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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Editorial Board Members

It is our great privilege to be the editors of this journal. The opportunity to review the scholarly work of others and provide a forum for dissemination is important work. Three original pieces of research are included in this volume of the journal. Selected for originality and timeliness, it is our hope that some part of your educational practice might be informed. It is our goal to feature voices that might be considered outside of the expected or usual.

What is your philosophy of education? One might ask if this is ever a serious question or rather just an academic exercise? Do you really want my philosophy or are you just looking to make sure my philosophy matches a certain litmus test? If the words diversity, inclusion and equity are central to the statement, will the test be passed? In her article, Dr. Tiffany Bates, raises the important issue of how a philosophy might inform practice. Can a philosophy be integral to our professional work? The implications for teacher training programs, as well as public schools, are included as part of this research.

Rightly considered, discipline is something that you have rather than something that you do. The procedures that are used to establish and maintain discipline in a school or a classroom are critical to establishing a learning environment that is fair to the diverse populations that we serve. Can discipline be fair if the differences in our students are not important variables in how we structure our daily interactions? Dr. Jaime Welborn uses the lens of cultural proficiency to examine this issue. To what extent do norms and expectations match student groups and how does what we know about diversity drive our decision-making?

It is a time-honored tradition in many classrooms to begin the day with what is called a morning meeting. This teacher-led meeting reviews the events of the day and might be topical about a current event or something the teacher considers important. If nothing else, students are reminded of the day of the week, date and year, and the weather forecast. Whether this is time well spent might deserve some attention. Dr. Christine Uliassi provides a case study that demonstrates how this meeting time can be a more meaningful exercise in social and emotional learning and one that might expand critical literacy skills.

Should you be so inclined, please consider sharing any personal reflection or critical review of the journal's content. We would like to consider a review feature in future editions of the journal. Best wishes for 2023.

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Pre-Service Teacher Perceptions: The Alignment of Written Philosophy and Clinical Practice

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Abstract

Educators have robust beliefs about teaching and learning. These beliefs are regularly expressed through philosophies. The philosophy is often constructed during teacher preparation programs. The philosophy describes how an educator will facilitate learning in their classroom. Some believe the philosophy is a mere practice that satisfies course requirements. Others think it is a document that only helps land a job. This poses the question: do educators apply their philosophies to their practice once they have entered the classroom? Using the qualitative method, the researcher uncovers the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding the alignment of their philosophy and practice. Through an electronic self-reflective evaluation form and in-person discussions, fifteen pre-service teachers explored the alignment of their philosophies and clinical practice. Participants also uncovered the reasons behind the alignment or disconnect. The analysis of participant reporting suggests many pre-service teachers apply at least half of their philosophy to their practice. In times of disconnect, participants identified barriers that were in and out of their control. In addition, some participants evaluated their philosophy and made changes to their practice. This research proves the significance of the written philosophy and discovers the importance of engaging in this type of evaluative exercise.

Key Words: pre-service teachers, philosophy, clinical experience, reflexivity, teacher education

Background

The statement of teaching and learning, often referred to as the teaching philosophy, is a written reflection that uses specific examples to articulate and demonstrate an educator's beliefs about how teaching and learning occurs in their classroom (Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.). Educators generally write this statement while completing their college or university's teacher preparation program. This statement normally details the ways an educator's day-to-day practices reflect and inform their approach to teaching (Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.). Importantly, your teaching philosophy statement also explains why you choose these options (Center for Educational Innovation, n.d.).

There are various reasons for writing a teaching philosophy. One of these reasons is to document beliefs to easily articulate them to students, peers, or search committees. Another is that it may serve as an introduction to a teaching portfolio. A third reason is to serve as a document of professional growth. Literature indicates that the teaching philosophy also serves different functions. Prospective employers routinely require a written philosophy to be included in application materials (Beatty, Leigh, & Dean 2009). It could be used as a catalyst to promote conversation during the interview process (Chism, 1998). It can also be a way to promote oneself as an educator (Zauha, 2008). No matter the reason, the philosophy should showcase an educator's core ideas and beliefs in the context of their discipline. In addition, it should be expected that these core ideals should be observable in their classrooms.

Research suggests that educational practice does not always align with written theories. Furthermore, it goes as far as suggesting that what is written in a philosophy of teaching and learning may not be what is occurring in the classroom. As Lawrence (1970) states:

> Dewey spotlights accurately the reason why so much educational practice lags far behind theory; few teachers have themselves experienced the kind of education in which they theoretically believe. It is therefore, for them, still in the realm of information and not of understanding. (p. 320).

If few teachers have not experienced the education in which they theoretically believe, how can one be sure they are applying that education into their own practices? If practice is lagging behind theory, this could mean written philosophies and practice do not always align. Dewey (1916) has also explained that education is not an act of telling and being told, but an act of doing (p. 37). It is the constructive process, which is a principle almost as generally dishonored in practice but stated in theory. "Is not this deplorable situation due to the fact that the doctrine is itself merely told? It is preached; it is lectured; it is written about" (Dewey, 1916).

More recently, the act of writing a teaching philosophy and the opportunity to put it into practice has been questioned. In the article, "The Teaching Philosophy: An Opportunity to Guide Practice or an Exercise in Futility?" the authors explore two questions - what is the point of the teaching Philosophy Statement? And is it just a futile exercise that means very little once teachers become a part of the system? In the article, the authors describe how "once in the system, many educators are either forced to abandon their education philosophy or take on several different belief systems, despite possible contradictions. As a result, teaching philosophies are not being used

as they were intended – to set goals and guide practice (Stribling, DeMulder, Barnstead, & Dallman, 2015). This research indicates a barrier for educators to apply their philosophies. The authors go on to indemnity the main barrier to be standardized testing. Many teachers struggle to maintain their own pedagogical beliefs under the pressure of testing and accountability (Patchen & Crawford, 2011). In addition, although teachers recognize the value of student-centered teaching, they find they use more teacher focused, direct instruction in preparation for state tests (Faulkner & Cook, 2006). Both of these statements prove that additional barriers may exist. Barriers that are out of the educator's control.

Further literature sheds light on the true purpose of the teaching philosophy and how it may check off another box, rather than influence practice. Maryellen Weimer (2018) shared:

> There's a new book out called Activating a Teaching-Learning Philosophy. The word "activating" caught my attention. To me that says "doing something about your teaching-learning philosophy." Unfortunately, our current use of teaching philosophy statements doesn't usually contain that expectation. Most often faculty prepare these statements as part of job applications, promotion and tenure processes, or for permanent contract positions.

The author extends her opinion by saying there's strong motivation to construct the philosophy statement that anticipates what the reviewers want to read, as opposed to one that reflects actual belief. This means pre-service teachers and current educators could write statements in their philosophy that they do not necessarily intend on implementing in their classrooms. Rather, these statements are written to impress the reader, land the job, or gain promotion. After this is achieved, "teaching philosophy statements likely end up in a file where they don't have much impact on teaching or learning" (Weimer, 2018).

Another author wrote an informative piece about how to write a teaching philosophy, yet, shared her skepticism as well. This author asked questions such as, "Is it worthwhile to require these? Do they tell us anything helpful? Does a teaching statement accurately reflect the kind of teaching a person does?" (Barrett-Fox, 2019). The author goes on to share she's not convinced that we take them [teaching philosophies] seriously. "And yet here we are, writing them" (Barrett-Fox, 2019). This piece depicts the routine of writing a philosophy, but also makes the reader wonder about what the underlying purpose. The last question is worth exploring: does a teaching statement accurately reflect the kind of teaching a person does? If the answer is no, it is possible that the teaching philosophy is not being implemented the way it was intended.

Conversely, other research shows the connection between written theory and classroom practice. In an article written by Jenkins (2011), the author investigates where educator beliefs come from and how they influence the development of their teaching practice. It was found that educator beliefs were largely influenced by their own past experiences of learning and some of the broad traditions of adult education (Jenkins, 2011). This is much like what Dewey spotlighted above. "Yet arguably of greater interest was the finding that adult educators' philosophies of teaching were also influenced by their current practice, their interaction with learners, and the challenges of the day-to-day learning context." (Jenkins, 2011). The author went on to describe how the educators' philosophies mimicked when was observed in their practice. This could prove that written philosophies are more than simple assignments that satisfy course requirements.

Problem

The research suggests that written philosophies of teaching and learning are mere exercises that educators complete as a requirement of their teacher preparation program. On the other hand, some educators construct their philosophy for the application process. Additional research reports that these philosophies are to please professors and hiring managers. This could lead one to believe that philosophies may contain what the writer wants someone to read, rather than what the writer actual does in their own classroom.

Writing a philosophy of education is required by almost every United States teacher preparation institution. In addition, it is often a required component to an educator's application packet upon applying for a job. The problem is that pre-service teachers are writing these philosophies, but may not be applying them into their practice once landing the job. The other issue, as mentioned above, lies within the purpose of the written philosophy. Some educators believe their philosophy fulfills a course requirement or job application packet, rather than being a document that outlines how teaching and learning will occur in their future classrooms.

Purpose

The current research study collects information to uncover the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding the alignment between their written philosophy and their clinical practice. During this study, participants self-reflect on the belief statements included in their philosophies. They engage in written evaluations and verbal discussions to determine whether they apply their philosophy in their current placement. Participants are given the opportunity to revisit their philosophy, revise their practice, and determine barriers for possible disconnects. In addition, participants have the chance to discuss the changes they would make to their future classrooms upon

graduation and job attainment. Overall, this study aims to add to the current research on theory versus practice.

Guiding Questions

In the study, the researcher investigates the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding their alignment of philosophy and practice by aiming to answer the following questions:

1. How well does your practice align with your philosophy of teaching and learning?
2. Can you identify the most important ideas, beliefs, or statements in your written philosophy?
3. Do you apply these statements to your current practice?
4. What evidence do you have to support your application of ideals?
5. What, if anything, has prevented you from applying your ideals?

The guiding questions listed above helped the investigator gain insight into whether the pre-service teachers were aligning their practice with their philosophy. Additional questions were utilized to gain more information and further class discussion. These questions include: what do you hope to accomplish when you teach? What personal qualities make an individual a great teacher? Do you believe all your students want to learn? What do you believe are the most effective teaching strategies? And why do you select particular experiences for your students? Each of these questions were followed by an additional probe.

Methodology

The study was conducted using a qualitative method of research. The instrument used to collect data was an investigator-developed self-evaluation form. Participants recorded their thoughts and cited evidence on this electronic form The researcher also conducted group discussions during the practicum course. Self-evaluation, self-reflection, and self-study are practices that provide a way for pre-service teachers to interpret and describe their pedagogies of teaching and learning. Focusing on the principles of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action established by Schön (1983), self-studies often feature in-depth descriptions of the issues and barriers pre-service teachers encounter during their practice (Loughran & Russell, 2002).

Procedures

The researcher obtained the data during a practicum course that took place throughout the second half of the semester. The practicum course is taught by university professors who act as educators and supervisors of clinical experience. This course is known to be a bridge between coursework at the university and practical experience in the placement schools. The researcher

gained the consent of all participants who enrolled in this practicum course. Participants were required to review, sign, and return the consent forms to the researcher. If a participant wanted to remove themselves from the study at any time, they had the choice to do so without question or given reason. After the researcher obtained the signed consent forms, she informed participants of the start of the study. Participant names are kept private to help ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of each participant.

Participants

The researcher was able to recruit all students that enrolled in the practicum course for the second half of the semester. This study includes a total of fifteen participants. All participants were required to be 18 years of age or older, in good standing of their teacher preparation program, and were participating in their clinical experience placement. Of the fifteen participants, twelve were female and three were male. There were three participants between the ages of 18 and 21, eleven between the ages of 22 and 24, and one who was 25 or older. When it comes to their program of study, eight participants were elementary education majors while the other seven were dual majors (special education/elementary education). The participants who added concentrations onto their certification concentrated in a mix of subjects including early childhood, autism, vision, and psychology.

The visual representation of this data is presented in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	AGE	PROGRAM	CONCENTRATION
1	Female	18-21	Elementary Education	Early Childhood
2	Female	22-24	Elementary Education	Autism
3	Male	22-24	Elementary Education	NA
4	Female	18-21	Dual (El. Ed./Special)	NA
5	Female	22-24	Elementary Education	Psychology
6	Female	22-24	Dual (El. Ed./Special)	NA
7	Male	22-24	Elementary Education	NA
8	Female	22-24	Elementary Education	Early Childhood
9	Female	18-21	Dual (El. Ed./Special)	Vision
10	Female	25 and older	Dual (El. Ed./Special)	NA
11	Male	22-24	Elementary Education	NA
12	Female	22-24	Dual (El. Ed./Special)	Vision
13	Female	22-24	Dual (El. Ed./Special)	NA
14	Female	22-24	Elementary Education	Early Childhood
15	Female	22-24	Dual (El. Ed./Special)	NA

Participant Placements

Through further analysis, the researcher was able to compile data on participant placement locations. This location data was collected by the name of the placement school, researching the school building's location, and mapping where this school is located. The fifteen participants represented eight school buildings within six different school districts. These school buildings are located in six towns/cities in eastern Pennsylvania.

The visual representation of the data is included below in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Placement Locations

- BUILDING ONE (3 STUDENTS)
- BUILDING TWO (1 STUDENT)
- BUILDING THREE (3 STUDENTS)
- BUILDING FOUR (1 STUDENT)
- BUILDING FIVE (2 STUDENTS)
- BUILDING SIX (2 STUDENTS)
- BUILDING SEVEN (2 STUDENTS)
- BUILDING EIGHT (1 STUDENT)
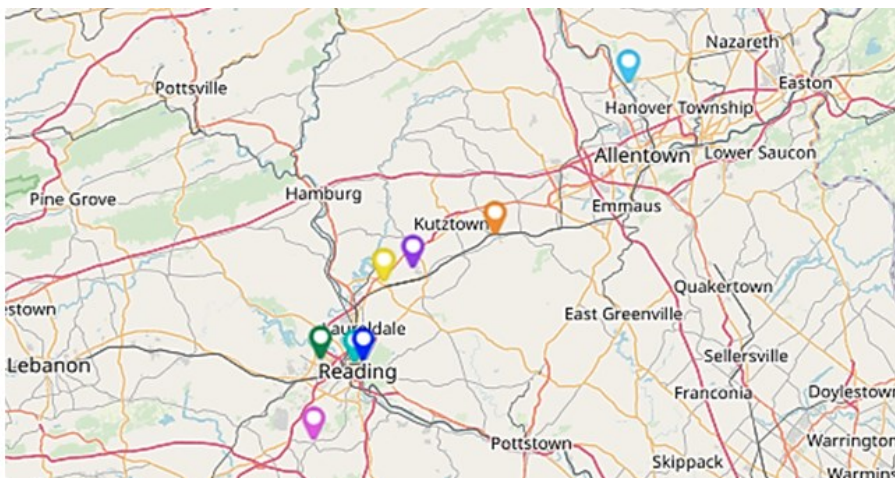
Instrumentation

The instrument utilized for data collection was an electronic evaluation form. This tool was chosen for data collection to uncover the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding the alignment of their personal philosophy and practice. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-eight questions, including follow-up probes and respondents' demographic information. In the demographic section, participants answered questions about gender, age, program of study, area of concentration, and clinical placement location. The purpose of this section is to determine if any demographic information is correlated with perceptions of alignment. For example, if elementary pre-service teachers feel they align their philosophy and practice more effectively in comparison to pre-service teachers who are dual majors.

In addition to this instrument, the researcher recorded data from class discussions. The purpose of these discussions was to uncover additional perceptions and supplemental information. These discussions were also held to benefit pre-service teachers by learning from one another. Holding discussions is valuable to this study and to the field of education because discussions help build holistic snapshots, allow researchers to analyze words, formulate the detailed views of participants, and enable interviewees to express their own thoughts and feelings. Research about the importance of discussion states, "the quality of the students' experience of learning through discussions is positively related to their performance" (Ellis, 2007). Ellis goes on to explain that "face-to-face discussions have powerful benefits for learning."

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the participants' verbal and written responses for common statements. These commonalities uncover trends that would explain participant perceptions and factors that have contributed. The researcher was particularly interested in similarities between levels of alignment, cited evidence, identified barriers, and reasoning behind application or disconnect. In addition, the researcher attempted to locate trends between demographics and perceptions of alignment. The researcher was unable to make any distinctive relationship between these two categories.

Findings

To collectively summarize the findings in this study, the researcher constructed a table (Table 2) and graph (Figure 2). The table lists the pre-service teachers and their level of alignment. As stated previously, pre-service teachers were asked to identify five belief statements/theories in their written philosophies to evaluate. Alignment is measured by the number of times each pre-service teacher admitted to applying, or not applying, the statements in their philosophies to their clinical practice. The graph provides a visual depiction of this dataset.

Table 2
Levels of Alignment

Pre-Service Teachers	Total	Levels of Alignment
Participant 3 Participant 8 Participant 10 Participant 14	4	Reported "Yes" for all five philosophy statements. *(apply all five statements to their practice)*
Participant 1 Participant 6 Participant 12	3	Reported "Yes" for four philosophy statements and "No" for one philosophy statement *(apply four of the five statements to their practice)*
Participant 2 Participant 4 Participant 5 Participant 7 Participant 13 Participant 15	6	Reported "Yes" for three philosophy statements and "No" for two philosophy statements *(apply three of the five statements to their practice)*
Participant 9 Participant 11	2	Reported "Yes" for two philosophy statements and "No" for three philosophy statements *(apply two of the five statements to their practice)*

Figure 2:

Levels of Alignment Display
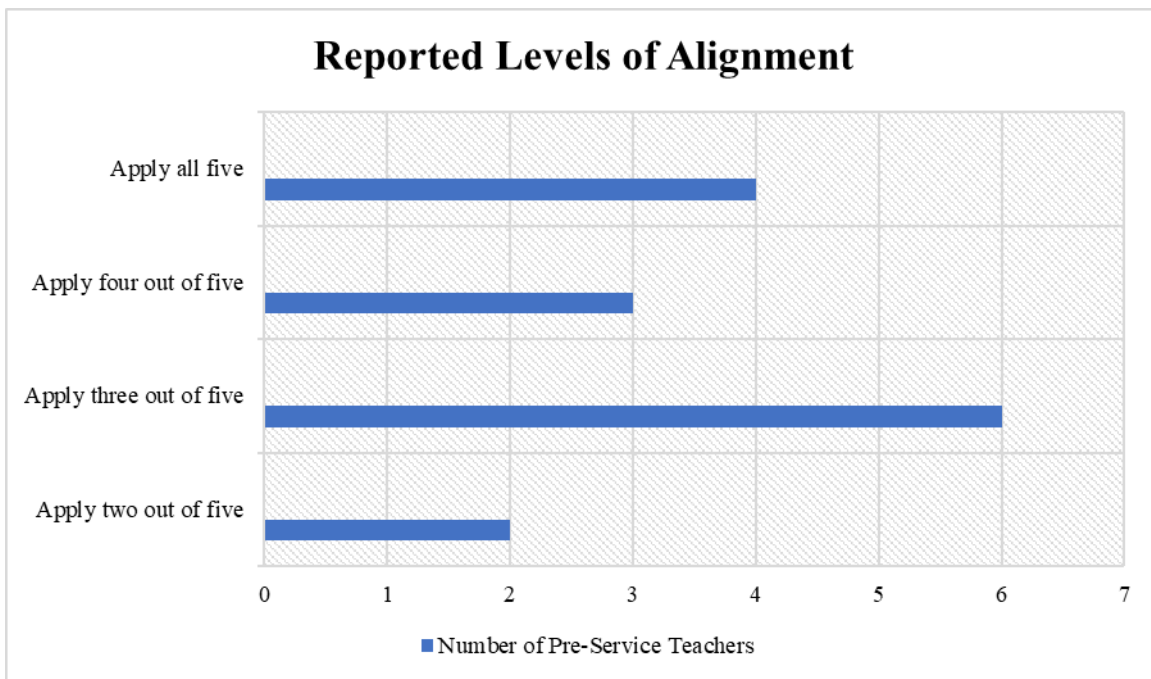
In addition to the above data, the researcher compiled details on the reasoning behind the misalignment. This misalignment is determined as occurrences where participants report they are not applying the philosophy statement to their practice. In order words, when pre-service teachers reported "No," they are not applying a particular belief into their practice. Pre-service teachers were also asked how they could apply this belief. Some examples of the collected, participant-reported data are shared in the table (Table 3) below.

Table 3
Misalignment Reasoning

Philosophy Statement *Derived from written philosophies*	Reasoning *Why this is not being applied to practice*
Communication is important when working with students' families	I believe I have done things to keep in touch with the families and allow them to have insight into the classroom. But I also feel I can do more. It is hard now because this isn't my classroom, so my mentor is taking on the bulk of family communication. She is doing the newsletters and sending messages home. I could start attending IEP meetings to talk with the parents and learn more about students. -Participant 9
When teaching, I use inquiry-based methods and interactive student-centered lessons	It is hard to do this because the district I am in is very book-based, but I have tried my best to make some interactive activities especially for review days. I always ask my students questions that help guide my lessons. -Participant 4
My philosophy for teaching is that students in almost all cases learn better from play	I feel like I have not had the opportunity to implement play in the classroom as much as I would have hoped. This is partially because I'm trying to get used to just teaching without any other distractions and I am not familiar with all of the manipulatives within the classroom that are at my disposal. It would be helpful if I had more freedom with the curriculum. I'm always told to use the manual. -Participant 1

Always highlight diversity in my classroom	This is not something I have done yet because neither of my placements had a lot of diversity and I wasn't sure how to do it in a classroom that wasn't my own. In my own classroom I would make sure to have books and other materials that represent all of the students in my classroom. I also want to celebrate all of my students and their holidays. -Participant 13
Incorporating various learning styles or the theory of multiple intelligences	I mainly only incorporate the kinesthetic learning style, which allows the students to learn through movements. I need to do better in incorporating the other learning styles within the lessons that I am teaching. The students have responded well though to the kinesthetic learning style and enjoy being able to move around within the classroom. I think it helps them learn and retain the content information. -Participant 12
Incorporating multiple intelligences to provide different learning methods to all students	I try to incorporate different ways for students to learn the material, but I do not incorporate all of the multiple intelligences into my teaching. This is something I need to work on. I could incorporate most of them into review days. -Participant 6
I want to be able to celebrate and address all my students' backgrounds and cultures	My placement classroom doesn't have a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures, so it is more difficult now. -Participant 2
I want to have a classroom library with bilingual books as well as books about different traditions and cultures	My current classroom does not have bilingual books or books on traditions/cultures. However, my other placement classroom did. It makes it more difficult to apply this belief when I don't have the books. I could check them out at the library. -Participant 9
The classroom is changing and will have students coming from different backgrounds	I am aware of my students and their different backgrounds, but I fail to really bring this out in my classroom. I know one thing I want to do is share a fun fact of a historical figure for science or social studies. I could also have students share information about their backgrounds and what is important to them. -Participant 7
Teaching and learning should be individualized	There are moments throughout my day when I work with small groups on what they specifically need, but math, SEL, and science is whole group. I can build in scaffolds to my teaching that would support all the learners in my classroom, including those struggling and excelling, but it's sometimes difficult. This is an area I need to work on, since I do not have control over how these subjects are taught (whole/small group) -Participant 11
Include parents into the classroom/their child's learning	While I reach out occasionally to parents about both strengths and struggles, I can do a much better job with frequent communication and asking them to take part in different capacities. I could also do more that would help connect the home and the school. -Participant 5

Furthermore, the researcher compiled details to depict evidence of the reported alignment. This alignment is determined as occurrences where participants report they are applying the philosophy statement to their practice. In order words, when pre-service teachers reported "Yes," they are applying a particular belief into their practice. Some examples of the collected, participant-reported data are shared in the table (Table 4) below.

Table 4

Alignment Evidence

Philosophy Statement *Derived from written philosophies*	Evidence *How this is being applied to practice*
I will encourage my students and get them involved through hands-on activities	I encourage my students daily with positive statements. I use hands-on materials and activities whenever possible. For example, in math I taught a lesson on symmetry and used manipulatives to help my students understand the concept. In social studies my students played an "I have, who has" game to learn about Pennsylvania as a melting pot. -Participant 8
Use multiple teaching methods	I use videos, technology, whole group and small group lessons, and hands-on materials. I also do a lot of partner and group work because I think students can learn a lot from each other. They talk with a partner every day in math to share their thinking. I also use the smartboard for a lot of lessons and try to include videos whenever possible. -Participant 1
Every student should be given an equal opportunity to learn. They are all capable of learning	I do implement this into my practice because I always do my best to make the best accommodations for my students so they all are learning. I make my way around the classroom to see what my students are writing and if they are stuck or not following along. I do this to make sure I can assist my students in their learning and give them the help they need to be successful. -Participant 3
I will try and make as many personal connections as I can	I try my best to get to know my students and even use their names in word problems and stories. I have very good personal connections with these students, and I feel like we have a good relationship where they respect me as a teacher but also as a friend, which is my ultimate goal. -Participant 14
Multicultural education or teaching from a multicultural standpoint	I try to incorporate many types of children's literature that include various types of culture and diversity, while portraying all types of people. Creating a multicultural environment is important to make all students feel valued and welcomed, while helping students learn about one another. In addition, I try to incorporate Spanish in my lessons, to help my students who speak primarily Spanish feel valued as well as their language. -Participant 6
Constructivism	I teach from a constructivist standpoint, or at least try to adapt the curriculum given to me to teach from a constructivist philosophy. I incorporate hands-on activities within my lessons that allow the students to explore their environment, while moving around the classroom to discuss and engage with their peers to help answer or solve a problem or question. I make sure that students are active in their learning process, so that I am not directly giving them the answers, but through engaging activities they are constructing their own knowledge of content and topic. -Participant 5

I should provide a calm down corner/space	I give students the option to use pop-its, gadgets, timers, and sensory items with a bean bag for the when they are having a "major feeling." This is something I added to my mentor's classroom. It helps with students that cannot regulate their anger. -Participant 12
The most important piece of education is making sure all students are learning	With each lesson I teach, I make sure to incorporate all aspects of the lesson to ensure student engagement. I try to keep all students engaged and focused throughout the lesson and keep them on track if they steer off track. I assess students to check their understanding. -Participant 10
Students should be allowed to express their opinions and feelings	One thing I am thankful for is that my students are comfortable enough to speak to me when they think my mentor teacher might not understand. I've worked hard to create a community where students feel they have a voice and are comfortable sharing their thoughts. -Participant 4
It is my job to help students build relationships with each other. The relationships will allow for more collaborative learning in the classroom	I include many activities throughout the day that include partner work or activities where students are working together with someone in the classroom. Sometimes they will work with their elbow buddy and sometimes they will work with a random person. I do this intentionally, so students are all engaging with one another many different times in the day. This helps them build those relationships. -Participant 15
Every child is different and learns differently. It is important that I tend to their individual needs to help them be successful	I have created many different activities and types of engagement for each student to be successful. I use audio, visuals, hands-on activities, partner-based learning, whole group instruction, games, and small group learning. This way I can reach the needs of all of my students. -Participant 7

Interpretations

Out of the fifteen participants, all reported they apply at least two out of five of their philosophy statements to their practice. Most participants applied at least three out of five and many applied four or more. However, it is important to note only four of the fifteen participants felt they demonstrated all five of the beliefs shared in their written philosophy in their actual practice. A breakdown of this data, represented as percentages is as follows (Table 5):

Table 5

Overall Alignment Statistics

Percentage of Participants *Out of 15 total*	Percentage of Alignment *According to the five selected philosophy statements*
100%	40% or more
87%	60% or more
47%	80% or more
27%	100%

One can conclude that pre-service teachers are applying their written theories into their actual practice; however, the majority of pre-service teachers are only applying a little more than half of their philosophical beliefs. This could prove the issue: there is somewhat of a disconnect between written philosophy and actual practice.

Pre-service teachers who reported "Yes" to applying four or five of their philosophy belief statements can be categorized as those who demonstrate higher levels of alignment between their written philosophy and clinical practice. In addition, pre-service teachers who reported "Yes" to applying three of their belief statements can be categorized as a moderate level of alignment. Lastly, pre-service teachers who reported "Yes" to applying only two of their belief statements can be categorized as demonstrating a low level of philosophy versus practice alignment.

Table 6

Unapplied Concepts and Barriers

Philosophy Statement	Possible Barrier(s)
Culture/Diversity	• Placement classroom is not diverse • Need additional materials • Not realizing they have not been implementing this belief; idea(s) on how to start were provided
Multiple Intelligences	• Strict curriculum guidelines • Not realizing they have not been implementing this belief; idea(s) on how to start were provided
Interactive Strategies/Exploration	• Strict curriculum guidelines • Unaware of available resources • Mentor makes the instructional decisions • Difficult to plan/manage
Parent/Family Communication	• Mentor prefers to handle this • Not realizing they have not been implementing this belief; idea(s) on how to start were provided

During some occurrences when a pre-service teacher reported they did not apply certain portions of their philosophy to their practice, they noted this was due to the curriculum restrictions of the school district in which they were placed. On numerous occasions, it was reported that the placement district required teachers to implement scripted programs without much room for deviation. Various pre-service teachers described that it was difficult to implement the hands-on learning method of the constructivist theory when they were required to read the teacher manual and utilize use student journals for certain subjects.

Another common barrier was the simple fact that the pre-service teacher did not realize they we not implementing their belief(s). Many participants shared they have never thought to revisit their philosophy during their teaching. Participants that noted "not realizing" as a barrier also noted one or more ideas on how they could begin to implement their belief into their practice.

Other barriers include the need for additional resources, the mentor teacher preventing the change in their classroom, the belief being difficult to plan/manage, or (in reference to culture and diversity) the classroom itself not being diverse. Many of these barriers can be counteracted by solutions. For example, working with the school librarian to compile resources, collaborating with an experienced teacher to determine how to more effectively plan/manage instruction, etc. The researcher found it helpful to hold whole-group discussions around these areas. This allowed for participants to learn from one another and determine how they can overcome some of the barriers identified.

Table 7

Applied Concepts and Evidence

Philosophy Statement	Evidence of Application
Culture/Diversity	• Adapted curriculum based on students in the class • Using additional, pre-service teacher selected materials • Learning about the community in which the students live
Relationships	• Getting to know students • Using student names/interests in teaching • Providing collaborative learning opportunities
Interactive Strategies/Exploration	• Using a variety of materials, activities, strategies to deliver instruction • Planning interactive tasks • Eliciting student participation • Students are active in their learning process
SEL (social-emotional learning)	• Providing a calm down space • Showing students they have a voice • Building an environment where students feel comfortable sharing thoughts and opinions
Student Achievement	• Providing accommodations • Learning about individual student needs • Incorporating learning styles • Using assessment to guide instruction

As one may note, the evidence suggests the need for pre-service teachers to adapt, supplement, obtain self-selected materials, etc. These suggestions could be used to provide solutions to some of the barriers listed in Table 6. One may also notice two of the topics included in Table 6 also appear in Table 7. This could suggest that the barriers are highly dependent on the placement district, school, and mentor teacher.

The data from Table 7 could indicate that written philosophies of teaching and learning should not be described as "mere assignments that pre-service teachers check off their to-do lists" (Stribling, DeMulder, Barnstead, & Dallman, 2015). This data proves that philosophies are meaningful and depict the true belief systems of many future educators. It appears that these future educators may need to be given the time and tools to evaluate their philosophy versus practice alignment. After this evaluation, it would be beneficial for pre-service teachers to revisit and make changes to their current practices.

Implications

Using the study's findings as a foundation, the following implications for future practice were developed:

- College and university teacher preparation programs may want to consider the value and purpose they place on teacher candidates' philosophy statements. They could also consider how these statements should be evaluated and revisited during times of practice teaching.
- Pre-service teachers should regularly practice the self-evaluation of their written philosophy versus their practice. This would most effectively be completed during student teaching, however, could be done during any type of practice teaching throughout their teacher education program.
- Universities and colleges should consider a district's curricular programs when determining where to place students for clinical experience. It may be wise to research districts to discover if they rely heavily on the use of scripted programs. These scripted programs make it more difficult for pre-service teachers to apply their philosophies.
- Universities and colleges should also consider the placements with cooperating teachers. Although it was not the majority, a few pre-service teachers identified their mentor teacher as a barrier that prevented them from implementing certain aspects of their philosophy.
- K-12 school systems should consider placing importance on new teachers applying what is written in their philosophy to their practice. They should also evaluate how they support their current teachers in aligning their philosophy with their practice.

In order for pre-service teachers to apply their philosophy of teaching and learning to their clinical practice, they must be supported by their institution, their placement school, cooperating teacher, and supervisor. Pre-service teachers will also need the necessary tools to fully apply the beliefs in their philosophies. In addition, pre-service teachers would also benefit from being given time and guidance to evaluate the alignment of their philosophy with their current practice. After this evaluation, pre-service teachers should be encouraged to make changes to their practice, if applicable.

Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from this research may benefit both higher education and K-12 school systems. From this information, universities and colleges can more effectively evaluate their teacher education programs. During this evaluation, these institutions should seek to discover how well they support their pre-service teachers in writing a philosophy they will put into practice during clinical experience. Institutions should also evaluate where they are placing student teachers. They should pursue K-12 school districts that allow for creativity in delivering the required curriculum. Furthermore, institutions should evaluate the cooperating teachers to ensure they are going to support student teachers during decision making and clinical exploration.

The conclusions uncovered in the data also show the benefit for K-12 school systems. With this research, K-12 school systems are able to more effectively determine whether they support their current teachers in applying the philosophy they shared during the interview process. This may help veteran teachers self-evaluate their beliefs versus their current practice. In addition, it could assist new teachers in feeling supported and ready to take beneficial risks. Overall, this research adds to the data that is currently published around the alignment of teaching philosophy and practice.

Future Research

It would be beneficial to repeat this study with additional groups of pre-service teachers. These pre-service teachers should be enrolled in a teacher preparation program and currently completing their clinical experience. Repeating this study would help solidify the data and results. It could also give researchers and educators additional information from larger groups of pre-service teachers.

If this research study were to be conducted in the future, I would recommend conducting it twice during the semester. The first would take place in the middle of the semester and the second at the end. This would allow pre-service teachers to make changes to their practice in the middle of the semester, if applicable. It would also allow the researcher to collect data on the applicable changes. It

would be interesting to discover if pre-service teachers alter their practice after engaging in the first occurrence of the study.

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Ensuring Equity in School Discipline: Operationalizing the Tools of Cultural Proficiency

Jaime Welborn

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges for educators is managing the dynamics of difference among students as it relates to culture and behavior in the classroom and other school environments. "Within diverse classrooms, the probability of misunderstandings and misrepresentations between teachers and students increases. Some behaviors that we take for granted and accept as normal may be quite different for our students" (Voltz, Sims, Nelson, 2010, p. 54). Our experiences in life, in fact, allow for the development of individual core values, norms, and beliefs that manifest as cultural behaviors, which we bring with us in spaces laden with their own cultural norms and expectations.

Without the ability to assess cultural knowledge and acknowledge how difference naturally produces cross-cultural conflict, we may miss critical reflection, dialogic, and action opportunities that can move us from tolerance of diversity with a focus on "them" to transformation for equity with a focus on our practices (Lindsey et al., 2008). Moving beyond classroom management, Rodriguez and Welsh (2022) highlighted the importance of school discipline as an issue to all educational stakeholders from policymakers to researchers and from school leaders to teachers because of the historical data we have to support "disparities in who receives punishment and experiences the impact of exclusionary discipline on education and long-term life outcomes" (p. 1). Given these realities, the Cultural Proficiency Framework provides four tools educators can use to manage the dynamics of difference by examining, challenging, and changing, if necessary, policies, practices, and behaviors that are perpetuating disparities in discipline across race, ethnicity, gender, social class, language, and ability (Cross et al., 1989; Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2019; Welborn et al., 2022).

Cultural Proficiency is about opening doors that allow all students needs to be addressed. The most important ideal, and often missed, within this work, is the precision and persistence of focusing on historically underserved students during the change process. When educators intentionally embed the work of Cultural Proficiency in all aspects of the system, historically underserved students benefit by gaining access to educational opportunities, and consequently higher levels of student academic achievement and success (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016). Likewise, when

educators create classrooms and school environments based upon belonging and a value for diversity, not only students, but leaders, teachers, staff, families, and community members develop and sustain systems that actualize how the "best of both worlds enhances the capacity for all" (Welborn et al., 2022, p. 126). The following article focuses on Eaveston Middle School administrators, teachers, and staff engagement in a year-long process to examine current classroom management and discipline paradigms, structures, and procedures for the development of an action plan for whole school transformation and equitable outcomes.

Rationale

"Every child, regardless of their race, sex, or disability status, deserves to go to a school where they are welcomed and given what they need to thrive... We will all benefit when we suceed" (Furtado, Duncan, Kocher, Nandan, 2019, p. 15). For years, there has been concern over discipline, especially discipline that is exclusionary, denying access to education in the traditional school setting. Researchers have shown links to discipline and lower student achievement. Skiba et al., (2002) studied the types of infractions leading to office referrals, as well as the disproportionality that exists with race, gender, and social class. A comprehensive study in St. Louis in 2019 found that exclusionary discipline affects the quality of a child's education in that black males with a disability are 24.6 times more likely to receive an out of school suspension than white females without a disability (Furtado, Dunchan, Kocher, Nandan, 2019). Knowing suspension rates have increased over the last 50 years, creating the gaps among and between race, language, ability, and social class, Ritter and Anderson (2018) focused on sources of disparities before consequences were even assigned. They were interested in knowing "what conditional disproportionalities exist in the likelihood of referral for different types of disciplinary fractions" (p. 163). Evidence was found that "black students are more likely to be referred for subjective infractions like disorderly conduct, other nonspecified infractions, and insubordination, and less likely to be referred for some objective infractions like drugs and alcohol" (Ritter & Anderson, 2018, p. 167). Similarly, Skiba found students of color are cited more for exclusionary discipline and for subjective types of infractions such as disrespect and noise (2002).

Additionally, Ritter and Anderson (2018) found that special education students tended to have high rates of referral; specifically, these students were three times as likely to be referred for infractions of major violence/weapons. "Similarly, lower income (FRL-eligible) students tended to have high rates (related to their peers who are not lower income) of referrals in all categories expect for the gun category" (p. 168). Lower-income students were approximately 1.7 to 1.8 times as likely

to be referred as non-lower income students. Further, Hispanic students were more likely than white students to be written up for truancy and were less likely to be written up for major violence or for minor violence/weapons, which included gang-activity, fighting, student assault, and explosives. Overall exclusionary discipline data showed correlations between higher rates and lower student achievement (Ritter & Anderson, 2018).

Just as Ritter and Anderson (2018) investigated at which steps along the disciplinary path disparities became evident, Hollie (2012) recognized the importance of effective classroom management prior to the referral of students. Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering (2003) defined classroom management, "Effective classroom management means that instruction can occur without interruptions and disruptions, that the students feel safe and comfortable enough to take risks – to approximate or make mistakes, and that the environment is conducive to optimal learning" (as cited in Hollie, 2012, p. 13). In his work, Hollie (2012) identified the Three Rs: Rapport, Relationship, and Respect as elements that are necessary for being culturally and linguistically responsive in classroom management. He highlighted the importance of relationships in this work, "As teachers reflect on the management issues in their classrooms, they need to be fully aware of the nature of their relationships with their students" (p. 63).

In addition, he claimed teachers who intent to incorporate culturally and linguistically responsive classroom management practices should subscribe to the Three Ps approach: being positive, being proactive, and being preventive" (p. 65). Hollie acknowledged that students coming from cultures influenced by ethnicity, spirituality, or social class often are challenged by cultural norms of the school, which produce challenges for the teachers and leaders as well. He alluded, cultural misunderstandings and miscommunications in classrooms, while often unintentional, tend to lead to referrals, and it is critical teachers and leaders are able to separate cultural behaviors from wrong behaviors.

> Once CLR educators have opened up to the possibility of cultural behaviors instead of wrong behaviors, they have to make split-second decision to determine if everyday common classroom management of student behaviors is culture. If the behavior is determined to be wrong as opposed to culturally inappropriate, then the response must follow the teacher' classroom management system. The points to internalize is that the decision to be made is the difference in a negative exchange or a positive exchange, an escalation or diffusion, or students being redirect to on-task behavior or ending up out of the class and missing valuable instruction. (Hollie, 2012, p. 72)

Based upon the reality of classroom management and school discipline in our schools, educators are called to respond with culturally competent educational practices to open the doors so that all students can thrive.

Currently, limited research has been completed on administrator and teacher combined efforts to examine classroom management and discipline practices through reflection, dialogue, and action for addressing discipline gaps in outcomes of their middle school students. As expectations to continuously improve our educational systems so that all students achieve at high levels rise and the moral imperative of implementing plans to meet all students' needs increases, some scholars recommend the *Four Tools of Cultural Proficiency* to transform their systems, practices, and behaviors toward equity and access (Cross et al., 1989; Lindsey et al., 2019; Welborn et al., 2022). It is critical educators have an understanding of their own cultural beliefs about and value for the students of the schools in which they serve before they can use the knowledge and skills to ensure students of color, those living in poverty, those who are multilingual, often referred to as limited English proficient, and those who are disabled receive an appropriate education.

"Bridging achievement gaps is a complex undertaking that requires leaders who have knowledge of the social dynamics within society and our schools that foster disparities" (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009, p. 13). Thus, to provide educators throughout the United States and beyond with a path to increase student achievement and close gaps in discipline within their own classrooms and buildings, research is necessary to identify effective processes for examining, challenging, and changing, if necessary, educational practices in classroom management and discipline with culture at the heart of the work. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate middle school teachers' processes and outcomes of examining their practices through reflection and dialogue to address discipline gaps among their middle school students.

Methodology

This article provides findings and recommendations related to one of the research questions that were used to guide part of a larger case study in Eaveston School District. The case study focused on the implementation and experiences of Cultural Proficiency work in a middle school in a suburban, public K-12 school district in the Midwestern United States. Eaveston Middle School, recognized as the #2 most diverse middle school in the state, serves approximately 600 students. Students, representing 78 countries, speaking 48 languages, and demographically 38% White, 37% African American/Black, 11% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 55% free or reduced lunch eligible, are 41% proficient in reading and 32% proficient in math. Qualitative methodologies, specifically case study, allows us to shape "why" and "how questions and then answer them (Yin, 2018). For Eaveston Middle School, the why and how questions were at the center of the work.

1. Why did Eaveston Middle School's discipline data show disparities, gaps between race, gender, social class, language, and ability?
2. How would Eaveston Middle School's educators close the gaps?

School Improvement Planning conversations between the administration and the researcher prompted the overall research question, as related to classroom management and discipline.

Research Question

In what ways do the middle school staff's application of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency to classroom management and discipline influence changes associated with culturally proficient practice to serve all students?

Population

The population for this case study research included all administration and certified staff (i.e. teachers, counselors, therapists) of Eaveston Middle School. The administrators and certified staff participated in whole staff Cultural Proficiency professional learning sessions during monthly scheduled faculty meetings and two half-day district professional development days during the 2021 -2022 school year. The total population included 54 participants.

Conceptual Framework

Miles & Huberman (1994) defined a conceptual framework as a tool that explains the main concepts of a research study such as key factors, constructs, and variables. This research integrated constructs such as classroom behavior management, school discipline, educational practice, and the Cultural Proficiency Framework. The equity, access, and inclusion-based framework of Cultural Proficiency (Figure 1) is an approach educators can utilize to unpack inequities and gaps in school discipline, as well as address diversity in classrooms and schools (Welborn et al., 2022, p. 9).

The work of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion is complex. Often, individuals and organizations enter this work looking for the answers, the direct path, specific steps to take to reach that point of "ending this work." Educators are naturally wired to be problem solvers. We identify gaps in academic, social, and behavior data and are quick to develop solutions to "fix the problem."

Rather, the work of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion should be considered a journey. Cultural Proficiency, an inside-out approach to a value for diversity and access that produces equitable and inclusionary outcomes, must be considered and applied at the individual and organizational levels.

Cultural Proficiency is a model for shifting the culture of the school or district; it is a model for individual transformation and organizational change. Cultural Proficiency is a mindset, a worldview, a way a person or an organization makes assumption for effectively describing, responding to, and planning for issues that arise in diverse environments. For some people, Cultural Proficiency is a paradigm shift from viewing cultural difference as problematic to learning how to interact effectively with other cultures. (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 5).

In 1989, Terry Cross and his colleagues published a monograph, *Toward a Culturally Competent System of Care* (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Issacs) that changed the way organizations could think about addressing paradigms for addressing issues of diversity and cross-cultural communication. In this monograph, he included the origins of conceptual framework of Cultural Proficiency, several tools individuals and organizations can apply for developing cultural competence for effective cross-cultural situations. The work of Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell (1999) expanded the tools to enable educators, schools, districts, and their communities to respond to people who differ from one another. The Four Tools, as defined by Lindsey, Nuri- Robins, Terrell, & Lindsey (2019), include:

Overcoming the Barriers to Cultural Proficiency – Caveats that assist in overcoming resistance to change

The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency – Underlying core values of the approach

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum – Language for describing both healthy and nonproductive policies, practices, and individual values and behaviors

The Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency – Behavioral standards for measuring and planning for growth toward Cultural Competence or Cultural Proficiency (p. 6).

Through professional learning and an intentional design of facilitation strategies, Eaveston Middle School staff operationalized the interconnected four tools of Cultural Proficiency using the Reflection, Dialogue, and Action (RDA) Process (Welborn et al., 2022) to begin transformation to increase classroom management and discipline practices and outcomes. Data was collected using the strategies addressed in the following section.

FIGURE 8.1 • The Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices

The Five Essential Elements of Cultural Competence

Serve as standards for personal, professional values and behavior, as well as organizational policies and practices

- **Assessing cultural knowledge**
- **Valuing diversity**
- **Managing the dynamics of difference**
- **Adapting to diversity**
- **Institutionalizing cultural knowledge**

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum portrays people and organizations who possess the knowledge, skills, and moral bearing to distinguish among equitable and inequitable practices as represented by different worldviews:

Informs

Unhealthy, unproductive, and inequitable policies, practices, and behaviors	Differing Worldviews	**Healthy, productive, and equitable policies, practices, and behaviors**
• Cultural destructiveness • Cultural incapacity • Cultural blindness		• Cultural precompetence • Cultural competence • Cultural proficiency

Resolving the tension to do what is socially just within our diverse society leads people and organizations to view selves in terms productive and equitable.

Informs

Informs

Overcoming Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Serve as personal, professional, and institutional impediments to moral and just service to a diverse society by:

- Being resistant to change,
- Being unaware of the need to adapt,
- Not acknowledging systemic oppression, and
- Benefiting from a sense of privilege and entitlement.

Ethical Tension

Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency

Provide a moral framework for conducting one's self and organization in an ethical fashion by believing the following:

- Culture is a predominant force in society.
- People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
- People have individual and group identities.
- Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.
- Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.
- The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.
- The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.
- School systems must recognize that marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a distinct set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.
- Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted to, and accepted.

Source: Adapted from R. B. Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, and Terrell (2009, p. 60).

Strategies of Data Collection: Reflection, Dialogue, Action

The key strategies for ensuring equity, access, and inclusion in classroom management and discipline are to implement and sustain intentional conversations followed by action. The Reflection, Dialogue, and Action (RDA) Process (Welborn et. al., 2022) can be used to apply the Cultural Proficiency Framework to classroom management and school discipline and was used in this research to collect the data. Because Cultural Proficiency is an inside-out approach, it is imperative that the intentional conversations allow individual educators to assess their cultural knowledge, demonstrate a value for diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, adapt to diversity, and institutionalize that cultural knowledge on their journey (Cross et al., 1989; Lindsey et al., 2019). By using the five Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency, educators can reflect on their own classroom practices or leadership behaviors, engage in dialogic conversations with their peers, and develop a plan of action for changing practices related to classroom management and discipline to be increasingly more culturally competent (Welborn et al., 2022). At the same time, organizations must develop processes for engaging in intentional conversations around policies and practices in school discipline. Reflection and dialogue allow us to answer the question, "Do we do what we say we do?" (Lindsey et al., 2019) Action allows us to change our behaviors, practices, and policies that are serving as barriers to actualizing the alignment of what we say we do and what we actually do. The following paragraphs provide details regarding the strategies used during the RDA Process Eaveston Middle School administration, teachers, and staff used to create change within their system and begin to reduce the disparities in school discipline (Welborn et al., 2022).

Strategy 1: Gathering and Analyzing Institutional Data

Before the beginning of Eaveston Middle School's journey of operationalizing the Tools of Cultural Proficiency to increase equity and close the disparities in discipline data, they worked with the district data specialist to gather and then analyze the quantitative institutional data as it relates to discipline. This included both exclusionary discipline data, such as out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, and non-exclusionary discipline data such as office referrals and in-school suspensions.

All data were disaggregated by race, gender, free and reduced lunch (FRL), language (EL), and ability (IEP). Through a series of analysis processes, Eaveston's staff engaged in reflection and dialogue to understand the data, including the gaps between and among cultural demographic groups (i.e. race, FRL, EL, and IEP). This step in the process was critical to understand the baseline of data and trends of this data over time. Highlighting the inequities allowed Eaveston's staff to begin thinking about the disparities in discipline, their role in classroom management prior to office

referral, as well as goals for increasing equity and access for their students.

Strategy 2: Collecting Qualitative Data on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum was used to collect qualitative data including examples of policies, practices, programs, and behaviors (things they say and do) that relate to classroom management and school discipline. Eaveston Staff worked to identify current practices and paradigms that they considered unhealthy, unproductive, and negative, as well as current practices and paradigms that they considered healthy, productive, and positive. Table 1 includes examples from the qualitative data collection.

Table 1

Qualitative Data Sample: Current Practices and Paradigms

Examples of Unhealthy, Unproductive, Negative and Inequitable Policies, Practices, Behaviors	Examples of Unhealthy, Unproductive, Negative and Inequitable Policies, Practices, Behaviors
Avoiding the teaching of classroom expectations or building classroom norms using student voice	Teachers actively walking through the expectations or using student voice to building norms
One size fits all rules and consequences	Asking questions for students to explain cultural behaviors
Refusing to use Restorative Circles or Practices for reentry into the classroom	Focusing on the assets of students- recognizing the strengths of the students
Demeaning a student for not following the rules in front of their peers	Modeling behaviors/reactions
Verbal or physical abuse	

Further, Eaveston's staff recognized the importance of understanding how classroom management often leads to discipline procedures and the inequities that could exist prior to office referral. In using the Cultural Proficiency Continuum to reflect and dialogue about current healthy and unhealthy policies, practices, and behaviors, the staff focus on 7 phases of the discipline process. These phases include:

Teaching high expectations for routines, procedures, and behavior (PBIS);

Building relationships with students; reinforcing high expectations, PBIS (rewards);

Communicating with students, Tier I behavior interventions;

Write-Up or referral / Communication with administration;

Tier II / Tier III behavioral interventions (RTI or MTSS);

Communication with families/parents; and

Re-entry back into the classroom/restorative discipline practices/restoring

relationships.

The acronyms used above to define the 7 steps of the discipline process are defined as follows:

PBIS – Positive Behavior Intervention System

RTI – Response to Intervention

MTSS – Multi-Tiered System of Support

Table 2 highlights examples from the qualitative data along the six points on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, representing the negative and positive policies, practices, and behaviors, and the seven phases of the discipline process.

Table 2

Phases of the Discipline Process on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum

	Culturally Destructive	Culturally Incapacitating	Culturally Blind	Culturally Precompetent	Culturally Competent	Culturally Proficient
Teaching high expectations for routines, procedures, and behavior (PBIS)	"These rules are simple. If you cannot follow my rules, there is the door."	"These students are older and should just know how to act in my classroom."	Assuming all students will follow the rules after teaching them one way for the first time	Beginning to discuss with colleagues how they teach routines and procedures with respect to culture	Engaging students in the development of high expectations for routines, procedures, and behavior	Advocating for students on the lower end of discipline gaps by leading others to reflect on their routines and procedures and the ways in which they are impacting those students
Building relationships with students; reinforcing high expectations, PBIS (rewards)	Using verbal or physical abuse to reinforce high expectations with no regard to the importance of relationships	Demeaning students by using inappropriate language that may not meet the needs of certain cultural groups	Pretending that reinforcing high expectations can be accomplished in one way	Beginning to understand varieties in all student cultures and then creating norms	Incorporating student voice to create more inclusive student cultural norms	Modeling effective relationships and using cultural knowledge as an asset for creating norms, high expectations, and rewards

Communicating with students, Tier I behavior interventions	Eliminating the opportunity to communicate with students or provide Tier I interventions	Targeting certain demographic-based student groups for Tier I interventions	Using the same communication practices with all students or pretending not to see misbehavior from certain group so of students	Talking to students when they have a behavior infraction	Taking multiple opportunities and engaging students in multiple ways to address misbehaviors	Engaging with colleagues on grade-level or department teams to examine, challenge, and change processes of communicating with students
Write-Up or referral / Communication with administration	Referring students without any interventions or parent/guardian contact	Using language in communication with administration that is cultural damaging, referring to difference as wrong	Ignoring the misbehavior to change data or based on anticipated reactions from the parents	Recognizing inconsistencies and needs for individual interventions	Changing write-up and referral processes and strengthening relationships based upon cultural differences	Engaging in a process to reflect on write-up and referral processes and dialoguing with others to advocate for culturally responsive practices
Tier II / Tier III behavioral interventions (RTI or MTSS)	Sending students to ISS/OSS without consideration of Tier II or Tier III behavioral interventions	Yelling at students, making them feel wrong while accessing Tier II or Tier III interventions	Pretending that all students who require a Tier II or Tier III intervention will respond the same	Implementing a mentoring program, not knowing the impact on student discipline or culture	Collecting, disaggregating, and using data on interventions to inform decision regarding programing	Advocating for students who are in a Tier II or Tier III behavior intervention track
Communication with families/parents	Not calling home or contacting families at all	Making the home culture, those behaviors accepted in the home appear to be wrong	Calling home and getting into a disagreement, which leads to not calling again	Knowing it's a positive practice to call home, but not following through	Calling home/contacting on a positive situation	Promoting sensitivity and awareness among colleagues of any differences that may arise from calling home
Re-entry back into the classroom/restorative discipline practices/restoring relationships	Shaming a student once they re-enter the classroom or refuse to restore the relationship	Demeaning students through the implementation of restorative practices	Assuming students are ready to begin learning after re-entering the classroom from OSS/ISS	Welcoming students back into the classroom when they re-enter	Spending individual time working with the student who re-enters the classroom to provide support and access to learning	Leading learning sessions that allow teachers to reflect and grow their practices used to retore relationships

Strategy 3: Setting a Goal for Increasing Equity, Access, and Inclusion

Following the collection and analysis of institutional discipline data and examples of policies, practices, and individual behaviors along the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, relative to the seven phases of the discipline process, Eaveston Middle School Staff worked to create a goal for increasing equity, access, and inclusion in their educational practice. Eaveston Middle School staff will build a school climate that promotes high expectations for all students and staff, yielding discipline data that increases alignment with demographic data (race, gender, IEP, LEP) by May 2025, as measured by the

following data:

- Office Referrals
- In-School Suspension
- Out-of-School Suspension
- Expulsions
- Parent Contacts
- Tier I Interventions
- Tier II/Tier III Behavior Interventions
- PBIS Rewards

This goal informed the development of action steps in Eaveston's classroom management discipline equity action plan.

Strategy 4: Understanding how Barriers and Guiding Principles Inform

Following the goal setting for increasing equity, access, and inclusion in classroom management and discipline, Eaveston's staff continued during the year in discussing the ways in which the Barriers to Cultural Proficiency and the Guiding Principles act as core values in their educational practice. The Barriers to Cultural Proficiency inform the unhealthy, unproductive, and inequitable outcomes evidenced by the quantitative and qualitative data from Eaveston's nonexclusionary and exclusionary discipline. The Barriers to Cultural Proficiency include: *1) systems of oppression; 2) sense of privilege and entitlement; 3) unawareness of the need to adapt; and 4) resistance to change.* Conversely, the Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency inform the healthy, productive, and equitable outcomes, those examples of practices and behaviors that can help Eaveston Middle School overcome the Barriers, guide them to become more culturally competent, and transform their classroom management and discipline systems. The Guiding Principles include the following belief statements:

- *Culture is a predominant force in society.*
- *People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.*
- *People have individual and group identities.*
- *Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.*
- *Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.*
- *The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.*
- *The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.*

- *School systems must recognize that marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a distinct set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.*

- *Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted to, and accepted.*

An understanding of how the Barriers and the Guiding Principles inform everything we do and say in our schools regarding classroom management and discipline is critical in achieving educational equity and closing the notable gaps.

Strategy 5: Developing a Plan of Action using the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency

The Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency are five action verbs that allow educators to measure and plan for transformative change to policies, practices, and behaviors related to classroom management and discipline. The Essential Elements include *1)assessing culture knowledge; 2) valuing diversity; 3) managing the dynamics of difference; 4) adapting to diversity; and 5) institutionalizing cultural knowledge.* Eaveston's staff used the Essential Elements to measure their own level of cultural competence in classroom management and discipline practices, but also develop five action steps to reach the goal of building a school climate that promotes high expectations for all students and staff, yielding discipline data that increases alignment with demographic data. The following table includes actions steps to reach the goal.

Table 3

Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency

Assessing Cultural Knowledge	Valuing Diversity	Managing the Dynamics of Difference	Adapting to Diversity	Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge
Extent to which students' and the adults' cultural identities are identified and assessed in classroom management and discipline processes and outcomes	*Extent to which students are valued through the processes and outcomes of classroom management and discipline*	*Extent to which multiple perspectives are considered as decisions are made to manage cross-cultural conflict in classroom management and discipline processes*	*Extent to which cultural knowledge is integrated into classroom/school management strategies of behavior and discipline*	*Extent to which values and policies support culturally responsive classroom management, discipline, and restorative practices.*

Develop a systemic mentoring system that supports students who are not thriving behaviorally.	Build caring cultures in classrooms that value student diversity and voice.	Create a safe space to engage students in reflection and dialogue around their lived experiences as students at Eaveston and implement their stories in action towards equity.	Develop a comprehensive plan for monitoring and reporting equity in relevant school-wide discipline data.	Provide opportunities for faculty to use reflection and dialogue about educational practices around building relationships, classroom management, discipline, and restorative practices.

Recommendations

For years, districts, schools, and educators have grappled with disparities that can be seen in discipline data across racial, gender, ability, social class, and language. This research provided numerous recommendations for transformative changes in policies, practices, and behaviors for increasing equity within classroom management and discipline. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Gather and analyze quantitative institutional data related to classroom management phases and exclusionary and non-exclusionary discipline.

2. Gather and analyze qualitative data along the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, providing examples of policies, practices, and individual behaviors related to classroom management and discipline.

3. Given the analysis findings and conclusions, create a goal statement for increasing equity, access, and inclusion with culturally competent educational practice.

4. Engage in the RDA Process continually to gain an understanding of how the Barriers and the Guiding Principles inform the policies, practices, and individual educator behaviors.

5. Develop and implement a plan of action using the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency.

6. Monitor the progress of the actions in meeting your equity goal related to classroom management and discipline.

Table 4 includes a rubric for guiding culturally competent classroom management and discipline practices. The overall outcome is to guide individuals and teams to increase the student achievement of all students, with an emphasis on addressing disparities in classroom management and discipline outcomes between student demographic groups, by continuously improving the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators who educate and support them. "All four Tools of Cultural Proficiency are demonstrated in the rubric and can help educators assess the healthy/unhealthy and productive/unproductive values, language, and behaviors along the Continuum" (Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice). This rubric was modeled after rubrics published in *Culturally Proficient Inquiry: A Lens for Identifying and Examining Educational Gaps* (Lindsey et al., 2008) and *A Culturally Proficient Response to the Common Core: Ensuring Equity Through Professional Learning* (Lindsey, et al, 2015).

Table 4

Classroom Management and Discipline Rubric

	Informed by Barriers to Cultural Proficiency			Informed by Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency		
	Culturally Destructive	Culturally Incapacitating	Culturally Blind	Culturally Precompetent	Culturally Competent	Culturally Proficient
Assessing Cultural Knowledge *Extent to which students' and the educators' cultural identities are identified and assessed in classroom management and discipline processes and outcomes*	**Refuse** to consider how the culture of the students, culture of the educator, and culture of the classroom produce cross-cultural conflict that must be acknowledged, accepted, and adjusted to.	**Demean** cultural differences in students by promoting assimilation to the dominant culture, behavior, and language.	**Ignore** aspects of culture that inform differences in cultural behaviors with an unawareness of the difference between cultural behaviors and wrong behaviors.	**Begin to recognize** behavior management and discipline policies and practices that do not include or were not informed by students' cultural perspectives.	**Provide** opportunities for students to contribute their knowledge and perspectives about culture and differences in the classroom to **apply** to the development of classroom or school behavior guides, discipline, and restorative practices.	**Assess** difference between the educator's culture, the culture of the school or classroom, and the culture of the students and **seek** continuous opportunities to **learn** about and **use** culturally responsive behavior management, discipline, and restorative practices.
Valuing Diversity *Extent to which students are valued through the processes and outcomes of classroom management and discipline*	**Stigmatize** or **eliminate** specific perspectives, behaviors, or groups, not part of the cultural norm in the implementation of classroom management and discipline policies and practices.	**Implement** classroom management and discipline policies and practices that reflect dominant group values, perspectives, and language.	**Avoid or ignore** cultural differences or perspectives when developing classroom management and discipline practices.	**Recognize** that current classroom management and discipline practices may have been created or enforced with limited cultural perspectives. **Select** and develop professional learning resources that provide information about discipline or restorative practices effective for diverse groups.	**Collect and disaggregate** discipline data to **change** classroom management and discipline practices that reflect diverse cultural perspectives.	**Promote and develop** students' and educators' advocacy for classroom management strategies, discipline, and restorative practices to ensure maximized student learning and effective cross-cultural communications.
Managing the Dynamics of Difference *Extent to which multiple perspectives are considered as decisions are made to manage cross-cultural conflict in classroom management and discipline processes*	**Validate the elimination** of students with placement into limiting behavioral paths that provide negative educational consequences for all students.	**Track or force** underperforming students into behavioral paths judged to be the most effective approach to assimilate and advance students.	**Pretend** that differences do not exist within the students, and treat all students the same in classroom management strategies and discipline procedures.	**Begin to recognize** that policies and practices may be perpetuating discipline gaps or the lack of restorative practices may be preventing growth and success for all students.	**Provide** students options that encourage positive behavior that maximizes teaching, learning, and success with appropriate, ongoing, and personalized support to support the student's needs.	**Offer** students and colleagues opportunities to learn how to develop the capacity to be effective in cross-cultural situations.

Adapting to Diversity *Extent to which cultural knowledge is integrated into classroom/school management strategies of behavior and discipline*	**Eliminate** culturally different groups from the learning environment based on assumptions while implementing classroom management strategies and discipline policies and practices.	**Implement** classroom management and discipline policies and practices that **demean** students and reflect the values and behaviors of the school's cultural norms or dominate groups.	**Adopt** traditional classroom management and discipline policies and practices to ensure equality for all student groups without regard for cultural differences.	**Begin to recognize** students' cultural differences, classroom management, discipline, and restorative practices may be supplemented or revised to meet the needs of all students.	**Incorporate** existing classroom management, discipline, and restorative practices, cultural responsiveness and differentiated approaches/resources to meet the needs of all students.	**Organize** school stakeholder groups to analyze and understand current data in a way that promotes multiple perspectives in the development of behavior expectations and discipline guides to achieve equity.
Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge *Extent to which values and policies support culturally responsive classroom management, discipline, and restorative practices*	**Establish** policies and practices that allow for educators to actively **identify and eliminate** perspectives that threaten the desired perspective of behavior or processes of classroom management or discipline.	**Create** policies and practices that allow educators to actively **demean** students and force assimilation of behaviors to the desired perspective of behavior or processes of classroom management or discipline.	**Standardize** all classroom management and discipline policies and procedures to meet the needs of all student groups with the belief that all students are the same.	**Begin to recognize** the limitations of the existing behavior management and discipline procedures. **Learn about or discuss** culturally responsive approaches and resources to support students.	**Collaborate to examine and use** data in decision making for continuous improvement of classroom management, discipline, and restorative practices.	**Implement and embrace** a system-wide plan for examining, challenging, and changing, if necessary, classroom management, discipline, and restorative practices to ultimately eliminate discipline gaps.

Adapted from *Culturally Proficient Inquiry: A Lens for Identifying and Examining Educational Gaps.* Randall B. Lindsey, Stephanie Graham, R. Chris Westphal, Jr., & Cynthia Jew. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Corwin Press, 2008.

Conclusions

While cultural differences manifest in the classroom and schools in various ways, cross-cultural conflict is inevitable. As culturally competent educators, we are called to ensure equity and access by managing our classroom and schools in a way that values the diversity and adapts to open doors for all students to thrive. Research tells us that well managed classrooms that are culturally responsive have direct connections to positive outcomes in student achievement. The Cultural Proficiency Framework provided four Tools the Eaveston staff operationalized to engage in intentional conversations to transform their policies, practices, and individual behaviors, the things they say and do regarding classroom management and school discipline. By reflecting on culture, cultural behaviors, and impacts of practices on students, culturally competent educators can rely on using the RDA Process with their colleagues to gradually transform paradigms and practices.

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Morning Meetings as Spaces for Critical Global Conversations

Christine Uliassi

Abstract

This article examines the experiences of a fifth-grade teacher, Ana, and her culturally and linguistically diverse students who engage in transformative morning meetings during one school year. Drawn from a larger qualitative study in critical practices, this article highlights the voices of the children and teacher as they critically engage with social and political issues during morning meetings. The findings showed that despite Ana's concerns about making sure varying perspectives were represented in meeting discussions and limited time for the meetings, the children were able to develop authentic critical literacy skills as they interrogated issues in their school community and in the world. This study provides implications for how teachers can utilize morning meetings to as a daily literacy event aimed at developing critical global consciousness and youth activism.

Keywords: critical literacy, global literacies, youth activism, morning meetings

Morning Meetings as Spaces for Critical Global Conversations

The recent push to include more social-emotional learning (SEL) in schools has kept morning meetings as a central component of classrooms across the country. Yet, these meetings are not new. In a description of her morning meetings in the 1930s, elementary teacher Debbie Shaw (1932), described how she started morning meetings for students to share "good news" that was "bubbling over" at the start of the day. She also noted it was a space that furnished "good training for young legislators" as students made decisions together about their days. Morning meetings have evolved to some degree over decades. Recent literature shows the purpose of these meetings continues to be to build community and social-emotional skills while students develop academic literacy skills (Bondy & Ketts, 2001; Boyd & Smyntek-Gorek, 2012; Kriete, 1999; McTigue & Rimm-Kaufmann, 2011).

Some critique the use of SEL and related interventions, like morning meetings, as an excuse to ignore the social conditions that create the need for these interventions (Kirshner, 2015; Tilhou, 2020). There is a need for teachers and students to address the range of social issues and injustices in children's lives. Morning meetings can become a space for examining these issues, yet typically, these meetings focus on building social-emotional and academic skills in less critical ways (Boyd and Smyntek-Gorek, 2012; Bruce et al., 2006; Kriete, 2003). This paper examines how one fifth-grade teacher, Ana, altered the format of a traditional morning meeting to meet the needs of her inquisitive

class. The purpose of this paper is to examine the classroom conversations from the perspectives of the teacher and her students who engage in transformative morning meetings during one school year. The research questions that guide this study are (a) How does the teacher alter and implement morning meetings for students' critical consciousness development? (b) What challenges and possibilities emerge as the teacher and students engage in morning meeting discussions and related literacy activities?

Literature Review on Morning Meetings

Morning meetings have been popularized by Responsive Classroom in recent decades. According to this approach, the purpose of morning meetings is "to begin each day as a community of caring and respectful learners" (Kriete, 1999, p. 3). In this space, teachers can develop classroom community while getting to know students "individually, culturally, and developmentally" (Kriete, 1999, p. 5). These meetings have four components: Greeting, Share, Activity, and Message. Several studies suggest that morning meetings provide needed emotional support and lead to improved classroom behaviors (Bruce et al., 2006; Kriete, 2003, Rimm Kaufman, 2006; Villano, 2020). Current studies provide suggestions for classroom activities to build community and support social-emotional development. For example, Villano (2020) promoted using morning meetings which allowed teachers time to ask reflective questions which guided students to identify their emotional state and connect feelings to experiences.

Beyond social and emotional development, many studies focus on educators using morning meetings to effectively develop and extend students' literacy skills (Bondy, 2001; Boyd and Smyntek-Gorek, 2012; McTigue & Rimm-Kaufmann, 2011). McTigue and Rimm-Kaufmann (2011) states that these meetings prioritize often overlooked area of literacy: oral language. Students, while learning about each other's lives and experiences, also have also strengthened their vocabulary and listening skills. Boyd and Smyntek-Gorek (2012) shared the findings of a third-grade teacher's morning meeting that incorporate a literacy event that gave students time to discuss their reading logs. They found this addition led to rich language use as students supported their opinions and judgements about texts in authentic conversations.

Beyond, the literature review shows that there are recent calls from critical educators to use these meetings to go beyond community building and meeting literacy standards (Boyd & Edminston, 2021; Lewison et al., 2008; Tilhou, 2020). Lewison et al. (2008) argue that Morning Meetings that focus on students' courtesy can be problematic when teaching from a critical and interrogative stance. They caution the "share" component of these meetings can reflect unjust power structures when students feel they need to share high-status experiences. Instead, the authors suggest teachers

disrupt this ritual by using this time to examine everyday issues (e.g., unfair lunchroom policies) with a sociopolitical lens.

Likewise, Tilhou (2020) critiqued Responsive Classroom morning meetings and called for a democratic approach to morning meetings with the aim of fostering agency and decision-making. Tilhou urges educators use this space to discuss and disrupt inequities and enact change, yet contends they are often merely spaces "stifled by academic standards.' In response to Tilhou's call, Boyd and Edminston (2021) questioned Tilhou's critique of all morning meetings that incorporate Responsive Classroom's format and urge a more nuanced lens. They provided examples of classroom cases where morning meetings are based on humanizing and democratic practices that extend Responsive Classroom ideas. For instance, students in one classroom were given time during morning meetings to use their voice to share their persuasive letters. They argue that since classrooms use these meetings to celebrate and validate everyone's experiences, they promote equality, inclusion, and humanized spaces.

It is possible that the reason for this dichotomous view of morning meetings is the lack of studies (excepting Body and Edmiston, 2021) that show teachers using morning meetings as both a space for authentic community building and critical literacy development. This study, providing a detailed case of a teacher who believed morning meetings should be a space for "news about Charlottesville [rally] and news about the new guinea pig" can enlighten educators to a more nuanced vision of morning meetings.

Theoretical Perspectives

It is a crucial time for framing literacy work in theories built upon building students' critical consciousness and supporting youth activism. In consideration of this, various critical perspectives shaped this study. Paulo Freire (1970), seminal scholar of critical pedagogy, linked education and democratic principles. He believed students should be active participants in questioning the realities of schools and society. This process has the power to bring critical awareness to students or "critical consciousness" as well as transformation to society. Similarly, critical pedagogy scholar Henry Giroux (1985), wrote that it is vital for teachers to fully realize their roles as transformative intellectuals who encourage students to act as critical agents. To teachers of critical pedagogy, a more democratic and liberating education is the goal (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1985). Then, youth activism is both an educational outcome and a medium for change.

Furthermore, Shor (1992) suggested teachers select topics that can lead to democratic change considering issues of inequality, but also urged teachers to consider topics that are appropriate and relevant based on students' age. This builds up to a *change-agency orientation* meaning "learning and

acting for the democratic transformation of self and society" (p. 195). Shor discussed a variety of ways teachers can guide students toward being activists. He even recognized that engaging in critical discussions is itself a type of social action. Student activism can vary in how long it takes to develop, and it depends on local and national political climate—namely, whether it is one of protest or one of passivity (Shor, 1992).

When considering theories of youth activism, it is important to consider perspectives beyond the local and national. Grounded in a global perspective, Yoon's (2016) Critical Global Literacies is an instructional framework designed to build students' critical global consciousness and activism. This interdisciplinary framework has four dimensions: *developing global awareness with an interconnected world concept*, *making connections from a personal to a global level*, *analyzing and critiquing texts from global and cross-cultural perspectives*, and *promoting social and political actions on global and multicultural issues.* In the first dimension, the complexities and interconnectedness of world issues (i.e., access to water, pollution, epidemics) are examined through questioning (Yoon et al., 2018). The second dimension involves exploring how local issues connect to global issues. In the third dimension, students are encouraged to reconstruct their knowledge with a cross-cultural perspective (i.e., how McDonald's slogans differ internationally to appeal to cultural values). The apex of this process is the fourth dimension where students using their global lens to act for change (i.e., poster campaigns) inside and outside the class (Yoon et al., 2018).

Importantly, when Kirshner discusses youth activism (2015), he emphasizes teachers consider students' experience of life in the *now*; they are not merely "Citizens of the Future" as they are often referred to. Here, the purpose of youth activism is for students to develop and utilize democratic principles and practices simultaneously. Kirschner (2015) describes two components of youth activism that should be encouraged in schools: *critique* and *collective agency*. With critique, students are meant to deconstruct and "denaturalize" the sociopolitical context of their lives. By *collective agency*, the students' focus is on the collective and collaborative efforts needed to create change. An example of this could be any of the over 160 youth working groups in the U.S focusing on educational reform, racial justice, environmental justice, and gender issues (Kirshner, 2015).

In sum, the theoretical concepts of critical global literacies and youth activism guided this study's examination of morning meeting conversations in one fifth grade classroom.

Methodology

This study employed case study methodology (Merriam, 2007; Yin, 2017). Case study method allows for examination of educational processes and problems that can lead to improved practices (Merriam, 2007). Patterns and details interactions within the classroom were examined. The intensive

investigation involved in case study research allowed for details and contextualization to expose the complexities of these daily literacy events. Case study allows for the investigation of a phenomenon when the variables are either not easily identified or too embedded within the phenomenon to be studied singularly (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). In this case, the context of the school, the background and priorities of the teacher, and the diverse experience of the students were examined.

Study Context

The site was a multicultural elementary school in a small northeastern city. The school district was purposely selected because of the district-level mission toward empowerment and focus on social justice and human rights. The district vision statement focuses on the importance of creative thinking and problem solving for social change and "democracy itself." This school serves 350 students, grades Prekindergarten through 5. About 20% of students receive English as a New Language (ENL) services. The ethnic ratio includes: 21% Asian, 10% Hispanic, 7% Black, 50% White, and 12% two or more races. Approximately 40% of students receive free or reduced lunch. This school serves diverse ELLs including children of international faculty and students, refugees, and first- and second-generation language learners.

Teacher Participant

Ana is a fifth-grade teacher with 30 years of teaching experience. She is an immigrant, so she uses her cross-cultural and multilingual experiences to connect with families and children. She considers a strength her "Being comfortable working with families from different countries. My family is from a different country ... I grew up around people who didn't speak English." In both her teaching as well as her work in the community, Ana puts issues of race and social justice front and center. She is in school and community book groups that discuss equity issues, and she is knowledgeable about issues affecting students of color, immigrants, and transgender students. Her classroom space reflected her focus on social justice. There was a gathering area that resembled a hearth, which is where Ana had her chair and often drank tea while starting morning meetings. Along with pictures of social justice advocates—such as Malala Yousafzai, Gandhi, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—a large LGBTQ pride flag hung above "the hearth." Ana set up the classroom to be a serene environment. The overhead lights were often either dimmed or off, so the space reflected light from small lamps and natural light.

Student Participants

Of the 18 students in Ana's fifth-grade class, there were two focal students, Mateo and Mohamed. There were selected because the larger dissertation study examined critical literacy practices for emergent bilinguals and both students received ENL services. The class was culturally

and linguistically diverse; in addition to Mateo and Mohamed, six other students were bilingual and several had lived internationally. *Mohamed, 11,* was born in Iraq and moved to the United States with his large family—both parents as well as three siblings—when he was in third grade. He spoke Arabic, but was not able to read and write the language. *Mateo, 10,* arrived in the U.S. from Spain with his parents and older siblings before beginning fourth grade. He was quite advanced in his Spanish language and literacy skills, and had begun English lessons before his move to the United States.

Data Collection

Over the course of the 2017-2018 school year, I collected data as part of a dissertation study on classroom teachers' critical practices. I observed Ana's English/Language Arts period, which started with morning meetings, for two to three days a week. The morning meetings lasted from 10-20 minutes. I took detailed field notes on the morning meetings including verbal descriptions of activities and exchanges, as well as direct quotes. I held three semi-structured teacher interviews (1 hour each) and 2 focal student interviews (15 minutes each). I asked questions about literacy activities, including morning meeting discussions and projects that sprung from them. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. A final source of data was classroom documents including lesson plans and student journals which informed on students' engagement with topics discussed in morning meeting.

Data Analysis

I analyzed data continually through memoing and coding to capture and express the participants' experiences with the morning meetings. I used open coding, in vivo coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Saldana, 2016). I prioritized in vivo coding, to maintain the participants' voices when writing their stories rather than researcher-derived codes. In vivo coding highlighs the voices of participants and allows the participants themselves to give meaning to the data. By representing the data with participants own words, it creates a more accurate description of the classroom experiences. For example, teacher and student interview and field notes led to open codes such as student-led conversations, current events, children bring up news, sharing news about family, and "I call it news instead of sharing." I made the axial code of *news instead of sharing.* In this way, I utilized sentiments Ana articulated during an interview about how she refined her morning meetings to meet the needs of her students during the given sociopolitical context (i.e., rise of white supremacy and anti-immigration sentiments). She found it was necessary to go beyond the more traditional "share" component to encourage students to engage with news and current events. This theme, *news instead of sharing,* demonstrates not only the unique manner Ana reframed her meetings, but it also has a more literal link to the daily discussion of current events that they

students brought up whether news from their families, happenings in school, or news stories. Another theme, *what's happening all around the world*, affirmed young Mateo's voice describing why he enjoyed morning meetings. He said that sometimes he just liked to listen to the conversations and learn about what was happening in the news. "I learn a lot about what is happening all around the world," he said, "and sometimes what is happening to my friends." This theme of global connections came up in many codes including connection to cultures, international perspective, connecting to home countries in both interview and observational data. The students frequently brought in global perspective by discussing U.S. responses to natural disasters, treatment of Muslim citizens, or differences in gun laws and prevalence of shootings. The development of the additional themes is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Codes to Theme Development

Codes	Data	Theme
"These children are going to change the world"	I want to make sure they have a voice...right? All those children are going to change the world and need a little help." (Ana, interview)	"These children are going to change the world"
	"I didn't know this happened in the world" and "I can't believe it." (Mateo, interview)	
Student agency		
Student-led	"If you want to be identified as it is just how you want to be what you like. You should have that right." (Mateo to school board)	
Protest plans		
advocacy	"Reading books like these [Malala] gets other people to try and be a better person. They see other people doing all those hard things, and they are just over there playing video games and not even worrying about education, so I think that really helps." (Mohamed, interview)	
activism		
"Literacy development, no matter what"	Field notes on frequency of student participation morning meeting;	"Literacy development, no matter what"
Students explaining ideas	Ana asking students to re-explain news to one another	
	Mateo said that sometimes he just liked to *listen* to the conversations	
Listening skills	"You're a questioning child!" (Ana to Mateo)	
Vocabulary explanation	Ana said that that morning meeting "should be literacy development no matter what"	
Asking questions	Class connects their conversation from morning meeting to other ELA activities	
ELL support		

I engaged in the following validation techniques: (a) triangulation across data sources (e.g., field notes on morning meeting discussions, student and teacher interviews, journals); (b) extended time in the research setting (1 school year); and (c) member checking on emerging themes with Ana.

Findings

The findings illustrate the possibilities and challenges that emerged through Ana's alteration and implementation of morning meetings in her culturally and linguistically diverse classroom. As the year unfolded, students gathered each morning and discussed many relevant and critical issues that they were concerned about. The findings related to the possibilities of morning meetings are: 1) *"News instead of sharing"*; 2) *"Literacy development, no matter what"*; 3) *"What is happening all around the world"*; and 4) *"These children are going to change the world."* Findings that relate to the challenges with implementing morning meetings are 5) *"Who is being left out of the conversation?"* and 6) *Negotiating time and curricular demands.*

"News Instead of Sharing"

After a quick greeting, Ana began most meetings asking "What's happening in the news?" Morning meetings were a time to interrogate everyday concerns and things happening in the news (e.g., Charlottesville & white supremacy, school shootings). Ana wanted morning news to go well beyond traditional morning meeting sharing, yet she expected and appreciated that students would still share personal and often positive news about a new baby in the family or a new pet. Reflecting on this, she said "So we have news about Charlottesville and news about the new guinea pig." Ana said "calling it 'news' instead of 'sharing' gives it a whole different flavor." Ana encouraged students to both critically read and listen to the news and bring topics to the morning meetings.

After Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, the school's student-led morning announcements reported the third grade fundraising efforts for Hurricane Harvey, which caused damage in Texas. A student immediately asked "Why aren't they doing it for Irma, Harvey, and Maria?" Ana replied that was a great question to discuss in morning meeting. There, students began deliberating why the third graders were not raising money for Irma and Maria as well as Harvey. Some students wondered aloud if they started their project before the other two hurricanes hit. Another suggested that a lot of people at the school had relatives who lived in Houston, and another student shared that his friend at the school is Puerto Rican, so his family should not be ignored. One student thought that they should raise money for all three hurricanes, and many agreed. The student who raised the issue described it as "cruel" to ignore people just because they live on the island of Puerto Rico. Ana complimented the students on their questions and responses. She asked the children if that was similar to how the United States responded differently to the three hurricanes. A student responded

that Irma and Maria hit islands to which people often do not pay attention. Ana praised the students for the questions, and said they would continue to find out more about the situation.

The morning meeting became a space for students to discuss upsetting or difficult news, share their fears, and, later, collaborate on a way to take action. Many of the critical conversations during the school year revolved around gun violence and school shootings. There were multiple school gun deaths during their fifth-grade school year, including the 17 students at Stoneman High School in Parkland, Florida. When the students were sharing news, often it would start with heartbreaking comments such as "There was *another* shooting yesterday" or simply "*It* happened again." Ana provided support and reassured the students by going over the school's safety plans. Ana made sure to encourage students to look at the facts of each shooting, so they could engage in meaningful conversations about the gun violence epidemic. For example:

Student: There was *another* shooting, today.

Ana: Where?

Several students: Maryland.

Student: Two students were injured, and the shooter was killed by police.

Ana: Was the shooter a male or female? Black? White?

[*Students answer*]

Mateo: What gun was used?

Student: It was another assault rifle.

Ana: That [Mateo's question about the type of weapon] is what we have to pay attention to. Whilst trying to build students awareness about these important and often difficult current events, Ana listened, restated, and guided multi-voiced conversations.

"Literacy Development, No Matter What"

Morning meeting discussions were accessible to students, including emergent bilinguals. Ana believed morning meetings should be "literacy development, no matter what." Ana did informal check-ins to make sure all students had some background knowledge and vocabulary needed to understand the news topics. For instance, one morning, a student shared that Donald Trump's former campaign manager, Paul Manafort, was being investigated by the FBI. Ana explained vocabulary like *indicted* and *house arrest* by writing the terms on the whiteboard, breaking down word parts, and using the words in sentences.

Meetings were a time students felt safe to ask questions to build their comprehension. During meetings, Ana praised Mohamed's questioning nature—"You are a questioning child!" she remarked. He frequently asked questions during critical conversations—which showed that he was listening—

and his questions provided an often much needed opportunity for Ana or another student to provide some background knowledge in relation to a news topic. Ana shared that she believed that the students' own explanations of news events were comprehensible to each other. It felt like Mohamed's questions were a "time-out" to let other students unfamiliar with the topic to access the information. For example, when discussing climate change and the wildfires as well as the resulting mudslides in California, Mohamed asked "What is a mudslide?" The students then explained it to him. While the conversations were often on complex topics, Ana tried to provide support or encourage peer support for all students to enter the dialogue.

"What is Happening All Around the World"

As Mateo shared about meetings: "I learn a lot about what is happening all around the world and sometimes what is happening with my friends." Ana leveraged the students' diverse and international perspective on issues. Immigrant students, including Mohamed and Mateo, regularly shared insights from their respective countries. This empowered their voices while building the class's collective global knowledge. For example, in a conversation on gun violence, Mateo shared that in Spain it is much more difficult for people to get guns in comparison to the U.S, where many more people consider having guns to be a right. Mohamed saw his role was to educate classmates about Muslims in a time of misinformation, once stating: "Just to point out, most of us Muslims are not like ISIS or Taliban." He spoke knowledgeable topics like the tenets of Islam and the increase in bullying of Muslim children since Donald Trump's élection. This helped other students understand current events from a global perspective.

It was close to Indigenous People's Day—which had recently replaced the Columbus Day holiday in the district—and Ana did a quick lesson on how the same holiday, when given a different name, can send a much different message. She asked the students to discuss what they knew about Columbus as well as how his arrival impacted Indigenous groups. Students connected Columbus and the Taìno to what they had been discussing in social studies about other colonizers and their effects on indigenous groups (i.e., Incas in Peru, Aztecs in Mexico) After a discussion, Ana concluded "That is why we need to pay attention to how we name things in our country, holidays included" because "[it] sends a message about who is valued." Later in the week, while reading a *Hardy Boys* book, a student noted that the text used the term "Indian" and did not positively portray indigenous groups. The student reflected that the book is "old" and wondered if it should be taken out of the library. In this way, the conversations from meetings affected the students' critical literacy skills and global perspectives across the curriculum.

"These Children are Going to Change the World"

The Morning Meeting became a space to take collaborative action on issues like unfair school practices (e.g., gendered language in the school's Code of Conduct) or national issues. These critical conversations often led to students seeing themselves as young activists. A month after the Parkland school shootings, a student-led national walk out was planned for March 14, 2018. Many of the students in Ana's class wanted to participate in the walkout, and they used morning meetings as a time to organize and plan. Ana told the class that she was giving them a "space to organize," but—because of teacher union rules—cannot help organize or participate. During one morning meeting, Mateo said "I have something about the walkout. When the U.S. was writing…starting *our country*, they wrote the right to bear arms. But if no one had guns, you wouldn't need a gun."

Ana: True, there are many countries that do not have guns.

Mohamed: Why?

Ana: They don't believe in it or think they need it.

A bilingual student then brought up the big rifles carried by armed police in India. At that point, Ana changed the subject back to the walkout organizing, saying "Let's have the organizers tell the plan so far…" The student taking the lead told the class that they are marching out and walking across the street. Ana asked the students who wanted to participate to talk to their parents. She told them "You need permission to leave the school and participate in the walkout." Later, Mateo shared with me that he did not think he would walk out. He wanted to stay with the teacher and learn. Mohamed said he planned on attending the march. "I want to," he stated, "even if I get in trouble, I am always getting in trouble." There was, at the time, some concern about school and district policy for participating in the walkout. Mohamed saw himself as a bit of a trouble-maker, both as a typical fifth grade mischief-maker (i.e., silliness with friends, losing homework) and as an actual change-maker. Mohamed, noted in an interview, how frustrating it was that some kids in America were "just playing video games." He was frustrated with others' apathy, so he along with several students took part in the walkout to address gun laws. As Ana said of their support of their activism, "All these children are going to change the world and need a little help."

Mateo got very involved in the rights of transgender and non-binary students at the school district level, and worked to revise the Code of Conduct which had dated and gendered language. Although this project was completed during social studies and writing time, it stemmed from morning meeting discussions. Ana had found out the school district was revising the Code of Conduct and wanted student feedback. She shared this at morning meeting. After several students decided to work with Ana to read the document and present their suggestions to the school board, the morning

meeting became a time to update the rest of the class on their progress. Mateo said he was proud that he could stand up for other students. He also said, "Maybe it is not clear for transgender students and leaves out nonbinary. If I'm a boy, I don't want to be called a girl. If you want to be identified as it is just how you want to be what you like. You should have that right." Both focal students were developing their agency as activists.

"Who is Being Left out of the Conversation?"

One of Ana's challenges in guiding critical conversations was making sure all voices were being heard, regardless of point of view. In an interview, she wondered by thinking aloud about her meetings, "Who is being left out of the conversation?" She was still working on skillfully guiding critical conversations, which would ensure all students felt comfortable discussing difficult topics, and that multiple perspectives would be heard. Ana told me that she wanted all students to feel safe sharing "even if it is not the view of the majority." She also worried about how much of her own perspectives she should share, so that students with a completely different view than her own would not feel they have to mimic her. She felt that, during the year of the study, most of the students had similar views on news topics, and she sometimes wished she had different political perspectives represented.

Even though Ana prioritized all students accessing critical conversations, there were power dynamics that sometimes left students out of the conversation. Because of Ana's awareness, these issues were usually addressed either with the group or with the individual students. For example, when a small group of boys were leading a morning meeting discussion, one of the female students voiced that they were only calling on other boys to participate. Ana restated the concerns and asked the male students, immediately, to recognize their behavior and make the required changes. Teachers noticed that Mohamed was not treated well by another boy in reading group—that is, he was excluded because he received extra help learning English. Ana addressed this by having the students go around the meeting circle and share all the languages they all speak. Noticing that almost half the students were bilingual, the class discussed the different stages of language learning—in one language or another—and discussed the challenges and benefits of language learning. These challenges provided Ana with drive to continue to discuss issues of gender and language discrimination so that all students could be equally active in these critical dialogues.

Negotiating Time and Curricular Demands

For Ana, the most obvious challenge to meaningful critical practices was what she referred to as "artificial nature of the school day." By this, she recognized that the school days were dictated by a schedule and curriculum she and her students did not have complete control over. This limited

literacy activities situated in students' experiences and inquiries. For her morning meetings, she sometimes only had 15 minutes squeezed between specials and the time the ESL and reading teachers came in to work with individuals or reading groups. I witnessed this time constraint shorten critical conversations that Ana and the students wanted to have. Early in my visits, in October, a student asked when the "long weekend" would be. Ana replied, "Next week is Indigenous Peoples Day. It used to be called Columbus Day." Mateo asked, "Can we talk about that [the change] during morning meeting?" Ana assured him they would talk about it, but they needed to go to specials and then finish discussing the hurricane topic. In essence, Ana wanted more of her class time to be spent examining issues the students brought up each morning. The students seemed to feel the same way. I often noted students' frustrated faces when they didn't get a chance to share or contribute to the morning meeting before it ended.

Even though Ana was not able to devote an ideal amount of time to morning meetings, she often found ways to continue the critical conversations later in the day. Ana shared that there was a lot to be taught in fifth grade; however, she was sometimes able to compare the outcomes of morning meeting with curriculum foci. For example, the school used the New York State curriculum framework inquiry model for social studies (NCSS, 2013) which Ana felt aligned with her morning meeting goals. This inquiry model included: "teachers as a facilitator and coach, providing support for student-centered learning, productive collaboration, and informed action" (NCSS, 2013). Ana shared that this model was similar to her morning meeting practices, sharing that she "wasn't teaching," she was facilitating conversations on current events and social justice issues the students were curious about. The outcome of this inquiry model was students' informed action which was evident in the students' activism after collaborative discussions and plans (i.e., code of conduct work, walk out).

Discussion and Implications

They began with the events in Charlottesville, and then, later, dialogued about Islamophobia, school shootings, and media consumption as well as fairness and justice reflected in school events and activities. Within this safe space, students were able to discuss topics that some teachers would not deem safe to discuss. These meetings gave the emergent bilingual students a chance to build listening and speaking skills, and the discourses often led to more in-depth literacy projects. When morning meetings focus solely on developing social-emotional and structured academic skills, students are not given a chance to talk about the difficult things happening in their lives and in the world. When teachers do hold these hard conversations about topics like race and inequality, as Ana did, teacher-student bonds and trust are strengthened (Kirshner, 2015).

Supported by Ana, these fifth graders' conversations were authentic and meaningful ways to develop global critical literacy skills. Conversations stemmed from personal and local events that were related to larger issues as students made connections from personal to global level (Yoon et al., 2018). What started as a morning announcement about a local hurricane fundraiser became a much larger conversation about unjust responses to natural disasters. Diverse learners, like Mohamed and Mateo, shared their real-life global perspectives which led to more understanding of the complexity and interconnected nature of events (Yoon et al., 2018).

Ana encouraged students to use their agency to affect democratic change through morning meetings as Tilhou (2020) suggested. Students used the morning meeting as a time for critique and collective agency, two components of youth activism. Kirshner (2015) contends that opportunities for critique and agency contribute to a person's sociopolitical development. Students were developing knowledge, critical analysis skills, and "capacity for action" in social and political situations that they encounter now and in the future. The news events of 2017-2018 school year were unnerving and upsetting. Many teachers avoided discussion of current events because they were so scary. Yet, by engaging with these troubling, oppressive realities learners take ownership of their role the world (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992), possibly replacing fear with hope. Shor asserted that learners thrive when they have coherent goals for taking action on an issue they care about.

This study had several limitations to consider. There was only one teacher participant and two focal students who were interviewed. The larger study was conducted in several classrooms with additional teacher and student participants, but Ana was the only teacher that used morning meetings within her ELA block. For future research, it is important to utilize a similar theoretical lens to examine morning meetings in a variety of settings. This district promotes empowerment and social justice in their mission and events. Ana was an experienced teacher closely in tuned to the experiences and concerns of her fifth graders. She firmly believes in equity and social justice and it permeates into all her practices. The critical consciousness her students developed was not wholly surprising given these factors. Therefore, an important implication is for researchers to look at the challenges and possibilities for teachers in different circumstances (i.e., less experienced, more traditional school setting) implementing morning meetings.

This study provides implications for teachers and teacher education programs. Teachers can use morning meetings to bring criticality into everyday discussions. Together, teachers and students can generate topics connected to the lives of the immigrant and refugee students and their unique viewpoints. Teachers can engage with, not avoid, the political climate even when it is divisive. This is only possible when less experienced teachers feel prepared and empowered to do so. In this way,

teacher education programs can prepare teachers to create spaces that allow for literacy activities based on student agency and involvement in social change in their schools, communities, and world.

As our world recovers from a global pandemic that affects privileged and marginalized communities differently, making space for global critical literacy practices remains crucial. As we face a climate crisis, we need young people to see themselves as activists not for the future, but for the now. Teachers and researchers can expand their expectations of morning meetings. Studies of transformative morning meeting conversations and actions provide clear possibilities for change from the voices of the teachers and students.

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