Effects of a culturally responsive teaching program on teacher attitudes, perceptions, and practices

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EFFECTS OF A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PROGRAM ON TEACHER ATTITUDES, PERCEPTIONS, AND PRACTICES

Dissertation
By
JAMES E. CUMMINGS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

EFFECTS OF A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PROGRAM ON TEACHER ATTITUDES, PERCEPTIONS, AND PRACTICES

By

James E. Cummings

Dissertation Director: Dr. Irwin Blumer

This case study examined the creation of a collaborative learning environment focused on the development of teacher attitudes, perceptions, and practices that are culturally responsive. Sixth and eighth grade teachers collaborated in small groups over the course of a school-year, focusing on dialogue, activities, and readings related to race and culture. The ways in which teachers involved in the study developed thinking in regards to their cultural awareness, sense of efficacy, and instructional practices played central roles in this study.

This qualitative case study was conducted by the school principal, who was a participant-observer. Data collection instruments included pre-program interviews, mid-program reflective journals, post-program interviews, and researcher field notes.

Prior to the start of the program, teachers expressed that they rarely spoke with students and peers about issues related to race and culture, provided minimal accommodations for students of color within the classroom setting, exhibited mixed beliefs in terms of their abilities as teachers to meet the learning needs of students of color, and had a limited understanding of their own racial identities.
As a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, most teachers experienced growth in terms of their perceptions of their own racial identity development, efficacy, and increased their sense of comfort and desire to speak with students and peers about issues related to race and culture.

Implications for practice include the need for courageous leadership, persistence, promotion of the development of racial identity, understanding of racial identity development, promotion of collaboration, advancement of transformational learning, and the development of multi-dimensional learning experiences. Limitations of this study include the researcher’s role as school principal and participant-observer, small sample size, and relatively short study duration.

Recommendations for future research include increasing the sample size and program duration, investigation of changes in student experiences as a result of teacher participation in a similar program, and investigating the effect of a similar program when focused upon particular racial and cultural groups, as opposed to the broad approach utilized within the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program.
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CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The need for teachers to develop and apply culturally responsive teaching approaches that maximize the learning of students of color has never been greater. There is an extensive body of literature defining the achievement gap between Black and Latino students in comparison to their White student counterparts. A brief look at a fraction of the statistical evidence defining this achievement gap shows the significance of the disparity.

The 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress fourth grade reading results indicate that nationally, 75% of white students read at a basic level (partial mastery of knowledge and skills required for grade level work) while only 40% of African American students and 44% of Latino students do (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). This achievement gap results in significant inequities between white students and students of color by the end of high school. According to Thernston and Thernston (2003), the “average black and Hispanic student at the end of high school has academic skills that are at about the eighth-grade level” (p. 22). The gap in achievement results between White students and students of color, extends beyond standardized testing. This gap also exists when comparing dropout rates; number of students taking advanced placement examinations; enrollment in honors,
advanced placement, and “gifted” classes; as well as admission into college, graduate, and professional programs (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

As the nation becomes increasingly diverse, the teaching force is becoming less diverse. 2003-2004 data shows that the student enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools was 58% White, 19% Hispanic, 17% Black, 5% Asian/Pacific islander, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). The increasingly diverse student population is being taught by a great majority of White teachers. White teachers currently represent roughly 90% of public school teachers nationally and this figure is expected to remain high or possibly grow over the next few decades (Gay, 2000; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003; National Educational Association, 2003; Howard, 2006).

This predominantly White teaching force is made up of a growing majority of female teachers. In 2005, 82 percent of the public school teachers nationally were female, this is an increase from 74 percent in 1996 (National Center for Education Information, 2005).

Three statistical realities are currently intersecting according to Howard (2006): “(1) our teacher force is mostly White, (2) our student population is highly diverse and growing in children of color, and (3) children of color are precisely the students most at risk of being caught on the negative end of the achievement gap” (p. 4). These three intersecting realities beg the question of preparedness on the part of White teachers and the ability of educational leaders to develop teachers to meet the existing and growing needs.
In a 1996 study of teacher beliefs, Zeichner and Hoeft found that white teachers in the United States have very limited experiences with diverse populations and that they frequently perceive diversity in a negative way. Geneva Gay speaks to the potentially harmful ramifications of educators who fail to acknowledge, embrace, and incorporate race into the fabric of teaching, writing “If educators continue to be ignorant of, ignore, impugn, and silence the cultural orientations, values, and performance styles of ethnically different students, they will persist in imposing cultural hegemony, personal denigration, educational inequity, and academic underachievement upon them” (Gay, 2000, p. 25). The failure of our educational system to acknowledge, embrace, and incorporate race into the fabric of teaching has cultivated an environment that limits the potential of students.

We must give increased attention to finding strategies to assist all teachers in improving their abilities to utilize culturally responsive teaching practices. The initial steps that lay a foundation for the development of culturally responsive teaching practices include the development of cultural awareness, beliefs and attitudes conducive to the education of students of color, and an increased sense of teacher efficacy.

Quality professional development employs strategies that can potentially impact these foundational components of culturally responsive teaching and have been shown to improve teaching and close achievement gaps (Hirsh, 2005). According to Sparks (2004), effective professional development experiences deepen understanding, transform beliefs and assumptions, and create continuous actions that affect practice. For the purposes of this study, the three results cited by Sparks (2004) are exactly what this professional development experience aims to produce: to develop and deepen
cultural awareness, to change the ways in which teachers think about themselves and their students of color, and to produce an understanding of the pedagogy that benefits students of color.

**Focus of Study**

This study examined an effort on behalf of administration and staff at Buchanan Middle School to begin the process of developing a culturally responsive community that maximizes the potential of all students. Culturally responsive teaching, defined by Geneva Gay as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to an effective for them” (Gay, 2000, p. 29), holds the potential to profoundly impact all students.

Teacher beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of themselves and their students serve as the foundation for culturally responsive teaching. Addressing these beliefs, attitudes, and expectations can be challenging. Sonia Nieto (1999) writes that becoming multicultural “means stepping out of your own world and learning to understand some of the experiences, values, and realities of others. It is sometimes an exhilarating experience, but it also can be uncomfortable and challenging because it decenters us and our world, forcing us to focus on the lives and priorities of others who are different from us” (Nieto, 1999, p. 155). These challenges were addressed in the context of a collaborative professional learning community that met on a monthly basis to focus on literature, activities, and ongoing dialogue about culturally responsive teaching throughout the year.
Research Questions

The major research questions for this study are:

- What changes in teacher perceptions of collaboration and dialogue emerged in teachers as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
- What do teachers perceive to be the impact on their instructional practices as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
- What changes in perceptions of efficacy emerged among teachers as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?

Theoretical Rationale

This study was focused on the creation of a collaborative learning environment that maximized the success of all students through the development of culturally responsive teaching practices. Creating change in teacher awareness, attitudes, perceptions, and practice went beyond educating teachers about culturally responsive practices alone. This study looked at creating a foundation for the infusion of culturally responsive teaching practices into all aspects of practice. The study of the establishment of this foundation was infused with a job-embedded, collaborative professional development model to support the process of change in individuals. The ways in which the adults involved in the study developed their own thinking in regards
to their cultural awareness, sense of efficacy, and instructional practices played central roles in this study.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) advocates for teachers to develop an understanding of how they think before focusing on the classroom activities and lesson plans that they utilize. It is the philosophies and theories of teachers that need to be looked at and understood if practices and rationales are to be impacted.

In creating a curriculum for teacher education in the area of culturally responsive teaching, Villegas and Lucas (2002) proposed six salient characteristics that define the culturally responsive teacher in terms of attitudes and perceptions that practices are based on. According to Villegas and Lucas, the responsive teacher recognizes that there are multiple ways of perceiving reality and that these perceptions are influenced by one’s location in the social order. The culturally responsive teacher also has affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, is capable of promoting learners’ knowledge construction, knows about the lives of his or her students, and “uses his or her knowledge about students’ lives to design instruction that builds on what they already know while stretching them beyond the familiar” (p. 21).

Research has shown that teachers who are able to apply culturally responsive pedagogies are able to can make a significant difference in the academic achievement of their students. Ladson-Billings (2006) found that those teachers who are most successful with African American students are aware of the position of African Americans in society and how that position affects expectations of students.

Shujaa (1995) also contends that teachers must develop an understanding of themselves in order to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching. Shujaa
states that before teachers can infuse cultural responsiveness into content, teachers must focus on their understanding of who they are racially and culturally and how they have learned to view human beings who are racially and culturally different from themselves.

The development of cultural awareness of one’s self and others is coupled closely by teacher efficacy. Efficacy being the extent to which teachers believe they have the capacity to positively impact student learning and achievement. Research shows that many teachers of students of color hold low levels of expectation for these students. Brophy and Everton (1978) found that teachers who were successful in producing student learning gains tended to have high expectations for students and also assumed greater degrees of responsibility for their learning. Brophy and Evertson (1978) reported that when these successful teachers encountered difficulties, they viewed the difficulties as challenges that needed to be overcome through appropriate teaching methods as opposed to indicators that the students could not learn.

Changing the way in which teachers operate and think about the world around them requires an understanding of adult learning. Sprinthall and Thies-Sprinthall (1980) advocate for a cognitive-development approach to teacher development and encourage the development of “on-site, collaborative education, which gradually increases the complexity of teacher perception.” (p.31) Understanding the way in which teachers learn, and the ability to identify various levels of cognitive-developmental functioning, will be essential to the success of this learning initiative.

Two areas of adult learning of particular interest within the context of this study were transformational learning and critical social theory. Transformational learning is
the process of experiential learning, critical self-reflection, and rationale discourse; it can be stimulated by people, events, or changes in contexts that challenge the learner’s basic assumptions of the world (Brown, 2006).

Critical social theory calls educators to become activists. Brown (2006) writes that those who espouse this theory:

> Are committed to an agenda in which past practices anchored in open and residual racism, gender exclusivity, homophobia, class discrimination, and religious intolerance are confronted and changed with time. They challenge exclusion, isolation, marginalization of the stranger; respond to oppression with courage; empower the powerless; and transform existing social inequalities and injustices. (p. 711)

Literature connecting adult learning and the development of racial identity is also very important in the context of this study. Janet Helms (1990) has written extensively on the subject of identity development. Helms suggests that the central tasks of people of color are to resist negative stereotypes and to develop an empowered sense of self. According to Helms, the task of White people is to go beyond perceived superiority and to develop a positive White identity based in reality. In order to do this, White teachers must perform two central tasks. They must abandon their own racism, and then oppose and challenge institutional racism. Helms offers six stages that White people must go through in order to perform these two central tasks. The stages include: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independent, immersion/emersion, and autonomy. Beverly Tatum (1997) has built upon the work of Helms, providing school-based examples and insights into the unique challenges presented by each of the six
stages within educational settings and within the context of both adolescence and adulthood.

The adult learning and development in this study will be looked at within the context of a collaborative professional development experience. Mike Schmoker (2004) cites a broad concurrence among educational researchers and organizational theorists who have concluded that developing the capacity of educators to function collaboratively is the best-known means by which we might achieve wide-scale improvements in teaching and learning. Hargreaves (1994) suggests that professional collaboration provides tremendous assets to professionals; including increased support, efficiency, effectiveness, confidence, and reflection. Professional learning communities are designed to bring professionals together to collaborate with the intention of producing continued learning improvements through the lens of a shared curricular-focused vision. Dufour and Eaker (1998) consider collaborative teams to be a central component of professional learning communities. Schmoker (2004) and others build upon this premise, focusing on the need for schools to change from a norm of teachers working in isolation to working in collaborative, team-based groups to improve teaching and learning. Langer and Colton (2005) claim that the failure of the majority of school improvement efforts is “because they don’t adequately engage teachers in collaborative inquiry where it matters most: in the daily learning-teaching interactions between students and teachers” (p. 22).

It is the responsibility of all educators to maximize the success of all students. For students of color, success is dependent on all teachers possessing attitudes, perceptions, and practices that support their needs. This study of the development of
teacher, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs related to educating students of color were influenced by literature pertaining to culturally responsive teaching, efficacy, racial identity development, adult learning, professional development, and collaboration.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in that it attempted to address the underachievement of students of color through the guided initiation of teacher dialogue and reflection focused on issues related to race and culture. These efforts took place over the course of a school year, within the context of the school day. This study analyzed the initial steps of an effort to develop culturally responsive teachers and teaching practices. Participants learned about their own racial identity, gained a greater understanding of students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, and learned about the educational needs of students of color.

Participants engaged in reflective dialogue focused on the topic of race and culture. Through dialogue and participation in collaborative activities, teachers were exposed to the potentially significant influence of collaboration within the context of a professional learning community.

At the outset of the program implementation, there were four expectations of potential changes within the participating teachers. First, teachers may report increased awareness of the needs of students of color, their own racial identity, understanding of the achievement gap, and racism. Second, teachers may report an increased use of culturally responsive teaching practices in their classes and may be able to identify
some past practices as being culturally responsive. Third, teachers may find that engaging in reflective dialogue around the topics of race and culture are challenging. Fourth, the program participants may learn that their level of efficacy may have the potential to substantially impact the learning of all students, especially students of color.

**Design of the Study**

This research was conducted as a qualitative case study. The case study involved the researcher as participant-observer. The research was evaluative in that the researcher studied the impact that participation in a collaborative learning community, focused on the development of culturally responsive teaching had on teacher practice, attitudes, and perceptions.

The program took place in a suburban public middle school with an enrollment of approximately 750 students in grades 6-8. Over the course of one year, teachers participated in monthly meetings with fellow teachers and the principal/researcher, who served as group facilitator. Training was provided prior to the initiation of regular meetings to all participating staff regarding the expectations and rationale associated with participation in this program. Monthly meetings took place within the school day.

This study applied research methods and procedures that were consistent with case study methodology. Data was triangulated using the following primary data.

- Data collected through interviews with individual teachers participating in the program. Interviews were conducted pre and post – program. Interviews took
place in a school conference room. Each interview will be audiotaped and transcribed.

- Data from mid-program reflective journals provided to each teacher participating in the project.
- Data from field notes, meetings, classroom observations, and observation follow-up. Meetings were audiotaped for referencing.

As noted by Mathison (1988), the data produced through this type of triangulation can be used holistically to construct plausible explanations about the phenomena being studied” (p. 17).

The subjects of the study included seven members in total. The project group included a fifth year middle school principal serving as researcher, and seven teachers. Staff participants included sixth and eighth grade teachers. All seven of the teachers are White, with six of the participants being female and one being male. All parties being studied participated on a voluntary basis and were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations and threats to validity in this study. Limitations include sample size, participant bias, researcher bias, duration of study, and testing.
Sample Size - The size of the sample, seven teachers in total, inhibits the potential for generalization of the findings beyond the one school involved in the study. Secondly, only two out of the three grades (sixth and eighth) were involved in this study. This was done for scheduling purposes and it significantly impacts the limited potential for generalization of the study. Replication is also limited due to the size of the study.

Participant Bias - The researcher recognized that the study participants were aware of the fact that they were participating in the study. Due to the fact that the participants were aware of their own participation, there is a possibility that they behaved in ways that were not authentic because of their awareness. This phenomenon is known as the “Hawthorne effect” (Diaper, 1990). This limitation was addressed through the researchers repeated addresses to participants concerning the importance of participant honesty in their reflections.

Researcher Bias – The researcher, also serving as school principal, created and implemented all data collection instruments associated with the study. The researcher as participant and school leader potentially presented limitations and threats to validity of the study.

Duration of Study – The study took place over the course of ten months. The duration of the study limits the degree to which the findings can be generalized.
Definition of Terms

Collaboration- Teachers engaging in the rigorous mutual examination of teaching and learning (Inger, 1993)

Collective Efficacy – Shared beliefs of group members concerning the performance capability of a social system as a whole (Bandura, 1996)

Cultural Awareness – Understanding, valuing, and respecting differences (i.e. race, age, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, culture)

Culturally Responsive Teaching – using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay, 2000)

Efficacy – A person’s perceived expectation of succeeding at a task or obtaining a valued outcome through personal effort

Ethnic Identity Development – An individual’s movement toward a highly conscious identification with their own cultural values, behaviors, beliefs, and traditions (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999, p. 41)
Pedagogy – How teachers interact with students, create learning environments, and facilitate instructional methodology

Professional Learning Community (PLC): A way to organize a school’s energies around its mission, vision, values, and goals. It focuses around collaboration as well as leadership and problem-solving that is essential to guiding a school along the professional learning community continuum (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Racial Identity – A sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group (Helms, 1993)

Social Cognitive Theory – a framework for understanding, predicting, and changing human behavior (Bandura, 1977)

Teacher Efficacy – A belief that teachers can help even the most difficult or unmotivated students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984, p. 569)

Transformational Learning - the process of experiential learning, critical self-reflection, and rationale discourse. It can be stimulated by people, events, or changes in contexts that challenge the learner’s basic assumptions of the world” (Brown, 2006, p. 706).
CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This study was focused on the creation of a collaborative professional development program designed to increase teacher efficacy through a series of professional development experiences focused on fostering cultural competency. Chapter two will provide an overview of the literature pertaining to the central themes of the study: culturally responsive teaching, racial identity development, efficacy, transformative learning, and collaboration. An understanding of the work and findings in each thematic area will potentially provide greater meaning and synthesis to data produced and findings arrived at in chapters four and five.

The need for teachers to develop efficacy, cultural competency, and pedagogical approaches that maximize the learning of students of color has never been greater. There is an extensive body of literature defining the achievement gap between Black and Latino students in comparison to their White student counterparts. A brief look at a fraction of the statistical evidence defining this achievement gap shows the significance of the disparity. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), often referred to as “the nation’s report card,” regularly tests students across America in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade. The NAEP results show a consistent gap between White student scores and the scores of Black and Latino students. By twelfth grade,
White and Asian students are, on average, four years ahead of Black students and only slightly below four years ahead in comparison to Latino students. These results translate into Black and Latino students, on average, completing twelfth grade with academic skills at the eighth grade level (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).

While tests of achievement and standardized testing reveals a gap in achievement between students of color and White students, this study did not focus on changing teacher behaviors in an effort to lead to changes in test scores alone. For the purposes of this study, the work of Fred Newmann (1992) was utilized to assist in framing the way in which the participants thought of student success. Newmann provides a framework for looking at student achievement in a manner that extends beyond standardized testing:

Success in school should not be judged primarily by the tests used in large-scale assessments. Such tests measure only limited forms of human accomplishment, they fail to test much of what schools try to teach, and, when norm-referenced and standardized, they make it impossible for half the students succeed. Other indicators of school success are important, such as reduced drop-out rates, increased enrollment in advanced coursework or in extracurricular activities, and projects that reflect more authentic forms of intellectual performance (p.2).

As the national student body becomes increasingly diverse, the teaching force is becoming less diverse. Data from 2003-2004 shows student enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools was 58% White, 19% Hispanic, 17% Black, 5%
Asian/Pacific islander, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native (National Center for Education Statistics). In contrast to the high level of diversity seen among students, the public school teaching force in 1994 was 87% non-Hispanic White, 7% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian/Alaskan native (Henke, 1996).

Whites teachers represent roughly 90% of public school teachers and this figure is expected to remain high, or possibly grow, over the next few decades (Gay 2000, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003; National Educational Association, 2003, Howard, 2006). Three statistical realities are currently intersecting according to Howard (2006): “(1) our teacher force is mostly White, (2) our student population is highly diverse and growing in children of color, and (3) children of color are precisely the students most at risk of being caught on the negative end of the achievement gap” (p. 4). These three intersecting realities beg the question of preparedness on the part of White teachers and the degree to which the existing achievement gap can be attributed to a lack of teacher preparation around issues related to meeting the learning needs of students of color.

Given that all teachers are not adequately prepared to meet the diverse needs of today’s student body, we must give increased attention to finding strategies to assist less successful teachers in improving their practices. Quality professional development employs these strategies, improves teaching, and closes achievement gaps (Hirsh, 2005). According to Sparks (2004), effective professional development experiences deepen understanding, transform beliefs and assumptions, and create continuous actions that affect practice. For the purposes of this study, the three results cited by Sparks are
exactly what this professional development experience aimed to produce; to develop and deepen cultural competency, to change the ways in which teachers think about themselves and their students of color, and to increase teacher efficacy in relation to meeting the educational needs of students of color. This chapter will provide a review of the literature to its five major research themes: culturally responsive teaching, racial identity development, efficacy, transformative learning, and collaboration.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

The end goal of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, the subject of this study, is the application of culturally responsive teaching practices in classrooms. The first year of this program was dedicated to establishing a foundation of cultural competency on which the future development of pedagogical practices that benefit students of color will be built. The concept of culturally responsive teaching comes out of an extensive body of literature on multicultural education, which will be examined within the context of this literature review.

Gay (2000) defines 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. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming” (p.29). Villegas and Lucas (2002) summarize the complexities and
interconnected understandings and skills that are involved in culturally responsive teaching:

Being a culturally responsive teacher is not simply a matter of applying instructional techniques, nor is it primarily a matter of tailoring instruction to incorporate assumed traits or customs of particular cultural groups…culturally responsive teachers have a high degree of sociocultural consciousness, hold affirming views of students of diverse backgrounds, see themselves as agents of change, understand and embrace constructivist views of learning and teaching, and know the students in their classes. It is the combination of all these dispositions, knowledge, and skills that enables them to design instruction that facilitates student learning. (p. 27)

The ideas that make up the effort to provide classroom instruction that is consistent with the diverse cultural orientations of ethnically diverse students is known by a wide range of names. These names include culturally relevant, reflective, sensitive, congruent, mediated, contextualized, synchronized, and responsive teaching. Despite the many names, the central ideas behind these efforts remain largely synonymous (Gay, 2000). According to Gay, culturally responsive teaching teaches to and through student strengths and is culturally validating and affirming. Gay (2000) identifies culturally responsive teaching as having the following characteristics:
• It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students’ dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum.

• It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.

• It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.

• It teaches students to know and praise their own and each others’ cultural heritages

• It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all subjects and skills routinely taught in schools.

Culturally responsive teaching is designed to prepare teachers to “build up and fill in the holes that emerge when students begin to use critical analysis as they attempt to make sense of the curriculum” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p.32). Research has shown that teachers who are able to apply culturally responsive pedagogies are able to make a significant difference in the academic achievement of their students. According to Ladson-Billings, “culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (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). In
identifying the core characteristics of culturally responsive teachers, Ladson-Billings (1995) writes that “culturally responsive teachers have a high degree of sociocultural consciousness, hold affirming views of students of diverse backgrounds, see themselves as agents of change, understand and embrace constructivist views of learning and teaching, and know the students in their classes” (p. 28).

Ladson-Billings (2006) found that those teachers who are most successful with African American students are aware of the position of African Americans in society and how that position affects expectations of students.

In creating a curriculum for teacher education in the area of culturally responsive teaching, Villegas and Lucas (2002) proposed six salient characteristics that define the culturally responsive teacher in terms of attitudes and perceptions that practices are based on:

- The culturally responsive teacher recognizes that there are multiple ways of perceiving reality
- The culturally responsive teacher recognizes that these perceptions are influenced by one’s location in the social order.
- The culturally responsive teacher has affirming views of students
- The culturally responsive teacher is capable of promoting learners’ knowledge construction
- The culturally responsive teacher knows about the lives of his or her students
- The culturally responsive teacher uses his or her knowledge about students’ lives to design instruction that builds on what they already know while stretching them beyond the familiar (p. 21)
Culturally responsive teaching is based upon the belief that teacher attitudes and approaches to teaching students of color in order to build on cultural strengths, can and will have a profound impact on student achievement. The theory behind culturally responsive teaching is founded in large part upon multicultural education’s focus on increasing educational equity for all students.

**Multicultural Education**

Shujaa (1995) states that in order to support culturally relevant teaching, professional development must enable teachers to focus on their perceptions of themselves as well as their perceptions of others. Teachers must recognize who they are culturally, racially, and economically and how they have learned to view others who are different from themselves in these areas in order to effectively implement culturally relevant pedagogy. This will involve a brief review of the literature related to multicultural education and anti-racist teacher development.

Unquestionably, the 1954 case of Brown vs. Board of Education was an incredibly significant event. This case was defined by a Supreme Court decision that according to Berman (1966) “succeeded in forcing into the foreground of public consciousness an issue that America had preferred to forget” (p. xxviii). James Patterson (2001) wrote of the intended outcomes envisioned by the Supreme Court Justices regarding the *Brown* case, stating that they thought that bringing African-American and European American students together in the same schools would weaken racial stereotypes, promote interracial understanding among youth, and eventually
impact society at large. The justices believed that European Americans would learn to look beyond their negative perceptions of African Americans as a collective and begin to see them as individuals rather than through the lens of prejudice. African Americans would gain access to mainstream society and there would be an end to racial isolation and oppression. Social interactions and academic competition with European Americans would become a reality (Patterson, 2001).

Geneva Gay (2004) writes that these perceived expectations have proven to be overly optimistic. According to Gay, the Brown decision was unclear in its intention to provide for both physical relocation and educational pedagogy that would support the educational needs of African American students. According to Gay, the decision was perceived and enacted in a manner that provided for equal educational opportunities to be created through “the mere presence of African Americans and European Americans in the same schools” (p.196). The physical movement of students without changes in pedagogy assumed that African American students and European American students could receive educational equality if they were treated the same way and taught in the same manner. Gay (2004) concludes that many of the issues faced by students of color today relate directly to issues stemming from the failure of Brown to go beyond the physical integration of students.

In effect, African American students arriving at white schools were expected to “act white.” Thus, operational conditions existed in early desegregation that perpetuated educational inequality even as it was struck down in principle, law, and policy. Although the Brown decision
signaled the end of de jure segregation, de facto segregation continued to be widespread, even until today. (p. 196)

Gay (2004) cites the response to Brown by those involved in the early stages of multicultural education as one that was focused on encouraging schools to circumvent negative performance and perceptions by teaching more positive information about the ethnic groups of concern (p. 201). The field of multicultural education has continued to develop since Brown. Gay (2004) cites the developments within the field as including a shift from focusing on a few exceptional individuals from various racial and ethnic groups, to a focus on the issues and events of the different groups. The field of multicultural education has also developed by increasing its scope of focus on a wide variety of racial and ethnic groups participating in different civil rights movements in different time periods instead of simply focusing on specific leaders and political issues.

James Banks defines multicultural education as “a reform movement designed to make some major changes in the education of students. Multicultural education theorists and researchers believe that many school, college, and university practices related to race and ethnicity are harmful to students and reinforce many of the ethnic stereotypes and discriminatory practices in U.S. society” (Banks, 1994, p. 1). In the Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education (Banks & Banks, 1995) multicultural education is defined as “a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and
particularly from ethnic studies and women studies” (p. xii). This wide-reaching definition speaks to the grand scope of multicultural education literature.

In an effort to better define the extensive field of multicultural education, Banks (1994) has identified five dimensions of multicultural education. The five dimensions are: “(a) content integration, (b) the knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) an equity pedagogy; and an (e) empowering school culture and social structure” (p. 13).

Banks (2000) writes of the need for the five concepts to be interconnected:

To implement multicultural education effectively, teachers and administrators must attend to each of the five dimensions of multicultural education. They should use content from diverse groups when teaching concepts and help students to understand how knowledge in the various disciplines is constructed, help students to develop positive intergroup attitudes and behaviors, and modify their teaching strategies so that students from different racial, cultural, language, and social-class groups will experience equal educational opportunities. The total environment and culture of the school must also be transformed so that students from diverse groups will experience equal status in the culture and life of the school. (Banks, foreword in Gay, 2000, p. viii)
In *An Introduction to Multicultural Education (1994)*, James Banks outlines the student-centered goals of multicultural education (p. 3). These goals include:

- To help individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspective of other cultures.
- To provide students with cultural and ethnic alternatives.
- To provide all students with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to function within their ethnic culture, within the mainstream culture, and within and across other ethnic cultures.
- To reduce the pain and discrimination that members of some ethnic and racial groups experience because of their unique racial, physical, and cultural characteristics.
- To help students to master essential reading, writing, and math skills.

In an effort to provide focus and definition to this expansive topic, Paul Gorski (2006) has synthesized defining principles of multicultural education as set forth by several of the field’s leading voices, including Nieto (1999), Sleeter (1996), Grant (1997), and Banks (2004). The key principles on which they agreed upon include:

1. Multicultural education is a political movement and process that attempts to secure social justice for individuals and communities, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, home language, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, religion, socioeconomic status, or any other individual or group identity.
2. Multicultural education recognizes that, although some individual classroom practices are consistent with multicultural education philosophies, social justice is an institutional matter and, as such, can be secured only through comprehensive school reform.

3. Multicultural education insists that comprehensive school reform can only be achieved through a critical analysis of systems of power and privilege.

4. Multicultural education’s underlying goal is the elimination of educational inequalities.

5. Multicultural education is good education for all students.

   Gorski’s synthesis clearly shows that at its’ core, the multicultural education movement is a political movement focused on broad goals centered on increasing equity and social justice.

   The total school transformation that Banks (2000) references involves the creation of school cultures that are both pluralistic and inclusive. These school cultures embrace diversity and foster the inclusion of every individual. Such cultures go beyond acknowledgment of differences among students, these differences are sought out and embraced within the context of the heterogeneous whole. Creating such environments is considered by many to be the most important work of school leaders. Edgar Shein (1992) writes that “the only thing of real importance that leaders do is create and manage culture and…the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture” (p.5).

   Leaders who create and manage schools that function at high levels of social and cultural interaction are able to acknowledge that diversity is far more than racial and
ethnic difference. Cultures based on high levels of social and cultural interaction are built upon efforts made to understand and respond to all groups of students. Responses and reactions to differences among community members manifest themselves in a range of ways. This range of responses has been defined and ranges from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency (Cross, 1989; Lindsey, Nuri Robbins, & Terrell, 1999). This spectrum of responses involves six steps:

- **Cultural destructiveness:** negating, disparaging, or purging cultures that are different from your own.
- **Cultural incapacity:** elevating the superiority of your own cultural values and beliefs and suppressing cultures that are different from your own.
- **Cultural blindness:** acting as if differences among cultures do not exist and refusing to recognize any differences.
- **Cultural precompetence:** recognizing that lack of knowledge, experience, and understanding of other cultures limits your ability to effectively interact with them.
- **Cultural competence:** employing any policy, practice, or behavior that uses the essential elements of cultural proficiency on interacting with other cultural groups in ways that recognize and value their differences, motivate you to assess your own skills, expand your knowledge and resources, and, ultimately cause you to adapt your relational behavior.
- **Cultural proficiency:** honoring the differences among cultures, seeing diversity as a benefit, and interacting knowledgeably and respectfully among a variety of cultural groups.
This study involved teachers in the process of collaboratively analyzing their own level of cultural competence. Participation in the project was aimed at assisting teachers in not only gaining a better understanding of their own level of cultural competence, but also increasing cultural competence as well.

Gay (1994) cites a shift in the contours of the multicultural education movement that has been developing over the past 30 years. This movement is focused on pedagogical over curricular concerns. Gay writes that “much of contemporary scholarship emphasizes the instrumental value of multicultural education and concentrates on how to effectively teach diverse students as well as what to teach them” (p.206). Sonia Nieto (1999) addresses the emergence, importance, and fit of cultural pedagogy within the context of the extensive field of multicultural education.

Because all education is embedded in a particular sociopolitical context, multicultural education cannot consist simply of lesson plans that differ in content from traditional curriculum, nor can it be just new or innovative pedagogical strategies with no connection to the lives of the students with whom they are used. Multicultural education needs to be placed within a framework of empowering attitudes and beliefs rather than viewed as pedagogy or curriculum. Without this framework, concerns about student learning can get lost. Having said this, however, it is also true that particular curricular, pedagogical, and program accommodations can make a dramatic difference in promoting the learning of students who previously have not experienced academic success. (p. 84)
The development of culturally responsive teaching practices signifies the application of multicultural education into teaching practices and the belief systems of teachers. This is a shift from the more global effort to change communities and systems. The philosophy and goals have much in common and represents a shift in focus from a more global perspective to one that is focused on individual teachers and individual students that is markedly different.

**Multicultural Education and Anti-Racist Education Contrasted**

The paradigms of multicultural education and anti-racist education are contrasted and debated among many researchers. In an attempt to clarify the distinctions between the two paradigms, Julie Kailin (1994) cites the work of Troyna and Williams (1986) being done in the United Kingdom, where the debate between the two paradigms received a great deal of attention as compared to the relatively minimal attention the debate received in the United States. Troyna and Williams (1986) summarize the anti-racist perspective that critiques the multiculturalists for:

- Defining the educational difficulties stemming from a multiracial society as problems resulting from the presence, per se, of black children. These include ‘underachievement’, lack of motivation, indiscipline and alienation, low self-esteem, damaged personal identities, and cultural differences.
- Anti-racist theorists, on the other hand, define white racism as the main problem. This is said to manifest itself in racist ideologies, racist practices and structural inequalities. From this perspective then, the alienation of
black students, for example, is not pathological but a rational response to racism in the educational system. Anti-racists adhere to the view that racism is an integral feature of the education system and that it manifests itself habitually in institutional forms. (p. 46)

Both paradigms are wide-ranging and vast in definition. In a very general sense, anti-racist theorists view multiculturalists as attempting to depoliticize racism. In the eyes of anti-racist theorists, proponents of multicultural education view problems associated with racism as being attributed to a lack of understanding (Brandt, 1986). Anti-racist theorists aim to alter the structural sources of racism and focus on challenging the institutional arrangements and economic roots of the historical development of racism (Kailin, 1994).

For the purposes of this study, the analysis of racist beliefs, perspectives, identity development, and awareness of institutional racism associated with anti-racist practices are critical. The belief that purposive anti-racist behaviors are critical for all educators is a foundational pillar of culturally responsive teaching.

Anti-Racist Teacher Education

“Anti-racist pedagogy is central to a philosophy of education that bears many names – ‘multicultural education’ (Banks, 1994; Grant, 1989; Nieto, 1992), ‘teaching for social justice’ (Bigelow, 1994) and ‘culturally relevant teaching’ (Ladson-Billings, 1994)” (Lawrence and Tatum, 1997, p.164).
Lee (1985) writes that the “aim [of anti-racist education] is the eradication of racism in all its various forms. Anti-racist education emerges from an understanding that racism exists in society and, therefore, the school, as an institution of society, is influenced by racism” (p. 8). She maintains that anti-racist pedagogy must be the business of all school personnel, must be an integral component of the curriculum, and must support students of color (Lee, 1995). Anti-racist teacher education must permeate the curriculum, social interactions among teachers, and school structures if it is going to be more than superficially effective (Banks and Banks, 1994; Nieto, 2000; Lawrence, 2005).

Anti-racist teacher education can initiate the process of change. Through the provision of professional development focused on anti-racist practices, teachers may experience profound shifts in attitudes, thinking, expectations, and actions in regards to the ways in which they address inequities involving race, ethnicity, and other social issues (Lawrence, 2005).

Lawrence and Tatum (1997) looked at the impact of an implicitly antiracist professional development program to see what, if any, antiracist classroom practices were produced as a result of changes in thinking about the issue of race. Lawrence and Tatum (1997) concluded that educators who participated in anti-racist professional development programming did change their behavior and practice. They cited participants moving far beyond the superficial “heroes and holidays” treatment of race and culture commonly seen following multicultural professional development experiences (Sleeter, 1992). They found that most of the White teacher participants began the course with a limited awareness of the institutionalized nature of racism and
the systematic advantages provided to White people. They found that participation in anti-racist professional development helped participants view themselves as racial beings, fostered the development of their own racial identities, and increased the frequency of anti-racist attitudes.

Lawrence and Tatum concluded that “antiracist moves made by white educators seemed to grow out of their greater understanding of the social significance of race, an evolving sense of their own racial identity, and a heightened recognition of the detrimental effect of racism on themselves and their students” (p. 175).

Lawrence and Tatum (1997) identified a number of program components that they believe to be most responsible for facilitating change:

- The program was explicit in its intention to break the silence about racism
- Made visible the personal, cultural, and institutional manifestations of racism in schools
- Acknowledged the sources of resistance to learning about racism
- The interactive nature of the class sessions was a contributing factor – “a significant amount of time and attention was devoted to the processing of information, in both large- and small-group formats, and creating a community of learners to talk about race, which was for many unique and long overdue” (p. 176).

The anti-racist teacher education program employed by Lawrence and Tatum (1997) was made possible through leadership that was willing to engage teachers in reflection and collaborative analysis of racism within a particular educational setting. Such work is extremely challenging and involves a level of introspection
and self-analysis that is difficult, yet incredibly important to the achievement of students of color.

Julie Kailin (1994) researched anti-racist staff development for teachers and her findings have served as the foundation for much of this study. Kailin found that White teachers will most likely not have the knowledge or experiences that will enable them to unlearn White racism on their own. White teachers may have empathy for students of color and feel as if they can connect to the struggles of students of color due to their own gender and class oppression. Feeling as if they have been oppressed does not prohibit a person from oppressing others however. Most teachers are White and female and have grown up in segregated environments. Most of these teachers have had little contact with people of color and most have been exposed to the negative stereotypes of people of color through popular culture. Due to this, it is imperative to Kailin (1994) that anti-racist education for teachers, works as a counter-hegemonic strategy. Anti-racist education must work to address the views, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of teachers as social actors since there is a high probability that these views are already tainted with prejudice and racism.

Kailin (1994) suggests that anti-racist education takes the form of a process that confronts two aspects of the problem of racism in our society. First, the institutional dimension of racism, which includes the rules, procedures, and practices that are inherent within society, must be addressed. Second, the “subjective or individual dimension of racism which is reflected in the categories,
attitudes and opinions that are held by individual teachers” (p. 175) must be examined.

In focusing on the development of knowledge of individual or subjective racism, Kailin identifies ten components that should be examined by teachers:

1. Using collaborative autobiography – reflection upon their own racial experiences

2. Examining the social background of teachers – looking at the larger picture of the social background of teachers so that teachers can formulate a better understanding of their relationships with other teachers, students, parents, and administrators with regard to race, class, and gender.

3. Using multi-cultural “illiteracy” and race awareness exercises - develop an understanding that many teachers have experienced an education that is largely a white, upper class, male, social construction that does not necessarily have their interests at stake as working people, any more than it has the interests of oppressed racial groups.

4. Exploring teacher expectations of student competency – introduce teachers to some of the research that shows how teachers have undervalued and underestimated the possibilities for achievement of students of color.

According to Kailin, most teachers will say that they do not undervalue or underestimate students of color, but by becoming conscious of some of the larger trends, perhaps over time teachers may become more aware of their own practices.
5. Understanding how individual or subjective racism is manifested in teacher-student interaction and in the general culture of the school. – discussion as to how racism manifests itself in the school through hostile and insensitive acts, bias, inequality, failure to hire teachers of color, etc.

6. Examining the phenomenon of labeling and the tradition of blaming the victim – discussion that is operative in how teachers interpret the behavior of people they are not accustomed to. Often these interpretations result in disproportionate tracking of students.

7. Understanding covert manifestations of racism and reactions to racism – teachers learn to recognize that some mannerisms and behaviors among some students may be a reaction or a resistance to racism

8. Using Student talk – panels of student speakers give their viewpoints of what racism feels like.

9. Using parent talk – parents of color, and parents of children of color, should be invited to come and talk to teachers about their particular concerns or experiences.

10. Using teacher talk – specific discussion of how teachers are feeling about their students of color and particular problems they encounter. (p. 176-178)

This study incorporated each of the components defined by Kailin as critical for teacher reflection in establishing an anti-racist environment. Kailin (1994) summarizes her belief in the great importance of anti-racist teacher education, “I would go so far as to say that an anti-racist education for teachers is a necessary precondition to any
strategy and tactics of a movement that is attempting to change existing relations of gender, class, and race domination” (p. 182).

While support through ongoing individual and collaborative professional development in the area of anti-racist education is critical, so is support from leadership at the district level. Blumer and Tatum (1999) write of the criticality of such support:

Beyond persistence, there is no cookbook formula for creating an active anti-racist culture. Educators must choose methods and ingredients adaptable to the situation of a specific school system at a particular time. While change can happen ‘from the bottom up’, our experience is that these grass root efforts are very difficult to sustain without central administrative support. The impact of committed leadership at the top of an organization cannot be underestimated. Certainly it is an essential ingredient to long-term success. (p. 266)

There is no perfect, easy approach to tackling the difficult issues involved in creating an anti-racist educational environment. The work involved is exceedingly difficult, time-consuming, and challenging. The importance of the outcomes for students of color, and potentially all students, is so great that this work is critical for all school and district leaders.

**Critical Social Theory**

Critical social theory prevents those engaged in the development of anti-racism to resist looking for mechanical strategies for responding to discriminatory incidents
according to Leistyna (2001). While efficient and timely technical responses to discriminatory acts are very important, educators must first be “apprenticized in theorizing oppressive behavior – all human behavior for that matter- so they can then act upon discriminatory tendencies from a more informed position” (Leistyna, 2001, p. 289). It is not enough to respond to racism simply through identification and enforcement of policy, that alone is a technical response. Working to root out racism and to change patterns of thought and action are necessary and extremely challenging. This type of challenge would be considered by Heifitz to be adaptive problems.

Heifitz’s (1994) work in the area of adaptive leadership differentiates between problems that are technical and those that are adaptive in nature. Technical problems are those to which there is already the knowledge as to how the problem should be responded to. Adaptive problems, such as those associated with race and ethnicity, have few clear and straightforward answers. This distinction makes Leistyna’s (2001) finding that technical responses are not adequate in response to racism very clear in that educators must have a developed understanding of oppressive behavior in order to respond fully to the adaptive problems posed by racism. Heifitz (1994) writes of the struggles that are encountered when facing adaptive challenges:

For many problems, however, no adequate response has yet been developed. Examples abound: poverty at home and abroad, industrial competitiveness, failing schools, drug abuse, the national debt, racial prejudice, ethnic strife, AIDS, environmental pollution. No organizational response can be called into play that will clearly resolve these kinds of problems. No clear expertise can be found, no single sage
has general credibility, no established procedure will suffice. Stresses build up and produce a sense of urgency among certain groups within society and sometimes throughout society. In these situations, our inclination to look to authority may generate inappropriate dependencies. (p. 72)

Paulo Freire (1970) viewed transformative learning as a way for people to transform their own world so that the world will become a more equitable place for all people (Taylor, 1998). Freire focused heavily upon social transformation coming about through an awakening of the social consciousness of the oppressed. Rather than look for external authority to provide technical answers, it was from each individual awakening to fight oppression that he felt adaptive solutions could be found. According to Freire, an unveiling of reality that takes place via an ongoing, never ending process, triggers this awakening. Freire believed that when individuals could see the reality of the social, economic, educational, and political contradictions all around them, that they would take action against the oppressive elements that drove their oppression.

Critical social theory offers a three-stage model of individual development. The development of the individual is facilitated through dialogue. Through dialogue, the individual begins to understand his/her self as an agent of change and resistor of sociopolitical constructs and begins to identify and create conditions for change (Brown, 2006). Much like Mezirow, Freire writes that the dialogic component is crucial. According to Freire, dialogue stimulates doubt, criticism, questioning, and
curiosity (1993). Dialogue is “the moment when humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 112). Dialogue will be a critical component of the Culturally Responsive Teacher Project. Each collaborative session will involve dialogue between teachers along with dialogue with student and parents of color.

Critical social theory calls educators to become activists. Brown (2006) writes that those who espouse this theory are:

- committed to an agenda in which past practices anchored in open and residual racism, gender exclusivity, homophobia, class discrimination, and religious intolerance are confronted and changed with time. They challenge exclusion, isolation, marginalization of the stranger; respond to oppression with courage; empower the powerless; and transform existing social inequalities and injustices. (p. 711)

The culturally responsive teacher is asked to live and model critical social theory on a daily basis within their classroom and within the school and community. The culturally responsive teacher will not passively accept the isolation, marginalization, and inequities currently existing in countless classrooms and schools throughout the nation. As teachers participating in this study take the initial steps towards developing greater cultural responsiveness, they must develop an understanding of their own individual racial identity before working to understand and foster the racial identities of others.
Racial Identity Development

It is the philosophies, beliefs, and attitudes of teachers that need to be looked at and understood if practices and rationales are to be impacted. The development of teacher thinking necessitates a review of literature in the area of racial identity development. It is the development of racial self-awareness on the part of teachers that sets the foundation for learning and development of effective multicultural attitudes and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Shujaa (1995) contends that teachers must develop an understanding of themselves in order to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching. Shujaa believes that before teachers can infuse cultural responsiveness into content, teachers must focus on their understanding of who they are racially and culturally and how they have learned to view human beings who are racially and culturally different from themselves.

There exists a well-established history of racial-identity theories (Carter, 1994; Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1992). These racial identity theories promote a belief that race is a socially and psychologically developed process (Howard, 1993).

Lawrence and Tatum (1997) write of the prevalence of a lack of dialogue about race and culture “One consequence of this silence about race is the unexamined impact of racial identity on interracial and intraracial interactions” (p. 163). Lack of dialogue, combined with the fact that many White people do not even think of themselves as being “White” (Tatum, 1992), can produce a failure on the part of teachers to
acknowledge their racial identity and this lack of acknowledgement “becomes a barrier for understanding and connecting with the developmental needs of children of color” (Lawrence and Tatum, 1997, p. 163).

According to Lawrence and Tatum (1997), the teacher who does not acknowledge his or her own racial identity will not recognize the need for children of color to affirm their own identity, nor will the teacher be able to serve as a role model for white students struggling to understand the complex racial realities around them. Without a racial identity that incorporates a transformative multicultural perspective, a teacher is likely to use mainstream teaching strategies and approaches that can perpetuate the academic achievement gap between White students and students of color (Vavrus, 2002).

The critical importance of developing one’s racial and cultural self-identity is reinforced by Vavrus (2002):

Transformative multicultural education necessitates the presence of teachers whose clarity of their own racial identity serves to affirm the identity of all students. To better serve their students, white teachers in particular should not be immobilized in white shame, guilt, and confessionals as they grow to recognize and reject the premises of color-blindness and white privilege. (p. 24)

The preparation of white teachers to work effectively in multicultural setting requires an understanding of their own white racial identity development. For white teachers, the process of racial identity development unfolds differently than it does for
other racial groups because of the social inequities that exist in our society (Carter and Goodwin, 1994).

Janet Helms’ has done a tremendous amount of work around the issue of identity development. She utilizes a six-stage psychological model to explain racial identity development. For whites, the process of developing racial identity involves becoming aware of one’s whiteness, learning to accept this aspect of one’s identity as socially meaningful and personally salient, and ultimately internalizing a “realistically positive view of what it means to be White” (Helms, 1990, p.55). Miville and Helms (1996) and Helms and Piper (1994) have described White identity development in six stages taking place within the confines of two separate phases. The stages and phases are as follows:

Phase I: Abandonment of a Racist Identity

- Contact
- Disintegration
- Reintegration

Phase II: Establishment of a Nonracist White Identity

- Pseudo-Independence
- Immersion-Emersion
- Autonomy

Phase I: Abandonment of a Racist Identity
Contact

Through contact with people of color, White people begin the process of racial identity development. According to Howard (1993), White people in the contact stage are ignorant of White privilege and do not see the benefits that are provided due to institutional and cultural racism. Delpit (1996) writes that White people in the contact stage “often perceive themselves as color-blind, completely free of prejudice, unaware of their own assumptions about other racial groups” (p. 95). Positive relationships that are formed with people of color are often seen as exceptions to negative stereotypes of people of color.

Disintegration

We enter the disintegration stage once we begin to question our previously held beliefs about race and acknowledge our Whiteness. The disintegration stage is potentially very emotional. It involves the collision of values regarding the fair treatment of all individuals with the awareness that people of color are often treated unfairly because of their racial identity (Howard, 1993). The disintegration stage is marked by feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety resulting from the realization of this collision of personal values and new awareness of societal realities.

Reintegration

For many White people, the contact and disintegration stages can result in regression back to previously held prejudices and racist beliefs (Howard, 1993). This stage can manifest itself in a wide range of ways. People can express their emotions
through the avoidance of people of color or they can manifest in more extreme and open expressions of prejudice and racism (i.e. hostility and violence, openly racist comments and actions). In this stage, Whiteness is recognized and is actively defended. Delpit (1996) addresses the question of the inevitability of a White person entering into the stage of reintegration:

I am sometimes asked if it is absolutely necessary to go through this phase. Must one blame the victim? Although it is not inevitable, most White people who speak up against racism will attest to the temptation they sometimes feel to slip back into collusion and silence. Because the pressure to ignore racism and to accept the socially sanctioned stereotypes is so strong, and the system of advantage is so seductive, many White people get stuck in reintegration thinking. (p. 101)

According to Helms (1990), individuals who are stuck in the reintegration stage are very difficult to move forward no matter if their racism is covert or overt.

Phase II: Establishment of a Nonracist White Identity

Pseudo-independence - The alternative to reintegration is pseudo-independence. This stage involves White people acknowledging responsibility for racism and confronts the fact that White people have benefited from it no matter if it was intentional or not. This stage, according to Howard (1993) is marked by individuals wanting to distance themselves from the negative feelings people have of their own White identity and to “help” people from other racial groups. This is generally not
possible during this stage of racial identity development because the individual has not yet developed an authentic White racial and cultural identity (Howard, 1993).

Immersion/Emersion

This stage is defined by an effort to move away from trying to “help” other groups and to develop a more internalized desire to change oneself and to change other White people in a similar way. Helms (1990) cites the two central questions of this stage: “Who am I racially?” and “Who do I want to be?” (p. 62). During the Immersion/emersion stage of racial identity development people are seeking out like-minded individuals in an effort to find more authentic and proactive ways of being White (Howard, 1993). Feelings of guilt and shame begin to fade during this stage of development and individuals begin to search out other antiracist White people for support and connection (Delpit, 1996).

Autonomy

This stage is not an end point. Instead it is one that according to Helms is being in a state of constant openness to new information and growth. This stage is marked by race no longer being considered a threat. We have acknowledged personal, cultural, and institutional racism and engage in activities to combat oppression of others whether that be related to race, sexism, classism, ageism, etc. We look to engage in learning about all groups and create connections across boundaries of difference (Howard, 1993).
Focusing on race, identity, and change will purposely challenge the way in which teachers think and operate. The process of examining one’s own racial identity can be uncomfortable and even frightening for White people. Those who oppose racism are often marginalized and resisted (Delpit, 1996). Blumer and Tatum (1999) speak to this resistance, stating that, “Many school leaders who want to address racism in their districts are afraid of resistance. While the possibility of resistance is real, even inevitable, the paralysis of fear is the greater threat to progress. Courageous leadership makes a difference” (p.266).

The ideology of white privilege can act to “delegitimate antiracist activity and to make accommodation to racism seem commonsensical and sane” (Roediger, 1999, p. 242). Teachers are often willing to examine curriculum in their classrooms honestly; they are even willing to talk about relationships and biases regarding students and parents but only if this occurs in a nonthreatening atmosphere. Yet, many of these same teachers balk when it comes to examining their own advantages as White people in the world. However, such self-scrutiny is exactly what White teachers must engage in if we are to make changes in our classrooms and in institutions. This reflection is the way we will experience the significant deep transformation in the education of students in our classrooms that can lead to equal opportunity in our country (Landsman, 2006).

The study of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program analyzed the initial year of the project during which the focus was on developing racial identity within participating teachers. Once teachers are able to reflect upon their own beliefs and attitudes towards race and culture, the hope was that they would be transformed in terms of their displayed and internal belief system related to their students. Teacher
beliefs and expectations for students have been shown to be critical in the academic achievement of students of color.

**Efficacy**

The development of cultural awareness and racial identity is coupled closely by teacher efficacy. Efficacy being the extent to which teachers believe they have the capacity to positively impact student learning and achievement. Research shows that many teachers of students of color hold low levels of expectation for these students. Brophy and Everton’s (1978) empirical research found that teachers who were successful in producing student learning gains tended to have high expectations for students and also assumed greater degrees of responsibility for their learning. Brophy and Evertson (1978) reported that when these successful teachers encountered difficulties, they viewed the difficulties as challenges that needed to be overcome through appropriate teaching methods as opposed to indicators that the students could not learn.

Albert Bandura’s (1977) development of the social cognitive theory of human functioning established that an individual’s sense of efficacy operates as a mediator of behavior. This theory drew attention to the connection between self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulatory practices in schools and has served as a foundation for educational efficacy research over the past thirty years. Bandura’s social cognitive theory stated that individuals are self-organizing, proactive, and self-regulating rather than simply beings that are shaped by external events (Pajares, 2002). His theory has helped researchers
move beyond viewing ability as the central driver of achievement and has shed light on
the important role of self-efficacy beliefs as a determinant of achievement.

Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy is founded on the hypothesis that through life experiences, people develop expectancy about action-outcome experiences and develop coping abilities to varying degrees. Bandura (1977) suggests that behavior is determined by both a general outcome expectancy (belief that behavior will lead to desirable outcomes), and a sense of self-efficacy (belief that one has the requisite skills to bring about the outcome). Bandura writes that the process of developing and utilizing self-efficacy beliefs is an intuitive one, meaning that these are beliefs that are developed over time through use of a continuum of events. Individuals engage in behavior, interpret the results of that behavior, use these interpretations to develop beliefs about their capacity to engage in future behaviors related to similar tasks and activities, and then behave in a manner based upon those beliefs.

Bandura (1994) identified four main sources that influence the development of people’s beliefs about their own efficacy. They are:

1. mastery experience- success achieved through perseverance.
2. vicarious experiences of social models – observing other people with similar backgrounds and experiences helps develop their belief and confidence.
3. social persuasion – constant affirmation and praise for successes.
4. emotional arousal - people’s reactions, alterations, and interpretations of their physical states.

Bandura’s four sources define how many educators develop and reflect upon their own beliefs in students. Many experienced teachers base their beliefs as to what
students can accomplish based on experience while many inexperienced teachers learn from peers and mentors within the school setting. Praise and commendation from peers and leadership reflects the norms and values of the given educational setting. Each of these four norms is expected to play a role in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program.

Since Bandura’s (1977) introduction of the concept of self-efficacy, researchers have investigated the role that self-perceptions play in teaching and learning at both the individual and collective levels. Bringing difficult issues such as race and culture into classrooms in which there has been a traditional culture of silence about such issues is very challenging for teachers. Taking on such difficult challenges requires a commitment to teach multiculturally and high levels of efficacy related to this task. This commitment requires an acquisition and transfer of culturally responsive knowledge in the classroom (Lawrence, 2005). The role of self-efficacy in making this commitment, and staying with this commitment despite the challenging nature of such work, is recognized by Bandura (1997) in his writing twenty years after his initial work on the concept of efficacy. He writes of the need for people to possess coping skills that will enable them to address challenges:

expectations and personal mastery affect both initiation and persistence of coping behavior. The strength of people’s convictions in their own effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations. At this initial level, perceived self-efficacy influences choice of behavioral settings. People fear and tend to avoid threatening situations they believe exceed their coping skills, whereas they get
involved in activities and behave assuredly when they judge themselves capable of handling situations that would otherwise be intimidating (p. 193).

Efficacy expectations determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the efforts to overcome obstacles will be. In the context of teaching and learning, the degree to which teachers believe they can effectively teach students will largely determine the degree to which they work to overcome obstacles they face in effectively teaching students of color. Those who persist in subjectively threatening activities that are in fact relatively safe will gain corrective experiences that reinforce their sense of efficacy, thereby eliminating their defensive behavior. Those who cease their coping efforts prematurely will retain their self-debilitating expectations and fears for a long time (Bandura, 1977, p. 194). In schools, this translates to the degree to which students will take on new challenges associated with their learning and will persevere in the face of challenges they face, the degree to which teachers will work to ensure the success of all students, and the degree to which schools and districts will collectively work to this same end.

Carol Dweck has built upon the work of Bandura, creating what she has termed the growth mindset and the fixed-mindset. The fixed mindset reflects a belief that one's personal qualities are fixed in stone. According to Dweck (2006) this mindset is associated with individuals believing that they possess a limited, set quantity of intelligence, personality, and moral character, resulting in a need for the individual to
feel as if they need to “look smart” by proving themselves to others over and over. This mindset reflects a low degree of self-efficacy. Dweck (2006) summarizes the fixed mindset:

When people believe in fixed traits, they are always in danger of being measured by failure. It can define them in a permanent way. Smart or talented as they may be, this mindset seems to rob them of their coping resources.

The lack of coping resources associated with the fixed-mindset results in students making efforts to protect their egos when faced with challenges. When faced with challenges, students operating with a fixed-mindset mentality will stop trying rather than risk appearing to not be smart or to appear as if they need to put effort into learning.

Students who live within the growth-mindset generally believe that your basic academic abilities can be cultivated through effort. Students who are operating within the growth mindset employ coping resources based on effort when faced with challenges according to Dweck (2006). These students depend upon accurate feedback from teachers in order for them to learn effectively. While students in the fixed-mindset desire positive feedback, no matter if authentic learning is taking place or not, growth mindset students require authentic feedback from teachers in order to produce authentic learning.
Measuring Efficacy

The study of efficacy within the educational setting over the past three decades has persistently presented challenges related to the measurement of efficacy. Tschannen–Moran and Hoy (2001) termed the ongoing attempt to best measure efficacy as “capturing an elusive construct” (p.1). They cite a variety of problems with existing measures of efficacy that have plagued this construct continuously. Among the issues that have contributed to difficulties measuring efficacy are disagreements regarding the conceptualization of efficacy. There have also been questions as to the extent to which efficacy is specific to given contexts and the degree to which efficacy is transferable across contexts (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001).

Many attempts have been made to effectively measure efficacy. The first attempt at measuring teacher efficacy was in the form of the Rand Measure, developed in the late 1970’s. The Rand Measure included just two items that asked teachers to indicate their level of agreement. The items read as follows:

Rand item 1. “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.”

Rand item 2. “If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.”
The Rand studies spurred a number of studies that further developed the idea that teachers’ beliefs in their own teaching abilities matter. In 1976, Armor et al. found that teacher efficacy was significant in teachers’ ability to successfully teach reading to students of color in an urban setting. Numerous measures have since been created to better measure efficacy. Researchers have sought to better capture this powerful construct through the development of longer, more comprehensive measures that go well beyond the reliability of the two-item Rand Measure.

**Teacher Efficacy**

Berman and McLaughlin, first conceptualized teacher efficacy in the late 1970’s. Their 1977 evaluation of 100 Title III ESA projects resulted in a finding that teachers’ sense of efficacy was positively related to amount of teacher change and improved student performance. While Berman and McLaughlin did not specifically study efficacy in the context of schools, they established a construct that continues to be developed today. In 1978, Brophy and Everton studied the variables associated with student achievement and found that teachers who were successful in producing student learning tended to have higher expectations and assumed greater responsibility for student learning. These teachers tended to view difficulties as obstacles to be overcome through the discovery of appropriate teaching methods, not as indicators that students were unable to learn (Dembo & Gibson, 1985).

Teacher efficacy is the extent to which teachers believe that they can affect student learning. Teacher efficacy belief is a judgment as to his or her own ability to
bring about desired outcomes in student learning and engagement, even among students who may be difficult or unmotivated (Armor, et al, 1976; Bandura, 1977). Pajares (2002) defines efficacy as a belief and perception of ones’ self, writing that “it is not simply a matter of how capable one is, but of how capable one believes oneself to be” (p. xx).

Research has shown that teachers have a great deal of influence over the students with whom they work. This is particularly true of low-income, culturally diverse students. Tucker et al. found an example of such influence, in their 2002 study. Tucker et al. found a powerful and direct link between teacher involvement and the academic engagement of African American students. Some researchers suggest a link between teacher expectations, beliefs, and perceptions and the existence of underachievement of students of color and the existence of the achievement gap in achievement between White students and students of color (Ferguson 2003, SkrIa, 2004).

Other empirical studies suggest that many of the nation’s predominantly White teaching force have low expectations for, and fewer interactions with, minority students (Garibaldi, 1992). These two co-existing realities highlight the gap between instructional needs and the realities faced in many schools across the nation. In looking at the education and motivation of Black males in the New Orleans area, Garabaldi (1992) found that the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents differed greatly. In his study of 2,250 Black males in the New Orleans School District, Garabaldi found that African American boys do want to finish school and want to be challenged academically. Students exhibited a belief that they would succeed academically, with
95% reporting that they expected to graduate from high school. Students also demonstrated a belief that they were being met with low expectations—40% responded that they believed their teachers did not set high enough goals for them, and 60% suggested that their teachers should push them harder. These findings signify perceptions that do not correlate with the responses from 318 teachers in the same district. Almost 60% of the teachers responded that they did not believe their Black students would go to college. The teachers who responded included 70% who had ten or more years of experience in teaching and 65% were Black.

Garabaldì (1992) found that parent perceptions were more similar to the perceptions of the students than the teachers. Eight out of every ten parents out of the over 3,500 parents who responded believed that their sons expected to go to college. This large disparity in perceptions further confirms teachers’ skepticism regarding the future of Black males.

Over the past three decades, researchers have established strong connections between teacher efficacy and teacher behaviors that promote student achievement (Ashton, Webb & Doda, 1983; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Teacher efficacy has also been related to motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989) as well as students’ own sense of efficacy. Teachers’ efficacy beliefs relate to their behavior in the classroom. It affects the effort teachers invest in teaching, the personal goals they set for themselves, and their level of aspiration (Tscannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

According to Tucker et al. (2005), teacher efficacy has a powerful influence over the achievement of all students. While this potential influence is great, research
also suggests that teachers have lower expectations for, and fewer interactions with, minority children (Garibaldi, 1992). Teachers’ sense of efficacy is one of the few teacher characteristics that can be tied to student achievement. Teachers who believe that student achievement can be influenced by effective teaching despite home and peer influence and have confidence in their ability to help all students achieve will display characteristics linked to student success. These characteristics include greater persistence, greater academic focus in the classroom, and provision of a varied feedback to students, all contributing to increased student academic achievement (Gibson and Dembo, 1984).

Numerous research studies have demonstrated the importance of teacher efficacy and the direct link between teacher efficacy and student achievement (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tucker, et al, 2005). Much of the research has identified the manifestation of teacher efficacy in observable classroom behaviors (Ashton, 1983; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

Teachers who demonstrate high levels of teacher-efficacy are more willing to try new teaching methods or ideas and to take risks in their teaching. These teachers tend to take on challenges and are more willing to share control in the classroom than low-efficacy teachers. High efficacy teachers utilize classroom management strategies that promote student autonomy and high levels of on-task behaviors from students in their classrooms (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). The following observable behaviors were found by Gibson and Dembo (1984) to be prevalent among high-efficacy teachers in comparison to teachers with low-efficacy:
• High-efficacy teachers spend more time monitoring and checking seatwork.

• High-efficacy teachers spend more time providing whole group instruction than low-efficacy teachers.

• High-efficacy teachers achieve more on-task behaviors and redirect students working independently when students are working in small groups.

• High-efficacy teachers are more effective in leading students to correct answers through use of questioning, whereas low-efficacy teachers demonstrated lower levels of persistence by going to other students, asking another question, or answering the question themselves.

• High efficacy teachers provide less criticism to students.

High-efficacy teachers not only demonstrate observable behaviors in the classroom in the form of techniques and teaching strategies. High-efficacy teachers demonstrate behaviors that promote the development of student efficacy. Teachers with high degrees of efficacy attend more closely to the needs of lower ability students than low-efficacy teachers. The reason for this is in part due to high-efficacy teachers having positive attitudes towards low-achieving students, building relationships, and setting higher standards for these students than low-efficacy teachers. In the classroom setting, low-efficacy teachers tend to view low ability students as potential disruptions and therefore concentrate their efforts on the upper ability groups (Ashton et al., 1983).
High-efficacy teachers are persistent in their efforts with all students. Student failure is perceived as an incentive to greater teacher effort by high-efficacy teachers while low-efficacy teachers view student failure as resulting from causes beyond teacher control and beyond the teacher’s ability to affect that failure (Ross and Bruce, 2007).

Teacher efficacy takes time to produce results. Ashton et al. (1983) found that teacher efficacy leads to changes in teacher behaviors, which in time modify students’ perceptions of their academic abilities. As student efficacy becomes stronger and more developed, the students become more enthusiastic and involved in their schooling and are more willing to initiate contact with their teacher(s) – each contributing to a direct impact on achievement.

Ashton et al. (1983) cite efficacy as a critical construct for teacher motivation, writing “sense of efficacy is a critical construct in understanding motivation, because it influences the nature and extent of behavior, the amount of effort expended and degree of persistence maintained in the face of difficulty” (Ashton et al., 1983, p. 10). Ashton et al. studied the connection between two different types of teacher efficacy and cognitive and affective outcomes. Ashton et al. deconstructed low teacher efficacy into two distinctly different categories. The first being general teacher beliefs in their ability to motivate students (e.g. “These kids can’t learn”). The second type of efficacy is a personal sense of incompetence in motivating students (e.g. “I can’t motivate these kids”). This type of efficacy is termed personal teaching efficacy by Ashton et al.

These researchers found that the key differences between general efficacy and personal teaching efficacy are crucial in terms of efforts made to influence teachers’ sense of
efficacy. Different strategies for influencing teacher efficacy should be implemented depending on whether the low efficacy is attributable to feelings of personal incompetence or if the sense of inefficiency is attributable to “ideological beliefs about the educability of various student types” (Ashton et al., 1983, p. 15). Ashton et al. conclude, “High efficacy teachers held positive attitudes toward their low-achieving students and worked to build friendly non-threatening relationships with them. Low-efficacy teachers had negative attitudes toward their low-achieving students and were more likely to use negative means of controlling them than their high efficacy counterparts,” (p.23) while high-efficacy teachers held relatively high academic standards for their low-achieving students in comparison to their low-efficacy colleagues.

Gibson and Dembo (1984) built upon Bandura’s work by attempting to validate the construct for teachers by developing an instrument to measure teacher efficacy. Their work showed that Bandura’s theory did correspond to teacher efficacy and that teacher efficacy is multidimensional. Their work analyzed teacher efficacy, flexibility, and verbal ability. By discriminating efficacy from flexibility and verbal ability, Gibson and Dembo (1984) were able to show that teacher efficacy is its own construct, distinctly different form verbal ability and flexibility.

Ross and Bruce (2007) studied the impact of a professional development program on teacher efficacy. They summarize the effects of teacher efficacy on student achievement by identifying five attributable factors. First, those scoring higher on teacher-efficacy measures are more likely to try new teaching ideas, particularly techniques that are difficult, involve risks, and require that control is shared with
students (Ross, 1998). Second, high-efficacy teachers use classroom management approaches that promote student autonomy. The stimulation of student autonomy helps keep students on task more effectively than custodial management techniques, thereby resulting in higher student achievement (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). Third, high efficacy teachers are more successful than low-efficacy teachers because of their ability to attend more closely to the needs of lower ability students. Fourth, teacher efficacy has a direct correlation to students’ perceptions of their own academic abilities. As student efficacy increases, their willingness to initiate contact with teachers and their general enthusiasm about school increases, both directly impacting their achievement. And lastly, “Teacher efficacy influences student achievement through teacher persistence. Teachers with highly perceived efficacy view student failure as an incentive for greater teacher effort rather than conclude that the causes of failure are beyond teacher control and cannot be reduced by teacher action” (Ross & Bruce, 2007, p. 51).

Tucker et al. (2005) researched the promotion of teacher efficacy for working with culturally diverse students. They found that teacher self-efficacy could be significantly increased through brief training and opportunities for ongoing consultation. Tucker et al. (2005) identified three central areas through which teachers could focus in order to increase efficacy with culturally diverse students. The first was to focus on student empowerment that included:

- The use of self-instructional strategies
- Teaching of effective ways to express feelings
- Teaching of self-praise skills.
The second central area involved targeting success behaviors includes:

- Providing organized environments with clear expectations
- Delivery of high rates of specific praise

The third central area of focus to increase teacher efficacy is the provision of culturally sensitive environment, which involves:

- The promotion of teacher-parent interactions
- Encouragement of parent participation in schoolwork
- Invitation of feedback on culturally sensitivity of teacher lessons and the physical arrangement of the school

**The Development of Student Efficacy**

Geneva Gay (2000) writes, “teachers must learn how to recognize, honor, and incorporate the personal abilities of students into their teaching strategies” (p.1). As teachers begin to develop and incorporate culturally responsive teaching strategies in to classrooms, student efficacy must be nurtured. It is student academic achievement and corresponding student efficacy that are the end goals of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. Geneva Gay (2000) writes of this end goal culturally responsive teaching is empowering, it enables students to be better human beings and more successful learners. Empowerment translates into academic competence, personal competence, courage, and the will to act. In other words, students have to believe they can succeed in learning tasks and be willing to pursue success relentlessly until mastery is obtained. (p.32)
Newly acquired beliefs are most vulnerable to change and are constantly threatened by the fact that people tend to hold on to beliefs that are based on incomplete or incorrect knowledge even when they become aware of correct explanations. In the context of this study, the newly acquired beliefs on the part of the teachers are vulnerable, as are the beliefs that will be developed in students within their classrooms. The self-efficacy skills that individuals develop have the highest chance of persevering and self-perpetuating if they are developed and reinforced early (Pajares, 2002). Teachers will need to recognize the importance of developing and reinforcing the personal abilities of students as they work to develop and incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices.

In light of these challenges to the development and incorporation of belief systems, educators face the essential task of making their students’ positive self-beliefs and self-regulatory strategies automatic and habitual as early as possible (Pajares, 2002).

Pajares (2002) recommends a number of ways in which teachers can help develop increased self-efficacy beliefs. These recommendations are grouped into two central categories: minimization of student comparisons to one another and focusing on self-efficacy beliefs within the context of professional practice. Pajares writes that comparison of students’ efforts and accomplishments is the norm in many facets of our culture, however educators should try to minimize the amount of relative ability information whenever possible. Pajares goes onto suggest that, ”students should be helped to develop internal standards for evaluating their own efforts. The teacher’s
challenge is to ensure that their students’ internal standards are rigorous without being debilitating, realistic without being self-limiting, fluid without being wishy-washy, consistent without being static” (p 121). Teachers must instill a sense of high standards that are individualized in order to create self-efficacy within individual students.

The risk to students in terms of exposure to failure is very real. Dweck and Leggett’s (1988) Motivational Model explained the two central patterns of responses shown by children in response to task difficulty. Dweck and Leggett investigated the cognition, affect, and behavior exhibited by children after experiencing task failure. They found that two patterns of responses appeared in their study with children who were equal in ability and equivalent in performance prior to experiencing failure. One response was helplessness that was accompanied by negative affect, negative expectations, decreased persistence, and avoidance of future challenges. The other response involved children focusing on a mastery strategy after encountering failure. In these children both affect and expectations for future task performance remained positive. These children showed increased persistence and their performance often improved.

As children get older they acquire a conception of ability that young children do not have (Rholes, Newman, and Ruble, 1988). Prior to children developing conceptions of ability in the middle-grades, Covington (1984) writes that children derive self worth largely from effort. Children attempting to develop increased self-worth demonstrate greater levels of effort and often that is paired with increased achievement. As children get older, ability begins to surpass effort as a measure of self-worth, and children often view ability and effort as inversely related. Given the view that effort and ability are
inversely related, students who do not believe they are able will often utilize self-worth protecting strategies such as procrastination, reduced effort, etc. to interfere with learning.

Pajares (2002) summarizes the need for teachers to decrease comparisons between students by citing that the individualized structures that lower competition among students in classrooms and schools is more effective in building self-efficacy among students than traditional, competitive structures.

The infusion of self-efficacy building strategies within the context of professional practice was found to be essential by Pajares (2002). He writes of the essential need for teachers to promote the competence and confidence of students as they progress through their schooling. The use of short-term goals can be very effective in nurturing the beliefs that students can succeed. Proximal goals provide greater opportunities for feedback and can provide students with a greater sense of mastery and success.

Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy is the perceptions of teachers in a specific school that the faculty as a whole can positively impact student achievement through use of a collective course of action (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy speaks to the importance of teachers possessing a high degree of confidence in their own abilities to tackle difficult and complex issues such as race and culture. Bandura (1997) wrote of the difficulties that schools face in developing collective efficacy. He cites challenges such as public accountability, responsibility for
student success, and minimal control over the workplace as factors that make the
development of collective efficacy difficult. However difficult, Bandura believes it is
possible:

Collective teacher efficacy is an emergent group-level attribute, the product
of the interactive dynamics of the group members. As such, this emergent
property is more than the sum of the individual attributes. It is “the groups”
shared beliefs in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute courses of
action required to produce given levels of attainments.” (Bandura, 1997, p.
477)

Moving beyond the development of efficacy in individuals, the collective building of
efficacy within an organization has the potential to be very powerful. Goddard and Hoy (2000)
write of collective efficacy as a factor that can explain differences among schools:

Just as individual teacher efficacy may partially explain the effect of teachers on
student achievement, from an organizational perspective, collective teacher efficacy may
help to explain the differential effect that schools have on student achievement.
Collective teacher efficacy, therefore, has the potential to contribute to our understanding
of how schools differ in the attainment of their most important objective – the education
of students. (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, p. 483)

According to Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, teachers are more likely to act
purposefully to enhance student learning in schools with a high degree of collective
efficacy. Schools with a high degree of collective agency “are capable of self-regulation,
which helps in the identification, selection, and monitoring of educational efforts that are
likely to meet the unique needs of students” (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, p. 502). In order for a school to possess a high degree of collective efficacy, the faculty as a whole must believe that they can execute course of action that will result in increased student achievement (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

The development of collective agency goes back to Bandura’s social cognitive theory. This theory is based upon human agency – the ways in which individuals exercise some level of control over their lives. The creation of collective efficacy is dependent on each individuals’ beliefs about a group’s conjoint capability to work together to produce desired results (Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002).

Hoy et al. (2002) found a reciprocal relationship between collective efficacy and other variables. They use the example of collective efficacy promoting higher school achievement while at the same time higher school achievement produces greater collective efficacy to illustrate this reciprocal process. These researchers found that collective efficacy is significant in schools and “when collective efficacy is high, a strong focus on academic pursuits not only directs the behavior of teachers and helps them persist but also reinforces a pattern of shared beliefs held by other teachers and students” (Hoy, et al. 2002, p. 89). Hoy et al. found that out of the three variables they examined-- socio-economic status, collective efficacy, and academic press (“the extent to which the school is driven by a quest for academic excellence” (p. 79)--it was collective efficacy that was the most significant variable in influencing school achievement. Hoy et al. found that collective efficacy “has the strongest independent effect on achievement, and the other two variables (academic press and socio-economic status) “flow-through” efficacy beliefs and create stronger collective efficacy.
Woolfolk and Hoy (2000) write that collective efficacy can be fostered through professional development opportunities and action research projects such as the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program:

One way for school administrators to improve student achievement is by working to raise the collective efficacy beliefs of their faculties. Although mastery experiences are the most powerful efficacy changing forces, they may be the most difficult to deliver to a faculty with low collective efficacy. Thoughtfully designed staff development activities and action research projects, however, are ways school administrators might provide efficacy-building mastery experiences (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, p. 502).

Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy (2000) found that the four sources of information defined by Bandura (mastery experience, vicarious experiences of social models, social persuasion, and emotional arousal) are pivotal for the creation of collective teacher efficacy. They also found that two key elements in the development of collective efficacy are analysis of the teaching task and assessment of teaching competence. While these two elements can be considered individually, Goddard et al. found that collective efficacy is formed only when teachers weigh these two elements in relation to one another. Both analysis of the teaching task and assessment of teaching competence are assessed by individuals in terms of whether the organization has the capacities to succeed in teaching students. Collective efficacy is built upon the interaction of both of these elements within a school.
Closely tied to development of racial identity and efficacy are the relationships that develop between teachers and students. The quality of these relationships is based on caring and empathy and both are critical for the success of students of color.

*Caring/Empathy*

Geneva Gay (2000) writes that “caring (in the form of teacher expectations and their attendant instructional behaviors) is too pivotal in shaping the educational experiences of ethnically different students to be taken for granted or left to chance…it must be deliberately cultivated” (p.70).

What this researcher will term as caring for students has a profound effect on learning. Students, especially students of color, who have caring relationships with their teachers are more motivated and perform better academically than students who do not (Gay, 2000; McAllister, 2002).

Landsman (2006) cites numerous empirical studies that have shown that students of color believe that positive and supportive relationships with teachers enhanced their academic achievement, that teacher awareness of and interest in students’ personal lives promoted achievement and engagement in learning, and that those teachers who promoted the voices of all students in classrooms were preferred by students of color (Hollins and Spencer, 1990; Howard, 2002).

Geneva Gay (2000) writes of the importance of caring within the context of culturally responsive teaching:

Caring is one of the major pillars of culturally responsive pedagogy for ethnically diverse students. It is manifested in the form of teacher
attitudes, expectations, and behaviors about students’ human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities. Teachers demonstrate caring for children as students and as people. This is expressed in concern for their psychoemotional well-being and academic success; personal morality and social actions; obligations and celebrations; community and individuality; and unique cultural connections and universal human bonds. (p. 45)

While the concept of caring can be defined as caring for another, Howard (2006) defines empathy as “to feel with” (p. 77). He asserts that empathy involves the suspension of ego, release of the privilege of non-engagement, and the suspension of assumptions. He writes that empathy is the “antithesis of dominance” (p.77). Howard (2006) views empathy as a healing response for White people because it allows White people to step outside of dominance and view social position from a new perspective and in doing so to connect to others who are not in a position of social dominance.

Freeman, Brookhart, and Loadman (1999) found that nearly one half of the teachers in their sample of almost 2,000 who began their careers teaching in schools with high diversity rates, struggled to establish positive and/or meaningful relationships with their students. The development of caring and empathetic relationships is not easy or simple. Freeman et al. found that entry-level teachers in moderate to high diversity schools were more likely than teachers in low diversity schools to:

- Characterize the motivation of their students as low or very low
- Acknowledge that they had many discipline problems in their classrooms
• Attribute discipline problems to factors that are beyond teachers’ control, and
• Believe that instructional materials emphasizing conceptual understanding and higher order thinking are well suited for only some (vs. all) of their students (p. 110).

Freeman et al. (1999) concluded that teachers in moderate to high diversity schools encountered more complex educational challenges and experienced more problems in connecting with their students than those in low diversity schools. While Freeman et al. were specifically looking at the development and successes of entry-level teachers, one must imagine that in-service teachers are also facing similar obstacles and struggles on a daily basis.

The development of meaningful, caring relationships between teachers and students is made especially difficult due to mismatches in teacher-student backgrounds according to Ornstein and Levine (1989). They write “teachers with middle-class backgrounds may experience particular difficulties in understanding and motivating their working-class and lower-class students. Problems of this nature may be particularly salient and widespread in the case of white teachers working with minority students” (pp 19-20).

Noddings (1992) has done an extensive amount of empirical research around the concept of caring. She cites four central components as essential for caring relationships to exist:

1. **Modeling:** Allows the individual to care and also provides instruction to others as to how to develop relationships that promote caring.
2. **Dialogue:** open-ended conversations promote the exchange of ideas
3. Practice: gives individuals the ability to develop and apply skills related to making significant contributions to society.

4. Confirmation: the act of encouraging and affirming the best in others. By confirming the best in others the individual is contributing to the betterment of others and is strengthening the community.


Research clearly shows that genuine teacher caring and empathy is essential to educational success. Affecting the ways in which teachers think about themselves and think about their students could potentially bring about changes in the degree of caring and empathy that they demonstrate towards the students of color whom they teach. Transformational learning theory informed and guided much of the transformational work done within the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. An understanding of the process of change that teachers may engage in as a result of their participation in this project helped this researcher better understand the process of change that the participants were being engaged in.
**Transformational Learning Theory**

Changing the way in which teachers operate and think about the world around them requires an understanding of transformative learning. Understanding the way in which teachers learn, and the ability to identify various levels of cognitive-developmental functioning, will be essential to the success of this learning initiative. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) advocates for teachers to develop an understanding of how they think before focusing on the classroom activities and lesson plans that they utilize.

Jack Mezirow conceived of the theory of transformative learning roughly thirty years ago and the theory has been reviewed and critiqued widely in that time. Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning is considered partly a developmental process of change, but more as “the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). According to Brown (2006), “transformative learning changes the way people see themselves and their world. It attempts to explain how their expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences” (Brown, 2006, p. 708). The theory of transformational learning is founded largely on the assertion that “because we are all trapped by our own meaning perspectives [i.e. frames of reference generated by life experiences], we can never make interpretations of our experience free from bias” (Merizow, 1991, p. 10). Through transformational learning, individuals are able to break free of bias through the process of perspective transformation.
According to Merizow (1991), the process of perspective transformation is defined as “the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world” (Merizow, 1991, p. 167).

Mezirow (1995) identified ten phases of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1995, p.50):

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self examination-of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisionally trying out new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective

These ten phases of perspective transformation reflect the three central themes of Mezirow’s theory. These themes include the centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse (Taylor, 1998). Each of the ten components are expected to emerge in teachers who participate in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. Mezirow’s ten phases of perspective transformation will provide this researcher with a
framework of possible outcomes and a greater understanding of the phases associated with transformative change.

Mezirow’s theme of critical reflection involves adults looking back at their experiences and then questioning the integrity of their previously held assumptions. According to Mezirow, it is critical reflection that most distinguishes the concept of adult-learning. Critical reflection generally results out of “distorted epistemic (nature and use of knowledge), psychological (acting inconsistently from our self-concept), and sociolinguistic (mechanisms by which society and language limit our perception) assumptions. In essence we realize something is not consistent with what we hold to be true and act in relation to our world” (Taylor, 1998, p. 16).

Most important in bringing about change in one’s perspective of the world is through the critical reflection of assumptions. It is the critical self-reflection of assumptions that allows individuals to be freed from cultural distortions and constraints. Critical reflection of one’s own assumptions is necessary if open discourse is going to take place. Critical reflection is the cornerstone of Mezirow’s third theme, rational discourse. Rational discourse facilitates the promotion and development of transformation in individuals and rests on the following assumptions:

- It is rational only as long as it meets the conditions necessary to create understanding with another
- It is to be driven by objectivity
- All actions and statements are open to question and discussion
- Understanding is arrived through the weighing of evidence and measuring the insight and strength of supporting arguments
The primary goal is to promote mutual understanding among others (Taylor, 1998, p.17)

The concepts of rational discourse will be introduced at the beginning of the Culturally responsive Teacher Project and will be utilized in each teacher meeting throughout the year. Given the critical importance of discourse that it be objective, open and focused on developing mutual understanding, this researcher will be focusing the teacher groups on the continual importance of rational discourse.

Argyris and Schon (1974, 1976) studied patterns of individual and organizational learning. They described the patterns of learning that they observed as “single-loop learning” and “double-loop learning.” These two patterns involved individuals or organizations reflecting on their actions in order to improve performance or results. The single-loop theory refers to a one dimensional view of learning in which the individual or organization forms a theory based on assumptions, takes action based on that theory, reflects upon the result of the action, and then changes the action to attain different results. The double-loop theory is two-dimensional in that the individual or organization looks to change the theory or assumptions that their actions were based upon, rather than maintain the same assumptions and change only the actions. Table 2-1 illustrates the single and double-loop theories.
Argyris and Schon’s double –loop theory in practice will assist teachers participating in the Culturally Responsive Teacher Program to break patterns of simply changing actions in order to produce different results. By being forced to look at their own assumptions about race and culture, and the corresponding actions and results they are seeing as teachers, the possibility of creating new theories of action is created within each participating teacher. This researcher may also be able to create new theories of action in breaking the cycle of single-loop learning by introducing the concept of double-loop learning through purposeful dialogue and reflection.

Fostering Transformative Learning

While the work of Mezirow has dominated much of the transformational learning landscape. Others such as Boyd have contributed to the literature related to fostering a climate conducive to transformative learning. Boyd and Myers (1988) write of the need for students to find their “spirit” – “that abiding within the person is a truth,
a knowledge, which is not separate from socio-economic, political, and other cultural influence, but transcends them’ (Boyd and Meyers, 1988, p. 282).

According to Boyd and Meyers (1988), two virtues were critical in the creation of an environment that promotes transformative learning. The first virtue is what they termed seasoned guidance, by which an experienced mentor would provide guidance through shared reflection on their own life experiences. The second central virtue is that of compassionate criticism. This involves assisting the learner in questioning his or her own reality, facilitating the process of self-analysis, and then ultimately helping the learner transform.

Anderson and Saavedra (1995) researched the process of teacher transformation taking place during social interactions between teachers in the context of an ongoing study group. Over a two-year period, Anderson and Saavedra studied the effect on teachers produced by putting them at the center of their own learning and in an environment that facilitated critical reflection and social context (Taylor, 1998). Anderson and Saavedra found that through structures based on a process of inquiry, teachers changed in the ways in which they viewed themselves as teachers and learners.

Anderson and Saavedra (1995) identified a number of conditions essential for transformative learning within a group setting. The conditions that she found facilitated transformative learning were utilized within the context of a study group:

1. Dialogic context: All participants must have the opportunity to be heard and valued in a democratic setting.

2. Identity and voice: A location must be provided for dialogue to take place and for participants to become consciously active in the (re) construction of
their identities and voices. This focus on the need for dialogue as a critical instrument for change mirrors the findings of Mezirow and Taylor.

3. Ownership of goals of the group and direct access to sources of knowledge: Currently in-service professional development offerings often convene practitioners to discuss agendas established elsewhere and present knowledge about practice that is created and mediated by others. Anderson and Saavedra believe that transformative groups must be able to negotiate their own goals and be in control of deciding what knowledge they wish to uncover and how they will go about doing that (i.e. research, reflective journaling, etc.)

4. Disequalibrium and conflict: These are necessary conditions of transformational learning according to Anderson and Saavedra. When practitioners begin analyzing and critiquing their own beliefs and practices, there is conflict between paradigms, ideological commitments and personal histories. Conflict occurs within individuals, within the group, and between individuals and the institution they belong to. Embracing this conflict is an essential component of transformative learning.

5. Meditational events: As individuals translate their own feelings, experiences, views, and practices to their peers, they contribute to the process of mutual transformation.

6. Demonstration: The opportunity for practitioners to demonstrate practices in action. This can be done within the context of a study group or by sharing responses to experiences (i.e. reflective journals, research activities, etc.).
Demonstration of practices allows collaborative learning to take place by looking at demonstrations or reflection on actual practices.

7. Generation: The generation of new knowledge is a result of reflective action that causes an individual to shift their own knowledge and beliefs in a way that will result in future action that reflects the generation of new knowledge.

8. Agency: As practitioners develop, they gain new understanding of a critical awareness of social processes and practices. This new awareness goes beyond recognizing how the forces of social control operates, but how these forces can be overcome individually and collaboratively (p. 230).

According to Taylor, Anderson and Saavedra’s (1995) work was most influential because she brought to light three group factors that related to transformative learning that had not been previously mentioned. The first factor is the cultural background of group members. This involves each group member having an opportunity to situate themselves within the context of the group. In order for a democratic and open environment to be created, issues of position related to race, class, gender, ethnicity, etc. need to be discussed in relation to the group as a whole (Taylor, 1998). The second factor is the essentiality of dissonance and conflict. This finding contradicted earlier studies that indicated that conflict should be minimized (Cranton, 1994). Anderson and Saavedra found that conflict and dissonance served as a medium for real learning opportunities and the exploration of differences.
The third factor that Taylor (1998) identified as most significant was Anderson and Saavedra’s finding that new ideas must be acted upon. She found that group members needed to go beyond the experience of rational discourse and reflection and that they needed to validate and explore their new ideas and beliefs.

Commitment to Change

Angela Paccione (2000) provided an empirical analysis of the factors that contributed to the development of commitment to multicultural education in teachers. Her study focused on identifying the factors that contributed most significantly to teachers who were already committed to issues of multicultural education and educational equity. Paccione concluded that a four-stage process could be used to describe the development of a commitment to multicultural education.

Her findings suggest that individuals move through these four stages of development in response to exposure to curricular interventions and experiences. Paccione identifies this finding as very encouraging in that “this finding places the onus for effective teacher preparation for student racial-cultural diversity in the hands of teacher educators” (p.998). In regards to the development of teachers already in the field, this finding may well lead one to conclude that the onus is on school and district leaders to facilitate opportunities for teacher transformation related to race and culture.

Educational leaders must create what Senge (1990) terms “networks of collaboration” (p.270) that support people working together to create value and new sources of value. If widespread, meaningful change in terms of the value we place on diversity, race, culture, and equity is going take place, it must be done collaboratively.
Collaboration

As this study focuses on the development of individual and collective efficacy of teachers, as well as culturally responsive teaching practices, the need for teachers to learn together and have opportunities to engage in purposeful dialogue is very important. This study was in part focused upon the ability of teachers to work in collaboration with one another to develop understanding and pedagogical knowledge. Collaboration within the context of educational reform is critical. Judith Warren-Little (1993) believes that collaboration in the ongoing development of teaching skills is crucial in the quest to meet the demands of educational reform. According to Little, the current model based on the development of individual teaching repertoires is not adequate in light of the new visions of teaching and learning presented by the educational reform movement. Collaboration is a tool that can be utilized as an effective lever for change assuming that certain conditions exist. These conditions include the time and structure provided to teachers for ongoing development.

Langer and Colton (2005) claim that the failure of the majority of school improvement efforts is “because they don’t adequately engage teachers in collaborative inquiry where it matters most: in the daily learning-teaching interactions between students and teachers” (p. 22). Senge (1990) goes beyond stating the importance of collaboration, citing the inefficiency and irrelevance of individual learning. According to Senge (1990), individual learning is at some level, irrelevant to organizational learning. Teams are the key learning units in organizations. Senge writes that:
If teams learn, they become a microcosm for learning throughout the organization. Insights gained are put into action. Skills developed can propagate to other individuals and to other teams (although there is no guarantee that they will propagate). The team’s accomplishments can set the tone and establish a standard for learning together for the larger organization. (p. 219)

Collaboration is a requisite of professional learning communities. They are not one in the same. Professional learning communities emphasize three key components: collaborative work and discussion among educators, a consistent collaborative focus on teaching and learning, and the collection and use of assessment and other data to inquire into and evaluate progress over time (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000). Judith Warren Little has written extensively on the need for professional learning communities to be utilized to improve individuals and schools. Recognizing that over the past few decades, equity reforms have been targeted at remedying individual student deficiencies, Warren Little (1993) cites the need for professional learning communities to focus on the issue of diversity and equity. Through the development and use of professional learning communities, teachers are able to assist one another in identifying and altering classroom practices that “contribute to student failure and that undermine equal opportunity to learn…The most promising of these efforts engage teachers collectively in studying classroom practices in ways that sometimes lead to more systematic changes at the school level” (p. 131). In order to make these changes, the norm for such improvement must be in line with well-established practices and
must also involve building capacity for organizational change (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1992; Little, 1993).

Mike Schmoker (2004) cites a broad concurrence among educational researchers and organizational theorists who have concluded that developing the capacity of educators to function collaboratively is the best-known means by which we might achieve wide-scale improvements in teaching and learning. Hargreaves (1994) suggests that professional collaboration provides tremendous assets to professionals; including increased support, efficiency, effectiveness, confidence, and reflection.

According to Marilyn Friend (2000), the term collaboration has permeated many dimensions of education. Collaboration is a term associated with many dimensions of schooling including teaming, professional development, inclusion, leadership, and response to reform initiatives. Friend points out that collaboration is often poorly defined, and is used in conjunction with any activity involving more than one person. This definition is simply not sufficient. Marilyn Friend states that “calling nearly every shared effort in schools collaborative, whether it is or not, diminishes the value of the concept, dilutes the professionals’ understanding of what it requires, and fosters a false belief that there’s not much to collaborating” (p.131). Friend and Cook (1990) define collaboration as “a style for interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work towards a common goal” (p.72). Morton Inger (1993) defines teacher collaboration as “teachers engaging in the rigorous mutual examination of teaching and learning” (p.5). For the purposes of this research, a combination of these definitions will be utilized. Collaboration will be defined for the purposes of this research as a style for interaction between two or more
educators voluntarily engaged in the rigorous mutual examination of teaching and learning.

Mike Schmoker (2004) addresses the fact that collegiality is often mistaken for collaboration. Schmoker contends that “Mere collegiality won’t cut it. Even discussions about curricular issues or popular strategies can feel good but go nowhere” (p.49). Rick Dufour (2003) expands upon the concept of collegiality and congeniality being mistaken for collaboration. He writes about the fact that many educators have different ideas about what collaboration is and looks like in practice. He states that many educators “point to the camaraderie of the group – the secret Santa exchanges, recognition of birthdays, Friday afternoon social gatherings – as evidence of a collaborative culture” (p.63). Dufour goes onto write about how many leaders believe they are building a collaborative culture when they institute operational guidelines and procedures. According to Dufour, leaders often mistake consensus around tardiness, homework, and supervision rotation at recess as collaboration. He writes that leaders also cite the willingness of teachers to create school wide programs such as math night and the annual school picnic as evidence of a collaborative culture.

While such activities are often worthwhile, Marzano (2003) has found that “there is little evidence that teacher congeniality and social interactions impact student achievement” (p.63). Dufour (2003) writes that activities based on congeniality and social interactions are important and do enrich the experiences of students and teachers and do have a level of importance within a school. While recognizing this importance, Dufour is definitive in addressing the activities that are mistakenly being perceived as being collaborative, stating that “none of these can transform a school” (p.63). Langer
and Colton (2005) claim that the failure of the majority of school improvement efforts is “because they don’t adequately engage teachers in collaborative inquiry where it matters most: in the daily learning-teaching interactions between students and teachers” (p. 22).

**Characteristics of Collaborative Cultures**

Collaborative school cultures are designed to work directly against the isolation of teachers within the school setting. The common perception, and often reality, of teachers working in schools is that they function as “convenient places for a bunch of individual teachers, like independent contractors, to come to teach discrete groups of children (Donahoe, 1993, p. 299). This existing sense of isolation on the part of teachers is felt and unwanted, teacher isolation from colleagues and a lack of time to discuss issues related to curriculum and instruction is reported as one of their greatest sources of teacher dissatisfaction (Poplin and Weeres, 1993).

Dufour and Eaker (1998) present five ways in which collaborative structures support the effort to build school cultures founded on educational community as opposed to teacher isolation. Collaborative structures support this endeavor because they:

- Enable teachers to test their ideas about teaching and expand their level of expertise by allowing them to hear the ideas of others (Wildman & Niles, 1987).

- Foster better decisions and increase the likelihood of ownership in the decisions (Dillon-Peterson, 1984).
• Can be linked to gains in achievement; higher quality solutions to problems; increased confidence among all members of the school community; more systematic assistance to beginning teachers; and an increased pool of ideas, materials, and methods (Little, 1990).

• Reinforce changes in school culture and commitment to improvement initiatives

• Help to reduce the fear of risk-taking by providing encouragement and moral support (Fielding & Schalock, 1985).

Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1994) identify the following characteristics of collaborative school cultures:

• Critical elements of school communities: reflective dialogue, deprivation of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms and values.

• Structural conditions: time to meet and talk, physical proximity, interdependent teaching roles, communication structures, and teacher empowerment.

• Social and human factors: openness to improvement, trust and respect, cognitive and skill-based teaching and learning, supportive leadership, and socialization of teachers (p. 4-5)
The Promise of Collaboration within the Context of Education Reform

Those schools that are able to move from traditional roles and procedures to form professional learning communities based upon a focus on collaboration have experienced remarkable results. Lee, Smith, and Croninger (1997), in a report of a restructuring study conducted by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, shared findings on 11,000 students enrolled in 820 secondary schools across the nations. In their analysis, Lee, Smith and Croninger found that in schools characterized by professional collaboration, teachers had worked together and changed their classroom pedagogy. Teachers had engaged students in high intellectual learning tasks, and students achieved greater academic gains in math, science, history and reading than students in traditionally organized schools. Judith Warren-Little (1993) claims that collaboration in the ongoing development of teaching skills is crucial in the quest to meet the demands of educational reform. According to Little, the current model based on the development of individual teaching repertoires is not adequate in light of the new visions of teaching and learning presented by the educational reform movement. Collaboration is a tool that can be utilized as an effective lever for change assuming that certain conditions exist.
Necessary Conditions for Collaboration

There are a number of factors that need to exist in order for professional collaboration to be developed and maximized. Friend and Cook (1990) outline the conditions that they believe are necessary for collaboration to exist. These conditions include “(a) a mutual goal, (b) parity among participants, (c) shared participation, (d) shared accountability, (e) shared resources, and (f) voluntariness” (p. 72). Rebecca Gajda and Christopher Koliba (2007) examined literature on professional collaboration and distilled six fundamental characteristics of collaboration. These characteristics are shared purpose, cycle of inquiry, dialogue, decision-making, action, and evaluation.

Both of these findings of factors are based on professionals working towards a common goal together within the context of a somewhat structured process. Rosenholtz (1985) believes that this focus on a coherent set of goals is essential if collaboration is going to affect improvement of practice and performance. Richard Elmore (2000) built on this thinking by Rosenholtz, writing that “participation in collaborative work increases commitment and satisfaction among teachers, but it is unlikely to result in changes in teachers’ practice, skill, or knowledge in the absence of clear organizational focus on those issues” (p. 17).

The foundation of this joint action by teachers is defined and simplified further by Inger (1993). Inger cites interdependence and opportunity as the two most fundamental conditions for collaboration to exist. Interdependence involves the concept that teachers working together is most significant in terms of results when these practices are an “integral, inescapable part of day-to-day work” (p. 6). Inger goes on to write that “to the extent they (teachers) find themselves truly interdependent with one
another to manage and reap the rewards of teaching, joint work will be worth the investment of time and other resources” (p. 6).

**Collaborative Challenges**

Inger (1993) states that collaboration “cannot occur where it is impossible or prohibitively costly in organizational, political, or personal terms. Schedules, staff assignments, and access to resources must be made conducive to shared work…and school policy must solidly support it” (p. 6). Inger goes on to say that value placed on collaboration must be clearly stated, demonstrated, and supported.

While much of the literature pertaining to collaboration and professional learning communities is dedicated to the many benefits associated with collaboration, Michael Fullan (1993) points out the existence of inherent dangers associated with “group think” (p.34). He cautions against the uncritical acceptance of the benefits associated with teacher collaboration and states that at the normative level, teacher collaboration is seen as uncontroversial and likely to attract universal endorsement.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) caution against the acceptance of all forms of collaboration and warn against acceptance of some kinds of collaboration. They state that the existence of collaboration should not be mistaken for a culture of collaboration. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) identify three forms of collaboration that need to be monitored closely. These forms of collaboration are termed balkanization, comfortable collaboration, and contrived collegiality:
**Balkanization** – A balkanized school culture is comprised of teachers operating in small groups, often operating in competition with one another in the form of teacher cliques. These groups of teachers attach their loyalties to and identities to particular groups of colleagues. In most cases these colleagues are those with whom they work most closely. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) found that the existence of such cliques in schools often reflect and reinforce a variety of outlooks on learning styles, teaching styles, curriculum, and discipline. Balkanization can lead to poor communication, teacher indifference, and groups going their own ways within schools.

**Comfortable Collaboration** – Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) view what they have termed comfortable collaboration as a common form of bounded collaboration that does not extend into the classroom setting. Comfortable collaboration is defined by teachers having time to work together, but the work done together does not extend into classrooms to include such activities as co-teaching, peer observation, or joint participation in action research. This type of collaboration fails to extend beyond what is comfortable for teachers; it leaves a great deal of teacher isolationism intact and fails to promote engagement in reflective practices.

**Contrived Collegiality** – Collaborative cultures are difficult to establish and challenging to maintain. Collaborative cultures are unpredictable and difficult for administrators to contain. Forms of collegiality that are created with the intention of administrators being able to contain, control, and regulate are referred to by Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) as contrived collegiality. This form of collaboration is defined by formalized strategies put in place to increase the attention given to co-planning, consultation, and other forms of teachers working together. Often contrived collegiality
is promoted when administrators are looking for rapid changes. At its best, contrived collegiality puts teachers in touch with one another and can serve as an effective preliminary step on the journey towards developing a truly collaborative culture.

Achinstein (2002) found that work in regards to learning communities offers “a simplified and overly optimistic vision of collaborative reforms” (p.422). Achinstein’s writing addresses the understanding of conflict within community and states that this understanding is “crucial to practitioners’, reformers’, and researchers’ understanding of how such communities form, cope, and are sustained over time” (p. 422). Conflict is an expected product of collaboration and that conflict will potentially be paired with resistance within this study.

Focusing on race, identity, and change will purposely challenge the way in which teachers think and operate. Blumer and Tatum (1999) speak to this resistance, stating, “Many school leaders who want to address racism in their districts are afraid of resistance. While the possibility of resistance is real, even inevitable, the paralysis of fear is the greater threat to progress. Courageous leadership makes a difference” (p.266).

Collaboration is a powerful lever for change. Teachers working together to change the ways in which they think and teach are foundational for the critical response to the underachievement of students of color throughout the nation. The changes that are needed must involve all classrooms and must bring all educators together in a directed yet collaborative effort to change practices to best meet the needs of all students.
Summary

Culturally responsive teaching practices encourage instruction that connects and engages students of color. These practices are founded on a mindset and belief system that teachers must possess, rather than simply a set of strategies that can be implemented in the classroom. The mindset that culturally responsive teachers must work to develop is based on their own racial identity development. It is how individual teachers perceive themselves racially that will impact how they interact with diversity within the classroom. A deeper understanding of their own identity, views, and beliefs in their students can potentially have a significant impact on the achievement of students. Transforming teacher views, understandings, and beliefs is a process that can be fostered through purposeful learning experiences. These learning experiences are maximized through collaboration with other educators and increase the likelihood of change to spread within an organization.

Conclusion

The need for educators to take purposive measures to change the ways in which they view themselves and view their students is essential. The tremendous challenges associated with the underachievement of students of color has been met by a limited level of effort on the part of educators across the nation to commit to an ongoing, challenging, and often uncomfortable self assessment of beliefs and actions is lacking at best.
School leaders must have the courage to address, support, and commit to the collective effort needed to assist teachers in reflecting upon their own beliefs and practices and the existence of racism in our schools. Blumer and Tatum (1999) refer to racism as “a crippling artifact of past societal failures” (p266). Racism will continue to cripple our educational system until we commit to changing the way in which we think and act.

Geneva Gay (2000) writes of the need for educators to demonstrate the courage to learn about themselves and their students culturally and racially, while at the same time working to employ their learnings in the classroom. She writes of the current marginalization of students of color and the need for learning and practice to occur at the same time:

Failures and mistakes are not self correcting; they must be deliberately transformed. Teachers can expedite this transformation for themselves and their ethnically diverse students by embracing, with diligence and enthusiasm, culturally responsive pedagogy. For a time, their training for and practice of it will probably have to occur in tandem…The benefit of training for and trying out culturally responsive teaching at the same time is how knowledge and praxis can reinforce and refine each other. (p.212)

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program purposefully involved teachers in collaboration designed to foster personal transformation. Working together through shared readings, dialogue, and interaction with guest speakers, participating teachers were encouraged to reflect upon their own racial identity and how their racial identities
influence the way in which they think about and teach students of color. As teachers developed in terms of their cultural competence, they embraced and applied culturally responsive practices within their classrooms and took actions that are anti-racist in nature. The beliefs that Geneva Gay proposes regarding teachers learning and practicing in tandem were utilized within this program.

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program is a small, but potentially important step in the development of a learning environment that is beneficial for all students at Buchanan Middle School.
CHAPTER THREE

Design of Research

Introduction

“Effects of a culturally responsive teaching program on teacher attitudes, perceptions, and practices” is a descriptive case study that focused on the development of teacher beliefs and practices that are conducive to meeting the educational needs of students of color. The study focused on what the researcher learns as a participant-observer during the initial year of a professional development program designed to address the issues related to a perceived lack of culturally responsive teaching practices at Buchanan Middle School.

Research Questions

This case study attempted to answer the following three research questions:

- What changes in teacher perceptions of collaboration and dialogue emerged in teachers as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
- What do teachers perceive to be the impact on their instructional practices as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
What changes in perceptions of efficacy emerged among teachers as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?

**Research Design**

This qualitative case study described and assessed a program in which teachers participated collaboratively in an exploration of culturally responsive teaching. The impact that participation in this program had on teacher attitudes, understandings, and practices related to students of color will be analyzed.

This study is focused on the analysis of factors that significantly impact the phenomenon of teacher understanding and practice. Use of a case study approach to analyze ways in which teachers respond to, and learn from, a collaborative professional development experience that has taken place within the context of an ongoing school year was most effective because it allowed for inquiry within real-life context. Yin (1994) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13).

There are a number of strengths associated with use of qualitative data in research. A list of these strengths has been characterized by Merriam (1998) and Miles and Huberman (1994) and includes the following key points:
1. The data focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in their natural setting;

The use of qualitative study methodology allowed the researcher to collect data that provided focus on “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what ‘real life’ is like” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.10). Miles and Huberman identify the benefits of qualitative data as including the fact that they allow the researcher to achieve “local groundedness,” meaning that the researcher is able to interact closely with the study participants. This closeness allows for the researcher to take into account the local context that the phenomenon is taking place in. Additionally, Patton (1985) writes of the importance for the researcher to be able to study phenomena in their naturally occurring settings:

[Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting—and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting (p.1).

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research does not aim to deconstruct a phenomenon to examine component parts; rather all of the parts are examined as a whole within the context of their natural setting in order to reveal how
they work together to form that whole (Patton, 1985). Yin (1994) builds on the need for use of qualitative case study, writing that case study is particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context.

2. Emphasis on specific, bounded cases increases reliability;

Merriam (1998) points out that qualitative case study design is chosen because researchers want to focus on insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. She goes on to state that cases must be “intrinsically bounded” (p.27) by an understanding of what is at the heart of the study, having a defined number of participants, and defined data collection tools and methods. If there is no definitive end and a lack of definition regarding methods and participants, “then the phenomenon being studied is not bounded enough to qualify as a case” (p.28).

This case study was defined by specific phenomena being studied. The case was bounded by the use of defined participants, procedures, and established methods of data collection. Since the study participants are subject to the same triangulation of data through the researcher’s use of interviews, field notes, and teacher reflection journals, it increased the reliability in the consistency of data collection and analysis.
3. Rich, vivid descriptions are generated;

Data collected through use of qualitative research methods is defined by “richness and holism” according to Miles and Huberman (1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) point out that this richness in description carries a “ring of truth that has strong impact on the reader” (p.10). In the use of qualitative case studies, the researcher is able to convey what has been learned about a phenomenon through words and pictures rather than through the use of numbers (Merriam, 1998). “Most analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, subclustered, broken into semiotic segments. They can be organized to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyze, and bestow patterns upon them” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.7).

4. Data can be collected over a sustained period of time;

Miles and Huberman (1994) write of the benefits associated with the extended time associated with collection of qualitative data. “The fact that such data are typically collected over a sustained period of time makes them powerful for studying any process (including history)” (p.10). They have found that qualitative research allows researchers to go beyond simple “snapshots” of what is going on and to delve into the how and why that drive phenomena. Collecting data over a sustained period of time can potentially allow for the assessment of causality as it plays out in a given setting as well (Miles and Huberman, 1994).
5. Flexibility in design and collection of data;

Merriam (1998) states, “the design of a qualitative study is emergent and flexible, responsive to changing conditions of the study in progress” (p.8). The ability of the researcher utilizing qualitative research methodology to vary data collection times and methods as a study proceeds, gives the researcher “further confidence that we’ve really understood what has been going on” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.10).

6. Understanding of meaning is maximized;

Qualitative data focuses on people’s “lived experiences” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.10). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the use of qualitative data “are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives” (p.10). How participants make sense of the experiences that they have as participants in the Culturally Responsive teaching Program, and how they apply this sense-making to their experience in the classroom, is at the very heart of this study. This researcher’s ability to understand meaning was facilitated through the use of data collection tools designed to uncover an understanding of teacher perceptions related to their experiences in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program.

Qualitative data provides an effective design for locating meanings that people place on their experiences. The view that qualitative research provides insight into how individuals construct reality by interacting with their social world is the key philosophical assumption for all qualitative research according to Merriam (1998).
Miles and Huberman (1994) write that qualitative data collected over sustained periods of time allows for powerful study of a process. The prolonged study of the process utilized by the culturally responsive teaching program will allow for the researcher to go beyond a basic understanding of what happened, to develop a deeper understanding of why and how things happened. Collecting data over a sustained period of time can potentially allow for the assessment of causality as it plays out in a given setting as well (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This study examined changes in teacher perceptions, attitudes, and understandings over the course of a school year and the ability to assess causality was essential in best understanding the changes encountered.

This study involves fieldwork in the form of discussions, meetings, and classroom teaching that took place at Buchanan Middle School. The researcher was physically in the setting that the phenomenon is taking place, and observed behaviors were demonstrated within their natural settings (Merriam, 1998). Throughout the study this researcher led and studied the professional development group as participant-observer.

Within the context of qualitative studies, the researcher was the primary instrument for the collection and analysis of data. The researcher provided responsiveness within the context of the study. This responsiveness allowed for the researcher to adapt techniques, process data immediately, and explore anomalous responses (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The role of researcher as the primary instrument for data collection provides inherent flexibility to the study in that it allows for data collection times and methods to be altered as the study proceeds. This inherent flexibility increases confidence that the study will reveal an understanding of what is going on (Miles and Huberman, 1994). While the flexibility resulting from the
researcher’s role in qualitative studies can be advantageous, an awareness of the fact that the final product is an interpretation of the views of others filtered through the eyes of the researcher is critical. This awareness calls for the researcher to communicate well, to empathize with respondents, ask good questions, and listen effectively (Merriam, 1998).

The use of the case study design in this study provided the researcher with a deep understanding of the process of implementing a culturally responsive teaching program in this particular school. Kenny and Grotelueschen (1980) write that case study design is appropriate when the objective is to better understand the dynamics of a program. “When it is important to be responsive, to convey a holistic and dynamically rich account of an educational program, case study is a tailor-made approach” (p.5).

This study was focused on the process used by members of a collaborative professional development program. Case study design is suited for the study of process and its meaning can be defined in two ways:

The first meaning of process is monitoring: describing the context and population of the study, discovering the extent to which the treatment or program has been implemented, providing immediate feedback of a formative type, and the like. The second meaning of process is causal explanation: discovering or confirming the process by which the treatment had the effect that it did (Reichardt and Cook, 1979, p.21).
The study at Buchanan Middle School provided a deep understanding of both views of the meanings of process defined by Reichardt and Cook. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program monitored the experience of teachers through dialogue, reflective journals, and field notes with the aim of studying meaning and discovering the process of potential transformation that participating teachers experience.

**Description of School and Community**

The Jackson Public Schools (a pseudonym) is a preK-12 school district located in a metropolitan area outside of Boston. Jackson is a large, mixed-class community of over 65,000 people and is known for its economic and cultural diversity. According to the United States Census Bureau, the median household income is $75,040, with 29.62% of the households earning less than $50,000. Jackson has a much larger percentage of renter households than any of the surrounding towns.

Jackson is a diverse racial community. The town is comprised of 79.8% White, 5.1% Black, 5.3% Asian, and 9.8% other. A majority of the “other” racial category is comprised of a large Brazilian population within the town. Jackson has a Hispanic and Latino population that makes up 10.9% of the population and a white, non-hispanic population of 89.1%. The demographic make-up of the student body at Buchanan Middle School is as follows: 66% White, 22% Hispanic, 7% Asian, 4% Black, and 1% other. The racial makeup of the teaching staff at Buchanan Middle School is approximately 91% White, 5% Latino, and 4% Black. Roughly 33% of the student body qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. Despite the fact that over 5% of the town is comprised of individuals of Brazilian decent, less than 1% of the student...
population at Walsh is Brazilian. The racial makeup of the teaching staff at Buchanan Middle School is approximately 91% White, 5% Latino, and 4% Black.

The Jackson School District serves 8,085 students in 13 schools. There are nine elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and one high school in the district. This culturally responsive teaching project took place within the Buchanan Middle School, which is one of three middle schools in the district. Grades six through eight are housed at Buchanan Middle School.

**Leadership Project**

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was developed in summer, 2007. This program was created by school administration in response to standardized testing data that showed a gap between the achievement of White students and students of color in all academic areas. Analysis of the existing achievement gap and discussion with teaching staff indicated that professional development focused on meeting the needs of diverse learners was needed. While the entire staff at Buchanan Middle School was involved in a year-long professional development initiative focused on improving educational services to students of color, only seven teachers were selected to participate in the more intensive Culturally Responsive Teaching Program.

This researcher presented an overview of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program at a staff meeting in 2007. At this meeting, it was explained that this researcher was looking for volunteer participation from teachers to meet throughout the year, during the school day to engage in activities and dialogue geared toward the
development of multicultural competence. The basic time requirements and the need for participants to complete reflective journals, interviews, meetings with students and parents of color, and completion of reading assignments outside of the school day were outlined at this meeting. It was explained that the final decisions as to who would be selected to participate would depend on the total number of interested teachers and the corresponding school day schedules that the volunteers possessed. It was made clear that ideally, two small groups of teachers would be formed to comprise the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program and that each small group of teachers would meet with the researcher/principal during their common meeting blocks on a monthly basis throughout the school year.

Selected participants were formally invited to join the study through individual meetings with the researcher. Each teacher asked to participate agreed to do so and signed a form giving consent. Confidentially was detailed in the consent letter as well as in the context of individual and group conversations. Each participant was aware that confidentiality would be maintained at all times and that results of study participation would have no bearing on performance evaluations or job status.

Sample Design

Teachers from grades six and eight volunteered to participate in the study. Due to time and schedule constraints upon the researcher, it was decided that a sample would be composed of two groups of teachers. Seven teachers in total were asked to participate in the study and all seven invited teachers agreed to participate. Out of the total of seven teachers, three teachers taught in sixth grade and four teachers taught
eighth grade. The teachers were broken into two separate groups that would meet at different times throughout the year. Individuals making up each group shared common planning time on a daily basis, which made it possible for each group of teachers to meet on a regular basis during the school day throughout the year.

The seven teachers who participated in the study were selected based on their interest in participating, grade level at which they teach, and corresponding teaching schedule. The participants selected bring a range of subject areas, years of teaching experience, and diversity of experiences and perspectives. The seven teachers selected will bring a wide array of experiences and perspectives to the study.

All of the seven participating teachers are White. This was not by design, rather all teacher volunteers in sixth and eighth grade were White. Six of the participants are female and one is male. The range in teaching experience is from three to thirty-four years, as outlined in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1  Participant Teaching Experience at Buchanan Middle School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Increments</th>
<th># of Faculty Participants</th>
<th>% of Faculty Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participant ages range from twenty-four to sixty. Six of the seven teachers involved in the study have earned Masters Degrees, with one teacher currently enrolled in a Master Degree program. Subjects taught by this group include: English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Three of the teachers teach sixth grade, and four teach eighth grade.

The teachers comprising the sample will provide a wealth of data that will inform the effectiveness of various aspects of the professional development program they will be participating in. All of the teachers involved are located in the study are located in the same building as the researcher and share common planning time, making it a sample that is convenient based on time and location. Table 3-2 illustrates the participant demographics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kristen</td>
<td>White, Female, 6th Grade English Language Arts Teacher, 34 years teaching experience, has participated in 2 courses related to CRT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>White, Female, 6th Grade Math Teacher, 3 years teaching experience, no professional development experience related to CRT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>White, Female, 6th Grade English Language Arts Teacher, 14 years teaching experience in diverse setting, 2 ELL courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>White, Female, 8th grade Social Studies Teacher, 21 years teaching experience, no professional development experience related to CRT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>White, Male, 8th Grade Special Educator, 8 years teaching experience, no professional development experiences related to CRT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>White, Female, 8th Grade Special Educator, 9 years teaching experience, no professional development experience related to CRT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>White, Female, 8th Grade Science Teacher, 12 years teaching experience, no professional development experience related to CRT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Methodology

Data Gathering Procedures

Three instruments will be utilized in this qualitative case study:

1. Semi-structured interviews
2. Teacher reflective journaling
3. Field Notes

Instrument #1 - Semi-structured interviews

Person-to-person interviews provide a tool for researchers to acquire information as to what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 1990, p.2). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to the new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). Gaining understanding of views and thinking of another through the use of interviews was written about by Patton (1990):

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe…We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and its meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about
those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective (p.196).

The use of a semistructured interview format allows the researcher to utilize a mix of more and less structured questions. The semistructured interview is:

- guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic (Merriam, 1998, p.74).

The use of semi-structured interviews, along with follow-up questions or probes allowed the researcher to best enter into the perspectives and thoughts of the study participants.

Interviews were conducted with each of the seven study participants. These interviews took place prior to the start of the program and at the conclusion of the first year of the program. These interviews were used to develop a greater understanding of teacher perception and attitudes related to the educational needs of students of color and teacher development.

All of the interviews were conducted by the researcher and took place in his private school office. These interviews were recorded and transcribed into a printed document. The printed document was provided for participant review to assure
accuracy. All audio recordings and documents related to the interviews were stored in a locked cabinet within the principal’s office for the duration of the study.

**Instrument #2 - Teacher reflective journaling**

Study participants were provided with reflective journal prompts at the mid-program point. Teacher reflective journaling provided the researcher with insights into the participants’ understanding and attitudes related to culturally responsive teaching through the first half of the program. These journals were collected by the researcher and were stored in a locked cabinet within the principal’s office.

**Instrument #3 - Field notes**

Field notes can potentially provide a wealth of data for the researcher. Field notes and audio recordings from group meetings were collected and transcribed following each monthly program meeting. Merriam stresses the importance of the researcher including his or her own “feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, and working hypotheses” (Merriam, 1998, p. 106) within their field notes. While the factual information related to each meeting (attendance, agenda, etc.) was detailed, the tool provides an opportunity to collect and engage in a preliminary analysis of data (Merriam, 1998).

Field notes include observations made by the researcher on an ongoing basis. LeCompte and Preissele (1993) write of observational data as “the data that begins to emerge as the participant observer interacts in the daily flow of events and activities, and the intuitive reactions and hunches that participant observers experience as all these
factors come together” (p.200). All field notes and audio recordings were stored in a securely locked cabinet in the researcher’s school office for the duration of the study.

The collection of data through the use of an array of sources (semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and field notes) and methods triangulates data. Triangulation establishes validity through “the use of multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). Merriam cites the researcher’s ability to be embedded within the context of the phenomenon being studied as a central reason for internal validity being a definitive strength of qualitative research.

**Pilot Test**

Merriam (1998) highly recommends the ruthless review and refinement of interview questions. In an effort to create interview questions that are most effective, the researcher utilized a pilot test as well as instrument review by peer researchers and experts. Interview questions were also subjected to peer and expert review. Fellow researchers in the same doctoral program were asked to review the instrument and provide feedback for improvement. Experts, in the form of professors and formal mentors at a top-tier graduate school of education were also asked to assess the proposed questions. In addition, a pilot test of the pre-project interview questions was given to three teachers at Buchanan Middle School who are not study participants.
Pilot participants were interviewed and then were asked to provide feedback to the researcher about the questions.

**Methods of Data Analysis**

Data analysis involves making sense out of the data collected. According to Merriam, to make sense out of data, a researcher must engage in “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). These actions result in the findings of the study being produced.

Findings can be in the form of organized descriptive accounts, themes, or categories that cut across the data. Each of these forms reflects different analytical levels, ranging from dealing with the concrete in simple description to high-level abstractions in theory construction (p. 178).

The researcher constructed categories and themes that documented any recurring patterns throughout the study. Data analysis was designed to capture themes and categories within the data collected. These categories and themes are “concepts indicated by the data (and not the data itself)….In short, conceptual categories and properties have a life apart from the evidence that gave rise to them” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p. 36).
The researcher organized collected data from the semi-structured interviews and reflective journals to best create an understanding of the patterns and themes comprising the phenomenon being studied. The construction of categories and themes was purposeful and involved an analysis simultaneously with data collection. Merriam (1998) writes that the final product of a qualitative study is shaped by the data that is collected and the ongoing analysis that accompanies the entire process (p. 162).

The researcher developed a coding system that was based upon the patterns and themes that presented themselves through the examination of data. “Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Coding categories were developed to reflect the purpose of the research and the answers to the research questions. Codes were designed to relate to the individual research questions.

Data was analyzed chronologically and significant changes over time were noted. Over the course of the study and the analysis of data, new codes were introduced in response to developing themes and patterns.

**Formats for Reporting the Data**

Miles and Huberman (1994) write, “Words, especially organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader…than pages of summarized numbers” (p.1). According to Miles and Huberman (1994) extended and unreduced text alone is a weak form of display. They write, “it is hard on analysts because it is dispersed over many pages and is not
easy to see as a whole. It is sequential rather than simultaneous, making it difficult to look at two or three variables at once. It is usually poorly ordered, and it can get very bulky, monotonously overloading. Comparing several extended text is very challenging” (p. 91).

In an effort to overcome the challenges of displaying data through text alone, data displays were utilized. Merriam (1998) notes the need for the use of displays, writing that the proper use of displays enables the reader to “quickly grasp complexities in the analysis that would take an enormous amount of narrative writing to convey” (p. 233). Data displays are a visual format used for presenting information. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) data displays must be focused enough to display a full set of data in the same location, and be arranged systematically so that the research questions can be answered. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) a time-ordered matrix allows a researcher to display time and sequence of events related to a phenomenon.

Miles and Huberman (1994) write that the use of a time-ordered matrix allows the researcher the ability to help the reader understand general patterns of changes over time and points us back to the original field notes to seek for explanations. The explanations can then be tested by looking at other changes in the matrix to see if those changes fit into the proposed pattern (p. 121).

This study utilized a combination of text, matrices, and networks to report the data collected to best answer the three research questions. Matrices and networks provide the reader with an understanding of the interplay between the identified variables across the duration of the study.
Frameworks for Discussing the Findings

The findings will be discussed in reference to the study’s three research questions:

- What changes in teacher perceptions of collaboration and dialogue emerged in teachers as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
- What do teachers perceive to be the impact on their instructional practices as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
- What changes in perceptions of efficacy emerged among teachers as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations and threats to validity in this study. Limitations included sample size, participant bias, researcher bias, duration of the study, convenience, and testing.

Sample Size - The size of the sample, seven teachers in total, inhibits the potential for generalization of the findings beyond the one school involved in the study. Secondly, only two out of the three grades (sixth and eighth) were involved in this study. This was done for scheduling purposes and it significantly impacts the limited potential for generalization of the study.
Participant Bias - The researcher recognized that the study participants were aware of the fact that they were participating in the study. Due to the fact that the participants were aware of their own participation, there is a possibility that they behaved in ways that were not authentic because of their awareness. This phenomenon is known as the “Hawthorne effect” (Diaper, 1990). This limitation was addressed through the researchers repeated addresses to participants concerning the importance of participant honesty in their reflections.

Researcher Bias – The researcher, also serving as school principal, created and implemented all data collection instruments associated with the study. The researcher as participant and school leader will potentially present limitations and threats to validity of the study. Merriam (1998) writes of this potential threat to validity, “in qualitative research where the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, subjectivity and interaction are assumed” (p.103).

Duration of Study – The study took place over the course of one school year. The duration of the study limits the degree to which the findings can be generalized.

Convenience – The study sample was based in part on convenience related to time at which teachers could meet and location at Buchanan Middle School. Samples of convenience can produce information-poor rather than information-rich cases (Patton, 1990).
Testing – The impact of the pre-interviews on participants is a potentially significant study limitation. The study looked at issues that are highly sensitive in today’s culture. Thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes related to race and culture bring with them a high degree of sensitivity. Participants who were involved with peers in a program focused on these sensitive issues may have been inclined to share what they felt would be acceptable to others in the group as opposed to what they really believe and how they viewed the world around them. Merriam (1998) notes that participants who know they are being observed will “tend to behave in socially acceptable ways and present themselves in a favorable manner” (p.103).

The researcher utilized four strategies identified by Merriam (1998) to enhance internal validity. These strategies included triangulation, member checks, peer examination, and clarification of researcher’s biases. These strategies, utilized in the areas of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation, were utilized as a means to mitigate study limitations and the potential for bias.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction of the Study

This study focused on how teacher beliefs and instructional practices related to the instruction of students of color changed as a result of participation in a job-embedded, collaborative professional development experience.

The research questions for this study were:

- What changes in teacher perceptions of collaboration and dialogue emerged in teachers as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
- What do teachers perceive to be the impact on their instructional practices as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
- What changes in perceptions of efficacy emerged among teachers as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?

This chapter presents the findings of the study using three primary data sources: individual teacher interviews that took place prior to the start of the program (Appendix
#1), written reflective journal responses to specific prompts provided by the researcher at the mid-point of the program (Appendix #2), and individual teacher interviews that took place at the conclusion of the program (Appendix #3). A secondary data source is field notes from program session meetings, informal classroom observations, and conversations with teachers. Field notes will be interspersed and blended into primary tool findings and noted when added. The themes generated in a review of the data sources through use of these tools provided direction for coding and analysis of data.

Chapter four is organized to present the study findings both chronologically and thematically. Key sub-topics embedded within the research questions were used to present and organize findings within three primary chronological time periods: the pre-program period, through pre-program interviews; the mid-program period, through mid-program reflective journals; and the post-program period, through post-program interviews and field notes.

The chapter is organized as follows:

**Introduction of the Study** - Providing a context for the case and presents an overview of chapter four.

**Introduction of the Project Site** – Details about the school, student and teacher demographics are provided.
Overview of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program – A summary of the intended content of each of the nine meetings that comprised the program.

Study Participants – This section of the chapter provides a brief overview of the seven study participants, focusing on their grade level, field, teaching experience, and experience in terms of training around issues related to race and culture.

Research Design – This section of the chapter highlights the design of the study.

Findings Related to Research Question #1 – This section examines the findings related to the changes in teacher attitudes and understandings associated with collaboration and willingness to discuss issues related to race and culture.

Findings Related to Research Question #2 – This section examines the perception of impact on teacher instructional practices as a result of their participation in the culturally responsive teaching program.

Findings Related to Research Question #3 – This section examines the perceived impact on teacher efficacy related to teaching students of color.

Summary of Research Question Findings

Conclusion
Introduction to the Project Site

Buchanan Middle School is located in an Eastern Massachusetts town with over 65,000 residents. The town is considered a mixed-class community with a high level of ethnic and economic diversity. In the 2007-2008 school year, Buchanan Middle School housed approximately 770 students in total. This total included 280 sixth graders, 250 seventh graders, and 240 eighth grade students. The school was originally opened in 1969 as a grade seven and eight junior high school. Roughly ten years ago the district transitioned the school to a middle school structure along with two other schools in the district, resulting in the creation of three middle schools in the district, each serving students in grades six through eight. Each of the middle schools houses at least one substantially separate program that is unique to that school. Buchanan Middle School houses a program for roughly 90 students with significant learning disabilities, one school houses roughly 20 students with diagnosed emotional-behavioral disorders, and the third houses all English Language Learner Programs. This program placement results in Buchanan Middle School having fewer than one percent of the student body being Brazilian despite the fact that over 5% of the town is comprised of individuals of Brazilian decent.

The demographic make-up of the student body at Buchanan Middle School is as follows: 66% White, 22% Hispanic, 7% Asian, 4 % Black, and 1 % other. The racial makeup of the teaching staff at Buchanan Middle School is approximately 91% White, 5% Latino, and 4% Black. Roughly 33% of the student body qualifies for the free and
reduced lunch program. Table 4-1 illustrates the racial composition of the student body at Buchanan Middle School in comparison to the district and state.

Table 4-1  Enrollment by Race / Ethnicity (2007-2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of School</th>
<th>% of District</th>
<th>% of State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All students attending Buchanan Middle School are on academic ‘teams.’ Each team is established by grade level and includes teachers of the following subject areas: math, science, social studies, language arts, and special education. Teams of five teachers are responsible for the educational services to approximately 90 students. Team teachers are provided with one preparation block each day, as well as a team-planning block. Teachers are expected to meet four out of every six days during their
team planning blocks to coordinate team planning, conference with parents, and collaborate.

Individual preparation blocks as well as team planning blocks are each approximately fifty minutes in length every day.

**Overview of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program**

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was designed to provide two small groups of teachers with the opportunity to engage in collaborative professional development meetings that took place monthly throughout a school year. These meetings were scheduled during team planning times within the school day. Meetings generally lasted from fifty to sixty minutes. Each small group of teachers shared the same common planning time blocks so that no instructional time or personal preparation time was missed on account of meetings. One of the nine project meetings was held after school, during contractual hours.

The focus of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was intentionally designed to be very broad in terms of what was open for discussion within the context of group meetings. This was done in an effort to encourage participants to share, question, and express their thoughts to the greatest degree possible. While discussion was open to any and all comments and thoughts, it was the responsibility of the participant-researcher to acknowledge the value of teacher input and to maintain the group’s focus on issues related to race and culture. Often, questions and comments that
came up that were not necessarily focused on the topic of the group meeting, but were very worthy of further exploration, were addressed in follow up discussions and with literature that provided participants with information outside of the context of the group meetings. Two such examples came up in regards to religion and socio-economic realities that can lead to the marginalization of students. While these issues are very worthy of discussion, they were acknowledged within the context of group meetings and were followed-up in a more in-depth manner outside of the group meetings.

Readings were distributed to participating teachers one week prior to most meetings. These readings were fairly brief in nature (generally 5-15 pages) and were focused on topics that were to be discussed at upcoming meetings. The content of each planned meeting was as follows:

**Meeting #1 (October)**

An overview of the project and planned activities within the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program were discussed. A significant amount of time was dedicated to discussion about definitions and the breadth of what would be discussed within the context of the group. While it was acknowledged that the majority of our student-based discussions would be focused on issues associated with Latino and Black students, we would welcome any discussion about any issues related to race and culture.

Participants had read excerpts of Fred Newman’s *Student Engagement and Achievement in American Secondary Schools* (1992) prior to the initial meeting. This
reading was used to provide a foundation for discussion about how the group would define student achievement in the context of the program.

Socio-economics were also discussed as a potential theme that would arise within the program. While this theme would be pertinent to many discussions, it was agreed that the participant-researcher would use his best judgment in keeping the groups focused on maintaining the groups’ focus on issues related to race and culture.

Teachers and the researcher/participant had the opportunity to discuss their own personal experiences with race and engage in the provision of brief self-biographies.

Meeting #2 (November)

Continuation of self-biographies focused on experiences with race and culture. Prior to this meeting, participants were asked to read selected portions of Gloria Ladson-Billings’ *Dream Keepers*. Discussion focused on teacher beliefs about students of color, the creation and development of shared vocabulary within the groups.

Meeting #3 (December)

Prior to this meeting, participants were asked to read selected portions of *Other People’s Children*, by Lisa Delpit. Discussion focused on academic and social expectations of students of color.
Meeting #4 (January)

Prior to this meeting, participants were asked to read Peggy McIntosh’s article entitled *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. Discussion focused on white privilege and the history of educational segregation and integration in the United States.

Meeting #5 (February)

This meeting was again largely dedicated to the concept of white privilege. While originally only one meeting was to be dedicated to this concept. Teachers requested additional time to discuss the concept. The impact of socio-economics on students of all races and cultures was discussed.

Meeting #6 (March)

Prior to this meeting, participants were asked to read portions of Geneva Gay’s book entitled *Culturally Responsive Teaching*. Five seventh grade Latina girls spoke with the Culturally Responsive Teaching groups during this meeting. Students were initially engaged in a series of guiding questions by the researcher/participant and then participants asked the students questions. The focus of this meeting was on the cultural and racial experiences of students of color at Buchanan Middle School and instructional strategies and approaches that most significantly benefited and limited their achievement and sense of empowerment.
Meeting #7 (April)

Prior to this meeting, participants were asked to read other portions of Geneva Gay’s book entitled *Culturally Responsive Teaching*. An eighth grade, Black, male student attended meeting #7 and spoke about his experiences as a Black male at Buchanan Middle School. This student provided a unique viewpoint in that he was a student of color, participated in the district’s gifted and talented program, and reported that he struggled socially with pressure to join gangs in his community. This student spoke to his educational experience at Buchanan Middle School, the factors benefiting his achievement, and those factors that limited his progress.

Meeting #8 (May)

There was no assigned reading prior to this meeting. A Latina teacher at Buchanan Middle School who also is a parent of two students of color who attended Buchanan Middle School attended meeting #8 to speak to her experiences racially as a parent and her insights into teaching as a teacher of color. This meeting was designed to focus on an open dialogue between participating teachers and the parent/teacher of color.

Meeting #9 (June)

There was no assigned reading prior to this meeting. This meeting summarized the experiences of the program and concluded with a discussion about future implications of what had been learned. Teachers also discussed plans for incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices into their classrooms in the coming year.
Design of the Study

This qualitative case study was designed to describe and assess a program in which teachers participated collaboratively in an exploration of culturally responsive teaching. The impact that participation in this program had on teacher attitudes, understandings, and practices related to students of color will be analyzed through use of a flexible and inductive approach. This type of approach allowed for a close review of the professional development system under study. The system under study involved two small groups of teachers, one made up of sixth grade teachers and the other made up of eighth grade teachers. While each group met at separate times during the school day, the content of the group meetings, and the readings done as part of the project, were identical.

The study took place during the 2007-2008 school year. The project meetings took place on a monthly basis between October 2007 and June 2008. The sources for data in this chapter include pre-project teacher interviews, reflection journals, field notes, and final teacher interviews. All interviews and most project meetings were recorded and transcribed.
Findings Related to Research Question #1

What changes in perceptions of collaboration and dialogue emerged in teachers as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?

To gain a greater understanding of teacher attitudes and understandings about their practice related to students of color, participating teachers were asked questions related to their perceptions of collaboration and their willingness to engage in dialogue focused on issues associated with race and culture. Participants were presented with questions and prompts in pre-program interviews, in reflective journals at the mid-study mark, and in post-program interviews at the conclusion of the program.

The researcher looked for common threads, findings, and connections that shed light on teacher changes in teacher perceptions related to collaboration and dialogue that resulted from participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program.

The fact that the researcher was the school principal and primary supervisor of all participating teachers may have impacted the responses provided. The somewhat delicate nature of the conversations regarding beliefs associated with race and culture may have also impacted participant responses. Given that pre-program interviews were, in many cases, the first time the researcher had ever engaged in a one-to-one conversation with each participant that focused on race and culture may have also affected responses.
Pre-Program Interviews

In pre-program interviews, participating teachers were asked what collaboration looks like in practice at Buchanan Middle School, and how collaboration has impacted their teaching. While the responses varied, it was clear that collaboration was limited in occurrence and effectiveness. Teachers made the following observations about their collaborative experiences:

- Sometimes I feel we don’t have enough time to talk about a certain kid or we just notice one day that a kid is doing the same thing in all of our classes and we didn’t catch it until the end of the day…that’s just the feeling of middle school.

- Outside of the classroom, teachers do the best job they can try to have an understanding about students they have in common, what can they do to try to help the child who is doing poorly? It doesn’t always transfer into the classroom though. You know, there is not a lot of co-teaching going on so collaboration is often rushed and it seems to be a little bit more surface level rather than be in depth.

One teacher spoke of collaboration being impacted by the relationships that exists with peers:

- I think it is a more positive thing when the teachers like each other, I think when its forced, which it is a lot I here, I think the result isn’t as effective as if teachers are collaborating with their friends.
None of the participating teachers cited participation in collaborative experiences that were ongoing, rich, and deep. The most cited limitation was a lack of time. In terms of the impact of teacher collaboration on teaching practices, the majority of responses focused on teacher teams collaborating in response to individual student issues, and teachers collaborating with other teachers in the same subject area around curriculum and planning issues. In general, when asked if teachers felt that the somewhat limited collaborative experiences they engaged in had a positive impact on teaching practices, the responses reflected positive beliefs:

- I think I have got a lot of good ideas from other teachers. I have done a lot with social studies teachers this year. With the current unit we are doing, it has actually helped me because I haven’t planned as much and it has brought me a lot of new ideas that I have liked.

- In my subject area, yes. Definitely for me, I like going over what I’ve done with other teachers and they can give me feedback. Together we improve that idea and discuss things they might have done in their classrooms. I can come up with an idea, we all can change it, modify it, and apply it to our own students.

- Yes, I don’t consider myself to be terribly creative. I can execute pretty well, but I don’t always have an easy time coming up with new ideas. Which isn’t really all that necessary as a teacher because there are so many ideas out there that you don’t really need to reinvent the wheel, but you know… I have talked to colleagues about how they introduce a new topic or something and then try to use those ideas.
• I think whenever you meet with a peer teacher and you talk about the way you do things, everyone has their own twist on something, I really feel it refreshes anything I have been doing and if it feels comfortable to my style of teaching I would definitely give it a shot or if a teacher says this worked really well, I would definitely give it a try, even if it was outside my comfort zone.

Pre-program interviews indicate that teachers viewed collaboration as being limited by time. This limitation contributed to a minimal depth of collaborative experiences. Despite this minimal depth of collaboration, each teacher cited opportunities that they had to test and discuss ideas related to instruction with fellow teachers and felt that doing so was beneficial to their practice.

In order to gain an understanding of teacher willingness to engage in discussions related to race and culture with peers, teachers were asked about their beliefs in both pre-program and post-program interviews. Pre-program interviews focused on prior experiences that participants had in discussing issues related to race and culture with fellow teachers. The great majority of responses indicated that these issues were rarely discussed with peers. Discussions with peers were largely limited to the topic being brought up indirectly in social settings, rarely were issues related to race and culture discussed in direct and meaningful ways. In general, teachers were uncomfortable discussing issues related to race and culture with peers as evidence by the following responses when asked about their willingness to discuss issues related to race and culture with their peers:
• We could have talked about it, but we didn’t. When it does come up you are very careful with it. We don’t talk about (racism) or fight it, but at the same time we embrace our diversity and talk about that.

This response was found to be very insightful. To the researcher it highlighted the views of a number of program participants prior to the start of the program. This view highlighted a pride in the diversity within the Buchanan Middle School and in individual classes, yet this pride was often coupled with a reluctance to discuss issues related to race and culture. Other teachers voiced similar beliefs in pre-program interviews:

• It is something right below the surface, always. You use code words like ‘we have a diverse group’, terms that mask what it is. No one ever says – ‘those black kids.’

• I am going to say not typically, on very rare instances we talk about race and culture. Through my schooling we have talked about it and I know a lot of the statistics talking about it, economically disadvantaged backgrounds have a tougher time in school, there are a lot of studies that prove it. Most of the discussion is surface level, nothing in detail, no.

Two participants expressed a general reluctance to discuss issues related to race and culture with peers, but did cite a slightly greater level of comfort in terms of discussing these issues with peers who they worked closely with:
I guess I discuss it to some degree with my teammates… regarding a language barrier with the family or a student … probably more socioeconomic than racial. I have heard the race card come up in conversations, but it’s not something I really talk about with people. In the lunch room maybe…

One participant stated that issues related to race and culture were discussed openly within her teaching team:

- Absolutely, at team meeting and at lunch time all the time. My experience with my team, even this year as well as with my old team and pretty much the culture of the school is about really trying to understand the cultural differences and really trying to address them when we can. Trying to smooth out the lines so there really aren’t racial lines and there aren’t cultural lines in the teaching. Making all the kids feel worthwhile no matter if they are green, polka dot or wherever they come from.

Pre-program interviews showed that teachers rarely engaged in meaningful conversations about race and culture with peers. Conversations that did take place were often in response to student issues that arose and were discussed in team meetings or over lunch. Substantive and meaningful conversations around issues related to race and culture were very rare in the experiences of the participating teachers.

In pre-program interviews, the degree to which teachers engaged in discussions with students about race and culture were examined. The majority of teachers stated that they did engage in very limited conversations with students about issues related to
race and culture prior to participating in the program, while one teacher spoke about race and culture openly with her classes. Typically these discussions with students were in reaction to the occurrence of holidays or issues of race and culture randomly arising in the context of classes. When asked in pre-program interviews if issues related to race and culture were discussed with students, the following responses were provided:

- Not with students, I have not had a discussion with students about race.
- Probably culture, but not necessarily race. I don’t think it is in a negative way; sometimes we might talk in the context in a classroom about how different cultures celebrate different holidays or something in a book.
- Occasionally, occasionally, it might come up with literature…
- No, not usually. Sometimes out of curriculum based ideas that come through the classroom we will talk about it.

One teacher said that she discussed issues related to race and culture with her students on a regular basis:

- Yeah, I think it comes up a lot with our students because I think the majority of our kids are Latino. Their culture and background directly affects how they perform here. The kids we have are very proud of where they are from, even if they are born here ...a lot of them identify more with their home country, maybe where their parents were born.
Pre-program interviews revealed that all but one teacher engaged in very minimal discussions with students about race and culture within their diverse classrooms. Each of these teachers spoke about these issues minimally with students, and only in response to class and curriculum occurrences that they felt necessitated discussions. One example noted in field notes involved a discussion regarding race and culture in the context of a discussion about World War II. Kristen cited an instance in class in which she was questioned about the treatment of the Japanese and this led to a discussion that was focused on race and culture.

*Mid-Program Reflection Journals*

Mid-program reflective journals showed that participating teachers were experiencing changes in the way in which they perceived the power of collaboration that was focused on one topic over a period of time. One participant wrote of the challenging, yet potentially powerful influence of a directed collaborative experience:

- Usually we meet about someone or something and then we do not go back to that topic for ages, often we never go back to it. This happens all the time at the beginning of the year, we meet about a new ‘thing’ and then we never hear about it again. This is different because we are meeting at certain times about one central topic, it is nice to know we are going to have one important topic to address over and over
Martha spoke to the finding that many of the participating teachers that found the scheduling of the program to be beneficial, “I liked it during the day. I think because the kids were around it was better, the way it was structured during the day made it more real for me.” All but one of the group sessions were embedded within the school day. Teachers used a period of time set aside for team meetings to participate (on days that teams were not scheduled to meet).

Three teachers expressed a sense that teachers were beginning to gain a certain level of comfort with one another within the context of group meetings, one spoke of the gradual easing of tensions and apprehension that accompanied sharing her thoughts on race and culture with peers, “It was a little awkward at first, especially jumping right into it with each of us speaking about our thoughts about race and racism. Once I realized that we were all in the same boat and nobody had all the answers or were doing all things correctly, it became a lot easier to relax and share.”

One teacher spoke of change that she was experiencing in terms of her comport level in speaking with students about issues related to race and culture. This teacher was very apprehensive and reluctant to speak with students of color in pre-program interviews. By the mid-program point, she wrote of an interaction that she had with students that she believed she would not have addressed prior to her participation in the program:

- Once so far this year I did speak to a student about race. I had a girl say ‘I am black’ and she wasn’t. She was white and I asked her to elaborate. She said that she was black and that she had some tan skin and dark hair. I said that when you refer to the term black you are saying African American and that you
should be cautious…it was easier to tackle that question than I thought it would be with her.

In terms of participating teachers speaking with peers around issues related to race and culture, the focus of responses regarded interactions with fellow participants. Teachers cited dialogue with participating peers as being ‘easier’ due to the shared experience and developing common vocabulary. Martha wrote of an increased ease in engaging in dialogue with fellow participants because of “the shared experience’ and the fact that ‘after the self-biographies we had all opened ourselves up to one another and had to trust the other teachers.” Generally teachers expressed a continued reluctance to speak with non-participating peers about issues related to race and culture.

**Post-Program Interviews and Field Notes**

Prior to the mid-program point, a portion of a group meeting was dedicated to discussion of the collaborative experience up to that point. Teachers voiced an appreciation for all of the different viewpoints that different teachers shared with the groups. Participating teachers laughed at how much easier to share and speak at meetings in comparison to initial meetings. When asked why this was, responses generally spoke to teachers not wanting to feel or sound inept and a fear of saying ‘the wrong thing.’
In post-project interviews, teachers were asked about their thoughts on the collaborative aspects of the program. As opposed to participating in a self-study or a single session workshop, participants had participated in the project for a full school year and had engaged in ongoing discussions focused on race and culture. Each participant reported positive feelings about participating in the program with peers.

Kristen reported that she found the small group setting and the chance to learn with and from other teachers very helpful:

- I think that it (the peer component) is really helpful, I think that doing these kinds of peer things is the way to go. In small groups, the way that we did it is more intimate; you are more willing to maybe share than if you were in an in-service kind of thing. I think working in small groups is important. Raising awareness is important. We could take classes...but teacher-to-teacher is always the best way to go. We learn more about each other this way, which I think is very important.

Martha echoed the sentiments of Kristen; she found that the collaboration gave her a deeper understanding of her peers:

- I think it was great to see peers enlightened by the experience and how personally they took everything. I think most of it was very comfortable, there was nothing I was dreading or fearing saying in front of others. There were a few parts that were a little uncomfortable, just people talking personally about their experiences and thoughts. The peer component certainly gave more insight into people I am working with in a good way, in a very, very good human way.
Henry spoke to the fact that he felt that in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program he had the opportunity to go beyond what he had typically associated with collaboration. The increase in depth and richness provided by the ongoing program allowed him to extend beyond what he had previously experienced in terms of collaboration:

- I don’t feel it (collaboration with peers) was difficult, I feel it was useful and it was well needed. I think very often (outside the program) you are talking about your average day, what’s going on, you don’t talk about these huge issues. They are so huge you don’t even open the door to them. I think that saying that this is an issue and we should be talking about it, keeping it open is very important. I think that bringing issues into the light and not covering or shrouding issues as if they are a bad secret is important. You can only help by being open and honest with people and that’s what we have been doing. We are trying to raise awareness and see where people are at.

Post-program interviews showed that participating teachers realized the importance of engaging in conversations related to race and culture with peers, felt a greater sense of confidence discussing this issue with peers, and believed it was easier to speak with other teachers who had participated in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Project compared to teachers who had not.

In the post-project interview, Henry spoke to the common language that was developed within the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program groups over the course
of the year, as well as the common understandings participants had developed through the shared experience:

- I definitely feel like the vernacular, or tools, to talk about race and culture were highlighted in the group itself and that makes it easier to talk about it. Since we were in the same CRT group it made it easier since we were on the same page. If you are talking to someone who was not in the group I think it is acceptable and totally okay, but the person on the other end would have to be willing to hear that.

When asked about changes in how she felt about speaking about these issues with her peers, Grace spoke about how her increased willingness and ability to engage in such discussions had changed in a positive manner as a result of her participation:

- Discussing these issues would not really be easier with peers…it would be different. I think I would feel more able to explain to people who may not have been a part of it, as to why we need to look at them (students of color) differently than we have been.

Each participant expressed a greater willingness to engage in discussions with peers about issues related to race and culture. This increased willingness was often coupled with a continued sense of caution in regards to having discussions about issues related to race and culture with people who did not participate in the program. Kristen spoke to this hesitancy very effectively:
• I think it depends on my relationship with the person (staff), yet having had some of the same articles and academic knowledge about the subject behind me, I might want to tell someone else about it and open up a discussion about it or extend a discussion about it with someone who has been through the program. In that sense yes, but as far as talking about race and discussing race, I am careful of that because it is such an emotional thing/topic. It would really depend on how comfortable with that person in particular in how far I think I could go.

The increased willingness to consider engagement in conversations with peers has the potential to have a powerful influence on an entire school staff. Henry talked of his efforts to speak with peers about race and culture and has concluded that these teacher-to-teacher discussions have the potential to be change levers within the school:

• These discussions are infecting the different populations of teachers at Buchanan. I had a great conversation with another teacher recently about white privilege and I was trying to explain it to her. I think those conversations are the key to change and I think we are on our way. I don’t know if it is going to radically change, but I do think we are moving forward.

Two teachers spoke to feeling that ‘not knowing exactly what was politically correct to say at all times was okay’ as a result of their participation in the group meetings, and that the importance of engaging in meaningful conversation about the topic outweighed
the risk of saying something that seemed ‘wrong.’ In her post-project interview, Martha spoke to this realization:

- I think that now feeling that it is okay not to know exactly how or what to say about race and culture is liberating. Thinking back to the first interview that I had with you, I think I was concerned in regards to saying the ‘right’ thing, but now I don’t feel that way. I feel that I am now being real and I have seen improvement in my classroom and within myself because of it.

In contrast to the somewhat uniform finding that participating teachers felt a greater sense of comfort, willingness, and desire to speak with fellow teachers about issues related to race and culture, the willingness to do so with students was significantly weaker. When asked in her post-interview how Gloria felt about talking to students about race and culture after participating in the program, she responded:

- I am not sure on that one. I don’t know how to approach that to be honest with you. You don’t want to turn the kids off, you don’t want them to think that ‘she is singling me out,’ so I honestly don’t know how to approach it from a teacher/student standpoint. That is something I need to work on.

In Gloria’s case, this uncertainty reflected a significant development in terms of her personal recognition of this as a need, and as something that with further development she may feel comfortable engaging in. In Gloria’s pre-project interview she was asked about her willingness to talk about race and culture with her students and she felt at that time that such discussions should be engaged in by guidance counselors:
• No I don’t talk about it. I mean usually when it comes to that situation it is usually guidance that talks to them. That’s all I can think of.

Gloria’s uncertainty reflects a significant change in her thinking, she clearly understands the importance of being able and willing to speak with students about race and has demonstrated a desire to improve in this area.

Generally, teachers felt that they could discuss race and culture more easily with students after participating in the program, yet the majority had not developed a comfort level and natural context for such discussions. The majority of participants expressed that they are more comfortable talking about these issues and still do so in reaction to issues arising in class. When Kristen was asked if she felt more comfortable speaking with her students about race and culture, she said:

• Yeah, I think so. I think in my classes if something that comes up that is race related I will acknowledge it in a discussion and I will say as much historically as I know about it and fill in the spaces for them. I will say that ‘this is what I know and this is from me, from my perspective so you have to understand that’.

Field notes indicate that as the program progressed, teachers expressed feeling more comfortable discussing topics associated with race and culture with others. The greatest degree of comfort involved other participating teachers; other staff to a lesser degree, and the smallest degree to which participating teachers felt more comfortable was talking with students about race and culture. During two meetings it was noted that teachers expressed uncertainty as to when, and in what context, they should
proactively bring up discussions related to race and culture. Teachers also expressed an uncertainty as to how different students would react to such a potentially emotional and difficult topic as well as 'where' in the curriculum such a topic fit best.

**Summary of Major Findings Related to Question #1**

*What changes in teacher perceptions of collaboration and dialogue emerged in teachers as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?*

Study findings, revealed through use of pre-program interviews, mid-program reflective journal entries, post-program interviews, and field notes, showed that teachers who participated in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Project each experienced changes in their attitudes and understandings about collaboration and their willingness to engage in dialogue with both peers and students related to race and culture. Common themes associated with changes in attitudes and understanding emerged in teachers as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program.

Prior to participating in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, all participating teachers had participated in a wide array of collaborative learning experiences with peers at Buchanan Middle School. Teachers cited typical collaborative experiences as being comprised of daily interactions they had with fellow teachers on
their teaching teams and also with teachers who were friends with whom they may have discussed students or teaching with socially, often times before school, during lunches, and after school. Teachers found that these collaborative experiences focused on day-to-day, student, and ‘routine’ issues. These experiences took place on an ongoing basis, but lacked depth and tended not to focus on substantial issues such as those related to race and culture. The other central mechanism for teacher collaboration took place on days set aside for professional development work, often with teachers whom they did not know from other schools in Jackson, or from different grade levels at Buchanan Middle School.

These experiences generally involved more significant topics, yet rarely involved discussions related to race and culture. While these workshop, or mini-class sessions, were typically more in-depth in nature, the fact that people were not familiar with one another in most cases, and that they were not ongoing in nature, played a role in minimizing perceived effectiveness.

Teachers participating in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program expressed the belief that ongoing discussions with fellow teachers provided the opportunity to engage in ongoing, rich conversations. Teachers cited the significant amount of time dedicated to the actual program meetings, readings and informal discussions as being important in the collaborative process. This type of collaboration was identified as significantly different in comparison to ‘typical’ collaboration taking place at Buchanan Middle School. The collaborative nature of the program allowed teachers to learn from others and to experience and benefit from witnessing the professional growth of their peers.
In regards to teacher willingness to speak to peers about issues related to race and culture, findings show a substantial degree of growth. The majority of teachers felt that their participation in the program increased their willingness and desire to discuss these challenging issues with other teachers. Prior to the start of the program, discussions between participating teachers and other teachers about issues related to race and culture were virtually non-existent. Findings showed that while teachers were proud of the diversity seen within the school and their classrooms, they were apprehensive about addressing issues related to diversity and consciously avoided these discussions with peers.

Findings show that teachers developed a realization of the importance of dialogue with peers around issues related to race and culture. Teachers demonstrated a greater sense of willingness to discuss these issues with all peers. They did express a greater comfort level in terms of engaging in discussions on these topics with fellow program participants than with peers who did not participate in the program. This finding harkens back to a common vocabulary that had emerged over the course of the program, as well as a sense that participants had a shared experience and saw things differently than those who did not participate in the program. This finding directly ties to the belief that teachers expressed in terms of feeling that through participation in the program they realized that it was okay not to know how to say what they were feeling and not to necessarily have ‘the answers’ when discussing these complex and often sensitive issues with peers.

Findings show that participating teachers all felt more comfortable and willing to speak with students about race and culture as a result of their participation in the
program. Teachers expressed a struggle to find appropriate times to engage in such discussions with their students. In part, this struggle was explained by an existing sense of pressure to maintain a focus on the provided curriculum. While teachers generally exhibited a greater level of comfort discussing issues related to race and culture with students, they preferred to speak about these topics if they were brought up by students or came up within the context of instruction within classes. In general, findings showed that teachers possessed a greater willingness and comfort level in speaking with peers about race and culture than with students as a result of their participation.

Teacher attitudes towards collaboration with peers and willingness and desire to engage in discussions concerning race and culture were impacted by participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program.

Findings Related to Research Question #2

What do teachers perceive to be the impact on their instructional practices as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?

While the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was designed to increase teacher awareness and thinking around instructional practices related to race and culture, the focus was not specifically on increasing the frequency of specific teaching strategies designed to best meet the needs of students of color. Despite the focus of the program being on the development of teacher thinking, it was anticipated that
instructional practices might be impacted. The perceived impact on the instructional practices of teachers was analyzed chronologically with participating teachers. Questions related to varying aspects of changes in instruction were provided in pre-project interviews, mid-study reflective journals, post-project interviews, and were also recorded in researcher field notes.

Three central themes were focused upon in an effort to develop an understanding of teacher perceptions and thinking around instruction provided to students of color; accommodating for diverse learners, the challenges faced when attempting to accommodate, and an understanding of the factors that teachers perceive as affecting the learning of many students of color.

**Pre-Program Interviews**

In pre-program interviews, participating teachers cited few ways in which they accommodated their instruction to maximize the inclusion and learning of students of color. Two of the teachers cited efforts that involved selecting literature that represented a multicultural perspective, and one teacher spoke of the need to consistently weave culture and race into instruction. Their responses were as follows:

Kristen spoke to her efforts to match reading selection with the cultural backgrounds of students in her classroom, “I try to pick literature based on including kids or including characters from different backgrounds. I think with projects I give them more leeway to include things from their culture.” This response and others like it
demonstrated that some participating teachers were cognizant of the need to teach to and through student backgrounds and cultures to maximize engagement and learning.

Madeline demonstrated a conscious effort to expand on discussion related to race and culture at every opportunity with her students. Her conscious effort to discuss race and culture in class was done so with the intent of building connection and understanding between students. Madeline stated, “Whenever we are doing something in class and someone brings up something in class that relates to their life… that relates even a little bit to what we are talking about, I go with it even if it’s a tangent just so that people become more aware of each others backgrounds.”

The great majority of teacher participants, when asked about past experience in accommodating instruction for students of color, indicated that they did little to no accommodating for students of color within their classrooms:

- Hmmm… the only thing I can think of to accommodate, in all of my problems I try to use names from students from all kinds of different backgrounds
- Probably not, other than if I know that somebody’s parents don’t speak English… I might try harder to make sure that they understand what is expected so that I don’t have to go to the parent.

These two responses indicated a very low level of awareness of the role that culture plays in learning. Other participants cited provisioning of project materials as the central way in which they accommodate for diverse learners in their classrooms. Gloria spoke of this provisioning for her students of color in science classes, “On my independent study projects I try to make it so that they do not have to go out and buy a
whole bunch of things because everyone cannot afford it. I give them idea and I tell them the point is not to spend lots of money. That can be cultural and it’s socioeconomic. That’s the only thing I can think of.”

While this teacher demonstrated a minimal understanding of the importance of accommodating instruction in the classroom, clearly an intentional effort was being made to help students succeed at the most basic level. Other participants approached the incorporation very differently, actually working to avoid bringing cultural backgrounds into their classroom. When asked about making accommodations to help maximize student growth, one teacher responded:

- I don’t usually think about it like that, I think I would say no, I am pretty sure I would say no… to be honest with you a lot of times, I don’t think about culture until the year progresses and you get to know more and more about kids backgrounds, but many times you can get through the year without really knowing what their cultural background is.

This response could be viewed as that of a teacher who does not appreciate the diversity within their classroom and school. That could not be further from the truth however. In her pre-program interview, this teacher was asked about her thoughts associated with teaching a racially and culturally diverse student group. This teacher responded, “I think it makes my life well rounded and I think it gives me access to knowing what the world is like really and what is very real for my kids and what is going on in their lives. I feel very fortunate to be able to know kids from as many
different areas of the world as we have here.” This teacher referred to the chance to work with such diversity in her classroom as a “really, really positive thing.”

The apparent dichotomy between a conscious decision to keep discussion and acknowledgement of cultural differences out of the classroom, and what appeared to be an earnest appreciation of student diversity, was explored further with this teacher.

The teacher stated that she felt very comfortable exploring and discussing race and culture with individual students on a regular basis. This teacher was operating from the mindset that students of color would feel singled out and possibly embarrassed if race and culture was brought up to the class as a whole. The exception to this was when race and culture came up when reading text or watching historical films. When asked why that discussion in historical context was welcomed, while other such discussions out of historical context were not, this teacher spoke again to being very cautious about bringing up such sensitive issues with students and limiting the chances of her making any student feel uncomfortable in her class.

Those teachers who did provide accommodations to their students of color were asked in pre-project interviews about the difficulties faced in providing those accommodations. Teacher responses focused on reading issues, the provision of resources, and understanding of different cultures and backgrounds.

One teacher spoke to the achievement gap between students of color and White students. She spoke to this gap in the context of reading ability and her struggle to help students catch up with limited time available:

• The reading levels, bringing them up to speed with reading, time – it’s the time, it is really truly the time, the vocabulary is challenging ...they can’t do it
independently, so you have to use class time and that's what is difficult.

Figuring out how to do the program and adapt the program to all the different levels and some of what you would like to be able to happen independently, they can’t do, so you have to use the precious little class time.

Another teacher spoke to the resource of knowledge and understanding as a barrier to providing accommodations that maximize the learning of students of color in the classroom. This teacher cited her own lack of cultural understanding along with that of teacher aides, fellow teachers, and teaching assistants in the classroom as a lacking resource:

- Resources are an issue, I think my own personal knowledge about their countries and backgrounds and I think that other adults in the classroom, their sensitivity, and their awareness of different cultures is an issue.

Pre-program interviews focused on gathering the thoughts of participants related to the achievement gap. Questions (Appendix # 1) related to the achievement gap were asked in an effort to gain greater insight into participant beliefs regarding the connection between classroom instruction and the academic achievement of students of color. Every participating teacher recognized the existence of the achievement gap and expressed a belief that it existed at Buchanan Middle School. In regards to driving forces behind this achievement gap, responses ranged, with focus given to language barriers, economic disparity, and a lack of family support.
One teacher spoke to language barriers as being a central contributor to the achievement gap between students of color and White students. This eighth grade teacher expressed frustration with the difficulties that her students experienced and felt that more should be done earlier in the life of each student:

- I guess I wish there was more done for the kids that seem to be struggling with language barriers, I wish that more time was spent with them in early grades, especially maybe in sixth grade (I teach 8th). It seems like those kinds of struggles should be behind them by that time and sometimes it can be frustrating to think that they are still struggling with understanding meaning of some vocabulary words.

Socio-economic issues were also viewed by teachers as contributors to the achievement gap. One special educator spoke to the fact that her classes were heavily populated by students of color who are also predominantly from low socio-economic families:

- “I do see a gap, if you look at people on IEP’s (Individualized Education Plans) they are not from affluent backgrounds. They are typically either working class blue collar, or lower …it is one of those things where you kind of have to look at it and go huh? I wonder why that is? I wonder why there aren’t lots of you know, rich wealthy kids who are being diagnosed with special education needs.

Two teachers viewed a lack of parental involvement on the part of students of color as central to the existence of the achievement gap. This lack of involvement was stated as not resulting from a lack of parental caring, rather as a result of economics:
I know it (the achievement gap) exists, I see it too. I think that a big part of student success is their family involvement in their education. I think it’s the most important factor. I think in Jackson there are a lot of recent immigrants who are working a lot and trying to make ends meet and they don’t necessarily put the time into their kid’s education that the kids really need. I think in some of those cases it is the cause.

Madeline also recognized the role of socio-economic status in contributing to the achievement gap and spoke to the impact of socio-economic status on students long before they enter middle school:

- I think it all starts from birth and that it’s hard…more resources need to be driven in the first five years of the child’s life. I don’t care if they say they have to wait…if they aren’t caught up in third grade …if they aren’t caught up in kindergarten, they aren’t catching up. Society as a whole is ridiculously unfair with resources. People have to fight for everything if they are from poor…backgrounds, daycare, healthcare, you name it. It’s not fair, depending on the community you live in. I don’t see that changing, but hopefully it will.

Another teacher viewed the achievement gap as being driven by both socio-economic issues, as well as some students of color failing to value education. In her pre-project interview she said, “I see a gap between lower socio-economic students and well to do students. I still see that there are some Hispanic students performing as well
as their other peers and I also see a drop where some students don’t think of school as important.”

This teacher cited the fact that her beliefs as to what she perceives to be the reasons behind the achievement gap, are not universal and that some students of color are succeeding in her classes.

**Mid-Program Reflection Journals**

Mid-program reflective journal entries showed that numerous teachers became aware of the importance of instructional approaches within the classroom that can maximize the learning of students of color. One common finding was that teachers must proactively work to develop connections and relationships with students of color. Martha found that she needed to become more purposeful in terms of developing informal relationships before and after classes:

- I now try to connect with my students of color and those who have cultural/language differences after they leave my class and before they leave for the day, to re-explain or be sure their understanding is there, even to just compliment them on a participation contribution they made that day.

Like Martha, Grace has developed a desire to seek out students and work to connect with them in a supportive and positive manner:
• It has made me start to become more proactive with these students, inviting them to spend time with me after school so I can help them. I look forward to beginning a new school year with this in mind.

By the mid-point of the study, Teresa was experimenting with the concept of developing closer connections with her students of color. She put this into practice by developing an informal mentoring system with one student to start with. Reflective journal responses show that Teresa’s mentoring did result in a perception of greater student success as well as Teresa realizing the importance and power of personal relationships with her students of color. In her own words, she said, “I wanted to develop a personal plan for him (the student) to feel that he has someone he can count on in the school building. This student and myself have had lunch together, do before and after school check ins, and he feels comfortable coming to me during certain blocks during the day to get help in his other subjects. He was very proud of his poetry project that we worked on together and I couldn’t have been any happier when he turned in a great project on time. All it took was a little extra time, and investment in him.

Currently, he is working on a school improvement activity and he is very proud of this!” Teresa clearly realized the need to proactively work on developing closer, more supportive relationships with students of color and was able to put these beliefs and understandings into practice.

At the mid-point of the program, every participating teacher expressed that they were engaged in thinking about ways in which they will change their instructional practices within their classroom. Madeline, Kristen, and Gloria each expressed a desire
to develop greater levels of dialogue in their classrooms around issues of race and to increase participation and a sense of belonging in their classes.

Madeline said “I would like to work on having more important conversations in my classroom about race”. Kristen also focused on fostering purposeful classroom conversations that took into account race, “I would like to build into our classrooms conversations more opportunities for dialogue between students about different approaches.” As a result of her participation up to that point, Grace said that, “I feel I can bring more into the classroom. I can make students of color more comfortable and make students of non-color realize that students of color can contribute a great deal of knowledge to the classroom.” These responses indicated a realization of the importance of conversation about race in the classroom setting and the crucial role that the teacher plays in making these conversations a reality.

In his mid-program reflective journal, Henry wrote of his new awareness of the level of casual racism taking place around him on a daily basis: “From participation in our CRT groups, I was floored by the amount of casual racism that they (students of color) experience on a daily basis, and I have tried to keep my eyes out for it.” Henry’s comments indicate the emergence of both anti-racist thinking and action.

Some teachers extended beyond changing the way in which they thought about changes in instruction that needed to be made, and were already putting instructional changes into place.

Martha modified the way in which she approached her daily instruction. She expressed a newfound attitude towards meeting the needs of her students of color. When asked about any changes in her instructional practices, Martha responded, “I
have incorporated steps into my every day teaching to think about who has been reached in my instruction and why some are getting it and some may not be. One on one conversations with those students has been my first step. In doing so, I am getting a better idea of how and where they will apply my instruction to their learning, where will it ‘happen’ at home, who will help if needed?”

Gloria, one of the participating science teachers, instituted changes at the program mid-point around her grouping practices within her classroom. Field notes indicate that Gloria expressed a great deal of surprise at comments that students made when speaking with the Culturally Responsive Teaching meetings. Her surprise and questions to the students focused on dynamics between students during cooperative work group sessions. At the meeting, two students discussed the fact that they felt they were often marginalized within student groups when doing cooperative work in class. Students reported that they are sometimes given the impression that “the White kids will insist on doing all the work and they expect us to just sit there, they don’t think we can help.” Gloria expressed surprise at comments like this both in the meeting and in individual conversations following the meeting. As a result, Gloria reported that, “I now listen more effectively to my student’s informal conversations in class. What are white students and students of color expressing about their choices of group partners? How can I do a better job making all kids feel good about their contributions to a group or project?”
Post-Program Interviews and Field Notes

In post-program interviews, each participating teacher said that they had made changes to their instruction and six out of the seven teachers spoke directly to how they were looking forward to starting the following school year with plans for the incorporation of accommodating strategies in mind. In discussing changes in instructional practices that resulted from participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, teachers provided the researcher with a range of examples. These included changes in assignments, inserting culturally relevant literature and specific examples (i.e. historical figures) into the existing curriculum, and conducting more regular check-ins with students.

Martha expressed a variety of ways in which she has changed her instructional practices; the most profound for her was in the way in which she delivered and thought about assignments for students, “I think in terms of giving assignments, that has been the biggest change for me. It is clarifying some things, not just writing the assignments on the board. If things are complicated, I make sure I know how every student is going to go about doing the work. If there is another need to fill in order for them to find success, I identify that need and make sure I address it. That is what I am doing now.”

Field notes revealed ongoing discussions that show that Martha had given a great deal of thought to the way in which her students of color viewed assignments that she had been giving out, she had recognized the need to make sure that she was differentiating and accommodating to meet the learning needs of all of her students.
The way in which she did this was “to develop deeper relationships with students and that led to students being much more comfortable letting me know what they did understand and what they didn’t. They feel very safe telling me that, and I don’t think that was the case before.”

While Martha spoke directly to student assignments, follow up discussions revealed that at its foundation, this change in instructional practice was focused more on a change in the development and fostering of meaningful relationships with students than on changing the way assignments were given out. Gloria also spoke about changes in her relationships with students, cited a change in the frequency of informal ‘check-ins’ with her students, and also discussed the development of stronger and deeper relationships with her students of color.

The changes in instructional practices that Henry put into place were focused on weaving cultural information into the existing science curriculum that he engaged in with students. When Henry was asked about these changes, he said, “I love the idea of incorporating a series focusing on minorities that teach science. What I want to make sure I am not doing is taking it out only once a year during multi-cultural day and just that one-day talking about it… I think that introducing it in little pockets here and there is very important…”

Field notes from meetings that involved students and the teacher/parent involved the greatest amount of discussion around the need for instructional practices to be modified to meet the needs of students of color in the classroom. Teachers were highly reflective on the way in which they needed to view the learning experiences of the students in their classrooms. Martha spoke directly to this newly acquired
awareness, saying “It is going to take some time for me to figure out how to make the changes I need to make in the classroom, but I know whatever changes I make will make a big difference.” While examples of practices that may be applied were discussed, the focus during these meetings was largely on the changes in teacher thinking and the developing awareness of how students in the classroom may be receiving and viewing instruction provided to them. Henry spoke about the realization that while he believed he needed to change some instructional strategies, it was an awareness of needs and deep relationships that would make the biggest difference in his instruction, “taking an invested interest in those students (of color), it does two things: one, it makes them feel that their culture is validated and important, the second thing is that it creates that bond in that we shared something that was personal and at the same time we know something about each other if we hadn’t shared it.”
Summary of Major Findings Related to Question #2

What do teachers perceive to be the impact on their instructional practices as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?

The instructional practices of each participating teacher were impacted through their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. While the emphasis of the program was on developing changes in attitudes and beliefs, teachers did change their instructional practices in tandem with their changing beliefs and attitudes.

Findings show that prior to the start of the program, participating teachers provided few instructional accommodations to students of color in their classrooms. Accommodations that were utilized took shape in the form of providing supplies to students and selecting texts for students because they may be of interest to them. Some teachers treated all students in their classes exactly the same and believed that doing otherwise would potentially be harmful to students of color.

The teachers who did acknowledge, and put into practice, the need for strategies to maximize the learning of students of color focused on resources in the form of time needed to provide remediation to students and also to resources in the form of cultural understanding and sensitivity of the staff. Thinking of challenges in the form of cultural understanding and sensitivity as a resource was seen as very interesting and unique by this researcher. In essence, the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program is
an experience designed specifically to increase that resource level at Buchanan Middle School.

In all of the responses provided to pre-project questioning about beliefs related to the achievement gap, no response cited teacher instruction as playing a role in the existence of the achievement gap. The overwhelming beliefs of the participating teachers focused on forces outside of school (i.e. socio-economic status and language barriers) playing out in schools in the form of students being over referred into special education, not receiving enough help at school or at home, and students developing poor attitudes towards their education.

Findings from mid-program reflections demonstrated that teachers were affected by their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program as evidenced by changes in instruction. Participating teacher reflections showed that there was development of understanding of the importance of race and culture in their classrooms and teachers were also beginning to consciously apply the changes in their thinking into their classrooms. Teachers were changing the proactive ways in which they developed connections and relationships with their students, were beginning to create opportunities to discuss issues related to race and culture in their classrooms, were reconsidering ways in which they grouped students in classes, and had begun to actively look for and address racism within the classroom and school setting.

Findings from post-program interviews and field notes showed that teacher perception of growth in terms of utilizing instructional practices that were intended to increase the learning of students of color in their classroom continued to increase between the mid-program point and the conclusion of the study. At the mid-program
point teachers noted particular growth in terms of the way in which they proactively developed relationships with students of color, and ways in which they were attempting to apply their changes in thinking through their instructional practices. At the conclusion of the program, teachers noted increased growth in terms of more specific changes in instructional practices.

Teachers cited changes in the way in which they crafted and explained assignments, created instructional opportunities to highlight issues related to race and culture, and increased the frequency of ‘check-ins’ with students. These findings indicate that as teachers progressed through the program they initially cited changes in their thinking around instruction and over time have been able to apply that thinking in specific ways within their classrooms.

**Findings Related to Research Question #3**

*What changes in perceptions of efficacy emerged among teachers as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?*

Teacher perceptions of efficacy are dictated by their beliefs in others, as well as their beliefs in their own ability to meet the needs of others. The findings related to the exploration of the development of teacher efficacy as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program will be shared in this section through an analysis of teacher beliefs over the course of their participation in the program.
Teacher beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices related to students of color will be explored in an effort to uncover transformational changes that may have taken place as a result of participation.

Teacher beliefs in terms of their perceptions of preparedness to meet the learning needs of students of color as well as the development of teacher racial identity will be explored. An understanding of the development of teacher perceptions of their own racial identity development is crucial to an understanding of teacher efficacy. Shujaa (1995) contends that teachers must develop an understanding of themselves in order to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching. Shujaa believes that before teachers can infuse cultural responsiveness into content, teachers must focus on their understanding of who they are racially and culturally and how they have learned to view human beings who are racially and culturally different from themselves.

Following this analysis of pre-program findings, the transformational experiences of participating teachers related to both their thinking about students of color and of their racial selves, as well as their perceptions of preparedness to meet the learning needs of students of color, were examined through data provided in mid-program journal reflections, post-program interviews, and field notes.

The themes of preparedness, teacher beliefs in their own abilities, their own racial identity development, and their beliefs regarding students of color were explored with the intent of better understanding teacher thoughts regarding the presence of students of color in the classroom and the performance abilities of these students in the classroom. An understanding of teachers’ sense of preparedness to meet the learning needs of students of color along with an understanding of teacher perceptions of their own racial
identities provides an insight into teacher efficacy at the outset of this program and provides a baseline understanding of growth attained through participation in the program.

**Pre-Program Interviews**

In pre-project interviews, an understanding of the way in which teachers think about students of color was sought out. In an effort to gain a well-rounded understanding of teacher thinking and their perception of preparedness to meet the learning needs of students of color, participants were asked questions that pertained to perceptions of their sense of preparedness to meet the needs of students of color, as well as questions pertaining to perceptions of the academic abilities of students of color. In pre-program interviews, participants were asked if they had ever received formalized training/professional development around issues related to diversity. They were then asked if they felt they were prepared to teach a diverse student body. Table 4-2 illustrates the responses to both prompts by the different participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Have You Ever Received Formal Training in Terms of Teaching to a Diverse Student Body?</th>
<th>Do You Feel Prepared to Meet the Educational Needs of a Diverse Student Body?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>No, I don’t think so. I did do some ELL stuff, a couple of the mini courses.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>Really I haven’t, it is one of those things where I have done some things with diverse students in it but I have no diverse training whatsoever.</td>
<td>I believe as teacher I can meet the needs of any student, so it is one of those things where being diverse doesn’t mean that I can meet their needs and more or less. They are each individuals so you have to treat them as such. I am really big on treating individuals instead of the whole. What is good for the whole is not necessarily good for that one person. If you are pinpointing for individuals everything will work out. If you do that you are going to succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>I don’t think that I have.</td>
<td>I am not sure, I think in this school we are probably not even recognizing all the problems with some diverse students with things they are struggling with it seems like the largest cultural group would be our Latino / Hispanic population so we have a tendency to focus on that, but I may be missing other kids that also are struggling, but I am not recognizing that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristen</td>
<td>Understanding teaching and ELL courses.</td>
<td>I am not sure…even though I took the ELL training and did learn ...I think that no matter what kind of student you have in front of you, if you are doing best teaching practices you are going to help all of the ones in front of you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>If what I am doing now meets their needs, I think I am doing okay, but then again I could always use more. If I am not doing okay then I definitely need training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>I have taken 3 ELL courses</td>
<td>I think I am more prepared than other teachers but I don’t think I can always be as prepared as I need to be to be truly effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>In general, yes I do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4-2 illustrates the fact that none of the participating teachers believed that they were not prepared to meet the learning needs of students of color, while only two of the seven teachers stated that they did feel prepared. Five of the seven participants expressed uncertainty as to their preparedness. The two teachers who did express certainty as to their preparedness to meet the needs of students of color had no prior professional development/training around issues related to race and culture. The two teachers who had participated in more professional development/training experiences than all other participants both expressed uncertainty when asked if they felt prepared to meet the learning needs of students of color.

In pre-program interviews, participating teachers were asked if they believed that race and culture may have an impact on student learning. The responses were split among participants. Some of the teachers believed that there was no connection between race and culture and student learning.

- I don’t think the culture affects their learning or my teaching but I think, well…it’s not their culture itself, it’s that a lot of families are not on board.
- No, I don’t think that.

Other teachers believed that there was a connection between race and culture and learning:

- Sometimes there is a big cultural divide. The understanding of that is a key. Getting the background is important, if you know that information it doesn’t excuse it, but it does help explain it.
• No matter what culture it is, I think the prior, background knowledge they bring to the table directly affects a lot of what they do. It affects, reading, writing, thirst for knowledge, understanding idioms and general language that you use, noticing details. I think that’s huge.

Pre-program interviews showed that participating teachers were split as to their perceptions of the connection between race and culture and learning. There was general uniformity in terms of teachers believing that the diversity in their classrooms had a positive impact on their teaching. Initial interviews elicited very positive beliefs from teachers related to teaching a diverse student body. Each teacher stated to some degree that they believed that teaching such a diverse group of students was beneficial. Two teachers spoke to the existence of racial and cultural diversity as being different from what they had experienced previously in their teaching experiences, and that this difference was a perceived as positive:

• It is totally different from where I am from. I like it a lot.
• When I came to Buchanan I was nervous, I didn’t know what to expect. And I actually like it a lot more than where I was teaching before. I love it, my experience has been positive. I have actually learned a lot from working here about different cultures, where students are from, the importance of family for students from certain cultures, like their talking about their family members
Other teachers spoke to the presence of racial and cultural diversity at Buchanan as not only being positive, but also contributing to their instruction, experiences as teachers, and experiences as people:

- I think it enhances everything that you do, it gives you all the colors of the rainbow to work with. It is tricky sometimes to work with, you have to think and double think which I don’t always do to be honest. It enriches the experiences to me as a teacher, it stretches me and makes me a better person.
- I think it makes my life well rounded and I think it gives me access to knowing what the world is like really and what is very real for my kids and what is going on in their lives. I feel very fortunate to be able to know kids from as many different areas of the world as we have here.
- I kind of feel like multiculturalism is a benefit, I really do because everyone is coming from a different place and it’s one of those things we should look at as a benefit as opposed to a vice.

In pre-program interviews, teachers were asked about their beliefs related to the impact that diverse students had on the dynamics of their classrooms. The teachers were very much divided in their responses. Those who believed that the presence of diverse students did not affect the classroom dynamics believed that there was no impact at all:

- I don’t think that the presence of diverse students has altered the way that my classroom runs, no. I just think that it is just business as usual.
Um, I don’t know I don’t think so. I guess that we have such a good cross section that I just don’t think there would be any reason for it to impact what goes on in the classroom.

One teacher believed that the impact on classroom dynamics varied by year. When asked about the impact on classroom dynamics, this teacher spoke to student grouping and social subgroups that form among students:

- Overall I don’t think it’s as extreme this year. There have been years when the two-way (specialized Spanish program) kids have been grouped in two large groups so that their cultural difference permeated the classroom a little bit more and I think it was…I don’t know…it depends on the makeup of the kids each year…sometimes I think there are more subgroups socially than others, this year there doesn’t seem to be a lot of that.

Other teachers did believe that students from diverse backgrounds had an impact on the dynamics of their classrooms. The impact that was cited took the form of differences in behavior, peer pressure, and excitement generated from the existence of such diversity.

Madeline spoke to differences in behavior and parental involvement when asked about impact on classroom dynamics:

- I see differences in behavior. I think kids from some cultures are a lot more vocal and how they interact with each other is different from how white students
interact. They are touchy feely, physical, louder. There are noticeable differences among students of color too, some kids from Haiti act completely different from Latinos and I think that parental involvement is completely different as well.

When asked about the impact on classroom dynamics, Gloria discussed her belief that peer pressure among students of color is a substantial difference in comparison to other students:

- Yeah, I think with peer pressure it does have an impact. If one kid sees another not caring they will say I am just going to have fun and do what they do. I think with this age group and certain student groups, the peer pressure is pretty high.

Henry voiced a belief that diversity does affect his classroom dynamics in a very positive way:

- ’It affects’ it kind of sounds like a negative, probably it’s a positive.

Wherever we are in this little world. Framingham has a great culture, we kind of get a really great mix of all cultures. I like that. I think it adds to discussions and everyone comes from their own unique backgrounds. It is so exciting, it is great to get the different backgrounds of people.

Kristen also believed that diversity had a very positive impact on the dynamics within her classroom. Like Henry she recognized the exciting aspects
of having a diverse classroom, and also recognized the challenges that can accompany such diversity:

- Oh, I think it enhances everything that you do, it gives you all the colors of the rainbow to work with. It is tricky sometimes to work with, you have to think and double think which I don’t always do to be honest. It enriches the experiences to me as a teacher, it stretches me and makes me a better person

Martha echoed the view of student diversity adding not only to classroom dynamics, but also significantly and positively impacting the life and experience of the teacher:

- I think it makes my life well rounded and I think it gives me access to knowing what the world is like really and what is very real for my kids and what is going on in their lives. I feel very fortunate to be able to know kids from as many different areas of the world as we have here.

In pre-program interviews, teachers were asked about their beliefs regarding the academic performance of students of color to gain a baseline understanding of the way in which participating teachers view students of color in terms of academic performance.

The majority of teachers believed that some students of color were limited in their academic performance by gaps in prior knowledge and language issues. A number of teachers cited their belief that students of color were not alone in
terms of general differences between student who were perceived as succeeding academically and those who were not. These teachers cited the fact that they had students across all races and cultures who were behind for many of the same reasons.

One teacher spoke directly to this belief, saying, “There are differences with all students, I have White students who are low academically and come in needing different things. I wouldn’t say one subgroup is any different from another.” Another participant believed that differences were typically seen between White students and students of color, but the degree of difference varied from year to year, “It’s year to year. This year I don’t see a big difference, there have been years that there have been extreme differences between groups. So it is partially cultural and partially their elementary school experience.” This belief that differences existed, yet varied by year, was echoed by a number of teachers. One teacher cited differences typically taking shape in terms of certain behaviors and mentioned that she did not see it in her classroom as much as she has in the past, “Sometimes I see lower reading skills, less homework completed, less interest in acquiring new knowledge. I don’t see it so much this year.”

The belief that language issues limit the academic performance of students of color was a general theme among respondents. One teacher spoke of her belief that language issues are to be expected and that she struggles to find the needed time to overcome these issues:

- I think generally speaking that there are cases where because of perhaps a language problem, maybe English is their second language or in their
family they speak a second language, it does present problems when it comes to comprehension. There is usually the need for more time with some groups of kids to go through some reading pieces.

Another teacher spoke eloquently about the differences between all students in terms of their academic performance and her constant struggle to acknowledge, appreciate, and teach through these differences:

- It goes across the whole gamete to be very honest. I think that I have some Hispanic students who are excellent students. They are able to bridge that language gap, I can especially see that in their writing, it is just a cultural thing in that they write some cultural phrases, which I appreciate. I think that it really is across the gamete, I don’t look at a Hispanic student and say that they are not going to do well, I try not to pre-judge. We really have a lot of diversity, not just Hispanic, but Indian, Russian, and Greek students with very strong cultural ties to those areas.

Mid-Program Reflection Journals

At the mid-program mark, teachers expressed a range of responses when prompted to write about their changes in perception relative to the way in which they thought about their students of color. Each participant stated that their participation in the program had impacted the way in which they thought about their students of color.
Teachers who had previously engaged in professional development around issues related to race and culture cited the fact that their participation forced them to be more aware of their actions as well as the abilities and limitations of all students.

Participation in the program also encouraged participants to reflect upon their new learning in the context of their practices in the classroom. Mid-program reflective journals showed that teachers expressed increases in reflections about students, the need to be more proactive with students of color, demonstration of increased racial sensitivity, and a greater understanding of the ongoing nature of the struggle against racism and prejudice.

Gloria wrote about the way in which participation in the program has made her reflect upon her practices around classroom discussion and participation:

- I have noticed that students of color participate less in class than do other students. I really didn’t ask myself why? Other than I thought maybe they were shy or maybe it was uncool …I feel bad for not looking into this. Since the program started, I have called on these students, even when their hands are not up. I want the students to feel empowered, that it’s okay to show the “gray matter” off, even if they give me the “I don’t know” look. We work it through the answers if they need help. I liked our discussion with the students, it gave me the insight to change the way I have class discussions. By participating in this project, I feel like I truly didn’t give
them all the chances to excel, I need to change my ways and to grow as a person and teacher

Grace echoed many of Gloria’s general sentiments, focusing on her need to be more proactive with students in involving students and making personal connections that may be beneficial a greater part of her daily practice:

- This program has reminded me that students of color can’t necessarily get the help they need with their work from their parents/families. Sometimes when they come to class unprepared it is because they didn’t know how to complete an assignment, and they may be embarrassed to ask me for help. It has made me start to become more proactive with these students, inviting them to spend time with me after school so I can help them. I look forward to beginning a new school year with this in mind.

Gloria’s developing beliefs have shifted from feeling as if the parents and families were largely responsible for poor classroom performance, to an attitude defined by a more proactive approach that is based largely on her actions as a teacher as opposed to the perceived shortcomings of others.

In terms of his thinking of students of color, Henry cited changes in the way in which he valued the personal connections that he develops with his students. Henry wrote of his realization that relationships with students of color are incredibly important since it is through these relationships common understandings are developed
between the student and teacher. These relationships indicated to the student that he cares about the student and the student’s race and culture, and build dialogue that leads to a greater understanding of different races and cultures.

Madeline’s beliefs related to students of color in her classroom were not transformed as dramatically as were Henry’s, but she did internalize and recognize the need to maintain an awareness of the importance of race and culture in terms of student learning, especially in the context of personal relationships with students.

- The CRT discussions and readings have also provided a great reminder for me to keep issues of race in mind when I am talking with my students on a personal level, outside of the instructional times. I often forget that many of my students come from single-family homes and immigrant families where they may be the first child in their family to graduate from a high school in the states. This was a foreign concept to me, growing up in suburbia New York. I was the fourth of five children to attend college. Both of my parents had advanced degrees and I couldn’t imagine coming home after school to care for younger siblings while my parents worked multiple jobs. Sometimes when I think of my students’ difficult home lives, I get really upset because the economic disparity in this country, even in Jackson, is absurd.

Madeline expressed a new found determination to work race and culture into the curriculum at every opportunity. She wrote of her frustrations about what she sees as
competition between what is mandated in the curriculum and the discussions revolving around race and culture that she feels are very important for her students.

- The CRT program has provided a way to be reminded about how we, as educators, should constantly keep in mind factors such as students’ backgrounds, ethnicity, race and home situations when we plan and implement lessons… I often find it’s important to stop instruction in the classroom to have conversations about politics, current events, etc. in order for my students to be educated about events that they may not otherwise learn about from home.

Kristen experienced a change in the way that she thought about students of color. In reflecting on the changes she experienced, she voiced her belief that she would need to struggle and grow to meet the changes in instruction and approach that would be necessary in her classes. Reflective entries reveal a substantial shift in Kristen’s self-perception and her perception of some of the difficulties faced by many of her students of color:

- My experience in the CRT program to this point has impacted the way that I think about students of color… I do think of students of color in a different way. I understand some of the cultural/street expectations they live with and are a part of. I will continue to struggle with trying to find ways to show respect whenever possible. I will continue to struggle with the haunting reality of gangs. I will continue to struggle with separating academic struggles from a student’s personality.
Martha experienced a transformation in terms of how she views her students of color. Her changed perception is, like Kristen, one that she recognizes is going to be paired with an ongoing need for continued reflection and growth as she moves forward. Martha has set aside time each day to reflect on the need for changes and how her teaching may have been perceived by her students of color on a daily basis:

- Now at the end of each day, I try to find a quiet time to think back on the day and look at it from the point of view of my students of color, “How is this day going to affect them, will they be able to find a place at home to do my assignments, will they understand my explanations or will some words be ‘lost’ once they get home and try to remember how to do the assignment?”

Teresa experienced a transformation in the way in which she combines a sense of caring and sensitivity with her new understandings of the struggles that many students of color experience on a daily basis:

- I have felt impacted from my participation in the CRT program in that I am now more aware of racial sensitivity. Once we had the discussion with the group of Latina girls, I was made more aware of how it can feel for them to feel different in a sea of white children. I learned how they can feel nervous, different, and scared walking into their new classes at the start of each year. One student described this very poignantly and mentioned how even during
lunchtime she feels more comfortable sitting with other Latino girls because they can be sillier together, relaxed, and less worried about middle school drama.

Teresa spoke of an increased awareness of the need to develop relationships with her students of color and she spoke with pride about her in-depth knowledge of all of her students:

- Getting to know my students, where they came from, what do they love about their culture, sports, and so on, is my first interest. Once I know more about them, they feel more comfortable staying after school, asking questions in class, and working with other students. I can safely say, I know where almost all of my students were born, what languages they speak, if they have any siblings, and a few of the special things that make them truly unique.

Teresa’s transformation in terms of the ways in which she thinks of her students of color has led to recognition of influences that played a role in shaping her thinking as a new teacher:

- I think all teachers can always be doing a better job. The problem lies with motivation and stereotyping. I feel one of the biggest hurdles a young or novice teacher has in the field is blocking out the “negative energy” from veteran teachers who have their own theories of why students are low achievers. From my own experiences, I heard that Latino student’s parents are hands off to their education, they don’t complete homework or test well as others, and if they
have a Latino sounding last name, their parents always speak Spanish.
Obviously, I know these are not true, but I cannot say the same for some of my
co-workers.

Teresa’s recognition of the influence that other teachers has had on her thinking
about students of color, combined with her newly developed thinking and knowledge,
has led her to take anti-racist actions and work to change the thinking of others:

· I do not want to generalize this concept to all of my coworkers, but in life I’ve
recently learned their will always be negative people around you, and the job I
have is to change that. My students of color are extremely important to me.
Not only do I want them to succeed academically, I want them to believe in me
that I want to see them reach all of their goals.

At the mid-program point, teachers were asked to reflect on their perceptions of
preparedness to meet the learning needs of students of color. Each participating teacher
wrote of a belief in a greater sense of preparedness to meet the needs of students of
color at the mid-program point. Following are the mid-program reflections from
journals, coupled with references to beliefs voiced in pre-program interviews to provide
perspective on growth to this point in the study.

At the program outset, Grace simply stated that she did feel prepared to meet the
needs of students of color in the classroom. By the mid-program point, Grace
expressed a belief that her participation in the program had led to a greater sense of
preparedness:
• My participation in the program has made me more hopeful about reaching some of the kinds of kids that I haven’t necessarily reached very well before. It is so hard to work with 85+ kids each year and to make them all feel special. I always try, but sometimes my efforts are met with resistance.

In terms of changes in the ways in which Grace operated within her classroom, she cited a newfound realization about the personal connections that she needed to make with every child and that she must believe in every child:

• The program has helped me see that it’s so important not to give up on anyone.
  At the very least, if I can make a personal connection of some sort with each child.

During the pre-program interview, Madeline spoke of the fact that she had participated in a number of courses designed to help teachers effectively teach English Language Learners. At the outset of the study, Madeline had expressed a belief that she possessed a fairly high degree of preparedness in terms of meeting the needs of students of color, saying, “I think I am more prepared than other teachers but I don’t think I can always be as prepared as I need to be to be truly effective”

Madeline’s mid-program reflection journals showed that her participation in the program cemented her commitment to self-improvement and learning around issues related to race and culture and felt that her participation was beneficial:

• The CRT has confirmed my already established belief that I need to continue educating myself in terms of learning about the history of blacks in our country
and the contemporary issues that minorities face in our educational system (and our country). I really appreciated the assigned readings and I thought the discussions were valuable forums for many to discuss issues that often are not addressed in our school.

Prior to the start of the program, Gloria was undecided as to the degree to which she felt prepared to meet the learning needs of her students of color. When asked about her feeling of preparedness, she responded, “If what I am doing now meets their needs, I think I am doing okay, but then again I could always use more. If I am not doing okay then I definitely need training.”

By the mid-point of the program, Gloria’s sense of preparedness had increased and she had begun planning for future lessons that would take into account her increased level of preparation. Her mid-program reflective response to whether or not she felt better prepared to meet the learning needs of her students of color, Gloria responded:

- With the proper knowledge and understanding about my students (ex. Through surveys), I feel I can bring more into the classroom I can make students of color more comfortable and can now make students of non-color realize that students of color can contribute a great deal of knowledge to the classroom. I have already started to write down lessons for next year in my units.

At the pre-program point, Kristen exhibited a sense of preparedness and confidence in her own abilities to meet the learning needs of any individual in her classroom, “I think
that no matter what kind of student you have in front of you, if you are doing best teaching practices you are going to help all of the ones in front of you.”

By the program mid-point, Kristen again expressed her previously held belief that she could meet the leaning needs of all students by focusing on best practices and respecting every individual along with a desire to improve on her ability to specifically meet the needs of students of color, “I will continue to look at ways I can help students of color achieve. For example, if I know a student, for whatever reason, is not going to get homework done regularly or projects done, I modify keeping the basic concept intact but pare down some expectations.”

Prior to the start of the program, Martha expressed an uncertainty in terms of her preparedness to meet the learning needs of students of color and the preparedness of the school as a whole to meet those needs:

• I am not sure, I think in this school we are probably not even recognizing all the problems with some diverse students with things they are struggling with it seems like the largest cultural group would be our Latino / Hispanic population so we have a tendency to focus on that, but I may be missing other kids that also are struggling, but I am not recognizing that…

Martha was still feeling uncertain about her preparedness at the mid-project point. Martha wrote extensively on this topic in her journal reflection to the prompt asking about preparedness. Her response demonstrated a greater degree of personal reflection on her preparedness to meet the learning needs of students of color:
I have always valued my students and as long as their contributions had them heading for my goals I thought we were all on the right track, but I need to re-evaluate those goals and ask some hard questions. Am I giving kids of color/language what they need in order to learn? Am I giving them as many opportunities as the students who are White, English speakers?

Martha’s questioning of her own ability to meet the needs of diverse learners included reflection on past practices which went unnoticed to her until now, her mid-program reflection demonstrated increased awareness and a desire to make changes:

- I think I have let my Spanish/Portuguese learners take a ‘back seat’ in terms of communicating and participating in the classroom. I think in some cases their ‘quiet’ group work has gone unnoticed at times, accepted as cooperative, but not particularly outstanding. I know I am a nurturing teacher but I will hopefully make my classroom have more opportunities for linguistically and ethnically diverse learners. I want my students to feel confident in their skills to contribute in every class.

Martha’s mid-program reflections on her realizations concerning past practices and determination to improve, were coupled with writings that concluded with confirmation of an increased sense of preparedness:

- Participation in this program has made me a more reflective teacher and with the awareness towards all of my students, I hope I will begin to eliminate misunderstandings. I need to improve and to think of ways to motivate and try
to remember that I need to create multiple solutions for getting information across to students.

In his pre-program interview, Henry displayed confidence in his ability to meet the needs of all students. He cited an ability to focus on each individual student in order to ensure that all needs are met:

- I believe as teacher I can meet the needs of any student, so it is one of those things where being diverse doesn’t mean that I can meet their needs more or less. They are each individuals so you have to treat them as such. I am really big on treating individuals instead of the whole. What is good for the whole is not necessarily good for that one person. If you are pinpointing for individuals everything will work out. If you do that you are going to succeed.

There was little change in terms of Henry’s belief in his own preparedness and ability to meet the learning needs of students of color at the mid-program point. Henry spoke to introducing more people of color into the existing curriculum whenever possible:

- I feel that students (generally) want to learn no matter what color teacher is in front of them. I have not taught any differently, but I do try to highlight minorities in my subjects whenever applicable. In our student group discussions, one of the African American males mentioned that he felt like he was in an all white school and that it took some adjusting for him to get used to it. It must be very tough to have all the teachers who are not the same color, but
I feel that even as a white, Italian American, I am able to convey the same information that a teacher of color could.

In her pre-program interview, Teresa had expressed a fair degree of confidence and sense of preparedness in terms of meeting the learning needs of her students of color. Teresa was a very active participant in the program and engaged in many conversations with her peers and this researcher on the topics discussed outside of the meeting group. By the mid-program point, Teresa wrote about her increasing feelings of preparedness and the changes that she was already putting into place within her classroom:

- I like what I am doing now, I think I can see strengths and improvement from the beginning of the year with some of the students who are Latino and were very shy, they would not talk at the beginning of the years and their participation is starting to get much better they are starting to feel more comfortable. I have more kids staying after school and they just seem happier, it’s taking a while, but it’s working.

In mid-program reflections, teachers were asked to write of their changes in thinking in terms of their own racial identity. The responses from teachers reflected increased racial identity development among the majority of participants. Four teachers wrote of significant shifts in their conception of their own racial identity, one teacher voiced slight changes, and two expressed no changes. Those who did experience transformation in terms of their perceptions of their own racial identities cited learning
about the concept of white privilege and a new awareness of racial and cultural issues as a result of their participation in the program.

Gloria expressed no change in terms of her self-perception of racial identity. In her mid-program reflection, Gloria wrote of how she viewed her own racial identity as a minimal factor in her self-identity:

- My view hasn’t changed. For my racial identity, I have always seen myself as a white female, who is a ‘melting pot’ of nationalities – Canadian, French, English, Irish, and Dutch. I have always thought that the color of your skin didn’t define who you are. Your nationality (or nationalities) also helps to shape you into the person you are (traditions, etc.).

Madeline expressed a belief that her racial identity was essentially a non-factor in regards to her identity:

- In terms of my racial identity, I really don’t think of my race as having that great of an impact in defining who I am as a person. Maybe I am being naïve, but I think my identity comes from my unique family, my diverse friends (personality wise more than racially diverse), and my traveling experiences more so than my race.

Teresa expressed a slight change in the way in which she believed her racial self-identity had changed over the course of the program. In her mid-program interview she wrote:
• My participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program impacted the way I see myself slightly. My parents raised my siblings and I to be very proud of our heritage and I remember growing up and going through school liking the feeling of being a little different from everyone else. No one was ½ Armenian and ½ Irish and I thought that was just the coolest.

Martha wrote in her mid-program reflective journal that, “I believe my own racial identity has been even more clearly defined. My teaching expectations are from a white person’s point of view. I have overly idealistic feelings about equality for all my students. Up until now I felt my privilege as a white person/teacher may have given me the idea that I knew what was best for kids of all colors, but in fact, I may have empathy, but I have much to learn about those students who have cultural, language, or racial prejudices blockading their education.” This profound statement reflects a significant shift in self-identity and makes it clear that Martha is beginning to examine her self and how she relates to others racially.

The concept of white privilege resonated with Henry as well in his mid-project reflection. This concept drew comparisons for Henry to struggles that he encountered growing up with fire engine red hair in an Italian family:

• From what I understand, white privilege is an “unsaid advantage of being white.” So in terms of other minorities, I will have this white privilege for my entire life. In one of the program meetings, I shared a story of growing up Italian and having all my friends say that I wasn’t “Italian enough.” Because I had red hair as a kid, I was made to feel less than my other Italian friends, and
even less than my brother (whose name is Mario). As a 32 year old, I still hold those Italian philosophies very close to my heart (church, family get-togethers, good food, etc), but I also have to keep in the back of my head that I am an American and that I am a piece in this giant melting pot.

Kristen experienced a transformation in racial identity similar to that of Henry and Martha. Out of all of the program participants, Kristen was the most reflective and was viewed by this researcher as most profoundly impacted by the concept of white privilege. As the teacher who was most comfortable discussing race and culture with peers and students at the outset of the program, it was somewhat surprising that Kristen was among the most impacted in terms of her own racial identity over the course of the program.

In her mid-program reflective journal, Kristen wrote extensively about the ways in which the program has made her examine and question her own concept of racial identity:

- The CRT program has impacted the way I think of racial identity. I feel conflicted and uneasy to think that students of color would look at me as “privileged.” The readings were insightful, yet disturbing. Growing up in the 50’s, I was the oldest of four children in a lower middle class family. My neighborhood was the typical ‘melting pot’… and discussions of differences were usually along religious lines. I have to admit that I still do not feel ‘privileged’. My parents had to struggle to keep food on the table and a roof over our heads. We all worked hard to help out. I remember using babysitting
money to buy pizza for the family or even ice cream treats. Otherwise, it was how many ways can you serve hamburger? I really didn’t see differences until I went to junior high school. That is when I met kids outside the neighborhood so to speak. Again the differences were still along monetary or religious lines.

Kristen’s viewpoint on White privilege at the mid-program point is largely based on deep-seated view of privilege being based on monetary and religious differences, rather than being based on race. However, Kristen realizes this and continues to struggle with the concept, tying in the historical suppression of women’s rights:

- My racial identity is female, white, Yankee/English/Irish. The articles about White privilege make sense intellectually, however, it’s hard to feel privileged. I have felt racism in the sense of girls/women of my generation were given few options for careers. However, many of my generation made waves that led to the opportunities girls today have.

Kristen’s ability to intellectually work through her perception of privilege and to begin thinking in terms of racial lines as opposed to monetary, religious, and sexist lines was quite remarkable. At the mid-program point Kristen expressed a conceptual understanding of white privilege in terms of race and seeks to find ways in which she can play a role in doing a better job in terms of relating to students of color:

- Color lines were just not something I thought about. Quite honestly I thought that I was doing an okay job relating to students of color until I read these
articles and participated in the student interviews. I see the problem but would like direction as to what I can do – to do a better job. My consciousness has certainly been raised.

Post-Program Interviews and Field Notes

Post-program field notes and interviews revealed an increased level of teacher sense of efficacy. This increase was evidenced by teacher development in terms of their beliefs in students of color, in their beliefs of their own abilities to meet the learning needs of students of color, and also in terms of their own racial identity development.

In her post-program interview, Gloria expressed a belief that her expectation of students of color had not changed as a result of participation in the program.

- My expectations for Latino, Latina, and African American students are still the same as white students. If any student in any category has a home life that isn’t great, I will turn myself into a pretzel to help the kids succeed – stay after, before homeroom. It doesn’t matter to me who the kid is.

Field notes reveal that in discussions outside of the group meetings with Gloria focused on changes that she had experienced in terms of her expectations of herself rather than experiencing changes in the way in which she perceives others. Perhaps more than any other participant, Gloria consistently was able to focus on what she perceived as her own shortcomings as an educator in an effort to make sure that every
one of her students was benefiting from her instruction. In Gloria’s post-program interview she summarized the change in her approach to her own self-development, “I am trying to see things through other people’s eyes, I’m more attentive to that, even more so since the program.”

In the post-program interview, Grace was asked once again if she felt better prepared to meet the learning needs of students of color as a result of her participation in the program:

- Yes, I do. I think that especially for next year, when the girls came into talk to us this year, we were so far into the year, habits were already formed in terms of after school behavior of kids and I think that next year I am going to really try and jump on that early in terms of the kids who may not get supports at home because of language barriers or the culture of school vs. home, like the teacher (who met with each group) spoke of. So I’m going to try and have a more formalized time after school that I can address certain things – reading, getting work done, etc.

When Grace was asked in her post-program interview if her expectations of students of color have changed as a result of her participation, she said that her perception of students of color had changed and that the way in which she looked at student performance in general had changed as a result of her participation in the program.
Following participation in the program, Madeline again spoke to how she felt that the program reinforced many of her beliefs and helped her focus on these issues in a very purposeful manner:

- I think that for me, participating in the CRT program served as a constant reminder that it is so important to be aware and as knowledgeable as possible about my student’s backgrounds. No matter what my student’s color, religion, gender, or socio-economic status, it is important as an educator that I do my best to get to know them so that I can try my best to understand them and teach them on a level that is meaningful to them.

Beyond participation serving as a general reminder of the broad topics addressed in the program, participation for Madeline reinforced classroom specific needs that her students of color possess:

- It is also important that I learn about my students and that my students learn about each other so that they can learn about the importance of appreciating each other’s differences and practice respect and compassion for others. I think that participating in the CRT project reminded me that as an educator, it is a crucial element that I stay aware of my student’s perspectives and engage in honest conversations with them about their lives.

Madeline expressed the belief that the program did more than simply reinforce previous learning and beliefs, particular aspects of the program furthered her learning about issues related to race and culture:
• I have felt good about my ability to teach students of color since participating in the CRT program. I think that I have learned a lot through the readings, conversations with colleagues, and conversations with students of color who attend Buchanan. It was interesting to hear the students’ perspectives about teachers, peers, and themselves as students of color.

At the conclusion of the program, Kristen was unsure as to whether her expectations of the students of color had changed, “I don’t know if it has changed. It has helped me to understand better maybe. The bar is there for everyone, how you get there might be a different way. The bar is still there in my mind.” Her beliefs related to the need for the schools to accept that families could not be always counted on to assist in the educating of their children had increased, “. I have to say that more and more or our population, it is the kids of color unfortunately – although I have two Caucasian boys who fit the mode- who whatever they do or get done will have to be done here at school. The after school program is huge for that…a way to look at that, Erin and I wrote a grant for “The Kitchen Table” homework program – that is the bottom line, the kids need a kitchen table – someone who has supplies for them, the bells and whistles, the things that we take for granted.”

Martha has both gained a new understanding and awareness of the issues that her students of color faced on a daily basis, and she is also proactively creating time for reflection on how she can maximize the learning experiences of all of her students, especially her students of color. In her post-program interview, she spoke to how her expectations for students of color has changed along with her expectations of herself:
• I just put a little bit more into myself in terms of paving the way for all kids. I do a better job with that in terms of talking with students or going through some things that I know are language-based problems since I know that a different language is being spoken at home. It isn’t coddling them, it is just re-thinking how I ask questions, doing what I can to set them up to succeed. A lot of kids have reasons that they need modifications, on the surface they seem like they understand everything but they didn’t so I now make more of a point to make sure they have an understanding and their success in my classroom has increased because of what I have done. My expectations were always pretty high, but now I do a better job helping kids meet those expectations. I always cared, I am doing more to find shortcuts to success.

Martha’s changes in expectations for her students of color and for herself has resulted in changes in how Martha speaks to all students about their future potential:

• I think my expectations have changed the way in which I speak with my students. There were times I spoke (in group meetings) about how kids keep hearing from teachers about the importance of going to college. I think with some kids I made some pre-judgments as to whether that was realistic or not… I don’t think I ever said ‘that kid is not going to college’ or anything, but I thought ‘is every kid going to college?’ Now I say it all the time, ‘You are all going to college’ and I do believe it now. That has been a big change for me because I didn’t always think that. The potential is there in everyone. That has
been a big change for me, I just didn’t talk about it much because I didn’t want any student to feel badly, but now I talk about it all the time.

It was clear from Kristen’s responses in her post-program interview that her participation in the program had contributed to a reassessment of her teaching strategies and that the program had made her focus on meeting the learning needs of this particular group of students, “The articles we read, the student interviews and our discussions have raised many aspects of teaching students of color. The ELL training and this program have helped me take a hard look at how to deliver my curriculum to all students.”

In her post-program interview, Kristen said that her participation in the program did increase her confidence in terms of her ability to meet the learning needs of students of color, “I think it has increased, everything we learn helps us to get better. I truly think yes, I am more confident now.”

At the outset of the program, Gloria had expressed uncertainty as to her preparedness to meet the learning needs of students of color. By the mid-program point, her perceptions of preparedness had shifted:

- With the proper knowledge and understanding about my students (ex. Through surveys), I feel I can bring more into the classroom I can make students of color more comfortable and can now make students of non-color realize that students of color can contribute a great deal of knowledge to the classroom. I have already started to write down lessons for next year in my units.
Interestingly, at the conclusion of the program, Gloria was asked again about her feelings in terms of preparedness and her response lacked the confidence exhibited at the program mid-point, “I am not sure. To be honest with you I am not sure. I am definitely thinking in ways that I have never thought before. So maybe I am starting, I am at the starting point.” Gloria’s thinking about issues related to race and culture and her responsibilities as a teacher had clearly shifted; yet her confidence in terms of her preparedness was still in flux.

In Martha’s post-program interview, she reinforced her beliefs in feeling more prepared as a result of her participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. When asked if she felt better prepared to meet the learning needs of students of color after participating in the program she said:

- Yes in most ways, but it makes me worried that there is not enough time in a day or class to reach every student. I am now a better listener and I am more critical of what types of conversations come about when students of color are brought up in team meetings. I try to ask better questions and have other people on my team think about their strategies from a different point of view. It is furthering my education about being a better teacher and reminding me of subtle forms of racism that can be found in a school. It is about giving kids what they need.

After participating in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, Henry’s confidence in terms of preparedness and ability remained high. In his post-program interview he did cite changes in his understanding of issues related to race and culture
and a new confidence in terms of being unafraid of the unknown relative to culture and an increased willingness to proactively ask questions and learn about culture:

- I feel that I am confident in teaching any student, I would say that in terms of teaching students of color I am no longer hesitant. I am now not afraid of cultures and to dive into things I don’t know much about. I am not afraid to ask questions anymore and I think that asking questions is good. It starts that bond, so asking those questions is the important part. Asking students of different cultures and different races, ‘okay, so what does that entail?’ Taking an invested interest in those students, it does two things: one, it makes them feel that their culture is validated and important, the second thing is that it creates that bond in that we shared something that was personal and at the same time we know something about each other if we hadn’t shared it.

In his post-program interview, Henry spoke to his belief in the importance of proactively developing relationships with all students, particularly students of color:

- I now think that no matter what the color is, I think it is your ability to relate that is the key. Sometimes you need the cultural background to relate because the kids are so entrenched in it. The student who just came over from another country is going to have different needs than the student who has been here for generations. That being said I think the key to beating racism is to treat them fair and equitably, not penalize nor pat someone on the back because of their race. You have to ride that equal line of giving everyone the same no matter what their ethnic background or skin color. I think the key is how you relate,
sometimes understanding where the student is coming from culturally is going to help that out.

At the conclusion of the program, Teresa spoke in her post-program interview of the positive changes that had resulted in her instruction and in her beliefs related to her ability to effectively meet the learning needs of students of color:

- My participation in the CRT training impacted my teaching beliefs and my own ability to teach students of color by keeping me well informed on issues these students face each day, and keeping me constantly interested in improving my teaching skills.

In terms of changes in perceptions of racial identity development as recorded in post-program interviews, the changes seen in mid-program reflective journals were largely maintained. The two teachers who had recorded little change in terms of their own racial identities, again voiced a belief that racial identity played a very small role in their self-identity.

Madeline saw her racial identity as playing a minimal role in terms of how she saw herself as a person and saw little change in her own racial identity perceptions as a result of participation in the program:

- In terms of my racial identity, I really don’t think of my race as having that great of an impact in defining who I am as a person. Maybe I am being naïve, but I think my identity comes from my unique family, my diverse friends
(personality wise more than racially diverse), and my traveling experiences more so than my race.

Following her participation in the program, Gloria’s views of her own racial identity remained unchanged:

- I am going to say no, only because race doesn’t mean anything to me. I am a mutt, Canadian, French, English, Irish – I have one of my closest friends who is white, she married a black man, so her kids are mulatto. It means nothing. It’s wheat bread or rye bread – it is bread.

All other participants voiced changes in their perceptions of racial identity both within the context of group meetings and in post-program interviews.

In group meetings, Teresa spoke of how her teaching experiences and Buchanan, furthered by her participation in the program, have helped her come to appreciate diversity and her own racial identity to a greater degree. When discussing her experience teaching in Jackson she speaks of her own past as well as the future of her children:

- My own identity does grow when I think of my future children. Teaching in Jackson has been a gift with respects to exposure to new cultures and I want the same experiences for my own children. When I reflect back to my own childhood, everyone was white; everyone had brown or blond hair, all living together in a cookie cutter community. In my elementary school, not grade, there were two students of color, isn’t that awful? It wasn’t until college when
I broke free of the confines of going to a Catholic School did I really get an opportunity to integrate with more cultures and meet more people who didn’t necessarily look the same as me. I finally have a chance to see what school classrooms should really look like - different teaching strategies, cultures, languages, and values, all coming together to meet a common goal. I can’t see myself teaching anywhere else.

Teresa’s changes in her own racial identity have changed to a greater degree than that of three participants and to a lesser degree than Henry, Martha, and Kristen. In her post-program interview, Martha was asked about her racial identity and she again spoke of the concept of white privilege and her newfound belief in the need for momentous changes in the way in which we think about students of color and the ways in which we engage in dialogue about that thinking:

The idea of being white privileged makes me understand more about my own schooling through college and what I was afforded to me. I am reminded about my generation and the civil rights era and thinking I understood the crisis and the need for change. But the important changes today that need to take place are really step two. It needs to engage a different way of thinking about the way students learn and how to bring that into a daily conversation with colleagues.

Henry’s journey into an examination of his racial identity was defined by a confirmation of the fact that he was not exposed to different races for the great majority of his life. He allowed himself to ask more questions of students and to be open to learning about all races and cultures. His experience in the program was defined by an
excitement about the very act of discussing a topic that was previously not discussed openly:

- I love that we are taking the initiative and talking about the elephant in the room. There is an issue here, this whole experience has been really good. It can only help by opening this dialogue up. I would love to say that I am now incorporating CRT practices all the time, but it is coming in little ways, that’s the way things start. By having discussions about it you are more open to it and are starting to do more about it. The article about having White privilege… there is an inherent white privilege. Just realizing that and going okay...I am White, I am coming at this as a White person with certain entitlements you didn’t realize you are having is a key. You can no longer be ignorant about it, you are aware of it and you go from there in terms of how you want to act and how you want to be perceived.

Henry’s openness to dialogue around these issues, paired with his acknowledgement that of no fault of his own, he has spent the great majority of his life in settings that were not diverse, has set the stage for powerful future development of his own racial identity.

At the conclusion of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, Kristen was asked about her transformative experience in terms of her racial identity, Kristen spoke about her continuing struggle to grasp the concept of white privilege and address her feelings:
That article on white privilege has rocked my core. I think about that a lot and I think I expressed in my reflective journal and in discussions that I ‘get it’, but at the same time I think I grew up in a different time than the author did so I think that is reflective of what she is having to say. I think that I don’t feel as though I was privileged, although I understand where she is coming from and certainly growing up in the 60’s I can see that there is a white privilege, having seen all the civil rights and living through that kind of thing. Living in New England is very different than living in the South so I think that all of those things just play into it and I guess what’s really got me stuck is that to me she is generalizing and I guess at some point you have to. She said that what she has is a supported idea, I believe it and believe her, I am not questioning her credibility. I just want to believe there is more to it than just that. At the same time it has really made me think and I guess where I am stuck is I don’t know what to do about it. What do I do? I am who I am and do I need to apologize for that? …I don’t know…that’s my dilemma. I really, really …when I look at kids I really try to look at them as kids and not think about my privilege …
Summary of Major Findings Related to Research Question #3

**How Did Participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program Impact Teacher Perception of Efficacy Related to Teaching Students of Color?**

In an effort to examine teacher perceptions of efficacy in terms of meeting the learning needs of student of color, the changes in beliefs that teachers held toward students of color were examined along with perceptions of their own sense of preparedness to meet these learning needs.

As a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, teachers did perceive changes in the way in which they thought about their students of color. In a general sense, those teachers who possessed high expectation of students of color and of themselves as their teacher, encountered a re-awakening and increased realization of the importance of race and culture being recognized and incorporated into student learning. Those who began the program believing that race and culture played a minimal role in learning and felt that student expectations were limited by socio-economic factors, language barriers, and gaps in background knowledge, found that these factors were not insurmountable, nor permanently limiting.

A number of themes emerged in the findings relative to changes in the way in which teachers perceived students of color. These themes included changes in the way teachers perceived student involvement in the classroom, the realization of the power of
personal relationships with students of color, and an increased sense of racial and cultural sensitivity.

A theme that emerged in the findings was the teacher expression of change in the way in which teachers considered the involvement of students of color in their classrooms. This was manifested in how students were grouped, their roles in cooperative activities, and the way in which relationships with individual students could help maximize involvement and learning. Some teachers realized that they were previously unaware of the dynamics between students in their classrooms and unaware of the possible reasons behind a reluctance to volunteer in classes and perceived this reluctance as disinterest. Participating teachers found that often the existence of language issues, lack of background knowledge, etc. was impacting the involvement of students of color in the classroom.

Participating teachers realized the value of relationships with all students, particularly students of color. Teachers recognized the need to be proactive in terms of discovering more about student backgrounds and making personal connections with individual students. Realization of the need to develop stronger personal relationships with students of color was paired with the growing realization that not all students have the same level of supports in the home setting and that this disparity is very often due to issues beyond the control of the student and the family of the student. Some teachers came to the realization that as teachers they had a responsibility to focus on what was in their control, relationships and instructional practices, to maximize student learning.

Every participating teacher voiced an increased sense of racial and cultural sensitivity as a result of participating in the program. Teachers became more aware of
the need to use personal relationships with students to uncover the feelings and
perceptions of the students of color in their classrooms. This realization dovetailed into
findings that demonstrated participating teachers had gained a greater degree of
awareness as to the importance of taking into account and incorporating race and
culture into daily instruction.

Findings show that teachers did change the way in which they perceive the abilities
and potential of students of color in the classroom and at the same time also
demonstrated and increased sense of preparedness and confidence in their own abilities
to meet the learning needs of students of color.

Each of the participating teachers in the program are White and are part of the racial
majority in their state, school district, and school. Many expressed that they had never
thought of themselves in terms of their racial identity until they participated in the
program and discussed racial identity within the context of the Culturally Responsive
Teaching Program. None of the participants had ever considered their own racial
identity in an in-depth manner prior to this experience.

The findings reveal that three of the teachers did not place a high value on their own
perceptions of their racial identity throughout the program. Findings were unclear as to
why these individuals did not develop the same level of value in terms of their thinking
about their own racial identity. Each did cite the importance of race and culture on
student learning by the conclusion of the program and each did cite actual changes to
practice they were making in their classrooms along with the desire to learn more about
best meeting the needs of students of color. Findings show that these teachers
maintained a focus on their actions bearing on the racial identity of their students and minimal focus on their own perceptions of racial identity.

Within the context of the program there were two experiences that were cited significantly more so than any of the other components in terms of impact on thinking about racial identity. Those two components were having students of color speak to the program groups about their experiences and their perceptions of their White teachers, and the introduction and dialogue around the concept of White privilege, introduced to participants through use of Peggy McIntosh’s article entitled *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*.

Through participation in the program, teachers believed that they were able to look at their own experiences through the lens of the privileges and benefits that they have received as part of the White majority. Teachers expressed new understandings and the development of greater definition of their understanding of their own racial identity. Teachers learned that in part due to the fact that they had somewhat unknowingly benefited from the advantages afforded through White privilege, they had been essentially shielded from viewing those of color as being disadvantaged by the very mechanism of advantage from which they had benefited and continue to benefit. Some teachers struggled with rationalizing and coming to grips with this realization throughout the study. Every teacher who acknowledged that they were impacted by an understanding of White privilege experienced a greater sense of openness and desire to learn more about the topic.
Summary

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was designed to merge collaboration and dialogue with a relentless focus on issues related to race and culture. This merging of professional development practices, with a purposeful commitment to race and culture, was intended to produce changes in teacher perceptions in attitude, understanding, and instruction related to race and culture. The goals of this program centered on changing teacher perceptions of students of color, along with their perceptions of themselves as racial beings and teachers. Data was collected through the use of pre-program interviews, mid-program journal reflections, post-program interviews, and field notes.

The study attempted to further an understanding of the way in which teachers changed as a result of working collaboratively with peers over the course of a school year and of the role of dialogue in their personal growth and transformation. In general, the findings revealed that teachers found peer collaboration to be beneficial to their own development, found that dialogue was an essential catalyst for change, and that there needed to be more dialogue around these issues with peers and students.

In the process of realizing the power of race and culture within the learning process, findings reveal that teachers found that their instructional strategies and approaches in class could facilitate the maximization of student learning. Participating teachers introduced strategies and approaches into their instruction as the program
progressed and expressed a desire and commitment to continue to grow in this area in the future.

The study attempted to provide greater illumination as to how teacher perceptions of themselves, as teachers of students of color, were changed as a result of their engagement in a program based on collaboration and dialogue. The degree to which teachers changed their instruction to best meet the needs of students of color was studied as well. Generally, findings showed that teachers developed greater beliefs in their own ability to meet the leaning needs of students of color, increased their own sense of racial identity, and increased their beliefs regarding the potential of students of color.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a detailed description of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. Following a review of the sampling and data gathering procedures, the findings were described chronologically; by research question. Each question was addressed using four different data sources (pre-program interviews, mid-program reflective journals, post-program interviews, and field notes). These findings were organized according to the three research questions that this study sought to answer. Finally, the findings were summarized, offering the researcher’s perspective on what the data suggested is the response to the four research questions.
Chapter Five will review the study’s major findings and examine the implications for educational leadership. It will also suggest areas where further research would be useful. The chapter will conclude with a reflective analysis of how the researcher’s beliefs about teacher thinking and instructional practices related to the instruction of students of color have been impacted as a result of this study.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This study examined an effort involving seven teachers at Buchanan Middle School to begin the process of developing a culturally responsive community that maximizes the potential of all students. Culturally responsive teaching, defined by Geneva Gay 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” (Gay, 2000, p. 29), holds the potential to profoundly impact all students.

The challenges of addressing issues related to race and culture in the classroom were addressed in the context of a collaborative professional learning community that met on a monthly basis to focus on literature, activities, and ongoing dialogue. The focus of the study of this effort was centered on three central research questions:

- What changes in teacher perceptions of collaboration and dialogue emerged in teachers as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
- What do teachers perceive to be the impact on their instructional practices as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?
• What changes in perceptions of efficacy emerged among teachers as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?

Chapter four provided for the presentation of the study findings from four separate data sources. The data sources used were pre-program interviews, mid-program reflective journals, post-program interviews, and researcher field notes.

While chapter four focused on the reporting of the data collected, chapter five provides the reader with an in-depth analysis of the study findings through the lens of each of the three research questions.

Chapter five is organized as follows:

Introduction – This section of the chapter presents an overview and context for the case.

Summary of Findings – The findings of the study are discussed in relation to the three research questions.

Discussion of Findings - In this section of the chapter, the findings are discussed in relation to themes from professional literature discussed in chapter two. The organization of themes is as follows: transformative learning, racial identity development, collaboration, culturally responsive teaching, and efficacy.
Limitations of the Study – This section of the study provides an overview of possible limitations on the part of the researcher and the research design.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice – Conclusions from the study are reviewed for implications and recommendations for practice.

Implications and Recommendations for Policy – In this section of chapter five, key findings are reviewed for implementation and recommendations for educational policy.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research - In this section of chapter five, key findings are reviewed for implementation and recommendations for future research.

Reflections on Leadership – The role and learning of this researcher in terms of leadership associated with the design and implementation of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program will be examined.

Conclusion
Summary of Findings

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program immersed seven teachers in a year-long professional development experience designed to increase teacher understanding of issues related to race and culture. Challenges faced by program participants included limited meeting times and difficulties associated with speaking to entire classes about issues related to race and culture. Through participation in this program, teachers developed: increased understanding of their own racial identity; understanding of the importance of caring relationships with students of color; greater insights into the learning experiences of students of color; changes in perceptions of students of color; and, shifts in beliefs related to being able to meet the educational needs of students of color.

It is important to note that the findings focused upon within the context of this study reflected the central aims of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program and do not represent the totality of what was discussed within the context of the group meetings, readings, and activities that were engaged in. The purposive focus of the program was to foster the development of attitudes, perceptions, and practices that were conducive to the learning of students of color. In the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program this effort was primarily focused on issues related to Latino and Black students in particular. Although this was the focus of the program, many instances of discussion related to other marginalized racial and cultural groups were discussed, as were socio-economic and language based issues took place within the context of group meetings and individual conversations.
Findings will be summarized through the lens of each of the three research questions.

**What changes in teacher perceptions of collaboration and dialogue emerged in teachers as a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?**

Findings revealed that participants benefited from the collaborative aspects of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. At the outset of the study, teachers found their collaboration with other teachers to be minimal, with a focus on day-to-day activities, sharing of curricular ideas, and student based issues. While peer collaboration did occur on a daily basis at Buchanan Middle School, the depth of collaborative experiences was limited and was typically not ongoing and focused in nature. As the study progressed, teachers reported that the opportunity to learn from one another and to witness the growth of peers were beneficial aspects of collaboration. Also, teachers expressed a belief that the program’s mandated focus on issues related to race and culture led to in-depth, rich discussion that went far beyond what was considered ‘typical’ surface level peer collaboration.

Prior to the start of the program, teachers reported that they rarely, if ever, spoke with peers or students about issues related to race and culture. Through participation in the project, teachers experienced significant changes in the ways in which they perceived the need to discuss issues related to race and culture with peers. Teachers reported that they felt a greater sense of confidence in discussing this issue with peers. Some teachers had put this new belief into practice by proactively engaging in
conversations about race and culture with peers. In these discussions, they attempted to challenge the thinking of others and to share and explain concepts that they had learned through participation in the program.

Findings show that participating teachers felt more comfortable and willing to speak with students about race and culture as a result of their participation in the program. Teachers acknowledged the need for discussion to take place between teachers and students on these important subjects, yet some did not feel comfortable putting these beliefs into practice. The most cited reason for this from participating teachers was that there was no perceived ‘fit’ for such discussions in their classrooms. By this, teachers were referring to having set curriculums for their various subjects and they did not feel that engaging in such discussions about race and culture correlated with what they were doing in their classrooms. Those teachers who taught English/language arts and social studies found that they had the most opportunities to bring up issues related to race and culture within their curriculum, while math and science teachers expressed the greatest level of difficulty creating opportunities for these discussions within their curriculum.

Even within the language arts and social studies classes, when these issues were discussed with whole classes, it was done when students brought up issues, or if race and culture came up in the context of following the curriculum. The most common example was seen through the experiences of the language arts teachers who used a number of literature pieces that involved topics that naturally led to opportunities for discussion about racial or cultural issues. By the conclusion of the program, teachers were unsure as to how to proactively bring up and discuss issues related to race and culture within the context of the whole-class setting.
Every participating teacher expressed comfort and willingness to engage in individual conversations with students about issues related to race and culture.

**What do teachers perceive to be the impact on their instructional practices as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?**

Prior to the start of the program, the majority of the participating teachers provided to students few, if any, practices that incorporated instructional strategies designed to maximize the learning of students of color. The instructional practices of each participating teacher were impacted through their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. Teachers changed their instructional practices in tandem with their changing beliefs and attitudes. The changes in instructional practices that resulted from participation in the program included more frequent check-ins, changes in grouping practices, increased differentiation, and infusion of race and culture into instruction as much as possible.

The findings from this study reveal that as teachers progressed through the program they initially cited changes in their thinking around instruction and over time have been able to apply that thinking in specific ways within their classrooms.
What changes in perceptions of efficacy emerged among teachers as a result of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program?

As a result of participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, teachers did perceive changes in the way in which they thought about their students of color. In a general sense, those teachers who possessed high expectations of students of color and of themselves as their teacher, encountered a re-awakening and increased realization of the importance of race and culture being recognized and incorporated into student learning. Those who began the program believing that race and culture played a minimal role in learning and believed that student expectations were limited by socio-economic factors, language barriers, and gaps in background knowledge, found that these factors were not insurmountable, nor permanently limiting.

Instructional themes that emerged in participating teachers included changes in the way teachers perceived student involvement in the classroom, the realization of the power of personal relationships with students of color, and an increased sense of racial and cultural sensitivity.

Participating teachers realized the value of proactively fostering caring relationships with all students, particularly students of color. Teachers recognized the need to be proactive in terms of discovering more about student backgrounds and cultures, and making personal connections with individual students. Realization of the need to develop stronger personal relationships with students of color was paired with the growing realization that not all students have the same level of supports in the home setting and that this disparity is very often due to issues beyond the control of the
student and the family of the student. Five of the participating teachers came to the realization that as teachers they had a responsibility to focus on relationships and instructional practices, elements that were in their control that would maximize student learning. Every participating teacher voiced an increased sense of racial and cultural sensitivity as a result of participating in the program. Teachers became more aware of the need to use personal relationships with students to uncover the feelings and perceptions of the students of color in their classrooms.

Through participation in the program, teachers believed that they were able to look at their own experiences through the lens of the privileges and benefits that they have received as part of the White majority. Teachers expressed new understandings and the development of greater definition of their understanding of their own racial identity. Teachers learned that in part due to the fact that they had often unknowingly benefited from the advantages afforded through White privilege, they had been essentially shielded from viewing those of color as being disadvantaged by the very mechanism of advantage from which they had benefited and continue to benefit. Some teachers struggled with rationalizing and coming to grips with this realization throughout the study. Every teacher who acknowledged that they were impacted by an understanding of White privilege experienced a greater sense of openness and desire to learn more about their students, their cultures, and issues related to race and culture.
Discussion of Findings

This study was designed with the intention of developing and deepening cultural competency, to change the ways in which teachers think about themselves and their students of color, and to increase teacher efficacy in relation to meeting the educational needs of students of color. This section will provide a discussion of findings relative to the literature associated with its five major research themes: transformative learning, racial identity development, collaboration, culturally responsive teaching, and efficacy.

Transformative Learning

According to Merizow (1991), the process of perspective transformation is defined as “the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world” (Merizow, 1991, p. 167).

Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning is considered partly a developmental process of change, but also as “the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). Mezirow’s theory was put into practice within the context of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. Experienced teachers were immersed in a program that encouraged participants to look within themselves, to look at experiences through their eyes of others, and to
continuously reflect on how past practices may, or may not, have contributed to the failure of many educators to bring out the very best in all students of color.

According to Brown (2006), “transformative learning changes the way people see themselves and their world. It attempts to explain how their expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences” (Brown, 2006, p. 708). The theory of transformational learning is founded largely on the assertion that “because we are all trapped by our own meaning perspectives [i.e. frames of reference generated by life experiences], we can never make interpretations of our experience free from bias” (Merizow, 1991, p. 10). The work of Brown ties directly to the struggle that took place between participating teachers and themselves in terms of their ability to process, comprehend, and apply the lessons of White privilege in their classroom and the school community. Teachers experienced and verbalized the sense of being ‘trapped’ in their own Whiteness. To a great degree, some of the participating teachers struggled with the realization that they may never truly be free of the biases resulting from the privileges they had unknowingly received throughout their lives.

Teachers who relentlessly pursue the goal of full transformation in terms of self-realization, and the development of an anti-racist self, must transform their perspective according to Pohland and Bova (2000). According to Pohland and Bova, it is only through transformational learning that individuals are able to break free of bias through the process of perspective transformation. Some of the participating teachers developed the desire to continuously pursue the goals of full self-transformation and
spoke to their aspiration to continue their reflection and development of their racial identity beyond the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program.

Geneva Gay (2000) writes of the need for educators to demonstrate the courage to learn about themselves and their students culturally and racially, while at the same time working to employ their learning in the classroom. She writes of the current marginalization of students of color and the need for learning and practice to occur at the same time:

Failures and mistakes are not self-correcting; they must be deliberately transformed. Teachers can expedite this transformation for themselves and their ethnically diverse students by embracing, with diligence and enthusiasm, culturally responsive pedagogy. For a time, their training for and practice of it will probably have to occur in tandem…the benefit of training for and trying out culturally responsive teaching at the same time is how knowledge and praxis can reinforce and refine each other. (p.212)

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program sought to engage teachers in learning about themselves and about issues related to race and culture at the same time they were practicing in the classroom. This concept of ‘learning while doing’ enabled teachers to try new approaches and to reflect upon their results with peers. This practice and ongoing reflection was seen in a number of different ways throughout the course of the program. As the program progressed, teachers discussed many issues that they were implementing in their classrooms as they were learning and developing over the course of the year, such topics included changes in student grouping, efforts to
develop individualized relationships with students, and increased individualization of assignments.

**Racial Identity Development**

Shujaa (1995) contends that teachers must develop an understanding of themselves in order to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching. Shujaa believes that before teachers can infuse cultural responsiveness into content, teachers must focus on their understanding of who they are racially and culturally and how they have learned to view human beings who are racially and culturally different from themselves. This development of understanding can be facilitated and developed through dialogue with others.

Lawrence and Tatum (1997) write of the prevalence of a lack of dialogue about race and culture, “One consequence of this silence about race is the unexamined impact of racial identity on interracial and intraracial interactions” (p. 163). Lack of dialogue, combined with the fact that many White people do not even think of themselves as being “White” (Tatum, 1992), can produce a failure on the part of teachers to acknowledge their racial identity. This lack of acknowledgement “becomes a barrier for understanding and connecting with the developmental needs of children of color” (Lawrence and Tatum, 1997,p. 163). At Buchanan Middle School, pre-program findings showed that there was very limited dialogue around issues related to race and culture with peers or students. The program provided a forum for ongoing dialogue between peers that was built on shared readings and common experiences among
participants. The development of a shared vocabulary and understanding was also found to be a powerful connector between peers and led to a higher degree of comfort in speaking with fellow participants about issues related to race and culture.

According to Lawrence and Tatum (1997), the teacher who does not acknowledge his or her own racial identity will not recognize the need for children of color to affirm their own identity, nor will the teacher be able to serve as a role model for White students struggling to understand the complex racial realities around them. Without a racial identity that incorporates a transformative multicultural perspective, a teacher is likely to use mainstream teaching strategies and approaches that can perpetuate the academic achievement gap between White students and students of color (Vavrus, 2002).

The critical importance of developing one’s racial and cultural self-identity is reinforced by Vavrus (2002):

Transformative multicultural education necessitates the presence of teachers whose clarity of their own racial identity serves to affirm the identity of all students. To better serve their students, white teachers in particular should not be immobilized in white shame, guilt, and confessionals as they grow to recognize and reject the premises of color-blindness and white privilege. (p. 24)

Teachers are often willing to examine curriculum in their classrooms honestly; they are even willing to talk about relationships and biases regarding students and parents, but only if this occurs in a non-threatening atmosphere. Yet, many of these
same teachers balk when it comes to examining their own advantages as White people in the world. However, such self-scrutiny is exactly what White teachers must engage in if they are to make changes in our classrooms and in institutions. Through this reflection they will experience the significant deep transformation in the education of students in our classrooms that can lead to equal opportunity in our country (Landsman, 2006). The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program provided evidence that teachers had begun to examine their own beliefs, relationships, and biases in the non-threatening atmosphere that was created in the program. The ongoing nature of the program, with established groups of teachers working together throughout the school year, allowed for information to be processed over time. The fact that the program spanned an entire school year provided teachers with the opportunity to allow personal reflection to take place over time. This reflection was provided for within a non-threatening atmosphere defined by trust, the development of a common vocabulary, and shared experiences that were fostered over the course of the year.

The preparation of white teachers to work effectively in multicultural settings requires an understanding of their own White racial identity development. For White teachers, the process of racial identity development unfolds differently than it does for other racial groups because of the social inequities that exist in our society (Carter and Goodwin, 1994).

Janet Helms’ has done a tremendous amount of work around the issue of identity development. She utilizes a six-stage psychological model to explain racial identity development. For Whites, the process of developing racial identity involves becoming aware of one’s Whiteness, learning to accept this aspect of one’s identity as socially
meaningful and personally salient, and ultimately internalizing a “realistically positive view of what it means to be White” (Helms, 1990, p.55). Helms (1994, 1996) and Helms and Piper (1994) have described White identity development in six stages taking place within the confines of two separate phases. The teachers involved in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program would be characterized as primarily falling into the range of stages found in Helms and Piper’s phase II (1994).

Phase II: Establishment of a Nonracist White Identity

Pseudo-independence

This stage involves White people acknowledging responsibility for racism and confronts the fact that White people have benefited from it no matter if it was intentional or not. This stage, according to Howard (2006) is marked by individuals wanting to distance themselves from the negative feelings people have of their own White identity and to “help” people from other racial groups. This is generally not possible during this stage of racial identity development because the individual has not yet developed an authentic White racial and cultural identity (Howard, 2006).

Immersion/Emersion

This stage is defined by an effort to move away from trying to “help” other groups and to develop a more internalized desire to change oneself and to change other White people in a similar way. Helms (1990) cites the two central questions of this stage: “Who am I racially?” and “Who do I want to be?” (p. 62). During the
Immersion/emersion stage of racial identity development people are seeking out like-minded individuals in an effort to find more authentic and proactive ways of being White (Howard, 2006). Feelings of guilt and shame begin to fade during this stage of development and individuals begin to search out other antiracist White people for support and connection (Delpit, 1996).

Autonomy

This stage is not an end point. Instead it is one that according to Helms is being in a state of constant openness to new information and growth. This stage is marked by race no longer being considered a threat. We have acknowledged personal, cultural, and institutional racism and engage in activities to combat oppression of others whether that be related to race, sexism, classism, ageism, etc. We look to engage in learning about all groups and create connections across boundaries of difference (Howard, 2006).

At the conclusion of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, each participant had entered into Helms’ Phase II and had developed a nonracist White identity. Each participant felt that their own development through the program was accelerated and deepened by the collaborative aspects of the program.
Collaboration

Langer and Colton (2005) claim that the failure of the majority of school improvement efforts is, “because they don’t adequately engage teachers in collaborative inquiry where it matters most: in the daily learning-teaching interactions between students and teachers” (p. 22). Senge (1990) goes beyond stating the importance of collaboration, citing the inefficiency and irrelevance of individual learning. According to Senge (1990), individual learning is at some level, irrelevant to organizational learning. Teams are the key learning units in organizations. Senge writes that:

If teams learn, they become a microcosm for learning throughout the organization. Insights gained are put into action. Skills developed can propagate to other individuals and to other teams (although there is no guarantee that they will propagate). The team’s accomplishments can set the tone and establish a standard for learning together for the larger organization. (p. 219)

Senge’s belief that teams can become microcosms for learning throughout an organization was a goal of the program. Findings show that teachers within each of the small program groups did spread their learning and understandings to peers outside of the program.

Hargreaves (1994) suggests that professional collaboration provides tremendous assets to professionals; including increased support, efficiency, effectiveness, confidence, and reflection. Teachers participating in the program found that they did
receive support from their peers in the program and that participating with peers did aid in their efficiency in terms of their own learning.

Marzano (2003) has found that “there is little evidence that teacher congeniality and social interactions impact student achievement” (p.63). Prior to the start of the program, teachers at Buchanan Middle School cited a high level of congeniality and social interactions with peers, Dufour writes of his belief that these interactions are important, yet they do not foster transformation within a school. Dufour (2003) writes that activities based on congeniality and social interactions are important, do enrich the experiences of students and teachers, and do have a level of importance within a school. While recognizing the importance of congeniality and social interactions, Dufour is definitive in addressing the limits of these activities that are mistakenly being perceived as being collaborative, stating, “none of these can transform a school” (p.63).

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was explicit in terms of its design to extend beyond the pervasive congeniality and social interactions that were often perceived as collaboration at Buchanan Middle School. Langer and Colton (2005) claim that the failure of the majority of school improvement efforts is “because they don’t adequately engage teachers in collaborative inquiry where it matters most: in the daily learning-teaching interactions between students and teachers” (p. 22). Pre-program findings revealed that participating teachers experienced a great deal of ‘surface level’ collaboration and collegiality on a regular basis. Teachers expressed that they rarely, if ever, engaged in rich and deep collaborative learning experiences that focused on issues related to the daily learning-teaching interactions between students and teachers. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program provided for such
collaboration and the participating teachers found this experience to be transformative in terms of their racial identities, perceptions of students of color, and beliefs in the abilities of their students of color and their own abilities to meet their learning needs. Richard Elmore (2000) wrote, “participation in collaborative work increases commitment and satisfaction among teachers, but it is unlikely to result in changes in teachers’ practice, skill, or knowledge in the absence of clear organizational focus on those issues” (p. 17). In this study, the focus was provided and driven by the researcher as principal. While multiculturalism and meeting the needs of all learners was a stated value of the Jackson district and was embedded in the mission statement of Buchanan Middle School, there was a great need for explicitness and a clear definition of what this value looked like in practice.

Inger (1993) states that collaboration “cannot occur where it is impossible or prohibitively costly in organizational, political, or personal terms. Schedules, staff assignments, and access to resources must be made conducive to shared work…and school policy must solidly support it” (p. 6). The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was embedded within the context of the regular school day for all participating teachers. The existence of ample preparatory time for teachers at Buchanan Middle School made this possible.

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was designed to provide collaborative experiences that explored assumptions and beliefs and intentionally increased knowledge and understanding while allowing participants to peel away preconceptions, revealing new thinking that was furthered through dialogue with peers. Certain aspects of the program were designed to assist in the development of teacher
transformation through the provision of particular conditions that have been found to be most beneficial.

Anderson and Saavedra (1995) identified a number of conditions essential for transformative learning within a group setting. The conditions that they found facilitated transformative learning were utilized within the context of a study group by Anderson and Saavedra, and were also utilized within the context of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program:

- **Dialogic context:** All participants must have the opportunity to be heard and valued in a democratic setting.

- **Identity and voice:** A location must be provided for dialogue to take place and for participants to become consciously active in the (re) construction of their identities and voices. Within the context of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, this was provided by consistency in terms of meetings, participants, focus on issues related to race and culture, and meetings being centered on dialogue as opposed to instruction.

- **Ownership of goals of the group and direct access to sources of knowledge:** Currently in-service professional development offerings often convene practitioners to discuss agendas established elsewhere and present knowledge about practice that is created and mediated by others. Saavedra believes that transformative groups must be able to negotiate
their own goals and be in control of deciding what knowledge they wish to uncover and how they will go about doing that (i.e. research, reflective journaling, etc.) Within the project, the researcher established the agenda with feedback from participants. An example of the use of feedback can be seen with the extension of discussion on White privilege into two group meetings instead of one. This resulted from requests by participants to extend the discussion on this challenging topic.

- Disequallibrium and conflict: These are necessary conditions of transformational learning according to Anderson and Saavedra. When practitioners begin analyzing and critiquing their own beliefs and practices, there is conflict between paradigms, ideological commitments and personal histories. Conflict occurs within individuals, within the group, and between individuals and the institution they belong to. Embracing this conflict is an essential component of transformative learning.

- Meditational events: As individuals translate their own feelings, experiences, views, and practices to their peers, they contribute to the process of mutual transformation. Throughout the program experience, teachers witnessed the growth and development of their peers.
• Demonstration: The opportunity for practitioners to demonstrate practices in action. The majority of the sharing was done in the context of program meetings with teachers openly discussing lessons changes, instructional changes, etc. that resulted from shifts in thinking and behavior as a result of participation in the program.

• Generation: New knowledge was generated within all participating teachers. This generation of knowledge was applied in classrooms, in discussions about issues related to race and culture with non-participating teachers, and the creation of anti-racist practices that put into place by participants as a result of their participation in the program.

• Agency: As practitioners develop, they gain new understanding of a critical awareness of social processes and practices.

The intent of the program’s collaborative experience was to produce change in individuals, change in the program groups, and ideally these changes would impact others throughout the school. The possibility and hope of this researcher is that these participants have returned to their teaching teams with new thinking and learning and will inspire and teach others strategies and perspectives that will benefit the entire school community. In writing about the need for learning to be propagated, Senge writes:
If teams learn, they become a microcosm for learning throughout the organization. Insights gained are put into action. Skills developed can propagate to other individuals and to other teams (although there is no guarantee that they will propagate). The team’s accomplishments can set the tone and establish a standard for learning together for the larger organization. (p. 219)

While the degree to which participating teachers have propagated their learning and newly formed beliefs and practices into the school community is unknown. What is known is that participating teachers have demonstrated an increased willingness and desire to speak with their peers and students about issues related to race. Findings also revealed that some participants were seeking out peers to discuss these issues and were also now aware of racism around them and were willing to confront racism.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Villegas and Lucas (2002) proposed six salient characteristics that define the culturally responsive teacher in terms of attitudes and perceptions that practices are based on:

- The culturally responsive teacher recognizes that there are multiple ways of perceiving reality
- The culturally responsive teacher recognizes that these perceptions are influenced by one’s location in the social order.
The culturally responsive teacher has affirming views of students

The culturally responsive teacher is capable of promoting learners’ knowledge construction

The culturally responsive teacher knows about the lives of his or her students

The culturally responsive teacher uses his or her knowledge about students’ lives to design instruction that builds on what they already know while stretching them beyond the familiar (p. 21)

These six characteristics of the culturally responsive teacher proposed by Villegas and Lucas were advanced within each of the participating teachers. Findings show that participating teachers each progressed in developing and applying the characteristics identified by Villegas and Lucas. Each teacher developed an understanding of the different characteristics and to different degrees, and in their own personal ways, applied their learning to their beliefs and instructional practices.

Changes in beliefs and instructional practices were evidenced by:

- Changes in thinking about racial identity and ways in which teachers thought about the way in which they perceive reality.
- Increased understanding and provision of accommodations and scaffolding to aid individual learners
- Re-thinking of student needs and abilities
- Stated desire to understand student backgrounds and to proactively develop more meaningful individual relationships
- Increased understanding of the need for the infusion of culture into classroom instruction and demonstrated application of this understanding.
Julie Kailin (1994) researched anti-racist staff development for teachers and her findings have served as the foundation for much of this study. In many ways Kailin’s work was geared towards the development of the six salient characteristics of the culturally responsive teacher identified by Villegas and Lucas.

Kailin found that White teachers would most likely not have the knowledge or experiences that will enable them to unlearn White racism on their own. White teachers may have empathy for students of color and feel as if they can connect to the struggles of students of color due to their own gender and class oppression. Feeling as if they have been oppressed does not prohibit a person from oppressing others however. As represented within the sample used in this study, the majority of teachers was White, female, and had grown up in predominantly White environments. Most of these teachers had little contact with people of color and most had been exposed to the negative stereotypes of people of color through popular culture. Due to this, it is imperative to Kailin (1994) that anti-racist education for teachers works as a counter-hegemonic strategy. Anti-racist education must work to address the views, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of teachers as social actors since there is a high probability that these views are already tainted with prejudice and racism.

Kailin (1994) suggests that anti-racist education takes the form of a process that confronts two aspects of the problem of racism in our society. First, the institutional dimension of racism, which includes the rules, procedures, and practices that are inherent within society, must be addressed. Second, the “subjective or individual dimension of racism which is reflected in the categories, attitudes and opinions that are held by individual teachers” (p. 175) must be examined. While both aspects identified
by Kailin were focused on in this study, the majority of meeting sessions focused on the subjective, individual dimension of racism that is reflected in the attitudes and opinions held by individual teachers.

In focusing on the development of knowledge of individual or subjective racism, Kailin identified ten components that should be examined by teachers:

- Using collaborative autobiography – reflection upon their own racial experiences
- Examining the social background of teachers – looking at the larger picture of the social background of teachers so that teachers can formulate a better understanding of their relationships with other teachers, students, parents, and administrators with regard to race, class, and gender.
- Using multi-cultural “illiteracy” and race awareness exercises
- Exploring teacher expectations of student competency – introduce teachers to some of the research that shows how teachers have undervalued and underestimated the possibilities for achievement of students of color.
- Understanding how individual or subjective racism is manifested in teacher-student interaction and in the general culture of the school.
- Examining the phenomenon of labeling and the tradition of blaming the victim – discussion that is operative in how teachers interpret the behavior of people they are not accustomed to.
- Understanding covert manifestations of racism and reactions to racism – teachers learn to recognize that some mannerisms and behaviors among some students may be a reaction or a resistance to racism.
• Using student talk – panels of student speakers give their viewpoints of what racism feels like.

• Using parent talk – parents of color, and parents of children of color, should be invited to come and talk to teachers about their particular concerns or experiences.

• Using teacher talk – specific discussion of how teachers are feeling about their students of color and particular problems they encounter (p. 176-178).

Each of Kailin’s recommended ten components were included within the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program. Some of the components were combined with others in an effort to maximize the limited time provided within the program. For example, self-autobiography and the examination of the social backgrounds of participating teachers were combined at the outset of the program during the first two meeting sessions and a teacher of color at Buchanan Middle School, who was also a parent of a student at Buchanan, spoke to the group as both a parent and a teacher of color.

Lawrence and Tatum (1997) write of the prevalence of a lack of dialogue about race and culture, “one consequence of this silence about race is the unexamined impact of racial identity on interracial and intraracial interactions” (p. 163). Lack of dialogue, combined with the fact that many White people who do not even think of themselves as being “White” (Tatum, 1992) can produce a failure on the part of teachers to acknowledge their racial identity, and this lack of acknowledgement “becomes a barrier for understanding and connecting with the developmental needs of children of color”
(Lawrence and Tatum, 1997, p. 163). Pre-program findings revealed that participating teachers rarely, if ever, spoke to fellow peers about issues related to race and culture. Through a continual focus on topics related to race and culture, participants were able to break the silence that contributes to the failure of many to acknowledge their racial identity and address this significant issue.

Most important in bringing about change in one’s perspective of the world is through the critical reflection of assumptions that is made possible through dialogue. It is the critical self-reflection of assumptions that allows individuals to be freed from cultural distortions and constraints. Critical reflection of one’s own assumptions is necessary if open discourse is going to take place. Critical reflection is the cornerstone of Mezirow’s theme of rational discourse. Rational discourse facilitates the promotion and development of transformation in individuals and rests on the following assumptions:

- It is rational only as long as it meets the conditions necessary to create understanding with another
- It is to be driven by objectivity
- All actions and statements are open to question and discussion
- Understanding is arrived through the weighing of evidence and measuring the insight and strength of supporting arguments

The primary goal is to promote mutual understanding among others (Taylor, 1998, p. 17).

At the very first group meetings, the need for open dialogue and constructive discourse was discussed as the most central value of the program. It was made clear
that there were no right or wrong answers, that information shared within the groups would stay within the groups, that all participants would perceive things differently, that each participant was approaching the issues at hand through very different histories, biases, and preconceptions, and that it would take collective courage to be as open and honest with ourselves and one another for change to potentially take place.

Through participation in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, participants had the opportunity to learn of the need to teach to students through the lens of race and culture. Doing so included the utilization of cultural knowledge, frames of reference, prior experiences, relationships, and individualized learning styles. Tied directly to the development of understanding of the need for culturally responsive approaches and pedagogy is the beliefs and expectations that teachers hold for students of color.

Efficacy

Efficacy is the extent to which teachers believe they have the capacity to positively impact student learning and achievement. This teacher belief has a powerful and direct influence of what teachers expect from students, and it is expectations that directly influence teacher behaviors (Gay, 2000). Research shows that many teachers of students of color hold low levels of expectation for these students. Brophy and Everton’s (1977) empirical research found that teachers who were successful in producing student learning gains tended to have high expectations for students and also
assumed greater degrees of responsibility for their learning. Brophy and Evertson (1977) reported that when these successful teachers encountered difficulties, they viewed the difficulties as challenges that needed to be overcome through appropriate teaching methods as opposed to indicators that the students could not learn. High-efficacy teachers are persistent in their efforts with all students. Student failure is perceived as an incentive to greater teacher effort by high-efficacy teachers while low-efficacy teachers view student failure as resulting from causes beyond teacher control and beyond the teacher’s ability to affect that failure (Ross and Bruce, 2007). One of the most significant changes in thinking and understanding over the course of the study centered on teachers’ shifts in perceptions and behavior relative to the potential effectiveness of teacher-student relationships and classroom instruction in terms of positively impacting the learning of students of color. At the outset of the program, each teacher cited forces outside of the classroom as limiting the learning potential of students of color. Teachers cited socio-economic, language, and family issues among others as limiting student performance in the classroom. Not one teacher spoke of instruction, or a lack of culturally responsive instruction, as a limiting factor for students of color. By the conclusion of the program, teachers cited numerous teacher-based approaches and strategies that they believed could positively impact the learning potential of students of color, and very little focus was given to factors outside of teacher control.

According to Tucker et al. (2005), teacher efficacy has a powerful influence over the achievement of all students. While this potential influence is great, research also suggests that teachers have lower expectations for, and fewer interactions with,
minority children (Garibaldi, 1992). Teachers’ sense of efficacy is one of the few teacher characteristics that can be tied to student achievement. Teachers who believe that student achievement can be influenced by effective teaching despite home and peer influence and have confidence in their ability to help all students achieve will display characteristics linked to student success. These characteristics include greater persistence, greater academic focus in the classroom, and provision of a varied feedback to students, all contributing to increased student academic achievement (Gibson and Dembo, 1984). Teachers who demonstrate high levels of teacher-efficacy are more willing to try new teaching methods or ideas and to take risks in their teaching. These teachers tend to take on challenges and are more willing to share control in the classroom than low-efficacy teachers (Ross, 1998). Participants in the Culturally responsive Teaching Program experienced growth in terms of their persistence in working to improve their relationships with, and instruction provided to, students of color in their classrooms. Teachers applied a range of instructional changes in their practices that included changes in lesson structure, changes in student grouping, and pre-assessment of needs. Individualized feedback was also provided by teachers in concert with the development of more in-depth, individualized teacher-student relationships.

High-efficacy teachers not only demonstrate observable behaviors in the classroom in the form of techniques and teaching strategies. High-efficacy teachers demonstrate behaviors that promote the development of student efficacy. Teachers with high degrees of efficacy attend more closely to the needs of lower ability students than low-efficacy teachers. The reason for this is in part due to high-efficacy teachers having
positive attitudes towards low-achieving students, building relationships, and setting higher standards for these students than low-efficacy teachers. In the classroom setting, low-efficacy teachers tend to view low ability students as potential disruptions and therefore concentrate their efforts on the upper ability groups (Ashton, Webb, and Doda, 1983).

Ashton et al (1983) cite efficacy as a critical construct for teacher motivation, writing that “sense of efficacy is a critical construct in understanding motivation, because it influences the nature and extent of behavior, the amount of effort expended and degree of persistence maintained in the face of difficulty” (Ashton et. al., 1983, p. 10).

Ashton et al. write, “High efficacy teachers held positive attitudes toward their low-achieving students and worked to build friendly non-threatening relationships with them. Low-efficacy teachers had negative attitudes toward their low-achieving students and were more likely to use negative means of controlling them than their high efficacy counterparts,” (p.23)

Woolfolk and Hoy (2000) write that collective efficacy can be fostered through professional development opportunities and action research projects. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program attempted to build efficacy:

One way for school administrators to improve student achievement is by working to raise the collective efficacy beliefs of their faculties. Although mastery experiences are the most powerful efficacy changing forces, they may be the most difficult to deliver to a faculty with low collective efficacy. Thoughtfully designed staff development activities
and action research projects, however, are ways school administrators might provide efficacy-building mastery experiences (Goddard and Hoy, 2000, p. 502).

As an action research project, this program was successful in building efficacy in individual teachers and collective efficacy within a small group of educators. The development of meaningful, caring relationships between teachers and students is made especially difficult due to mismatches in teacher-student backgrounds according to Ornstein and Levine (1989). They write, “Teachers with middle-class backgrounds may experience particular difficulties in understanding and motivating their working-class and lower-class students. Problems of this nature may be particularly salient and widespread in the case of white teachers working with minority students” (pp 19-20).

Prior to the start of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, there was virtually no professional discussion concerning race and culture experienced by participants within Buchanan Middle School. The challenges written about by Ornstein and Levine played out in the daily lives of many, if not all teachers and their students of color at Buchanan Middle School. The ‘mismatch’ between teacher-student backgrounds was apparent and did impact the way in which teachers perceived students and the way in which many students perceived teachers. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program made teachers aware of this ‘mismatch’ and engaged participants in changing their perspective and understanding, and highlighted the importance of culture and relationships in the learning process for students of color. The resulting understanding and changes in teacher thinking motivated many to begin proactively fostering the development of relationships between teachers and students of color.
Geneva Gay (2000) writes that “caring (in the form of teacher expectations and their attendant instructional behaviors) is too pivotal in shaping the educational experiences of ethnically different students to be taken for granted or left to chance…it must be deliberately cultivated” (p.70). This aspect of culturally responsive teaching was a major area of focus within the program and proved to be perceived by teachers as a potentially powerful level for change in their classrooms. While the participating teachers valued relationships with students prior to participating in the program, the need for them to deliberately and proactively strive to develop positive relationships with students of color was emphasized and realized within teachers.

Geneva Gay (2000) writes of the importance of caring within the context of culturally responsive teaching:

Caring is one of the major pillars of culturally responsive pedagogy for ethnically diverse students. It is manifested in the form of teacher attitudes, expectations, and behaviors about students’ human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities. Teachers demonstrate carting for children as students and as people. This is expressed in concern for their psychoemotional well-being and academic success; personal morality and social actions; obligations and celebrations; community and individuality; and unique cultural connections and universal human bonds. (p. 45)

It is clear through the writings of Gay (2000) that the development of relationships alone is very important, but these relationships must be paired with,
as she writes, “teacher attitudes and expectations, and behaviors about students’ human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities” that are based on a belief in students of color. This program attempted to create changes in teacher attitudes and expectations that reflected an increased level of efficacy. This efficacy was designed to be founded on increased teacher perception of their ability to meet the learning needs of students of color, paired with an increased perception of the educational abilities and potential of students of color.

**Limitations of the Study**

There were a number of limitations and threats to validity in this study. Limitations include sample size, participant bias, researcher bias, duration of study, and testing.

The size of the sample, seven teachers in total, inhibited the potential for generalization of the findings beyond the one school involved in the study. Secondly, only two out of the three grades (sixth and eighth) were involved in this study. This was done for scheduling purposes and it significantly impacted the limited potential for generalization of the study. Findings can not be generalized to other middle school settings because of the small sample size.

The researcher recognized that the study participants were aware of the fact that they were participating in the study. Due to the fact that the participants were aware of their own participation, there is a possibility that they behaved in ways that were not
authentic because of their awareness. This phenomenon is known as the “Hawthorne effect” (Diaper, 1990). This limitation was addressed through the researchers repeated addresses to participants concerning the importance of participant honesty in their reflections. The possibility of participant bias may also have been magnified given the common perception of sensitivity and caution that often accompanies sharing of beliefs and attitudes held in regards to the topics associated with race and culture.

The researcher as principal and direct supervisor of participants may have significantly impacted the degree to which participants felt that they could share their beliefs and attitudes relative to their students of color, their teaching experiences at Buchanan Middle School, and their beliefs and attitudes relative to issues related to race and culture.

The researcher created and implemented all data collection instruments associated with the study. The researcher as participant and school leader will potentially present limitations and threats to validity of the study.

The duration of the study lasted ten months and manifested itself in nine meeting sessions. The duration of the study limits the degree to which the findings can be generalized.
Implications and Recommendations for Practice

This study produced a number of implications and recommendations for practice. Implications and recommendations include the need for; courageous leadership, persistence, promotion of the development of racial identity, understanding of racial identity development, promotion of collaboration, advancement of transformational learning, and the development of multi-dimensional learning experiences.

Courageous action

The leader must exhibit and model courageous action in addressing issues that are all too often not addressed. Doing so requires the leader to explore topics that reveal a great deal about his or her own thinking, beliefs, and experiences in a manner that exposes his or her needs, fears, and hopes. Committing to an in-depth level of ongoing dialogue involves a great deal of uncertainty and a lack of control on the part of the leader. How participants will react in terms of their own beliefs and perceptions as well as how they may react to the beliefs and perceptions of others cannot be known in advance. The issues of race and culture are charged with historical and experiential baggage that also cannot be known until that baggage is unpacked. The courageous leader must commit to the struggle and the process of exploring with others the very challenging yet potentially powerful road that can lead to growth and unrealized potential of both teachers and students.
Persistence

Blumer and Tatum (1999) found that persistence was the universal ingredient in the creation of an anti-racist culture, they wrote:

Beyond persistence, there is no cookbook formula for creating an active anti-racist culture. Educators must choose methods and ingredients adaptable to the situation of a specific school system at a particular time. While change can happen ‘from the bottom up’, our experience is that these grass root efforts are very difficult to sustain without central administrative support. The impact of committed leadership at the top of an organization cannot be underestimated. Certainly it is an essential ingredient to long-term success. (p.266)

Many educators and educational leaders fail to take action in developing their personal and institutional abilities in the area of anti-racist practices. Many seem to believe that a particular set of strategies, or that one great workshop or professional development experience will address and solve the problems at hand. This workshop, nor any other professional development experience alone, will address and ‘solve’ the issues associated with race and culture. Addressing such challenging and often seemingly overwhelming issues such as those related to race and culture will require consistent persistence as a guiding principle. Districts and schools that dedicate themselves to development of anti-racist and culturally responsive practices need to recognize and commit themselves to persistence in this critical, invaluable, and never-ending effort.
**Promote the Development of Racial Identity**

Racial awareness sets the foundation for learning, developing, and implementing multicultural attitudes and culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom. In order for teachers to be able to fully understand the cultural and racial development of others, they must understand their own racial identity. This study has explored the ways in which a year-long program can impact teacher’s racial identity development. Research suggests that the development of one’s racial and cultural self-identity serves as a crucial foundation on which culturally responsive and anti-racist practices can be established. Vavrus (2002) writes, “transformative multicultural education necessitates the presence of teachers whose clarity of their own racial identity serves to affirm the identity of all students” (p.24). The promotion of understanding of racial identity development alone is insufficient. This effort must be led by those who understand racial identity development and who can use their knowledge to help guide and encourage the development of teachers.

**Understand Racial Identity Development**

The leader who commits himself to furthering the racial identity development of others is well served understanding as much as possible about racial identity development. Understanding Helms’ stages of racial identity development is invaluable in allowing the educational leader to gauge where individual participants are at, and to have a greater understanding of what their thinking may be focused upon. An understanding of racial identity development is beneficial in that it can assist the leader
in designing professional development experiences that are tailored to the needs of individuals at different stages in their development of antiracist White identity. The creation and implementation of one-size-fits-all professional development does not typically meet the needs of all participants due to the fact that individuals are typically at different stages of personal development in terms of their identity development. Racial identity development is fostered through collaboration and dialogue that is ongoing, open, and supportive within the collaborative structure.

**Foster Collaboration**

Often congeniality and day-to-day interactions between teachers are perceived as collaboration. While research has shown that social interactions and congeniality are important (Dufour, 2003), it is collaboration that offers great opportunity in creating transformative growth within schools. It is important for school leaders to recognize these differences and to define and foster ongoing collaboration. The creation of opportunities for structured collaboration provides teachers with powerful opportunities for growth and has the potential to dramatically impact classroom practices.

Educational leaders should look to first establish structural conditions that are most conducive to ongoing collaboration between teachers. Such structural conditions include time for collaboration to take place, communication structures, and the existence of interdependent teacher roles (Krus, Louis, and Bryk, 1994), while collaborative intent is important, without supportive structures, collaboration is often not possible.
Once structures are in place, making collaboration possible, leaders must work to espouse and define the values associated with collaboration within the school and/or district. Reflective dialogue, collective focus on student learning, trust and respect, openness to improvement, cognitive and skill-based teaching and learning, supportive leadership, and socialization of teachers are all cited as values connected with the development of collaboration within a school or district (Krus, Louis, and Bryk, 1994). True collaboration is difficult to produce and involves a great deal of structural and value-based work if it is to be successful and integral in bringing about school or district-based change.

**Advance Transformational Learning**

Transformational learning is based upon the theory that individuals must break free from their own biases. Mezirow (1995) cited the need for critical reflection and rational discourse to exist in order for transformational learning to take place. Critical reflection involves adults looking back on their experiences and assumptions in an effort to question the integrity of these previously held assumptions. It is through the process of critical reflection that biases and existing cultural distortions and constraints can be brought to light. It is important that educational leaders work to encourage critical reflection in general, but it is essential for teachers to engage in critical reflection when engaging in the process of racial identity development and addressing the cultural and racial needs of students of color.

Educational leaders will be most successful in fostering the development of critical reflection by creating opportunities and skills centered on rational discourse.
Rational discourse is focused on objective, evidenced-based sharing of ideas and experiences that are geared toward building mutual understanding between people. Collaboration that is founded on rational discourse allows for teachers to not only share and examine their own thinking and beliefs, but they will also receive feedback from others that assists them in this effort. Teachers will be better able to apply new ways of thinking and to constantly re-evaluate results of their actions through rationale discourse. Essential to this effort are the establishment of shared norms and values centered on rational discourse and the development of collaborative opportunities with others that are ongoing.

*Embrace the Power of Student Voice*

Each program participant cited the power and influence of student voice on their transformative experiences within the program. During the program, students in both seventh and eighth grade spoke with teachers about their personal experiences as students of color. Leaders should work to incorporate student voice into teacher development experiences.

*Develop Multi-Dimensional Learning Experiences*

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program incorporated a number of varied learning experiences for teachers, many of which were based on the work of Kailin. As opposed to many professional development experiences that focus on one or two dimensions (i.e. reading and reflection, speakers, discussion, etc.) this program built in
student-talk, teacher and parent talk, readings, dialogue, meeting exercises, etc. While the majority of teachers cited the student-talk and the parent/teacher talk portions as most influential on their thinking, each voiced a belief that the multi-dimensional aspect of the program helped sustain interest throughout the year.

Educational leaders are encouraged to develop learning experiences for teachers that are not only collaborative, but are also multi-dimensional in order to maximize learning and development of all individuals.

**Implications and Recommendations for Policy**

On the national level, it is imperative that the specific learning needs of students of color are recognized and supported at all levels. Policies geared towards meeting the educational needs of diverse learners need to provide greater support and funding for student opportunities to learn, better incorporate professional development for current teachers, and maximize the preparation for student teachers who will be teaching diverse students in the future.

Opportunities for student learning have been a topic of policy debate on the federal level for over two decades. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (NCLB, 2002) included opportunity to learn in its accountability structure. NCLB states that lack of equity in the classroom can result in serious adverse consequences for schools and teachers. While adverse consequences threaten those schools and districts that fail
to provide equity, the funding needed to provide needed services and changes has been lacking. Increased national awareness surrounding the significant inequities that exist in the funding, quality, and delivery of education must be paired with funds to support dramatic increases in professional development that best supports students of color. Such professional development needs to include supports for teachers and educational leaders that include focus on; cultural awareness, pedagogy, curriculum, assessments, interventions, and innovations designed to best meet the educational needs of students of color.

As we strive to better equip the existing teaching force for the adaptive challenges that are currently presented by the achievement gap between White students and students of color, policies must exist to better prepare individuals training to become teachers.

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teachers (NCATE) has mandated that multicultural education be included as a component of teacher certification programs across the nation. NCATE cites the use of a variety of components as necessary in addressing this mandate; these components include courses, readings, clinicals, and field experiences. A 1994 study by Gollnick found that ten years after the 1982 NCATE mandate, only eight out of fifty nine accreditation reports from teacher preparation programs in the United States were in full compliance with NCATE accreditation mandates.

In assessing the educational backgrounds of the participating teachers in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program, only one teacher participated in an undergraduate course designed to focus on race and culture. The teacher who did
participate in this course cited the fact that this course was not a mandatory requirement within her teacher preparation program. Clearly we know of the cultural mismatch between the students in classrooms across the nation and the largely White, female, middle-class teachers preparing to teach these students. Mandating and requiring greater preparation and understanding of issues related to race and culture may be very beneficial in decreasing the degree to which potential teachers and existing students are mismatched.

Banks (1999) provides multicultural benchmarks for schools to utilize in order to maintain an effective multicultural school. He states the following should be in place (p. 106):

- A multicultural education policy statement sanctions and supports diversity.
- The staff has positive attitudes and expectations toward diverse students.
- The school staff reflects ethnic and cultural diversity.
- The curriculum is transformational and action-focused.
- Parent participation provides a cultural context for teaching and a link with student personal/cultural knowledge.
- Teaching strategies are constructivist, personalized, empowering, and participatory.
- Teaching materials present diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural perspectives on events, concepts, and issues.

At the district level, every school district should “have a policy statement on multicultural education that conveys the board of education's dedication to establishing
and preserving schools in which students from all groups have an equal opportunity to learn” (Banks, 1999). The purposes of a policy statement include: legitimacy to multicultural education in the district, facilitating the creation of programs and practices that promote cultural diversity and equal educational opportunities for all, and communication to parents and the public that multicultural education is a priority in the district (Banks, 1999). Policy statements at the district level must be tied directly to the core values of the system, and the values of each school in the system. It is when these values are clearly understood and are lived out on a daily basis throughout the entire system that progress can be made. All decisions, from economic to hiring, must be done with the core values of the system in mind. The policy statement will be carried out in terms of ongoing supervision of staff, evaluation of staff, evaluation of school leadership and performance, hiring procedures, and goal setting at the school and district level.

At the school level, the school puts into place the policies and values of the district. All staff must be expected to have positive attitudes and expectations toward students of color. These attitudes and expectations should be monitored and evaluated by the teachers and administration within the school. The staff itself should reflect ethnic and cultural diversity and should participate fully in the district efforts to seek out and incorporate diversity into its system through proactive recruiting efforts.

The curriculum should allow for constant reflection and modifications to best include opportunities to incorporate race and cultural facets. School and district policy should encourage teachers to work collaboratively to seek out opportunities for students to reflect upon their own racial identities as well as the cultural and racial issues
surrounding them in their immediate environment. Policies should also promote teachers and students looking outside of their immediate environments to best learn about and prepare for the diversity the world provides.

Parental involvement should be promoted through district and school policy. Parent involvement should be viewed as an opportunity to elicit and incorporate culture into learning as much as possible. Parents should be viewed and utilized as a resource, linking parents with tremendous resources for knowledge and understanding about cultural and racial background information.

District and school policy should ensure that teaching strategies are both individualized and empowering. Standards and principles of effective teaching should clearly delineate what instruction that is individualized, empowering, and participatory looks like in practice. Utilizing culturally responsive teaching strategies can no longer be optional for teachers in the twenty first century. Yet, requiring teachers to change their instructional practices alone is not sufficient. Such a call for action must be in line with the explicit values of the system and school and must be supported through ongoing professional development for teachers around the skills and changes in thinking that are necessary for such a change to take place.

The provision of changes in teaching strategies must also be accompanied by changes in teaching materials. Again, if this effort is stated as a central value of a school and district, policies and expenditures must be in place to support this value. Many of the existing textbooks and ways in which certain topics are taught, include few, if any, cultural or racial materials. Teachers and curricular leaders must work to look upon their current curriculum and teaching strategies to identify areas of need for
inclusion of diverse racial and cultural materials, examples, and perspective within their current curriculum, and then work to purchase needed materials and to infuse them into the curriculum.

These efforts are all very important, yet they will all be for naught if policies establishing and defining ongoing monitoring, assessment, and commitment to continuous improvement in this area are not carried out and enforced in a relentless and dogged manner. This can be done through a number of different approaches. One important approach would involve the district and school-based improvement plans including these efforts and being evaluated and revisited in a public forum on a regular basis.

**Implications and Recommendations for Future Research**

This study provided insights into the ways in which a multi-dimensional, job-embedded professional development experience impacted teacher beliefs, attitudes, understandings, and practices related to culturally responsive teaching.

This study took place over the course of one school year, with group meetings taking place on a monthly basis. Looking at the way in which a similar program, designed with more frequent group meetings in mind may prove beneficial to participants may be of interest. Increasing the duration of the study to two or more years would potentially provide valuable longitudinal data.
This study involved a group of seven teachers, all of whom were White. Further research on larger sample groups as well as diverse teacher groups may provide additional insights into the group dynamics that may impact teacher development in a similar program.

While students of color played an important role within the context of the program, speaking twice with program groups, the changes experienced by students was not assessed. Future research may consider tracking of changes in student perception and learning in response to changes in teacher practices within the classroom.

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program took place within the context of the school day. Repeating the study outside of the regular school day would potentially provide valuable information in terms of the impact of the job-embedded nature of the program plays on teacher growth and development.

Future research may consider greater inclusion of issues closely related to race and culture within the context of the school setting. Increased focus on socio-economic factors and language-based issues may contribute to greater understanding of factors impacting teaching and learning.

The focus of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was very broad in nature. The term ‘students of color’ was defined in a very broad sense and did not explicitly focus on English language learners, or any one racial or cultural group. Further research may consider providing greater definition to the particular student needs being addressed, along with greater definition provided to the racial and cultural groups being included within the context of study.
Reflections on Leadership

As a leader I have learned a great deal about myself, and my leadership, through this study. The two areas of most significant growth for me have been lessons learned through my effort to put the virtues of responsibility and authenticity into practice and a greater understanding of the complexities and realities of adaptive work.

I decided to embark on my journey that became the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program as a result of a graduate class that focused on the need for leadership that lived out responsibility and authenticity to meet the learning needs of our students of color. Through participation in this class, I felt I needed to work to become a more authentic leader and to accept the full responsibility of leadership. To me this meant extending myself to commit to a challenging, complicated, and never-ending path of self-improvement and the facilitation of change in others.

Robert Starratt (2004) writes, “The educator-leader has to be responsible for nurturing and sustaining a learning environment characterized by authenticity and responsibility” (p.55). As an educational leader, I made the conscious decision to address the seemingly overwhelming challenges that very often accompany topics that involve race and culture and to make a commitment to making changes even though there were no clear answers or approaches that I knew of.

In many ways, I realized early on in the process of designing the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program that I would be calling upon myself to be more authentic with myself as a leader and with others as learners than I had ever been before. I was
essentially asking participants to engage in a process that was focused on producing authenticity within themselves. By purposefully asking participants to look within themselves and to peel back layers of perceptions, biases, and experiences, authenticity was enhanced. Starratt (2004) writes that:

Authentic persons come to realize that about themselves: that their own authenticity is made up of layers of culturally and spiritually constructed “stuff” – all those things that some recent philosophers point to in their “deconstruction of the self.” Oddly enough, however, authentic persons become more, not less, in the process of such deconstruction, as they become aware of where they came from, how they came to be. They discover in that process the much greater freedom to choose to be some or all of that self, including some or all of the culturally and spiritually constructed layers of themselves. (p.75)

Pushing others to look within themselves is challenging, yet incredibly rewarding work. I have learned that this work takes time, persistence, and trust. Unlike all other efforts I have made in terms of professional development with peers in the past, I did not believe I had the answers or knew exactly where our path would take us. I simply knew initially that being on the path was essential.

Once we had created and collectively stepped onto the path, it was the virtue of presence that enabled me to better understand what was going on around me as the program progressed. Presence, as defined by Starratt (2004), means “coming down from the balcony where you were indifferently watching your own performance, engaging the other with your full attention, and risking the spontaneity of the moment
to say something unrehearsed, something that responds to the authenticity of the other from your own authenticity” (p. 87). As a leader, it took a certain degree of courage to give up control that comes with scripted meetings and agendas and to allow for increased freedom of dialogue and exploration, risking the spontaneity that Starratt refers to. By being consciously as present as possible to the teacher participants throughout the program, I believe it allowed me to more fully understand what was taking place around me during the program and heightened my ability to model openness and presence for others. Starratt (2004) writes that presence to others also activates authenticity, “that is why this kind of presence is a virtue: it produces good.” As a leader I have now seen how the virtue of presence can affect others and how it can produce authenticity.

Through this study, I have learned a great deal about many facets of adaptive leadership. Adaptive challenges are defined by Heifetz and Linsky (2002) as those that:

Cannot be solved by someone who provides answers from on high. We call these adaptive challenges because they require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization or community. Without learning new ways – changing attitudes, values, and behaviors – people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment (p. 13).

As a leader, I was attempting to face the reality within one school of a failure of educators to thrive in an environment that was comprised of diverse learners and a
largely homogeneous teaching force. In my opinion, the work of Heifetz and Linsky (2002) made it clear that new ways of learning as evidenced by – changing attitudes, values, and behaviors, had not been integrated into the thinking and behaviors of educators at Buchanan Middle School. While faced with the adaptive challenges posed by student diversity, there had been no adaptive response. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Program was designed to provide a relatively small, yet important response to this adaptive challenge. Two central adaptive leadership lessons were learned through my leadership of this program. One is that leadership is an ‘improvisational art” as described by Heifitz and Linsky. They write of the fact that while a leader may have “an overarching vision, clear, orienting values, and even a strategic plan” (p.73), what is done from moment to moment cannot be scripted or entirely planned for. The effective leader has to:

Move back and forth from the balcony to the dance floor, over and over again throughout the day, week, month, and year. You take action, step back and assess the results of the action, reassess the plan, then go back to the dance floor and make the next move. (p.73)

The second central lesson for me involved an understanding of the need to lead in accordance to your own beliefs. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) write,

If you are to be authentic and effective, you must play your role in accordance with what you believe so that your passions infuse your work You need to realize that you cannot have it both ways. If you are attacked, discredited, ostracized, or fired, you may feel that you have experienced a kind of assassination. But you cannot expect people to seriously consider
your idea without accepting the possibility that they will challenge it. Accepting that process of engagement as the terrain of leadership liberates you personally. It enables you to be just as involved in working on your idea as everybody else, without withdrawing or becoming entrenched in personal defense (p.190).

Initially I worried about putting my personal beliefs ‘out’ to others in such a public and ongoing manner as the school principal. Through the program I realized the tremendous power and freedom that comes with leading with the heart. If and when ideas were challenged and questioned, there was very little thought given to role, instead the focus was on my ideas and views as a person and fellow educator.

Adaptive challenges such as those faced throughout the Culturally Responsive Teaching Program are ultimately endless in nature. The work that is required is never completed. The realizations associated with leadership as improvisational art and leading with the heart, along with a mindset of continual growth and reassessment, are critical to this kind of important work.

Finally, as a leader I learned that the dangers associated with courageous and compassionate leadership are outweighed by the potential gains from such leadership. In hindsight, I have limited my own leadership potential as a result of fear for many years. I have feared the unknown and both the real and imagined resistance to challenging deeply seated beliefs, attitudes, and practices of others. I now understand that it is through compassionate and authentic leadership that I will reach my full
potential as a leader and person. It is also through compassionate, courageous, and authentic leadership that I will be most effective in maximizing the potential in others.

Conclusion

Supporting teachers as they collaboratively attempt to change and improve the ways in which they think, believe, and act in relation to students of color in their classrooms is complex, challenging, and rewarding work. This study confirmed that through an ongoing, focused, collaborative professional development experience, teacher perceptions related to themselves and the ways in which they think about and teach students of color can be changed.
APPENDIX A

Pre-Program Interviews

Date: _______________   Place: ___________________________________

Introduction: As you know from the letter of consent, this research will be focused on cultural awareness, culturally responsive teaching, adult development, and collaboration. This interview will be audio recorded, but all of the information gathered will be confidential. Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions you would like to ask?

1. Describe your perception of teacher collaboration at this school. What does it typically look like?

2. How has teacher collaboration impacted your teaching?

3. Do you ever get a chance to discuss issues related to race and culture with other teachers or students at school? When do these discussions take place, and what do they typically include in terms of discussion?

4. What has been your general experience working with a diverse student body?

5. How do you feel about teaching a diverse student group?

6. Do you do anything to accommodate the different cultural backgrounds of your students? If so, what do those accommodations look like in your classroom?

7. Do you feel that the presence of diverse students affects the dynamic of your classes? If so, how?

8. In a general sense, what are your perceptions of the performance of diverse students in your classes?

9. Research has shown that a gap in academic performance exists between some students from diverse backgrounds and White students. What are your thoughts on this?
10. Do you think that culture affects students’ learning and your teaching? If so, how?

11. What are the difficulties you face when trying to accommodate the diverse students?

12. How do you address these difficulties?

13. Have you received any education or training around meeting the needs of diverse students? Do you feel prepared to meet their needs?

14. Do you do anything in particular to discover or find out about the cultural backgrounds of your students? If yes, what does this look like?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview.
APPENDIX B

Mid-Program Reflection Prompts

Prompt #1
How has your experience in the CRT program (to this point) impacted the way that you think about students of color?

Prompt #2
How has participation in the CRT program impacted the way in which you see yourself in terms of your own racial identity?

Prompt #3
How has participation in this CRT program impacted your teaching?

Prompt #4
How has participation in the CRT program impacted your beliefs in your own ability to teach students of color?
APPENDIX C

Post-Program Interview Questions – Guiding Questions / Semi-Structured Format

What aspects of the program impacted your own growth as an educator?

Has the program changed the way that you think about race at all?

Do you feel any better prepared to meet the needs of students of color?

Has the program changed the way you think about your own racial identity? How?

Has the program changed the way you think about the academic abilities of students of color?

What did you think about going through the program with peers? Was this helpful, not helpful?

You spoke about how you are going to change your instruction, have you so far?

Has participation impacted your confidence around the issue of teaching students of color?

Has the program furthered your anti-racist development?

Have your expectations of students of color changed?

Has participation impacted your willingness to talk with colleagues or students about race?

How about with students?

Were there any components of the program that you found particularly helpful?

Time and frequency of meetings – the program was embedded in school day, any thoughts on this?
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