

Culturally Responsive Literature

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Culturally responsive teaching is an effective way for educators to create relevant learning experiences that build on students' strengths and cultural backgrounds. As a result, culturally responsive teaching has had positive learning outcomes for minority students because they are taking ownership of their learning and risks in trusting learning environments. This article defines culturally responsive teaching and explains how teachers can incorporate it into their lessons. First, it examines research on culturally responsive practices and culturally relevant pedagogy. Next, it explains the characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. Then, it offers suggestions on implementing culturally responsive practices into the classroom. The article concludes with examples of culturally responsive literature that can be implemented into the classroom. Through culturally responsive teaching, students' learning needs can be met, while placing an emphasis on students' different cultures, showing that all students are respected and valued in the classroom (Callins, 2006).

Keywords: culturally responsive teaching, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, culturally relevant practices, social justice

INTRODUCTION

Now, more than ever, finding literature that speaks to all students, both those represented in the classroom and those that are not, is crucial. According to a report conducted by the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. population is more racially and ethnically diverse (Shrestha & Heisler, 2011) than ever before. Furthermore, there is a growing concern that while the student body in elementary and middle schools is of racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, nearly 82% of U.S. public school teachers are non-Hispanic White women (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013; Cross, 2003; Sleeter, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These statistics support a growing need to implement culturally relevant pedagogy. This article discusses the importance of implementing culturally responsive practices in the elementary classroom and the differences and overlap between culturally responsive practices and culturally relevant pedagogy. Next, characteristics of culturally responsive practices will be reviewed. To conclude this article, a discussion of resources will be provided.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

Both culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy focus on social justice and cultural consciousness in the classroom (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice pedagogy are intertwined. Gutstein (2003) suggests that social justice pedagogy has the goal of helping students develop positive social and cultural identities. In their study, Kambutu et. al (2020) recommended using culturally contextualized education. Their study focused on the (un) intentional promotion of educational injustices against low-income children and families in Kenya and Nepal. Kambutu et. al (2020) suggests implementing culturally contextualized education that allows pupils to embrace critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills (Applied Educational Systems, 2020). Esposito and Swain (2009) suggest that issues of social justice “naturally arise as teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy” (p. 38). Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) refers to teacher practice and is based on the work and research of Geneva Gay (2002,2010). Culturally relevant pedagogy, on the other hand, focuses on the work of Gloria Ladson Billings (1992, 1995) which centers on teachers’ positionality, posturing, and paradigm in delivering content. Ladson-Billings (1994) research defines culturally responsive teaching as, “A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge, to impart skills, and to change attitudes” (p. 13).

As teachers, it is our job to get to know our students, understand their backgrounds and cultures, and connect with them on a personal level (Wiens, 2015). Teachers who practice culturally responsive teaching provide lessons supporting social interactions and awareness of the different cultures within the classroom. By providing these learning opportunities students are aware of the diverse backgrounds within their learning environment and performance at school increases. Wiggan and Watson’s (2016) research suggests the need for a multicultural curriculum to provide more opportunities for culturally diverse students. When providing students with high quality instruction and relevant lessons; achievement in schools increases (Wiggins & Watson, 2016). Based on the findings from their study in Nepal and Kenya, Kambutu et. al (2020) strongly suggests infusing culturally appropriate lessons into existing curriculum, so that students can develop skills to help them understand and appreciate local and global issues that may or may not include culture. By implementing culturally appropriate lessons that focus on critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, Kambutu et. al (2020) posit that educational social justice will be promoted for all.

Furthermore, Khanal (2017) indicates the need for culturally responsive school policies that would celebrate students’ linguistic and cultural diversity through his research in Nepal. Hramiak’s (2015) research in Yorkshire and Humbersides, (UK) also suggests that teachers who infuse culturally responsive teaching practices encourage students to embrace other cultural heritages and it bridges the gap between home and school. The CRT framework helps teachers and students remain culturally sensitive inside and outside the classroom (Hramiak, 2015). As teachers remain fair, and consistent with their culturally relevant teaching practices, students begin to change their attitudes and learn to accept the diversity around them (Hramiak, 2015). A research study conducted in India suggests the importance of incorporating elements of students’ cultures into daily instruction (Guha, 2006). When teachers explore different possibilities for learning, it allows for flexibility within the curriculum (Guha, 2006).

The research from the United States and countries around the world supports the implementation of culturally responsive practices. However, many educators find themselves struggling with how to effectively do it. Gurung, Moltow, and Brett (2019) indicated that better learning environments will be created when students and teachers embrace and acknowledge diversity. Wien’s (2015) research suggests that when teachers are considering how to deliver their content, they need to think critically about the curriculum as well as the specific students in their classrooms Hramiak’s (2015) research suggests that teachers can continually adapt their teaching practices to remain culturally sensitive throughout each school year based on the specific cultural needs of their students. Other research suggests that a shift in school culture may be needed in order to help students acquire a new set of skills when promoting CRT (Blitz,

Anderson, & Saastamoinen, 2016). The following pages will describe methods as well as materials that can easily be utilized.

SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Culture is important when communicating and building relationships with people. Learning about students and their cultures are essential for creating a classroom community that fosters collaboration and understanding (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1994). To execute this effectively, The Education Alliance at Brown University (2020) has proposed seven characteristics that should be considered when implementing culturally responsive teaching. The seven characteristics are (1) positive perspectives on parents and families, (2) communication of high expectations, (3) learning within the context of culture, (4) student-centered instruction, (5) culturally mediated instruction, (6) reshaping the curriculum, and (7) teacher as facilitator" (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2020).

Teachers can promote a classroom community by providing culturally relevant strategies for children and their families. This can be accomplished by granting families the opportunity to form positive perspectives on what is presently taking place in the classroom, and allowing them to make suggestions for improvements (Goodman & Hooks, 2016). Through meaningful learning experiences, teachers can also provide instruction and activities that include sharing cultural talents and traditions (Goodman & Hooks, 2016). Allowing students and parents to share their values and traditions can educate teachers on how to shape their instruction to meet the needs of their students.

When communicating high expectations, it is important for teachers to clearly state the learning objectives and goals to all students while providing specific feedback and self-assessment techniques (Young & Sternod, 2011). Learning within the context of culture can be incorporated through a variety of different teaching styles such as role playing, cooperative learning, and research projects that include issues or concepts about culture (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2020). Together parents and teachers can bridge cultural differences through effective communication skills. Some of these activities can include talking about differences, modeling how differences make the world a better place, and attending community events that discuss differences (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2020).

When students work collaboratively, they can develop social skills through discussions in which students share information and ideas. Learning these skills are essential for students' educational growth and development. Padron, Waxman, & Rivera (2002) define cooperative learning as using small groups where students have specific roles to accomplish specific tasks and activities. Cooperative learning is an essential student-centered instructional technique for academic success (Padron, Waxman, & Riveria, 2002). According to the Education Alliance at Brown University (2020) "instruction is culturally mediated when it incorporates and integrates diverse ways of knowing, understanding, and representing information. Instruction and learning take place in an environment that encourages multicultural viewpoints and allows for inclusion of knowledge that is relevant to the students." (p.1).

Teachers can create mediated instruction by providing different ways for all students to be successful and having students create individual goals to promote student growth. When creating an environment that embraces cultures and traditions all students can feel more accepted (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2020).

When looking at curriculum, a primary goal should be developing and deepening student understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011; Authentic Education; 2015). When students are provided with complex and authentic opportunities, they can learn to interpret and apply material and self-assess (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011; Authentic Education; 2015). Teachers can develop projects that reflect students' background knowledge. Students can learn from their surroundings by using resources other than textbooks, such as researching alternative viewpoints and encouraging interviews within their community (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2020). The teacher is not lecturing during responsive teaching, instead he or she is facilitating the students working in collaboration to solve a task (Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002).

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy (CLR) is defined as, “the validation and affirmation of the home (indigenous) culture and home language for building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academia and mainstream society” (Hollie, 2012, p.23). When incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices, teachers are aware of their students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds while responding to the specific needs (Hollie, 2012). Figures 2 and 3 show student work samples from a culturally responsive lesson on famous women in history. The students were asked to write about an important female figure that influenced them; specifically explaining how they can relate to this individual. The examples provided are from an African American student and a Caucasian student. Both students chose to use the book *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* to complete their writing prompt.

The teacher exposed these students to various famous leaders in history, while exploring the content with the students. Then, books were provided on different reading levels for the students to explore. Students were allowed to find one specific leader that she/he could relate to from history. Once a historical figure was chosen, the students worked independently to complete their writing prompt. This process is an example of CLR because the teacher explores with the learners, guides them through the learning process, and allowing them to work independently when ready (Hollie, 2012). Through these culturally responsive lessons, students construct knowledge and meaning through their world (Kieran & Anderson, 2019).

As identified in Figure 1, the African American student saw herself as the character, and therefore only drew one person. However, in Figure 2, the Caucasian student saw herself as a separate being and drew Josephine Baker as an African American. The students in the classroom who identify as African American showed in this activity that they viewed themselves as being present in the book. This is seen in the depiction drawn by the African American student. She is the only individual in the picture because she sees herself as the individual presented. On the other hand, the Caucasian student saw herself as a separate being, and included another individual in her drawing. These pictures support the thought that when students see themselves represented in literature, whether textbooks or picture books, they feel more connected to the lesson because they are represented. When teachers use real-life examples and try to connect to the students’ interests in the classroom, students are more engaged and feel more connected to their schools. These personal connections not only lead to better learning, they are key for reduced prejudice and improved intergroup relations (E. Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998; Singh, 1991). When students feel included in the lesson, there will be higher participation (Bouchard & Berg, 2017). Since the students are engaged in the learning and actively participating, this can increase student achievement (Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005).

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

Culturally relevant pedagogy is viewed as an effective means of meeting culturally diverse students’ academic and social needs (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 1997). Culturally relevant pedagogy requires educators to focus on three main components: academic achievement, cultural competence, and developing a sociopolitical or critical consciousness within the student body (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Howard (2003) points out that one of the most important goals of implementing culturally relevant pedagogy is to “increase the academic achievement of culturally diverse students” (p. 196). Aronson and Laughter (2016) identified positive student outcomes across different content areas in their synthesis of research.

When students from culturally diverse backgrounds and low-income students, are treated as capable learners, they will demonstrate high levels of competency (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Incorporating students’ culture, especially those who are typically under-represented, into the lesson will give them a deeper sense of connection to the information, leading to more engagement in the lesson. Green (2019) identified that students who were generally set up to fail, flourished when they were given high expectations. In addition to high expectations, Ladson-Billings (2006) asserts that students need access to the necessary tools in order to be successful.

“Culturally relevant teaching requires that students maintain some cultural integrity as well as academic excellence” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). Ladson-Billings (1995) asserts that culturally relevant teachers “utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning” (p. 161). By infusing students’ culture through literature, teachers will be able to foster deeper connections with students. Students will feel empowered and validated when they see characters that look like them, and who are experiencing issues similar to them. Studies have indicated that students make academic progress when their teachers are prepared to incorporate CRT into classroom pedagogy (Cabrera, Milem, & Marx, 2012; Cammarota & Romero, 2011). Lee (2012) found that teachers play an important role in how “students come to understand what it means to respect, understand, and value diverse culture” (p. 53). (Gutstein et al., 1997) have proposed a model of culturally relevant mathematics teaching that incorporates both the reality of school reform in school mathematics and the critical, cultural promise of a culturally relevant pedagogy for diverse student groups. While their study focused on the content area of mathematics, one of the model’s components can be implemented in any subject area, and for any age group: building on students’ informal and cultural knowledge. This component of the model suggests the need for “greater acknowledgment and incorporation of students’ community and culture in the reform practice of building on students’ informal knowledge” (Matthews, 2003, p. 64).

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICE- STRATEGIES FOR C.H.A.N.G.E

Culturally responsive teaching can help teachers form positive relationships with students of all backgrounds (Edwards & Edick, 2013). By building positive relationships within the classroom, teachers can connect with all students to support their academic success. These positive educational experiences can motivate and increase students’ self-efficacy (Edwards & Edick, 2013). Teachers can implement the culturally responsive teaching by the C.H.A.N.G.E. strategy shown in Figure 4. This strategy was adapted from the seven principles of culturally responsive teaching (Gary Howard Equity Institutes, 2010). When implementing culturally responsive teaching practices teachers get to know and understand their students’ backgrounds and cultures. Compassion and Caring is the first component of the strategies for C.H.A.N.G.E in culturally responsive teaching. Teachers communicate their expectations and encourage and support each student (Gary Howard Equity Institutes, 2010). They provide feedback and foster a classroom community that promotes positivity, kindness, and compassion. Some examples of compassion and caring are morning meetings, personalized greetings, good news, and welcome-back postcards (Kriete & Davis, 2016).

The next step in the strategies for change is to hear what your students are saying, listen, and get to know your students and peers. Talk to your students and let them share what they wish you knew (Schwartz, 2016). Provide students with opportunities for classroom discussions on educational topics that affect them and their daily lives. This leads us to the next step: to appreciate and acknowledge everyone and their differences. This can be done by creating daily lessons that include a variety of cultures. Also, providing students with children’s literature, as well as virtual trips which, allows them to explore different cultures and regions all over the world. The fourth step in strategies for C.H.A.N.G.E. is learning new concepts. Teachers need to infuse teaching strategies that support culturally responsive teaching and learning. One example of this is a morning meeting. The morning meeting concept helps create a responsive classroom that builds a sense of community while improving students’ self-confidence (Kriete & Davis, 2016).

The four components of a morning meeting are as follows: greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message (Kriete & Davis, 2016). These four components help to improve social-emotional learning with students and foster a learning environment that builds self-awareness. Guidance is the fifth step of strategies for C.H.A.N.G.E. in culturally responsive teaching. In this step, teachers, parents, and students bridge the gap to create a positive classroom and school climate where each student is valued. Teachers can begin community building by creating a user-friendly classroom website. Teachers can start by familiarizing their students with the website and letting their students take part in the website.

Other ways to bridge the gap are holding family nights at the school or sending home family projects to complete with one another. Opening the lines of communication between the parents and the school can foster a positive attitude towards learning for both students, parents, and teachers. Finally, the last step in

strategies for C.H.A.N.G.E. is energy and enthusiasm for learning. When teachers make learning enjoyable, students are energized and eager to learn. Teachers can provide energy and enthusiasm through art and music. By providing classroom supplies and resources representing different cultures, students may feel valued and respected within their classroom environment. Some of these supplies could include multicultural crayons and paints or songs from different countries. When teachers incorporate culturally responsive teaching strategies into their classrooms, the outcome can be both a rewarding and positive experience for all members of the school community. Through culturally responsive teaching, teachers provide experiences that promote students' strengths and differences to meet all their learners' needs. Also, teachers, parents, and community members can become active participants in the education process when they are given an equal opportunity.

IMPLEMENTING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) aims to ensure success among all students represented in the classroom. Irvine and Armento (2001) assert that this can be accomplished through support such as respect for students' cultural backgrounds, making meaningful connections to the curriculum, engaging in appropriate communication, and implementing effective instructional strategies. By seeking out literature containing diverse characters, specifically those represented in the classroom, students will feel more accepted, appreciated, and validated. Robbins (2001) found that the students connected with the culturally relevant texts in their ELA class, which led to increased engagement in the classroom.

Gay (2010) suggests that four main components of CRT need to be considered: caring, communication, curriculum, and instruction. These four components are listed in Figure 5. Educators show they are caring when they seek out instructional materials that represent the cultural and racial diversity that is present in the classroom. Additionally, these culturally competent teachers acquire a sound knowledge base about their students, which they view as an amoral mandate for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gay 2010; Bonner, Warren, & Jiang, 2018). Effectively communicating with students is essential in the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Teachers need to find the best ways to communicate with their diverse students whether that be through literature, conversation, or activities. Making curriculum relevant to the students is critical, if teachers want their students to demonstrate success. Teachers should seek out multicultural curriculum materials and "accurately recognize the worth of the knowledge various ethnic groups have contributed" (Bonner et al., 2018, p. 702). Kieran & Anderson (2019) suggest that culturally responsive pedagogies "prompt educators to design instruction from the perspective of students' diversity as strengths rather than deficit" (p. 1). Gay (1995) refers to the use of a symbolic curriculum. Some examples of symbolic curriculum include images, symbols, icons, and mottoes, which teach students knowledge, skills, morals, and values. Bulletin boards, images throughout the classroom, and trade books that are on display share with students and other guests to the classroom what is valued. Students learn important things from items displayed in the classroom. As such, students come to expect certain images, value what they see, and devalue what they do not see (Gay, 1995). It is important to realize that although students may identify with one culture, his/her background may be of several cultures.

When the children see their cultures presented in a positive light in the classroom and school community, the students' demeanor changes. Students feel accepted and appreciated. Students feel more appreciated when the teacher incorporates their individuality into the lessons. In a first grade classroom, the teacher incorporated many different cultures into her daily teaching practice. This led to the students being more compassionate towards others and better understanding their classmates. Finally, the instruction delivered by teachers must also vary to ensure that students with diverse learning styles are not left behind. Teachers must create a safe learning space for the instruction (Gay, 2010). Bonner et al. (2018) found in their study that teachers could not only impart information to their students but also learned a great deal from them. The teachers in the study commented that their students' lives and stories have "enriched [their] teaching and [their] attitudes toward all cultures" (Bonner et al., 2018, p. 707). This indicates that culturally responsive teaching practices are mutually beneficial for teachers and students. Furthermore, teachers

expressed their satisfaction with how open-minded their students became due to the diverse backgrounds, which enhanced the learning environment for all students (Bonner et al.,2018).

When teachers use real-life examples and try to connect to the students' interests in the classroom, students are more engaged and feel more connected to their schools. Several pathways can be utilized when embedding culturally responsive practices into your classroom. These pathways include: instructional inclusion, environmental inclusion, teaching cultural figures, teaching the historical struggle, equity monitoring, and family and community engagement. Figure 6 shows how these pathways can be incorporated into your teaching practice.

When looking at the topics/choices through instructional inclusion, teachers could incorporate diverse topics and characters from various backgrounds in their classroom libraries for independent reading, use authentic texts as instructional texts, and incorporate projects based on literature.

If you are considering environmental inclusion, you could incorporate book title pictures in your room/school, and use bulletin boards to promote learning about diverse people, cultures, and holidays. Figure 7 and Figure 8 model different examples of a prominently displayed bulletin board in the hallway for all students to see daily. Additionally, using authentic representative literature during read-alouds, opening/closing lessons, and capitalizing on student interests also fits into this pathway. Finding books written by authors from diverse backgrounds would benefit students when considering literature to implement.

When teaching about cultural figures, using a variety of books about those individuals is very helpful. Students can compare and contrast how the authors portray the individuals, and they can also compare the information that is included in each book. Once students become knowledgeable about certain individuals, they could also construct their book. Figure 9 shows an example of a third grade research project. Each student was allowed to further research an African American of his/her choice after learning about several during class. The students read books and showed video clips about many individuals who have made a difference in the world. Students were then able to select one of the individuals already studied, and further their knowledge, or they were given the choice to learn about someone new.

Books about the civil rights movement, slavery, World War II, and immigration could all be used when discussing historical struggles. Sharing non-fiction and historical fiction is beneficial for students, so they can see recurring themes. Equity monitoring refers to providing access to rich materials to all students. Whether the materials are provided by the district through the curriculums used, or materials that teachers purchase, or use from the public libraries, teachers need to make conscious decisions on what materials are being utilized in the classroom.

Literature can be incorporated when involving families and the community as well. Schools can host literacy nights, and ask parents and community members to be guest readers. The books that are shared on those evenings could include non-fiction books about upcoming holidays, and also include diverse characters. Additionally, schools can host book walks, where students and their families would walk through an outdoor space, or a designated area in the school reading a book together.

We will investigate how each of these pillars can be implemented through literature. Books are widely available to teachers of any age range through school and public libraries. Teachers can access these books through digital downloads or by borrowing the hard copy from the local library. The authors used a combination of these methods to expose their students to various culturally responsive books. Students were excited to know that the books came from the local library, and wanted to visit the library to see what other offerings were on the shelves. The students felt a connection to the library because they felt that the library celebrated their individual cultures since the institution carried books about them.

Although teachers must adhere to a curriculum that is laid out, teachers can decide how they will meet the needs of the students in the classroom and have some control on which resources to implement. Having said this, teachers must be mindful of the cultural needs in the classroom, and see to it that all students are represented when creating lessons. By doing this, students will become more engaged in the lessons. The researchers spent time investigating a variety of children's literature to find books that represented their diverse classrooms. Students were excited to see many of these books for the first time, and were instantly engaged in the lesson because they felt a connection to the literature. Whether it was because they

recognized themselves as the characters or there were familiar settings or words, the students felt a sense of belonging.

The researchers made it clear to the students that time would be spent on several books over some time, so that if a student did not feel represented on one day, they were aware that there were several other opportunities to engage with literature. Setting the tone from the beginning was very helpful because the students needed to know that this was a unit, not just a single lesson. Students appeared excited each day throughout the unit to see if their culture would be represented that particular day. Additionally, when certain cultures were represented, the researchers had the option to encourage the students to take on a teaching role, and share their personal experiences with their peers. This opportunity gave reluctant learners something to get excited about, and made the students more active in their learning. Students gained an appreciation for their classmates that they may not have had in the past. Once the books were shared and students had the opportunity to share their personal experiences, students were broken into groups to complete group work. Students could continue to learn more about the shared cultures, or they could work collaboratively to learn about others that were not discussed or represented in the classroom. The majority of the groups chose to do a combination of the options. They wanted to learn more about their own personal cultures and then compare them to cultures they had not previously heard about. By engaging in this particular assignment, students were able to become leaders when discussing their own culture, and engaged participants when learning about other cultures.

When choosing the books to implement in the classroom, the researchers spent time evaluating the diversity in their own classrooms as suggested by Hramiak (2015) and Wiens (2015). From there, time was spent reviewing lists from multiple websites to see which books were highly recommended for our particular age range. After seeing several titles mentioned numerous times, the researchers borrowed these books from the library and then shared them with the students. We felt that the books selected fairly represented the cultures in our classrooms, as well as some of the cultures that were not visible. We wanted students to know that they represented some of the cultures, but there are many more. We believe that this process ignited some curiosity among our students because many wanted to visit the school library and the public library to see what other offerings were available. Parents also connected with the researchers to inform them that their student was so excited to learn more about their culture and those of their classmates.

By incorporating literature with characters from a diverse background, students will see the greatness of his/her culture, which will in turn build up the students' self-esteem and confidence (Bonner et al., 2018). Furthermore, Siwatu (2006, 2007) found that CRT pedagogy is manifested when teachers provide examples from students' cultures and to make learning more relevant to their backgrounds and experiences. Cruz, Manchada, Firestone, and Rodl (2019) concluded that teachers had a challenging time building cultural connections. In their study, the lowest mean scores were in areas involving specific cultural knowledge, such as how a student's culture contributed to math and science (Cruz et al, 2019). By locating content specific picture books, and other types of literature, some teachers' self-efficacy in teaching culturally relevant pedagogy might be strengthened. Whether a classroom is diverse or not, it is important to teach about cultural diversity (Byrd, 2016). Additionally, when teaching about cultural diversity, teachers would be remiss to not include information about current issues of inequities (Byrd, 2016). Children as young as preschool have been found to respond positively when taught about bias (Bigler & Wright, 2014; Coughran, 2012; Durden, Escalante, & Blich, 2015). In establishing a culturally responsive learning environment, teachers reduce the threats related to cultural stereotypes and lower expectations of diverse learners (Gay, 2002; Steele, 2010). Therefore, the following books represent a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

An initial step in implementing culturally responsive practices is acknowledging that there is a need for it. Culturally relevant pedagogy empowers students in all facets of education: intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically (Ladson-Billings, 2009). While it appears that emphasis is placed on race, culturally relevant pedagogy lays a foundation for all students to reach academic and cultural success (Ladson-Billing, 2009). Furthermore, teachers need to self-reflect and acknowledge the identities of each

student in their classroom (Wiens, 2015). Once they have acknowledged their students' specific needs, the CRT teaching planning can begin (Wiens, 2015). They can use their resources from student and staff knowledge to working outside of the building with community members (Wiens, 2015).

Through culturally responsive teaching, teachers are meeting the learning needs of culturally diverse students (Gay, 2010). Teachers are modeling and facilitating experiences that are respectful of the various groups and cultures (Gay, 2010). They are providing resources that help students learn and build on their strengths. Students feel welcome, build confidence, and accomplish tasks, which may help them in their future educational endeavors. By exposing students to culturally responsive teaching, this may help them to view topics from multiple perspectives and show empathy and compassion when making decisions.

Teachers can use classroom space such as bulletin boards to increase cultural differences that are present in the classroom and the school. Additionally, teachers can invite families to share information about their cultures, while showing families what is currently taking place in the school setting. Lastly, teachers of both preschool and elementary classrooms can share literature with diverse characters as well as diverse authors. All of these suggestions can be implemented with ease. By raising cultural awareness from a young age, students will be immersed in a setting where they will experience cultural and academic success.

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APPENDIX: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Marley Dias, an 11-year-old, was tired of reading books about white boys and their dogs. She decided to do something about it. She started a book drive, and only wanted to collect books where African American girls were the main characters.

Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History, Vashti Harrison, 2017: The author provides information about 40 influential black women who broke barriers to make the world better for future generations. Each woman discussed in the book has contributed to the betterment of the world.

Teachers could use this book at any time of the year, and read about one woman each day. Students could select which woman they want to hear about, or the book could be read in order.

Malala's Magic Pencil, Malala Yousafzai, 2019: Malala wrote this book about her own life and how she stood up for the girls' rights. As a Muslim, she was not granted to the right to an education. She fought for her right, as well as the rights of other young girls. Teachers could use this book to show how children worldwide live in different circumstances, and not all students come from the same backgrounds. As an extension, students should be allowed to think about something they see as unfair, and how they would change the circumstances.

Dear Santa, Love, Rachel Rosenstein, Amanda Peet, 2015: This book chronicles the efforts of a young Jewish girl, who wants nothing more than to celebrate Christmas. After many mishaps, she learns that Hanukkah is a special holiday too.

Teachers could read this book during the holiday season to show students that there are holidays other than Christmas. Students can learn some of the traditions of Hanukkah, and if there is a student who does celebrate Hanukkah, he/she could share some of the traditions with the class.

Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story, Reem Faruqi, 2015: Lailah is a new student in America. She is finally old enough to observe the fasting during her holiday of Ramadan. Lailah fears that her classmates will not understand why she is fasting. Through the help of her teachers and librarian, Lailah is able to explain the holiday and what it means to her classmates. Teachers could use this book to address diversity as well as holidays celebrated around the world. Students can identify similarities and differences among the holidays they celebrate with the holiday of Ramadan.

All Are Welcome, Alexandra Penfold, 2018: This book provides a great message to start the school year, or as a read aloud after a long break. The book expresses that all students, regardless of background, are welcome in the school. The illustrations contribute to the words in the book beautifully.

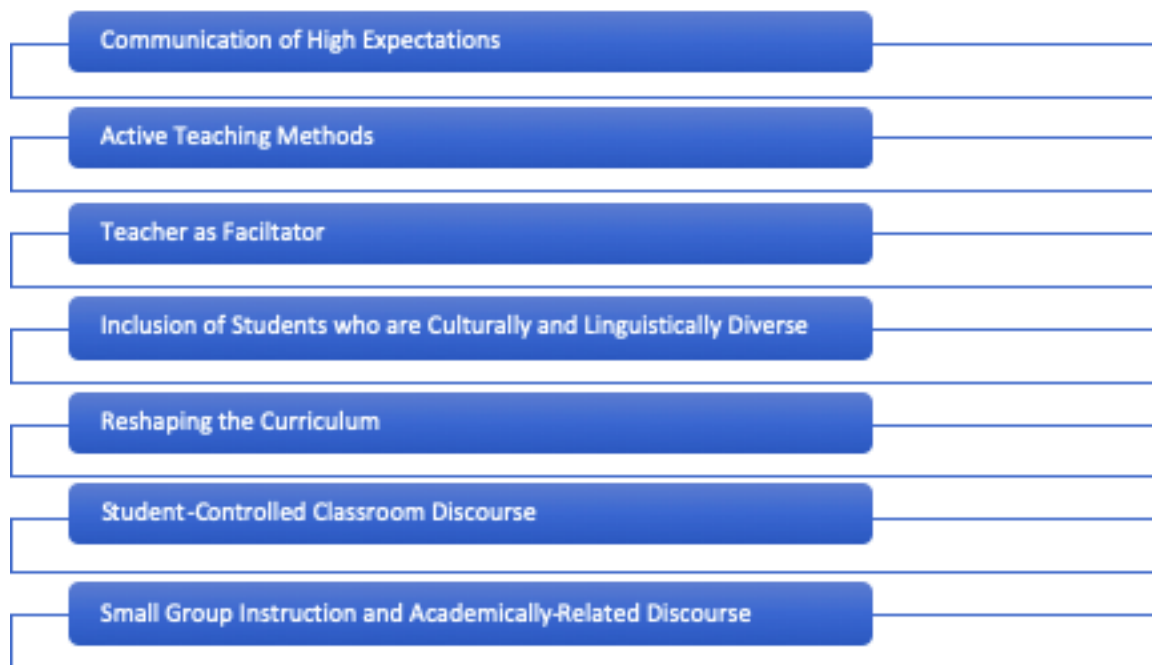
Teachers could share this book many times throughout the year. This book capitalizes on the diverse nature of classrooms today, making all children feel welcome and special. The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher (Family Fletcher Series), Dana Alison Levy, 2015: This series is about a family of 2 dads and 4 active boys. Each boy in the family is easy to relate to, and experiences issues just like any other student would.

Teachers could use this book to show that families can be structured differently. Not all families have a mom, a dad, or even 2 parents. Students will be able to make connections with the characters in the story who range in age from 6-12.

Hector: A Boy, A Protest, and the Photograph that Changed Apartheid, Adrienne Wright, 2019: Hector is a young Black South African boy engaging in a peaceful protest in South Africa when he loses his life. The students were protesting against a law that all classes be taught in Afrikaans, which is the language of the White government.

Teachers could use this book to discuss government and relationships between white and black people. Students can share their opinions on language and their relationships with people who appear different from themselves.

FIGURE 1
SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING



Ladson-Billings, 2005

FIGURE 2
WORK SAMPLE FROM AN 11-YEAR OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT FROM THE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SOCIAL STUDIES ASSIGNMENT

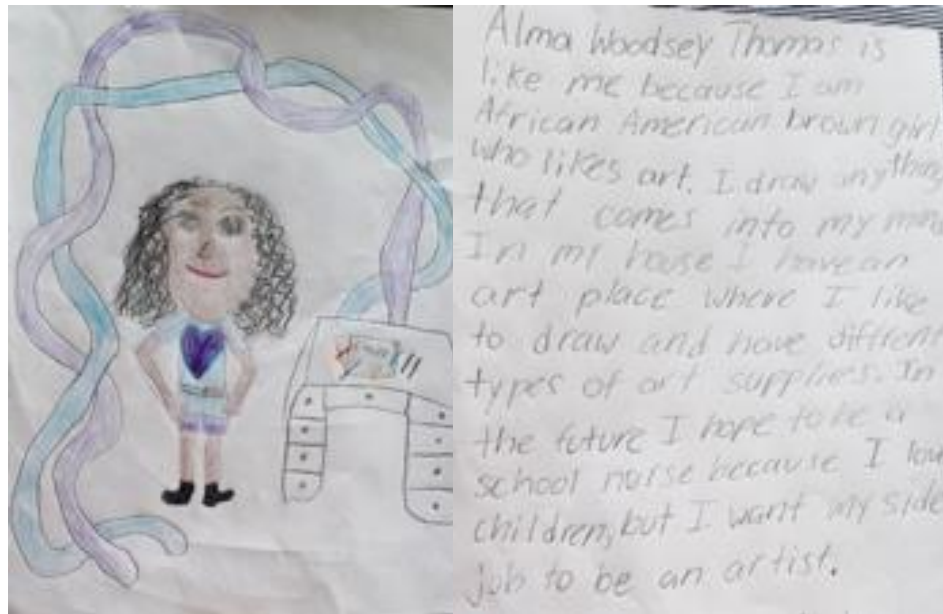


FIGURE 3
WORK SAMPLE FROM AN 11-YEAR OLD CAUCASIAN STUDENT FROM THE SAME CLASS

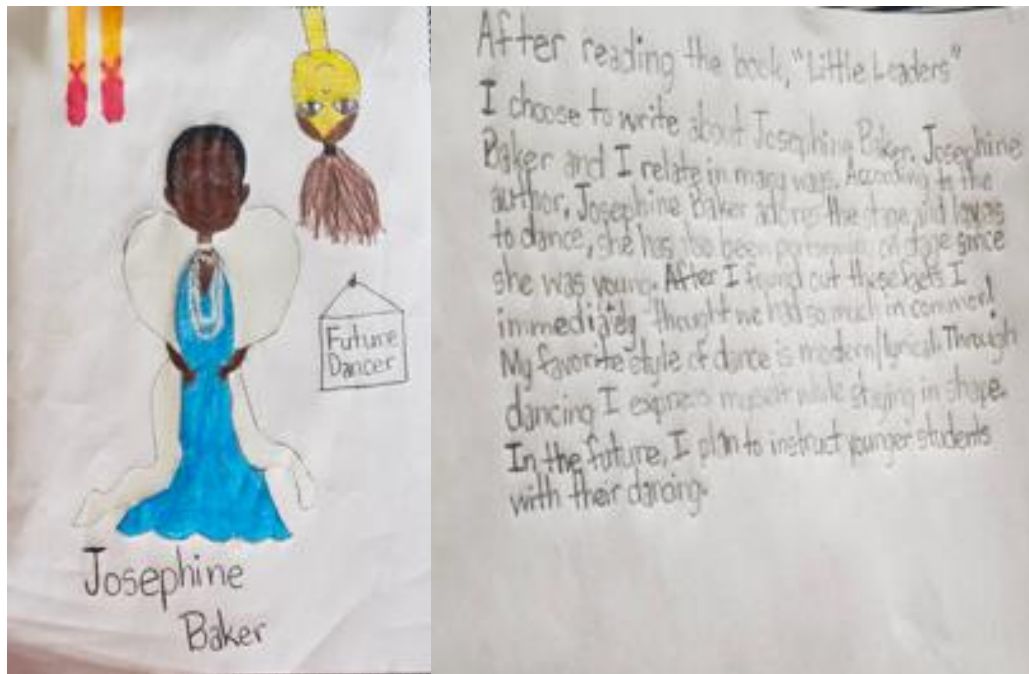
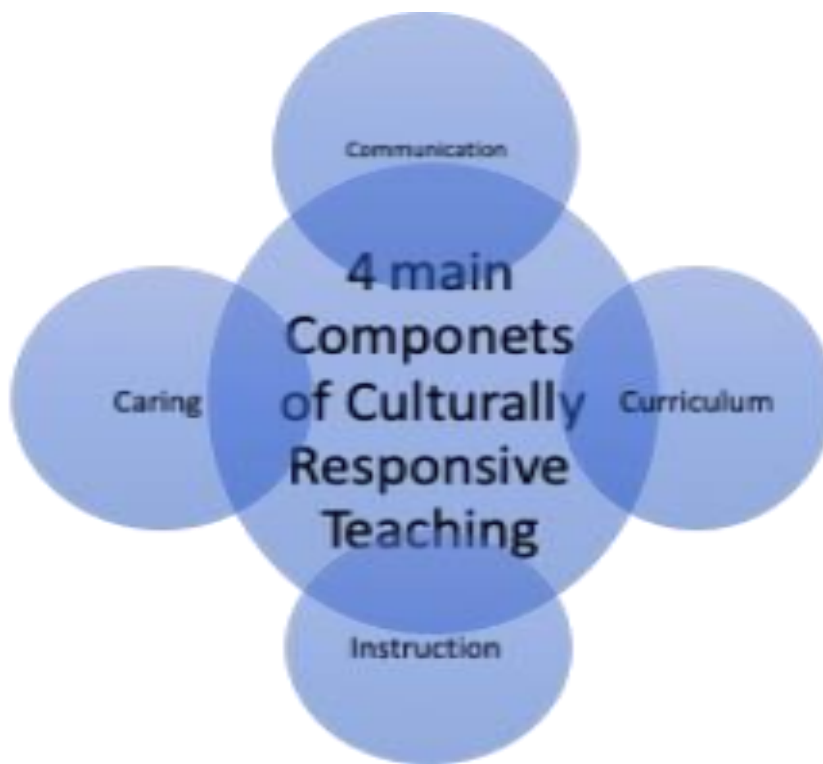


FIGURE 4
STRATEGIES FOR C.H.A.N.G.E. IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING. THIS STRATEGY WAS ADAPTED FROM THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

| |
|--|
| C - Compassion and caring |
| H - Hear what your students are saying, listen, get to know your students and peers |
| A - Appreciate and acknowledge everyone and their differences |
| N - New concepts |
| G - Guidance- Bridging the gap between parents, teachers, and students |
| E - Energy and enthusiasm for learning |

Gary Howard Equity Institutes, 2010

FIGURE 5
FOUR COMPONENTS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING



Gay, 2010

FIGURE 6
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PATHWAYS: OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN EDUCATION



King, 2017

FIGURE 7
EXAMPLE OF A BULLETIN BOARD OR HALLWAY DISPLAY



FIGURE 8
THE SAME BULLETIN BOARD/HALLWAY DISPLAY CHANGED FOR ANOTHER MONTH OF CELEBRATION AND RECOGNITION



FIGURE 9
EXAMPLE OF STUDENT WORK ON CULTURAL FIGURES

Which school did they attend and what did they study? What job did they start off as having?

Later on after the age of 12 she was sent back to her father she was an excellent student, she participated in drama club, debate club, and student council, in a news club speaking to the press. She won a full ride scholarship to Tennessee State University. The following year she was invited to the White House conference on Youth.

Accomplishments- What is your contributor most known for? Also, tell about any awards your contributor may have received.

Oppain was crowned Miss Fire prevention by WWRB, a local Nashville radio station, was hired to read afternoon news on WWSB, she became Miss Nashville she became a star she was noticed in many channels she graduated in Baltimore, Maryland she did movies won many awards got her own T.V. network also books and her own show. She is none

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