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Administering an Educational Program: Implementing Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Instruction in Elementary Schools to Increase Student Achievement

Marquita Hockaday

Abstract

The demographics in America's K-12 classrooms will continue to shift throughout the 21st century as students become more diverse. However, educators remain predominantly White, presenting issues of cultural disequilibrium. Cultural disequilibrium may result in frustration and a breakdown in the classroom, leading to a lack of achievement amongst culturally diverse students. Further, educators and educational leaders often lack the skills to work with diverse populations due to inadequate pre-service programs. Thus, it is critical that educational leaders become aware of and understand various culturally responsive curricula and instructional practices. Elementary school educational leaders can develop and administer effective culturally responsive programs to reach the youngest generation and improve achievement in an effort to correct the underperformance of culturally diverse students.

Keywords: culturally responsive, curriculum and instruction, diverse, achievement, educational leader, Funds of Knowledge, motivation

As America's population becomes more multicultural, school demographics continue to reflect this diversity. In 2000, one in three students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools was from a racial or ethnic minority group, and this trend will continue to increase throughout the 21st century (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Consequently, teachers often experience cultural disequilibrium or the "cultural mismatch that may occur between teachers and their students" (Bergeron, 2008, p. 5). Cultural disequilibrium

arises when teachers are confused and frustrated due to a lack of preparation (Bergeron, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial that pre-service and practicing teachers are made aware and are encouraged to implement culturally responsive educational practices. Also, K-12 schools must integrate culturally responsive curriculum and instruction into written, taught, and tested curriculum to improve student achievement. To best understand how culturally responsive curriculum and instruction can impact student achievement amongst diverse groups,

various terms and phrases must be operationalized.

For the purposes of this paper, culture is defined as a “set of beliefs, values, and language patterns of a social unit, often recognized through one’s ethnic identity” (Bergeron, 2008, p. 6); culturally responsive curriculum and instruction involve including family customs and traditions, as well as community culture and expectations, in core content areas that will lead to student engagement and motivation (Saifer, Edwards, Ellis, Ko, & Stuczynski, 2011). Diversity is defined as the “vast set of experiences and attributes of an individual, including socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, and religion, that contribute to each person’s uniqueness” (Bergeron, 2008, p. 6). Diversity in this paper places emphasis on three groups of students: those from minority groups, those with low socioeconomic status backgrounds, and those who speak English as a second language. These are the groups of students who often underachieve due to traditional elementary curriculum guidelines, measurements of achievement, and deficit thinking among many school officials (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Finally, student achievement, in the context of culturally responsive curriculum, refers to meeting and/or exceeding state and local standards, understanding and accepting various cultures, and enriching one’s own cultural experience (Saifer et al., 2011).

I will first describe the current issues of underachievement among diverse students. Further, I will present a review of literature on various models of culturally responsive curriculum and instruction to determine how these

models can inspire the aforementioned students to achieve in schools. Finally, practicing and aspiring instructional leaders will receive specific tools and guidelines using Hallinger’s Conceptual Framework of Instructional Leadership and the 2014 ISLLC Standards. These leadership tools may be implemented to assist faculty and staff in elementary schools in effectively applying culturally responsive curriculum and instruction that will improve diverse student populations’ achievement.

The Issue: Underachievement of Diverse Elementary School Students

Student achievement varies depending on the definition and goals of measurement. Based on the emphasis of student achievement for this paper, diverse students tend to underachieve when compared to their counterparts in elementary schools. For instance, Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that all students needed to demonstrate mastery of “literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills in order to be active participants in democracy” (p. 160). If mastery of literacy and numeracy skills was based on data, such as the mean scores of all diverse students who took the fourth grade math Virginia Standard of Learning (SOL) end-of-course test compared to the scores of those students who are middle-class and White, diverse students perform at a lower rate (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2015). According to the VDOE (2015), of the students tested in 2013-2014, 82% of White students passed English SOL tests while only 59% of those identified as Gap Group 1 members (students with disabilities, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students)

passed English SOL tests. Also, 80% of White students passed math SOL tests, while 61% of Gap Group 1 members passed the same tests. These data represent a need for stronger curriculum and instruction methods in the classroom to prepare all students for assessments. Also, in terms of literacy skills, research has shown that students who live in poverty experience delays in their academic achievement and are often delayed in their language and literacy development (González, 2002). The National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) has reported that, in families living in poverty, only 28% of children can read at the minimal level of proficiency.

Perhaps this explains why diverse groups continue to underachieve when achievement is defined as meeting or exceeding local or state standards. However, when achievement is defined as understanding and accepting various cultures, or enriching one's own cultural experience (Saifer et al., 2011), then underachievement can be explained by the longtime description of America as a melting pot instead of salad bowl (Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014). For years, America has been viewed as a melting pot, or diverse societies that must be assimilated into the European, middle-class way of life (González, 2002). This ideology trickled into America's schools and impacted the performance of diverse students (Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014). Describing America as a melting pot suggests that society must be in line with European, middle-class ideals. On the other hand, a salad bowl approach, a philosophy that allows individuals to coincide, mingle, and influence American society with their

their cultural idiosyncrasies, is more ideal for a culturally responsive society (Green-Gibson & Collet, 2014). Thus, the salad bowl ideology can be implemented into schools to allow diverse students to increase their achievement.

There is a rapid increase of minorities across America, and elementary schools, for example, are experiencing a huge influx of Hispanic students (Coffey, Cox, Hillman, & Chan, 2015). Due to this shift in the population, school officials are tasked with modifying curricula to include culturally responsive material (Coffey et al., 2015). According to Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995), "teaching that ignores student norms of behavior and communication provokes student resistance, while teaching that is responsive prompts student involvement" (p. 17). According to Coffey et al. (2015), "It is important that elementary education programs are solid so that children learn in ways that benefit them for the rest of their lives" (p. 12). So, if administrators include culturally responsive curriculum and instruction programs in elementary schools, it is possible to impact students throughout their academic careers and also in their social lives (Coffey et al., 2015).

What is Being Done: Current Practices for Culturally Diverse Students

Elementary school instructors have realized that classroom demographics are shifting and have responded to these changes with various strategies and techniques of instruction. However, the strategies included are often not implemented with fidelity and can create more problems than solutions. For instance, project based learning (PBL) is one instructional strategy that

elementary school teachers include in unit plans in an effort to put students in cooperative learning groups and have them engage in critical and creative thinking. However, if PBL is integrated without providing supporting strategies, such as student choice and connecting the material to students' prior knowledge, the project and its components will lose significance (King, Sims, & Osher, n.d.).

Further, elementary instructors often include discussions and open dialogue in daily classroom practices. This is an instructional strategy that is effective for culturally diverse students as it allows these learners to question the status quo and engage in conversations about the power structure within their communities and schools. However, if instructors do not take advantage of the discourse community that they have within their classrooms, they may limit discussions to simple question and answer sessions that are teacher driven. An elementary instructor may misconstrue his or her students' mental capabilities and not allow the class to question or critically analyze the implicit biases that exists within school community (Brown & Lee, 2012).

The Solution: Implementing Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Instruction

Culturally responsive curriculum allows students to relate their home life to content they are learning in the classroom. The most effective culturally responsive curriculum permits students to gather knowledge from a recognizable cultural base and associate any new knowledge to their life experiences (Menchaca, 2001). Infusing culturally responsive curriculum and instruction in elementary schools encourages students

to question traditional views (Bergeron, 2008). Connecting school, family, and the community leads to students feeling as if they belong and as if learning is purposeful (Saifer et al., 2011). There are at least four different approaches to culturally responsive curriculum and instruction that can be integrated into elementary school classrooms to improve students' academic achievement. These four approaches - culturally responsive teaching, cultural responsiveness and service learning, culturally responsive standards-based teaching, and funds of knowledge - will be outlined and reviewed through literature in the following sections. Also, an explanation of how students can gain academic achievement will be described in each section.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Teachers must engage diverse learners in a divergent manner. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) created culturally responsive teaching based on the idea that students' emotions influence their motivations, and their emotions are socialized by their cultural backgrounds. According to Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995), "to be effective in a diverse class, teachers must relate content to the cultural background of their students" (p. 18). In order to reach students who are different, teachers must make learning meaningful. An instructor must answer the essential questions, or the "how, what, and why of teaching" (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p.18), to ensure that all elements of instruction are cohesive. Therefore, culturally responsive teaching is an approach that teachers can incorporate to make learning meaningful. For instance, if all students in a third grade class are working on the same

math problem but one student is frustrated and stops working, while another student from a different cultural group feels excited by the challenge and continues working, and yet another student from yet another cultural group is exasperated but pushes through the anger to conquer the task, the teacher might conclude that two of the students are intrinsically motivated to complete the work (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Even though the teacher might not understand each child's behavior, it is the teacher's job "to understand all students' perspectives" (p. 19). Consequently, it is important for teachers to work with all students in an effort to extend their current knowledge and inspire a desire to achieve.

The basis of Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (1995) framework is that motivationally effective teaching is equal to culturally responsive teaching. In an effort to help diverse students achieve, less emphasis should be placed on punishment and reward, and more emphasis has to be given to communication and understanding. The goal of culturally responsive teaching in Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's (1995) approach is for teachers to demonstrate that what students are learning makes sense and is of importance. Further, the authors posited that implementing culturally responsive teaching leads to intrinsic motivation, as teachers demonstrate an understanding of the students' perspectives and each child is viewed as a unique and active participant in his or her education.

The framework includes four motivational factors for teachers and students to integrate into the elementary school environment in order to increase

academic achievement for diverse students. First, an environment where teachers and students feel connected and respected is important (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Collaboration, cooperative groups, equality, and discussions about equal treatment amongst all groups are key components of this first factor. For instance, researchers have found that diverse students demonstrate improvements in their academic performance, attitude toward peers, and self-esteem when they participate in cooperative grouping procedures such as the Jigsaw method (Walker & Crogan, 1998). Next, teachers should create an environment where instruction is relevant to a student's daily life. Students should be given clear goals and choices in assignments, and student, parent, and teacher conferences must be a normal occurrence (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Culturally responsive curriculum often includes student choice, experiential, and inquiry assignments (Bergeron, 2008). The instruction should be challenging, thoughtful, and inclusive of information that students will value. Lessons should include real-world issues, and discussions must incorporate students' dialogue (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Projects, problem-based assignments, critical questioning, and experimental inquiry methods should also be incorporated into teaching and learning strategies (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Finally, when students are learning about what they value, they will demonstrate more knowledge (Gonzalez, 2002; Saifer et al., 2011). Therefore, allowing students to demonstrate knowledge in more ways than one is critical. Students in an elementary school can demonstrate

knowledge through authentic assessments, such as portfolios or speeches, contracts, and self-assessments (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

The purpose of implementing the four motivational factors created by Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) is to ensure that teachers create an environment in which diverse students are able to achieve. The premise of culturally responsive teaching is that students' emotions are culturally socialized, and motivation is influenced by students' emotions. To properly educate diverse students, teachers must work to motivate all students by understanding and implementing culturally responsive teaching. While culturally responsive teaching is ideal, the expectations and principles of this approach, such as understanding and accepting every student's culture, are not only daunting, but can possibly be viewed as unrealistic when one considers the biases that individuals bring to the classroom. For instance, some teachers view their students through a deficit lens and believe that children from certain cultural backgrounds are unteachable (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005). Without being exposed to the ideals of culturally responsive teaching in undergraduate programs, pre-service teachers may not possess the tools necessary to integrate culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms. According to Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995), "for culturally different students, engagement in learning is most likely to occur when they are intrinsically motivated to learn" (p. 21). If a student is aware that his or her teacher is not inspired to understand or accept the cultural make-up of the class, then there

is a chance that the student will not perform to the best of his or her ability. Therefore, it is crucial that administrators and educators plan, create, and implement, to the best of their ability, culturally responsive teaching that leads to diverse students achieving.

Cultural Responsiveness and Service Learning

Even though teacher demographics are currently not representative of student populations, proactive teachers work to break down barriers in their classrooms, allowing students to discuss issues of equality and ending segregation and stereotyping (Steven & Charles, 2005). These teachers are in the beginning stages of becoming culturally responsive educators. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), culturally responsive teachers (a) are socioculturally conscious, meaning that there is more than one way to perceive a problem—usually based on one's socioeconomic status; (b) have positive opinions of students from diverse backgrounds; (c) view themselves as both capable of and responsible for responsive educational change for all students; (d) comprehend learner knowledge construction; (e) are invested in getting to know students personally; and (f) use personal knowledge of students to create teaching and learning strategies. In summary, culturally responsive educators are often learner or student oriented (Bergeron, 2008).

While culturally responsive teachers have the best intentions, they sometimes have deep-seated, though unintended biases (Meaney, Bohler, Kopf, Hernandez, & Scott, 2008) and are often working from curricula, pedagogy, and evaluative measures "that privilege

the affluent, White, and male segments of society” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 22). Also, when multicultural education efforts are implemented, the curriculum often emphasizes information and knowledge instead of building an awareness and understanding among diverse students in an effort to eliminate “racist and sexist attitudes” (Steven & Charles, 2005, p. 17). Therefore, integrating culturally responsive curriculum and instruction that encourages concepts such as service learning in elementary schools could deepen superficial knowledge of cultural differences and further student achievement.

The “current racial and class make-up of K-12 teachers and pre-service educators contrasts sharply with that of their students” (Meaney et al., 2008, p. 190). It is crucial for educators to acknowledge this difference and find ways to connect with students. According to Solorzano and Solorzano (1999), a culturally responsive classroom is one where all children’s backgrounds are accepted, every student is integrated into the class experience, classroom processes are fair and equal, and the teacher maintains a rapport with every student. Also, culturally responsive classes emphasize both being a part of and contributing to the community—in other words, citizenship (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The concept of service learning interacts with culturally responsive curriculum and instruction and can be infused in the elementary classroom.

According to Anderson, Swick, and Yff (2001), there are six essential components to service learning: (a) high quality service to the community; (b) a connection between the service activity

and the classroom; (c) reflection from the student about the service activity; (d) allowing the student to choose their service activity and be active in planning and implementing said activity; (e) collaboration to make sure everyone (parents, students, community, and teacher) benefits; and (f) evaluation of the program to ensure that the goals were met. The purpose of service learning programs in elementary school classrooms is two-fold. First, student engagement increases; also, students begin to make decisions that are of value and based on their cultural backgrounds (Anderson et al., 2001). Students are able to be involved in projects that will improve their environment, such as planting trees or gardens in the school’s backyard, or projects that are problem-based and require critical thinking skills and real-world applications (Anderson et al., 2001). Service learning programs can lead to student achievement due to the amount of interaction that occurs between students and community members on a somewhat regular basis (Meaney et al., 2008).

With that being said, there are issues that can occur with the cultural responsive instructor and service learning projects, such as fidelity of the program and assumptions. For instance, an instructor may make false suppositions about a student based on his or her cultural background and force the student to participate in a project that the student may or may not have an interest in pursuing. Also, a service-learning program must have buy-in from the instructor as well as the students to persist over time. Without student engagement, service-learning programs cannot succeed. According to Meaney et

al. (2008), one of the requirements of effective service-learning programs is that students reflect on their own cultural competencies while working with disadvantaged groups. So, instructors must encourage students to become invested in the project and put in the time and effort to complete the given task. Service-learning and culturally responsive instruction can be effective and meaningful when integrated into curriculum and instruction. This interaction may lead to students enriching their own cultural experiences and therefore improving academic achievement.

Culturally Responsive Standards-Based Teaching

Currently, the American education system reflects the dominant culture in curriculum, instruction, interaction with families, and through emphases placed on individual achievement, competition, and having a teacher-led classroom (Saifer et al., 2011). Many cultural groups do not respond to this traditional view of education and thus, culturally responsive standards-based Teaching (CRSB) has been created as a response for these diverse students. According to Saifer et al. (2011), culturally responsive teaching acknowledges the needs of students by including their families and communities and in turn improving their motivation and engagement; standards-based teaching gives all students an opportunity to be exposed to demanding and advanced learning. CRSB teaching combines the two and is successful because it allows for a deeper connection between family, schools, and community (Saifer et al., 2011).

According to Saifer et al. (2011),

culturally responsive teachers who are also focused on standards-based learning will (a) demonstrate an understanding of their own culture; (b) recognize and understand their students' cultures; (c) appreciate the ways different cultures impact teaching and learning; and (d) actively acquire several strategies for including cultures in demanding and rigorous curriculum and instruction that will lead to student achievement. After taking stock of their own life story and completing exercises that will lead to an understanding of their own cultural experiences, culturally responsive teachers can begin to do the work to comprehend their students' cultural backgrounds. Teachers must consider who their students are and what is important for them to learn (Saifer et al., 2011). Also, the classroom should be a safe place for students to explore and share what they feel is essential knowledge (Saifer et al., 2011). In order to reach the listed expectations, it is essential that an instructor implement the core components of CRSB teaching in order to see student achievement.

According to Saifer et al. (2011), CRSB teaching includes six essential elements: (a) it is student centered, (b) it has the ability to transform individuals, (c) curriculum and instruction is connected and integrated, (d) classroom materials nurture critical thinking skills, (e) assessment and reflection elements are always included, and (f) it leads to relationship and community building. Once the six elements of CRSB teaching are integrated into elementary classrooms, student achievement may improve. For instance, when content is individualized so that students' lives, interests, families, and communities are

pulled into the classroom, they begin to feel invested in the material and become more engaged (Saifer et al., 2011).

There are several approaches that can be implemented in the classroom to integrate CRSB teaching. For instance, involving students in the planning of activities and/or building instruction around students' specific and cultural assets may increase academic achievement. Also, allowing students to choose a topic for an essay and select from books with characters that are representative of their culture, may increase the likelihood that students will become invested in the content and have a desire to achieve (Saifer et al., 2011). Further, when teachers transform their role from leader to facilitator, and allow students' perspectives to shape curriculum and instruction, students are more likely to achieve. Permitting students to study subjects from the point of view of their own culture while questioning traditional curriculum and instruction may transform learning and enrich students' cultural experiences. Promoting interdisciplinary activities encourages students to view various cultures and subjects in a new light and may lead to improved achievement on numerous standards. Likewise, reflection and asking students to formulate questions and share their thoughts as they work may foster critical thinking skills, which could increase students' performance on state and local standards. Finally, including families and communities in the classroom demonstrates to students that school is crucial and motivates students to succeed. Depicting the relationship between family, school, and community as essential by bringing in outside

resources or inviting family and community into the classroom may motivate students. They may realize how important their culture is to the school experience and become more invested in the learning process (Saifer et al., 2011). In a case study completed by Bergeron (2008), it was clear that CRSB teaching could have a positive impact on an elementary school classroom. In this research, the instructor implemented CRSB teaching and realized that, overall, including the six essential elements of CRSB teaching increased student achievement. For instance, the instructor incorporated student-centered learning when she permitted student choice on projects, integrated hands-on and experiential inquiry assignments, and allowed students to write in either Spanish or English in daily journal assignments (Bergeron, 2008). Also, the instructor involved the community and families in her classroom by inviting parents in for either student-led or parent-led conferences. The instructor's conferences were so effective that one of the parents came back to give a holiday feast for all of her child's teachers. Although there is no official report about the instructor's students' final scores on the state standardized tests at the end of the school year, Bergeron (2008) does state that despite the teacher being a novice, "this particular case outlines a success story, in which several factors contributed" (p. 25).

Without professional development or a commitment to proper implementation, instructors may make incorrect assumptions about students' cultural backgrounds and therefore inappropriately integrate CRSB into curriculum and instruction (Gist, 2014).

Administrators might hastily include CRSB teaching into curriculum and instruction initiatives without proper education, leading to uncommitted instructors who may still have predisposed biases that have not been addressed. Without professional development, these instructors may believe that acts such as including a text by a multicultural author or celebrating certain cultural heritage months have fulfilled their obligation of integrating CRSB teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Also, instructors may make the wrong conclusions about students through the lens of CRSB teaching. These assumptions can be dangerous if teachers create lessons based around false traditions. For instance, O'Connor, Anthony-Stevens, and González (2014) discussed an example of a teacher ordering dreamcatcher kits for her students, who were predominantly Native American, as a "cultural" activity, even though the members of this particular tribe did not participate in making dreamcatchers. Therefore, it is critical that teachers are properly educated on how to implement CRSB teaching before the program is integrated into curriculum and instruction.

Funds of Knowledge

According to Rodriguez (2013), Moll, González, Greenburg, and Velez-Ibanez created the funds of knowledge (FoK) framework and approach to counteract cultural deficit thinking and explanatory methods. In this approach to teaching, educators are expected to become learners with their students and also ethnographers. Teachers should do their best to understand students' knowledge acquired from their home life. Educators can try to understand

students' FoK by completing in-home visits or participating in interviews with the student and the student's family (Rodriguez, 2013). Originally, the goal of FoK research was to have the teacher act as if he or she was an anthropologist, studying the student's cultural space to better understand how they develop their knowledge and skills (O'Connor et al., 2014). Currently, the FoK framework is viewed as a tool for teachers to "develop an awareness of the potential resources that could be used within the classroom to better connect with students' existing forms of knowledge" (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 93). Implementing FoK into an elementary classroom becomes important because this framework emphasizes refining students' prior knowledge and using what students already know in the classroom to increase their achievement.

The goal of FoK is to cultivate students' previous knowledge, not to replace or trivialize what they bring from their cultural backgrounds (McLaughlin & Barton, 2012). The instructor recognizes students' culture while also accentuating the content that must be learned. For instance, in a third grade science class where students are not meeting state or local standards and are also not achieving on the teacher's assignments, the teacher will recognize that this failure may be due to a "mismatch between students and [the] classroom" (Carlone & Johnson, 2012, p. 153). Instead of placing blame with the diverse students, the teacher will implement the FoK approach to help his or her students achieve (Carlone & Johnson, 2012). To integrate the FoK framework, the instructor should use the diversity and cultural backgrounds of his

or her students as a teaching tool and resource in all lessons. In order to implement students' cultural backgrounds into daily lessons, teachers must observe students and get to know them beyond the surface level; also, the teacher must be willing to allow students to know the teacher on a personal level that does not cross boundaries (McLaughlin & Barton, 2012). Several researchers have demonstrated instances where implementing FoK into elementary classes has increased student achievement. For instance, Upadhyay (2006) discussed a fourth grade teacher's integration of FoK into her urban classroom. The teacher shared her own life experiences with students, observed their behaviors, encouraged them to open up to her about their home life, and implemented those ideas into science lessons. According to the teacher, the students were then able to make sense of and feel connected to the science curriculum and felt welcomed to a new environment (Upadhyay, 2006).

One of the most important elements of FoK is ensuring that students learn from each other's prior knowledge. This allows students to achieve in terms of understanding and accepting various cultures. As stated by O'Connor et al. (2014), "we certainly do not mean to suggest that students from a certain cultural group should only learn about people and practices from that group" (p. 19). A teacher must ensure that students in his or her class are "encountering varied perspectives" (O'Connor et al., 2014, p. 19). On the other hand, including FoK in the classroom can lead to issues if an instructor is not careful with his or her implementation. Boundaries and barriers

must be established at the start of the school year to ensure that teachers do not infringe upon a student's privacy and to guarantee that both parties, the teacher and student, do not blur the line between school and home. A novice educator may easily misconstrue the principles of FoK to mean that the teacher is supposed to know every detail of a student's life; however, the main goal of FoK is to use a student's prior knowledge for educational achievement (Rodriguez, 2013). Instructors must remember the purpose of implementing FoK is to allow every student to demonstrate what they have gained from their culture and family and use that knowledge to become an expert on a certain topic. Consequently, motivation and engagement will occur as instructors become facilitators and students educate their classmates. The classroom will become parallel to a community, influencing students to achieve (Rodriguez, 2013).

An Elementary School Instructional Leader's Toolkit

Low academic achievement among diverse students has been partially linked to a lack of culturally responsive curricula integrated into the written, taught, and tested curriculum (Saifer et al., 2011). Therefore, instructional leaders are tasked with integrating culturally responsive curriculum and instruction as early as possible to ensure academic success for diverse populations. Any of the aforementioned frameworks and approaches, or a combination of them, can be implemented in an elementary school and/or classroom to aid academic and social achievement; however, without the proper instructional leader and program, the execution of said programs may falter. An instructional leader must

follow a sound framework, as well as guidelines, in order to ensure that elements of culturally responsive curriculum and instruction are properly integrated in the classroom. The following section will explain how an instructional leader can apply the ideas of Hallinger's Conceptual Framework of Instructional Leadership, and the ISLLC Standards 2014, to ensure elementary school teachers, as well as other faculty and staff, are effectively integrating culturally responsive curriculum and instruction.

Hallinger's Conceptual Framework of Instructional Leadership

There are three major components of Hallinger's Conceptual Framework (Hallinger, 2005). First, an instructional leader, who for the purposes of this paper is defined as the administrator or principal, must outline and refine the school's mission. Whether the instructional leader completes this charge alone or with a team is determined by what kind of leadership style the leader possesses. For instance, if the leader is more democratic, he or she will most likely create a team to work on the school mission and allow several revisions of the document until the mission statement is reflective of the school's values and climate (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). On the other hand, an autocratic leader might work on the mission statement alone and send it to faculty and staff through e-mail, requiring everyone to memorize the statement. A school's mission statement is important for the leader to communicate and frame because this is how the instructional leader will link and explain the school's "central purposes" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 225).

Culturally responsive curriculum and instruction can be added into a school's mission by explicitly stating that celebrating diversity and various cultural backgrounds is central to the school and that if students are able to demonstrate their ability to do so, they have achieved an intended learning outcome (Hallinger, 2005). The school's mission must include goals that are "clear, measurable, [and] time-based" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 225). In an elementary school, the principal might require that students are able to recognize various cultures exist beyond their own by the time they graduate 5th grade. Further, principals might encourage teachers to include projects in social studies courses that require students to bring in an artifact representative of their cultural background, thus enhancing students' cultural experiences and celebrating the school's diversity. Also, the school might hold assemblies and parades that acknowledge various cultural groups that make up the school's population as well as the community surrounding the school.

The ISLLC Standards

Instructional leaders must also manage the instructional program by supervising and evaluating curriculum and instruction, coordinating what type of curriculum is implemented, and monitoring how students are progressing (Hallinger, 2005). In order for a principal to be effective at the job of managing the instructional program, he or she must have proficiency in the areas of teaching and learning, "as well as a commitment to the school's improvement" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 226). Therefore, incorporating the Council of Chief State School

Officers' (CCSSO) ISLLC Standards will encourage an instructional leader to perform their duties to the best of their abilities. For instance, principals are required to follow Standard 3: Instruction, which states: "An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting instruction that maximizes student learning" (CCSSO, 2014, p. 17). Standard 3 has specific strands that discuss actions that instructional leaders can take to ensure that they are maximizing their efforts to become "hip-deep" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 226) in the school's instructional program. For instance, in an elementary school, the principal might make an effort to know students' reading levels or what topic they are going to choose for their science project and how that might relate to their cultural background.

Also related to culturally responsive curriculum, ISLLC Standard 3, B states that an effective instructional leader "ensures a focus on authenticity and relevance in instruction" (CCSSO, 2014, p. 17). An instructional leader might monitor and evaluate curriculum and instruction to confirm that teachers are utilizing materials and assignments that students can apply to real world settings. The frameworks and approaches detailed in this paper can be considered authentic and relevant to all students. However, the instructional leader must evaluate student progress and the quality of the curriculum and instruction to ensure that the approaches have been integrated into the classroom effectively. Similarly, the instructional leader can incorporate ISLLC Standard 3, H that states that he or she will verify "the presence of culturally congruent

pedagogy and assessment" (CCSSO, 2014, p. 17). The instructional leader must make sure that teachers are incorporating the appropriate framework or approach into their classroom based on the teacher's pedagogy and the students who are being served. In order to ensure proper measures of culturally responsive curriculum and instruction are integrated, instructional leaders will need to engage in ongoing observation, appraisal, feedback, and practice with faculty and staff (CCSSO, 2014; Hallinger, 2005).

Further, ISLLC Standard 3, C states that an effective instructional leader "ensures that instruction is anchored on best understandings of child development" (CCSSO, 2014, p.17). Again, the approaches and frameworks mentioned in this paper are developmentally appropriate for elementary school aged students; however, the instructional leader must evaluate and monitor the quality of the classroom instruction to guarantee the implementation of the approach. For instance, if a teacher is employing service learning in a math lesson where students are raising money for a single cause, this is not proper integration of service learning—the instructor is assuming that all students care about the same cause instead of allowing for student choice.

Finally, Hallinger (2005) says that the instructional leader must promote a positive school climate by protecting instructional time, providing opportunities for professional development, being visible, and giving incentives for teachers and learning. In other words, "effective schools create... 'academic press'" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 226), and an instructional leader has high

expectations and standards for his or her faculty, staff, and students. Instructional leaders must also implement ISLLC Standard 3, F in which he or she “provides ongoing salient, informative, and actionable feedback to teachers and other professional staff” (CCSSO, 2014, p. 17). The principal needs to engage in as many classroom observations as possible to guarantee that culturally responsive curriculum and instruction is integrated into the classroom in an effective manner. Also, in situations where culturally responsive curriculum is not effective, principals need to provide feedback that is actionable and timely so that faculty and staff may respond efficiently.

Instructional leaders must create an environment where professional development is a norm, always available, and a shared responsibility. According to Hallinger (2005), the principal is responsible for providing teachers with regular professional development, whether that is in the form of giving teachers research articles to read about best practices or having the teachers participate in hands-on activities based on best practices. The instructional leader must identify the professional development needs of his or her staff before designing professional development, aligning activities to the staff’s needs throughout the school year (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Also, it is important for the instructional leader to understand how students learn in his or her school in an effort to facilitate strategies to the staff in an effort to educate students (Stein & Nelson, 2003). An instructional leader who understands how to best facilitate culturally responsive curriculum and instruction to

students will also be able to implement professional development effectively for the staff.

Conclusion: What Does This All Mean?

An elementary school instructional leader, or administrator, can incorporate Hallinger’s Conceptual Framework of Instructional Leadership and specific strands from Standard 3 of the ISLLC Standards to ensure that faculty and staff integrate culturally responsive curriculum and instruction to increase student achievement. Student achievement, in the context of culturally responsive curriculum, has been defined as meeting or exceeding state or local standards, acquiring a deep understanding and acceptance of various cultures, and enriching one’s own cultural experience (Saifer et al., 2011). Elementary school is the ideal time to begin implementing culturally responsive curriculum and instruction programs because the information students learn during these primary years will impact them for the rest of their lives, both academically and socially (Coffey et al., 2015). The approaches and frameworks detailed in this paper are not inclusive of all possibilities for culturally responsive curriculum and instruction. Also, if these approaches are not implemented with fidelity, ongoing professional development, monitoring and evaluation, and a commitment to redesigning based on continuous feedback, it is possible they might hinder the success of culturally diverse students. As America’s population steadily embraces multiculturalism, classrooms will continue to reflect this diversity and educators must appropriately integrate curriculum and instruction that will

foster optimal student achievement.

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