator,” also known by some as an anticipatory set, is an instructional method that serves to include a connection to home, school, and the text using pictures, stories, or parental involvement to bridge the gap between home and school. The purpose is to engage the students in the lesson and give them a purpose for learning.

Instructional methods were also manipulated to include student choice of reading material to ensure readability and interest. The instructional methods were manipulated to include increased exposure to culturally relevant material including text, experiences, videos and audio clips. The study incorporated the use of direct and immediate feedback. Direct and immediate feedback includes the use of feedback that is related to the learning target and objectives. Feedback should be more than just “great job,” “you did it,” or “way to go.”

Context and Participants

The study takes place at Skyward Elementary School in a rural area in Georgia, within the Beautiful County School District. The 20-year-old school houses grades Pre-K
through 5. The population of students is 461, with 42% of students scoring at or above proficiency for math and 47% of students scoring at or above proficiency for reading. Forty-three percent of the population of students is minority. The minority student population consists of 32.5% Black or African American students, 3.7% Hispanic students, 0.9% Asian students, 5.4% two or more races.

The study focused on 19 students placed in one fourth-grade homeroom with two teachers assigned to the classroom. There are nine African American students, eight White students, one Hispanic, and one student identifying as “other.” The students were also categorized based on achievement level. Student achievement levels were identified through the following data sources: third-grade Milestone scores, STAR Reading Assessment scaled scores, third-grade teacher observations, and final report card grade at the end of third grade. Nine students have been identified as low achievers, six students have been identified as average achievers, and zero students have been identified as high achievers. There are four students identified and served in the special education program known as Program for Exceptional Children (PEC). There is one student served under 504 for ADD. There is one student identified and served in the ELL program.

The fourth-grade team consists of three general education teachers and one special education teacher. There are 64 total students on the team. Each homeroom has at least 19 students, with the maximum number of 23 students in each homeroom. One teacher teaches math, one teacher teaches ELA, one teacher teaches science/social studies. Science and social studies are taught on a rotating weekly schedule. Due to COVID, at the beginning of the school year, the teacher rotated during the school day to teach each homeroom. After October, the students began to rotate to each subject area
instead of the teachers. The students received instruction in math, ELA, science, or social studies each day. The ELA teacher has been chosen as the interventionist because the subject ELA was used to implement the intervention of CRIM. The PEC teacher served as the researcher and closely worked with the interventionist to implement CRIM effectively.

JS (initials for the general education teacher) is a White, female ELA teacher for fourth grade at Skyview Elementary School. She is originally from a small town in Alabama but moved to Macon, Georgia after getting married. This is her seventh year as an elementary educator. She has previously taught third-grade ELA and social studies. She graduated from Troy University with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. She also has a master’s degree in Gifted Education. This year has “looped up” with her students, meaning she is teaching the same students she taught the year before. Her third-grade students have now become her fourth-grade students. She is fun loving teacher, full of energy. It is not uncommon to find her singing or dancing in the classroom. She sets high expectations for appropriate classroom behaviors such as respecting the teacher and respecting your peers. She enjoys hanging out with her students by making Tik-Tok videos, listening to their stories, or even beating them in a race at recess. She was very excited to implement CRIM because she believes in putting students’ needs first.

I, AD (initials for the researcher/special education teacher), am a Black, female special education teacher (PEC) for fourth grade at Skyward Elementary School. I am originally from Macon, Georgia. This is my 15th year as an educator. I have served as a special education teacher as well as an ELL teacher in Grades K–12 throughout my career. Throughout my career I have taught several subjects as a resource teacher as well
as a co-teacher. I have also taught in multiple counties throughout the state of Georgia, all of which were Title 1 schools. I set very high expectations for success for all students. I believe that they are all capable of success; their success just may be defined differently. I am very passionate about implementing CRIM because I want minority students to feel a sense of belonging in the classroom that I didn’t feel growing up. I want minority students to be able to find their success in the classroom have high achievement that is equal or greater to their white counterparts. I want to make education attainable and fun for students so that they are intrinsically motivated to learn more independently.

Data Sources

Student data for determining improved reading abilities through the embedded use of CRIM came from STAR Reading Assessment. Star Assessments are generated by Renaissance. Renaissance offers STAR assessment in reading, math, early literacy, curriculum-based measures (CBM), and Spanish. The STAR Reading Assessment includes items to analyze the student’s ability in vocabulary, comprehension, literacy, author’s craft, and evaluate arguments. Scores from these items identified struggling readers, on-grade level readers, and advanced readers. It is a computer-adaptive test that is personalized for each student. Students are given passages to read independently, then multiple-choice or fill-in-blank questions about the given passage. If a student answers a question correctly, the next question is more difficult. If a student answers a question incorrectly, the subsequent question is less difficult. The STAR assessment is designed to be complete in about 15 minutes. After test completion, detailed reports about the student’s reading are immediately available to educators (Star Reading, 2021).
The Star Reading Assessment yields scaled scores, Lexile range, projected scaled scores, percentile rank, and instructional reading level. Data were analyzed with a t-test to compare the pre and post results to determine if the interventions impacted the scaled scores. Data were analyzed to determine the discrepancy from the projected scaled score. The instruments for the study have been fully developed by an outside agency. The method of assessment is highly regarded and frequently used in the field of education to assess reading abilities of students in Grades K-12.

Students completed *Learning Styles Inventory*. Learning style surveys are “designed to help respondents determine which learning style they have” (Cherry, 2020, pp.1). The learning style inventory yielded specific results to each student. After completion of the learning style inventory, each student was given a learning style. The learning style inventory also provides the educators with best practice teaching methods to help the learner learn. Students are also able to use this information as they study for test and quizzes.

We utilized student information sheets completed by parents/guardians to obtain information related to students’ identified race. I used open-ended survey questions, cultural stories, and classroom discussions to gather data related to students’ cultural identities and personal interest. The open-ended survey questions provided the research information specific to each student so that we could build on the student’s background knowledge. Sample questions for the survey include: *What activities do you enjoy doing with your family? What is your favorite meal to eat at home?*
Procedures

Prior to the study, the researcher discussed the implementation process with the principal and assistant principal to gain approval. I ensured approval from the university’s institutional review board was obtained. According to Bibb County Research Policy, all research must be approved by submitting a *Request to Conduct Research* form. The form must be submitted with all supporting documents and reviewed by the board. The request is then accepted or denied. Upon approval, the request is sent to the building principal. The principal then has three days to approve or deny. If the principal does not respond within three days, the request is automatically deemed approved, and letter of notice was sent to the applicant.

The researcher reviewed current STAR reading data scores to determine the appropriate average instructional level when implementing culturally relevant teaching practice. Parents were provided a letter to grant permission for their student to participate in the study. Prior to implementation, we completed professional development training in culturally relevant teaching practices. The initial professional development training was a self-paced online course created by me in a previous course. We completed the training course and completed the post assessment. I participated in the course as a refresher and to ensure all questions from the ELA teacher could be answered. After the initial implementation, there were weekly check-ins to ensure appropriate implementation of culturally relevant instructional methods and determine if any assistance was needed to find strategies for the upcoming week.

Prior to implementation of the intervention cycle, I explained to the students that I needed their help to complete course requirements to obtain my doctorate degree. The
objectives of the study were discussed as not to misconstrue the data. The students participated in a learning styles inventory pre and post student engagement surveys. We reviewed the student information sheets to find commonalities in reading ability, learning styles, cultural identities, and personal interest. I completed an observation protocol to obtain baseline data. The student engagement survey, and the observation protocol was completed again at the end of the intervention cycle.

Next, we collaborated to create activators that connected to the students’ cultural identities. The interventionist and the researcher collaborated to modify traditional small-group instruction so that the instruction matches the students' learning styles. We collaborated to add reading passages that connected to the students’ cultural identities and personal interests.

Students began participating in the study in January after completing the STAR assessment to get baseline data. The intervention cycle lasted through an outline unit in the current curriculum module. This unit took 7 weeks to complete. At the end of the intervention cycle, the participants retook the STAR assessment.

**Data Analysis Strategies**

I used multiple sources of information to collect data. The study employed the use of surveys, observation protocols, and grade reports. The data related to the feelings before and during the use of CRIM was collected using surveys. The survey included questions about their classroom experiences and their perceptions of their teachers. Questions about their educational experience were addressed using surveys to provide a personal and narrative element to the case study.
Observation protocols were conducted during the presentation of the culturally relevant instructional method to gather first-hand accounts of the participants’ reactions to this method of teaching. Observations began prior to intervention cycle to determine teacher behavior prior to intervention cycle. Observations were also collected during the intervention cycle. The focus of the observations was student and teacher behaviors. The observations tool was developed by Bellwether Education Partners. This observation tool focused on the learning environment, student engagement, the quality of the instruction, and how the intervention was implemented within the set curriculum. The observation provided insight into teacher behaviors as well as student behaviors.

Methods of analysis were conducted during and after data collection incidences. Data were organized according to themes. “Themes are ideas, points of view, or experiences that run through the category (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 171). The themes were organized into categories of Positive Impact, Negative Impact, No Impact, Behavioral, or Achievement. The category Positive Impact refers to data that I or participant described as a positive impact on the educational experience such as feelings of success, feelings of worthiness, or excitement about learning. The category Negative Impact refers to data that I or participant described as a negative impact on the educational experience such as feelings of isolation, feelings of inadequacy, or apathy about learning. The term Behavioral Impact refers to data that I or participant described as impacting behavioral outcomes such as motivation, self-esteem, and attentiveness. The term Achievement refers to data that I or participant described to influence achievement levels such as grades or assignment completion time. Next, I used the categories to enable me to see the big picture. The patterns in the categories assisted in
gaining answers to the research questions. “Looking at the overall picture without getting lost in the details allows you to discover what the data tell and the significance of the story for your research question” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 177).

Summary

This action research examined the use of culturally responsive teaching methods to improve motivation and achievement for fourth-grade students in a diverse classroom. Before the study, the researcher collected background information such as socio-demographic info, learning styles, and obtained parent permission for participation in the survey. The researcher and teacher participated in professional development for the implementation of culturally responsive instructional methods. The 19 student participants participated in the intervention cycle using (a) differentiating lessons based on learning styles, (b) incorporating an “activator” that connects to the students’ culture and builds background knowledge, (c) allowing student choice for instructional text, (d) increased opportunities to respond to the text, and (e) direct and immediate feedback. Observation protocols and surveys were used to gather information regarding students’ feeling towards the use of CRIM. Information was organized into themes to see the big picture results.
CHAPTER 4
OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Each year, our classrooms become more and more diverse. As the population of our classrooms become more and more diverse, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all student groups. This can come as a challenge for some educators. Some educators struggle with lack of know-how, some educators struggle with lack of resources, while other educators may struggle with lack of time to commit to the process. A lack of diverse education can lead to a lack of student engagement, which can result in reduce levels of achievement. This study is designed to determine the impact of implementing culturally relevant instructional methods in a fourth-grade ELA classroom. The study was born from the lack of diverse reading options offered in the fourth-grade curriculum and the low level of reading achievement. Data were collected through surveys, grade reports, observation protocols, and STAR reports.

The study participants include 19 students and two teachers. The students are all members of the same homeroom class. The students travel throughout the day together as they rotate to each core class, lunch, specialty class, and recess. Both teachers in the study are fourth-grade teachers. One teacher serves as the general education teacher and the other serves as the special education teacher. The general education teacher teaches three segments of ELA to the entire fourth grade, with each segment lasting 75 minutes. The special education teacher travels with the one class throughout the school day to each core class.
**Intervention**

The study employed an intervention strategy that modified the fourth-grade curriculum by differentiating lessons based on learning style, incorporating an “activator” that connects to the students’ culture and builds background knowledge, allowing student choice for instructional text, increasing the use of culturally diverse material, and offering direct and immediate feedback. The interventions were provided as presented in the Table 4.1. Each week we implemented a different culturally responsive instructional method (CRIM). The CRIM was chosen by me and/or the general education teacher each week based on the lesson topic and previous level of achievement or engagement. The intervention was employed by myself and/or the general education teacher each week. The table includes week number and corresponding date, the lesson topic based on an abbreviated Georgia Performance Standard, a description of the CRIM employed, and the intendent impact of the intervention.

The instructional unit began with writing an imaginative narrative. The following prompt for writing was presented to students after reading the assigned text:

In the story, “Moon Over Star,” Mae and her cousins imagine they are in a rocket ship on the way to the moon. Write an imaginative narrative where you pretend to land on the moon.

Students were given further instructions to include a beginning, middle, and ending for their story. Students were also instructed to include sensory details and dialogue. Students were again reminded in the directions to write in an order that the reader can easily follow the story.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lesson Topic</th>
<th>Description of the CRIM employed</th>
<th>Intended impact of the implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/31-2/4</td>
<td>Write an Imaginative Narrative</td>
<td><em>Learning By Learning Style:</em> Students completed small group instructions based on their learning style. <em>Immediate feedback:</em> Students were given a rating between 0-5 for their rough drafts of their narratives.</td>
<td>Increased student engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2/7-2/11</td>
<td>Finding Theme in Poetry</td>
<td><em>Student Choice:</em> Students were allowed to pick the poem and work with group members to complete analysis assignment.</td>
<td>Increase student engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2/14-2/18</td>
<td>Unit Assessment</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2/24-2/25</td>
<td>Sequencing Writing an Informational Narrative</td>
<td><em>Activator:</em> Students’ background knowledge was activated through a “Give one, Get one” activity culminating with a snowball fight.</td>
<td>Opportunity to respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Activating background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2/28-3/4</td>
<td>Sequencing Writing an Informational Narrative</td>
<td><em>Culturally Responsive Text:</em> Water Woes, A Readworks passage</td>
<td>Increased student engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3/7-3/11</td>
<td>Sequencing Cooperative learning (Kahoot)</td>
<td><em>Activator:</em> Opportunity to Respond <em>Culturally Responsive Text:</em> Mama, I’ll Give you the World</td>
<td>Increase student engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase student achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3/14-3/18</td>
<td>Writing an Informational Narrative</td>
<td><em>Individualized learning by need</em> <em>Immediate feedback</em></td>
<td>Increase student achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before writing, the students read “Moon over Star” written by Dianna Hutts Aston, a culturally diverse text presented in the Literature Anthology. The first two pages were read as a whole group, and the students completed reading the text independently. The intervention began with small group instruction for components of writing the narrative. Students were given small group instruction based on their identified learning style for Days 1–5 of the instructional unit. For example, the kinesthetic learner worked on putting a narrative in order. The auditory learners watched a video about writing a narrative. The verbal learners added sentences to each different paragraphs in a narrative. After writing their beginning, students were given one opportunity to interact with classmates by sharing their interesting hook of their narrative with their classmates. Each day, the lesson began with an activator to connect to the text via a story or video. On Day 2, the students listened to a story titled “Man on the Moon: A Day in the life of Bob.” On Day 3, the students watched a narrative story of Mae Jemison’s Trip into Space. On Day 4, students watched Neil Armstrong’s trip to the moon.

A whole group lesson followed the activator, with explicit instructions on writing a narrative. Students then completed small group instruction based on their learning style. After completion of small group instruction, students were expected to write the section of their narrative that was taught during whole group lesson. The students were given verbal explicit and immediate feedback during their writing sessions. At the completion of writing their beginning and middle, students were given explicit and immediate feedback in the form of a rating of 1 through 5. The ratings were based on the checklist provided to students. A rating of 5 indicated that the student had included all necessary components for an exemplary essay. A rating of 4 indicated that the student had included...
4 components of an exemplary essay. A rating of 3 indicated that the student had included 3 components of an exemplary essay. A rating of 2 indicated that the student had included 2 components of an exemplary essay. A rating of 1 indicated that the student had included 1 component of an exemplary essay. A rating of 0 indicated that the student had not included any components of an exemplary essay. On Day 5, students were instructed to type their completed narrative into the school-based platform. I graded the narratives using a rubric. The rubric is provided in the Appendix B.

Each week the teacher and the researcher participated in a CRIM survey. The purpose of the CRIM survey was to track the level of engagement and the level of students’ achievement for each week. There were four choices to select to indicate the level observed for that week. The choices were “excellent,” “good,” “fair,” and “poor.” Each week, the teacher and I participated in a CRIM survey. The purpose of the CRIM survey was to track the level of students’ engagement and the level of students’ achievement for the week. My survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “excellent” and an achievement level of “good.” The general education teacher’s survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “excellent” and an achievement level of “good.”

During Week 2, the students were given the opportunity to self-select a poem to analyze. The abbreviated Georgia Performance Standard for this week was “Finding Theme in Poetry.” The lesson began with whole group instruction. I displayed the poem “Basketball” by Lebron James, a culturally diverse text, on the board. I read the poem aloud while students followed along. I then presented the analysis worksheet on the board side by side with the poem. A copy of the analysis sheet can be found in Appendix C. We
completed the analysis worksheet together. The students answered the questions with my guidance. The students were then instructed to complete an analysis worksheet on a poem of their choice. A copy of each poem can be found in Appendix D. I read the titles and the authors of each poem aloud. The students had to write their number that corresponded to the title of their poem on their analysis worksheet. I wanted to ensure that students were not swayed by what their friends chose so writing the number down was the best method to ensure they truly picked a poem they liked. The title of each poem and the number of students who chose the poem is included in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Self-Selected Poem Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem number</th>
<th>Poem Title</th>
<th># of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“April Rain Song” by Langston Hughes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Winter Poem” by Nikki Giovanni</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Homework, Homework” by Jack Prelutsky</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“The Dentist and the Crocodile” by Ronald Dahl</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Recess! Oh Recess!” by Darren Sardelli</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Brown Girl, Brown Girl” by Leslé Honoré</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“On Turning Ten Poem” by Billy Collins</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“Falling Asleep in Class” by Kenn Nesbitt</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>“Cats” by Marilyn Singer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>“The Swing” by Robert Louis Stevenson</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>“Rock and Roll Band Poem” by Shel Silverstein</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the activity, the general education teacher and I walked around the room and monitored students’ completion of the analysis worksheet. We asked some students why they chose their poem. One student stated, “because the poem’s title sounds just like me.” Another student stated, “because cats are my favorite animal.” A third student said, “I just like the title, it sounded interesting.” The atmosphere in the classroom was unlike any other time during any assignment prior to intervention cycle. All the students were fully engaged. The teacher and I noted that during this assignment, all the students were completing their task. The students were reading their poems and accurately answering questions on their analysis worksheet. The students were working collaboratively with their peers. This activity brought a high level of student engagement.

Each week, the teacher and I participated in a CRIM survey. The purpose of the CRIM survey was to track the level of engagement and the level of students' achievement for the week. My survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of "excellent" and an achievement level of "good." The general education teacher's survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of "excellent" and an achievement level of "good."

Week 3 did not include purposeful use of CRIM. This week was the district wide winter break, and the students were out of school for three days at the beginning of the week. The final two days of the week were dedicated to unit testing as scripted in the district pacing guide. The students participated in review activities for the unit assessment and unit testing during the final days of the week. Due to a shortened week, we did not have time to plan for engagement opportunities. The focus this week was on student
achievement and preparedness for unit assessments.

Week 4 included purposeful CRIM geared towards increased engagement and increased reading achievement for students. This week’s learning target, as stated in the general education teacher’s lesson plan, was: “I can summarize the text using ONLY key details. I can identify key details in the text.” The instructional set for this week included reading “A Drop of Water,” which is presented in the Literature Anthology. “A Drop of Water” is a nonfiction text about how water molecules change. This week’s CRIM intervention activity included a “Give one, Get one” activator activity, which culminated in a snowball fight. Each student was given the “Give one, Get one” worksheet included in Appendix E. The teacher projected the book on the board. I flipped through the pages of the book and read the headings of each section. The students were instructed to write at least one fact in three of the boxes across the top of the sheet. These should be facts the students already knew based on information they learned in science class in the previous weeks. The students were then given a sticky note. They were instructed to write one of their facts on the sticky note. After every student wrote a fact on the sticky note, they created a snowball with the sticky note. I gave a count down and all the students threw their snowball across the room as if having a snowball fight. The students then selected one snowball from the floor and wrote that fact on their paper. I repeated this activity until students had collected a total of three snowballs. At the end of the snowball fight, students would have a total of six facts about water molecule changes before reading the text.

Each week, the teacher and I participated in a CRIM survey. The purpose of the CRIM survey was to track the level of engagement and the level of students' achievement
for the week. My survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “excellent” and an achievement level of “good.” The general education teacher's survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “excellent” and an achievement level of “good.”

Week 5 included purposeful CRIM geared towards increased engagement and increased reading achievement for students. This week’s learning target, as stated in the general education teacher’s lesson plan, was: “I can identify and describe an overall structure of events in a text.” This week, students participated in a small group assignment with a culturally diverse text. The text, “Water Woes,” was developed by ReadWorks. The text was organized in problem and solution text structure. The text depicted the story of a young girl from Mexico City and her struggle to get clean water for her family. The students took turns reading each paragraph of the story, as I provided assistance with difficult words as needed. I also presented reading strategies that could be implemented independently by the students. The students were instructed to complete the comprehension questions independently.

Each week, the teacher and I participated in a CRIM survey. The purpose of the CRIM survey was to track the level of engagement and the level of students' achievement for the week. My survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “excellent” and an achievement level of “good.” The general education teacher's survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “excellent” and an achievement level of “good.”

Week 6 included purposeful CRIM geared towards increased engagement and increased reading achievement for students. This week’s learning target, as stated in the
general education teacher’s lesson plan, was: “I can describe plot events that take place in the story using specific details.” The instructional set for this week included reading “Mama I’ll Give you the World,” which is presented in the Literature Anthology. This text is from the realistic fiction genre. The story tells how Luisa plans something special for her mother. This week, students participated in small group and whole group learning activities with a culturally diverse text.

Week 6’s intervention included an activator. The activator began with the teacher posing a scenario to students, then asking them to answer a question related to the scenario. The students presented their answers aloud as an opportunity to respond.

Scenario: Think of someone special in your life. Now imagine it is their birthday. What could you do to make that person feel special for their birthday?

In the class, 16 out of 19 students raised their hand to offer an answer to the questions. Each student was given the opportunity to share their responses aloud to the class. The teacher then projected the story on the board as students followed along in their textbooks. Various methods for reading were implemented, including teachers reading, individual students reading aloud, audio reading, choral reading, and students reading independently. Throughout reading, the teacher made connections to the text and students’ lives.

The next day, students participated in a cooperative learning activity. Students worked with a partner to reread the text page by page. After each page, students had to answer a comprehension question. The comprehension questions were provided via Kahoot, an interactive web-based platform. The platform provided immediate feedback to the students by indicating if the correct or incorrect answer was selected, the correct
answer, and their ranking of accuracy. After completing the cooperative learning assignments, students completed their comprehension test independently. The class average score on the comprehension assessment was 93.33%. Individual student scores can be found in the Table 4.9 located in Appendix F.

Each week, the teacher and I participated in a CRIM survey. The purpose of the CRIM survey was to track the level of students’ engagement and the level of students' achievement for the week. My survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “excellent” and an achievement level of “excellent.” The general education teacher's survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “excellent” and an achievement level of “excellent.”

Week 7 included purposeful CRIM geared towards increased engagement and increased reading achievement for students. This week’s learning target, as stated in the general education teacher’s lesson plan, was: “I can develop and write an explanatory essay that: introduces a topic clearly, groups information, includes elaboration (explanation, examples from the text), includes linking/transition words or phrases and provides a concluding statement.” This week’s intervention included an activator, immediate feedback, and individualized learning based on their specific need. The students were given the prompt, “Using information from the two sources, “A Horse of a Different Color” and “Giraffes,” write an informational essay telling how zebras and giraffes are alike or different.”

Before writing, students were asked which animal they would rather be for a day. The students watched an informational video about both animals. Then the students wrote their response on a sticky note, and the sticky notes were displayed on the wall. I
reviewed the prompt, directions, and compare/contrast words. The students were then instructed to read the two passages independently and begin their rough draft without any assistance or additional guidance from us.

The next day, students were provided with direct feedback about their writings. The general education teacher graded the writing. She shared the grade, areas of strengths, and areas of weaknesses with each student. The students completed their writing assignment on Canvas, their individual learning platform. The students worked independently to complete the assignments and make revisions to their rough draft. I analyzed the score of the rough draft and the score on the final draft for the impact. An immediate feedback score of 5 would indicate the students’ potential to make 90% or higher on their final draft. An immediate feedback score of 4 would indicate the students’ potential to score 80% or higher on their final draft. An immediate feedback score of 3 would indicate the students’ potential to score 70% or higher on their final draft. An immediate feedback score of 2 would indicate the students’ potential to score 60% or higher on their final draft. An immediate feedback score of 1 would indicate the students’ potential to score below 60% on their final draft. The average final score was 65%. Each week, the teacher and I participated in a CRIM survey. The purpose of the CRIM survey was to track the level of engagement and the level of students' achievement for the week. My survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “excellent” and an achievement level of “fair.” The general education teacher's survey responses for this week indicated an engagement level of “good” and an achievement level of “fair.”
General Finding and Results

Surveys

Student Surveys

Learning styles

The students participated in a Learning Style Survey to determine their individual learning styles. The results from the Learning Style Survey indicated that one student was identified as a visual learner, seven students were identified as auditory learners, eight students identified as verbal learners, and three students were identified as kinesthetic learners. A visual learner learns best when information is presented in a picture, graph, or chart. (KidsKonnect, 2022). The learning activities best suited for a visual learner would include writing key words or main ideas on a whiteboard, drawing pictures during the lesson, visual presentations, and decorating one’s classroom with anchor charts (KidsKonnect, 2022). An auditory learner learns best when information is presented through sound. The learning activities best suited for an auditory learner would include teaching through reading, recalling information in sequence, and presenting the information through rhythm or melodies (Learning Abled Kids, 2018). A verbal learner learns best when the learner reads or writes the information. The learning activities best suited for a verbal learner would include listening to stories, making a list of new words or new ideas, using mnemonics, and engaging in word play (Time4Learning, 2022). A kinesthetic learner learns best when participating in hands-on activities or moving while learning. The learning activities best suited for a kinesthetic learner would include role-playing, using gestures for new words, and hands-on experiments (KidsKonnect, 2022).
After the survey was completed, the teacher used the rating scale to determine the learning style of each student. The learning styles were displayed on chart paper and posted in the classroom. Students were then placed in groups based on their learning style. They were seated in groups of four. Students’ small group instruction was designed to fit their learning style.

**Student Engagement Survey**

The students participated in a Student Engagement Survey prior to interventions and after the completion of interventions. The purpose of the pre-survey was to gather baseline data for students’ interest level in stories that will be presented, demographical information, their level of community within the school, their personal interest, and cultural activities.

Seventeen of the 19 student participants completed the pre-survey. Biographical information included the race of each student. Seven students identified as Black, six students identified as White, one student identified as Hispanic, and three students identified as Other. Student interviews were conducted to gather specific information for the classification of other. Two students incorrectly identified as Other when the correct identification should be Black. One student is Biracial. I asked the students why they chose “Other.” SD responded, “I’m brown and not black,” while pointing to her arm. MC responded, “I didn’t know race meant.”

Next, students were asked about their perceptions surrounding school. The first set of these questions related to their perceptions surrounding their teachers. Schlosser (1992) and Noguera (2003), as cited in Milner and Tenore (2010), explained the relationship between teachers and students is an important element in student classroom behavior. “Students recognize when there is unnecessary distance between themselves
and their teachers, and such disconnections shape the students’ actions” (Milner & Tenore, 2010, p. 567). Students demonstrate inappropriate actions when they feel a teacher does not care about them. Students may misbehave in an attempt to increase the distance. Teachers taking time to build relationships with students enhances the classroom environment thus have lasting effects on the classroom environment (Milner & Tenore, 2010). The survey presented the prompt, “My teacher, … cares about me.” Each teacher’s name was inserted in the blank. Only 1 of the 16 students responded no to the question about one teacher, Mrs. Harris. When probed about their answer, the student responded, “She is mean to me.” The survey presented the following prompt: “Which is your favorite subject?” Twenty-four percent of students responded ELA, 18% of students responded science, 35% of students responded math, and 24% of students responded social studies. Students were asked questions about their current classroom experiences. The survey presented the prompt, “Which activity do you enjoy the most in ELA?” About 24% of students selected the activity “When my teacher reads aloud”; 24% of students selected the activity “When I read in small group”; 6% of students selected “Writing”; 35% of students selected “Working with my teacher in small group”; 12% of students selected “working with my partners to answer questions.”

The second set of questions related to students’ perceptions surrounding themselves. The survey presented the prompt: “Which sentence correctly describes you?” Eighty-eight percent of the students selected “I fit in with other students at school,” while 12% selected “I don’t fit in with other students at school.” About 76% of students responded, “I like coming to school because education is important to me.” Twenty-four percent of students responded, “I like coming to school to talk to my friends.” Zero students responded, “I don’t like coming to school because education is not important to
me.” Zero students responded, “I don’t like coming to school because I don’t have any friends.” Next students were presented with a set of questions about their choice of books. Six percent of students responded, “I like reading books with characters that look like me.” Twenty-five percent of students responded, “I like reading books about different cultures.” Fifty-six percent of students responded, “I like reading books that teach me something new.” Nineteen percent of students responded, “I like reading books that tell me about something I already know.” Then students were asked about to select the term that would describe their classroom behaviors. Eighty-eight percent of students responded, “I complete all my assignments to the best of my ability.” Twelve percent of students responded, “I do not complete all my assignments to the best of my ability.” Zero students responded, “I never participate in class.” Twelve percent of students responded, “I sometimes participate in class.” Twenty-four percent of students responded, “I often participate in class.” Sixty-five percent of students responded, “I always participate in class.” Lastly, students were asked about their grades. Twelve percent of students responded as making mostly As. Forty-one percent of students responded as making mostly As and Bs. Zero students responded as making Cs. Forty-one percent of student responded as making Bs and Cs. Six percent of students responded as making failing grades.

The third set of questions related to students reading interest. The survey presented students with a picture. The survey presented the prompt, “Based on the picture and the title, this story looks interesting to me. I think this is a text I would want to read.” Table 4.3 shows the student response to the survey question. The first column includes the picture with the title that was presented to students. The second column presents the number of students who responded affirmatively to the prompt on the pre-survey. The third column presents the number of students who responded negatively to the prompt on.
the pre-survey. The fourth, fifth, and sixth columns document results on the post-assessment once the students had read (or not) the book.
Table 4.3 Book Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture and Title</th>
<th>pre-survey</th>
<th>pre-survey</th>
<th>post survey</th>
<th>post survey</th>
<th>post survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of students who responded, “Yes, this book looks interesting to me”</td>
<td># of students who responded, “No, this book does not look interesting to me”</td>
<td># of students who responded, “Yes, this book looks interesting to me”</td>
<td># of students who responded, “No, this book does not look interesting to me”</td>
<td># of students who responded, “I did not read this book”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture 1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture 2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture 4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture 5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture 6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture 7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey presented the open-ended prompt: “Think about your book choices. What helped you determine if the book was interesting. Tell me why you chose the books.” Student responses are provided in Table 4.4. Student responses were reported as written by the student in their survey answer.

Table 4.4 Student Responses to Open-Ended Questions in Pre-Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Responses to Open-Ended Question in Pre-Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“iI chose some books cause it might be drama our life storys witch i like”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“some of them were interesting and some were not”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“i said i wanted to read those books because they look interesting because and i like books that are like a world without rule because i want to live in a world without rules and i did not pick those books because animals really can not run with sign in their hands”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“because it is a lot of word and its fun also you can pop corn read”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“winner is interesting”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“LEARN SOMETHING NEW”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“i choosed the books like see how they run and i choosed telephone mix up”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Beacuse if i dont now the book im not going to read it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intervention cycle ended with the participants taking a post-survey. The participants were presented with similar questions from the pre-survey, as well as new questions about their experience. Sixteen of the 19 student participants responded to the survey. The survey prompt presented the question, “Which activities did you enjoy
Students were able to select multiple options to this question. The results of the survey are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Post-Intervention Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What activity did you enjoy completing in ELA?</th>
<th>Intervention activities</th>
<th>student responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaning though my learning style</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting feedback on my writing</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing a poem to analyze</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give one, Get on</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group stories with teacher</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole group poem</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing an activity before the lesson</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The post-intervention survey asked similar questions related to student perceptions surrounding themselves. The survey presented the prompt: “Which sentence correctly describes you?” About 81% of the students selected “I fit in with other students at school,” while 19% selected "I don’t fit in with other students at school.” On the question related to assignment completion, 94% of students responded, “I complete all my assignments to the best of my ability,” while 6% of students responded, “I do not complete all my assignments to the best of my ability.” On questions related to book interest, there were four choices to select to indicate their book interest. The responses were as follows: 19% of students responded, “I like reading books with characters that look like me.” Thirteen percent of students responded, “I like reading books about
different cultures.” Fifty percent of students responded, “I like reading books that teach
me something new.” Nineteen percent of students responded, “I like reading books that
tell me about something I already knew.” On questions related to participation in class,
there were four choices to select to indicate their level of participation in class. The
responses were as follows: zero students responded, “I never participate in class,” while
19% of students responded, “I sometimes participate in class.” Alternatively, 31% of
students responded, “I often participate in class.” Lastly, 50% of students responded, “I
always participate in class.”

The survey presented the open-ended prompt: “Think about your book choices.
What helped you determine if the book was interesting. Tell me why you chose the
books.” Student responses are provided in Table 4.6. Student responses were reported as
written by the student in their survey answer.

I sorted the responses by themes. The themes I identified were “reflection of self,”
“increasing knowledge,” “entertaining,” and “no interest.” Table 4.7 shows the sorted
responses. The theme “reflection to self” means the students were able to see themselves
in the story. Their responses align to the ideas that characters of their race were present in
the story. Three out of 19 students indicated an attraction to the story based on the
characters present in the story. Those three students were black girls and the stories in
this intervention cycle included stories with black girls as the main character. This
indication of students to an attraction of stories with black girls as the main character
signals to me that students enjoy seeing themselves in stories we read. Our students want
to read stories with characters they feel a relation to. Two of these three girls also showed
a positive impact on comprehension test scores as depicted in Accelerated Reading
Comprehension Tests grade report in Appendix F.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>student # initials</th>
<th>Student Responses to Open-ended Question in Post-assessment</th>
<th>student # initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 OC</td>
<td>“yes they were interesting because they have problems and solution”</td>
<td>4 OC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 SG</td>
<td>“because the fun, they look like me.”</td>
<td>8 SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 BS</td>
<td>“They are interesting because I learn something knew in all of the books.”</td>
<td>18 BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 CS</td>
<td>“because they teach me something new”</td>
<td>17 CS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 JL-M</td>
<td>“because all i chose was cool because its cool how they draw the picture.”</td>
<td>9 JL-M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 SD</td>
<td>“think the was interesting the was ver fun”</td>
<td>5 SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 MR</td>
<td>“I like these stories, because they have chrater's like me.”</td>
<td>15 MR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 TB</td>
<td>“It was interesting becues some books tote me something new.”</td>
<td>1 TB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“because it's long helpful heartbreaking”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I like the the i also liked the story line.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“HELP ME LEARN.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“they weren’t”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Becaues the stories are so amsome and i like the books becaues it is so cool.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“cause it had surprises party's and Cartier [looks]like me and the pomes are nice”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“the stories are interesting becuse they had people had good story about there self.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I on the telephone it was ineresting because you had phone on the wall”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7 Responses by Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student responses sorted by theme</th>
<th>reflection of self</th>
<th>increasing knowledge</th>
<th>entertaining</th>
<th>no interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 SG</td>
<td>12 NL</td>
<td>4 OC</td>
<td>7 KF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 JP</td>
<td>17 CS</td>
<td>9 RG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 MR</td>
<td>1 TB</td>
<td>19 ZT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 JL-M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 MC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 KJ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 TS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three out of 19 students indicated an attraction to the story based on the ability to learn something new from the text. Eight out of 19 students indicated an attraction to the story because it was entertaining to them either through pictures used or the storyline. With a total of eleven out of 19 students showing an attraction to culturally diverse text presented in the intervention cycle shows that students like reading stories that include elements of different cultures. These stories allow students to learn something new. They were able to enjoy the diverse storyline presented. When students are engaged in the learning task this shows elements of self-determination theory (Ryan et al., 2017) students are learning because they want to learn thus their value of education and their confidence increases. Only one student indicated no interest or attraction to the stories read during the intervention cycle. This one student is a very unmotivated student. He
generally sleeps during class, rarely participates, and is often late or absent. I was not surprised by his lack of interest in the stories. I considered his responses as an outlier because his classroom behavior when reading culturally diverse text was opposite of his responses. He, too, showed gains in achievement as indicated by the Accelerated Reader Comprehension Test Grade in Appendix F.

**Teacher Surveys**

**Culturally Responsive Teaching Module**

Surveys were also used with both the researcher and the general education teacher to collect data. We participated in a culturally responsive teaching module. Miler and Tenore (2010) contended that teachers must possess a particular set of knowledge and skills necessary to implement CRIM. The culturally responsive teaching module was utilized to provide background knowledge, a basic set of skills, and examples for classroom use. We completed a post-assessment at the completion of our self-paced modules. Results of the post-assessment showed that we passed the post assessment. We both scored 100% accuracy on the post assessment. The final question asked each participant to rate their ability to use culturally responsive teaching practices in their classroom on a daily basis. The general education teacher rated herself a 7 out of 10, while I rated myself a 9 out of 10.

We also participated in a Culturally Relevant Teaching Methods Survey to gauge our knowledge and value of culturally responsive teaching practices in our classroom. Results of the Culturally Relevant Teaching Methods survey revealed biographical data such as the number of years each teacher had been teaching, the current grade level taught, and past grade levels taught.
The general education teacher and I also self-rated our knowledge of culturally responsive teaching practices. The rating scale gave the values 0 to 5. A rating of 0 equates to “I have never heard the term before.” A rating of 1 equates to “I heard this term before but, I’m not sure what it means.” A rating of 2 equates to “I have been to a training but, I don’t implement in my classroom.” A rating of 3 equates to “I use culturally relevant teaching techniques in my classroom on occasions.” A rating of 4 equates to “I use culturally relevant teaching practices in my classroom daily.” A rating of 5 equates to “I can teach a course on culturally relevant teaching practices, to show others how to incorporate into their classroom.” AD, the researcher, rated myself as a 3. JS, the general educational teacher, rated herself a 2. The teacher took the same survey at the end of the intervention period.

*Culturally Relevant Teaching Methods*

During the post survey of culturally relevant teaching methods, my rating remained unchanged. JS, the general education teacher, increased her rating from 2 to 4. Each teacher participant was asked to define culturally relevant teaching practices. I defined the term as “Tying cultural experiences to their academics. Relating to students through their culture to enhance their educational experience. Meeting the needs of students through various learning experiences.” JS defined the term as “Culturally relevant teaching practices meet the needs of all students regardless of their background. These practices ensure students have an equal opportunity to learn without bias within instruction and assessments.” The survey included prompts to determine what teachers needed to implement culturally relevant teaching practices into a daily part of teaching: I responded, “incorporated in district plan, more time to plan, and more resource.” JS responded, “more time to plan.” We shared the sentiment that some students experienced
benefits of culturally relevant teaching practice. I added that there was also evidence of improved engagement levels and improved achievement levels at certain times during the study. Both general education and I noted the positive impact CRIM had on levels of engagement from students. We both noted that during lessons that employed CRIM students were more on task, took more ownership of their learning, and retained more knowledge from activities that employed CRIM. I shared the lack of anticipated growth in achievement levels from CRIM. Some students showed increased achievement but not the majority of students.

The teachers also completed a CRIM survey at the end of each week. The survey was used to track the strategy used each week, the intended impact of the strategy, the actual impact of the strategy, and whether additional resources were needed for next week. I thought it was important to keep a record of the strategies used each week and each teachers’ perceptions of that week. These perceptions help drive the choices made for the next week. CRIM weekly surveys gave the opportunity for the general education teacher and myself to rate the level of engagement and the level of achievement each week.

Table 4.8 includes the responses for each week to the CRIM check-ins. Analysis of the weekly CRIM check-ins indicated the level of engagement was “excellent” for Weeks 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6. I rated the engagement level for Week 7 as “excellent” but the general education teacher rated it “good.” Both the general education teacher and I rated the achievement level for Week 7 as “fair.” During Week 7, students submitted their informational writing assignment. The scores indicated that three students failed the assignment by making a final grade of 50%. Four students showed average abilities on
the assignment by making a 75%. Nine students passed the assignment by making a 100%. Three students did not turn in the completed assignment, so they did not receive a grade. Engagement levels during the lesson components was typical to other assignments but the level of achievement was lower for this assignment.

Table 4.8 Weekly CRIM Check-Ins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Myself</th>
<th>General Education Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>fair</td>
<td>excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note, Week 3 is not included in the table because the purposeful use of CRIM was not planned for this week.

**Observations**

I used an observation protocol tool developed by Bellwether Education Partners (2022) to take observations prior to intervention cycle and during intervention cycle. The purpose of the observations was to determine the classroom atmosphere, student behaviors, and teacher behaviors. The first category indicated on the protocol is General Observations. I was guided to respond to five prompts by selecting “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “agree,” or “strongly agree.” I indicated
“strongly agree” with 4 out of 5 prompts on the pre-intervention observation protocol and “strongly disagree” to 1 out of 5 prompts. I indicated “strongly agree” to 4 out of 5 prompts and “strongly disagree” to 1 out of 5 prompts on the during intervention cycle.

The next category indicated on the protocol is Teacher Behaviors. I was guided to answer nine prompts by selecting “all of the time,” “most of the time,” “some of the time,” “never,” or “no opportunity to observe.” On the pre-intervention cycle, I indicated “all of the time” on 2 out of 9 prompts. I indicated “most of the time” on 2 out of 9 prompts. I indicated “some of the time” on 4 out of 9 prompts. I indicated “never” on 1 out of 9 prompts. I indicated “no opportunity to observe” on 0 out of 9 prompts. During the intervention cycle, I indicated “all of the time” on 6 out of 9 prompts. I indicated “most of the time” on 2 out of 9 prompts. I indicated “some of the time” on 0 out of 9 prompts. I indicated “never” on 1 out of 9 prompts. I indicated “no opportunity to observe” on 0 out of 9 prompts.

The last category indicated on the protocol was Student Behavior. I was guided to answer nine prompts by selecting “all of the time,” “most of the time,” “some of the time,” “never,” or “no opportunity to observe.” During the pre-intervention cycle, I indicated “all of the time” on 1 out of 5 prompts. I indicated “most of the time” on 1 out of 5 prompts. I indicated “some of the time” on 2 out of 5 prompts. I indicated “never” on 0 out of 5 prompts. I indicated “no opportunity to observe” on 1 out of 5 prompts. During the intervention cycle, I indicated “all of the time” on 2 out of 5 prompts. I indicated “most of the time” on 3 out of 5 prompts. I indicated “some of the time” on 0 out of 5 prompts. I indicated “never” on 0 out of 5 prompts. I indicated “no opportunity to observe” on 0 out of 5 prompts.
Additionally, I added notes in the comments section of both observation protocols. On the pre-intervention protocol, I noted the use of attention getters throughout the lesson. Some attention getters were used because students were talking and/or off task, while other attention getters were used to ensure comprehension of the lesson standard. Other comments noted that two students were sleeping or had their head on desk. Comments also included that another two students were talking off tasks. I noted that although student work was not displayed in the room, there were anchor charts displayed based on current and previous lesson content. The teacher had a warm and welcoming presence. She spoke mostly positive during the lesson. There was a moment when her frustration was evident. Vague feedback was given to students when answered incorrectly. At one point, no one was able to answer the question correctly. Teacher would state “no” to each student, then “really, how are y’all missing this?” with a sign of exacerbation after the third incorrect answer.

I also added comments on the observation protocol during the intervention cycle. Researcher noted that although the students were very talkative, they were having on-task conversations. The room was abuzz with cooperative learning, students reading aloud, and students talking through answer choices. The teacher used feedback by relating back to previously taught information and anchor charts displayed throughout the room. The teacher visited each student desk and actively monitored the progress of students. I noted that the desks were arranged in groups versus pairs as during the first observation.

I compared the results from the pre-intervention observation protocol to the observations taken during the intervention cycle. The observation protocol was taken on a pre-selected day before the intervention began and a preselected day during the intervention cycle. The teacher was not aware of the date of observation to ensure valid
observation methods. I ensured that the teacher planned to implement CRIM on the preselected date. Analysis of the responses to the protocol before the intervention and the responses during the intervention indicate a positive impact to culturally relevant instructional methods to student motivation. Each prompt received an increase score on the observation protocol. Prompts that were not present during the pre-intervention were present during the intervention cycle. These results signal an overall positive impact for student motivation as measured by observations. A copy of the protocol prompts can be found in the Appendix G.

**Grade Reports**

Grade reports were analyzed to determine the impact the use of culturally relevant instruction methods had on student achievement. The grade reports include scores from Accelerated Reader© comprehension test, rough draft, and final scores from imaginative narrative and informational narrative assignments. Scores were recorded from comprehension tests taken prior to the intervention and during the intervention. There was a total of six tests reported. Three tests were taken prior to intervention cycle, and three tests were taken during intervention cycle. Each student’s score was recorded for each test, then an average score was calculated for tests taken prior to the intervention cycle and during the intervention cycle. Additionally, students’ change in rough draft score to final draft score was analyzed to determine the impact on student achievement. For each writing assignment, students turned in a rough draft. The teacher then rated the rough draft and gave immediate and purposeful feedback. The feedback and ratings were made available to students the next school day.
Appendix F shows the results of the comprehension test taken. The first section indicates the tests that were taken prior to the intervention cycle. The second section indicates tests that were taken during the intervention cycle. The first column identifies the student participant by number and initial, the second thru fourth column indicates book numbers 1-3. The book number corresponds to the date taken, the title of the book, and grade level of the text for pre-intervention test taken. Book 1 was taken 8/30/21. The title is “Experts Incorporated” and is 4.0 grade level. Book 2 was taken 9/17/21. The title is “Spiders” and is 4.4 grade level. Book 3 was taken 11/4/21. The title is “Aguinaldo” and is 3.8 grade level. The fifth column is the students’ average score on the three tests taken. The sixth thru eight column indicates the book numbers 4-6. The book number corresponds to the date taken, the title of the book, and the grade level of the text for the test taken during the intervention cycle. Book 4 was taken 1/13/22. The title is “See How They Run” and is 5.1 grade level. Book 5 was taken 1/28/22. The title is “Moon over Stars” and is 4.3 grade level. Book 6 was taken 3/11/22. The title is “Mama, I’ll give you the World” and is 4.0 grade level. The ninth column indicates the average score of the three tests taken during the intervention cycle. The tenth column indicates the impact.

Seven out of 19 students showed a negative impact between comprehension test taken before the intervention cycle and during the intervention cycle. Three out of 16 students showed no impact between comprehension tests taken before the intervention cycle and during the intervention cycle. Nine out of 19 students showed positive impact between comprehension tests taken before the intervention cycle and during the intervention cycle. The average score on comprehension test taken prior to the intervention cycle was 86.4%. The average score on comprehension test taken during the
intervention cycle was 83.5%. This demonstrates that the use of culturally diverse text and CRIM had an overall negative impact on student’s comprehension scores as measured by AR tests.

Table 4.9 shows the results of immediate feedback on the imaginative narrative assignment. The first column presents the students’ number and initials, the second column indicated the score given as “immediate feedback,” the third column indicates the final score given, the fourth column indicates the impact that occurred due to the use of intervention of immediate feedback. An immediate feedback score of 5 indicates the students’ potential to make 90% or higher on their final draft. An immediate feedback score of 4 indicates the students’ potential to score 80% or higher on their final draft. An immediate feedback score of 3 indicates the students’ potential to score 70% or higher on their final draft. An immediate feedback score of 2 indicates the students’ potential to score 60% or higher on their final draft. An immediate feedback score of 1 indicates the students’ potential to score below 60% on their final draft. The final score was calculated using the rubric included in Appendix A. It should be noted that four points were added to the final draft grade for completion of the rough draft. The points earned divided by the total possible points equates to the student’s final score presented as a percentage. The impact was categorized as positive, negative, or no impact. *Note: Student data for Student 7 and Student 10 were removed from the table. The students did not turn in a rough draft at the time immediate feedback was given.
Table 4.9 Immediate Feedback on Imaginative Narrative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>student #</th>
<th>immediate feedback score</th>
<th>final score</th>
<th>impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 TB</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>no impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 MC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 DC</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 OC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 SD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 BD</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 KF</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 SG</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>no impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 KJ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>no impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 NL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 JL-M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>no impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 JP</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>no impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 MR</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 TS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 CS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>no impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 BS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 ZT</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results from Imaginative Narrative Assignment indicates seven out of 19 students show positive achievement impact to the use of immediate feedback by the researcher. A positive achievement impact means after feedback was given; the student’s final draft score was higher than predicted based on their score on their rough draft. Four out of 19 students showed negative achievement impact to the use of immediate feedback by the researcher. A negative achievement impact means after feedback was given; the student’s final draft score was lower than predicted based on their rough draft score. Six out of 19 students showed no impact to the use of immediate feedback. No impact means students score did not improve or worsen with the use of immediate feedback.

Data analysis was conducted on the impact immediate feedback had on students’ achievement during the Informational Writing assignment. Table 4.11 shows the results of immediate feedback on the informational writing assignment. The first column presents the students’ number and initials, the second column indicated the score given as “immediate feedback,” the third column indicates the final score given, the fourth column indicates the impact that occurred due to the use of intervention of immediate feedback.

*Note: Three students did not turn in a rough draft due to being absent. and two students did not turn in a final draft due to being absent.
Table 4.10 Informational Writing: Zebras and Giraffes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student #</th>
<th>Feedback Score</th>
<th>Final Score</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 TB</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 MC</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 DC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 OC</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 SD</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 BD</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 KF</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 SG</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 RG</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 AH</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 KJ</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 NL</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 JL-M</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 JP</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 MR</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 TS</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 CS</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 BS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 ZT</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from informational writing scores indicates that 100% of the students demonstrated a positive impact. Every student that submitted a rough draft and received immediate feedback on the contents of the rough draft scored higher on their final draft. A grade of 60% or higher indicates that the student submitted an essay that demonstrated understanding of the lesson standard. Thirteen out of 16 students submitted an essay that received a passing score. Although 3 out of 16 students submitted an essay that did not meet lesson standards, these students each showed improvement from rough draft to final draft. I concluded that immediate feedback on the informational writing assignment resulted in positive impact on student achievement.
STAR Data Reports

Students take STAR Reading assessment four times throughout the year. Accommodations or modifications outlined in a student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or 504 plans are adhered to for each administration. Participants in the study were tested August 9, 2021, during the second week of school. This administration session is considered the Fall Administration by the district. Students completed the assessment again December 1, 2021. This administration session is considered the Winter Session by the district. Students completed the assessment again March 11, 2022, at the end of the intervention cycle. This administration cycle is not named, but for the purpose of this study it will be referred to as Early Spring. Students completed the assessment once more on May 9, 2022, before the end of the school year. This administration is considered the Spring Session by the district. Throughout this study, it will be referred to as Late Spring to ensure clarity.

During the Fall administration of the STAR assessment, the general education teacher and I simply explains the purpose of the test, review the test directions, and answer any questions about how to take the test. Students are instructed to begin as we monitor students from the back of the room. The first administration is not high stress for us because a low score on the Fall administration allows for more growth throughout the year. During the Winter administration, the testing session begins with a pep talk from both of us. Teachers encouraged students to do their best, take their time, read questions carefully. We also reviewed effective test taking strategies. We explained that this administration of the test shows student growth since the beginning of the school year. There is an in-depth explanation of the value of the test. There is an in-depth explanation
of how the test is constructed. Students are reminded that test questions will get increasingly harder.

During the Early Spring administration, I delivered a similar speech to students as delivered prior to the Winter administration session. I had a personal stake for students to increase scores from the Winter administration to show proof that the intervention cycle was positively impactful in the reading achievement of students. We carefully and closely monitored students’ during administration. Students are prone to just clicking through a test of this nature. There are incidents in which students don’t read the question and simply select answer choices. We were hoping to avoid these incidents during this administration by closely and carefully monitoring students.

Appendix H depicts the Star Data Report test scores. The first column indicates the students’ number and initials, the second column indicates the Lexile Score from Winter administration. The third column indicates the Lexile Score from the Early Spring administration. The fourth column indicates the impact from the Winter to Early Spring score due to the CRIM implemented during the intervention cycle.

Fifty-eight percent of students demonstrated a decrease in Lexile scores reported prior to intervention than Lexile scores reported immediately after the intervention cycle completed. This decrease in Lexile score signals a negative impact on achievement for students. About 42% of students demonstrated an increase in Lexile scores taken prior to intervention than Lexile scores reported immediately after the completion of the intervention cycle. This increase in Lexile scores signals a positive impact on achievement for students. As a majority of students reported a decrease in Lexile scores,
this indicates an overall negative impact on achievement for students in this fourth-grade diverse classroom.

**Analysis of Data Based on Research Questions**

The impact of CRIM was analyzed using multiple sources of data. I examined the impacts of the intervention week by week. Names have been redacted and students are referred to by researcher-appointed number and two letters that represent the students’ initials. Analysis data is arranged by the impact on motivation and the impact on achievement. Results from surveys and observations were used to determine the impact on motivation while the results from grade reports and STAR reports were used to determine the impact on achievement.

RQ 1: How does the use of culturally relevant instructional methods impact student engagement and classroom culture in the general education fourth-grade classroom?

RQ 2: How does the use of culturally relevant instructional methods impact reaching proficiency in the general education fourth-grade classroom?

RQ 3: How were culturally relevant instruction methods integrated into the curriculum by general education and special education teachers? The use of culturally relevant instructional methods had positive impact on engagement and classroom culture. Each week both teachers completed CRIM check-in to indicate the level of engagement. Every week except week seven students demonstrated ‘excellent’ engagement. Week seven was the lowest rated week for engagement. Student responses from their book interested shows that students enjoyed reading the text presented during the intervention
cycle. Responses from the post intervention survey showed that students enjoyed participating in the activities such as getting feedback, small group instruction, and Get one, Give one snowball activity. The atmosphere in the classroom was heightened with student excitement during the intervention cycle.

The use of culturally relevant instructional methods positively impacted reading proficiency in the diverse classroom. Weekly CRIM check-ins indicated that the achievement level of student was “good” for four out of six weeks, ‘excellent’ one out of six weeks and ‘fair’ one out of six weeks. The grade reports showed that overall, 9 out of 19 students showed positive impact in change of average score between non-culturally diverse text and culturally diverse text. Three students demonstrated proficiency on the text prior to intervention and continued to demonstrate proficiency during the intervention cycle. These students showed no impact to the use of culturally relevant instructional methods. Analysis of the change in STAR reading proficiency scores shows a negative impact to the use of culturally relevant instructional methods.

I was able to integrate culturally relevant instructional methods into the current curriculum. I had to work within the time constraints and perimeters from the district, but it was successful. The general education teacher had a harder time finding resources and finding the time needed to effectively implement CRIM. During our informal conversations we often spoke about wishing we had more time to find the resources.

**Reflections from the Teachers**

The general education teacher and I had many conversations during this study. Some of those conversations were formal in nature and others informal in nature. These informal conversations occurred more frequently than formal conversations. Informal
conversations occurred before school during hallway duty, during school during recess duty, and even on our lunch breaks. These conversations would often continue into afterschool. We both saw the “aha moments” that happened during the intervention cycle. Our students who were high achievers seemed to achieve even higher, while the lower achieving students seemed to remain unchanged. We often discussed that the students we thought would be most excited by culturally diverse text seem indifferent to them in class, but their individual survey results indicated their appreciation for the texts. Students in general seemed to enjoy the cooperative learning activities that were incorporated within the intervention cycle.

One thing we combatted the most was the talking that occurred due to the new seating arrangement. After students completed the Learning Styles survey, they were seated with others of similar learning styles. That means all the auditory learners were seated together. As it turned out, the auditory learners were our most talkative students. They were also placed in the front of the class. It was invigorating to have them talking about task-based activities. They were having discussions amongst themselves, pulling other classmates into class discussion, frequently raising their hands to answer questions, and sharing information learned from their videos. While every teacher loves to have student involvement, it was often a distraction to the learning environment when not managed properly.

Both the general education teacher and I discussed how fun the work week had become. We enjoyed creating lessons with the aim of increasing student engagement and student achievement that incorporated components of CRIM. We understood the constraints we had to remain within due to the demands of the curriculum. We were determined to make this work. Throughout the intervention period, I created and
implemented the majority of the intervention cycle components, as the general education teacher was responsible for the lesson plans of two other classes. Although the general education teacher never complained, I didn’t want to put undue stress on her.

Summary

This action-research examined the use of culturally relevant teaching practices in a diverse classroom. The study included 19 student participants and two teachers. The action research employed the use of an intervention cycle to determine the impact of CRIM in a diverse classroom. The intervention cycle was implemented in a week-by-week basis. Data was collected through the use of surveys, observation protocol, grade reports, and STAR reports. Data was analyzed by looking at the results from each data set collected.

Students participated in learning style surveys and pre/post engagement surveys. Teachers also participated in pre-intervention assessment by completing a culturally relevant teaching module, CRIM survey at the end of each week, and a post survey at the end of the intervention cycle.

Data was collected through observation data protocols. I completed the protocol prior to intervention and after the conclusion of the intervention cycle. Differences in the observation protocol was used to determine the impact of the use of CRIM in a diverse classroom.

Grade reports were used to determine the impact of using CRIM in a diverse classroom. Grades were collected from comprehension test taken prior to the intervention cycle and during the intervention cycle. The number of students who showed improved
scores was compared to the number of students who showed decreased scores. This comparison determined the impact CRIM had on the students’ achievement level.
CHAPTER 5

FINAL THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

This study examines the use of culturally relevant instructional methods (CRIM) in a fourth-grade diverse classroom. Student participants within this study exhibited extremely low reading abilities and exceptionally low motivation to complete assignment and participate in class. Examination of the current curriculum was conducted to pinpoint a possible causes of low reading achievement and low motivation rates. Examination was also conducted to determine the areas to improve the current curriculum to meet the needs of students. This examination revealed a lack of culturally diverse text. The use of culturally relevant text for a diverse classroom is rooted theories by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b) and Geneva Gay (2000).

Participants in the study included 19 students and two teachers—one general education teacher and me. The two teachers worked together to implement the intervention cycle. The intervention cycle included: (a) differentiating lessons based on learning style, (b) incorporating an “activator” that connects to the students’ culture and builds background knowledge, (c) allowing student choice for instructional text, (d) increased use of culturally relevant material, and (e) direct and immediate feedback. Data was collected through surveys, observations, grade reports, and STAR data reports. Data was analyzed for the impact it had on achievement and motivation, using the terms “positive impact,” “negative impact,” or “no impact.”
The aim of the study was to answer the following questions:

RQ 1: How does the use of culturally relevant instructional methods impact student engagement and classroom culture in the general education fourth-grade classroom?

RQ 2: How does the use of culturally relevant instructional methods impact reading proficiency in the general education fourth-grade classroom?

RQ 3: How were culturally relevant instruction methods integrated into the curriculum by general education and special education teachers?

Data collection from surveys showed an overall positive impact on student motivation levels. Data collection from observations showed an overall positive impact on student motivation. Data collection from grade reports showed an overall positive impact on student achievement. Data collection from STAR reports showed an overall negative impact on student achievement. Data analysis concluded that the use of CRIM had an overall positive impact on student motivation. Data analysis concluded that the use of CRIM had an inconclusive impact on student achievement. Data analysis concluded that CRIM were able to be integrated into the curriculum. Although it was not a seamless process, there was an overall increased use of the methods.

**Results Related to Existing Literature**

This action research was grounded in the theoretical framework and pedagogical knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings 1995a, Ladson-Billings,
Extensive studies of curriculum that is conscious of cultural identities that represent the diverse set of students in our classrooms prove the outlined educational benefits of this pedagogical practice. This action research also shared those positive links to engagement and achievement. The benefits of CRIM can span beyond the four walls of the classroom.

The goal of education focused through a culturally relevant framework is to create global citizens that will enhance our current world with ideals of inclusivity, appreciation for various cultures, and understanding towards the differences that make up our society. That enhancement can include the development of cultural competence, which can create a world with greater social order, increased graduation rates, and students with a wider range of knowledge and skills.

I would be remiss if I did not include the challenges of implementing CRIM in this discussion. The same challenges mentioned in Chapter 2 were evident during the study. The lack of inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy in preservice education courses, the lack of professional development offered to new and veteran teachers, and the lack of direct implementation of these theories cause insufficient knowledge and practice within the current curriculum. Those challenges were present during the intervention cycle as well as other challenges such as lack of autonomy in the classroom.

**Practice Recommendations**

It is a common misconception that CRIM cannot be implemented in math and science. This is far from the truth. When teachers understand the contributions from
various cultures in all subject areas, they are able to pass that information onto students. I would recommend that there be an intentional daily incorporation of culturally diverse text in all classrooms beginning in pre-K and continuing through 12th grade. Throughout my professional career as an educator, the mentions of various cultures are scarce and usually occur during the national dedicated times of observance. Even then those mentions include stereotypes and inaccurate depictions of those cultures. To ensure intentional incorporation of culturally diverse text in all classrooms for pre-K–12th grade, professional development on the topic must be incorporated for all teachers and paraprofessionals.

I would also like to see students become engrossed in the theories and ideologies surrounding culturally relevant teaching. Students should be introduced to these principals in pre-K and the practices developed throughout their educational career. This knowledge would allow students to advocate for themselves. The more knowledge we give students about this process, the more benefits they will reap from them.

I would also recommend that state- and district-wide testing incorporate culturally relevant text, more than just using cultural names but also cultural stories within assessments. Since teachers are implementing these practices in their classrooms, it should be reflected in district wide testing as well as statewide testing.

**Limitations or Suggestions**

Limitations of the study included my ability to fully change the curriculum. Milner and Tenore (2010) discussed the systemic barriers that contribute to the limitations of implementing CRIM: “Teacher are sometimes pressured and closely
monitored by their administration to follow a set frame of referral, discipline, and management, which can make it difficult for teachers to employ culturally responsive classroom management” (Milner & Tenore, 2010, p. 568). Students are mandated to take district-wide assessments within a specific time frame. Teachers are mandated to follow the pacing guide provided by the district. These mandates hindered some autonomy of the teachers during the intervention cycle. But these limitations also helped prove that CRIM can still be implemented even under tight constraints from the district.

Also, the organization of the class allowed for two teachers to be present to implement the intervention cycle, and this may not be typical for all classrooms. If only one teacher is present in the classroom, which is the norm, it may be more difficulty to implement the complete intervention cycle. Having two teachers in the classroom allowed for extra student support, more time for planning CRIM, and the ability for the teachers to divide the responsibilities of teaching to maximize the educational experience for students. Having one teacher in the classroom or lacking a professional learning community may cause constraints in time, support, and resources in implementing CRIM; therefore, it is important to continue to study the organization of the class and school.

Limitations of the study included the short time frame of the intervention cycle. If the intervention cycle spanned the school year and in multiple subject areas, the impact may have been different. The intervention cycle lasted for three months. Due to the district testing schedule, the baseline testing and the intervention cycle needed to be completed in a shorten time frame to ensure all data was collected.
Limitations also exist in the limited knowledge of culturally relevant teaching practices as a preservice teacher as well as limited professional development in culturally relevant teaching practices as a continuing teacher. The participating teacher had very limited knowledge of this teaching model. She was willing to learn but didn’t have the luxury of learning on her own. The district does not offer professional development on the topic, and she did not have the opportunity to take a course on the topic during undergrad or graduate courses. I did not have any undergraduate courses dedicated to the topic, but I had several graduate courses on the topic. I have not had any professional development on the topic within my current district.

Limitations also existed in the resources available for implementing CRIM. Each school is expected to follow the district pacing guide and use the district-purchased curriculum. The students are expected to complete district testing during the testing window. The expectation to follow the district pacing guide and utilized the district purchased curriculum put limitations on the available resources for teachers. I was able to use additional websites to find culturally relevant text, but these were not provided by the district.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research could include implementing the intervention cycle into multiple classrooms in multiple grade levels to determine if a positive impact occurs across multiple areas of implementation. If I did this intervention cycle again, I would implement the instructional methods in two subjects at a time. This allows for students to have more exposure to the methods. After a few months of implementation in two subjects, I would the increase the implementation to another subject area. I would
gradually increase implementation until all subject areas are utilizing CRIM. I would also
do the same with grade levels. I would start with the older grade levels because I feel that
I would be able to get feedback on what works and doesn’t more easily from upper
elementary students. I would implement in Grades 3 through 5. Implementation in
multiple grade levels gives teachers an additional resource of a peer teacher as well.
Teachers would have the ability to collaborate with each other to find resources or for aid
in implementation.

Future research could also include implementing different culturally relevant
techniques than the techniques used in this action research. Chapters 2 and 3 outline
specific techniques that are associated with creating a culturally responsive classroom. I
was not able to use all the techniques in this study. Some techniques work better for
different environments. It would be beneficial if future research included a prolonged use
of the techniques used in this study or new techniques not used in this study.

Future research would include increased professional development for teachers to
ensure proper implementation of CRIM. As mentioned, creating a culturally responsive
classroom is not just utilizing a set of skills but adhering to a set of ideals. There should
be ongoing professional development for teachers to create a culturally relevant
environment that makes learning optimal for all students. I would like for this district to
find value in CRIM and make it part of the professional development profile for teachers.

Summary

Conducting this action research gave me a unique opportunity to reach students in
a way I have never done before. Implementing, reviewing, and analyzing the use of
CRIM to determine the impact on student motivation and student achievement was a tantalizing experience. Throughout my teaching career, I have not had any specific training on culturally relevant teaching pedagogy. I have not frequently used culturally relevant text or encouraged students to be socially consciousness. But year after year, district after district the same reoccurring problem is evident: low reading ability. Each year the blame is place somewhere new. This year the blame was placed on COVID. For me, the reason for the issue was not my main concern because I believe there is not one specific reason, but a solution to the problem is a greater place to focus my energies. This study looked at utilizing CRIM as a possible solution.

There are three distinct moments that stood out for me the most throughout this study. The first moment occurred during the student choice activity. I enjoyed watching the students work together to complete the assignment. I saw some students who are generally followers, step into a leadership position. Students were highly motivated to read the poems and complete the assignment. The next moment that stood out for me was reading the responses to the open-ended prompt during the post-survey. It seemed as if at least one maybe two students appreciated the use of culturally relevant text. I was hoping that more students would be excited to read books and discuss experiences that were closely related to them. But I was overjoyed that at least two students appreciated this opportunity, and sometimes that is more than enough. The third moment was the comment left by the teacher participant in the action research. On her post-intervention survey, she mentioned the ability to do “something like this” all the time. I believe she appreciated the use of CRIM and understood the value it can have within a classroom. She stated that she has a plan for implementing the techniques within her classroom. I
feel that I have made a positive impact on this classroom and hopefully student
participants as well as teacher participants, including myself, take this experience with
them to impact a change on the educational experience for students within a diverse
classroom setting.
REFERENCES


doi: 10.1080/00405849509543675


profession, policies, and curriculum. Information Age.


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https://www.renaissance.com/products/star-reading/

http://www.TPRonline.org

https://www.time4learning.com/learning-styles/verbal-linguistic.html


https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-0003.V47-1


APPENDIX A

LEARNING STYLE SURVEY

The Learning Style Survey is 3 pages. The first two pages were printed front to back and presented to students. The third page is used to calculate the results.
6) The classroom job I like most is
   a. Hanging new posters in the room
   b. Reading the directions for a worksheet to the class
   c. Taking notes for a group assignment
   d. Walking around the room to hand out papers

7) As an adult the job I’d like most is
   a. Cartographer - making maps
   b. Voice-over actor - doing the voices for animated shows
   c. Author - writing books
   d. Athlete - does physical activity every day

8) I learned to ride a bike by
   a. Watching a sibling or friend do it
   b. Listening to my parent tell me how
   c. Reading about how to ride
   d. Getting on a bike and trying it

9) In group projects I am the person who
   a. Draws the pictures or charts
   b. Talks more than everyone else
   c. Takes the notes
   d. Gathers the needed supplies

10) When I study for a math test at home I
    a. Review graphs and illustrations
    b. Have someone ask me quiz questions
    c. Take written practice tests
    d. Use counters or blocks to practice skills

https://kids.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Learning_Style_Test_for_Children
Learning Style Survey

Results

Directions: Count the number of times you circled each letter and write those numbers on the corresponding lines below. Circle the letter you answered most. If you tied on any letters, your learning style is a combination of those answers.

A = _________  B = _________  C = _________  D = _________

If you answered with...

 Mostly A:
You are a Visual Learner. This means you understand and remember information better when it is something you can see such as a picture, graph, or chart.

 Mostly B:
You are an Aural or Auditory Learner. This means you learn best from hearing information especially when it has a rhythm to it.

 Mostly C:
You are a Verbal Learner. This means you understand and remember information better when you read or write it yourself.

 Mostly D:
You are a Kinesthetic or Physical Learner. This means you learn best from hands-on experiences or when you are moving as you read/listen.

https://kids.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Learning_Style_Test_for_Children
Writing Rubrics were used to grade students’ Writing Assignment. The Narrative Rubric was used to grade Imaginative Narrative Assignment. The Informational Rubric was used to grade Informational Writing Assignment. The rubric is organized into 3 categories. The organization category is divided into 0 to 4 points that students can earn. The Elaboration Category is divided into 0 to 4 points that students can earn. The final category of conventions is divided into 0 to 2 points that students can earn.

### NARRATIVE WRITING RUBRIC in 4th grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a <strong>clear beginning, middle and end</strong></td>
<td>There is a beginning, middle and end</td>
<td>There is a little bit of a beginning, middle and end</td>
<td>No real opening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really effective <strong>opening</strong> for audience</td>
<td>Effective opening for audience</td>
<td>Weak opening for audience</td>
<td>No real attempt to establish a setting and characters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly establishes a <strong>setting and characters</strong></td>
<td>Establishes a setting and character</td>
<td>Weakly establishes a setting and characters</td>
<td>There is little or no plot, just a series of events with little or no order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience can easily follow <strong>plot</strong></td>
<td>The audience can pretty much follow the plot</td>
<td>The audience has to work hard to follow the plot</td>
<td>No real attempt at a closing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Really effective closing</strong></td>
<td>Effective closing for audience</td>
<td>Weak closing for audience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELABORATION</td>
<td>CONVENTIONS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes vivid <strong>dialogue</strong> that makes audience deeply understand how the characters feel and what is happening. <strong>Vividly describes characters and setting</strong> with specific details. Consistently uses strong, clear <strong>word choice</strong>, including <strong>figurative language, sensory language</strong>.</td>
<td>Adequate use of correct <strong>punctuation</strong> (for dialogue). Adequate use of correct <strong>capitalization and grammar</strong>. Adequate use of correct <strong>spelling</strong>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes dialogue that usually makes audience understand how the characters feel and what is happening. <strong>Describes characters and setting with specific details</strong>. Usually uses strong, clear <strong>word choice</strong>, including <strong>figurative language</strong> when appropriate.</td>
<td>Limited use of correct <strong>punctuation</strong> (for dialogue). Limited use of correct <strong>capitalization and grammar</strong>. Limited use of correct <strong>spelling</strong>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes dialogue that sometimes helps audience understand how the characters feel and what is happening. <strong>Somewhat describes characters and setting with details</strong>. Sometimes uses strong, clear <strong>word choice</strong>, including <strong>figurative language</strong> when appropriate.</td>
<td>Rare use of correct <strong>punctuation</strong> (for dialogue). Rare use of correct <strong>capitalization and grammar</strong>. Rare use of correct <strong>spelling</strong>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't include much dialogue, and the dialogue doesn't help the audience understand how the characters feel or what is happening. Doesn't really include details about characters or setting. No strong, clear <strong>word choice</strong> or include <strong>figurative language</strong> used.</td>
<td>Unreadable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The introduction makes a <strong>clear claim/thesis statement</strong>, so it's obvious to the reader what the essay is about, and what information will follow.</td>
<td>The introduction makes a pretty clear claim/thesis statement, so that the reader can figure out what the essay is about, and what information will follow.</td>
<td>The introduction makes a somewhat clear claim/thesis statement, so that, with some work, the reader can figure out what the essay is about, and what information will follow.</td>
<td>There is little or no introduction and claim/thesis statement to lay out what the essay is about, and what information will follow.</td>
<td>Copies text from another author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The paragraphs are <strong>clearly organized</strong> - it is evident that the writer planned out which information to present, and in what order, based on the thesis statement. Each paragraph is about ONE topic.</td>
<td>The paragraphs are organized - it seems as if the writer planned out most of the essay and which information to present, and in what order, based on the thesis statement. Each paragraph is generally about ONE topic, and there is not a lot of extra random information.</td>
<td>The paragraphs are somewhat organized, but each paragraph has some random information and it's not clear what the topic is in each paragraph.</td>
<td>The paragraphs are disorganized and don't relate to the thesis statement. There is no clear distinction between one paragraph and the next - it's all a jumble.</td>
<td>Off-topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each paragraph <strong>transitions</strong> smoothly from one to the other, using transitions such as &quot;Similarly&quot;, &quot;By contrast&quot;, or &quot;One example of this is...&quot;</td>
<td>Each paragraph generally transitions smoothly from one to the other, often using transitions such as &quot;Similarly&quot;, &quot;By contrast&quot;, or &quot;One example of this is...&quot;</td>
<td>Each paragraph sometimes transitions smoothly from one to the other, but often there is no real connection between the end of one paragraph and the start of the next.</td>
<td>There is little to no smooth transition or connection between one paragraph and the next.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a strong, logical <strong>conclusion</strong> that reinforces the claim / thesis statement for the audience.</td>
<td>The conclusion for the audience supports the claim / thesis statement.</td>
<td>Somewhat logical conclusion for the audience, but it doesn't really reinforce the claim / thesis statement.</td>
<td>No clear conclusion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELABORATION</td>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly uses relevant and specific <strong>facts and details</strong> to teach the reader useful information about the topic.</td>
<td>Adequate use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistently cites the sources for the included facts, letting the reader know where the information came from.</td>
<td>Limited use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistently uses strong, clear <strong>word choice</strong> appropriately.</td>
<td>Rare use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very effectively uses <strong>elaborative techniques</strong> such as metaphor and personal experiences to support the thesis statement.</td>
<td>Just copies text from another author</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often uses relevant and specific facts and details to teach the reader useful information about the topic.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually cites the facts and details, letting the reader know which sources the information came from.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually uses strong, clear word choice appropriately.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often effectively uses elaborative techniques such as metaphor and personal experiences to support the claim.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes uses relevant and specific facts and details to teach the reader useful information about the topic.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only sometimes cites the facts and details, letting the reader know which sources the information came from.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes uses strong, clear word choice appropriately.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes uses elaborative techniques such as metaphor and personal experiences to support the claim.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't include more than one fact or detail, and it may not be relevant and doesn't teach the reader useful information about the topic.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it uses facts and details, doesn't cite where they came from.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't use strong, clear word choice.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No use of elaborative techniques.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies text from another author</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-topic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rare use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just copies text from another author</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-topic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

POEM ANALYSIS SHEET

The “Analyzing a Poem” worksheet was used by students and teacher to complete the analysis of poems. It was projected on the board during the whole group lesson. Then passed out to students during student choice activity.
APPENDIX D

STUDENT CHOICE POEMS

These were the poems available to students during the student choice poetry activity. Each poem title was read aloud. The students selected the poem and wrote the number on their Analysis Worksheet. Students were then given the poem of their choice. Students had a choice of 11 different poems.

#1 April Rain Song by Langston Hughes

Let the rain kiss you
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops
Let the rain sing you a lullaby
The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk
The rain makes running pools in the gutter
The rain plays a little sleep song on our roof at night
And I love the rain.

#2 Winter Poem By Nikki Giovanni

once a snowflake fell
on my brow and i loved
it so much and i kissed
it and it was happy and called its cousins
and brothers and a web
of snow engulfed me then
i reached to love them all
and i squeezed them and they became
a spring rain and i stood perfectly
still and was a flower
# 3 Homework! Oh, Homework! By Jack Prelutsky

I hate you! You stink!
I wish I could wash you away in the sink,
if only a bomb
would explode you to bits.
Homework! Oh, homework!
You're giving me fits.

I'd rather take baths
with a man-eating shark,
or wrestle a lion
alone in the dark,
eat spinach and liver,
pet ten porcupines,
than tackle the homework,
my teacher assigns.

Homework! Oh, homework!
you're last on my list,
I simple can't see
why you even exist,
if you just disappeared
it would tickle me pink.
Homework! Oh, homework!
I hate you! You stink!
The crocodile, with cunning smile, sat in the dentist’s chair.
He said, “Right here and everywhere my teeth require repair.”
The dentist’s face was turning white. He quivered, quaked and shook.
He muttered, “I suppose I’m going to have to take a look.”
“I want you”, Crocodile declared, “to do the back ones first.
The molars at the very back are easily the worst.”
He opened wide his massive jaws. It was a fearsome sight—
At least three hundred pointed teeth, all sharp and shining white.
The dentist kept himself well clear. He stood two yards away.
He chose the longest probe he had to search out the decay.
“I said to do the back ones first!” the Crocodile called out.
“You’re much too far away, dear sir, to see what you’re about.
To do the back ones properly you’ve got to put your head
Deep down inside my great big mouth,” the grinning Crocky said.
The poor old dentist wrung his hands and, weeping in despair,
He cried, “No no! I see them all extremely well from here!”
Just then, in burst a lady, in her hands a golden chain.
She cried, “Oh Croc, you naughty boy, you’re playing tricks again!”
“Watch out!” the dentist shrieked and started climbing up the wall.
“He’s after me! He’s after you! He’s going to eat us all!”
“Don’t be a twit,” the lady said, and flashed a gorgeous smile.
“He’s harmless. He’s my little pet, my lovely crocodile.”
Recess! Oh, Recess!
We love you! You rule!
You keep us away
from the teachers in school.
Your swings are refreshing.
Your slides are the best.
You give us a break
from a really hard test.

Recess! Oh, Recess!
We want you to know,
you’re sweeter than syrup,
you’re special like snow.
You don’t assign homework.
You make the day fun.
You let us play kickball
and run in the sun.

Recess! Oh, Recess!
You’re first on our list.
We’d be in despair
if you didn’t exist.
We’re happy we have you.
You’re awesome and cool.
Recess! Oh, Recess!
We love you! You rule!
#6 BROWN GIRL, BROWN GIRL
by Leslé Honoré

Brown girl Brown girl
what do you see?
i see a Vice President
that looks like me

Brown girl Brown girl
what do you do?
i fought i hoped
i spoke what was true

Brown girl Brown girl
what do you know?
that there are strong women
who want me to grow

Brown girl Brown girl
what do you feel?
that #BlackGirlMagic
will help us all heal

Brown girl Brown girl
what do you see?
a world that sees my skin
before it sees me

Brown girl Brown girl
whatcha gonna do?
march, fight and create
till i make this world new

Brown girl Brown girl
how are you so strong?
'cause i got Queens in my blood
to help push me along
#7 On Turning Ten Poem  
by Billy Collins

The whole idea of it makes me feel  
like I'm coming down with something,  
something worse than any stomach ache  
or the headaches I get from reading in bad light--  
a kind of measles of the spirit,  
a mumps of the psyche,  
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

You tell me it is too early to be looking back,  
but that is because you have forgotten  
the perfect simplicity of being one  
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.  
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.  
At four I was an Arabian wizard.  
I could make myself invisible  
by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.  
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

But now I am mostly at the window  
watching the late afternoon light.  
Back then it never fell so solemnly  
against the side of my tree house,  
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage  
as it does today,  
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,  
as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.  
It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,  
time to turn the first big number.

It seems only yesterday I used to believe  
there was nothing under my skin but light.  
If you cut me I could shine.  
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,  
I skin my knees. I bleed.
#8 Falling Asleep in Class
by Kenn Nesbitt

I fell asleep in class today,  
as I was awfully bored.  
I laid my head upon my desk  
and closed my eyes and snored.  
I woke to find a piece of paper  
sticking to my face.  
I’d slobbered on my textbooks,  
and my hair was a disgrace.  
My clothes were badly rumpled,  
and my eyes were glazed and red.  
My binder left a three-ring  
indentation in my head.  
I slept through class, and probably  
I would have slept some more,  
except my students woke me  
as they headed out the door

#9 Cats
By Marilyn Singer

I prefer  
warm fur,  
a perfect fire  
to lie beside,  
a cozy lap  
where I can nap,  
an empty chair  
when she's not there.  
I want heat  
on my feet  
on my nose  
on my hide.  
No cat I remember  
dislikes December  
inside.
#10 The Swing
By Robert Louis Stevenson

How do you like to go up in a swing,
   Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
   Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
   Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
   Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,
   Down on the roof so brown—
Up in the air I go flying again,
   Up in the air and down!

#11 Rock and Roll Band Poem
By Shel Silverstein

If we were a rock 'n' roll band,
   We'd travel all over the land.
We'd play and we'd sing and wear spangly things.
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.
If we were a rock 'n' roll band,
And we were up there on the stand,
The people would here us and love us and cheer us.
Hurray for that rock 'n' roll band.
If we were a rock 'n' roll band,
Then we'd have a million fans.
We'd giggle and laugh and sign autographs,
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.
The people would all kiss our hands.
We'd be millionaires and have extra long hair,
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.
But we ain't no rock 'n' roll band,
We're just seven kids in the sand.
With homemade guitars and pails and jars
And drums of potato chip cans.
Just seven kids in the sand.
Talk'n and waven' our hands.
And dreamin' and thinkin' oh wouldn't it be grand,
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.
APPENDIX E

GIVE ONE, GET ONE ACTIVITY

Each student was given a copy of this worksheet during the Give one, Get one activity.
APPENDIX F

COMPREHENSION TEST GRADE REPORT

Appendix F includes a list of 6 comprehension test taken prior to the intervention cycle and during the intervention cycle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># &amp; in.</th>
<th>Pre intervention</th>
<th>During intervention</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#1   #2</td>
<td>#3</td>
<td>avg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 TB</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 MC</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>3 DC</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>4 OC</td>
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<td>5 SD</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 BD</td>
<td>BD</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>7 KF</td>
<td>KF</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>8SG</td>
<td>SG</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9 RG</td>
<td>10 AH</td>
<td>11 KJ</td>
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<td>70</td>
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APPENDIX G

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

This was printed and used to collect observation data prior to intervention cycle and during the intervention cycle.

The Classroom Observation Tool was developed by Bellwether Education Partners for a site visit to the Rochester City School District’s Summer Scholars Program. The observation tool addresses the learning environment, student engagement, instructional quality, and curriculum implementation, which were components of the program quality review on which the district requested feedback.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher:</th>
<th>Observer:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date/Time:</td>
<td>Number of Students:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content Area:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>The classroom is adequate for the number of students and activities.</td>
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<td>The classroom is well organized and materials are set up and ready.</td>
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<td>The classroom is clean.</td>
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<td>The classroom temperature did not distract from learning.</td>
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<td>Student work is displayed prominently.</td>
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<td>AREA</td>
<td>The Teacher:</td>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Inclusive Participation</td>
<td>Uses practices that involve all students in responding, encouraging all students to formulate answers and participate.</td>
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<td>2. Equity of Individual Turns</td>
<td>Calls on a variety of students using a pre-planned system to randomize students to ensure equity.</td>
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<td>3. Monitoring Responses</td>
<td>Monitors student responses through focused listening and observing, circulating around the room when students are sharing with partners or teams, reading with partners, or</td>
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<td>4. Error Corrections</td>
<td>Provides immediate, clear corrections for individual or group errors, telling students or guiding them to the correct answer.</td>
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<td>5. Feedback and Acknowledgement</td>
<td>Provides specific feedback and positive affirmation for performance, focusing on achievement and effort rather than on inherent qualities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Pace</td>
<td>Having prepared for the lesson, maintains an efficient instructional pace while providing adequate thinking time. Avoids digressions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Positive Learning Environment</td>
<td>Promotes a positive learning environment, connecting with the learners and promoting student success. Utilizes positive reinforcement to encourage appropriate.</td>
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<td>8. Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Displays a genuine interest in the content of the lesson and the learning of his/her students.</td>
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<td>9. Lesson Adjustment</td>
<td>Adjusts the lesson based on student performance (e.g., re-teaches challenging content. Provides additional practice. Moves forward in lesson).</td>
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<tr>
<td>AREA</td>
<td>The students:</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</table>
| **10. On-task Behavior** | Exhibit on-task behavior, following the teacher's directives and completing requested tasks. | _____ All of the time  
_____ Most of the time  
_____ Some of the time  
_____ Never  
_____ No opportunity to observe |
| **11. Frequent Responses** | Respond when asked to give verbal, written, or action responses.                | _____ All of the time  
_____ Most of the time  
_____ Some of the time  
_____ Never  
_____ No opportunity to observe |
| **12. Cooperative Responses** | Work productively with partners or team members (completing tasks, listening to partners, staying on-task). | _____ All of the time  
_____ Most of the time  
_____ Some of the time  
_____ Never  
_____ No opportunity to observe |
| **13. Accuracy** | Provide accurate responses.                                                    | _____ All of the time  
_____ Most of the time  
_____ Some of the time  
_____ Never  
_____ No opportunity to observe |
| **14. Appropriate Behavior** | Exhibit behavior that allows them to learn, their peers to learn, and the teacher to teach. | _____ All of the time  
_____ Most of the time  
_____ Some of the time  
_____ Never  
_____ No opportunity to observe |
CONCLUDING NOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For teacher / staff feedback:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For staff meetings and in-session professional development:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H

STAR DATA REPORT SCORES

Appendix H depicts student scores on STAR administrations. The table was used to chart the scores, determine the change in scores, and determine the impact of CRIM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Star Data Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student # &amp; initials</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 TB</td>
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<td>2 MC</td>
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<td>3 DC</td>
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<td>4 OC</td>
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<td>5 SD</td>
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<td>12 NL</td>
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<td>13 JL-M</td>
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<td>14 JP</td>
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<td>15 MR</td>
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<td>16 TS</td>
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<td>17 CS</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 BS</td>
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<td>19 ZT</td>
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