



# Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Middle School Teachers

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Like many districts around the country, Oakland Unified School District struggles with behavioral and academic disproportionality among its African-American and Latino students. OUSD has been at the forefront a very direct conversation about how to change these disproportions. Research has shown that teachers with a strong culturally responsive pedagogy seem to be driving force in the reduction of behaviors and the improvement of academics in urban schools. This intervention was designed to utilize cognitive coaching, critical teacher reflection, and student voice to guide teachers through a process to that would strengthen their pedagogy while decreasing student behavior and increasing academic success. Through obstacles and interruptions common in urban schools, two participants were able complete the intervention showing growth and success even when the intervention veered from its original path.

## **Context of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

### *What Got Us Here?*

While urban students of color have historically had a more than tenuous relationship with public education, this relationship began to traverse the rails of “zero tolerance” in the mid-90’s. This choice of policy coincided with a general sense in the public education sector and mainstream society, that students-especially black and brown students- were out of control. Losen and Skiba (2010) support the idea that school districts would “no longer” stand by and accept the behavior of disruptive students, brought on a sense of comfort with schools believing this hard-nosed approach would scare students into conformity. They (Losen and Skiba, 2010) found, instead, “the limitations of such a policies presented themselves in noticeable levels of discriminatory actions towards African American and Latino students, as well as students with disabilities. By the end of the 90’s these students were being suspended or otherwise removed from classrooms at incredible rates.” To add insult to injury for schools, student behavior seemed to increase in many urban areas, as students began to realize educators and school administrators really only had limited power of them. As student diversity increased, so did the rate and scale of student failure (LDF/NAACP, 2005). A clear connection could be made between student failure in schools and the increase in crime and the prison population of these maligned groups. Researchers and Civil Rights organizations began to delve deeper into this continuing phenomena. By 2006, there was irrefutable evidence that specific groups were bearing the brunt of zero tolerance: African American males, Latino males, and students with disabilities (Losen and Skiba, 2010). Over time, a racial discipline gap became so apparent that many in academia and civil liberties began to call for the government to take action against clear discriminatory actions of school districts across the country. California was among one of the many states identified in a UCLA Civil Rights Project report (2005), as having high levels of disproportionality in the suspension and expulsion of African American students. This report helped shine a light on the demand for something to be done. By 2010, many school districts found themselves entering into a Voluntary Resolution Plan with the U.S.

Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. These agreements were made in lieu of pending lawsuits and with specific goal based expectations.

*Force or Choice: A Means to an End*

In 2012, Oakland Unified entered into its own agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, to address the district's disproportionate discipline of African American males. As part of this agreement, Oakland Unified chose to accelerate certain initiatives: Developing full service community schools, reducing "defiance" as a basis for suspension, rejecting zero-tolerance, and adopting Restorative Justice and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support strategies. All of Oakland Unified's school sites were asked to decide which of these initiatives (along with others previously committed to) they would participate in. Edna Brewer chose to add Restorative Justice and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support to its other district commitments. In 2010, Brewer had committed to yet another district partnership: The Office of African-American Male Achievement (AAMA). The Office of African-American Male Achievement (AAMA) is an initiative that was created to make explicit and systemic attempts to improve educational outcomes for African-American males whose historical experience in education has led to their absorption into the school to prison pipeline. Edna Brewer Middle School was a pilot site for AAMA.

Two AAMA programs were instituted at Edna Brewer: The Voluntary School Study Team (VSST) and The Manhood Development Program. The VSST was to be tool for school and community stakeholders to self examine, identify areas of need, then plan and implement change. This program had a strong start in 2010, but, lost support from both families and teachers by the 2011 school year. Many of the families that supported this original endeavor were no longer at Brewer because their children had graduated. While new parents attended events, the identified areas of need didn't seem to resonate with the new group. At the same time, many Brewer teachers were "smarting" over what they viewed as direct attacks against them and their treatment or lack of support of African-American Male students and most chose not to participate by the 2011 school year. By January of 2012, the VSST was removed from Brewer. The Manhood

Development Program continues to be a part of Brewer, but on a much smaller scale. Initially it was facilitated by a very dynamic leader, who instilled a strong sense of awareness regarding inequities on campus in the young men who participated in the program. This awareness was at its strongest in the 2010-2011 school year. By the following school year, many of the student leaders that had emerged from the program had graduated and the behaviors of the current students were interpreted in vastly contrasting ways by the program facilitator and site-based staff. The program facilitator felt the school was ignoring the fact that young African-American men on campus felt targeted and that most efforts to help the young men were through punitive measures. The school staff felt, there were many efforts in place to support these students, but the students were causing intentional divisiveness between the facilitator and teachers to avoid taking responsibility for their actions. From the perspective of the Manhood Program, there seemed to be a very intentional effort to disenfranchise any African-American male that seemed to be struggling academically or behaviorally. From the perspective of the school, the Manhood Program-and by default AAMA-seemed to listen only to the students and did not seem interested in a true partnership with the site. Both of these perspectives have proportional merit and situations and data that give validity to each side. In the end, both sides were exhausted and feeling as if their efforts were not appreciated. By the 2013 school year, the Manhood program had decreased from a 5 day and 15 hour a week program serving 30 + young men to a 4 day and 8 hour a week program serving 8 young men. The current program now has a proficient, yet decidedly less dynamic facilitator, who is shared with another school. Teachers and administration no longer feel “under attack”, but, are aware of and concerned with the continued disproportionality in academics and behavior for students of color, especially African-American males.

During the 2012 school year, Edna Brewer Middle School began a district mandated School Quality Review (SQR). This review called for various district employees, parents, students, and community members to come together and visit a school site. During these visits reviewers visit classrooms, interview teachers, students, and parents. All culminating in a detailed report that provided Brewer stakeholders with a rubric-based evaluation of the school. This evaluation made two outstanding observations

that propelled the stalled discussions of disproportionality: Brewer teachers and administrators' focus seemed to be solely on academics and the diverse needs of the Brewer community weren't being addressed sufficiently enough. These histories and conversations presented in the School Quality Review report only highlight the fact that this national discussion is also necessary at Brewer. In response to the findings of the SQR, we created a comprehensive Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). Part of that team, the culture committee, is designed to focus solely on the cultural climate of Edna Brewer. This team has begun the process of guiding the school through a self-reflection on culturally responsive pedagogy. This reflection is an introductory and done as a group, as opposed to individual teachers looking deeply into their own practice. It is in within this dynamic, that this action research project looks to directly engage a small group of teachers with explicit coaching to examine the effects this may have on the teacher, their students, and ultimately the community at large. These current and past efforts suggest the necessity of an action research project focused on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.

### **Problem of Practice**

Oakland, CA is a port city located directly across the bay, east of San Francisco. It is the 47<sup>th</sup> largest city in the United States and is a major transportation hub and trade center. Oakland is a very diverse city of over 400,000. Although a consistent stream of residents of European descent, priced out of San Francisco and other less diverse areas of the bay, find their way to Oakland, people of color constitute approximately sixty-nine percent of Oakland's population. Twenty-seven percent are African-American, 24 percent Latino, and 18 percent Asian. This high level of racial diversity is also found in the Oakland Unified School District's (OUSD) student population: 38 percent of these students are Latino, 31 percent African-American, and 14 percent Asian. Sixty-nine percent of all of OUSD's students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. OUSD students also speak over 48 different home languages. The struggles of students in such diverse urban environments are often seen in attendance, classroom failure, and dismal graduation rates. OUSD is no stranger to these sad results: The district has an 11 percent

chronic absentee rate, API scores far below 700 for many schools, and a 63 percent graduation rate. Within this environment lies Edna Brewer Middle School.

Edna Brewer Middle School (Brewer) is a comprehensive 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school centrally located in Oakland. Brewer is currently considered one of, if not the top, public middle school in Oakland Unified School District. The community is quite economically and racially diverse; students attend from every corner of Oakland. While Brewer does have an achievement gap for its students of color, the gap is smaller in comparison to other comprehensive middle schools in the district. Brewer is recognized for its high expectations and high achievement. Both administrators and teachers seem to have a shared belief in providing students with rigorous academics. These groups also generally agreed that more focused effort can be placed on HOW students are provided this rigorous learning environment. The school has a variety of systems and practices in place in the classroom that are intended to guide and support educators in maintaining academic rigor. In the 2012-13 year, the school has utilized an ELA Coach, a Math Coach, Walk-through Forms, site-based lesson studies and instructional rounds to support rigor. For many years the school has used the family system and subject-based partner planning as foundational small professional learning communities. These efforts have most likely been a major force in the school's average maintenance of an 815 API (the state's academic rating system) for the last five years. At Brewer, teachers are expected to use some variation of backward planning, Kagan Instructional Strategies, Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies, and Restorative Justice. Brewer not only has a high percentage of teachers with 5 years or fewer but experiences a nearly 25 percent attrition rate every 2-3 years. These factors not only affect the school's relational dynamics, but the instructional integrity as well.

Most recently, Brewer has undergone the Oakland Unified School District's School Quality Review (SQR). The School Quality Review process is designed to approach the question of school quality based on evaluating the extent to which schools live up to Oakland Unified's School Quality Standards. The Brewer SQR results established some clear areas of strengths and weaknesses. Brewer was evaluated using a rubric for each quality standard as well as a developmental scale for the ratings. The developmental scale is as follows: **Underdeveloped, Beginning, Developing,**

**Sustaining, Refining.** Out of 24 focus standards, Brewer scored a rating of **Underdeveloped** (2) or **Beginning** (13) on a total of 15 standards. The Brewer community was somewhat, but not completely, surprised by these low ratings. While the low ratings covered all areas of the quality indicators, one area stood out: **RELATIONSHIPS**. The SQR report indicated in various ways, that Brewer’s educators had a tendency to place a greater emphasis on rigor over relationships. The SQR team was able to establish a clear cultural disconnect between Brewer students and teachers, through observations, direct quotes from the Brewer community, and academic and discipline data results. Two Focus Standards (FS) stood out for this researcher, FS 1.2 and FS 2.6.

Focus Standard 1.2: **A quality school provides safe and nurturing learning environments**, received a rating of *Developing*. The SQR team reported a general lack of value and respect for student’s culture or experiences. The team especially noted “*a pattern of an overt lack of connection and respect between teachers and African-American boys...*”. Focus Standard 2.6: **A quality school creates an inclusive, welcoming and caring community, fostering communication that values individual/cultural differences**, received a rating of *Beginning*. The report explained that this standard focuses specifically on practices outside the classroom and is the complement to Standard 1.2, which focuses on practices inside the classroom. The team found that, “*Many adults in the building did not understand how some of their actions, words, tone, body language, timing, etc. reinforced the experience of disrespect that many African American students entered middle school with. Those adults did not understand the ways that their actions contributed to African-American student disengagement, underachievement, and acting out*”. The report also stated that the adults who did understand the relationship between adult behaviors and student disengagement and “discipline problems” reported not knowing how to share this knowledge with their colleagues.

Observation and informal conversations with teachers and staff suggests Brewer educators are aware of the research and understandings regarding urban student disengagement. On the other hand, they, along with the School Quality Review report, suggest that teachers are not as clear about their ability to affect change in students nor

the effect they *have* on students. Depending on the teachers experience in the classroom or with the content, they may appear to be feeling overwhelmed, disrespected, or frustrated with what they perceive as a lack of solid support system. Or they may appear to be simply finding their way in an environment with a host of expected struggles. Due to Brewer's long-standing focus on curricular continuity and professional learning communities, many of the answers to Brewer's struggles are present in the school and should simply be expanded upon or consistently reviewed for their current effectiveness. Herein lies the problem of practice of Brewer's lack of academic growth and increase in negative student behaviors of its students of color. **Novice teachers are unable to manage student behavior in their classrooms, resulting in a disproportionate number of students of color, ELD, and poverty, being referred for discipline, which leads to a lack of academic success in the class.**

## Literature Review

### *Introduction*

The United States has the highest rate of childhood poverty among Western democratic nations, one in four. Of those children African American and Latino students are much higher than the average (Banks, et al, 2005). There is a long history of poverty's effect on access to healthcare, housing, and other out of school activities, recent research has highlighted inequities in the allocation of school resources: supplies, qualified teachers, technology and curriculum offerings to name a few (Banks, et al, 2005). Banks, et al's , information regarding The Demographic Imperative shows, that these disparities continue to have a devastating effect on students who have limited resources and support. They maintain students of color and those with learning disabilities are becoming a part of a growing underclass; because modern society and the economy demand that higher levels of education are attained, the unsuccessful attempts at school for these students severely inhibit them from any productive engagement in society. Along with these societal factors, the student diversity in urban schools has



consistently grown, while the homogenous state of teachers, school design, and classroom instruction has not (Banks, et al, 2005). Banks and fellow researchers (2005) stand by these factors as the cause of the lack of academic success for these diverse student bodies: African American, Latino, Southeast Asian, and students with disabilities. Discussion of the causes of this lack of success has been ongoing for more than 30 years. Current research is focused on Equity, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, and Resiliency/Social Emotional Competence. Many teachers in high-poverty schools struggle to establish a positive classroom environment; resulting in students continuing to have limited academic growth and increased behavioral struggles. Research suggests the answer to this dilemma is multi-tiered but must begin within the classroom (Banks, et al [2005], Wlodkowski & Ginsberg [1995], Bondy, et al [2007]). The classrooms in Edna Brewer Middle School share many of the same dilemmas as urban classrooms across the country. What makes Brewer's community different is that it maintains a higher level of racial and socio-economic diversity than most urban schools. This difference doesn't preclude it from continuing to have the familiar high levels of disproportionality in both academics performance and behavior issues among its Latino and black populations when compared to its Asian and white populations. Brewer's discipline data has been focus of attention for several district entities as well as for the site. While Brewer's 2013-14 school year suspension numbers have gone down, in the 2011-2012 school year, 69% of all suspensions were African-American students, while they made up only 39% of the student population (SQR, 2013).

During the School Quality Review in 2013, as now, teachers at Brewer were expected to utilize Kagan cooperative learning strategies and continuous positive reinforcement in their classrooms. They are also expected to use Noah Salzman's Effective Behavior Management System, to support classroom management. These expectations continue during the current (2013-14) school year while leadership at Brewer is working to examine why the disproportionality continues to exist.

## Equity Traps, The Demographic Imperative, & Edna Brewer Classrooms

### *Equity Traps*

Bell, McKenzie and Scheurich, (2004) define equity traps as patterns of thinking and behavior that trap the possibilities for creating equitable schools for children of color. The authors find that equity traps stop an educator's ability to move toward equity. These traps are reinforced through formal and informal communication, assumptions and beliefs. For example, teachers will sometimes communicate to each other their belief that the reason they are not academically successful with many of their children of color is due to the bad or negative attitudes of the children or their parents (e.g., McKenzie, 2001). These types of verbalizations can lead educators to develop an "uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity", called "dysconscious". This uncritical habit of mind leads to deficit perceptions of some children, then lowering teacher expectations of those very children, which in turn, results in the students seeing themselves as less intelligent or incapable. Bell McKenzie and Scheurich, (2004) offer a focus on four primary equity traps:

- (1) **Deficit View:** Students who fail, do so because of internal deficits or deficiencies: intellectual abilities, language barriers, motivation, and immoral behavior.
- (2) **Racial Erasure:** That racism would cease to exist if everyone would just forget about race and just see each other as human beings who are the same.
- (3) **Avoidance & Employment of the Gaze:** *Avoidance:* Teachers choosing low-income schools to teach in to avoid the supervision (gaze) of middle-income parents and school administrators.  
*Employment:* Teachers use of the gaze on other teachers to norm the behavior of teachers that spoke out in ways that could disrupt the deficit discourse.
- (4) **Paralogical Beliefs and Behaviors:** Conclusions drawn from premises that don't logically warrant that conclusion. *Ex: Adults blaming their misbehavior on student misbehavior: "They make me this way!"*

Upon closer examination of Edna Brewer classrooms and teacher conversations these traps are apparent. While nearly all of the classrooms maintain the basic expectations mentioned earlier, if one observes a struggling classroom with a more critical eye, equity traps become obvious. Many of the classrooms present content-rich walls and boards. Much of the information on the wall is directly related to the subject matter, with small doses (if any) of culturally relevant subject matter, student work is often minimally displayed as well. This can appear that the teacher assumes the content alone will interest students, and some cultural connection to them is unnecessary (Bell, et al, 2004). This can be seen as a form of *Racial Erasure*, because the teacher, against current research is leaving the importance of race and culture out of the picture. An example is when disruptive students are given warnings and sent to a buddy room as opportunities to self-correct. Although, this process has not proven to be helpful to the disruptive student, teachers continue to utilize it. The rationale for failure being: “*The student choses not to adjust their behavior*”, or “*I’m forced to put them out for the sake of the other students*”. This response is so common at Brewer that many adults on campus may not see this as having a *Deficit View* of the student or as a practice of *Paralogical Beliefs and Behaviors*, but I argue that they do indeed fall into these equity traps. *Avoidance & Employment of the Gaze* can be found on campus and in the classroom as well. A prime example is when teachers meet regularly in various small learning communities. While these meetings have produced much curriculum-based pedagogy, they are also moments when teachers who are more vocal can *Employ the Gaze*, to discourage another teacher who may be speaking out in ways that disrupt the deficit discourse. In a display of *Avoidance of the Gaze*, those teachers who have secretly chosen a low income urban school to *Avoid the Gaze* are able benefit from partner planning or professional learning community work to avoid direct responsibility for quality work. They can simply rely on the various teams to carry them through. In short, equity traps are alive and well in Edna Brewer classroom and on the campus.

## *The Demographic Imperative*

Banks, et al (2005) points out the Demographic Imperative as strong motivating factor to move towards real democracy. The authors suppose and support the idea that in order to support democracy, teachers must eliminate disparity. Consequently, in order for students to participate in democracy; they must experience democracy, which begins in the classroom. The authors describe the Demographic Imperative as a 3-pronged issue: *Increasingly Diverse Student Population, Homogenous Teaching Force, and The Demographic Divide*. *The Increasingly Diverse Student Population* is self explanatory and consistent in most urban schools. As is the *Homogenous Teaching Force*, but we must look at how this homogeneity affects the classroom in terms of culture. Most U.S. teachers are European Americans from middle-class backgrounds that speak one language, English. These teachers find themselves in conflict within their classrooms because they are often at cultural odds with their diverse student population (Banks, 2005). Some of the confusion may center on the definition of “culture”. When discussing culture, many think solely of race and cultural practices. This may be the same thought process for many Brewer teachers, with many sharing their rationale behind any limits in cultural competence: “*Well, I don’t know about the details of the culture and I don’t want to offend anyone, so less is more*”. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (1995) define culture as: The deeply learned confluence of language, beliefs, values, and behaviors that pervades every aspect of our lives. This definition is the working definition of this action research project. This definition underscores the critical importance of culture in anyone’s life. Yet they ask the educator to further consider the idea of an inseparable bond between culture and motivation. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski’s (1995) research suggests that the incorporation and consideration of student culture will stimulate *intrinsic motivation*, a necessary component of urban student success. They identify the downfall being that there is a social and institutional resistance to teaching based on principles of “intrinsic motivation”; Arguing that we are a very ‘carrot and stick’ motivated society (1995). Edna Brewer’s efforts to motivate students is very much extrinsic in nature and strongly based in what the student will lose or not be allowed to participate in. This extrinsic motivation works well for students whose socialization accommodates extrinsic motivation

(Ginsberg and Wlodkowski, 1995). For those who don't—often low-income students of color—there is a motivational gap. This leads us to our final prong of the Demographic Imperative: *The Demographic Divide*. The *Demographic Divide* is the numerical results of the cultural clash of the first two components—increased suspensions, student failure, etc. In order to close this motivational gap, thus lessening the academic and behavioral gaps, teachers must develop a culturally relevant pedagogy (Delpit, 1995) (Ginsberg and Wlodkowski, 1995) (Banks, et al, 2005).

Edna Brewer classrooms are conceptually democratic, with many teachers feeling they are offering students options and designing lessons that are age and developmentally appropriate. For the most part this is true. But, if the *Demographic Imperative* is taken into consideration, then Edna Brewer Middle School must reexamine its efforts in responding to it. It is a campus that speaks the language of equity/democracy, cultural competency, and resiliency/social-emotional learning, but struggles to put it into purposeful action. Research suggests that this can be done within the classroom through the development of a culturally relevant pedagogy (Howard, 2003).

### **The Need for a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Building Resilience and Social Emotional Competence**

#### *Discipline vs. Punishment*

Public Agenda & Common Good took a survey of parent and teacher opinions on public school discipline policies (2004). Their results were a general sounding board of teacher perspectives and issues. The survey results found nearly 8 in 10 teachers (78%) say that there were persistent troublemakers in their school who should have been removed from regular classrooms. The authors assert that students pay a heavy price academically when schools tolerate the chronic bad behavior of the few. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers they surveyed agreed, admitting their teaching would be a lot more effective if they didn't have to spend so much time dealing with disruptive students.

Does this line of thinking sound familiar? Yes, it sadly leans strongly towards the same line of thinking that Bell-Mckenzie & Scheurich (2004) find forces educators into a

vicious cycle of equity traps. For quite a while, schools have been mired in systemic process that don't support student success but instead match systemic processes found in the prison system. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, INC (2005) reported a nationwide increase in the number of school suspensions, despite indicators that violence among youth was decreasing across the country. The educational response was as if the perception was that in schools, the violence was increasing. By 2000, NAACP reports, there were over three million school suspensions and over 97,000 expulsions. NAACP pointed out that this kind of wholesale exclusion from the educational process does nothing to teach children positive behavior. They found that in fact, taking children out of school for even a few days disrupts their education and often escalates poor behavior by removing them from a structured environment and instead, giving them increased time and opportunity to get into trouble. This report directly accuses the education system of being the entry point into the prison pipeline. It argues that the inadequacies of the public educational system, especially in areas of concentrated poverty have set students up to fail. The authors of this report state that in 2004, Legal Defense Fund joined The Civil Rights Project at Harvard in a roundtable discussion on the School-to-Prison Pipeline issues in four target states, California being one of them (LDF/NAACP, 2005). UCLA's Legal Defense Fund released a study in 2012 detailing Oakland Unified's discipline disparities, this study, was foundational in the U.S. Department of Civil Rights entering into a *Voluntary Resolution* with Oakland Unified (Murphy, 2012). Forced to seriously look at its suspension numbers of boys of color, specifically African-American boys, Oakland Unified began efforts to look for other ways to discipline students. At this point, Edna Brewer has lowered its suspensions, but African-American and Latino boys are still displaced from their classrooms regularly due to behavior. This displacement occurs through regular dismissal to the "buddy room" or to the "on campus restoration" room. Yang's (2009) writings suggest that displacement isn't much different from suspension, the child experiences removal from the community and observers still learn how to see themselves as punishable.

Yang (2009) reminds us that discipline, according to Freire is a necessary condition for effective action in the social world. Freire says, "*True discipline does not exist in the muteness of those who have been silenced but in the stirrings of those who*

*have been challenged, in the doubt of those who have been prodded, and in the hopes of those who have been awakened.”* This insightful statement underscores the need to differentiate discipline from punishment.

Yang (2009) defines discipline and punishment:

*Discipline: An act of rigorous physical or mental training, a practice of will that can lead paradoxically to docile compliance or emancipatory possibilities.*

*Punishment: Retribution for an offense, an exclusionary act by which students are removed from the opportunity to learn; it is harm inflicted by an external agent as a mechanism through which outside regulation becomes internalized subjectively.*

Yang (2009) argues that discipline at least allows for transformative possibilities, while there has been little analysis of the harm caused to the individual student or the collective culture of the classroom when a student is removed. While Brewer suspension numbers and referrals issued have decreased since the 2012-2013 school year, the disproportionate numbers of African Americans, Latinos, and students in special education continues to exist, even in light of Brewer’s extensive use of Restorative Justice during the 2013-2014 school year.

**Edna Brewer Middle School Demographics & Referrals '13-'14**

Total # of Students: 796

Total # of Referrals: 597

#	RACE/DESIGNATION	%	#/REFERRALS	%
245	Asian	30	23	4
153	Latino	19	91	15
243	African-American	30	375	63
97	White	12	43	7
54	Other/Not Specified	7	54	9
125	Special Education	15	160	26

At Brewer, these numbers in conjunction with the knowledge of the abysmal graduation rates of black and brown students, supports Yang’s (2009) assertion that the achievement gap is a mirror image to the punishment gap. In essence, more punishment corresponds to less achievement. When looking at the primary students behaviorally displaced, in Edna Brewer’s 8<sup>th</sup> grade...[corresponding academic achievement], Yang’s assertion rings true. Yang also points out the fact that this racially disproportionate punishment and preference is not invisible to our students. They are collectively impacted by the culture of removal-*even if they themselves are not punished*. She elaborates, students develop a subjectivity of being always available for punishment, and this subjectivity tends to correspond to race and gender of the student...Moreover, this sense of self-as-punishable becomes *shared across race and gender* in institutions where suspensions are common, even by students who don’t fit the demographic profile for punishment. For example, Asian American girls in Oakland identify with the punished, not the punisher (Yang, 2009). This is not to suggest that there shouldn’t be any form of discipline, but to challenge educators to be cognizant of the “global” effect of punishment of the one. Which begs the question of how do we discipline students so that it expands



emancipatory possibilities instead of instilling docile compliance and a sense of self-as-punishable?

### *Culturally Responsive Classroom Management*

One of the products of this discriminatory system is what Enid Lee (1996) calls the *Individual Gap*. Within this gap, some students of color come to school confident, and leave less capable. Their self-esteem has been eroded by subtle-racism such as low expectations of teachers and culturally invalidating classrooms, leading students to soon become “de-skilled” and therefore less capable. In order to fight these systems and their resulting inequities, educators must take a pro-active anti-racism stance. Lee (1996) considers *Anti-Racism: A proactive strategy for dismantling racist structures and for building racial justice and equality. It must become a perspective that cuts across all subject areas and institutional practices*. Lee (1996) also maintains that this level of intention is necessary because racism is systemic and not episodic. This should start, not with blame or finger pointing but with an understanding of unconscious bias and unintentional racism. “Ethnic and racial stereotypes are learned as part of normal socialization and are consistent among many populations and across time. When we receive evidence that confronts our deeply held and usually unrecognized biases, the human brain usually finds ways to return to stereotypes” (Moule, 2009). Understanding this is to understand that unintentional racism is not always determined by what a person does or whether they possess prejudiced beliefs or attitudes. It can take place in many different forms, which is true of most urban schools. Most educators are not intentionally biased or racist, but all, including those of color can manifest environments that become so. Moule (2009) introduces the idea that the human brain uses a mechanism called “re-fencing” when confronted with evidence contrary to the stereotype. This is a reaction of the brain when a fact cannot fit into the mental field, the exception is acknowledged, but the field is hastily fenced in again and not allowed to remain dangerously open. In other words, people must work to prevent the maintenance of stereotypes; we must work to prevent the brain from re-fencing. This is the foundational reason educators must move towards a culturally relevant pedagogy. Teachers must begin with themselves. Weinstein,

et al (2004) assert three prerequisites to becoming a culturally responsive teacher: (1) *recognize that we are all cultural beings, with our own beliefs, biases, and assumptions about human behavior*, (2) *acknowledge the cultural racial, ethnic, and class differences that exist among people*, (3) *understand the ways that schools reflect and perpetuate discriminatory practices of the larger society*. While the prerequisites have multi-tiered levels of understanding, there are simple strategies to start teachers on this ever-changing journey. (1) *Creating a physical setting that supports academic and social goals*. (2) *Establishing expectations for behavior*. (3) *Communicating with students in culturally consistent ways*. (4) *Developing a caring classroom environment*. (5) *Working with families*. (6) *Using appropriate interventions to assist students with behavior problems*.

The key to cultural relevant pedagogy is understanding who you are as an educator; what you come to the table with; and how that plays out in the classroom, with what your students bring (Weinstein, 2004). Teachers must be intentional in how they design their classrooms and how they manage their own classroom behavior as well as their students. Bondy, et al, (2007) reminds us that culturally responsive classroom management makes it explicit that classroom management is grounded in teachers' judgments about appropriate behavior and these judgments are informed by cultural assumptions. So, when a teacher views behavior as a manifestation of difference in culture, one should teach alternative behaviors (Bondy, 2007). This is supportive of the notion discipline being a transformative act. Yet, schools and teachers often view behavior as a manifestation of defiance, often leading to conflict, student alienation, and disruption of the learning environment.

### *Moral Authority*

Brown (2003) suggests that teachers in urban schools need to develop a *moral authority* to be successful. He states that the urban teachers primary source of control is their moral authority, which rests on the perception of students and parents that the teacher is knowledgeable about the subject matter, competent in pedagogy, and committed to helping all students succeed in school and life. This is a large order, especially for young teachers, yet it is necessary when the stakes are as high as they are in

urban schools. I believe teachers must also be resilient in order to maintain moral authority; both should be clearly defined:

***Authoritative:** Exhibiting personal power, earning respect rather than demanding it, setting standards and pushing students to meet them and believing all students can learn.*

***Authoritarian:** Indirect in expressing expectations and expects obedience from students without justification.*

*-Bondy, et al (2007)*

***Resiliency:** The ability to bounce back successfully despite exposure to severe risk.*

*-Krovetz (1999)*

Brown (2003) utilizes Delpit's view (1995) on teacher authority to remind us that knowledge of your students' background is especially critical in classroom management: "Black people often view issues of power and authority differently than people from mainstream middle-class backgrounds. Many people of color expect authority to be earned by personal efforts and exhibited by personal characteristics. In other words, "The authoritative person gets to be a teacher because she is authoritative." Some members of middle-class cultures, by contrast, expect one to achieve authority by the acquisition of an authoritative role. That is, "The teacher is the authority because she is the teacher." Even though these concepts may not be fully or easily understood, Brown (2003) reminds us that teachers must be aware of the cultural backgrounds of students. He suggests that urban teachers must explicitly demonstrate assertiveness and establish authority through their verbal exchanges with students, noting that urban children expect more direct verbal commands than most suburban children and may ignore commands expressed like questions. He also asserts the importance of urban educators being aware of specific verbal and nonverbal communications styles that affect students' ability and motivation to engage in learning activities (Brown, 2003).

### *Warm Demanders*

Bondy and Ross (2008) argue that while urban teachers work hard to create interesting lessons, students are still disengaged because what is missing is not skill in

lesson planning, but instead a teacher stance that communicates both warmth and a nonnegotiable demand for student effort and mutual respect. According to these authors, teachers able to do this are considered *warm demanders*. Kleinfeld (1975) coined the phrase warm demander to describe the type of teacher who was effective in teaching Athabaskan Indian and Eskimo 9<sup>th</sup> graders in Alaskan schools. (Bondy & Ross, 2008) He found that these teachers were able to communicate personal warmth and used what he called “active demandingness”. These teachers utilized no-nonsense straight talk (Bondy & Ross 2008). Bondy & Ross (2010) recognize that the uninformed observer may see this communication style as harsh. Teachers in high-poverty schools care about their classrooms and struggle to establish a positive classroom environment, but the way they care is not usually comprehensive enough (Bondy & Ross, 2008). Ware’s (2006) study of African American teachers showed that these teachers shared nearly exact communication styles, high expectations, and a relentless demand for students to meet those expectations, as those found in Kleinfeld’s Alaskan teachers. Ware (2006) took the concept of a warm demander and operationalized it to closely examine two African-American teacher’s instructional practices. Ware (2006) identified the teachers as warm demanders in the following contexts: (a) warm demanders as authority figures and disciplinarians, (b) warm demanders as caregivers, and (c) warm demanders as pedagogues. In support of context (a), Ware (2006) identifies research that supports culturally responsive African American teachers as those who not only teach with authority, but whose students were “proud of their teachers’ meanness”. Cooper (2002) identifies this behavior as “community-commanded demonstration of caring” (Ware, 2006). When Ms. Willis, one of Ware’s subjects, was asked about the good or “right” ways to educate African American students, she explained, “That the right way is to have high expectations and have a positive attitude towards them. She cautioned teachers against the negative influences of low expectations or negative beliefs when teaching African American students. She offered that she gave her students tender loving care and became familiar with them to learn what would motivate them to work to her high expectations” (Ware, 2006). Ware’s (2006) other subject found that her students had an emotional and academic hunger. She saw analyzing and supporting her students as fundamental to the act of teaching, encouraging her students to develop a global sense of

caring by teaching them to care about their communities. “*They have to care about what is going to happen to them and the people in the world with them*” (Ware, 2006). Lastly, Ware (2006) explains that warm demanders as pedagogues demonstrated some culturally specific practices: incorporating elements of the students’ culture in their teaching, adapting instruction to meet the students’ learning style, and having high standards and expectations.

Bondy & Ross (2010) believe in order for teachers to become warm demanders, they must:

- Establish a caring relationship that convinces students that you believe in them.
- Care enough to relentlessly insist on two things: respect and the completion of academic tasks.
- Approach students with behavior issues with unconditional positive regard and genuine caring.
- Build deliberate relationships (via questionnaires, hand on shoulder, questions that show you remember something about the student.
- Learn student cultures; learn their idiosyncrasies.
- Recognize that their own cultural backgrounds guide their values, beliefs, and behaviors.

High expectations aren’t enough, as mentioned by Ware’s (2006) teachers, insisting that students meet those expectations is critical (Bondy & Ross, 2010).

### **Teacher Mindset: Real Talk**

Unpacking our levels of consciousness and intent requires hard work. The hard work of facing a deep unwavering level of honest, and seriously focusing on your own biases as opposed to your idea of personal tolerance (Moule, 2009). It is better to

acknowledge our bias and work on them together in the open. When we mask our true attitudes, we will continue to work slowly or unproductively (Moule, 2009). Moule (2009) argues that by acknowledging biases, doors for learning are often open, allowing people to consciously work for harmony in classrooms and communities. Yet race dialogue is consistently demanded to take place in a 'safe' environment. Demanding race dialogue happen in a 'safe' environment is tantamount to premising racial pedagogy on the assumptions about comfort, this quickly degrades anti-racist teaching into image and personal management (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Leonardo & Porter (2010) believe this is especially true in education, perpetuating an idea of 'pseudo-humanism' that establishes white humanity at the expense of people of color. It continues an idea that the European must hold down others to maintain power; in schools this attitude simply reaffirms an already hostile and unsafe environment many students of color consistently experience. Duncan-Andrade (2009) reminds us that real hope is needed to make change in struggling communities. "The idea of that hope alone will transform the world, and action undertaken in that kind of naïveté is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism. But the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, Freire quote). Duncan-Andrade (2009) offers the concept of 'Socratic Hope' as a methodical stance requiring both teachers and students to painfully examine their lives and actions within an unjust society. The procedural rules in public race dialogue maintain white comfort zones and become a symbolic form of violence experienced by people of color (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). So, facing this conversation and ourselves, requires a necessary form of violence (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). The authors suggest, that a humanizing form of violence, a non-repressive expression of power, returns people to their rightful place, just as the violence of decolonization can potentially cancel the molesting power of colonialism (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). To contemplate this action, Leonardo and Porter (2010) ask that the hegemonic and literal appearance of violence as only bloodshed, physical or repressive be suspended. They (Leonardo & Porter, 2010) instead offer concept of a humanizing form of violence as a pedagogy and politics of disruption that shifts the regime of knowledge about what is ultimately possible as well as desirable as a racial arrangement.

### *The Change Must Begin With The Teacher*

Educators must understand that racially diverse students bring cultural capital to the classroom that is often drastically different from mainstream norms and worldviews (Howard, 2003). Understanding that culture is the deeply learned confluence of language, beliefs, values, and behaviors that pervades every aspect of our lives, is foundational in understanding the bond of culture and motivation (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Student's unfamiliarity with dominate or mainstream cultural capital or the racial and cultural incongruence between students and teachers are leading factors in the failure of students of color (Howard, 2003). Howard (2001) shares some basic African-American student's preferences for genuine relational learning environments. Students prefer:

1. Teachers who displayed caring bonds and attitudes toward them.
2. Teachers who established community and family-type classroom environments.
3. Teachers who made learning an entertaining and fun process.

Howard (2003) suggests teachers construct pedagogical practices in ways that are culturally relevant, racially affirming, and socially meaningful to their students; Students must be able to see that their teacher understands race has always and continues to matter in an increasingly racially diverse society. Coffey (2013) considers Ladson-Billings definition of culturally relevant teaching, *A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to import knowledge, skills, and attitudes* as a way for teachers to create a bridged between the student's home and school lives. There is a level of critical consciousness teachers must possess, allowing them to help students engage in the world and others critically (Coffey, 2013).

Howard (2003) offers critical teacher reflection as an avenue for the teacher to fully understanding themselves and why race and culture matter. He asserts that critical reflection attempts to look at reflection within moral, political, and ethical context of teaching. Howard (2003) contends that central to much of the work around culturally

responsive pedagogy has been the idea that reflection gives attention to one's experiences and behaviors, and meanings are made and interpreted from them to inform future decision-making. In order to ensure that these interpretations and future decisions are culturally conscious, teachers need to engage in honest, critical reflection that challenges them to see how their positionality influences their students in either positive or negative ways (Howard, 2003). Critical reflection requires one to seek deeper levels of self-knowledge and to acknowledge how one's own worldview can shape students' conceptions of self (Howard, 2003). Palmer (1998) strongly suggests "we teach who we are" and that it is necessary for teachers to separate their own lives from the act of teaching. Howard wonders if, in our diverse society, the question of "who we are" contributes to the underachievement of students who are not like us, because teachers are consciously or subconsciously subscribe to deficit-based notions of culturally diverse students (2003). Inseparable from a culturally responsive pedagogy is the development of an antiracist pedagogy (Howard, 2003). Howard presents Derman-Sparks and Brunson-Phillips' four key steps in developing an antiracist pedagogy:

- a. Develop a deeper self-knowledge about one's racial and cultural identity, and how racism has shaped this identity.
- b. Acquire a new information base about the role that race and racism play in various educational policies and practices.
- c. De-center and extend empathy to increase one's knowledge base about racially and culturally diverse groups.
- d. Become activists to develop skills and competence to combat racial inequities in work, school, and community settings.

This can be a tall order for any educator. But, recognizing that people of color are in a constant 'catch 22' in public settings around the issue of becoming visible or remaining silent (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Leonardo & Porter (2010) offer this realization to keep in mind: if minorities follow an analytics of color, they run the risk of incurring white symbolic racism at best or literal violence at worst; If they maintain their dignity and find voice by participating in public race dialogue, they are made vulnerable to assault on many fronts.



## Moving Teachers Toward Pedagogical Growth

### *Culturally Cognitive Coaching*

Costa and Garmston (1994) developed *Cognitive Coaching* based on several fundamental beliefs about teaching and human growth and learning. Human beings are capable of change and are continuously growing cognitively. Thus, teaching cannot be reduced to a formula or a recipe. Because observable teacher performance is based on internal, invisible skills and thought processes that drive the overt skills of teaching, they propose the basic teaching behavior is decision-making (Costa & Garmston, 1994). It is then assumed that with skillful coaching, a teacher's cognitive processes can be significantly enhanced and therefore so can the teacher's perceptions and decision, which produce the resulting behaviors (Costa & Garmston, 1994). These assumptions are built on Peterson and Clarke's (1986) four-phase cycle of instructional decision-making:

Phase I: (Planning Phase) All thought processes teachers perform before classroom instruction.

Phase II: (Interactive Phase) Mental functions performed during the teaching act.

Phase III: (Reflective Phase) Teachers look back to compare, analyze, and evaluate the decisions that were made during the planning and teaching phases.

Phase IV: (Application Phase) Teachers abstract from what has been learned during their own critical self-reflection and then project those learnings to future lessons.

As teacher and coach move through these phases, Costa and Garmston (1994) direct the cognitive coach to keep three major goals or outcomes in mind: Trust, Learning, and Autonomy. This *trust* relationship must be non-threatening and with the intent of intellectual growth, mutual respect, and the realization that no one needs to be fixed. Coaches should skillfully engage teacher intellect by maintaining teacher access to his/her higher cognitive function and employing various tools and strategies that will enhance teachers' perceptions. Ultimately, Cognitive Coaching is intended to develop the

teachers' ability to self-monitor, to self-analyze, and self-evaluate (1994). Costa and Garmston (1994) suggest the use of 5 non-judgmental meditational competencies for coaches.

1. Posing carefully constructed questions, intended to challenge the teacher's intellect.
2. Paraphrasing: Communicates an attempt to understand and value the teacher.
3. Probing for specificity: Clarity, elaboration, and precision: "*Which students specifically?*"  
*What criteria will you be using?*"
4. Silence: Wait time.
5. Collecting data and presenting it objectively: Skillful coaches assist the teacher in designing strategies, or they draw from their own repertoire of data-gathering techniques relevant to the teacher.

These primary components of Cognitive Coaching will be used as the framework upon which the work on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy will be built.

Glickman, et al (2009) warns that the mind almost simultaneously processes a visual image and integrates that image with previously stored images related to good and bad experiences and then ascribes a value or meaning to that image. So, in order to effectively supervise teachers, we must immediately consider observation a two-part process: First describing what has been seen, then, interpreting what it means (Glickman, et al, 2009). As discussed earlier, conversation concerning race and culture can be difficult at best, and violent to the psyche at worst. With this in mind, subscribing to the coaching strategy of using description, when talking to a teacher about his/her classroom, before providing interpretations and evaluative statements creates an instructional dialogue versus defensiveness, combativeness, or resentment (Glickman, et al, 1986, 2009). Glickman (2009) also warns that observers often lose the description of the event and retain only the interpretation, creating communication difficulties and obstacles to improvement. Observation during this research project is non-evaluative and only for the collection and analyzing of data for teacher critical reflection and possible development or improvement.

### *Teacher Critical Reflection*

I've argued trust, and a feeling of belongingness and family are among the variety of traits necessary for an educator to have a successful culturally diverse classroom. The research supports this and all roads point to teacher growth and development as the route to making these classrooms successful. At the root of all of the discussed research is one foundational necessity: Relationships. Although few would argue and the literature consistently notes the importance of high-quality interpersonal relationship in young people's capacity to function effectively, including the substantial role it plays in their success at school (Martin & Dawson, 2009). This research project is proposing that the route that critical relationship is through critical reflection of the teacher. Traditional teacher preparation often utilizes superficial means of addressing issues pertaining to race and culture in the classroom (Howard, 2003). Howard (2003) asserts that in today's world teachers must be able to critically analyze race, ethnicity, and culture and how these concepts shape the learning experience for their students. The teacher must also be able to construct pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to students' social and cultural realities (Howard, 2003). The term "critical reflection" looks at reflection within a moral, political, and ethical context of teaching. Milner suggests that teachers should be guided through the reflection on race by using "race reflective journaling", allowing the opportunity to reflect on such a difficult topic in private (Howard, 2003). Howard (2003) suggests that through challenging self-questioning and examination of classroom practices and procedures, teachers will be able to come to grips with the recognition of prejudice notions of racially diverse groups that were passed down from generation to generation. This is a critical part of critical reflection and developing a culturally responsive pedagogy.

### *In The End The Time Has Come*

The discussion of culturally responsive pedagogy has been ongoing for many years (Delpit, Neito, etc). Banks, et al (2005) along with many other researchers have proven that the level of diversity in schools is only increasing. All that remains is a challenge that demands that they develop and maintain a culturally responsive pedagogy

if schools are ever to improve and diverse population of students are ever to succeed (Howard, 2003).

There is anecdotal and qualitative evidence that much of Brewer's traditional disciplinary action is focused on the same group of "troublesome" students. These students were previously known by the moniker: "Frequent Fliers", but were renamed "Extra Loves/XL's" by this researcher. This is the environment in which this action research project is taking place and the motivation behind this my theory of action (figure 1). Research shows that many teachers feel that usually only a few disruptive students interrupt the learning of the many (Public Agenda & Common Good, 2004). Edna Brewer's discipline numbers for XL's would appear to support this assertion. In general conversations with teachers, while understanding the effects of social inequities, many lay the blame for student lack of success squarely at the feet of the student and their parents. Yet, there is a strong undercurrent of understanding and effort to challenge this equity trap (Bell-McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). This solitary focus allows Yang's (2009) argument that the "punishment" of the disruptive student results in the non-disruptive student feeling punishable, is overlooked, resulting in a fractured community.

This intervention is designed to move teachers towards foundational change that prevents the fall into equity traps and fractured educational communities via the "shoring up" of culturally responsive pedagogy. The research reviewed for this intervention suggests that culturally responsive pedagogy is the key to classroom success with students like Edna Brewer's XL's. This research also supports the use of teacher critical reflection as a route to enhance this pedagogical growth process. Ideally this awareness will lead to increased fidelity of their culturally responsive pedagogy. The teacher incorporates long held deficit views and the illogical blaming of students and their belief and behavior systems into a survival narrative that allows the teacher to function in academic situations that seem hopeless. The hope of this researcher is that this intervention will increase the educator's culturally responsive pedagogy, leading to fewer behavior issues in the classroom and increased academic success of these students.

(figure 2) **Theory of Action**

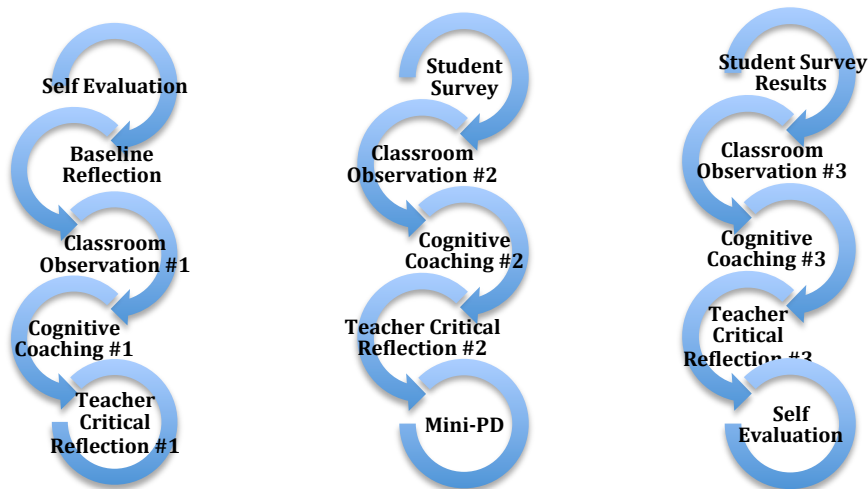
Problem/Challenge of Practice	Literature Review	Intervention/Innovation	Expected Change
<p>A small number of students, seen as tier 3 students, receive of 50% of the traditional disciplinary action, leading to...</p> <p>High numbers of African-American and Latino students (esp. boys) are sent out of class because of behavior issues. Leading to....</p> <p>Increased disparities in academic performance.</p>	<p><b><u>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy:</u></b></p> <p>-Cultural Competence</p> <p>-Culturally Responsive Teaching</p> <p>-Warm Demanders</p> <p><b><u>Diverse/Urban/At-Risk Learners:</u></b></p> <p>-Causes of student lack of success.</p> <p>-Motivating At-Risk students</p> <p>-Decreasing student behaviors</p> <p>-Moral Authority</p> <p>-Student Voice</p> <p><b><u>Coaching Teachers:</u></b></p> <p>-Moving teachers to change</p> <p>-Coaching teachers Strategies</p>	<p>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy mini-PD</p> <p>Targeted coaching cycle with 4 teachers</p> <p>Classroom observations: -Teacher Action/Response Data Points</p> <p>-Teacher Use of Strategies Data Points</p> <p>Targeted student surveys</p> <p>Teacher critical reflection Journal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased positive student engagement (more appropriate student conversation, increased work completion).</li> <li>• Decrease in negative student behavior (lower numbers of students receiving referrals or being sent out).</li> <li>• Higher academic scores for AA &amp; Latino Boys.</li> <li>• Increased teacher self-reflection while working towards intentional culturally relevant pedagogy.</li> <li>• Increased teacher cognition around instructional decision-making.</li> </ul>

## Intervention Design

	Component	Activites	Purpose	Data Collection	Type of Data (process v. impact)
<b>1</b>	<b>Pre- Intervention</b>	-School wide In-service -Select/Invite participants. -Self-Efficacy Scale -Baseline Reflection Questions.	-Introduction to the ARP. -Provide Baseline Data.	-Self-Efficacy Scale. -Baseline Teacher Reflection.	<b>Process</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	-Classroom Observation #1-3 -Data Collection #1-3 -Coaching #1-3 -Teacher Reflection #1-3	-Cognitive Coaching via 4 phases w/critical questioning.  -Coach & Teacher scoring effort  -Discussion of what worked and what didn't  -Teacher reflects in notebook.	-# of disruptive behaviors  -# of Teacher responses to behaviors  -# of culturally relevant references  -Teacher reflections	<b>Impact</b>
<b>3</b>		-Student Surveys	-Student voice on teacher efficacy	-Survey results	<b>Process</b>
<b>4</b>		-Mini-PD	-CRP Strategies -Presentation of Survey & Referral Data	-Teacher Reflection	<b>Impact</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Post- Intervention</b>	-Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale -Final Teacher Reflection	-Compare to baseline data	-Efficacy Scale	<b>Process</b>

Based on the research, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy requires a certain amount of continuous self-reflection and understanding of ones “cultural” place in the world. This is an ongoing process and is not set to a specific timeframe or checklist of items that make a particular educator culturally responsive. Even so, the research has provided certain strategies and best practices that can help guide an educator on the right path (Howard, 2003; Glickman, et al, 2009). This Intervention is designed to jumpstart an *intentional* mindset of culturally responsive pedagogy in the teachers involved. Teachers will be provided with data, cognitive coaching, and a process for critical self-reflection. The purpose of this intervention and any resulting evidence are not for evaluative purposes but instead for developing an intentional culturally responsive mindset. This could be especially beneficial for Edna Brewer teachers since, as mentioned earlier, they are a fairly aware and receptive group when it comes to current viewpoints on diversity

and equity. Yet, this predisposition to *understanding* could and does limit the culturally responsive growth of Brewer teachers, especially newer ones. Intervention participants were initially introduced the basic concepts of Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) and Culturally Response Pedagogy during a series of school-wide efforts that included community circles on unconscious bias, and a PD from Brewer’s culture component of its Instructional Leadership team. The hope is that this early school wide work has laid the foundation for the needed habits of mind/mind shifts.



*The intervention is cyclical in nature and focused on teacher self-examination in an effort to create a habit of mind around Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.*

During the pre-intervention phase, participants completed Frye, et al’s Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale and a researcher designed Common Baseline Reflection (2010) (Appendice A & B). They were asked to score themselves on a scale between 1-10 that translates to corresponding percentages (i.e. 7=70%). This scale was used to establish the teacher’s perceptions of their culturally responsive teaching competencies pre-intervention. The corresponding Common Baseline Reflection was used to introduce teachers to a style of progressive questioning that is intended to allow teachers to share unfettered (pre-coaching/training) thoughts about their cultural responsiveness. The intervention consisted of three major components a series of Cognitive Coaching cycles and Critical Teacher Reflections, supported by a mini-professional development. The Cognitive Coaching cycles were based on Costa and Gamston’s assertion that the basic teaching behavior is decision-making, based on internal invisible skills. Their idea is to use skillful coaching to increase teacher cognitive processes leading to enhanced teacher perceptions and decisions, decisions that critically effect student behavior (1994). Teachers were guided through Peterson and Clarke’s (1986) four phases cycle of instructional decision-making:

**Phase I:** (Planning Phase) All thought processes teachers perform before classroom instruction.

**Phase II:** (Interactive Phase) Mental functions performed during the teaching act.

**Phase III:** (Reflective Phase) Teachers look back to compare, analyze, and evaluate the decisions that were made during the planning and teaching phases.

**Phase IV:** (Application Phase) Teachers abstract from what has been learned during their own critical self-reflection and then project those learnings to future lessons.

A core component of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is the ability to understand self and recognize how your own worldview can shape the student's concepts of self. Critical Reflection is a direct effort to give attention to one's experiences and behaviors. All is interpreted and used to inform future decision-making (Howard, 2003). With this in mind, participant teachers were asked to critically reflect after coaching sessions, responding to provided questions. They were also asked to reflect independently, as desired. Lastly, in an effort to stimulate cognitive growth and critical reflection a student survey that includes questions that directly relate to the efficacy of teacher cultural responsiveness (Appendix C). After the second round of Cognitive Coaching, the participant teachers were provided with the results of the student surveys, individual referral data, and a mini-PD that offered strategies for Culturally Responsive Classroom Management and Cultural Responsive Pedagogy (Appendix C & D). This was followed by one more cycle of classroom observation, coaching, and teacher reflection to allow teachers to take into consideration student voice as they reflect on their classroom actions. The final stage of the research project was the post-intervention stage. During this stage teachers were asked to complete the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (Appendix A).



## METHODOLOGY

When one walks into most Brewer classrooms, you will see evidence of the required best practices: Do Nows, posted daily learning targets, students working independently and in groups throughout different points in the lesson. The average teaching experience level at Brewer is 5 years, so many teachers struggle with utilizing these strategies with fidelity. There is also a common cultural disproportionality found in the teacher-student populations. Edna Brewer teachers are 60% European-descent, 19% African-American, 12% Asian, 7% Latino, while the student body is 39% African-American, 27% Asian, 18% Latino, and 10% European-descent. Most Brewer teachers are content-strong and very intelligent. Most grew up in middle-income homes or have worked hard to achieve academic success. During a recent School Quality Review, “the SQR team observed a pattern of an overt lack of connection and respect between teachers and African American boys in many class observations. Those teachers did not seem to understand the deep significance of publicly humiliating African American males, nor did they appear to have an orientation towards building real relationships of trust and appreciation with those young men” (SQR, 2013). While students who struggle come from a variety of classrooms, a cursory view of the discipline data shows that many discipline issues happen in the classrooms of teachers who are not of color, new to teaching or to the school, those teaching primary subjects (i.e. non-electives). Many of these criteria overlap, depending on the teacher. With this data in mind, a broad selection of options was available when considering teachers for participation. At the proposed time of this Action Research Project, at least five other Brewer educators were beginning site-based research projects of their own, so in an effort to limit cross-pollination and research fatigue, the decision was made to limit the participant sample to 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers.

### *Sample Selection*

Of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, the majority of the veteran teachers (4 years or more of experience), were in various stages of transition, duress, or not easily accessible during a

regular school day. Two had decided to leave the classroom, one applying to medical school (this information was not made clear to the researcher until the project had begun), the other to an educational doctorate program. One long time Brewer teacher had announced that this was his final year and needed to teach closer to home, while another had the sudden death of a family member early in the year limit her capacity to be an option for participation. One veteran teacher was also heavily involved in developing a cultural plan and other teacher leader opportunities for the school, so participation in this project was considered too much to ask for the researcher. 8<sup>th</sup> grade PE and elective teachers were not highly viable options because most of their classes were very large, separate from the main 8<sup>th</sup> grade hall, and generally where students enjoyed being just because of the nature and design of the courses. In the end this left four 8<sup>th</sup> grade content area teachers to select from. An examination of Brewer's discipline data showed that many of the teachers that struggled with student behavior and achievement were either new to education or new to Brewer. All of these teachers had fewer than four years of teaching experience, and the 2013-14 school year was either their first or second year at Brewer. All four were approached and asked if they would like to participate in the project. All four agreed.

Science teacher, **Mr. Z**, a 23-year-old Chinese-American second year of Teach For America (TFA) corps member is new to Brewer this school year. He had spent his last year teaching in West Contra Costa County, a neighboring urban district with similar concerns as Oakland Unified.

Math teacher, **Ms. J**, a 38-year-old African-American \*\*Teach Tomorrow Oakland<sup>1</sup> candidate, who had not completed her coursework when placed into a Brewer math classroom when the previous teacher was removed mid-October had no teaching experience and had spent the last 15 years as restaurant server.

Math teacher, **Mr. C**, a 27-year-old European-American teacher with 3 years of teaching experience gained in Chicago Public Schools. New to Brewer, but, the veteran of the group.

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<sup>1</sup> Teach Tomorrow Oakland is a local partnership that recruits community members and supports them in the process to become Oakland educators.

Science teacher, **Mr. A**, a 22-year-old Filipino-American teacher and second year Teach for America (TFA) corps member who spent his first TFA year at Brewer. Mr. A is the member of the group with, albeit limited, institutional knowledge.

Only one of the teachers, Ms. J is from Oakland/Bay Area. Two are from Southern California, Mr. C and Mr. A, and Mr. Z is from Washington State. This group seemed to be the most viable for the research project for their availability as well as for the variety of characteristics they shared with the target population (middle school {Brewer teachers}): racial diversity, limited teaching experience, experience in diverse urban environments, some knowledge of the “Brewer Way”, and open to learning.

Since this group was young and technologically savvy, they were given various options for submitting data: journals (handwritten and digital via Google docs), email, Google hangouts (for coaching sessions), and face-to-face meetings.

### *Instruments*

### *Impact*

EXPECTED CHANGE	DATA SOURCE #1	DATA SOURCE #2	DATA SOURCE #3
Decrease in student referrals.  Teachers will reflect on their cultural competence and will be able to do so in a more culturally responsive manner.	Referral (AEIRIES) Report  Teacher Critical Reflection Journal	Restoration Room Log  Post Coaching Questions.	Student survey results, Pt.1 & 2
Teacher will independently use the cycle of instructional decision-making.	Teacher Critical Reflection Journal	Post Coaching Questions	
Teachers will refine their perspective on their culturally responsive self-efficacy.	Pre and Post Culturally Responsive Teacher Efficacy Scale	Teacher Critical Reflection Journal	Warm demander test score & Individual referral data.

**A) Pre and Post Culturally Responsive Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE):** Frye, et al's (2010) adaptation of the Siwatu's (2007) CRTSE scale. This scale was based on the belief that newer teachers are beginning a journey that involves understanding the cultural contributions of the students in the classroom, while learning to value themselves and others, so that they can bridge the cultural gaps between home and school (Frye, et al, 2010). (Appendix A)

**B) Student Survey-Pt. 1:** Designed by the Human Resources Services and Support Department (HRSS) of Oakland Unified School District as a student engagement piece of the Teacher Growth and Development System, TGDS (a new teacher evaluation process), Beta version. The use of a Likert-scale survey that offers students five answer options to 17 questions regarding teacher practices and classroom messaging. (Appendix C)

**C) Student Survey-Pt. 2:** Researcher designed questionnaire, designed to elicit direct, short answer student response regarding their perception of teacher practices as well as an avenue to allow students to directly address teacher and provide advice with anonymity. (Appendix C)

**D) Teacher Critical Reflection Journal:** Critical teacher reflection is considered a necessary part of developing a culturally responsive pedagogy (Howard, 2003). Teachers are given challenging self-questioning prompts to push the examination of classroom practices and teacher perception in an effort to motivate the teacher to face their own generational prejudices (Howard, 2003). Teachers are also given opportunity to free write, allowing room for spontaneous thought. (Appendix B)

### *Process*

I utilized three primary tools for my process data:

**A) Cognitive Coaching:** Facilitating the use of the four phases of instructional decision-making (Peterson and Clark, 1986) through the use of the five non-judgmental meditational competencies suggested by Costa and Garmston (1994). This process used within a protocol followed in each coaching session.

**B) Mini-PD:** A short professional development training identifying equity traps and the components in the development of a culturally responsive pedagogy. Participants are also given beginning strategies for increasing cultural responsiveness. (Appendix D)

Individual coaching sessions shortly followed the classroom observation, following the Cognitive Coaching protocol designed by the researcher (Appendix E) ensured a certain level of equity in interaction with participant. Although questions may have varied as they related to specific incidents in a teacher's classroom the general theme of the competencies: Carefully constructed questions, paraphrasing, probing for clarity, wait time, and collecting and presenting data objectively (Costa and Garmston, 1994). After third cycle of coaching, teachers are provided mini-PD in conjunction with the results of the student surveys. Opportunity given to teachers to take the shared information and have a group discussion around any patterns they may have noticed within their own data and between participants. Teachers are then asked to complete a final critical reflection on their own.

### *Research Design & Data Collection*

The intervention was greatly affected by the time of year and grade level, making consistent data collection difficult. Many of the behaviors, both student and teacher that sparked the initial interest for this particular intervention were curbed by a variety of influences. The bulk of the intervention was done between March-June. This time of year also includes, district assessments, Teacher Evaluation deadlines, 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation events, and simple "rising 9<sup>th</sup> grader" maturity. Because of this, the initial focus on teacher response and its resulting effect on the levels of student behavior, discipline, and academic success had to be adjusted. The resulting focus was on teachers' perception of culturally responsive pedagogy and the effects of Cognitive Coaching and Critical Teacher Reflection on that perception.

## *Impact Data*

My impact data was geared toward collecting teacher and student perceptions regarding teacher cultural competence. I wanted data that would speak directly to a student's perception as well as the deeper pedagogy of cultural responsiveness for the teacher. Initially this survey was going to be given on to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade extra love (\*\*"XL") students, but in an effort to avoid any questions of validity due to these students harboring negative feelings towards the teachers, the survey was given to students considered to be culturally responsive (\*\*"CR") to the teacher's approach. Extra love, or "XL" students are those who are given referrals or buddy room disciplinary actions often. In contrast, the "CR" students are those who are rarely sent out of class. The students were chosen by the teacher and during impromptu times to avoid any chance of impartial "prepping" by the teacher.

I would stop by a study participant's class and ask for any "XL's" or "CR's" that could come out to take a short survey. When the students were out of the class, they were told what the survey was about and ensured that it would be confidential, with only their ethnicity and gender being identified. Students were given the option for non-participation. Those that agreed stayed in the testing area and were given directions regarding the survey and quiet time to complete it. Students were allowed to ask questions regarding the meaning of a question, but were not given any assistance in choosing or developing answers.

The OUSD Human Resources Services and Support (HRSS) Department survey (Appendix C) was chosen because it utilized language and choices that students could easily understand and respond to. The Pre and Post Culturally Responsive Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Appendix A) was designed specifically to identify culturally responsive characteristics and was clearly written in the language of culturally responsive criteria. Since both tools provided a wealth of information, I chose a select segment of questions from each that met the criteria for culturally responsive pedagogy and warm demanders (Howard, 2001, Bondy & Ross, 2010, Weinstein, 2004 ). Students and teachers answered all survey questions, so that I could have access to their full perspectives. From each tool 10 core comparable questions-totaling 20- (Appendix F) were chosen to present the data

from. I created a series of short answer questions (Appendix C) as an addition to the student survey to allow students to speak to some teacher questions deeply and more specifically. This also provided an opportunity for students to provide teachers with advice. I created a rating system to the student survey:

**Part 1:** Totally Untrue, Mostly Untrue =1pt, Somewhat=2 pts, Mostly True= 3pts, and Totally True=3pts

**Part 2:** Statements that were directly positive and in support of the teacher/teacher choices=3 pts, Statements that weren't definitively positive or negative= 2 pts, and Statements that were directly negative and not in support of the teacher/teacher choices=1pt.

These points were then tallied and counted as teachers' Warm Demander points. The Pre and Post Culturally Responsive Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Appendix A) was selected in an effort to evaluate whether teachers showed a change in their perceptions of their cultural responsive pedagogy. There were a large variety of questions, some appearing to overlap but meant to help provide a deeper, layered understanding of how teachers saw themselves. This scale is the crux of the data revealing whether or not there is a shift in teacher perception of their culturally responsive pedagogy. The teachers are asked to give themselves a score between 1-10 on each question, one being equivalent to 10% and ten being equivalent to 100%.

### *Process Data*

Certain aspects of the intervention were specifically designed to guide the process of teacher growth. The classroom observations allowed for the collection of data to be discussed in the post observation coaching sessions as well as in the teacher reflections. The post observation coaching sessions, included questions that directly reflected actions that had taken place during the observations and any ongoing themes found in the teacher reflection journals. To ensure teachers were moving themselves in the direction of culturally responsive pedagogy, the mini-PD provided more general and overarching criteria than may be discussed in the coaching sessions. Following the PD, teachers were

given their individual results from the student surveys, including their scores from the warm demander tests (allocated points given to survey questions). This information was intended to further push teachers toward deeper self-examination, hopefully leading towards a path of culturally responsive pedagogy.

### *Data Analysis Methods*

All data was collected and organized by ethnicity and grouped under each individual teacher. A total of 46 students took the survey, the students were told to respond regarding their Math and Science teachers. The students were grouped in several ways:

1. Initially by grade level “family”: The Allstars and The Leaders
2. Then by behavior/discipline: Extra Loves (XL’s), students who have been removed from class often for disruptive behaviors, and Culturally Responsive (CR’s), students who have not been sent out of class or had behavioral issues.
3. Then by ethnicity and gender.

The XL’s and CR’s from each “family” were only able respond to their own teacher pair. Some students had higher-level math class, Geometry or Algebra and were only able to respond regarding their Science teacher. While this allowed me to disaggregate data regarding individual teachers, it made it impossible to interpret what the entire group or a particular subgroup thought about an individual teacher or all of the teachers as a whole. It did, however, allow for more specific attention on individual teacher practices.

Using the 20 comparable questions, I was able to find pockets of good culturally responsive pedagogical practice as well as areas of continued need. I also used these questions along with the post teacher self-efficacy scale to compare whether or not teacher change in perspective matched the areas in which students scored them poorly.



STUDENT SURVEY	TEACHER SCALE
My teacher respects my ideas and suggestions (S) #2	I am able to gain information about my students' cultural backgrounds (T) #16
My teacher explains things in different ways (S) #3	I use a variety of teaching methods to help my meet the needs of my students. (T) #11
My teacher is afraid of me. (S) #11	I am able to build a sense of trust in my students. (T) #9
My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me. (S) #7	I am able to implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture. (T) #6
In class, we talk about people that look like me. (S) #17	I teach students about their cultures' contributions in the content areas (T) #17
My teacher knows about my family. (S) #9	I am able to gain relevant information about my students' home life. (T) #8
My teacher doesn't let us give up on tough work. (S) #13	I am able to adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students. #!
My teacher only accepts our best #14	I am able to identify ways the school culture (e.g. values, norms, and practices) is different from my student's home culture. #5
My teacher believes in my ability to learn. #1	I develop a personal relationship with my students. #20
My teacher makes learning fun. #6	I use my knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds to help make learning meaningful. #13

Comparison questions, these questions are from the student survey and the teacher efficacy scale and were selected as comparable samplings from each tool, relating to culturally responsive pedagogical competencies from both the student and teacher perspective.

## Findings of Action Research Project

The goal of this Action Research Project was to increase the teacher's knowledge and use of a culturally responsive pedagogy, through cognitive coaching and critical teacher reflection. The participant teachers reflect a sampling of Edna Brewer teachers who are struggling with classroom management and student academic success. My assertion is that through an observation and cognitive coaching cycle that includes post coaching questions critical teacher reflections, fueled direct professional developmental and targeted student input, teachers will:

1. Decrease the referral numbers and increase the academic success of students of color.
2. Will utilize the cycle of decision-making, and
3. Reflect on their cultural competence and reassess their pedagogy and begin to make deeper changes.

The impact data showed several patterns emerging amongst the two surveyed students groups as well as amongst the teachers. For example, the Culturally Responsive (CR) group tended to rate their teachers perceptions more positively than the Extra Love's (XL), in several areas. There was also a clear correlation between the variety of ways a teacher explained things and how enjoyable or "fun" a student thought the class was. To manage the various ranges of responses from both teachers and students, the data was organized under overarching themes that are supported by concepts in Ware's (2006) specific practices for warm demanders, Weinstein's (2004) prerequisites to becoming a culturally responsive teacher and the preferred learning environments of some students of color. (Howard, 2001, 2003):

- 1) Caring: Creates family type attitude and environment in which students feel a bond with the teacher that makes learning fun.
- 2) Academic Success: Insisting on quality, respect, and completion of academic tasks.
- 3) Critical Consciousness: Sees how own positionality influences students in either positive or negative ways.
- 4) Cultural Competence: De-center and extend empathy to increase ones own knowledge base around racially and culturally different groups.

I initially looked at the results of the student survey, and I found that while the Culturally Responsive (CR) group did have a tendency to rate teachers higher than the Extra Love's (XL), many of their scores matched in quantity. Meaning, both groups gave similar or matching ratings. The CR group gave more positive ratings in specific areas like, feeling

that their teachers believed in their ability to learn; the majority responded with 50% or higher in “Somewhat”, “Mostly True” or “Totally True”. This is not true for African-American males; their numbers had more varied results. Only one African-American male student stated that it was “Mostly Untrue” that his teacher believed in his ability to learn.

Mr. Z who received the highest number of positive responses; totaling 80% of his respondents saying it is “Mostly True” or “Totally True” that he believes in their ability to learn. Mr. Z’s classroom observation notes suggest that he often uses statements that message his belief in students: “It’s really important that you all get this...” Okay, here’s the work you missed, I really want you to be able to finish”. Students in the CR group all felt their teacher believed in their ability to learn. A couple of common threads regarding this difference in opinion began to emerge in the short answer responses on part 2 of the student survey. When asked if their teacher cared about them, most CR’s responded in the affirmative. When asked to detail their response in part 2, several stated that “it was because it was the teacher’s job to care about all students” or “because the teacher comes around and asks how they are doing on their work”.

This suggests a certain amount of personal security in the CR student, thus the use of the term Culturally Responsive, as they are responsive to the dominant cultural teaching practices and don’t need added supports to feel cared about. One CR student, in response to the same question, “Only as a student, not personally, and that’s okay.” On the other hand, the XL response to that question varied:

“I don’t know”

“I really don’t think so because she does not take time to explain things to me”

“Yes, but, I disrupt the learning of others sometimes, so she cares about everyone else.”

Student responses from both groups showed an insight regarding themselves and their perceptions of their teacher’s actions that was much more in depth than I had anticipated.

Other correlations became clear as well. One question asks if the teacher respects the student's ideas and suggestions. For example, 50% of Mr. C's African-American male students felt less than positive regarding his belief in them, while 75% of this same group responded with a resounding "Mostly True" in regards to whether Mr. C respects their ideas and suggestions. This turn in data wasn't clearly explainable, without looking at teacher reflections. Mr. C shares that he grew up in a very diverse environment, although the primary "other" was Latino, and that his parents grew in environments that "were not exactly functional". I believe these experiences move him towards being open to listening to students, causing students to feel he respects their ideas and suggestions. Yet his commitment to consequential consistency and his history with Latino peers, and his family history lead him towards more of a social justice mindset. This may speak to a phenomenon in Oakland Unified in which teachers and students engage in moments of high social equity and listening to one another, but this does not get translated into academic success. It should be noted that Ms. J, the eldest, but least experienced teacher of them all received the lowest number of positive responses, especially from the CR group. This was probably because she has the inclination to over-manage the class out of fear of losing control. Data shows that she was the highest referrer of the participants, and often needed support to get her class quiet.

Another trend was found in the component Academic Success. I was able to see a data connection between the students who stated that their teachers did not explain things in different ways. When both XL and CR students responded to whether a teacher made learning fun, all but 3 of the 46 students surveyed responded with "Somewhat" or in the negative. It can be assumed then, that teachers with limited ways to explain things, will have an increase number of students who did not feel learning was fun in their classes. Suggesting, the fewer options presented to students to access information, the fewer students who find learning engaging and fun. This assessment of the data rang true across all ethnicities and both student groups with the short answer questions as well. When asked why do students misbehave in class most XL and CR students responded by saying students were either bored or didn't understand. Their academic suggestions to the teacher were entirely directed at the teacher making the lesson more interesting, fun or more hands on. An interesting data point in Academic Success spoke directly to cultural

perspective. The majority of students of color selected the survey options that said the majority of their teachers allowed them to give up on tough work or did not accept their best (Appendix C). There were exceptions, but the vast majority responded in the negative; while a majority of the European-American students felt either the complete opposite or varying stages of the positive.

The data shows that all of the teachers have made some caring and cultural connection with the students. Mr. C made connections with African-American and Latina Females that generally ranked him at “Somewhat” positive or higher. Yet, he struggled to make those same connections with 50% of his African-American and Latino males. All of these young men selected the survey option stating that he does not seem to know when something is bothering him. Considering approximately 98% of his 180 referrals between March-June were African-American and Latino males, Mr. C was a serious consideration for coaching around social cues for these two ethnic groups. The young men in these groups rated Mr. C low on part 1 of the survey, but their short answers about him suggest he missed opportunities to connect:

**Do you feel your teacher cares about you? Explain:**

**(Latino Male)** *“Yes or also somewhat, He ask me how I’m doing once in a while.”*

**(Af-Am Male)** *“No he sends me out a lot.”*

**What could the teacher do about it kids that misbehave?**

**(Same student)** *“Just keep correcting us, and do more fun stuff.”*

**(Same student)** *“Be nice, it hurts the student and the class when he puts people out and it makes others act out.”*

Yet, Mr. C is not alone, the Cultural Competence in this group of teachers is low, only four students out of the entire group of student respondents stated in the positive that their teachers know what’s bothering them or know their families. Latina females and European-American males felt that there were no teachers that knew about their families. This highlights the unbalanced attention and lack of effort given to connecting with students who are not behavioral problems.

Lastly the student survey showed that 98% of all students, across groups, ethnicities, and gender responded in the negative to the prompt: In class, we talk about people that look like me. This is sign that all of the participant teachers were missing a

critical culture competency component, and could benefit from the intervention. All of the student survey information was intended to provide student voice and perspective in contrast to the teacher perspective. It was also intended to be a motivational force in moving teachers toward critical reflection and actual perspective shift. I looked at teacher reflection journals, teacher response to coaching questions, and finally to teacher post-self efficacy scale to see if there was a shift in perspective.

### *Participant Attrition*

Of the four participants, two did not complete the intervention. Although Mr. A was observed and many follow up meetings were scheduled. He was not able to make any of them. When provided the post observation and reflection questions, he did not provide any responses, effectively not allowing any opportunity to share his thoughts or growth.

Mr. C, shared a baseline reflection and one post coaching reflection. Due to a conflict with a district mandated math assessment, Mr. C's classroom was not always available for observation. Severely limiting the opportunity to gather data. When asked to complete reflections questions online, there was no response until after the end of the school year.

### *Mitigating Factors*

The remaining two teachers completed the intervention completely. The resulting information is strongly based on the experiences of these two participants, Mr. Z and Ms. J. The original expected outcomes were directly related to the students. When I began this intervention, my expectation was that my intervention would help the teachers reflect on their decision-making process in response to students' academics and behavior. With coaching and professional learning, I thought teacher behavior would change, decreasing student behavior and increasing student academic success. Instead, a variety of difficult circumstances affected my results:

1. Teacher attrition, causing two of the four participants to effectively no longer be a part of the intervention.

2. 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation events, and the planning and preparation for them severely limited any spare time either myself or the teachers had.

3. Very stressful dynamics as many people prepared to transition to other sites by choice or by administrative release.

### *The Final Results*

I was not able to see a decrease in student referrals or an increase in academic success. I was however, able to see the remaining teachers able to reflect deeply on their practice and their culturally responsive pedagogy.

All of the original participants completed a pre-self efficacy scale (Appendix). In general none of the four scored themselves below a 6 in target questions (Appendix) and as high as 9 for some. Ms. J, gave herself a score of 2 in regards to teaching students about their cultures' contributions in the content areas. The other applicants scored themselves much higher: Mr. Z-6, Mr. C-6, Mr. A-7. In comparison to the student survey, the teachers' perspective on their competence was much higher than the students'. If examine the comparable questions we will immediately see the discrepancies, I've chosen to only highlight a few areas of struggle identified by students, for each teacher:

STUDENT SURVEY	TEACHER SCALE
My teacher is afraid of me. (S) #11	I am able to build a sense of trust in my students. (T) #9
My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me. (S)  #7 Students scored the teachers as primarily SW or to the negative (MU, TU).	I am able to implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture. (T) #6  Teachers scored themselves: Mr. Z: 6, Mr. C: 7, Ms. J: 6, Mr. A: 6
My teacher knows about my family. (S)  #9 All but 4 student respondents replied TU or MU	I am able to gain relevant information about my students' home life. (T) #8  Teachers scored themselves: Mr. Z: 8, Mr. C: 9, Ms. J: 8, Mr. A: 8
My teacher doesn't let us give up on tough work. (S) #13  The majority of the students score the teachers solidly in SW.	I am able to adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students. #1  The teachers scored themselves: Mr. Z: 8, Mr. C: 8, Ms. J: 5, Mr. A: 7

Mr. Z and Ms. J, completed the entire intervention and regularly shared their reflections as well as responded to post coaching questions. Ms. J, began her reflections very tentatively, seeming to never express a strong feeling in any way, but, staying very neutral. She didn't express a perceived connections between her and her students, although many of them were African-American as well, she felt she had grown up in such different circumstances that her past wasn't really relevant to the students. In her reflections she continued to express a desire to want to engage students and get the lesson across to them. She even began to realize that not only was she being too passive as a teacher, but also as a teacher partner. She began to see areas from her past that limited how she worked effectively with students:

*“As a waitress, I had perfected my questioning to yes or no answers because it made things easier...Asking questions that lead to a specific answer reduced confusion, sped up the time it took to take orders, and lead to bigger tips because customers got exactly what they ordered. However, as a teacher, I learned that that line of questioning was unproductive and considered low-level.”*



By the third cycle of coaching, she had begun to utilize media images and clips to convey the messages she wanted to send to students.

*“ Your advice/direction/information led me to look into using media images and clips...as well as serve as reminders of the content so students would have a greater recall and fluency. I found it insightful and began doing it for my upcoming summer job at the Summer Algebra Institute-California State University.”*

The use of the coaching protocol was extremely beneficial with Ms. J. Her growth in cognitive awareness around her teaching practices was exponential. When she reviewed the student surveys and attended the PD, she was asked what stood out for her. What stood out for her was that the students didn't feel she was afraid of her. This was important because standing her ground on discipline was difficult. *“..at times I was pushing the envelope. Making students fill out a reflections sheet in the buddy room was a struggle, but I held my ground. Even though there were times when I let misbehavior slide because of the backlash.”* This statement is incredibly important because she effectively owns that she did indeed have some fear, and overcame it. The result being, the students did not see her as fearful and thus began to respect her standing her ground. In her final reflection she states that she knew her lessons were boring but didn't know how to change-even with the suggestions given during coaching. Once she became involved in her summer work program she became aware of a curriculum designed for African-American students and studied about her [own] heritage and what it takes to serve African-American students. *“ I feel nearly reborn again”*. Ms. J's post survey showed a great level of confidence but she had made some adjustments with her new insight. Results are highlighted in the chart below.

Ms. J Total (XL) student perception, w/Teacher perception of decreased efficacy denoted.	Totally Untrue	Mostly Untrue	Somewhat	Mostly True	Totally True
Q1: My teacher believes in my ability to learn.			55%	27%	18%
Q2: My teacher respects my ideas and suggestions.		9%	73%	18%	
Q3: My teacher explains things in different ways.			55%	27%	9%
Q6: My teacher makes learning fun.	45%	9%	45%		
Q7: My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me.	45%	9%	18%	18%	9%
Q9: My teacher knows about my family.	27%	36%	27%	9%	
Q11: My teacher is afraid of me.	55%	45%			
Q13: My teacher doesn't let us give up on tough work.	9%	18%	27%	27%	18%
Q14: My teacher only accepts our best.	18%	18%	27%	18%	18%
Q17: In class, we talk about people that look like me.	55%		36%		9%

Mr. Z began this process with a fairly clear idea of what the struggles and area of concerns were for him. He was actively listening to his students and thinking about his part in the process:

*“There was obviously a concern for me, because there was absolutely no way to have an effective productive classroom without the students feeling like there’s someone in charge, especially in urban classrooms....*

*...I also was late in the year to start adapting more group projects, which I feel as though the students appreciate [group work]. Ultimately, if the lessons are being perceived as boring, that lessens the impact of the lesson and decrease buy-in for future lessons.”*

He initially laid his struggles squarely on his planning and organization, although this wasn't really his struggle. As his numbers show, he actually received the highest student ratings for the level of fun/interest, his belief in his student's ability to learn, and his ability to explain things in different ways. I believe the students knew he was a good

teacher. He was just not “connecting” to them. So, during coaching sessions, I began focusing the conversation on develop his Critical Consciousness. Asking him to examine whether or not he had anything in common with his students, or asking him to connect with own personal cultural experiences. By coaching cycle 3 he began to look at himself and his own experiences:

*“It sometimes is difficult for me to be as authoritative as I need to be in the classroom. Growing up in an academic, immigrant family, I was actually a child of not so strict parents. As they learned American culture, they looked to me sometimes to understand what the normal, expected procedures were for disciplining their child...I was always afforded a lot of independence at home and at school. Because of this I am sometimes too flexible in class, in an attempt to be genuine with the students, but this often causes negative results because students need a consistent, positive and demanding presence to work to their full potential.*

## **Implications and Conclusion**

This intervention has widespread implications for a site administrator. Research shows that crux of urban school success is strong committed teachers. Teachers committed to thee work of building a culturally responsive pedagogy. A culturally responsive pedagogy is rooted in the educator’s ability to know themselves in the context of the world and what that means for the students they teach. This intervention was initiated to see if fairly savvy teachers could benefit from cognitive coaching and critical reflection to decrease the negative behaviors in their class and increase academic success. I learned that level of cognitive and critical intention needed to do this well, will take much longer than I had given myself. To deepen their understanding of themselves and their classroom, this intervention would need to begin at the very start of the school year. Both teachers who completed the entire intervention became deeper, more critical thinkers about their work. As their administrator, I was able to facilitate deeper level of cognition, allowing the teachers to make jumps in logic on their own.

Future efforts in this action research project would be advised to begin in the beginning of the school year and to avoid the rush of Spring semester events. I would also addition of a Professional Learning Community, and allow a small group of teachers

to discuss concepts that came out of the coaching, and to be a support to one another in the practice deeper cognitive work.

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# APPENDIX A

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING SELF-EFFICACY SCALE (CRTSE)

*Pretest Posttest Means*

Score: Scale 1-10

1. I am able to adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students. \_\_\_\_
2. I am able to obtain and use information about my student's academic strengths. \_\_\_\_
3. I am able to determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group. \_\_\_\_
4. I know whether or not my students feel comfortable competing with other students. \_\_\_\_
5. I am able to identify ways that the school culture (e.g. values, norms, and practices) is different from my student's home culture. \_\_\_\_
6. I am able to implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture. \_\_\_\_
7. I am able to assess student learning using various types of assessments. \_\_\_\_
8. I am able to gain relevant information about my students' home life. \_\_\_\_
9. I am able to build a sense of trust in my students. \_\_\_\_
10. I am able to establish positive home-school relations. \_\_\_\_
11. I use a variety of teaching methods to help meet the needs of all my students. \_\_\_\_
12. I am able to develop a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse backgrounds. \_\_\_\_
13. I use my knowledge of students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful.  
\_\_\_\_
14. I use my students' prior I use my students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information. \_\_\_\_
15. I am able to identify the ways students communicate at home and know they may differ from the school norms. \_\_\_\_
16. I am able to gain information about my students' cultural backgrounds. \_\_\_\_
17. I teach students about their cultures' contributions in the content areas. \_\_\_\_
18. I am able to greet English Learners with a phrase in their native language. \_\_\_\_
19. I design a classroom environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures. \_\_\_\_
20. I develop a personal relationship with my students. \_\_\_\_
21. I know how to obtain information about my students' academic weaknesses. \_\_\_\_
22. I am able to praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language. \_\_\_\_
23. Identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students.  
\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE TEACHER REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

#### Reflection #1:

Your students seem very comfortable with you. Why do you think you send XL's out in such high numbers? Why do you think it increased as the end of the year approached. How do you think your students see the exits (XL's and on task students)? Please answer tonight if you can.

Over the year, I was learning from and listening to many people whose opinions did not always match. People who offered me their opinions were colleagues, administrators and my own students. Listening to them all, I had to figure out what was best; however, I had hardly any experience as a teacher and my perspective proved short-sided.

What I gain from all of the feedback was:

Kids were not taking warnings seriously.

The learning environment was distractful because some students were having side conversations.

I needed to be firmer.

Perhaps getting lost in translation, I assumed that sending the distractions (XLs) out and eventually to OCR would send a firmer message and cause the learning environment to be more conducive to learning. All the while, making a conscious effort to check-in later on in the day, I told and tried to show XLs that it wasn't personal; and, I held on to the hope that our next class meeting would be a good one.

As far as students' thoughts, I think no one would say that they or anyone else who was sent out didn't deserve it. On the other hand, I believe many of them wondered why I got so firm, so late in the year. In fact, the minority group, students who remained engaged until the end of the year, were the ones telling me to do something about the XLs.

Overall I learned many valuable lessons about teaching, engagement and clarity during my term at Edna Brewer. Since the school year ended, I've been doing research work on teaching and reflecting about the things that went wrong and ways to improve my practice. As a result, I believe I'll be a much improved Ms. Johnson next year, my second time around. I thank you for everything, and all the Edna Brewer staff for their kindness and support.

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## APPENDIX C

### Student Surveys Pt.1 & 2

<b>STUDENT SURVEY PT. 1</b>	<b>Totally Untrue</b>	<b>Mostly Untrue</b>	<b>Some- what</b>	<b>Mostly True</b>	<b>Totally True</b>
1. My teacher believes in my ability to learn.					
2. My teacher respects my ideas and suggestions.					
3. My teacher explains things in different ways.					
4. My teacher asks questions to make sure that we can follow along.					
5. One of my goals in this class has been to learn as much as I can.					
6. My teacher makes learning fun.					
7. My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me.					
8. My teacher gives us time explain our ideas.					
9. My teacher knows about my family.					
10. My classmates behave the way the teacher wants us to.					
11. My teacher is afraid of me.					
12. In this class, I want the teacher to call on me.					
13. My teacher doesn't let us give up on tough work.					
14. My teacher only accepts our best.					
15. Student behavior in this class is under control.					
16. In this class, we learn a lot.					
17. In class, we talk about people that look like me.					

## **PART 2**

- 1. Do you feel your teacher cares about you? Explain.**
- 2. What makes kids misbehave in this class?**
- 3. What could the teacher do about it?**
- 4. Does kicking students out help or hurt the student? The class? Explain.**
- 5. What expectations does your family have for you at school?**
- 6. What makes you behave in class?**
- 7. What advice would you give your teacher to make their classroom better next year?**

## APPENDIX D

### MINI-PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



POWERPOINT TITLE PAGE

## APPENDIX E

### Cognitive Coaching Protocol

1. How do you feel the class progressed? Were they on task?  
Disruptions?
2. Which students did you feel you needed to speak to the most? Did you find yourself redirecting or supporting more?
3. Share Coaching observations and data with teacher.
4. How do you feel this compares to the earlier part of your school year? Do you see any connections to how you may have interacted then with what happens or doesn't happen in class now?
5. Please reflect on:
  - a. What you feel has been your strengths and struggles.
  - b. How you feel students have contributed to the dynamic (positively and negatively)
  - c. How your views/feelings are connected to your own personal cultural experience.