

ENHANCING TEACHER PREPARATION: FIRST-YEAR TEACHER USE OF  
CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

A Dissertation by

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## DEDICATION

To my wife, Joni, and my children, Kylie and Dylan

In memory of my grandfathers, Peter C. Jantz and Peter T. Neufeld

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## ABSTRACT

While the cultural landscape of society is becoming more diverse, the teaching population continues to remain largely white and female. Teacher preparation programs must prepare future teachers for the diversity with which they will work and training in culturally relevant pedagogy provides teachers with skills necessary for working with diverse student populations. This qualitative case study investigated how two cohorts of students from Bethel College, a small, liberal arts college on the plains of Kansas, implemented the constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. The constructs investigated included: reflective practice, cultural literacy, building a community of learners, respect for diversity culturally relevant instructional methodology, and high expectations. Six graduates, including elementary and secondary teachers, and their mentors/principals were interviewed. The teachers were additionally observed. All other graduates of the program from the same time frame were invited to participate in an open-ended online survey. The findings indicated that although graduates saw some success in their use of culturally relevant pedagogy, some changes in their teacher education program could enhance graduate effectiveness. One such finding was that “Generation Y” teachers’ views of diversity are different than preceding generations and generational differences must be taken into consideration in teacher training programs.

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## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Throughout history inequities between groups of people have been well documented, from the early treatment of Christians to the anti-Semitic treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany (Muller-Doohm, 2005; 2007; Wild, 2005) to the glass ceiling experienced by females in the corporate world (Vernet & Butera, 2005). The term *social justice* was first expressed by Luigi Taparelli, an Italian Catholic priest and philosopher, around 1840. In the late mid-1900's political philosopher John Rawls added to this discussion, drawing upon the ideas of Bentham and Mill, Locke, and Kant (Behr, 2003). In educational settings, teaching that is inspired by social justice has been referred to by many names, one of which is culturally relevant pedagogy, the aim of which is to ensure that all students achieve high levels of learning (Villegas, 2007).

Since the 1950's, with the *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* U.S. Supreme Court decision and the Civil Rights Movement, much emphasis has been placed on the equitable treatment of minority groups (Ferber, 2007; Hamm, 2001). The inequities brought to the fore in that court case and other events of that time period highlighted disparities between the treatment of various groups of people. Although progress has been made, there continues to be concern that more needs to be done (Ferber).

The education system, as shown through *Brown vs. BOE*, is not immune to the effects of inequalities in the treatment of various groups. Education advocates, politicians, and communities at large continue to struggle with issues of social justice and inequities in the treatment of diverse groups of people and research was replete with examples of inequitable treatment of children in schools based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, religion, language, and sexual orientation (Choules, 2007).

All persons and institutions in education, from early childhood programs to P-12 programs to teacher preparation programs, share in the responsibility of overcoming these inequities. In the age of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), educators have been faced with not only providing equal educational opportunities to children, but are further expected to demonstrate equality of results (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). To that end, P-12 school curricula began to focus heavily on content, specifically reading and mathematics. However, the overall focus of NCLB continues to be on all children and thus the emphasis in teacher education programs has been toward ensuring that teachers understand and help all children be successful.

Demographic information indicated that P-12 student populations were becoming more diverse. At the same time, demographic information indicated that candidates entering teacher education programs were becoming more homogenous (Bennett, 1995; Jordan, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Zimpher, 1989). According to the U. S. Census Bureau in a survey initially reported in April 2004, there were 6.2 million teachers in the U.S. Of those, 71 percent were women and of the 6.2 million, 17.3 percent were historic minorities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Ladson-Billings, however, stated “students of color compose at least half of the population in the largest 25 cities in the United States” (p. 230). Ladson-Billings noted the impact of external forces on the educational enterprise and how demographic and cultural mismatches between teachers and P-12 students created additional challenges when preparing prospective teachers. Ladson-Billings further noted that “higher birthrates and increasing immigration in the Latino/Latina/Hispanic and Asian Pacific Islander populations guaranteed a rise in the numbers of students of color” (2005, p. 230). An early study by Ogbu (1987) showed that this “cultural mismatch” between teacher and student most negatively impacted the academic performance of African-American and Hispanic students. “[This study] invariably call[ed] for restructuring of

teacher preparation programs so that prospective teachers [had] skills, attitudes and knowledge to meet the challenges of culturally diverse school environments” (Phuntsog, 1999, p. 1). Ware (2006) further described the cultural mismatch between the school culture and the culture of the student, additionally describing the negative impact that this had on student achievement.

Ladson-Billings (2005) suggested that educational institutions, including higher education teacher preparation programs, perpetuated the cultural mismatch between P-12 teachers and students. Grant and Gillette (2006), while noting the importance of the teacher candidate selection process in higher education, focused also on the importance of the knowledge base for an effective teacher, including culturally responsive teaching, necessary for all teachers regardless of their work with students of color. Grant and Gillette stated:

To be ‘culturally responsive’ means that effective teachers must not mouth the words; rather, they must

- Believe that all students can achieve and hold high expectations for all learners.
- Build a ‘community of learners’ in the classroom and connect with students’ families.
- Be learners themselves and vary instruction to meet the needs of students.
- Know that students have a wealth of skills and knowledge and use these in teaching.
- Be willing to be introspective about themselves and their teaching, monitor their beliefs and actions for bias and prejudice, and be unafraid to teach about the ‘isms’

(p. 294).

In support of Grant and Gillette, Au (2006) stressed commitments that unite the work of implementing culturally relevant pedagogy: fostering social justice; maintaining and enlarging student’s competence in their culture and language; connecting home and school experiences;

seeking the academic success of all students, specifically students of color; and valuing the knowledge that is found in student's language and culture. Ladson-Billings (1995) wrote:

[a] next step for positing effective pedagogical practice is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate (p. 469).

Ladson-Billings further posited that "culturally relevant teaching is distinguishable by three broad propositions or conceptions regarding self and other, social relations, and knowledge" (p. 483). In each instance a strong knowledge of self was seen to be valued. Finally, Ladson-Billings suggested that instead of adding courses in multicultural education and human relations that categorize diverse learners as *other*, teacher preparation institutions should instruct candidates in culturally relevant pedagogy, designed to "problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society" (p. 483).

#### Background to the Study

With the rise of NCLB, school districts are experiencing increased accountability for student learning (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). In the past, teachers and administrators provided equal education opportunity, but more recently had to demonstrate equality of results. As such, schools and districts had to ensure that all subcategories of students were able to succeed at proficient levels. With accountability at high levels, beginning teachers had to demonstrate that they had the ability to help all students in their classrooms, regardless of their ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, academic ability, or family structure, be successful. Thus, teacher preparation institutions were required to make every effort to ensure that their

program completers had the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work with all children.

Teacher education programs were becoming the focus of national discussions on student achievement (Grant & Gillette, 2006). As noted by Grant and Gillette:

What we lack is research on the effectiveness of programs, especially when our candidates enter teaching positions. We need to know what happens when they come face-to-face with students, families, and communities beyond student teaching and implement that which they learned through the programs we designed. We need to know how they interpret the notion of culturally relevant teaching and how that notion is connected to student achievement (p. 298).

Study by Ladson-Billings (1995) further suggested that additional research in the area of teacher effectiveness and culturally relevant pedagogy was necessary.

The Bethel College Department of Teacher Education prepares teachers for licensure in 14 initial endorsement areas: art, biology, chemistry, elementary education, English, German, health, history and government, mathematics, music, physical education, physics, Spanish, and speech/theatre. Programs in adaptive special education can be added to an existing endorsement. To be eligible to receive a recommendation for licensure from Bethel College, candidates complete a sequence of courses designed to enable the candidate to be an effective teacher. Table 1 lists these courses, shows whether a field experience component is embedded in the course, and provides an overview of the focus of each course. In addition to the courses listed in Table 1, candidates are required to complete courses in their field of study, including a content specific methods course (in some instances, candidates were enrolled in programs which required two or more content specific methods courses). Candidates seeking a license in elementary education are required to complete multiple courses in methodology, each of which requires a field

component and are not listed on Table 1. The courses listed in Table 1 reflect only those courses that are required of all candidates in the Bethel College Teacher Education Program.

Table 1

Bethel College Teacher Education Curriculum

Course Name	Field Experience Required	Emphasis
EDU 101, Early Field Experience	X	Age
EDU 210, Introduction to Infants, Children, and Youth with Special Needs	X	Exceptionalities
EDU 255, Introduction to Education		History, sociology, and philosophy
EDU 300, Media and Computers for Educators		Pedagogy
EDU 310, School and Community <sup>a</sup>	X	Cultural, racial, socioeconomic, gender, and religious
EDU 325, Methods of Teaching	X	Pedagogy
EDU 345, Behavior Management		Behavior management
EDU 353, Psychological Foundations of Education		Theory
EDU 460/470/475, Student Teaching	X	Clinical Practice

<sup>a</sup>This course met the Bethel College core requirement for Cross-Cultural Learning (CCL). “The cross-cultural learning requirement is designed to prepare students for working and living in a diverse and global community by exposing them to a cross-cultural experience in a culture significantly different from their own. This requirement is a college-level, guided, reflective experience in which students meet the people of another culture within their social and physical environmental context. The involvement in another cultural setting is extensive enough that students are challenged to see their own experience through different cultural lenses. This experience should raise students’ consciousness to the possibilities of reconciliation among peoples” (Bethel College, 2008, p. 47-48).

Bethel College Teacher Education programs are accredited by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher



Education (NCATE). The most recent accreditation visit was held in February, 2005. NCATE (2002) Standards 1, 3, and 4 specifically address candidate performance. Those standards state:

Standard 1: Candidates' preparing to work in schools as teachers or other professional school personnel know and demonstrate the content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates meet professional, state, and institutional standards.

Standard 3: The unit and its school partners design, implement, and evaluate field experiences and clinical practice so that teacher candidates and other school personnel develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn.

Standard 4: The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. These experiences including working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools (p. 10).

Results of this accreditation visit showed all standards were met and there were no areas for improvement in candidate knowledge and preparation. The faculty in the Bethel College Teacher Education Program felt confident that candidates completing the program had the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all children learn as demonstrated by program completer performance on the Principles of Learning and Teaching test, which was required for licensure. Thirty of the 35 program completers, from 2007 to 2009, took the assessment with an average score of 177.47 out of 200. The Kansas state required score for licensure was 161. One hundred percent of these 30 program completers met the required score, all but one on the first attempt. The range of scores for these program completers was 161 to 200. When considering the

“Students as Learners, Diverse Learners” sub-section of the test, two program completers fell below the average performance range and two scored above the average performance range as reported by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) score reports for each individual program completer. Likewise, when considering the “Reflective Practitioner” sub-section of the test, four program completers fell below the average performance range and three scored above the average performance range as reported by ETS score reports for each individual program completer. These two sub-sections were highlighted because they directly relate to the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy.

Less data were available on program completers’ implementation of the demonstrated knowledge after their graduation. As a result, especially in light of the aforementioned research focus on teacher preparation institutions, the faculty in the teacher education program was interested in gaining an understanding of their program completers’ use of culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom. It was believed that an understanding of the impact of their work would aid in improving the preparation of teachers at this institution. Research (Grant & Gillette, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995) in the area of culturally relevant pedagogy and teacher preparation, and the results of that preparation, demonstrated a need for further study. Grant and Gillette discussed “the need for research on and dissemination of results about the effectiveness of our teacher candidates” (p. 292). For the purposes of my research, I selected to conduct a qualitative case study of two cohorts’ (students graduating in 2007-08 and 2008-09) of program completers use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their first and second years of teaching.

Over the past number of years, the cultural landscape of schools has been changing. Noted previously (Bennett, 1995; Jordan, 1995; Zimpher, 1989), although the teaching population was remaining relatively homogenous, the student population was becoming more

diverse. This diversity included racial, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic status, English language learners, and students with disabilities (K. M. Brown, 2006). As such, it became increasingly important that teacher education programs prepare pre-service teachers for student diversity in their classrooms (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000; Phuntsog, 1999; Tatto, 1996). Many teacher education programs focused on a one-course program of study in multicultural education (Causey, et al., 2000; Colville-Hall, MacDonald, & Smolen, 1995; Phuntsog, 1999; Tatto, 1996) and several studies (Colville-Hall, et al., 1995; Groulx, 2001) specifically called for experience in working with diverse populations as part of teacher training in order for that training to be most effective. Further, research (McAllister & Irvine, 2002) pointed to the need for teacher preparation programs to examine teachers' beliefs and dispositions regarding diversity and teaching. Research (Causey, et al., 2000; Colville-Hall, et al., 1995; Garmon, 2004) also suggested that teacher preparation programs needed to explore candidate experiences prior to entering a teacher education program, stating that a program can only go so far in influencing beliefs and dispositions about diversity. Finally, self-reflection was considered to be important for teachers and especially those working with a diverse student population (Colville-Hall, et al., 1995; Groulx, 2001).

Bethel College is a four-year, private, liberal arts college in south central Kansas affiliated with Mennonite Church USA. It offers teacher licensure programs in 14 content areas: art, biology, chemistry, English, German, health, history and government, mathematics, music, physical education, physics, Spanish, and speech/theatre. According to the Bethel College catalog, Bethel seeks "to be a diverse community of learners, committed to the search for authentic faith and empirical understanding" (Bethel College, 2008, p. 23). Further, Bethel's programs are informed by four central values: an ethic of discipleship, an ethic of scholarship, an

ethic of service, and an ethic of integrity. “Distinctive elements of a Bethel education include requirements in cross-cultural learning, peace, justice and conflict studies, and religion” (Bethel College, 2008, p. 7). Consistent with the Bethel mission and tradition, the Bethel College Teacher Education Department created a conceptual framework providing focus for the teacher education programs. This conceptual framework was developed with broad input from the larger community and was supported by research. Central to the beliefs espoused in the conceptual framework was the belief that the basis for effective teaching was reflection, specifically within content knowledge, professional knowledge and pedagogy, and beliefs (Bethel College Teacher Education Department, 2004). The conceptual framework guides instruction within the program, as well as program completer competencies.

Over the years, Bethel College Teacher Education Program completers have been hired to teach in a variety of venues. In addition to providing data on the placement of program completers found later in this study, I have provided demographic data on the candidates’ originating district. In an effort to help the reader fully understand the contextual factors underlying use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their first and second year of teaching, this reference is being provided here. Data retrieved from the Kansas State Department of Education website (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009b), the School Tree website (SchoolTree.org, 2009), and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) website (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009) provided the following contextual information.

Eighteen candidates completed the Bethel College Teacher Education Program in the 2007-08 school year. Of the 18, 15 were female and three were male and 17 listed themselves as Caucasian and one as African-American. Eleven of these program completers entered the teaching profession upon program completion and subsequent licensure; of the remaining seven,

two entered graduate school, two entered voluntary service, two were otherwise employed within a school setting, and one was employed outside a school setting. For purposes of this study, the 11 program completers employed as teachers served as the 2007-08 cohort (all eleven were white and female). Prior to entering college, five of the 2007-08 cohort graduated from a high school in a small, rural district; three of the cohort group graduated from a high school in a mid-sized, rural district; and three of the cohort group graduated from a large, urban district. Nine of the cohort entered Bethel College from Kansas, and one each came from Minnesota and California.

Seventeen candidates completed the Bethel College Teacher Education Program in the 2008-09 school year. Of the 17, seven were female and ten were male. Sixteen of the 17 listed themselves as Caucasian and one as Asian. Ten of these program completers entered the teaching profession upon completion and licensure; of the remaining seven, two entered voluntary service, two entered graduate school, two were employed within a school setting, and one was employed outside a school setting. For purposes of this study, the ten program completers employed as teachers served as the 2008-09 cohort (four were male and six were female; all were white). Prior to entering college, six of the 2008-09 cohort graduated from a high school in a small, rural district; two of the cohort group graduated from a high school in a mid-sized, rural district; one of the cohort group lived in a suburban district and completed home school; and one graduated from a large, urban district. Nine of the cohort entered Bethel College from Kansas, and one came from Nebraska.

Within these two cohorts of students, not including the cohort member who was home schooled, the smallest high school from which a cohort member graduated had 65 students enrolled during the 2008-09 school year. All of students who attended this school in 2008-09 were white, with a 14% free and reduced lunch count, and 55.4% male to 44.6% female ratio

(SchoolTree.org, 2009). The largest of the high schools represented from these two cohort groups had an enrollment of 1619 students during the 2008-09 school year. Of these students, 57% were Caucasian, 31% were African-American, 7% were Hispanic, 4% were Asian Pacific Islander, and 2% were American Indian Alaskan Native. Thirty-four percent of these students received free or reduced lunch and 53.8% were male and 46.2% were female (SchoolTree.org).

### Problem Statement

Resistance to multicultural education, diversity and social justice is sometimes found embedded in institutional organizational structures, found in organizational policies and as such, multicultural education, diversity and social justice policy reflect the views of the dominant culture of the organization (Greenman & Kimmel, 1995). For example, teacher education program assessments that restrict access to programs could be biased and subsequently, restrict access to programs for students against whom these assessments demonstrate a bias.

On an individual level, however, research has demonstrated a need for the inclusion of multicultural education, social justice, and culturally relevant pedagogy in teacher education programs as noted previously. Although teacher education programs professed to have a commitment to the teaching of social justice and to the preparing of teacher candidates to teach a diverse P-12 population, early research showed that little had been done to demonstrate that commitment. Phuntsog (1999), in his meta-analysis of the literature, stated the following:

Though teacher diversity programs may, at their best, barely scratch one's deeply rooted cultural beliefs, students are expected to undergo profound personal transformation that may then enable them to question and challenge their long-held views about school teaching and learning. The current conceptualization of teacher preparation for cultural diversity seems to exist on an optimistic plane that assumes that a single dose of

multicultural education is effective to prepare the teaching force to narrow the academic achievement and drop-out gaps between students from dominant and dominated cultures (p. 2).

Other research (Tatto, 1996) claimed to the contrary and suggested that “teacher education faculty and enrollees across the programs studied subscribed to ideals of social justice and fairness in regard to teaching diverse learners” (p. 155).

Although researchers disagreed on the ability and success of teacher preparation programs to effectively demonstrate that teacher candidates possessed appropriate attitudes, dispositions and beliefs regarding cultural diversity, multicultural education, and social justice, research demonstrated agreement on the importance of these beliefs (Causey, et al., 2000; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Phuntsog, 1999; Tatto, 1996) and self-reflection (K. M. Brown, 2006; Causey, et al., 2000; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Phuntsog, 1999; Tatto, 1996). Found in his literature review, Phuntsog (1999) listed the following as critical elements for culturally responsive practices: (1) culturally literate, (2) self-reflective analysis of one’s attitudes and beliefs, (3) caring, trusting, and inclusive classrooms, (4) respect for diversity, and (5) transformative curriculum to engender meaning (p. 10).

The theme that seemed to generate further discussion was the question of how these beliefs and dispositions become manifested into action in the teacher’s classroom. As noted by Tatto (1996), “It is less clear how they translate these ideals into their views concerning curriculum design and implementation, assessment of student progress, and classroom and school organization” (Tatto, p. 155). Thus, the question became: How do teachers’ knowledge, understanding and beliefs of social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy translate into action in the P-12 classroom setting? In presenting this research, I described how Bethel College

Teacher Education program completers used culturally relevant pedagogy in the P-12 classroom setting.

### Purpose of the Study

Bethel College and the Bethel College Teacher Education Program have ascribed to the ideals of social justice, making this concept an important component of the curriculum. Data collected on completers of this program indicated that upon completion, program completers accepted teaching positions in a variety of venues: in Kansas, and out of state; urban, suburban, and rural; private and public. The institution gathered data on completers of the program as they concluded their first years of teaching and this data suggested that completers of the program were demonstrating success. Data were not collected, and subsequently less information existed, regarding graduates' actual use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their educational practice. Thus, the purpose of this study was to describe how Bethel College program completers used culturally relevant pedagogy in the P-12 classroom setting. This study reflects the empirical research on social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy that called for additional study on the manifestation of social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom setting. Through this research study, the literature on the topic of culturally relevant pedagogy has been enhanced.

### Significance of the Study

Research is replete with data demonstrating the importance of beliefs and dispositions toward social justice on a teacher's classroom setting and instruction (Causey, et al., 2000; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Phuntsog, 1999; Tatto, 1996). However, what was less clear, and has little research data, was how these beliefs were then translated into action in the teacher's classroom. Thus, the outcome of my research has provided researchers and higher education



institutions a description of how concepts of social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy taught in a teacher education program were manifested in the P-12 classroom. This research has added to the literature on effective implementation strategies of culturally relevant pedagogy in the P-12 classroom setting.

### Overview of Methodology

I selected a qualitative case study as the paradigm for this research. A qualitative case study method was chosen because of its ability to provide a rich source of contextually-based data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2001). A key concern of qualitative case study “is understanding the phenomenon of interest from participant’s perspectives, not the researchers” (Merriam, p. 6). Further, Merriam noted there was confusion surrounding case study; some suggested that case study was the unit being investigated, while others stated that case study referred to the type of study conducted. Merriam put this conflagration out as she noted, “The case then, could be a person such as a student, a teacher, a principal; a program; a group such as a class, a school, a community; a specific policy; and so on” (p. 27). Through this research, I was able to describe how completers of the Bethel College Teacher Education Program used culturally relevant pedagogy in their Pre-K-12 classroom settings, using case studies to allow the data to present itself and tell its story. “Case studies can illustrate certain topics within an evaluation, again in a description mode” (Yin, 2003, p. 15). As such, I was able to provide rich descriptions of my topic within its real-life context. Merriam added that the case study method could help to point out the complexities of a given situation, making causal relationships difficult to establish. As methods for this case study, I used an initial survey, semi-structured interviews, and observations in an effort to answer my research questions.

### *Research Questions*

This research study sought answers to the following overarching question: How do completers of the Bethel College Teacher Education program use culturally relevant pedagogy in the P-12 classroom? As a result this research was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the program completer describe his or her use of culturally relevant pedagogy in his or her classroom?
2. How does the program completer's description of culturally relevant pedagogy translate into action in his or her classroom (curriculum design and implementation, student assessment, and classroom organization)?

### *Objectives*

The objective of this research was to:

1. Describe how Bethel College Teacher Education program completers' knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy was manifested in his or her P-12 classrooms.

### *Delimitations*

This study was delimited to one institution of higher education, Bethel College, and was further delimited to two cohorts of Bethel College Teacher Education Program completers.

### *Assumptions*

I made the following assumptions regarding this study:

1. A teacher can impact students through their attitude, beliefs, and actions.
2. Teachers want to successfully teach all children in their classrooms.
3. Bethel College teacher education program completers understand the concepts of social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy.

### *Definition of Key Terms*

The following terms were identified as important and central to this research and common definitions were provided, most often based on the work of authorities and researchers in the field.

#### *Candidate*

Candidate referred to those individuals who are “admitted to, or enrolled in, programs for the initial or advanced preparation of teachers” (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002, p. 53).

#### *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Culturally relevant pedagogy referred to the “modification of classroom instruction to respond positively to home culture of students” (Phuntsog, 1999, p. 2). Culturally relevant pedagogy was also termed in the research as: culturally compatible, culturally congruent, and culturally responsive.

#### *Diversity*

Diversity referred to the “differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area”(National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002, p. 53).

#### *Program Completer*

Program completer referred to those individuals who completed a program for the initial or advanced preparation of teachers. Program completer was also termed completer.

### *Multicultural Education*

Multicultural education was “an educational strategy that incorporates the teaching of students from diverse backgrounds, human relations, and the study of ethnic and other cultural groups in a school environment that supports diversity and equity” (J. A. Johnson, Dupuis, Musial, Hall, & Gollnick, 2008, p. 114).

### *Social Justice*

“Social justice is conceptualized contextually rather than definitively, because social justice has different meanings and significance in diverse circumstances” (Behr, 2003, p. iii). A broad definition of social justice moved from a legal definition of the term justice toward a sense of fairness as captured by the following statement: “Empowering weaker persons and groups of persons with the means to protect their own rights and to advance their own interests” (Behr, p. 12). At Bethel College, social justice was referred to under the broader heading of “peace, justice and conflict resolution”.

### *Warm Demander*

Warm demander was a term used to “identify teachers who were successful with students of color because the students believed that these teachers did not lower their standards and were willing to help them” (Ware, 2006, p. 435).

### Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation includes six chapters. Chapter One of this dissertation provided the background to the study, the problem statement, and the significance of the study. Also included in Chapter One was an overview of the methodology to be used, including the research questions, objectives, limitations and delimitations, researcher assumptions, and a definition of the key terms. Chapter Two provides the conceptual framework, detailing the guiding belief of

this study; the theoretical framework, outlining the theoretical lens through which this research was framed; and a summary of the empirical research surrounding the topic. Chapter Three provides an in-depth look at the research design and methodology for this research. Included in this chapter are a review of the research perspective, purpose of the study, and the research questions and an initial discussion of the context, the role of the researcher, the units of analysis, and the data collection methods. Methods used to analyze the data and to monitor the quality of the data are also included in Chapter Three. Chapter Three of this research concludes with a summary.

In Chapter Four I tell the stories of the six program completers, which I interviewed and observed in this study, and I present an overview of the data collected from the on-line survey. In Chapter Five I provide an overview of my data analysis and present my 18 findings. In Chapter Six I present six conclusions, along with seven implications.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Through the literature review, I was able to lay the foundation for my research by articulating my conceptual framework; providing an understanding of my worldview. Chapter two then, includes my conceptual framework and is followed by my theoretical framework of a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, specifically the school of thought constructed through the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings. I next provide an overview of the search criteria and methodology I used to identify, assimilate, summarize, and synthesize the empirical research. I then provide a brief synthesis of the empirical research, focusing on the major themes found in the empirical research on culturally relevant pedagogy and the six constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy which I incorporated into my study. In the concluding section of this chapter, I summarize and articulate the interconnectedness of my conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and the literature reviewed.

#### Conceptual Framework

This research was grounded in three core beliefs: (1) Teachers want to successfully teach all children in their classrooms, (2) Teachers understand culturally relevant pedagogy, and (3) Teachers use instructional pedagogy that matches their beliefs. These beliefs lent themselves well to the theoretical framework that I selected for this study: theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. Theory of culturally relevant pedagogy stems from the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings. This theory aptly provided a theoretical lens through which to look at my research: Bethel College program completers' use of culturally relevant pedagogy in the Pre-K-12 classroom setting. Further, I chose to look at this research through a social constructivism epistemology and through this perspective, "truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of

our engagement with the realities of our world. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (Crotty, 2003). I sought understanding of my research through socially constructing meaning, my own as well as the participants in this study.

Further, I believe that in sharing my worldview with the reader of this research my biases become exposed and a fuller understanding of this research might occur. As I chose to conduct a qualitative case study, I needed to call attention to my worldview so that this worldview did not become a significant source of distortion to my research (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993). I brought to this study over 25 years in education. I had four years of experience teaching in a small, Southwest Kansas town and one year of teaching in a large urban school district. Following that, I worked for three years as a school administrator (assistant principal) in the same urban school district in both middle school and high school settings. Subsequently, I worked in this school district at the district central office as school improvement coordinator and at the same time worked through Kansas North Central Association with school districts across the state of Kansas on school improvement efforts. I held these positions for four years. Following that experience and an additional year as an assistant principal in the aforementioned district, I became the director of teacher education at Bethel College, a small, private, liberal arts college associated with Mennonite Church USA, in South Central Kansas. I have been in this position of preparing teachers for the past 14 years. Additionally, I served on a local school board two terms, for a total of eight years.

### Theoretical Framework

As I began considering a theoretical framework to guide my thought in conducting this study of first- and second-year teacher use of culturally relevant pedagogy, I was initially drawn to the work of Argyris and Schön (1974): theories of action (theory-in-use and espoused theory

as well as single-loop and double-loop learning). My early searches of literature, using this theory as a guide, introduced me to the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995, 1999, 2000, 2005) and her foundational work on a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. This work provided me with an alternative theory that fit within my research perspective more appropriately and thus, I selected culturally relevant pedagogy theory to serve as my theoretical framework.

Ladson-Billings (1995) initially noted the need for a cultural relevant theory as she considered the growing trend toward a disparity between “racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics” between teachers and their students as well as the “continued failure” of minority students. She argued that other theories did not aptly include thoughts of pedagogy beyond psychological models, that “sociolinguistic explanations have failed to include the larger social and cultural contexts of students” (p. 483), and that “cultural ecologists have failed to explain student success” (p. 483).

Ladson-Billings (1995) did consider Black Feminist Theory, through the work of Patricia Hill Collins, as she considered her own theoretical framework for her study. She fully described her work through this lens, specifically focusing on the four broad propositions of Black Feminist Theory: “(1) concrete experience as a criterion of meaning, (2) the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, (3) the ethic of caring, and (4) the ethic of personal accountability” (p. 471). Through her reflections of her work within these four propositions, Ladson-Billings began to realize that the work of Collins did not allow her “to theorize about teacher’s practices,” pedagogy, and as a result, she began to “generate theory as [she] practiced theory” (p. 474), a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Through her work, Ladson-Billings (1995) posited that culturally relevant teaching must meet three criteria. Prior research, she noted, provided evidence of continued school failure in



helping African-American children learn, and she further noted that researchers had not provided a consistent single explanation for this failure. She additionally noted that little research has been conducted on the *success* of schools in working with African-American children. Thus, she argued that no theory of pedagogy can be considered legitimate if it does not take into account that students must achieve. Thus, culturally relevant teaching must demonstrate an ability to develop students academically.

Ladson-Billings (1995) further noted a trend in the research that indicated that academically successful African-American students were successful at the expense of their psychosocial and cultural well-being. She noted that research indicated that successful minority students “acted white” and were as a result ostracized by their minority peers. She suggested that this creates a dilemma for African-American students and thus, culturally relevant teaching must demonstrate a willingness to support and nurture cultural competence.

Finally, Ladson-Billings (1995) noted, “Not only must teachers encourage academic success and cultural competence, they must help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (p. 476). She argued that to do this, teachers must first be able to recognize social inequities as well as their causes. She noted that research did not indicate that teachers, at least within teacher preparation institutions, were prepared with the skills needed to do this. The third of her criteria of culturally relevant teaching then was the development of critical or sociopolitical consciousness.

To this end, and within the creation of a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (1995) noted that three broad propositions emerged from her research:

- “the conceptions of self and other held by culturally relevant teachers,
- the manner in which social relations are structured by culturally relevant teachers,

- the conceptions of knowledge held by culturally relevant teachers” (p. 478).

Ladson-Billings provided definition of these propositions based on her own research of exemplary teaching working with African-American students.

Specifically, Ladson-Billings (1995) noted that these teachers were able to separate themselves from the norm, at least as far as previous research had indicated, by believing their students capable of demonstrating academic success; seeing their pedagogy as continually evolving, not static; seeing themselves as part of their communities; and using their teaching to give back to their communities (conceptions of self and others). She also noted that these teachers “maintain[ed] fluid student-teacher relationships, demonstrated a connectedness with all of the students, developed a community of learners, and encouraged students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for another” (social relations). Finally Ladson-Billings, while providing evidence from her research, noted consistency between effective teachers using culturally relevant pedagogy and their conceptions of knowledge. She stated that these teachers viewed knowledge as constructed and that it must be “viewed critically” (p. 481). She noted that these teachers used scaffolding to help their student learn and that they were passionate about their content. Finally, Ladson-Billings noted that these teachers used multiple forms of assessment so that students could demonstrate their excellence.

I utilized this theory of culturally relevant pedagogy to provide the theoretical framework for my study and strands of these propositions can be found within all aspects of my research. Given that the graduate participants in this study were in either their first or their second year of teaching, I sought to find answers to questions of how they described their use of culturally relevant pedagogy and further whether that was consistent with their actions in the classroom as perceived by their mentors and principals or observed by me.

Specifically, within my review of the literature, I identified six constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy: reflective practice, cultural literacy, community of learners, respect for diversity, culturally relevant instructional methodology, and high expectations. I found that each of these constructs fit well within the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy as I have illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Relationship Between “Theory of” and “Constructs of” Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Construct	Conception of Self and Others <sup>a</sup>	Social Relations <sup>a</sup>	Conceptions of Knowledge <sup>a</sup>
Reflective Practice	X		
Cultural Literacy	X		
Community of Learners		X	
Respect for Diversity	X		
Culturally Relevant Instructional Methodology	X	X	X
High Expectations	X	X	X

<sup>a</sup>These headings refer to the three broad propositions described through the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995).

#### Search Criteria

The purpose of this literature review was to identify, assimilate, summarize, and synthesize the empirical research related to the use of culturally relevant pedagogy in the Pre-K-12 classroom setting. To aid in this search I used the following research questions that guided my search strategy:

1. How are theories of action, social justice, and culturally relevant pedagogy related?

2. What is the influence of theories of action on teachers' use of culturally relevant pedagogy in the P-12 classroom setting?
3. How has culturally relevant pedagogy been used in the P-12 classroom setting?
4. What empirical research has been conducted on culturally relevant pedagogy using theories of action?

Again, I would like to note that although I initially conducted my search utilizing a theories of action theoretical framework, the research led me into a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, which I then used for this study.

I used several databases to help me in my search for answers to these questions. In my initial search, I utilized Google Scholar because of its ability to provide me with a broad range of literature related to this study. I selected Proquest Cambridge Scientific Abstract (CSA) because of the user-friendly approach to searches and the indexed databases in Education and Sociology. Further, within CSA I utilized the Education: A Sage Full-Text Collection and the Sociology: A Sage Full-Text Collection databases because of the easily accessible full-text documents. Finally, I selected FirstSearch also because of the broad range of materials available. Specifically within FirstSearch, I used ArticleFirst, ECO, and WorldCatDissertations to give me a more comprehensive listing of research materials available.

I organized my search of the empirical research based on the primary keywords of theories of action, social justice, beginning teachers, culturally relevant pedagogy, and dispositions. Maintaining the broad umbrella of research viewed through a theories of action lens proved to result in little empirical research and as such, I widened my search on the keywords. Within culturally relevant pedagogy, I began to also consider research found using the keywords of the many alternate names (culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive teaching,

culturally responsive), multicultural education, and diversity, all consistent with a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy framework. For beginning teachers I expanded my search to include pre-service teachers and teacher preparation. In addition to the keyword of disposition, I also used teacher beliefs.

For consideration to be used in this literature review, I restricted my selected research to studies published in a peer-reviewed journal. Further, I selected research based on an empirical research design related to the keywords listed previously. To aid in the summarization and the synthesis for this literature review, I utilized a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to identify conclusions and findings from each of the articles and then I searched for themes that evolved.

#### Review of Literature

The following themes emerged from my synthesis of the empirical research:

1. It is difficult for teacher preparation programs to have an influence on long-held beliefs and practices in the space of one course.
2. Programs for the preparation of teachers must be well-articulated and coherent, yet sufficiently infused with discord or risk as to promote growth.
3. Programs for the preparation of teachers must include pre-service experiences in working with diverse populations.
4. Programs for the preparation of teachers must specifically address instructional strategies aimed at helping all children learn.
5. Self-analysis and reflection are important components of effective multicultural training.
6. Prior experience in working with diverse populations appears to be a factor in future knowledge of and working with diverse populations.

7. Culturally responsive pedagogy is important in working with all students, and more specifically, diverse populations.

Much of the literature included in this review stressed the importance of teacher training programs and as such, the first four themes carried this as a central thread. Teacher beliefs about diversity were critical to the effective instruction of all children (McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Tatto, 1996; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Teacher education programs, as they were structured (Garmon, 2004; Tatto; Villegas & Lucas) were not enough to have significant influence on the long-held beliefs, attitudes and dispositions of teacher candidates (Causey, et al., 2000). Greenman & Kimmel (1995) further suggested that the college course evaluation structure forced professors to not push students toward critical thinking and reflection and thus changes to college curricula may have been difficult.

To be effective in preparing teachers for a diverse student population, research suggested that diversity must become the central issue in teacher education programs (Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995). Additional research proposed that these teacher education programs must be well-articulated and coherent (Tatto, 1996), spanning more than just one semester (Causey, et al., 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). McAllister and Irvine (2002) and Greenman and Kimmel (1995) also suggested that these programs must be supported, yet sufficiently infused with discord, as to promote growth and change in teacher candidates. Villegas and Lucas suggested that issues of diversity in the curriculum must move from being peripheral to being central.

Also noted in the literature was the importance of pre-service experiences in multicultural or diverse settings (Causey, et al., 2000; Fuller, 1994; Groulx, 2001; McAllister & Irvine, 2002). Research indicated that teacher education programs need to incorporate these planned experiences into their programs for their teacher candidates. Fuller further stated that these

experiences provided an experiential reference for teacher candidates. McAllister and Irvine suggested that these pre-service experiences helped the teacher candidates develop a sense of empathy for working with diverse populations. Dispositions, beliefs and prior experience played an important role in the development of social justice thought (Garmon, 2004).

A final theme regarding teacher education programs noted was in regard to the importance of specifically instructing teacher candidates in the use of multiple strategies for working with diverse populations. Rodriguez (1995) noted that when the teachers included in her study were taught how to incorporate diversity into their teaching, they did. Other research showed that teacher candidates benefited from courses in multicultural education, but without specific training in pedagogy, they did not possess the ability to select appropriate teaching strategies for the situation (Fuller, 1994).

A second disposition that was found in the literature to be important for multicultural training was reflection and self-analysis. The ability to reflect on effective multicultural practice was found consistently in the research (Causey, et al., 2000; Garmon, 2004; Greenman & Kimmel, 1995; McAllister & Irvine, 2002). Garmon stated that this self-reflection demonstrated having an awareness of one's own beliefs and attitudes; this structured reflection was critical in the development of an understanding and awareness of social justice issues (Causey, et al.) and practice in appropriate multicultural education practice (Greenman & Kimmel).

Prior experience in working with diverse populations appeared to be a factor in knowledge and understanding of diversity and the ability to work with diverse populations (D. F. Brown, 2004; Garmon, 2004). Specifically, Groulx (2001) noted two characteristics in her research for predicting success in urban teaching: (1) candidates over the age of 30 and (2) candidates with life experiences in urban settings. Causey et al. (2000) noted prior life

experiences in a multicultural environment as an important component to ensuring that training took hold in teacher candidates.

The most predominant theme found through this literature review was in the area of culturally responsive pedagogy (D. F. Brown, 2004; Cooper, 2003; Rodriguez & Sjoström, 1995). Fuller (1994) reporting on the work of Jacqueline Jordan Irvine provided the following list of specific strategies for effectively working with minority students:

- Have appropriately high expectations for students;
- Employ many different instructional materials and strategies;
- Use interactive rather than didactic methods;
- Use the students' everyday experiences in an effort to link new concepts to prior knowledge;
- Help students become critical thinkers and problem solvers (p. 276).

Ware (2006), using the language of “warm demander” effectively described similar characteristics of teachers shown to be effective in their instruction of minority children. Villegas and Lucas (2002) suggested six “stands” in essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions for teaching diverse learners: sociocultural consciousness, an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds, commitment and skills to act as agents of change, constructivist views of learning, learning about students, and culturally responsive teaching practices.

Further investigation into the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy revealed six constructs, which effective teachers of diverse students employed. Those constructs were: reflective practice, cultural literacy, community of learners, respect for diversity, culturally relevant instructional methodology, and high expectations.



In a general sense, Schön (1987) sought to reconcile, in educational settings, the perfection of theory with the messiness of practice through the art of reflective practice. As noted by Fuller (1994), research indicated the continued need for teachers to engage in the practice of reflection while working with children from diverse backgrounds. Drawing on his literature review, Phuntsog included self-reflective analysis within his “Five-Spoked Wheel of Culturally Responsive Teaching” (1999, p. 10). McAllister and Irvine (2002) further noted that although the focus of their research was on the role of empathy in teaching culturally diverse students, their research supported the value of self-reflection as a strategy aimed at fostering appropriate multicultural educational practice. Stated in another manner, Grant and Gillette additionally found that “to be ‘culturally responsive’ means that effective teachers must not mouth the words; rather, they must be willing to be introspective about themselves and their teaching” (2006, p. 294).

To be effective in their use of culturally relevant pedagogy, research indicated that teachers need to have knowledge about cultural diversity beyond awareness of and a general recognition of differences that existed between differing groups of people (Gay, 2002). Gay further stated that teachers must acquire “detailed factual information about particularities of specific ethnic groups” to bring the content alive for the children (p. 107). Additional research (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) suggested that teachers should expand their sociocultural consciousness, that is their thinking, behaving, and being as influenced by micro-cultures, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and language. Ladson-Billings (1995) described three broad propositions, creating a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, the first of which was “conceptions of self and others” looking at our own values and beliefs as well as looking at the values and beliefs held by others. Ladson-Billings found that successful teachers held strong in

their beliefs regardless of the opinion of others. In more general terms, Grant and Gillette (2006) suggested that teachers using culturally relevant pedagogy needed to be learners themselves, know their students, and use their knowledge in the classroom. The idea that teachers should be culturally literate was drawn from each of those specific components and additional research (Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995) suggested that teachers must demonstrate an attitude of respect for cultural differences, teachers must demonstrate knowledge of students' culture and background, and teachers must make connections between home and school. Drawing on the work of others, Phuntsog (1999) described this critical condition of culturally responsive practice as being culturally literate. Fuller (1994) noted that teachers must recognize the changes in student populations and that to effectively educate all children, teachers must be prepared to work with diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic students. Finally, Au and Blake (2003) noted that pre-service teachers who differ in background from their students would benefit from programs designed specifically to prepare them to work in a diverse community while Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran (2004) stated that a lack of multicultural competence can create and expand difficulties experienced by the novice teacher.

Research on culturally relevant pedagogy demonstrated that important to the effective teaching of all children was the need to build a community of learners (Au, 2006; D. F. Brown, 2004; Gay, 2002; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995). Rodriguez and Sjostrom noted through their research that teachers must have "skills in building cultural bridges between home and school (p. 307) and Au suggested that teachers should seek to connect home and school experiences. Gay stated that in culturally responsive teaching, building community was an essential element. In his qualitative study of 13 urban educators, Brown found the creation of caring learning communities to be an important component of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Specifically he noted that “a community of learners is created so students feel like a family” emerged as a common theme within his research (p. 276). Additionally, Grant and Gillette concurred and stated that effective culturally responsive teachers should work to build a community of learners in the classroom and connect with students’ families. Finally, Ladson-Billings (1995) noted that “the term culturally responsive appears to refer to a more dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture” (p. 467).

The fourth construct identified in the literature was that of respect; respect for cultural differences (Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995) and a respect for diversity (Phuntsog, 1999). Phuntsog stated that “respect for diversity, caring and inclusive classroom, and self-esteem are interdependent” (p. 11), while Rodriguez and Sjostrom, supporting the work of Ana Maria Villegas through their research, identified that an “attitude of respect of cultural differences” was necessary for teachers in a multicultural society (p. 304). Villegas and Lucas (2002) added that teachers in a culturally diverse society needed an “affirming attitude toward students who differ from the dominant culture” (p. 23).

The literature abounded with research on culturally relevant instructional methodology. Grant and Gillette (2006) provided that teachers must be life-long learners and must vary their instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students. Their research, however, called for more study in this arena. Although pre-service teachers were presented with a wide variety of teaching strategies and although these same pre-service teachers benefitted from multicultural courses and field experiences, research (Fuller, 1994) stated that these same pre-service teachers lacked the ability to connect the appropriate teaching strategy with the appropriate environment. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that these same pre-service teachers should be provided with a more expansive look at pedagogy, as well as an introspective view of themselves, so that they could

more adequately help all students experience success. Further research (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) indicated that it would be unrealistic to expect a pre-service teacher to gain the full complement of culturally relevant teaching strategies while in an undergraduate teacher training program, but that these skills only develop with experience. Given this, Gay (2002) noted that “culturally responsive teachers know how to determine the multicultural strengths and weaknesses of curriculum designs and instructional materials and make the changes necessary to improve their overall quality” (p. 108). Finally, research conducted by Phuntsog (1999) showed that “the key to meeting the needs of all culturally different students may lie in developing even more effective culturally responsive teaching strategies that ensure curricular relevance and excellence for all learners” (p. 13).

The final construct of culturally relevant pedagogy supported by the literature was that to be effective teachers of multicultural students, teachers must have high expectations for their students (Fuller, 1994). Au (2006) further suggested that teachers must seek the academic success of all students, and most especially their students from diverse backgrounds. Grant and Gillette (2006) added to this and stated that teachers, to be effective, must believe that all children can learn and further they must hold high expectations for all of their students.

### Summary

Within this chapter, I detailed my conceptual framework, my theoretical framework, and provided a synthesis of the related empirical literature. Set within a social constructivist epistemology, my conceptual framework was grounded in three core beliefs: (1) Teachers want to successfully teach all children in their classrooms, (2) Teachers understand culturally relevant pedagogy, and (3) Teachers use instructional pedagogy that matches their beliefs, their espoused theory and their theory in use are aligned. These core beliefs aligned with my chosen theoretical

framework of a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, which in turn was aligned with the selection of a qualitative case study research design.

There were multiple connections between my chosen conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and the related empirical research as viewed through a social constructivist epistemology. Historically, racism was accepted as a norm, a governing variable if you will. Through the civil rights movement, the governing values changed. Likewise, the role of women in the workplace, as well as the treatment of various religious groups, has seen a shift in recent years. Issues related to social justice, as a conceptual term, were constantly under reflection; the rules and values, the governing values of social justice were constantly scrutinized. The related empirical research showed that to be effective in working with multicultural learners, teachers must reflect on their practice. This construct was supported in my theoretical framework as shown on Table 2. Additionally, the review of the related literature indicated the importance of beliefs and dispositions in the teaching of diverse student populations. The literature further detailed the difficulty that individuals have in changing long-held beliefs. Finally, the literature provided the constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy which I further aligned with a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy on Table 2. Additionally, this theoretical framework aligned well with a qualitative case study design where I observed and described the actions of participants in the study. In Chapter Three I provide a description of the methodology that I implemented in this research.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I explain the research design, methodology and methods that I used for this study. I reiterate my research perspective grounded in a social constructivist epistemology, the purpose of this research, and the research questions. Subsequently, I describe my role as researcher, the units of analysis, my data collection methods and analysis, and I provide a review of how I worked to ensure quality of the research. I conclude with a summary of this chapter and the timeline under which I conducted my research.

#### Research Design and Methodology

Previous chapters of this study provided the background and purpose of this study, the empirical research about culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice in an education setting, and an overview of the theoretical perspective of theory of culturally relevant pedagogy necessary to understand and frame the research. This chapter describes the research design and methodology, including the context of the study, the role of the researcher, the units of analysis, and the data collection methods that I used to conduct the study and answer the previously detailed research questions. In this chapter I also describe the procedures that I used in analysis of the data.

I selected a qualitative case study as the paradigm for this research. A qualitative case study method was chosen because of its ability to provide a rich source of contextually-based data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2001). A key concern of qualitative case study “is understanding the phenomenon of interest from participant’s perspectives, not the researchers” (Merriam, p. 6). Further, Merriam noted there is confusion surrounding case study; some suggested that case study was the unit being investigated, while others stated that case study

referred to the type of study. Merriam put this conflagration out as she noted, “The case then, could be a person such as a student, a teacher, a principal; a program; a group such as a class, a school, a community; a specific policy; and so on” (p. 27). Through this research, I was able to describe how completers of the Bethel College Teacher Education Program used culturally relevant pedagogy in their P-12 classroom settings, using case studies to allow the data to present itself and tell its story. “Case studies can illustrate certain topics within an evaluation, again in a description mode” (Yin, 2003, p. 15). As such, I was able to provide rich descriptions of my topic within its real-life context. Merriam added that the case study method could help to point out the complexities of a given situation, making causal relationships difficult to establish. As methods for this case study I used an initial survey, semi-structured interviews, and observations in an effort to answer my research questions.

#### *Research Perspective*

This research study was grounded in three core beliefs: (1) Teachers want to successfully teach all children in their classrooms, (2) Teachers understand culturally relevant pedagogy, and (3) Teachers use instructional pedagogy that matches their beliefs. These beliefs lent themselves well to the theoretical framework that I chose for this study: a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. Theory of culturally relevant pedagogy stemmed from the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings. Ladson-Billings (1995) posited that there are three criteria necessary for culturally relevant teaching and further provided three broad propositions to guide the theory. This theory aptly provided a theoretical lens through which to look at my research: Bethel College program completers’ use of culturally relevant pedagogy in the P-12 classroom setting. Further, I chose to look at this research through a social constructivism epistemology and through this perspective, “truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of our

world. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (Crotty, 2003). I sought understanding of my research through socially constructing meaning, my own as well as the participants in this study.

### *Purpose of the Study*

Bethel College and the Bethel College Teacher Education Program ascribe to the ideals of social justice, making this concept an important component of the curriculum. Data collected on completers of this program indicated that upon completion, program completers accepted teaching positions in a variety of venues: in Kansas, and out of state; urban, suburban, and rural; private and public. The institution gathered data on completers of the program as they concluded their first years of teaching and this data suggested that completers of the program were demonstrating success. Data were not collected, and subsequently less information existed, regarding graduates’ actual use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their educational practice. Thus, the purpose of this study was to describe how Bethel College program completers used culturally relevant pedagogy in the Pre-K-12 classroom setting. This study reflected the empirical research on social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy that called for additional study on the manifestation of social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom setting. Through this research study, the literature on the topic of culturally relevant pedagogy has been enhanced.

### *Research Questions*

This research sought answers to the following overarching question: How do completers of the Bethel College Teacher Education Program use culturally relevant pedagogy in the Pre-K-12 classroom? As a result and in alignment with a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, this research was guided by the following research questions:



1. How does the program completer describe his or her use of culturally relevant pedagogy in his or her classroom?
2. How does the program completer's description of culturally relevant pedagogy translate into action in his or her classroom (curriculum design and implementation, student assessment, and classroom organization)?

### *Context and Participants*

Merriam (2001) noted that case study knowledge was “more contextual” in that the knowledge derived from our experiences was rooted in the context. “Naturalistic observations take place in the field” (Patton, 2002, p. 262). Thus, the setting for this research was in six classrooms in six distinct districts.

Teacher 1, Molly, taught in an elementary school in a "Large City," defined by SchoolTree.org as “A central city of a 'Core Based Statistical Area' or 'Consolidated Statistical Area', with the city having a population greater than or equal to 250,000” (2009). Teacher 2, Joni, taught in an elementary school located in the "Urban Fringe of a Large City," which was defined by SchoolTree.org as “Any incorporated place, Census Designated Place, or non-place territory within a 'Core Based Statistical Area' or 'Consolidated Statistical Area' of a Large City and defined as urban by the Census Bureau” (2009). Teacher 3, Kylie, taught in a middle school located in a "Rural area, inside a 'Core Based Statistical Area,'" which was defined by SchoolTree.org as “Any incorporated place, Census designated place, or non-place territory within a 'Core Based Statistical Area' or 'Consolidated Statistical Area' of a Large or Mid-size City and defined as rural by the Census Bureau” (2009). Teacher 4, Kathy, taught in a high school located in a "Mid-size City," which was defined by SchoolTree.org as “A central city of a 'Core Based Statistical Area' or 'Consolidated Statistical Area', with the city having a population

less than 250,000” (2009). Teacher 5, Dylan, taught in a high school located in the "Urban Fringe of a Large City," which was defined by SchoolTree.org as “Any incorporated place, Census Designated Place, or non-place territory within a ‘Core Based Statistical Area’ or ‘Consolidated Statistical Area’ of a Large City and defined as urban by the Census Bureau” (2009). Teacher 6, Ken, taught in a high school in a “Small Town,” which was defined by SchoolTree.org as “An incorporated place or Census Designated Place with a population less than 25,000 and greater than or equal to 2,500 and located outside a ‘Core Based Statistical Area’ or ‘Consolidated Statistical Area’.” (2009). Teachers 2 and 5 taught in different districts. Each of these schools was located in the state of Kansas.

Table 3

School Demographics

	School Size	Gender of School Population		Racial Composition of Population <sup>a</sup>					Socioeconomic Composition of Population <sup>b</sup>	
		M	F	C	AA	H	PI	NA	F	R
Teacher 1 (ES) <sup>c</sup>	584	52.9	47.1	58.2	21.1	12.3	3.6	4.8	53.9	13.4
Teacher 2 (ES)	332	54.5	45.5	77.4	3.3	18.1	1.2	0.0	41.2	11.6
Teacher 3 (MS)	405	49.4	50.6	93.3	0.7	3.2	1.2	1.5	7.2	4.2
Teacher 4 (HS)	1768	52.2	47.8	88.1	4.4	3.6	3.2	0.7	3.2	1.1
Teacher 5 (HS)	646	52.8	47.2	91.8	2.3	4.2	0.6	1.1	21.5	4.8
Teacher 6 (HS)	907	49.6	50.4	93.5	2.1	2.4	1.3	.07	8.6	3.6

Note. With the exception of school size, all values are represented as percents.

<sup>a</sup> “C” represents Caucasian, “AA” represents African-American, “H” represents Hispanic, “PI” represents Asian Pacific Islander, and “NA” represents Native American Alaska Native. Percents have been rounded and may not total 100%. <sup>b</sup> “F” represents free and “R” represents reduced. <sup>c</sup> “ES” represents placement in an elementary school, “MS” represents placement in a middle school, and “HS” represents placement in a high school.

Table 3 provides specific demographic data for each of the schools (SchoolTree.org, 2009). The descriptions of these school locations were enhanced in each case study as they are found in Chapter Four. In all instances throughout this document, all participants were referred to by pseudonyms and locations were given fictitious names.

#### *Units of Analysis*

The units of analysis in this qualitative case study were six program completers of the Bethel College Teacher Education Program. These program completers included two males and four females, two teaching at the elementary level, one at the middle level, and three teaching at the high school level. These individuals were selected based on the diversity of the student population with which they work. Schools represented by these individuals are all located in Kansas and were described previously. Five of the graduate participants in the interviews gave permission to interview their mentors or principals and interview data from these individuals were included in the case studies, findings, conclusions, and implications. Of the mentors and principals, two were white, female principals; one was a white, male mentor; and two were white, female mentors. Additionally seven graduates participated in an on-line survey including open-ended questions. These seven participants were all white females. Data collected from the on-line survey were incorporated into the findings, conclusions, and implications.

#### *Role of the Researcher*

Much has been written about the role of the researcher in conducting qualitative research. This written work focused on multiple aspects that the researcher brought to research and as such, guidelines helped to ensure specific criteria were accomplished. The role of the researcher, described in this written work, incorporated the following: researcher communication skills (LeCompte, et al., 1993; Yin, 2003), make explicit any researcher biases (Creswell, 2003;

LeCompte, et al., 1993; The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994; Yin), protection of human participants (Creswell, 2003; LeCompte, et al., 1993; Merriam, 2001) including the guarantee of confidentiality (Creswell), and finally, the role trust plays in data collection (LeCompte, et al.).

As a researcher, I understood that I brought to my qualitative research my own history and experiences, which may have shaped how I interpreted the data that were collected through this research (Creswell, 2003; LeCompte, et al., 1993; Yin, 2003). As such, I attempted to make explicit any possible biases that might have influenced my collection and analyzing of the data. I brought to this experience over 25 years in education, serving as a teacher, school administrator, district school improvement coordinator, school board member, and teacher educator. Given the subject of this research, I believed that these experiences provided me with additional insight into the study. I aimed to employ appropriate strategies to ensure validity and reliability of this research. Further, it was my intent to protect human subjects (Creswell, 2003; LeCompte, et al., 1993; Merriam, 2001) through the establishment of well-constructed protocols, seeking volunteer participants, and following the established guidelines of the Wichita State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which provided oversight of research study. See Appendix A, B, C, and D for participant consent forms. See Appendix E, F, and G for protocols. Participants in this study were guaranteed absolute confidentiality in the publication of the findings and conclusions and were advised of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time.

#### *Data Collection Methods*

For the purposes of this research and in an effort to answer my research questions, I utilized three different methods to gather data. I collected data through an on-line survey instrument, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. As noted by Lincoln and

Guba (1985), in naturalistic studies triangulation of data is important as this provides the researcher the opportunity to validate each piece of evidence against another source. Lincoln and Guba further stated: “No single item of information (unless coming from an elite and unimpeachable source) should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated” (p. 283). Patton (2002) suggested that triangulation of data is important because it serves to increase the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

### *Survey*

McNamara (1994) described the use of survey research and stated that in the case when practitioners conducted survey research in their own organizations, this method was used “effectively (a) to inform their projections for new programs, (b) to help monitor the implementation of a specific decision or new procedure, or (c) to evaluate the results of a promising intervention program currently operating in their organization” (p. 187). For the purposes of my research design, I was most interested in the third option, evaluating results of the Bethel College Teacher Education Program’s efforts in preparing candidates to be effective in utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms upon graduation. The survey, which was comprised of all open-ended questions, designed for this study was conducted electronically using eListen, software designed as a survey recording and reporting system. All program completers, with the exception of the six that were selected to be interviewed and observed, from the 2007-08 and 2008-09 cohort groups were invited to participate. Contact information for one program completer could not be verified and as such, 14 invitations to participate were issued. Seven participants provided survey responses. All of the respondents were white and female. More detail about the administration of this survey is provided in Chapter Four.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

“Much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others” (Stake, 1995, p. 64). As such, I used semi-structured interviews to gain information that was not available to me and to gain information on those things that I was not able to observe directly (Creswell, 2003; LeCompte, et al., 1993). The semi-structured format gave enough structure as to provide similar information from all participants, yet was flexible enough to allow for clarification of points or further exploration on a topic. Semi-structured interviews were scheduled with a purposive sample of six Bethel College Teacher Education Program completers (based on the program completer’s location in a setting providing an opportunity to work with a diverse P-12 student population) from the 2007-08 and 2008-09 cohorts. Semi-structured interviews were also scheduled with three mentors and two principals of the program completers. I did not secure permission from one individual to conduct an interview with either his mentor or his supervisor. Member checking was used to ensure credibility of the data collected. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim and transcribed to a Microsoft Word file.

### *Observation*

Creswell (2003) noted that there can be a number of advantages to observation as a data collection type: (1) the researcher can gain firsthand knowledge and experience with the participants, (2) the researcher can record the information in real time, as the data shows itself, (3) discrepancies can be observed, and (4) observation can be useful when dealing with difficult subject matter. Yin (2003) added that participant observation provides a unique opportunity to have access to information not readily available with other methods of data collection. As noted within the theoretical framework of this research, Argyris and Schön (1974) pointed to the need for direct observation of the behaviors, thus aligning the data collection method with the

theoretical framework. I conducted observations, up to one-half day each, of the purposive sample of program completers, during which time extensive field notes were taken. These observation field notes were then transcribed verbatim and transferred to a Microsoft Word file.

#### *Document and Artifacts*

One additional source of data for this research study that I had anticipated was documents and artifacts that may have existed, which could have provided additional information about the research. “Records, documents, artifacts, and archives—what has traditionally been called ‘material culture’ in anthropology—constituted a particularly rich source of information about many organizations and programs” (Patton, 2002, p. 293). I anticipated that such documents might have surfaced in my study; however none did and so this method was not necessary.

#### Data Analysis

For the purposes of this research study, I primarily gathered data from on-line surveys, interviews, and observations. With the permission of interview participants, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Program completer participants were asked to provide permission to interview either their mentor or their principal as well. Five of the six participants gave permission to interview either a principal or a mentor. Extensive field notes of observations were taken and transferred to a Microsoft Office Word document. Data from the open-ended, on-line survey were compiled by question. Following the transcription of the interviews and the observations, and additionally following the compilation of the on-line survey results, all data were unitized and subsequently imported into the computer software program, Microsoft Office Excel, which aided in coding and sorting the transcribed data. I then attached a theme to each unitized piece of data and began to look for trends, patterns, and relationships that existed in the data, especially as they related to my central research questions. Throughout the process, I

communicated and discussed the findings of my research with my dissertation committee chair to ensure completeness of the data analysis.

### Research Quality

Internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity represent the conventional means for establishing trustworthiness in research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Internal validity has been demonstrated through the use of triangulation of data; reliability, or the extent to which there could be consistency in findings, was shown through explicit detailing of the assumptions and theory, as well as by triangulating data and providing detailed descriptions of the process (Merriam, 2001). External validity, in qualitative research, is under much debate. Lincoln & Guba suggested that within the naturalistic paradigm, questions of external validity used in quantitative research are inappropriate for qualitative research. As such, “Working hypotheses, concrete universals, naturalistic generalization, and user or reader generalizability are discussed as alternative to the statistical notion of external validity” (Merriam).

### *Internal Validity*

Validity in quantitative research answers the question as to whether the research investigated what it was supposed to investigate. In the same light, internal validity in a qualitative study looks at how research findings matched reality; were the research findings congruent with reality? In qualitative research, this has been shown through member checking, triangulation of the data, peer examination, engagement and submersion and by making the researcher’s biases known (Merriam, 2001). In this research, I outlined my beliefs and experiences, in an attempt to be up front about any biases that I may have had. Throughout the interviews and the observations I utilized member checking to ensure the accuracy of the information collected. Further, I triangulated data by using three sources of data: on-line surveys,



interviews, and observations. As a final check on the internal validity of this research, I used peer examination, in the form of my dissertation committee chair and an external reviewer.

#### *External Validity*

As noted previously, external validity or transferability in qualitative study presents unique challenges to the qualitative researcher. Once again, Merriam (2001) provided suggestions for helping qualitative researchers establish external validity: using a multi-site design, providing thick description, and providing modal comparison information. This research was a multiple-case study. I provided rich, thick description of the case studies. Further within the confines of maintaining the confidentiality of the participants, I provided as much information as possible, so that typicality, or modal comparisons, could take place.

#### *Reliability*

In quantitative and in qualitative research, reliability seeks to answer questions dealing with the replication of the study: what is the extent to which the study could be repeated and if repeated, would the results be the same. In qualitative research this poses a problem because “human behavior is never static” (Merriam, 2001, p. 205). As reliability in the traditional scientific sense of the word is difficult to show in qualitative research, Lincoln & Guba (1985) described the researcher’s task as seeking dependability or consistency in the results. Thus, according to Merriam, the researcher should check for reliability, or rather consistency and dependability, through triangulation of the data, peer examination, and an audit trail. As I have mentioned previously, I used triangulation of the data and peer examination in my data collection and analysis. Further, I made explicit my actions throughout the study, including describing in detail the steps I followed for the processes, thus ensuring an audit trail took place.

### *Protection of Human Subjects*

For purposes of this research, I followed all guidelines for research as set forth by the Wichita State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), including the submission of a proposal to that body for review. Research protocols were developed for interviews and observations and those were shared with participants. See Appendix A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. Participants were advised of their rights prior to gathering any data and were asked to sign a formal consent for participation in the research. In the case of the on-line survey, participants were instructed, prior to answering any questions, that by completing the survey they were giving formal consent for me to use their responses. All participants were assured of confidentiality of the data collected and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participation in this study was voluntary.

### Summary

In this chapter, I explained the research design, methodology, and methods that I used for this study. I restated my research perspective that was grounded in a social constructivist epistemology, the purpose of my research, and the research questions I addressed. Subsequently, I described my role as researcher, the units of analysis, my data collection methods and analysis, and a review of how I worked to ensure quality of the research.

This dissertation has been organized into six chapters. Chapter One of this research provided the background to the study, the problem statement and the significance of the study. Also included in Chapter One were an overview of the methodology, including the research questions, objectives, limitations and delimitations, researcher assumptions, and a definition of the key terms. Chapter Two provided the conceptual framework, detailing the guiding belief of this research study; the theoretical framework, outlining the theoretical lens through which this

research was framed; and a summary of the empirical research surrounding the topic. Chapter Three provided an in depth look at the research design and methodology for this research. Included in this chapter was a review of the research perspective, purpose of the study, and the research questions, as well as an initial discussion of the context, the role of the researcher, the units of analysis, and the data collection methods. Methods that were used to analyze the data and to monitor the quality of the data were also included in chapter three. This chapter concluded with a summary.

In Chapter Four I present six case studies, one for each of the six program completers, which I interviewed and observed in this study. I include the results of the on-line survey in Chapter Four as well. In these case studies, I referred to each individual using a pseudonym to protect the identity of the program completer. Locations and schools were also referred to as a pseudonym. In Chapter Five I provide an overview of my data analysis and present my findings. In Chapter Six I present my conclusions, along with my implications for practice and further study.

## CHAPTER 4

### SIX STORIES AND A SURVEY

This chapter is comprised of six case studies and a presentation of the data from an on-line survey. These case studies are provided to look at the graduates of Bethel College and focus on their ability to utilize culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms during their first and second year of practice. The survey results are provided to validate the case studies and to add richness to the stories told. As noted in previous chapters, the demographics of kindergarten to twelfth grade students demonstrate that the population is diverse and is becoming increasingly so each year (Broido, 2004). This diversity impacts teaching and learning and as such, teachers prepared to work with these students must be able to meet the challenges of teaching diverse students and meet these students' needs.

Bethel College is located in North Newton, Kansas, adjacent to the town of Newton and 25 minutes north of Wichita, which is Kansas' largest city. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), North Newton has 1522 residents, 35% of whom are age 65 or older. Fifty-six percent of the residents are female and 44% are male. Ninety-four percent of the population of North Newton is white. North Newton hosts only a handful of businesses, which includes the North Newton city hall and the North Newton post office, all located within one city block. Kauffman Museum and the Bethel College Mennonite Church are located adjacent to the campus. North Newton is largely a bedroom and retirement community, serving as home to the Kidron Bethel Retirement Community. There are no public schools located in North Newton, but the Newton School District includes the North Newton residents. North Newton and Newton are separated by a short-line railroad that runs southeast to northwest. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), there are 17,190 residents comprising the total population of Newton. The median age of

the Newton resident is 39 compared to the median age of 48 for North Newton. Likewise, while 94% of the North Newton population is white, 87% of the Newton population is white. Whereas North Newton hosts few businesses and no public schools, Newton provides services for all needs.

Perhaps the history of Newton can best be told by the Newton Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Bureau (2007) who on their website state:

Follow the famous Chisholm Trail into Harvey County and discover how from 1871 to 1873 Newton came to be known as "bloody and lawless, the wickedest city in the West." In 1872 the western terminal for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway and the railhead for the Chisholm Trail were established here. Newton's early days are filled with tales rivaled only by Dodge City. The Harvey County area boasts one of the largest Mennonite populations in the country. While bonnets, beards and buggies have been forsaken for a more modern lifestyle, the Mennonites today, like their ancestors before them, are warmhearted, courteous and friendly, more liberal than their Amish cousins and well-known for the[ir] hospitality and good [cooking]. The Mennonites left Russia for fear of religious persecution [in the] 1870's. Today, the Mennonite influence is clearly visible. Harvey County is home to nearly two dozen Mennonite Churches, two colleges, a national[ly] recognized mental health center, the Mennonite church USA national headquarters and Mennonite Press. Each was founded by and is supported by Mennonites.

Bethel College is a private, four-year college associated with the Mennonite Church USA. Bethel College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the

North Central Association. Although Bethel College offers the BS, BA, and BSN degrees with 17 majors, qualified students can elect to create an individualized major.

The following demographic information about Bethel College was taken from the National Center for Education Statistics (2010) website based on information provided by Bethel College in their Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (*IPEDS*) report. Ninety-eight percent of Bethel College students receive some form of financial aid. Ninety-five percent of the students are enrolled full-time with 52% of the student population male and 48% of the student population female. Seventy-seven percent of the students reside on campus with the typical student ranging in age from 18 to 22. Seventy-seven percent of the students are white, 10% are non-resident alien, 5% each are Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino, and 1% each is American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or unknown. Eighty-four percent of the students are under the age of 25 and 16% are age 25 and over. Seventy percent of the student population comes to Bethel from the state of Kansas, 24% from other states, and 6% from foreign countries.

The Teacher Education Department at Bethel College is housed in the Division of Social Science and Human Services. The department has two full-time faculty, two part-time faculty employed full-time by the college, and five adjunct faculty teaching courses in the teacher education program. The institution offers licensure programs in art, biology, chemistry, elementary education, English, German, health, history and government, mathematics, music, physical education, physics, Spanish, and speech/theater, as well as an added endorsement in adaptive special education. Programs for licensure at Bethel College are accredited by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

Students enrolled in licensure programs at Bethel are recruited from the Bethel student population and as such the enrollment tends to mirror the overall Bethel population. At any given time, approximately one-fourth of the Bethel College student population is enrolled in teacher education courses.

In order to be recommended by Bethel College for an initial teaching license, students must complete the approved program in their endorsement area. This program includes coursework in their content areas as well as coursework in teacher education. The teacher education coursework requires a minimum of 34 hours (elementary education, art, and music require more hours) in teacher education with a grade of C or better in each course. By design, each student must additionally meet the Kansas required score for the PRAXIS II content test for their endorsement area, and the Principles of Learning and Teaching test (PLT) to be recommended for a license by Bethel. Until 2012, students can add endorsement areas to an existing license by taking and passing the PRAXIS II for the area they would like to add. During the 2008-2009 year, three students took advantage of this option and are currently under contract to teach in the added endorsement area.

The six students highlighted in the case studies completed the Bethel College Teacher Education Program described above and are actively engaged in teaching in a Kansas school. Of this six, four are white females and two are white males. Four went through college as traditional students (18-22 year olds) and two had completed other degrees previously and came back to gain their license to teach. Five of the six graduated from Kansas high schools, although one of those had spent a significant portion of her childhood in another country. One of the students graduated from a high school in Michigan. A more detailed description will be provided in each of the case studies.

As noted in my research design, the case studies are created based on information gained through an observation of the graduate's classroom that lasted approximately one half of a day, an interview with the graduate, and an interview with either the graduate's mentor or principal. In one instance I did not secure permission to interview the graduate's mentor or principal and so that case study has been written using only my own observations and the graduate's interview.

The major focus of the case studies is the graduates' use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their classroom. From the literature review, six constructs supported by the research are the focus of the case studies: (1) Reflective Practice (Fuller, 1994; Grant & Gillette, 2006; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Phuntsog, 1999; Schön, 1987), (2) Cultural Literacy (Au & Blake, 2003; Fuller, 1994; Gay, 2002; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Phuntsog, 1999; Rodriguez & Sjoström, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Weinstein, et al., 2004), (3) Community of Learners (Au, 2006; D. F. Brown, 2004; Gay, 2002; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Rodriguez & Sjoström, 1995), (4) Respect for Diversity (Phuntsog, 1999; Rodriguez & Sjoström, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), (5) Culturally Relevant Instructional Methodology (Fuller, 1994; Gay, 2002; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Phuntsog, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), and (6) High Expectations (Au, 2006; Fuller, 1994; Grant & Gillette, 2006).

Each of the next six sections of this chapter will present the case studies of the six teachers given the pseudonyms of Molly, Joni, Kylie, Dylan, Ken, and Kathy. All names of locations and names of other individuals are fictitious. The final section of this chapter will include a discussion of the results of the on-line survey.



### Case Study One – “Molly”

“I think that this generation, my generation even, doesn’t have a problem with diversity. It’s less of an issue.” This brief statement from Molly seemed to exemplify the tone of my interview with her. Molly demonstrated neither a color blind nor a color conscious attitude with her students, but rather demonstrated a respect for differences among people. Her mentor described her as being open with the students. Molly’s mentor stated, “[She] accepts them for who they are and makes them feel like they’re not different from each other.”

I first met Molly in the fall of 2006 when she and her mother scheduled a visit with me to discuss the teacher education program at Bethel. Specifically, Molly was interested in teaching at the elementary level. Molly had been attending a state school prior to this point and was considering transferring to a teacher education program closer to her home. From that first meeting with Molly, Molly demonstrated that she had a sense of purpose and knew what she wanted to accomplish, at least in the short term. She appeared driven by her goals and could easily articulate these goals. In that initial meeting, Molly, her mother, and I created a plan of study that would enable Molly to graduate in her remaining two years and additionally be recommended for a teaching license with an endorsement in elementary education. Molly demonstrated her commitment to her goals by completing her elementary education major and licensure program on schedule in the spring of 2008.

Molly grew up in a rural Kansas town, which according to the U.S. Census Bureau had about 565 people (2000). Of this number, 552 were white and the median age for this population was 43.1 years. Of the population, 78.4% had achieved a high school diploma or higher, while 10% had achieved a bachelors degree or higher. Because no major events have altered the demographics of Molly’s hometown, data from 2008-09 will be utilized. The high school from

which Molly graduated includes grades 6 to 12 with approximately 152 students. Of these students during the 2008-09 school year, 41% were males and 59% were females, 95% were white and 21% were eligible for free or reduced lunch (Kansas State Department of Education, 2010). Prior to arriving at college, Molly had few opportunities to interact with a diverse population.

While at Bethel, Molly had the opportunity to become involved with a diverse K-6 student population. Most of the education courses in which Molly enrolled included a field experience component designed to provide Molly with the opportunity to interact with a diverse population (see Table 1). Molly's preference was to work with primary age (K-1-2) children and in EDU101A, Early Field Experience, Molly worked with not only primary age students, but also worked with intermediate age (3-4-5) students. While Molly was enrolled in EDU310, School and Community, Molly had the opportunity to interact with not only a racially diverse student population, but also was able to interact with students whose first language was not English and whose religion was different than her own. Molly's exposure to a diverse student population, in her teacher-training program, culminated in a student teaching experience in a highly diverse school, Washington Elementary School, located in a school district in Kansas.

Washington Elementary School houses kindergarten to grade five with three sections of each grade. In the 2008-2009 school year, there were 407 students enrolled at Washington and approximately half of the students were male and half were female. Of the student population, 43.5% were on free and reduced lunch. Approximately 69% of the students were white, 19% Hispanic, 2% African American, and 10% were self-classified as other (Kansas State Department of Education, 2010). At that time, Washington Elementary School also housed the English for

Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for one-half of the district. Molly student taught in a first grade classroom in this school.

Upon graduation and completion of her licensure program in the spring of 2008, Molly actively sought a teaching position in and was subsequently hired by the largest school system in Kansas. Molly accepted a first grade teaching position in Lakeview Elementary School. With 568 students, Lakeview was the largest elementary with which Molly had experience.

Demographic information demonstrates that approximately 46% of the students are males and about 54% of the students are females. Approximately 19% of the students at Lakeview are on free and reduced lunch. Lakeview information further shows that 52% of the students are white, 10% are African American, 16% are Hispanic, and 22% of the students classify themselves as other (Kansas State Department of Education, 2010).

I scheduled to meet Molly in her classroom at 12:30 p.m. on a rainy day in January. As I drove to the school, I noticed that the homes in the neighborhood were single-family dwellings, typically with a single-car garage, reflecting buildings of the 1940's and 50's. Large elm trees dotted the landscape and it was not unusual to see many cars parked on the streets. Lakeview Elementary School was built in 1954 although it had recently undergone construction; the remnants of this construction were still evident outside the building. The view from the front of the building indicated that Lakeview was a one-story building. While there was a newly constructed parking lot on the north side of the building, there were many cars parked on the street in front of the building.

Upon entering the school and subsequently the office, I met the principal, who was a friend from my graduate school days. The school social worker, behind the counter in the office,

was filling in for the secretary and was working with three sets of parents. The principal directed me to Molly's classroom.

Molly's classroom was decorated in a tropical motif with bright colors: bamboo shoots on the walls; grass and flowers hiding student cubbies; flamingos, palm trees, and tiki torches around the room; and fish and tropical banners on the walls. Interspersed around the room were academic related items: 1<sup>st</sup> grade words, numbers, months, the alphabet (Aa Bb ... etc.) and related words, colors, games, and manipulatives. There were six tables with four chairs at each table and in the center of each table was a supply box. There was a colorful carpeted area (squares with different colors) in front of a smart board. Also on one wall was a brag board with student work and notes, as well as a board with "proud papers" attached. Although one wall had a full row of windows, they had been covered by a large tropical banner.

The way the first grade teachers at Lakeview had arranged their schedule, Molly had one set of first graders for math for half an hour and then her own class returned to her room. Molly worked with each group of students using multiple learning styles. When asked about this later, Molly said,

Well, with any activity, I try to hit all of the learning styles because there are so many kids that have either all of them or just one. I try to make everything so that every kid is going to get at least part of it and really get into it. So I try to make every activity at least cover all those so that every kid is always actively engaged in at least part of it. Not all kids just have one learning style.

Molly's mentor agreed:

When we're doing team planning and I'm interacting with her and her team, they always try to explore research based strategies, things that are proven to be effective with kids

and obviously we try to reinforce that in our entire building, not just with that team. I would say that she makes an effort to implement those strategies that she knows are going to have the most impact on all of her students.

I observed this as well. Molly effectively provided her students with instruction verbally and visually, with the ability to practice the new material, and then with an activity designed to reinforce the concepts. Molly has effectively combined two components of culturally relevant pedagogy: the use of a variety of methods in her instruction and the understanding that she needs to know each of her students to effectively teach them. While observing in her math classroom, I had the opportunity to see Molly's students create a hypothesis and then use manipulatives to prove or disprove their conjecture. Molly additionally had individual dry erase boards for all of her students and taught using a Smart Board. In working with her students, she ensured that all children had opportunities to participate and were engaged in the lesson. On occasion, Molly used examples that seemed to relate directly to individual student circumstances. One further example of cultural relevance in her lessons was the use of "free choice" show and tell. In this instance, students were to bring any item, for show and tell, which related specifically to their culture. Molly's mentor noted that Molly does strive to get to know each of her students and tries to meet each of their needs:

Well, I think that when I have been in her classroom she does make an effort to personalize things for her kids. She is aware of each student as an individual and she makes the effort to let the kids know that she recognizes that. And I think that she plans for that too; when she's planning her lessons she tries to find ways to make things relevant to her kids, not just as a whole class, but individually too.

As a former math teacher, I was intrigued by Molly's math lesson. The intriguing part of the lesson was a portion of the questioning that she used, which seemed to demonstrate her comfort with teaching math and with teaching children that may need to see problems worked using multiple algorithms. First, Molly gave the students a problem to solve and then had the students describe how and why they used the strategies that they did to solve the math problems. She followed with these probing questions: "How could we solve this? Does anyone know a different way? How did you figure this out? Okay, I'm going to show you another way. There are lots of different ways to solve this problem." In treating math in this manner, Molly allowed students to understand that there may be more than one way to work through a problem; different ways that could be equally valid.

Through my conversation with Molly and through my observations of her classroom, I found that Molly worked diligently to incorporate a variety of methods in her instruction. She stated,

I will use the smart board, stuff like that. We'll use hands-on materials. I use Kagan a lot, so they're all in Kagan groups as far as being leveled different. And there's like a high, a high medium, low and low medium, so then activities with that which are all usually hands-on. Then, they all have to listen, they all usually have to speak and different things like that. And then, throughout the day it's always different. I'm teaching, and then when we do centers it's all independent, but every center is doing something completely different, whether they are playing a game on the computer or they're listening at the listening center, or doing fuller activities, I mean it's completely different.

Molly demonstrated a commitment to helping all children be successful in her classroom.

Although Molly was a bit hesitant to give herself praise for this, her mentor stated it very well, as noted previously when she described Molly's efforts to personalize the education of her students.

Molly was able to demonstrate high expectations for her students by using effective communication. I believed this communication to be effective with her first grade students because their appropriate actions consistently indicated that they understood Molly's intent. Molly's communications with her students were concise and to the point. She was extremely honest with the students and they knew exactly where they stood with her as the following examples indicate. At one point in my observation, Molly told the students, "Thank you for following directions." And at another point the students were asked to lay their heads down on their desks, followed by a discussion of why they had to lay their heads down. Her mentor also noted that Molly demonstrates high expectations:

I think by being consistent, like if she says that she wants them to line up without using their voice, and they don't, she has them sit down and start over. She's just very consistent. She models what she expects. So if it might be something new to them, she'll show them what it's supposed to look like so that they will know. And she gives them opportunities to practice. But just so they know what it looks like, what it sounds like and then having an opportunity to practice.

Demonstrating high expectations for her students and having respect for her students and their culture seemed to elicit similar responses from both Molly and her mentor. Molly's mentor stated it very concisely when she stated:

She's just open with them and accepts them for who they are and makes them feel like they're not different from each other. And again, I think she's very to the point and blunt

with her students. She pretty much lets them know what is and is not acceptable. But she is just really honest with them. I think that is important.

Again, communication between Molly and her students seemed to be a driving force for communicating respect for her students and their culture and for establishing high expectations for her students

In some regards, Molly's practice of knowing her children and their families is a product of the grade that she teaches. When asked about creating a community of learners in her classroom and connecting with students families, both Molly and her mentor expressed that this seemed to happen naturally because many of her students' parents drop the children off in the classroom at the beginning of the day and then pick them up from the classroom at the end of the day. Both of these times provide ample opportunity for communication and connections with parents. In addition to these times, Molly remarked that she additionally makes phone calls and sends emails and homework sheets, which must be signed and returned. Her mentor further stated that Molly "has a really good rapport with all of her parents."

Born in the late 1980's, Molly is a "Millennial." Depending on the author, the term Millennial refers to individuals born between 1981 and 2002. This group of individuals has also been referred to as "Generation Y" or "Gen Y". Over the years much has been discussed about the differences in generations, including the Interbellum Generation (those born between 1900 and 1910), the Silent Generation (those born between 1925 and 1945), Baby Boomers, and Generation X. According to Howe and Strauss (2003) Millennials are special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, achieving, pressured and conventional. Further, Broido (2004) states that the Millennial generation, demographically distinct from other generations, have attitudes toward diversity issues different from other generations. Based on the interviews with Molly and



her mentor, two aspects of Millennials seem to fit well with Molly: confident and her view of diversity.

As I was interviewing Molly's mentor, I asked her about "gaps" that might exist in the Bethel College Teacher Education Program. Her response, although perhaps it shouldn't have, surprised me. She stated,

I don't know that it would be considered a gap because it's more of a personal ... she's very confident. She's very confident, very knowledgeable, so I would say "how to be a mentee." I mean, what the purpose of a mentor is. And so, what can you do as a mentee to help support that relationship. And that's not to say that anything between us has ever been negative, because she's been great to work with. But especially initially, and maybe this is normal for all college graduates, although I can't say that because I've mentored lots of people and she just initially did not seem to think that she needed me. Which she probably didn't, I don't know. But even I need a mentor, you know, so when you're provided with someone to provide that support, take advantage of it.

In the interview with Molly, she pointed to the changing attitudes of her generation toward diversity. I asked the question, "If I walked into your classroom, what would I see that tells me that you are culturally literate?" Molly response surprised me:

Well, our reading curriculum does a lot that shows that; even our reading poster that we have for every week. And just the students that are in here and how I relate to them and how the other kids relate to everyone in here. It's not, there's no difference between any of the students. And the kids, I don't know if it's just the age of kids that it doesn't matter, or maybe with our generation that it's not an issue anymore, but none of these kids react to any of the other kids any differently. And neither do I. And I notice that a lot

of the older teachers that we have here view things like that a lot differently. Even when we have our in-services and we talk about that. I think that this generation, my generation even, doesn't have a problem with it, so it's less of an issue.

Perhaps it was just Molly's straightforward verbalization of this concept that caught me off guard and thus surprised me. I am not sure that this statement should have surprised me. It appears to me that over the years each successive generation has demonstrated more leniencies toward issues than the prior generation. For example, the court case, *Plessey v. Ferguson* from 1896, upheld the doctrine of "separate but equal" (J. A. Johnson, et al., 2008), while little over 50 years later, *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 overturned this decision. Molly's statement indicated that although diversity issues may have been problematic for prior generations, her generation, and the generation following hers, has a more relaxed attitude toward issues of diversity.

Through our conversation and observation, I gained a sense that Molly embraced students for who they were, including their culture, but that she did not base her classroom and instructional decisions on their cultural differences alone.

At Bethel, reflective thinking about self and practice is taught and expected. Students are expected to reflect on their practice before, during, and after instruction. I was interested in specifically seeing whether our graduates continued to utilize this practice upon graduation. Molly immediately provided me with assurance that, at least with her, those lessons had been learned.

I do agree that Bethel has made that very clear, and people said that about me here as well – being reflective – and just going through lesson plans and reflecting on those. Then afterwards going through a lesson, reflecting on how it went; what I could have done differently and how I'm going to change it the next time I do a lesson. Similar to it,

or even the next year, when I do a project or something like that. And just looking at myself, at what went wrong and then I'm more able to more anticipate what the kids will do the next time too.

Her mentor provided me with the thought that perhaps Bethel is on the right track with the expectation that our students practice self-reflection. It appeared through her comments that reflection was not only encouraged, but expected.

Well, as her mentor, especially in her first year, we met on a regular basis and always had reflective conversations. Sometimes they were planning conversations, obviously, and then we would do the lesson and always come back and reflect on how it went and think about what went well and what didn't go well. And I would say she responds to what she's thinking and reflecting in a positive way. So she acknowledges if something doesn't go well and tries to think of a solution to make it go better the next time.

At the end of our interview, I asked Molly whether she had some suggestions for improving the teacher education program at Bethel. Her response, I believe is consistent with many beginning teachers, exposing one of their greatest fears. Her response was that Bethel's course on classroom management could be enhanced. She stated:

I haven't had a problem with this, but I've just had to deal with this on my own – classroom management. I think the classroom management class that we took was more of like, "This is what happened and this is how I dealt with it." That does not really do justice until you're in the classroom. So maybe going in and observing and then writing down those things and then going back in and talking about what you would do instead of hearing what that person saw and did.

At the end of the day, when all was said and done, I observed that homework sheets were packed in the student's backpacks and parents were lined up outside the door. Molly gave one more reminder to the students, "Remember, tomorrow is show and tell, free choice. No excuse, you should all have one." This just provided another opportunity to learn more about her students.

#### Case Study Two – "Joni"

"I think there is that mindset out there where teachers are trying to get to more cultural diversity." Joni was adamant about the need to incorporate issues of culture in order to meet all children's needs. However, she pointed to challenges that teachers face in achieving this goal.

The problem is that every teacher is under so much stress to teach certain skills and have them all taught by the end of the year. And you just feel like you don't have time. I've just learned to be okay with maybe that first quarter not meeting my goals, and I don't always meet all my goals every quarter anyway, but I just relax and don't get too upset until I get the kids where I need them. Because it goes so much smoother the whole year if you spend the time in the beginning getting to know the parents, getting to know the kids, see what works, see what doesn't and then the rest of it's pretty easy to figure out.

Honestly, I can't recall the first time that I met Joni because Joni has the type of personality that causes you to believe that you have known her all your life. I would describe Joni as a non-traditional student, in more ways than one. Joni graduated with her first degree in social work from another institution about 20 years ago and returned to school to get her license to teach special education at the elementary level. Joni completed her licensure program in the spring of 2008. Joni also rides a motorcycle to work. When you first meet Joni, you cannot help

but be captivated by her engaging smile. When she listens to you, she gives you her full attention and you know that she is actively listening. Joni has a heart that pours itself out for her children.

Joni is the only graduate participating in this study who graduated from a high school outside of Kansas. Although the high school that Joni graduated from is located in a rural area, there are currently 1378 students enrolled at that school. Of that population, approximately 15% are eligible for the free and/or reduced lunch program. Approximately 95% of the students in this school are white, with 3% of the students African American and 2% being Hispanic. These demographic data were secured from SchoolTree.org (2009). Following graduation from high school, Joni attended a local university for two years and subsequently transferred to a community college in Kansas. Joni completed her bachelor of arts in social work from a Kansas state university in 1990. After about 15 years, Joni decided to return to school to earn her license to teach.

Because Joni was seeking an initial license in elementary education and an added endorsement in special education, she completed her student teaching in two placements, which happened to be in two different schools in the same district. One of the schools, Washington, was the same school in which Molly completed her student teaching. Joni completed her elementary student teaching in a fifth grade classroom in this school during the same year that Molly was teaching first grade in that building (refer to Washington Elementary School demographics within the case study on Molly). Joni's second placement was in Jefferson Elementary School where she was a student teacher in an interrelated classroom.

At the time of this study, Jefferson Elementary School housed kindergarten to grade five with three sections of each grade. There were 472 students enrolled at Jefferson and approximately half of the students were male and half were female. Of the student population,

45% were on free and reduced lunch. Approximately 60% of the students were white, 28% Hispanic, 4% African American, and 8% were self-classified as other (Kansas State Department of Education, 2010). Joni was subsequently hired to teach special education in Jefferson Elementary School the following year.

I have been familiar with Jefferson Elementary School for some time, and so I believe that I had trained myself to not become aware of the details of the school and its environment. Driving to Jefferson for my observation and interviews allowed me the opportunity to look at the school from a different vantage point. Jefferson Elementary School is located on a busy street, although the front of the building is on a side street. The neighborhood in this area consists of small, single-family dwellings. There is a church across the street, to the north of the school. Parking for the school is somewhat of an issue. There is a small parking lot in front of the building, which also includes the driveway for dropping off students. On a given morning, some individuals park in the parking lot or park in the church parking lot across the street and have to cross over the driveway to get into the building. Many parents drop their children off on the street as well and so those children have to cross the driveway. To maintain the safety of the children, and adults, teachers serve as crossing guards on a rotating basis.

Approximately twelve years ago, the school district passed a bond issue to build a new elementary school and renovate all of the existing schools. Prior to that time, Jefferson Elementary School was a series of individual pods constructed in the 1960's. Through the bond issue, these pods were combined and additional classroom space was added. At this point in time, the school housed two classes per grade level. In a subsequent building project which added an additional wing, Jefferson was enlarged to accommodate three classes per grade level.

In the current grade configuration, Jefferson Elementary School houses kindergarten to fourth grade.

I arrived at the school at 7:55 a.m. as students were arriving for their day of school. As I entered the building, I greeted the crossing guard who happened to be an old friend and another teacher, who was holding the door. Upon entering the school, to the left was a hallway, straight ahead was another hallway, and to the right was an open office area. To the right of the office was another hallway. The office area was set up as an open space with a low counter and the administrative assistants were located behind the counter. Behind them was work space for the teachers and staff. Private offices were behind doors, set to the side of and behind the work-space. On the counter were clipboards for visitors to sign in and guests were to wear lanyards with a school I.D. designating the individual as a visitor. Joni met me at the counter and took me back to her classroom. Student artwork was displayed on each of the walls in the halls. There were also pictures, about 3' by 3', of the individual students arranged together to create a mosaic of another picture. Upon reaching the classroom area, there was a large dry space (not that it was specifically dry, but that was the terminology Joni used to describe the space), separating the hallway from the dry space was a six foot wall, and the classrooms were located behind this wall. Toward lunch time the smell of food filled the halls; I am not sure what was on the menu, but it smelled like McDonalds.

Joni's classroom was divided by portable walls creating three classroom spaces; this seemed to help with having multiple people working with individual students at the same time. On the wall opposite the entrance, were two individual small rooms shared with the classes on either side of this classroom. Those small rooms led out of the building and provided the only natural light to enter Joni's classroom. Student cubbies were by the front entrance and students

stored personal items in them. Other cubbies with supplies were located around the room. Student projects, which were penguins, hung from the ceiling, were part of on-going work for the students. It became apparent that all spaces in the room were utilized for learning activities. The main teaching area included a U-shaped table with the teacher in the center of the U and the students around the sides. There was space for eight students around the outside of the table. Under the table top were drawers with student supplies. I can't describe the room without mentioning the bead boxes. The bead boxes were important to each of the students and were used for positive reinforcement of students. The students decorated their own box and then received beads to put in the boxes, which they could then trade for desired items. Finally, Joni had provided cushions, pads and a workout ball for students to sit on at the table if the student behavior warranted this privilege.

Joni serves as an interrelated teacher for the students in this building and during the morning that I observed, Joni was working with first and second grade students. Her first class of the day consisted of two white boys, one African-American girl, one female Hispanic paraprofessional, and Joni.

I think that sometimes it is the little things that matter with children. As the students were arriving, Joni noticed her female student looking a bit despondent. Joni quizzed the student about it and the conversation between Joni and the student went like this:

Student – I didn't get my work done.

Teacher – Is that upsetting?

Student provided more explanation.

Teacher – Well, maybe we'll have time.

Student – My mom is in the office.



Teacher – Are you having a rough morning?

The student then perked up.

In this instance, it appeared that all that the student needed was a little attention. Providing this type of individual attention gave Joni the opportunity to understand the child and in doing so she could provide individual attention to the students' needs. In our interview, Joni stated:

I think that I try to greet my kids and kind of get to know them. I mean, I check in on them, see how are things going, because I know some of them have, they have different types of family setups. I think like today even I said something where they said, "At home I have something this way," and I said, "That's okay, not everybody's the same. It's all right," so we talk about things.

By doing this Joni gets to know all of her children and can work to ensure that she is meeting their learning needs.

It became very apparent that communication was an important part of the teaching and learning process for Joni; communication with not only the students, but with the families of the students as well. In both her actions and her words, Joni conveyed respect for the individual and their families in her communications.

Conversation One:

Student Boy – You know Mario? He wore girl pants.

Teacher – Well, you know, would that be something to tease him about?

Student Boy – No.

Teacher – No.

Conversation Two:

Setting: Joni and a student were talking about Parent/Teacher Conferences.

Teacher explained what happened at the conferences quietly, like a secret.

Student Boy – My parents already talked about it.

Teacher explained that she wanted him to know about the conversation.

Teacher – Well, we're good then, right?

Joni summed up her perspective on communication with students and their families in this way:

I connect with them a lot, I mean, I call them. Almost every day I'm calling or emailing, or writing a note to a family. I would say, just about four out of five days out of the week. I'm constantly contacting them. A lot of them have a lot of medical problems. A lot of them have behavior issues that we're dealing with. Some of them have abusive situations at home that they are escaping. I have one right now living in a church. So, it's constantly talk with families.

Not only does Joni reach out to her parents, but she also encourages them to communicate with her; she actually encourages her students' parents to come see her with any issue. She definitely places a premium on these interactions. Joni expressed that she not only wants them to come to parent teacher conferences, but that she wants them to feel free to come by the school or call the school at any time, or email her about any issues. Joni exemplified this as she continued her statement:

Usually, I drop everything, because that's very important. Usually it's something very important to them that they want to talk about. And I try to give them positive feedback, besides just the IEP or report card progress time. I do contact them when there's a problem, but I try to do little notes home, like "Hey, good news, this is what we did", or if they worked really hard, or they finally learned how to do this skill. You know praise them at home or keep practicing at home.

In visiting with Joni, it becomes apparent that family connections are important; important for the work that she is doing, but also important because of its impact on the children. Joni's principal sees the connections that Joni makes as well; she stated, "Lots of visits, lots of phone calls, lots of home visits, going to pick them up for IEP's when they don't have cars, those kinds of things." In using communication, Joni is expertly weaving a strong community of learners inside and outside her classroom.

When asked the question, "If I walked into your classroom, what would I see that tells me you're a culturally literate teacher?" Joni initially struggled with a response. I believe that the previous examples demonstrate Joni's actions and communications to be responsive to her student needs. After a few further probing questions, Joni began to come up with ideas that she incorporates into her lessons:

I use all the different intelligences that I can. If I know one student likes to interact, interpersonal, and be the helper, I try to engage them in that. If they need to move and they're kinesthetic, I get them up and moving. If they're visual, I'm going to try a lot of different ways; see there are a lot of different ways that you can use visual. And auditory, I just hit as many of those different intelligences on each concept as I can. And I can't always fit them all in one day, but we keep coming back, I have to keep coming back with my kids and hitting on the same skill even if it's a little blip over and over and over. It is fun to see them just be able to do things that they can't normally do, like exercising control, instead of blurting out, or something. I try to use all of the different intelligences.

Joni's actions in the classroom backed up her descriptions. I observed Joni using various tactile methods in her instruction. She incorporated movement, as well as oral and aural instruction.

Ultimately, Joni's principal perhaps summed up Joni's use of varying methodologies when she stated, "Oh, heavens, everything that she does is designed to help all children learn."

At the time of my observation of Joni's classroom, an earthquake had recently struck Haiti. Joni used this as an opportunity to help her students become aware of life when a tragedy strikes and teach students lessons about social justice. One activity that I observed in Joni's class was a discussion on "What would you give?" Students were to come up with items that they would donate to Haiti. She then tied that discussion into their snack time. Her principal was very familiar with this and shared the following:

Oh, she ties in a lot as far as the stories and that kind of thing with world events. And trying to get the kids to truly identify .... Oh, Haiti is one that comes to mind readily. In that getting them to understand that they have no food. Working on that concept of giving to others; it is just a neat way of getting them to understand. They've looked at the pictures and then to understand that [Haitians] don't have anything. Joni was funny, she was talking to me and she said, "I wasn't making much progress [with the children] until we got to the bathroom, and it clicked in [for them], there's no toilet paper. And all of the sudden, and no bathrooms, then their level of concern was way up there. No food and water, no problem. No bathroom, that's a problem." So, it's interesting.

Joni's actions in the classroom demonstrated that what she told me and what her principal has observed in her classroom and related to me are accurate. At one point in the lesson, her students were writing in sand, and then used wands to write in the air. At another point, she took her students into the hall and they were using movement to help with recitation. She very clearly demonstrated the ability to both speak the speak and walk the talk.

Reflection has become an important part of Joni's practice. As I observed Joni, I realized that she was constantly thinking, constantly revising, constantly working to help her students understand new concepts. Joni mentioned:

If I'm introducing a concept and a kid is obviously not getting it, I have to quickly reflect and ask 'What else can I do?' How else can I present it in a different manner, at that moment, all the time?

I believe that this type of thinking has become almost a second nature for Joni and the casual observer would not realize that she has made adaptations to her plans.

Joni and her principal also discussed her reflective thinking, especially in situations where a solution to an issue could not be readily found. Her principal remarked that Joni will quite often process a challenging issue out loud and will work through to find a solution, often verbalizing her thinking. Her principal added that this reflection process is one that she devotes time to and is a regular part of her day. Her principal stated, "She does a lot of processing after she tries something, and Joni's one that is usually here later in the afternoon." It is at these times when few others are around that she is able sit down and verbalize her thinking, even though she may not be expecting any sort of a response. She just needs to process out loud. Her principal added,

She and I and maybe a couple of others are still here in the building and part of that reflection is that you will see her come sit down and say, "Well, this is what I did and this is how it turned out." So she takes some quiet time and does it on her own, but then she'll kind of verbalize, you know. "What do you think? Do you think that'll work? Yeah.

Her principal remarked that this was a process that Joni had begun two years before. She would use this sort of processing with her cooperating teacher in her student teaching experience.

Finally, Joni stated that she uses reflective practice to make changes for the future. She discussed that at the end of lessons she will mentally take notes and at times take physical notes of things that she wants to remember. She will make changes in her lesson plans to remind herself that “Next year I’m not going to set it up that way. I’ve learned. So it just doesn’t work and you’re constantly changing.” When asked about a specific example, Joni mentioned the following scenario, which demonstrated major changes from the way she had done things the previous year, “I have changed the way I group kids, depending on where their reading level is. Last year I worked only by grade levels. Well, I’m mixing it more this year between grades, wherever they are at.” Given that instead of having all second grade students come to her at the same time or having all third grade students come to her at the same time, scheduling problems become an issue as the schedule was not created to handle this type of creativity. But Joni believes that grouping students by their current skill level is in the best interests of her children, so she does it. Interestingly, Joni’s principal commented about the same example when discussing Joni’s reflective thinking.

We have struggled with the phonics program that special education [the cooperative] wants to use. But to do a full lesson requires an hour plus, and at the primary level; well, her pull-outs are not to that degree. So she has struggled and revamped and tried and regrouped to the point we are now, where she’s grouping the kids by ability, not by grade. It’s making the lessons flow better and smoother. It has been a challenge to get to that place. It [the phonics program] has some great components and it ties in well with what we do in general education, but the volume of time that it takes is the real challenge. Joni is a reflective practitioner. She reflects at the micro level, constantly making changes, thinking on her feet and adapting lessons as the lessons progress. She reflects at the macro level,

and is planning for future years. And as she reflects, she has demonstrated that she keeps the students and their needs at the forefront of her thinking.

In all instances, Joni demonstrated a great deal of respect for students in both her actions and in her speech. As I observed her, I noticed that she regularly referred to the students as either “Sir” or “Miss” or “Mister”. Joni remarked, “I try to be respectful, I mean respect them personally, I just individually try to call them Miss whoever, Sir, or whatever.” She mentioned as well that many of her students go by a name other than their legal name. She said that she will always call the student by their preferred name. Joni’s focus on the individual allowed each student to feel important and welcomed in her class. I observed the following interaction, which was typical of her student interactions:

Student Girl – (Hispanic female) came in late

Teacher – Hey, welcome, we’re glad you’re here.

Student Girl – quietly responded.

Teacher – What happened?

Teacher – Oh, the car wouldn’t start?

Teacher – Well, we’re glad you’re here.

This interaction between Joni and her student demonstrates the welcoming spirit that Joni uses in her classroom. All students are made to feel wanted and safe.

Joni also uses her conversations with her students to try to help them grow into accepting young people. In our interview, she provided me with another example of how she might demonstrate respect, and of how she would encourage her students to demonstrate respect of other’s culture and language.

When kids will bring something up that they're excited about that happened at home that is of a different [cultural perspective], I just try to say "Hey, that's great" and be positive. But some kids will pipe up and say "That's not what we do." and I will say "That's okay, everybody's different. It takes all sorts of different ways and we need to celebrate those differences and I think it's interesting," or "I didn't know that." I'll be real interested, or at least try to say, "I'm real interested in that."

Joni's actions did not betray her words. As she worked with her student population her general body language indicated that she had an interest in the student that she was working with. She would lean in to the student and at times get down on their level. She gave that student her total attention. In many instances, if her attention had been pulled away from the student, even momentarily, she would apologize and ask the student to continue. Her actions and her words mirrored each other.

Joni did mention that given her student population in an interrelated classroom, often the students have little "squabbles" amongst themselves. She mentioned that she will try to talk to them about the issues and ask questions like, "Would that be something that you would like to tease someone about?" or "Would that be appropriate?" She stated that many times, she will work with the students to try to fix the problems themselves, providing help if they need it. Understanding that many of her students are sensitive or easily embarrassed because they have been called out before, she will take the students "off to one side and quietly talk to them about what's going on." She noted:

They have more problems with behavior, they're not getting the information and so they have a sensitivity to being up front. Sometimes they are seeking to be the person of interest, so I have to deal with that too, and not feed into that. If they're seeking extra



attention I try to address that need in another way. Like, “Hey, I noticed that you’re doing these things, I think maybe you want attention. Let’s do this after class, or can you stay after and let’s talk, what’s going on.”

These statements indicate not only that Joni tries to be respectful of her students, but that she also knows her students well. She has to know her students so that she can distinguish between attention-getting behaviors and behaviors that might be associated with the student’s disability. Joni’s principal shared similar stories in my interview with her. She remarked about not only Joni’s tone and content, but her physical presence and concern in working with her students. She said, “Oh, [she demonstrates respect for students] in how she treats them. You never see her raise her voice. If there’s a problem she’s down close, right there visiting with them.” Joni’s bond with her students is evident in her actions whether her students are with her or not. She continues to demonstrate concern when her students are sent to the principal for other reasons. Her principal continued, “And even if her kids are in here [principal’s office] for some reason, I don’t ever get them from her room, she’s coming by to check on them saying ‘Is everything doing okay?’ and ‘Oh, I’m so sorry.’” She went on to say that, by doing this, students understand that she wants them to be successful and that they need to remember that their actions have consequences. She finished:

She gives a lot of ‘I hope everything’s squared away and you can come join us,’ making sure that they feel wanted. It’s kind of like kill them with kindness. She’s had some challenges, but she does a nice job.

Even the interaction with the students, while providing instruction on her activities about Haiti, demonstrated care and respect for others. And in quietly expressing this concern, she encouraged the students to think beyond themselves and demonstrate concern for others, even

those that the students may not know. She stated, “Everyday I remind them, ‘Today as you get a drink, today as you use the bathroom, be thankful; be thankful for it.’” One of the activities that she had her classes involved in was for her students to consider what item, which they own, that they would like to donate to someone in Haiti. Her story continued:

[speaking to students] “And then at the end, right before the end of the day, think about what you like, something that you like, or you think would be helpful or useful for you [to donate to a person in Haiti].” You know, we went through the non-examples, which wouldn’t be appropriate; you wouldn’t give them your skis or something that can’t be used there. Or their X-Box, because they have no electricity. I went back and explained that they probably didn’t even have X-Boxes before the earthquake, even with electricity because they didn’t have money for things like that.

She stated that she initially struggled with whether or not she should include Haiti in her lessons with the students. She felt the students were so young. She didn’t know if they could relate, without knowing where Haiti is, let alone knowing where the United States is. Her reasoning came around and she stated, “I thought about it and I thought, you know there’s no reason why I can’t try to make them understand this and at least have some kind of feeling.” Even Joni’s dilemma over the use of this difficult subject demonstrated her respect for her students.

In addition to the teaching to multiple intelligences through a variety of activities, Joni mentioned that she does incorporate some cooperative group work. In response to those activities, she did remark, “Although, at this age, they tend to get off track easier with each other.” Her overall perspective is that she tries to think of as many different ways to get them to learn as she can. Although she does have a SmartBoard in her classroom, it is not currently hooked up due to a recent move and subsequently is not being used. She does have two laptops

for students to use with their writing. Although I am less familiar with Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), her principal did mention that Joni uses the DRA.

She also uses the DRA, she's worked with our instructional coach and uses the DRA as a diagnostic type item and it gives her a common vocabulary when she's working with classroom teachers. If they're at a DRA in her room of say 10 to 12, but in the classroom the teacher is only able to get them to a 6/8. Then that becomes an issue of how do we get them to transfer this knowledge into this other setting; that kind of thing. It's just a lot of very positive, good visuals, those kinds of things. A lot more of the visuals and the hands on than there is lecture. If you go in and watch, there [are] always things, there's stuff, there's pictures, there's something to tie the lesson in to give it some meaning.

Joni's use of reflective thinking, adapting her lessons if her students don't understand the content using the initial method, and Joni's deep understanding of her students, as well as her creativity provide Joni with the resources to ensure that her methodology is meeting the learning needs of her students.

Joni and her students have four classroom rules; there were three initially and then a fourth was added later. Within each of these rules, Joni stressed the importance of providing examples and non-examples to help students fully understand the rule. The first rule was that "You have to respect others, yourself, and property." The second rule was "You have to do your work." Joni mentioned the following in describing the second rule:

Yeah, every person has to do their own work. I can't do your work for you. You can't ask your friend to do your own work for you or help. You have to do your own work because we are all here to learn and it's not doing you any good if someone else is doing your work for you. So, everybody has to do their work.

The third rule was “You have to follow directions.” Those three rules were the initial three rules and to those three she later added a fourth, “You have to have a positive attitude.” She added this rule because, as she stated, many of her students come in to class with a self-defeating attitude. In reflecting on her initial three rules and the characteristics of her students she felt she needed to address this aspect of her students. In providing guidance to her students on this rule, she provided them with the following examples:

[speaking to the students] You know, you can’t come in and say, ‘Oh, I can’t do that’ or ‘I don’t know, I’m so dumb’ or ‘I can’t do this’ or ‘This is too hard for me.’ We need to come in and say ‘We’re going to try it; I know some of these things are hard for you, I’m not perfect at everything either and we are going to do the best we can.’ I tell them all the time that my writing stinks, and it’s alright, it’s not my strength. It’s okay, we work with it. And then I follow that up with ‘But what are your strengths?’ So just keep going and I just try to give them those examples of attitude and say I’m going to do my best. I’m going to come in and try. And if they are willing to try, I will help them along; I will support them till they get it. And I think they have a good sense that I will do that for them, I will help them along until they are successful. But they have to have a good attitude.

Joni did share with me one additional rule that she has for her students and she says that this is a rule that is sometimes hard for the students. The students cannot have a bad day when there is a sub in her classroom. Joni shared the following in discussing her communication with students regarding days when there is a sub in her classroom:

[speaking with students] ‘When we have a sub, you can’t have a bad day with a sub. Can’t have it, it just doesn’t work. You can have a bad day with me I will help you

through it, we'll get through it. I have bad days too, we get through it; we still get our work done and we still have to follow all the rules. A sub is just not equipped, coming in, not knowing everybody, not knowing what we do. You just have to wait. You can have a bad day the next day, when I come back, or when I am here.' And they understand that. You just repeat it, and you build it up, each time and eventually you just have to mention it the day before, 'We will have a sub, you know my expectations. I hope you make good choices. If you don't we'll follow up when I get back.' Usually that means a lot of extra work for them, because it just doesn't work. Because it just goes downhill for all of them if one of them is really acting up. But I try to have high expectations, try to push them.

Although Joni's expectations demonstrated a respect for the rules and the establishment of rules that in many instances were challenging for her students, her principal focused on her academic expectations. These expectations were equally appropriate for her student population.

I think that by working with regular education, and she has a real clear idea of where they need to be, that her goals for her kids are set high. The gap [between where her students are academically and where they need to be academically] is not huge at this point in time for most of those kids, and we're doing our dead level best to not let it get any wider. So on her IEP's she's got at least a year's growth, a year plus in most cases, to start inching away at that deficit. When she sets her goals on her IEP's, they're very appropriate. We may not always make it, but we are doing our dead-level best to get there.

Joni additionally had two suggestions for improving teacher education programs.

Although she felt comfortable, given her training, working with special needs students, she observed other new teachers who were not as comfortable. Thus, her first recommendation was

that teacher preparation programs should prepare teachers for the diversity of students that they will experience in their classrooms.

In interacting with new teachers, who started at the same time I did, there are two in this building that are a year and a half in, and they are general education, one's first grade teacher, and one's a fifth grade teacher. In talking with them, they kind of have the mentality in their classroom, they kind of expect everybody to be within a certain range, and any outliers, they just don't seem to deal with them well, even if it's not academic, if it's emotional, or social issues that are just kind of wacky. Maybe that's my social work background that I'm better able to deal with or handle that, but they just don't want to deal with it.

The second suggestion that Joni provided was that teacher preparation programs should prepare teachers to deal with families. This included working with the wide variety of family situations that teachers encounter, even on the plains of Kansas. She did state that she felt communication with families was stressed, but that perhaps maintaining an open mind about the parent clientele could be stressed a bit more. As an example, she stated:

I'm not sure if you're really prepared for Mom bringing step-dad, who is really boyfriend, and in the next conference you have another step-dad and those issues that keep coming up. You just have to be real sensitive, and I think some teachers tend to judge harshly.

In a related issue, Joni felt that future teachers should be giving a better picture of typical parent teacher conference might look like, especially given her background in special education. She stated:

You might have the general education teacher and [the special education teacher] and maybe the social worker and maybe the speech person's going to pop in and talk all at once and how that feels to [the parent] to have all these people ganging up, well, not exactly. But you kind of have to be careful how you word things and bring it to a level that they are going to understand. And be sensitive to where they are; I guess the biggest thing, until you really get to know them and develop a relationship, maybe to not go out strong all at once, "he's just really having a problem, he's just his behavior is just ...." Before you go out and be real strong on stuff, get a feel for where the parent is at. What is their viewpoint, how are they seeing their kid? Maybe they don't see the same thing we see.

Given all that Joni does for her students and their parents it is no wonder that she received the following reaction:

Last night, they were so thankful and said, 'Thanks for caring' and 'Thanks for taking care of my kid' and most of the kids come up and hug me. And that's what's funny, because I'm not really a huggy person, but all my kids hug me.

#### Case Study Three – "Kylie"

Like many of the students at Bethel, Kylie grew up on a farm outside a rural community in central Kansas. Kylie grew up as one of four children with strong parental support and influence. Late in the interview, Kylie's principal noted this as she stated, "She comes from a family with very high expectations, very structured." Kylie's own expectations for herself indicated that it was hard for her to accept less than her best as she noted, "It [reflection] has also forced me to realize that I'm not going to be this fantastic super teacher my second year teaching. Which is hard for me, I think you could have predicted that." Kylie was very focused in her

decision to become an English teacher. My own early communications with Kylie brought to life the influence her own high school English teacher had on her decision to become an English teacher. Throughout her college experience, I never saw Kylie waver in her educational plans.

Growing up, the nearest town to Kylie's family farm had approximately 653 residents according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Data from this website further indicate that in 2000, approximately 47% of the population was male while 53% of the population was female. The median age in this community was 40.6 years of age. Of that population, 96.8% (632 individuals) described themselves as white, while four individuals within each category described themselves as American Indian, Asian, or "some other race." Seventeen individuals described themselves as having a background including "two or more races." The school from which Kylie graduated enrolled 149 students in grades 9 through 12 during the 2008-2009 school year (SchoolTree.org, 2009). Of these students, 15.4% were on free or reduced lunch. Of the student population, 139 described themselves as Caucasian, four each described themselves as Native American and African American and one each described themselves as Asian Pacific Islander and Hispanic.

Following graduation from high school in the spring of 2004, Kylie began her teacher training at Bethel. As indicated previously, the student population at Bethel gave Kylie the opportunity to interact with peers from a diverse background on a more regular basis than in her previous home and school life experiences. Kylie had many opportunities to experience a diverse Pre-Kindergarten to twelfth grade student population as she progressed through the teacher education program at Bethel. By the time Kylie was ready to student teach, she had experienced Pre-K to 12 diversity in age, socio-economic status (SES), religion, gender, special needs, and race. Kylie decided to student teach in a middle school in a small community of 3,509. Kylie



taught 8<sup>th</sup> grade English in Silver Springs Middle School. This past year, Silver Springs Middle School enrolled 259 students in grades 5 through 8 (SchoolTree.org, 2009). In this school 22.4% of the students were on the free and reduced lunch program. A majority of the students (54%) were male, while 46% were female. The majority of the students in the school (95.0%) were Caucasian, while 3.5% of the students were Hispanic and 1.5% was African American.

I had the opportunity to serve as Kylie's college supervisor in her student teaching experience. In her final evaluation, Kylie received a rank of "exemplary" from her cooperating teacher in all areas, including sensitivity to cultural differences in communications and reflective practice. Her college English department observer rated her equally high in all areas. I was perhaps the more critical, with my rating resting with my observation of her opportunity to demonstrate sensitivity to cultural differences in her communications. Kylie performed well in all instances, but I felt that in this setting she did not have the opportunity to fully demonstrate her capabilities. Regardless, all three of the individuals who observed Kylie on a regular basis were in agreement that she was strong in all evaluated components. A copy of this evaluation instrument can be found in Appendix H. All indications from Kylie's pre-service education indicated that, although Kylie had minimal exposure to diverse populations prior to entering the teaching profession, she would be successful in working with all students and would utilize culturally relevant pedagogy to help all of her students experience success.

Following her graduation from Bethel, Kylie secured a 6<sup>th</sup> grade English teaching position in East Side Middle School in a suburb of the largest town in Kansas. As a suburb, this town boasts 6,698 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) with 98.3% percent of the population identifying themselves as White. East Side Middle School enrolled 405 students in grades 6 to 8 with approximately equal numbers of male and female students (SchoolTree.org, 2009). The

racial diversity of the school is somewhat higher than the racial composition of the city would indicate, with 93.0% of the students in the school listed as Caucasian, 3.2% as Hispanic, 1.5% as Native American, 1.2% as Asian Pacific Islander, and 0.7% as African American (due to rounding errors, the numbers do not add up to 100%).

In late January 2010, I had the opportunity to observe and interview Kylie at East Side Middle School. East Side Middle School is located in a developing part of town, with lots of space and the high school situated just to the west. Parking in front of the building is in a large and spacious lot. The drive to the school cuts between the parking lot and the school. The school appears to be a fairly new building and is clean and almost sterile in grey and blue tones. A select few posters adorned the walls. As this is a new facility, there are few mature trees and shrubs. The main office is to the left upon entering the building, and the cafeteria is in an open commons area seen as you enter the building. The office is an open area with a low counter separating the staff from the public. The waiting area is large with a number of chairs situated along the walls. Two administrative assistants were located behind the counter. The administrative assistants were very friendly and pleasant and seemed to be aware that I was visiting Kylie and her principal that morning. To the left was a hallway with office space for administrators and other personnel. I scheduled to meet Kylie at 8:30 a.m. and as this was close to the beginning of the day, there was considerable traffic through the main doors of the building. As I was waiting for Kylie to come to the office a number of students and parents came into the office for a variety of reasons.

After a couple of minutes, the assistant principal came into the office. She and I began our teaching careers in the same town and we used the opportunity to catch up. We made plans for my interview with her and she escorted me to Kylie's room. Kylie's room was located on the

6<sup>th</sup> grade hall, some distance from the office; I was concerned that I would have difficulty finding my way back to the office. Given that Kylie was in her first year as teacher, I was anxious to see Kylie's room and gain a sense of what the transition from college to the teacher profession was like for her. Upon entering the room, I was struck by the warm feel of the room, especially given the bare walls in the halls. As is traditional in many classrooms, there were United States and Kansas flags on the wall; colorful posters filled many of the spaces on the walls. One wall consisted of shelves with books and cabinets with supplies. There were two windows with the blinds pulled down on the wall opposite the door. White boards, a promethean board, bulletin boards, and banners completed the wall décor. One of the bulletin boards contained information and pictures about Kylie's favorite things, while the other bulletin board had the words "Welcome to Language Arts." One of the banners displayed classroom rules including: Always respect property (return things in same condition, no graffiti or vandalism, stay out of other people's spaces, ask for permission) Always respect yourself (be confident, don't write on yourself, believe in yourself, make your own decisions, don't let other people bring you down, do your best), and Always respect others (cheer people up, treat others better than you want to be treated, be kind, listen, compliment and encourage others, help others, stand up to bullies). Another banner included essential vocabulary: 1) Respect, 2) Thank You, 3) Please, 4) Right, 5) Privilege, 6) Can, and 7) May. The state indicators for English were on display on a final banner. The desks were arranged in groups of four throughout the room; students had already been in the room and there were materials on the desks. Additional technology included an overhead projector with a pull-down screen and a TV/VCR combination. In the back corner of the room, Kylie had provided a number of pillows, which the students, when given permission, used for sitting on while reading. I noticed especially, that the first class that I observed used the pillows

while the second class that I observed remained in their seats. Students were encouraged to be comfortable as they worked; the teacher seemed equally comfortable standing, sitting on a chair, or sitting on the floor with the students.

I first conducted an interview with Kylie and following the interview, students arrived for class. It became apparent that the students in her class understood the routines as they busily became engaged in classroom activities, picking up where they had left off when they had left the room previously. Twenty students entered the room and of this number, there were 14 girls and six boys. One of the girls was of Asian descent.

To me, one of the interesting aspects of the program at East Side Middle School is that all students get a “double dose” of English; they have two hours of English instruction throughout the day. As such, Kylie sees all of her students twice during the day. As Kylie noted, she has three groups of students that she works with and this gives her a number of opportunities to practice reflective thinking throughout the day. I had the opportunity to observe Kylie work with two of these groups of students and although I did not observe any differences in her lessons, she did remark that she takes advantage of the opportunity to improve her practice with each lesson she teaches. She stated:

I am constantly reflecting. I have three different classes that I teach; it’s the same content, but different groups of students. Even throughout the day I’ll see myself saying, “Oh, that didn’t work, I need to fix that for the next hour.”

She additionally noted that she doesn’t feel that this is fair to her first block students because she generally always presents the lesson first for them. Reflection for Kylie is not limited to just lesson-by-lesson planning. She uses her reflective ability to make notes in her lesson plans about activities that worked or didn’t work so that she remembers for future lessons. She noted as well,

that as part of the evaluation system that teachers at East Side Middle School are required to reflect on the lesson, which was observed.

Her administrator noted these two aspects of Kylie's reflective ability as well. She stated that Kylie has the opportunity to verbalize her reflections while working with other 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers in their team meetings. She realizes that Kylie also reflects within herself, but stated that was more difficult to observe. Kylie's administrator further noted that Kylie's reflections for the evaluation appear to be accurate. She notes:

Our evaluation instrument has reflection or self-reflection built in. And so after an observed lesson we have a self-reflection form that she has to complete and it looks at things that went well, and things that she would do differently. And it has some specific things for her to address. She's very thorough on that. And she's pretty much on the mark, I think, as far as what I would suggest. I think she's not overly critical of herself, but she also always has some things, she always is able to identify things that she would do differently.

Kylie shared that her most recent evaluation, the second of the year, had occurred a week and a half prior to my visit and so her reflections were still fresh in her mind. Based on this, she was able to give me specific examples of changes that she would make to her instruction based on her reflections.

Although her administrator did not evaluate Kylie during her first year in the building, Kylie's administrator shared about her visit observations as part of the evaluation. She noted that Kylie had been involved in staff development on differentiated instruction. She stated that Kylie is very willing to step out of her comfort zone and try new things with her students. She further noted:

In fact, the last time that I observed her she had, she had centers set up, which is a little unusual for sixth grade, you don't see as much of that. But the kids were absolutely, they were eating that up. It was a really good. She was reviewing for a test and her centers, and she didn't call them centers but, that's really what they were and I knew she didn't want to use that terminology with her students, but they were designed around the multiple intelligences.

I believe that this quote aptly describes two areas of Kylie's personality. First, Kylie is willing to try new ideas and is willing to put forth the effort to make sure that the activities are highly structured, organized, and successful. Second, she understands sixth graders and didn't want to taint her activities by using grade school terminology. Kylie's administrator went on to discuss each of the "centers" and noted that Kylie is "very, very organized. She had it all where it needed to be so that it ran smoothly. I like to see her turning over some of the responsibility [to the students]."

Interestingly, both Kylie and her principal described the same event while sharing with me about the use of reflective thinking. In this situation, Kylie and her team of 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers had a Muslim student who was caught cheating on an assignment. The mother of the student refused to believe that her daughter had cheated and this required reflective thinking and processing on the part of a number of people in order to move forward. It struck me that both Kylie and her principal provided this as an example of Kylie's reflective thinking.

Kylie stated that overall, her reflective thinking has caused her to slow down and think about what she is teaching. She noted:

It's also forced me to realize that I'm not going to be this fantastic, super teacher my second year of teaching. Which is hard for me; I think you could have predicted that. It

just makes me slow down and think through things. It's made me slow down say, "This didn't work, they don't know it yet, we need to go back and relearn it." I need to remember to try it a different way.

From a micro level, on a class-by-class basis, to a macro level, making notes for future years, Kylie has demonstrated a strong ability to utilize reflection to improve her instruction and student learning in her classroom.

In the conversations with Kylie and her administrator, as well as a review of the school demographics, it became apparent that East Side Middle School is not a highly diverse school. It further became apparent when looking at the students in Kylie's classroom. As such, asking Kylie to share how cultural literacy manifests itself in her classroom became a bit of a challenge. She noted that materials on her walls, posters and banners, relate more to the content of her instruction than to the diversity of her students. She did mention that she is trying to teach them in subtle ways about building and maintaining relationships with others. She noted that:

The things that I'm trying to teach them are a little more subtle; the respect and manners and politeness and how you treat other people, more that kind of thing and trying to create a norm so that it doesn't matter where you came from or what your home life looks like, in this classroom, everybody is on the same page and on the same level.

Her administrator agrees and noted that she sees "a nice level of respect and good rapport with her students" in Kylie's work with students. Again, she noted that East Side Elementary School is not very diverse.

Focusing on methodology to help all children learn was a different story, however. Kylie was aptly able to provide a description of the methods that she uses to help all children learn. As noted previously by both Kylie and her administrator, Kylie used "centers" based on multiple

intelligences as a way of reviewing content. Kylie additionally noted that she uses cooperative learning and working in small groups, as well as tiered instruction. Her administrator was highly “impressed, especially for such a new teacher” was a process that Kylie implemented at the close of the period, a variety of closure activities.

At the end of her time with them, she has some kind of closure activity. And sometimes that’s having the students reflect on something that was hard for them, or something new they learned today. Sometimes it’s more of like a ticket out of class. In fact one of the games that she used for her differentiated instruction activity, the centers, was all of the questions that the students had written in a closure activity. She’ll have them write a test question, but it’s a way for the students then to reflect on what happened in that period. And to actually give them a little bit of time to go back through. So I think that is not only a way for student’s to reflect, but it’s a way to give [Kylie] more information on what her students need and where they still have some gaps. So she’s able to kind of look through those cards and see “oh, it really looks like a lot of kids still have a question on this, or these questions would lead me to think that they are not understanding this particular concept.”

Although Kylie didn’t mention it, her administrator noted that she also uses Popsicle sticks to help in calling on a variety of students. “[Kylie] uses a variety of strategies to make sure that she’s not only calling on girls or only calling on boys.”

Both Kylie and her administrator noted the importance of respect in working with students. As I observed Kylie in the classroom, I specifically noted that when she communicated with the students she positioned herself on their level, whether that was standing, sitting in a chair, or sitting on the floor. As she visited with students on an individual basis, the



conversations were in hushed tones, and were difficult to hear if you weren't within the immediate area. This concept of respect was one designed to help build a sense of community in the classroom. Additionally, Kylie noted the importance of building a community in her classroom. She stated that she feels that it is important to connect with the students on a different level and let them know that she cares about them more than just the grade that they make in her class. She remarked that this practice was difficult to continue prior to state assessments, but she still felt it an important practice to continue. Her administrator agreed and stated that she felt that Kylie's willingness to share about herself and her life opened the communication between Kylie and her students. She additionally noted the emphasis that Kylie has placed on respect and positive character traits as helping to build a positive sense of community. Her administrator noted, "She had her students come up with classroom rules, had them set up expectations for behavior and so she got a lot of feedback from them." This type of activity was seen as beneficial in building community within her classes.

Kylie described her connections with parents and guardians as typical, parent/teacher conferences, emails back and forth, but described these communications as pertaining primarily with student progress. Her administrator said that she had noticed that Kylie works hard at the beginning of the year to send out positive emails to each of the parents before they ever contact her. She noted that this was effective with their "very, ultra-connected community, with some highly involved parents in our school." Kylie mentioned that this was intentional as she said that she tries "to let them know when their kids are really doing a great job in class, so that if they're struggling later [she] already [has had] that communication base." Kylie's administrator further noted that Kylie gives her students' parents homework at the beginning of the year. She noted,

She had her students' parents doing homework and introducing their child. She sent home a parent questionnaire at the beginning of the year, parent homework. List five words that describe your child's character, what motivates your child, what upsets your child, how would you rate your child's study habits? She said the kids really got into that because they could give their parents some homework right off the bat.

Ultimately, however, Kylie's connections with her students and with their families and guardians were described by both Kylie and her administrator as being based on respect; her administrator notes, "Really into respect, she's got a lot of things on respect in her room."

As Kylie talked, I found myself going back and envisioning her as a student in my classroom five years ago. I noticed items on her walls, e.g. her classroom rules, as having a foundation in our discussions. I noticed things that she said in our interview as also having a foundation in our classroom discussions. One of those subjects came up as I asked her a question about introducing a lesson that addresses topics of diversity and culture. She stated:

I talk about how fair and equal aren't necessarily the same thing. And I think that was something that you talked about in Intro to Education and it just kind of stuck with me. What's fair is not necessarily providing the same for everybody and how everybody comes from a different background. And start with basic things that are pretty neutral; not necessarily specific to, "you're African American, or you're Muslim, or . . .," more the things that they have all experienced in some way, shape or form. Start with that and then try to go from there. Build on the commonalities.

As I envision Kylie in her classroom, I know that she is building her classroom utilizing the wealth of knowledge she gained through her pre-service education and to that, she is adding her new experiences. One of her new experiences while at East Side Middle School has been in

understanding students from a different religion than her own, specifically in working with Muslim children. One of the things that she has noticed is that “what they want, at this age, more than anything, is to be treated the same as everyone else, and not have [their differences] pointed out, or acknowledged while still, not ignoring it.” Her administrator brought back the idea of respect in Kylie’s classroom. She noted that it is not only on the walls to remind the students, but that Kylie teaches about the concept of respect and then holds her students to her high expectations for respect. Not only does she hold the students to demonstrating respect, but she holds herself to the same standards, especially, as her administrator noted, making sure that she respects their time by organizing her plans to maximize their time. “She’s really respectful of their time. She’s going to make the most out of the time that she has with those students and she expects them to do the same.”

Kylie’s ability to establish positive, professional relationships with her students was another area that her administrator remarked as a strength. She noted that Kylie served as a track coach in the spring and that through this experience Kylie got to know a group of children other than the ones that she has in her classes on a daily basis.

She did coach track for us last year, and she’s going to do that for us again. And I thought it was neat, because she established some relationships with students that she’d never had in class. And we have some real special needs types of kids that go out for track, that’s a sport where everyone can participate. No cuts and we have some participation meets and so we get some challenging kids that do that, but it’s wonderful for them. And [Kylie] has done a really good job with helping, not just working with the top runners, but helping them to show respect to some of those special needs kids too.

Respect, as demonstrated observations of her work with students and verified by communications with her administrator, is modeled by Kylie and expected of her students.

As previously discussed, Kylie has attempted to employ a variety of teaching methods designed to meet the needs of her population. Specifically, the review centers aimed to meet the needs of varying multiple intelligences of her students and provide an opportunity for differentiated instruction, as reported by her administrator. Kylie and her administrator provided a list of instructional activities including, but not limited to, use of graphic organizers, bubble maps, and T-charts, “read alouds,” modeling, “daily oral language,” Promethean Board and clickers, and Kagan cooperative learning structures. Kylie reports that during her first year, she relied heavily on direct instruction while this past year she has been trying to incorporate more constructivist activities. Johnson, Musial, Hall, Gollnick, & Dupuis describe constructivism as “An educational theory that emphasizes hands-on, activity-based teaching and learning during which students develop their own frames of thought” (2008, p. 331). At this point in her career, Kylie mentioned that she is less confident in her ability to guide her students through constructivist activities and get them to the conclusion.

While I was observing Kylie, I had the opportunity to observe her students participating in a constructivist activity. Her students had just completed the novel, *True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, by Avi. Kylie had her students pair up and select a character from the novel that they would like to be. Their partner then wrote a series of interview questions aimed at the chosen character and the activity concluded with the interviews taking place. As her students were working through this activity, Kylie encouraged each of the students to think more critically about the content. For example, she made statements such as, “Think it through. Not

‘because she made me mad,’ but rather think about what she did that made you mad? Think like Captain Jaggery.”

Through no fault of her own, technology and technological advances is an area in which Kylie has had to learn as she has progressed through her first two years of teaching. Bethel, although offering courses in educational technology, has limited opportunities for students to utilize technologies such as SmartBoards or Promethean Boards and Student Response Devices (Clickers). Kylie’s student teaching placement did not allow for much technology beyond overhead projectors and computer labs. As such, when Kylie received a Promethean Board she taught herself how to use that technology and has found ways to have her students use it as well. In her classroom, Kylie has computer technology, including a Promethean Board, a TV/DVD/VCR combination, and an overhead projector to name a few.

When asked about how Kylie knows that all of the children in her classroom are engaged, she stated, “The biggest thing is seeing them engaged and just paying attention when I’m teaching and when we’re working to what they are doing. If they’re plugged in and they’re on task and they know what is going on.” She followed this up by stating that questioning skills are important; instead of asking “Do you know what you are supposed to be doing?” asking “Please tell me what you are supposed to be doing.” Kylie mentioned that asking more specifics up front helped to clarify issues early rather than waiting for work to be turned in and finding that the students didn’t understand. She provided an example of this at the end of her classes when she asked the students to describe their homework for her.

As shown previously, Kylie comes from a family that embodies high expectations. Kylie has high expectations for herself and subsequently has high expectations for those around her, including her students. Again, this was verified by her principal, who is familiar with Kylie in

her work setting as well as being familiar with Kylie's background. Kylie noted that first and foremost she gives respect and she expects respect, not only in student's interactions with her, but in their interactions with each other. Secondly, she expects students to be engaged; engaged in the classroom activities and "not off in their own world." Homework provides Kylie with an opportunity to demonstrate her high expectations. The following statement notes not only Kylie's high expectations, but also her willingness to help her students achieve those expectations:

A lot of kids will say "Well, I didn't get that done because..." or "I forgot I was supposed to..." and I just don't take those excuses, saying, "No, it needs to be done; you tell me when it's going to be done." That's something that I've had to work on too, being the strict teacher. Saying, "Tell me, when are you going to get this done?" "Okay, how are you going to do that?" "Are you going to take it home or are you going to stay after school or are you coming in during study hall?" and not letting them get away with those excuses. Giving them more responsibility for what they are doing. This is a new thing for them in sixth grade. It's something that they struggle with a lot at the beginning of the year. Most of them are starting to get it at this point in the year and it will help them out next year.

On an individual level, this is a form of goal setting, which her administrator said that she does with them, and which she finds to be helpful, especially with their state assessments. Kylie's administrator further noted that she tries to meet individually with her students to set a goal using data including formative assessments, WEA scores, and previous state assessment scores. She further noted that Kylie does not have many special needs students in her classroom, but she does try to adapt her expectations through differentiation of accommodations and modifications.

While describing her Bethel course work, Kylie mentioned that her favorite courses were those in which the instructor was able to “walk the walk.” Instead of just teaching about an educational theory, Kylie appreciated when the instructor used that theory to teach the students in the class so that the students could learn by example. She additionally noted that she received the most benefit from courses that included an observation component, where she could interact with Pre-Kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Ultimately, she noted that these experiences made more of an impact on her than sitting in the classroom. She noted, “Seeing these are the things that you need to do, rather than hearing these are the things that you need to do.” Her administrator agreed and felt that more exposure to the classroom prior to student teaching would be beneficial.

Kylie additionally noted what I consider to be a recurring issue with teacher education programs. She noted that classroom management at Bethel could be enhanced. I asked Kylie about her course and realized that the course that she took had been completely revised since she took it. During the year when Kylie took the course, it had been provided in an on-line format and currently is provided in a face-to-face format with a restructured curriculum.

As I think about Kylie, I am not sure that Bethel can take full credit for her successes in the classroom. Perhaps her administrator said it best when she stated, “She comes from a family with very high expectations and very structured.” It is no doubt that family is important in the education of a child.

#### Case Study Four – “Dylan”

Dylan comes from a teaching family. Dylan’s father teaches high school math in his hometown and Dylan teaches high school math in the town where his father first taught. Dylan’s younger brother is completing his teacher education program with an endorsement to teach math

as well. Perhaps it is because of my own background in teaching math that I have enjoyed watching Dylan progress from student to student teacher to teacher.

At the time of my observation of and interview with Dylan in February, he was in the second half of his first year of teaching. Although I did not secure permission to interview a mentor or administrator about Dylan's use of culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom, I did observe several of Dylan's classes and concluded the experience with an interview of Dylan at the end of the school day.

As with many of the other students that come to Bethel and subsequently enter the teacher education program, Dylan came from a rural Kansas town. The total population of this town in 2000 was listed as 1,873 by the U.S. Census Bureau (2000). The median age was 37.8 years; 46.9% of the total was male and 53.1% was female. As with many of the other small, rural towns in Kansas, the strong majority of the population, 96.7% in this case, described themselves as being white. Other races represented included Hispanic with 2.2%, Black or African American with 0.2%, American Indian and Alaskan Native with 0.4%, Asian with 0.4%, "some other race" with 0.6%, and "two or more races" with 1.5%. There are three schools in the district that serve Dylan's hometown and a neighboring community. According to the district website, a neighboring community hosts the primary center, which includes kindergarten to grade 3. The middle school houses grades 4 to 8 and includes a Pre-Kindergarten Center while the high school houses grades 9 through 12. According to SchoolTree.com, the high school enrolled 220 students in the 2009-2010 school year. Of this population, 22.8% were on free or reduced lunch and the racial distribution is only slightly different than the town population as a whole: White, 94.1%; Hispanic, 5.5%; and African American, 0.4%.



Although Dylan was on track to graduate from Bethel in four years with a Bachelor of Arts degree and a major in Mathematical Sciences and a recommendation for teacher licensure, Dylan injured his knee while playing basketball and elected to be “redshirted” for one year and completed his program in five years. During the fall semester of his fifth year, Dylan student taught in the high school in the same district in which Kylie had student taught the previous year. There are three schools in this community: an elementary school with grades kindergarten to 4, a middle school with grades 5 to 8, and a high school with grades 9 to 12. The demographics of the community are the same as reported within the case study on Kylie; however, the demographics of the high school are slightly different. There were 255 students enrolled in grades 9 to 12 during the 2009-2010 school year (SchoolTree.org, 2009). Of that number, 54.1% were male and 45.9% were female. The racial breakdown of the high school is as follows: White, 93.3%; African American, 2.4%; Hispanic, 3.9%; and Asian Pacific Islander, 0.4%. Whereas 22.4% of the population of the middle school, where Kylie student taught, was on free and reduced lunch, 13.4% of the high school population was on free and reduced lunch. Dylan’s cooperating teacher graduated from Bethel. Dylan’s primary responsibilities in this placement included teaching algebra and geometry. Technology available in this placement included a computer for research, grading and attendance, an overhead projector, and graphing calculators.

Looking back at data from Dylan’s student teaching, I notice that on each of his final evaluations, one from his cooperating teacher, college supervisor, college math department representative, he received an “Exemplary” ranking in the area of “Is sensitive to cultural differences in communication, responses” and “Uses reflection. Adapts and adjusts” both of which relate to his use of culturally relevant pedagogy. In another area, “Classroom climate is positive, promotes student self-esteem and development. Relationships built on mutual respect”

Dylan also received a ranking of “Exemplary” from each of the observers. As an observer in his student teaching classroom, I was consistently impressed with the rapport, which he developed with his students; always positive, always professional. For example, in one exchange between Dylan and one of the students in his first class, Dylan’s language was polite and respectful:

Teacher – [Student Name], what are you doing?

Student – Response.

Teacher – Could you please ...?

Student – Response.

Teacher – Thank you.

In this exchange, I considered the use of the student’s name a form of dignifying the student and the use of “please” and “thank you” as modeling appropriate and expected behavior. In another instance, Dylan made a mistake in a math problem that he was working, a student corrected him, and Dylan thanked the student for catching the mistake. As this interchange occurred across the room, I was not able to hear the student responses in this exchange.

Following his student teaching, Dylan remained enrolled at Bethel during the spring semester and was subsequently employed to teach geometry at Santa Fe High School (SFHS) in Kansas. This contract included additional responsibilities in coaching tennis, a responsibility that Dylan was initially hesitant to accept, but ultimately came to enjoy. Further conversations with Dylan indicated that his contract included teaching regular geometry and then transitional geometry for students who need more support. He additionally had a tentative contract to help coach track in the spring should enough students go out for the sport.

When I looked at the website for Santa Fe, Kansas I got a different feel than my previous impressions of this community. The website promotes a vibrant community with many

opportunities, including educational opportunities in the local community college. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) Santa Fe boasts a population of 12,057 with a median age of 36.1 years. Located within 20 minutes of the largest city in Kansas, the population of Santa Fe is 94.3% White, 1.4% African American, 1.1% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.2% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, 1.1% “some other race,” 1.9% “two or more races,” and 2.9% Hispanic. With 52.1% of the population, a slight majority of the residents are female; the remaining 47.9% of the population are male. Santa Fe High School itself had 646 students enrolled during the 2009-2010 school year (SchoolTree.org, 2009). Interestingly, the school population, regarding gender, is just reversed from the percents of the community itself, with 52.8% of the school population reported as male and 47.2% reported as female. The racial breakdown varied slightly from the community as a whole and was reported as follows: American Indian Alaska Native, 1.1%; Asian Pacific Islander, 0.6%; Hispanic, 4.2%; African American, 2.3%; and Caucasian, 91.8%.

I arrived at SFHS at 12:30, as lunch was ending. Santa Fe High School was located on the North edge of Santa Fe. To get there, I followed the route I was most familiar with, which took me through town and then back north. I later realized there was a more direct route that would have bypassed the downtown area and saved me about 20 minutes of travel time. From the outside of the building it was obvious that construction was recently completed on the building, there were few trees or shrubs and the building had a “new” feel to it. This was confirmed upon entering the building and learning that a new wing, in addition to renovations, had been added. North of the school appeared to be a new housing development. Parking for SFHS was between the school and the road to the north and appeared to have only one exit; at least, I could only find one exit, which required me to travel the span of the parking lot and

beyond. Upon entering the building (at lunch), I noticed that individuals enter in a commons area which was set up for lunch. There were students eating at tables with a number of faculty/staff sitting at tables also eating. The office was located to the left of the entrance with glass windows set to view the commons area. Dylan met me as I entered; he was one of the faculty eating in the commons, and escorted me to the office and then grabbed his food from the table and took me to his room. There was an almost sterile feel to the building, new and clean.

Dylan's classroom was located in one of the older wings of the building; however, it had been completely refinished. The classroom had beige walls, built in cupboards and shelves on one wall with a work space below. A printer was located on the workspace below the cupboards. There were white boards on the front and back walls and one side wall; a projector was ceiling mounted with an Elmo at the front; included in this setup was computer and stereo system. The side wall, with two windows, had basketball (The University of Kansas) propaganda mounted on it, as well as a math calendar with activities; recruiting for track and field ("We have a spot for everyone"). The back wall white board had class assignments posted on it. Notes on the side wall white board reminded students that, when absent, it was their "responsibility to get their make-up work!" and a note specific to geometry students: "You can access guided notes on my Wiki page (if you are absent)." In the first class that I observed, there were nine males and eight females. In the second class, a transitional geometry class, there were nine males and 11 females. As the students began to get out their materials for class, I noticed that several had laptops with them; when I asked Dylan about this, he explained that the school was involved in a one-to-one laptop initiative.

Upon entering Dylan's room, perhaps my most notable initial reaction was to the rapport that Dylan had with his students. He maintained a positive, professional relationship, but used

information about the students to help in motivating them to do their best. The first class that I observed was a higher functioning class and it was obvious that students in the second class struggled with motivation.

Teacher – I’ll bet you ...

Student 1 – Well, yeah.

Teacher – You slept through class.

Student 1 – I’m failing your class.

Teacher – You’re not failing.

Student 2 – Mr. “D,” my finger is stuck.

Teacher – Any nurses in class? ...

Teacher – “Amber,” are you feeling okay?

Student 3 – Yeah.

Teacher – Do you want to go to the nurse?

Dylan’s use of non-threatening language served to help diffuse and address situations that needed confronting and helped to keep students focused and working.

Teacher – What are we doing here?

Student 1 – We need to do more math work here!

Within the context of the classroom climate that Dylan had established, these snippets demonstrate Dylan’s ability to maintain positive relationships with his students, express care for them, and yet maintain an appropriate work environment, as noted previously.

Dylan’s ability to reflect, adapt and change was evident in his communications with his students, but he stated that the art of reflection was encouraged by the administration as well. He noted that the principal of SFHS is new this year and she has introduced reflection into staff

meetings held weekly. This reflective practice is encouraged during in-service days and at other times of the year as well. Dylan noted:

We have a staff meeting every week, every Thursday morning, and every one of those staff meetings is doing basically that, reflecting; reflecting on your own teaching, but also reflecting in a group setting with other teachers as well. [The principal] will have questions for us to answer, and then on our in-service days, a lot of that is spent doing the same thing. And then the other thing that I think is kind of neat is what she does on her website: she posts a question, kind of like a blog, and each teacher is supposed to go onto that site and then answer the questions. So then you can do your reflecting on your own, but then you can see what other people have put too, and then you can use that to help.

Reflecting about his teaching practice is not a foreign concept to Dylan. On a micro level, Dylan shared that he teaches three sections of the same geometry class and he further shared that there are differences between the populations of each class, “each class has a certain dynamic.”

Understanding the differences between his classes has helped him to tailor the instruction to meet their needs. He noted that one class may be higher functioning and he may use certain instructional methods with that class, while another may require more time. He notes, “By the third time I’m teaching the same thing, I know. Well, this worked, they understood this, don’t show them this, that confused the heck out of them.” His instructional practice is not limited to acting and reacting on an hourly basis, but he additionally makes notes of changes that he would like to make in his methods for the following years.

Dylan’s reflective ability on an hour-by-hour basis, as well as his ability to think on his feet enabled him to adapt his communications to meet the needs of his students. Dylan demonstrated, through his actions in the classes that I observed, that he had a strong

understanding of his students and their needs. For example, one male student asked to use the notes of someone not in attendance because his notes were not accurate. Dylan reminded this student of his behavior and attention the previous day when they were working on their notes and then talked about consequences. I asked Dylan about the exchange later and he remarked:

But yeah, I did go back and said, “‘David,’ this is how you do it.” If I wouldn’t have done that, he would have been done for the day. He would have been, ‘Okay, it’s me against the world, I’m done.’ But yeah, I’ve learned how to handle individual students and what I can do, because his attitude would have changed from positive attention to ... ‘oh jeez.’

His ability and efforts to help all of his children are enhanced through his use of Kagan cooperative learning activities. For these, Dylan turned back to his training during his student teaching experience. He talked about his planning for these activities and noted that he further tries to answer every question from every student, realizing the appropriateness of questions that students ask, as well as timing of the questions. He noted that he helps students on homework questions, but he additionally stated, “The test is not the time to learn, it’s the time to find out what the students learned.”

Dylan confirmed what I had observed of his classes; that he has a limited diverse population that he works with. Respectful of his students’ parents and guardians, Dylan encourages participation in parent teacher conferences. He noted that he also calls parents to let them know how they are doing in class. He was quick to note, however, that he didn’t tell them, as parents and guardians, what to do, but rather let them know how their child was progressing.

In my interview with Molly, she mentioned that individuals in her age group, the Millennials, view diversity differently than do other generations that preceded the Millennials. I believed that this could be a unique thread in which to follow and so I added a couple of

questions to my protocol based on this line of thinking. In my interview with Dylan, this seemed an appropriate time to ask Dylan to compare his views of diversity with previous generations. Dylan agreed with Molly that he felt that his generation did view diversity differently than previous generations. He noted, “All through college a lot of our classes were designed around teaching to everybody. You know, incorporating everybody, culturally diverse classrooms, it’s happening everywhere and so you need to be ready for that.”

In working with all students, Dylan mentioned that this provides him an opportunity to live his religious faith, at least in modeling values that he expects in his students. He felt that his religion helped tremendously in this aspect of his teaching as he noted, “Just treating all students the same. Treating them fair, giving them the respect that I expect from them. So if they do that, I find that they will do the same.” I don’t know if Dylan’s excellent hearing presents him with dilemmas in regard to addressing issues with high school students, but it does present him with the opportunity to employ the 20/80 rule that my students have had drilled into them. I let them know that 20% of the decisions that they make are worth “going to the mat” for and the other 80% of their decisions are “throw away decisions,” the outcome doesn’t matter. Their responsibility is to try to decide which decisions fall into which category. Dylan demonstrated that he ably used this rule along with his rapport with his students. This was demonstrated through an exchange that I observed:

One student said something to another student (I couldn’t hear it, but Dylan did)

Teacher – “S” word, “David.” What do you say?

Student gave an excuse.

Teacher – What do you say?

David – I’m sorry



Inappropriate language in Dylan's classroom obviously fell within the 20% and the students appeared to understand this and understood the routine for dealing with it. In modeling appropriate behavior and language, Dylan consistently modeled the language he expected, using "Please" and "Thank you" consistently in his communications with the students.

Dylan teaches two sections of transitional geometry and three sections of regular geometry. When asked about methods that he uses in working with his students, Dylan remarked that with the transition class he feels he is required to stick to the curriculum, which is based off of worksheets as opposed to a textbook. The routine for these classes is that Dylan will go over a couple of problems, modeling processes expected of the students. He will then work additional problems, letting the students tell him what to do. Following that, the students will work individually to complete the worksheet. He noted that with his transition geometry classes he does not vary this routine much, because "if I do let them try to work together and figure stuff out it becomes a disaster very fast with those two classes." He noted that with his geometry classes, however, he is able to demonstrate much more flexibility in his instruction. He stated:

With geometry I can do more cooperative learning and in my instructions for geometry, I give them these guided notes. I started creating those because I find that students are much more apt to take notes if all they have to do is fill in the blanks. I made that, and I started that about a month into first semester. I find that they just liked it a lot. So, that helps. But that's what I do for each class.

As I observed Dylan in the classroom, it became apparent that he enjoys working with students and with teaching his content. His body language and his voice inflections demonstrated enthusiasm for a subject, and with students not readily engaged, many find challenging. For example, my field notes describe that while working with students, Dylan raised and lowered the

pitch, tone, and volume of the words he was using to emphasize points, gain student attention, and raise or lower students' level of concern. Dylan's quickened body movement and hand gestures demonstrated energy and excitement for the content that he was teaching.

Dylan noted that he uses a variety of methods for determining whether his students have learned the material. In addition to the typical testing strategies, chapter tests, quizzes, and homework, Dylan looks to other less obvious strategies as well. He said he looks "at facial expressions, or realizing who is answering the questions when I ask a general question. Realizing whether one person is answering every question, or whether the majority of people answering." His excitement over student learning is contagious, especially when he describes his classes that have a high participation rate.

And they're fun and they like to learn. I had one class last semester, I had 23 students and it was this way. It was perfect. I didn't have one problem ever. They were all participating, it was fun. We were having fun, but we were learning. Not every class can be like that.

While Dylan works with students from all ends of the ability spectrum, he demonstrated an understanding of the importance of having high expectations for all of his students, noting, "Granted, not all students have the same ability, but that still doesn't change the fact that you can have high expectations. He further stated "high expectations for one student may mean a 'C' compared to high expectations for another student may mean an 'A'." He demonstrated his high expectations for student teaching through his interactions with them in the way that he answered their questions. Quite often in mathematics, the easiest method is to give students the answer, but Dylan does not just do this. He works with the students until they get the solution, going through

the processes. When asked about this, he mentioned that he wants the students to understand that he believes in them. He noted:

But I try to, in the way I answer their questions. I don't want to give them the answer, I want to ask more questions in a way that says, "Hey, I believe in you, you can figure this out, look at your notes, look at some examples, you can process that information and you can answer it without me having to give you straight up the answer."

He realized that this method is much more challenging with some students than others, but he also realized that in the long run this method is more effective in helping the students learn and understand the material. He also noted that he aims to ask all students questions as he is presenting the material and in doing so, he selects questions with answers that he believes that the individual student will be able to answer. He noted that he believes this gives the students a little more confidence.

Although Dylan was a bit more general in his response to courses at Bethel that impacted his ability to teach all students, he did note that Psychological Foundations of Education was his favorite class. He followed that up by listing several other education courses, focusing on special needs and multicultural education, which he felt had an impact. He specifically noted that the use of microteachings was an important component for helping gain teaching skills. He additionally noted that he was required in one of his courses to teach lessons in the Pre-Kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade setting and believed that more of those experiences would have been beneficial. He stated, "I think more [pre-service experiences actually teaching] would be helpful. Just because then you're exposed to all sorts of different kinds of kids and the behaviors. So I think that more than anything." He did mention that his specific Math Methods course was less helpful than he would have liked, but he did note that this course has a new instructor.

Even though he lacked early pre-service experiences, Dylan demonstrated that by utilizing rapport and a positive, respectful environment, he is aptly able to teach even the challenging students, as my field notes describe:

With the second class and the fact that it was a lower functioning class, the students were much more distractible and seemed like dominoes, when one fell, others fell. Many of the students appeared to lack confidence and were just seeking reassurance they were on the right track.

In a demonstration of helping all students learn, Dylan aptly provided this reassurance.

#### Case Study Five – “Kathy”

Kathy was the second of four siblings to attend Bethel College, although her father had attended Bethel some years before. Kathy’s route to become a teacher was a bit different than that of a traditional teacher education student at Bethel. Kathy initially graduated from Bethel with a degree in History and went into the workforce for a year. During that year, after Kathy decided that she would return to school to get her license to teach, I had my first real interactions with her about becoming a teacher. Kathy and I mapped out a plan to help her achieve her goal and she subsequently completed the licensure program for history and government in 2009. At the same time, she worked with the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) to add an endorsement in Arabic to her license. At this point in time, KSDE allowed adding endorsements to an existing license through testing and although there was not a test for Arabic, Kathy worked with KSDE to meet the qualifications to add Arabic to her teaching license.

Kathy grew up, at least through the seventh grade, in the country of Jordan, providing her with a foundation in the Arabic language. Following this period of time in Jordan, Kathy’s family relocated to a rural Kansas community, the same community from which Dylan, in case

study four, was raised and graduated from high school. The total population of this town in 2000 was listed as 1,873 by the U.S. Census Bureau (2000). The median age was 37.8 years; 46.9% of the total was male and 53.1% was female. As with many of the other small, rural towns in Kansas, the strong majority of the population, 96.7% in this case, described themselves as being white. Other races represented included Hispanic with 2.2%, Black or African American with 0.2%, American Indian and Alaskan Native with 0.4%, Asian with 0.4%, “some other race” with 0.6%, and “two or more races” with 1.5%. There are three schools in the district that serve Kathy’s adopted hometown and a neighboring community. According to the 2009-2010 Kansas Educational Directory (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009a), a neighboring community hosts the primary center, which includes kindergarten to grade 3. The middle school houses grades 4 to 8 and includes a Pre-Kindergarten Center while the high school houses grades 9 through 12. According to SchoolTree.com, the high school enrolled 220 students in the 2009-2010 school year. Of this population, 22.8% were on free or reduced lunch and the racial distribution is only slightly different than the town population as a whole: White, 94.1%; Hispanic, 5.5%; and African American, 0.4%. Although Kathy described herself as Caucasian, her Jordanian ethnic background, her language skills, and her Muslim religion distinguished her from her classmates. In describing her Pre-Kindergarten to twelfth grade experiences, Kathy stated, “I grew up in a very diverse location, but at the same time, I’m thinking, I went to an American high school with no diversity, no, none.”

Because Kathy had completed a degree in history prior to returning to school to get a recommendation for teacher licensure, her education coursework and training served as the basis of her second stint in college. Interestingly, Kathy’s own enrollment in her education courses impacted the diversity of those classes and provided her classmates with opportunities to expand

their horizons. For example, Kathy enrolled in EDU 310, School and Community and in this course the instructor took students to a variety of religious settings, a Spanish Catholic Mass and an African American Baptist church service. With Kathy's influence, the instructor additionally took the students to a Muslim mosque for a religious service. Following her coursework, Kathy student taught in a classroom focusing on American history.

Her student teaching experience provided Kathy an environment with more diversity than she experienced in her own high school. According to the 2009-2010 Kansas Educational Directory (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009a), the district in which Kathy completed her student teaching includes one adult learning center/alternative school, one high school, two middle schools, five elementary schools, and an early childhood center. This school district encompasses one main city and includes two surrounding communities. According to SchoolTree.org (2009), the high school in this district enrolled 1,130 students during the 2009-2010 school year with an almost even split of males and females, 49.5% male and 50.5% female. The percent of students on free and reduced lunch was 29.5%, while the racial composition of the school was as follows: American Indian Alaskan Native, 0.9%; Asian Pacific Islander, 0.9%; Hispanic, 14.8%; African American, 3.5%; and Caucasian, 79.9%. Kathy taught five sections of American History on a block schedule while student teaching in this placement. Although I served as Kathy's primary college supervisor in her student teaching, two other individuals from Bethel also observed her teaching, another member of the education department and a representative from this history department. One of these individuals commented about Kathy's ability to engage students in a positive manner, maintaining an appropriate work environment. The second noted that Kathy aptly made adjustments to her lessons as needed "to make sure all

students understood [the] material.” My own evaluation of Kathy, using the Teacher Education Department evaluation scale, was as follows:

- I. e. Is sensitive to cultural differences in communication, responses. Exemplary.
- II. c. Relates lessons to student experiences, prior learning. Lessons are meaningful and relevant. Proficient.
- II. f. Uses multiple strategies of teaching and for learning. Exemplary.
- II. i. Adapts lessons for diversity with specific and effective adaptations for special needs. Proficient.
- III. a. Constantly monitors learning and is aware of effects of instruction; Adapts and uses alternative approaches, to address learning problems. Proficient.
- IV. g. Builds community atmosphere where differences are respected. Exemplary.
- V. f. Uses reflection. Adapts and adjusts. Exemplary.

According to my own recollections of Kathy’s teaching, I was struck by her use of multiple methods of instruction in her classroom. Because all of Kathy’s training was geared toward teaching in a history classroom, I was very interested in her success using her teaching methodologies in a foreign language classroom.

Upon completion of her licensure program and subsequent receipt of her license with endorsements in American history and government and foreign language Arabic, Kathy accepted a teaching positions in Hidden Valley, a large suburban school district. According to the 2009-2010 Kansas Educational Directory (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009a), there are five high schools in this district. Kathy’s teaching position required that she teach in two different schools in this district, Hidden Valley High School One and Hidden Valley High

School Two. I had to opportunity to observe and interview Kathy in the first of these two schools.

Hidden Valley High School One was located off of a main road in a developed residential area, between two major roads. A large stadium was located on the west side of the school and there was a large parking lot between the road and the school. Upon entering the school, there were Army recruiters in the foyer area with a “hallway monitor,” teachers sitting behind a table, in front of the office. The office had large windows open to the foyer area. There were two doors into the office with a reception counter running the span of the office. On this February day, shortly after Valentine’s Day, I had scheduled to meet Kathy at 12:00 p.m. in the office, so I notified the receptionist that I was there and she called Kathy’s room. Shortly, Kathy arrived to escort me to “her” classroom.

Kathy’s classroom was located downstairs, in a room without windows. This classroom was decorated with lots of Arabic posters. Kathy informed me that this classroom was assigned to her as her home base, but was a room in which she did not teach. She noted that she teaches from a cart and moves from room to room. In the mornings, she teaches in another school in Hidden Valley School District and in the afternoon she is in this building and teaches from a cart. Kathy taught in another classroom on the same level down another corridor.

Following interviews with Kathy and her mentor teacher, Kathy and I went to her first class. This is a room which “belonged” to a government teacher. There were two windows in the room, which I found to be interesting because we had gone down a flight of stairs and I believed that we were underground. From the outside I hadn’t noticed the change in ground level, at least from the front. From this vantage point in this classroom, the outside ground level still appeared to be at least two levels below the windows. The walls were off white and there were campaign



posters on one of the walls. The back wall was recently given to Kathy to decorate. The desks were in six straight rows with five desks per row. There was a computer with a ceiling-mounted projector with a TV/VCR combination in a corner of the room. Kathy used a white board with markers for instruction. I noticed that “Olympic” theme music was played in the halls during the passing period as students were moving from room to room.

I observed two of Kathy’s classes. The first class, a level-three Arabic class, had three students. All three of these students were white males; one of the students was Jewish. Although there were five students enrolled in the second class, only three were in attendance. Of these, two were female and one was male; one was Somalian, one was Arabic, and one was Indian (from India). The students in this class were enrolled in first year, level-one Arabic.

Demographics at Hidden Valley High School One provide that 1,768 students were in attendance during the 2009-2010 school year (SchoolTree.org, 2009). Comprising 52.2% of the population, there were more males than females at this school. Given the diverse composition of Kathy’s classes, I was intrigued to find the racial breakdown of the total school population as follows: American Indian Alaskan Native, 0.7%; Asian Pacific Islander, 3.2%; Hispanic, 3.6%; African American, 4.4%; and Caucasian, 88.1%. A total of 4.3% of the population received a free or reduced lunch. Considering that this is an affluent suburb of a large urban city, the demographics of Hidden Valley High School One should not have surprised me.

As I observed Kathy in this setting, I once again noted the relationships that she had developed with her students. I knew from her student teaching that this was a strength and given the small class sizes that she had in this setting, she was able to able to incorporate her rapport in improving her own instruction. With smaller numbers of students Kathy noted that she reflects constantly during lessons and if it is not going well she will automatically move on to something

different. She noted that her reflection is done on a minute-to-minute basis, as well as a day-to-day basis; constantly and continuously. She also noted that the students help her with this; at least she viewed their input as help. She noted:

If it's not going well, I automatically know. The kids are very vocal about it. Because [classes are] so small, they will let me know. If they like the activity and they are engaged, they don't say anything. Or they'll say, "That was fun."

Kathy further shared an example of a modification to her lessons that she made based on student comments. Ultimately, she changed her lesson plans based on student input and then found that the changes didn't work as she had planned. She reverted to the original plans and the lesson progressed much more smoothly.

Kathy is in a unique situation at Hidden Valley High School One and that situation has led to much reflection on Kathy's part, at least as far as changes that she intends to make in her classroom in future years. As noted previously, Kathy is licensed by the Kansas State Department of Education with an endorsement to teach both history and government, and Arabic. There is another person in the department who also teaches Arabic, but who is not licensed to teach. As such, and rightly so, there appears to be concern, on the part of the previous teacher, that Kathy will be taking over the program in the future. Kathy notes that she feels like she is a student teacher again. She stated:

I came in with her rules. I came in with her syllabus. Everything was hers. And she's wonderful, she really is; but it's not my style. She loves that textbook and I hate it. So I'm realizing that is maybe the advantage of coming out of a teaching program right away. I have those standards and I like them. That is what the standards say that I need to

do; that's what I'm going to do. And the textbook is completely different. Next year a lot of it's going to change.

As I observed Kathy's class, I noticed that she used no textbooks or worksheets. She used manipulatives and she used vocabulary words, but no textbooks. Kathy also noted that she is working to establish her own rules in her classroom, rather than rely on the previous teacher's rules. And in many regards she found that the creation of her own rapport with the students was hampered by the students' relationship with the previous instructor. In my conversation with Kathy, she asked me about support for teaching foreign languages. She aptly realized that her training had been in the teaching of history and further realized that this training did not fully prepare her for the teaching of a foreign language like Arabic. Kathy's reflective thinking led her to conclude that she needed more training in foreign language instructional methodology and she was actively seeking additional support.

Kathy's mentor teacher, a history teacher, noticed some of the struggles that Kathy experienced with the situation early on and noted that many of their early conversations were centered on the situation described previously.

I'm sure people in the outside world imagine that you can just walk in and start teaching, but there's a lot more to it. And I think early on, she struggled with some of the basic stuff that everyone does, classroom management, and things like that. And with a curriculum such as hers, there isn't a set curriculum, whereas in American history or geography, we see the beginning and the end. For her, she's creating on her own and so I think that she has to be reflective constantly, not only in subject matter, looking at what worked, what didn't work, but also in just the basics of teaching; the first couple of days struggling and falling and these kids not accepting her right away and having to come to

me. We talked about it and said, “What worked, what didn’t work? Let’s expand on that,” and that’s what she did.

Her mentor mentioned that he has seen an obvious change in Kathy based on her reflective thinking. He noted that the difference was like “night and day” and that he enjoyed watching her “bloom and blossom as a teacher.” He additionally noted a change in her personality. He said, “She’s amazing now. It’s fun to see the comfort level. I see a smile on her face; I see a spring in her step. I see a confidence in the classroom with the kids when she’s taking on roles.” He noted that she is no longer looking at surviving the day, but now is considering where she will be in a month, or in two months and is able to focus on long-term planning. As I was visiting with Kathy, this long-term planning aspect came into focus. Realizing that her comfort level with Arabic was not where she felt it should be, she was considering applying to a program designed to help Arabic teachers. She asked if I would be willing to write her a letter of recommendation. She ultimately was approved for this program.

Kathy is currently teaching in a program within Hidden Valley High School One called the Center for International Studies (CIS). Cultural awareness and cultural studies are important within this program. Because Kathy teaches in a classroom that is not her own, she struggled with the question of what an observer visiting her classroom would see that demonstrated her cultural literacy, but she did note that she attempts to highlight, with her students, cultural activities sponsored by CIS. She noted that CIS attempts to sponsor these activities at least once a month. She additionally noted that she has had visitors come to her classroom. She stated:

We had a guy come from Iraq, who was a soldier and who wants to teach Arabic. Before that, we had a number of visitors come from Muslim countries, well, predominantly

Muslim countries. Nepal, and India, and Pakistan and various areas; they came to visit American schools and the kids got to ask questions and back and forth.

As a Muslim herself, Kathy is able to incorporate information from her own background to help her students understand more fully various cultures.

She uses her background, as well as what she knows about the background of her students to make comparisons between American culture and what a person would normally see in Arabic countries. In our interview, she noted that quite often her students and she will discuss what she referred to as “do’s and taboos.” She further noted that one of the students in her first class, the Jewish student, did “a lot of comparisons on his own and shares out loud.” She additionally noted that this young man would try to teach her Hebrew. She noted that she is willing to learn and that she wants to learn a new language along with them. With her second class, she finds additional ways to connect with her students. In describing this second class, she stated:

It’s also really nice to have a student from Pakistan, one from Somalia, one who is bilingual, no, almost trilingual. And then we have another girl from Sudan, and then we have another guy who is biracial, half Caucasian and half black. So it’s a very diverse class, and they all have their own stories and their own connections.

I was intrigued with her discussion with her second group of students, the students in Level One Arabic. The class was discussing various nouns used in naming different sports, e.g., football, basketball, etc. When it came to baseball, she asked “What does the actual definition of Al Qaeda mean?” She then related that Al Qaeda translates to mean “the base” in English. She first related this to a rough translation in Arabic of “baseball” and then went on to state that “they are calling themselves the base, the platform going back to the base of society.” This provided Kathy

the opportunity to engage her students in yet another discussion of cultural differences and similarities in American society.

Kathy further noted that due to the low enrollment in her classes she is able to call each of her students' parents to share with them the progress of their students. She did mention that the parents of one of her students did not want their child taking Arabic and this presented Kathy an opportunity to demonstrate compassion with this child. She noted:

I made post cards to send home to their parents. One of the girls, at [Hidden Valley High School Two], her parents have expressed that they don't like that she's taking Arabic.

I'm also getting this feeling that things aren't going so well at home. I made a post card for her, and I decided to talk to her first before I sent it home. I want her to continue to take Arabic, obviously, but I didn't know how her family was going to receive the post card. So, I talked to her in person and she said, "No," she didn't want me to send it home. I replied, "This post card is for you then. I want you to know that I really like having you in class" and that was that. There was nothing that I could do about it.

Kathy's caring spirit for the individual student in her classes was apparent in that story, but she shared with me another story dealing with another young lady, a young lady with a background very similar to Kathy's background. She noted that she had invited students over to her house to help her students understand more about the culture. She shared that one student's mother went to drop her daughter off and when she saw "guys" at the house she didn't like having to drop her student off. Kathy explained that she had gone outside and explained to the mother that she and her brother were there to chaperone the kids and monitor their actions. The student's mother still would not leave her child at the house and she left. Later she found an opportunity to visit with the student privately and she stated:

Well, one of my girls at [HVHST] is covered, and I know that she feels that she can identify with me, because I totally understand where she is coming from. And I told her, 'I get it, you don't have to explain it to me. I know exactly what went down and I understand and that's fine.' I think it helped her. And she's really open with me. Every time I bring food, she says, "Can you make it 'Halal' so I can eat it?" I was like, 'Absolutely, there's not a problem with that.' I try to be as respectful as possible; no matter what.

Her mentor teacher expressed that he notices these efforts as well. He stated that he realizes that she works hard in the classroom and further noted that she often times is teaching content that could be covered in a video, but she is engaged with the students. He stated that "she's got them around her, they're doing group work; they're doing activities."

With Kathy, every opportunity to become a teachable moment is used. She described that each Friday is "culture day." As I was observing Kathy on February 16, Americans had recently celebrated Valentine's Day. This provided Kathy with an opportunity to visit with her students about a variety of traditions celebrated by different peoples. In each instance this provides Kathy with an opportunity to teach her students about customs and traditions in an effort to help her students understand and respect a variety of cultures. She noted that every other Friday she will bring food to class so that her students have the opportunity to experience food from her culture. This provides her with the opportunity to talk about table manners and how you would eat certain foods. As I was visiting with her, she added, "It's very cultural every day. The kids are usually very good at asking, 'Well, I heard that you can't do this, is that true?'" Each moment becomes a teachable moment!

This respectful relationship between Kathy and her students was not always present. As mentioned previously, Kathy stepped into a situation where there was a popular teacher providing instruction. The students saw Kathy as a stranger, an intruder in their midst. Kathy did not have the relationship with the students that the previous teacher had. Kathy felt pressure to work with the students in the same manner and with the same materials that the previous teacher had. Kathy did not succumb to this pressure. Her mentor teacher noted that “she had to convince the kids that she is their teacher and that she is very confident in her field. I think that’s shown through now because the students want to be in her class.” This relationship has progressed to the point where I observed the following playful interaction between Kathy and one of her students:

Teacher – Erase your boards. Use one of those verbs in a sentence.

Student – Can you spell it out on the board?

Teacher – Sound it out.

Student – You’re mean.

Teacher – Did your second grade teacher spell it out for you?

Student – My second grade Arabic teacher was mean.

Her use of humor in this conversation allowed her to emphasize her expectation that her students do their own work and she was able to convey this in a manner that facilitated her relationship with them. Her mentor further noted that he has observed that the students in her classes want to be engaged and involved and that he believes that she is still finding her space, but that it is going to happen. With a respectful relationship with her students established, I observed Kathy working to help her students demonstrate respect for their parents while injecting a bit of humor.

Teacher – I spoke with your mom. She’s very nice.



Student – Yes, she is, but ....

Teacher – She’s very nice!!!

Student – I bought her a watch for \$195.00.

Teacher – That was nice.

Student – She’s ridiculous.

Teacher – All parents are.

“Gosh. Goodness.” That was the response I got from Kathy when I asked her about her methodology. I had interviewed her mentor teacher prior to interviewing Kathy and so I already knew, from him, that Kathy utilized small group activities, technology, individual activities. He further noted that he felt excited when, as an older teacher, he could see younger teachers bringing new ideas and pushing boundaries. He stated that older teachers, after 18 plus years in the classroom get comfortable and he doesn’t ever want to be that way. He certainly enjoyed the excitement of the energy that Kathy brought to her classroom.

Kathy on the other hand, seemed to focus on her inadequacies. But, she further demonstrated that she was attempting to find solutions. She noted that the fact that she was not trained in teaching a foreign language was a challenge for her; although she did state that she had taught adult English Language Learners, noting that was different than teaching a foreign language. She also stated that she has had the opportunity to observe in a variety of classrooms and is gaining ideas. But with her own methodology, Kathy attempts to change activities every 10 to 15 minutes. With Kathy, routine is important. She notes that they know what they need to be working on from the moment they enter the room. As I observed, she very obviously had structured the class period and was highly organized. Kathy further shared with me an aspect of

her instruction that demonstrated, once again, deep understanding of this age of students and care for their feelings. She noted:

They do a lot of partner work because they don't like to talk to me. They don't want to talk to me because they are so scared they're going to say it wrong. A lot of times they're scared to talk to each other because they're going to say it wrong to each other, but then I remind them that "You're learning it together, how are you going to learn if you don't talk to each other?" So they're a lot more comfortable talking to each other, but then I catch them speaking in English and so then it's ....

Although Kathy expressed that she is still learning methodology for teaching a foreign language, she demonstrated a broad understanding for children and their learning that was helpful in bridging the gap.

In many instances, Kathy described her perception that the situation she entered at Hidden Valley High School One hampered her ability to be effective. Given that she began the year by taking over another teacher's classes, she felt that she missed out on the important first days of the year and ended up trying to change the effects of the previous teacher. Rules and expectations were no exception; Kathy explained that the students had come to expect certain lenient expectations from their previous teacher and when Kathy began to have higher expectations for them they seemed to resent it. She noted that this impacted both her rules and expectation for behavior in the classroom and her expectations for quality student work. She expressed that she was working slowly to change the culture of the room and felt that gradually the changes were taking place. Her mentor mentioned that it was more difficult for him to address Kathy's expectations based on observations, but he did mention that they had discussed some of Kathy's frustration, especially when she had a student that was capable, but not living

up to their ability. He did feel that was an area that was a bit more universal in nature, across the spectrum of both new teachers and experienced teachers.

Like many former students, and especially notably like many of the former students in this study, Kathy was aptly able to identify strengths of the Bethel College Teacher Education program, as well as areas that she felt could be improved. She started by noting that she felt that she lacked a true appreciation for some of the course while she was enrolled in the program, but now that she was in the work force, she was beginning to understand the value of the coursework for her current assignment. Most notably, in Kathy's mind, was EDU 210 Intro to Infants, Children and Youth with Special Needs. She felt that the content of that class helped her to meet the needs of all of her students. She additionally noted that her social studies methods course provided her with multiple activities, which she could introduce to her students. Finally, she noted that EDU 310 School and Community additionally provided her with an opportunity to gain multiple teaching strategies. At the same time that she mentioned this, she did mention that she, now thinking back on it, would want more methods, more strategies to employ with her students.

Interestingly, Kathy stated emphatically that she "hated" the Reflective Teacher Portfolio that she had to submit at three points in the Bethel teacher education program. She further stated that as much as she hated the portfolio, it was very helpful to her with regard to her planning, especially as her planning related to the state standards.

When I asked her cooperating teacher to evaluate the Bethel College Teacher Education Program based on his experiences with Kathy, he remarked that the biggest issue he saw in her was with behavior management. At the same time he mentioned that, he also mentioned that he

has seen many new teachers and that this was a pervasive issue. Ultimately though, with regard to Kathy, he stated:

She's going to be a great teacher, and I see she's done remarkable things. I can't imagine if she was in a program like a social studies, like a normal geography, world history, American history and had the curriculum and had the guidelines, she would be a top teacher. I think she's going to be a top teacher in her field and I hope she gets the opportunity to teach in social studies because I think she will do a phenomenal job. She is very, very good. And I've caught on very quickly, just talking to her and watching her in the classroom, she's going to be a good teacher.

As I concluded my interview with Kathy, I asked her whether she felt that her generation viewed diversity differently than generations before hers. I think the question took her off guard and she had to think about it for a moment because for her, diversity only becomes an issue if there is a lack of diversity. She does recognize diversity between exceptionalities, but cultural diversity and racial diversity didn't seem to enter her realm of consciousness until I mentioned it to her. In fact, at one point in the conversation she remarked, "I'm just now realizing that I have a very diverse population of students." Whether or not she recognized these differences in her student population, it is apparent that Kathy was very aware of the best way to meet the needs of her students. She combined a nice blend of humor in her communications while at the same time working to help her students more fully understand the complexity of human relations, especially the complexity of working across cultures. In this assignment, Kathy was helping her students address envelopes using Arabic.

Teacher – This is your homework.

Student – OMG! Where did you get this? [The student's home address]

Teacher – I have connections.

Student – I lost mine. [Homework assignment]

Teacher – Here it is.

Student – Why can't we use the dash?

Teacher – Because Arabs don't like the dash.

Perhaps Kathy doesn't notice the cultural and racial diversity in class because in her mind it doesn't matter, or perhaps it is because, as she noted, "They are so American."

#### Case Study Six – "Ken"

There must be something about my planning, because the weather, for each of the six visits that I made to the graduates included in these case studies, was consistently cloudy and rainy. I conducted these interviews and observations over a two-month period of time and noted the weather in my field notes. As I approached the location for my final case study participant, it struck me rather abruptly that the weather was, in every case, overcast. I did wonder whether this impacted my observations or the student behavior.

My sixth and final case study participant was Ken. Ken was somewhat unique in that he lived his entire life, including his college experience, within 30 minutes of his birthplace in Kansas. Ken grew up, went to college, and student taught all within the same community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) the median age of the 17,190 residents of this community was 36.9 years of age. The racial demographics of this community were as follows: White, 86.7%; Black or African American, 2.3%; American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.5%; Asian, 0.7%; "some other race," 6.8%; and "two or more races," 2.9%. The Hispanic population was included within those numbers; however, a different breakdown of the demographics demonstrated that 12.7% of the population designated themselves as Hispanic or Latino of any

race and 82.3% of the population designated themselves as White alone. Of the residents of this community over the age of 25, 83.8% had achieved a high school diploma or higher, while 21.6% had achieved a bachelor's degree or higher.

According to the 2009-2010 Kansas Educational Directory (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009a), the district in which Ken completed his student teaching included one adult learning center/alternative school, one high school, two middle schools, five elementary schools, and an early childhood center. The service area for this school district included one main city and included two surrounding communities. According to SchoolTree.org (2009), the high school in this district enrolled 1,130 students during the 2009-2010 school year with an almost even split of males and females, 49.5% male and 50.5% female. The percent of students on free and reduced lunch was 29.5%, while the racial composition of the school was as follows: American Indian Alaskan Native, 0.9%; Asian Pacific Islander, 0.9%; Hispanic, 14.8%; African American, 3.5%; and Caucasian, 79.9%. Ken both graduated from this school and student taught in this school.

Ken student taught in a speech classroom and was employed by the district to serve as an assistant debate coach. While in his student teaching experience, Ken was observed and evaluated by four individuals; I served as Ken's main college supervisor, another member of the education department, a member of the communication arts department, and Ken's cooperating teacher additionally provided input on his final evaluation. The following is a summary of the components of the evaluation relating to Ken's use of culturally relevant pedagogy in his student teaching classroom:

I. e. Is sensitive to cultural differences in communication, responses. Proficient.

- II. c. Relates lessons to student experiences, prior learning. Lessons are meaningful and relevant. Proficient.
- II. f. Uses multiple strategies of teaching and for learning. Exemplary.
- II. i. Adapts lessons for diversity with specific and effective adaptations for special needs. Proficient.
- III. a. Constantly monitors learning and is aware of effects of instruction; Adapts and uses alternative approaches, to address learning problems. Exemplary.
- IV. g. Builds community atmosphere where differences are respected. Exemplary.
- V. f. Uses reflection. Adapts and adjusts. Exemplary.

Ken ultimately completed the Bethel College Teacher Education Program and was recommended for a Kansas teaching license with endorsements in speech/theatre and English. Although Ken did not complete the English licensure program, like Kathy with Arabic, he passed the Praxis II content test required for the English endorsement and thus was eligible to add the English endorsement to his license.

Following his graduation from Bethel College, Ken accepted a position teaching high school English and coaching debate and forensics in the community of Leadville within 30 minutes of his hometown. Somewhat smaller than his hometown, Leadville had a population of 13,770 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The median age within this community was 36.3 years, while the racial composition of Leadville was as follows: White, 95.1%; Black or African American, 1.3%; American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.4%; Asian, 0.4%; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 0.1%; “some other race, 1.2%; and “two or more races,” 1.5%. Within this breakdown, 2.9% described themselves as Hispanic or Latino of any race. While teaching,

and coaching debate and forensics, at Leadville High School, Ken also coached track, specifically pole vault, for his alma mater.

According to the Kansas Educational Directory (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009a) the Leadville School District includes one high school, one middle school, four elementary schools, and an early childhood center. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the community additionally enrolled a significant portion of the population, 1,087 individuals, in a local college.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the student population at Leadville High School included 907 students (SchoolTree.org, 2009). Of this population, 12.2% of the students were on free or reduced lunch. With 93.4% of the school population, the majority of the students were described as white, while other races represented were as follows: American Indian Alaskan Native, 0.7%; Asian Pacific Islander, 1.4%; Hispanic, 2.4%; and African American, 2.1%.

I arrived at Leadville High School, as agreed, at 8:30 a.m. on an early March day. I had been to this high school on previous occasions for my own children's sporting events, but had never been inside the building. Leadville High was located on the north edge of Leadville and comprised an area of about four square city blocks. There were large parking lots on the three sides of the building that I could see from the front of the school. As I arrived, there were several buses unloading groups of elementary age students. I navigated my way through the elementary students and entered the building in doors directly across the hall from the office. Upon entering the office, I introduced myself and explained my purpose. I signed in and a student escorted me to Ken's classroom. Having an escort was good because the route to the classroom was somewhat confusing. Upon arriving at the classroom, I waited in the hall as the previous class was finishing. This gave me adequate opportunity to explore the building. From my perspective,



the building was well maintained with hand-written posters on the walls; many of these posters included motivational quotes. Outside Ken's classroom there were promotional materials recruiting for debate and forensics. Two female students were sitting outside the room while the rest of the class was watching Julius Caesar.

Ken's classroom itself was shaped like a large rhombus; it was a large room with desks in four rows, two sets of rows each facing each other with a walkway in between. There were numerous awards, for debate and forensics, on the walls and trophies on the shelves. There were computers and a printer on counters built out of one of the walls. Underneath the counters were file boxes with materials for debate and forensics. As I entered the room, music was playing from a laptop. Ken was taking role electronically and an outline of the day's activities was on the white board at the front of the room. I had the opportunity to observe two of Ken's classes. There were 21 students in the first class that I observed; there were ten males and 11 females; two of the students were African American, one was Asian, and two were Hispanic. There were a total of 15 students in the second class that I observed; all of these were white and there were six female students and nine male students. Observing two sections of the same class gave me a perfect opportunity to observe Ken's ability to reflect and make adaptations to his instruction.

I first observed Ken teach one section of English I and noted that he made some adaptations to his instructions as listed on the board. When he got to that point of instruction in the second section of English I, I noted that he flipped the content and worked backwards with the second set of students. When I asked Ken about his reflective practice, he noted, "From second hour to third hour, you will notice that the exercise that I did was a little bit different; I wanted to see if it would work a little better this way." In fact, Ken notes that he constantly reflects and finds the practice especially important for a new teacher. Ken lives back in his

hometown and so he expressed that the 30 minute drive provided him with the opportunity to reflect on his practice. Within his overall practice of reflective thinking, he noted:

And as a first year teacher, coming up with entirely new lessons pretty much every class, I'm always trying to think of how I can make it better. Especially because I teach the same class more than once; I get a chance to try things out on a day-to-day basis.

Ken noted that this practice was embedded in every aspect of his teaching, constantly using reflection. This included reflecting not only while providing the actual instruction, but reflecting while creating lesson plans; thinking about what went wrong and how he could improve upon it. This reflective practice has impacted the way that Ken works to ensure that all of his students are learning. His reflections demonstrated that his overall concern is for his students and their learning, as he specifically noted, "I'd been thinking for much of first semester, 'How we can improve these scores.' If I just lecture to them and tell them the right answer, they just zone out, because that's what they're used to."

Ken's mentor, also an English teacher, noted that Ken is generally a highly reflective person. She stated:

The area that he intended to teach was debate/forensics/speech/theater, that sort of thing. So English has always been his less comfortable area. In spite of that, he's worked really hard to try and find ways to engage his learners; when something doesn't work as well, he's kind of like, "Well, this didn't work so well, what's another way to do this?" He's asking questions, he's thinking about it, he's trying different ways to do things, and then watching the kids to see what works best for them. So I would say from a reflective standpoint, he's highly reflective and I think that's as much a part of his own personality as it is about any training that he's had.

She further noted that the longer we teach the more we tend to find ourselves and our teaching “in a rut.” She said that unfortunately students’ scores improve only because they are doing a task over and over; not necessarily because they are fully engaged. She noted that Ken does a nice job of watching the students and paying attention to whether they are engaged with the content that he is teaching or whether they are just going through the motions. As I observed Ken’s first English class, I noticed Ken practicing his observation skills. Ken had just given his students an assignment.

Teacher – Alright, you have till the end of the hour, which will be in about four minutes.

Student – Do we have to turn this in?

Teacher – No, you won’t be turning it in.

As soon as he mentioned that they wouldn’t be turning the work in, Ken noticed that several of the students stopped working on the activity. He then questioned the students about the decision to stop working.

Student – Well, we don’t have to turn it in.

Teacher – Well, then you will turn it in.

In my field notes, I wondered whether this might be a commentary on motivating factors in school age children in our society. In any case, Ken understood that there were motivational issues and addressed them immediately.

Both Ken and his mentor were quick to admit that the clientele at Leadville High School was not highly diverse in terms of racial composition of the student body. They did note, however, that the population was very diverse in terms of interests. Ken noted that he tries to engage all of his students by allowing them the opportunity to have conversations with their peers. He noted, “I try to make sure that each student gets a chance to have a conversation about

what we're learning with someone sitting next to them so that they can hear it in what I'm going to call 'their own words.'" In an effort to aid in this teaching strategy, Ken does not have a seating chart. He allows the students to sit where they like and felt that the students would be more likely to "open up" to the person next to them if they "like" the person with whom they are sharing. Although Ken works to achieve this engagement, he stated that he does not consistently employ this strategy on a daily basis.

On a related note, Ken's mentor described that she had observed this attempt to increase student engagement and mentioned Ken's strategies to find topics that fit the interests of the students and further related to the content. She noted that she observed Ken as being responsive to the perceived interests of his students in his instruction.

One of the things that he did with his grammar work was to have the kids come up with sentences that fit a certain sentence structure. The hardest thing for kids to do is to come up with a sentence off of the top of their head. So he would have little snippets of "The Office," which is a television show that is age appropriate and is a high interest level to most of the kids; even if it's not a show that they've been watching, they're still reasonably entertained by it. So, he's giving them something to talk about; in the sentence stems he says, "Okay, so Doug is, ..." whatever, and he's asking them to fill in for whatever modifier he's looking for, or complete the sentence in whatever way that he gives them, a visual cue, a sentence structure pattern that he wants, so they're not struggling.

She did note that she felt there might be some who would argue that "The Office" might not be culturally appropriate, but she did state that when thinking of culture as not being limited to race, but including a "youth culture," "The Office" fits well within that culture.

I had the opportunity to observe Ken use a form of this student engagement in his classes. Ken's students had completed an assignment and prior to grading the papers, Ken asked the students to compare answers with a neighbor. He instructed them, in discrepancy areas, to convince their partner that their answer was the correct answer. Ken then had the students grade the papers as a class and following that, students were required to get with another neighbor and work to understand the mistakes that they had made. I asked Ken about this strategy and he noted that previously he had just collected their work on a Friday, graded it over the weekend, and handed it back on Monday. He noted that this process promoted passive learning as opposed to the active learning that he wanted to achieve. At some point within the first semester he changed this instructional strategy to his current strategy and, upon reflection, felt that this more adequately helped him achieve his learning goals for his students. As his mentor teacher notes, "And so the bottom line is that he is trying to, first of all, engage the students, make sure that they're with him."

Although Ken and his mentor repeatedly reminded me that Leadville was not a highly diverse population, Ken was easily able to describe his efforts toward creating a community of learners with his students and their families. Ken has an easy-going relationship with his students, one promoted by an active interest in the student's lives outside of school. He noted:

At the start of the hour I get swarmed by three or four kids who just want to talk about whatever, from sports to video games to music, stuff like that. There's at least one or two kids who want to look through all the songs that I have on my computer.

Even the language that Ken used was designed to promote communication as opposed to halt communication, even while providing students with consequences for their inappropriate behaviors. On occasion, I heard him make the following comments to students:

Teacher – I kind of want you to get this special learning seat.

Teacher – I would like to hear about that after class.

With regard to the first comment, Ken was talking to a student who, because of behavioral issues, was not allowed to sit near one of his peers. In the second instance, Ken was talking to a student who was interrupting Ken while he was trying to provide instruction to the class. Ken's use of "I" messages enhanced his relationship building skills and emphasized the learning aspect of the class while continuing to demonstrate respect for rules and authority as well for the students themselves.

Although Ken expressed a desire to connect with students on issues, other than classroom related; Ken also demonstrated an understanding of the appropriateness of those relationships. Within the previous month another teacher at Leadville High School was suspended pending the outcome of an investigation into allegations of inappropriate teacher-student relations. I believe this was on Ken's mind when he discussed his conversations with students outside of class. He noted that due to an assignment he had given the students in the first semester, he had learned to not necessarily ask too many questions about their family unless they brought up the issue. He noted that in the first semester he had asked the students to write a personal narrative and they had revealed information, which made him uncomfortable. He did share that he wanted to listen if they wanted to talk, but he didn't want to expect them to reveal sensitive information.

In my observations of him, and given his speech training, I found that Ken was specific in his use of the English language. He was clear, concise, and direct. For example, at one point, while giving instructions, Ken told the students, "Okay, now please do me a favor and put your packets away and get out a piece of paper and something with which to write." His mentor mentioned that he is able to combine this aspect of his training with knowledge of youth to help

bridge the adult-teen barrier that often exists. She noted that he will use references that are appropriate to teens and provided an example she had noticed Ken use with the students. She had observed Ken “using text message writing as a way to get his point across to the kids,” which she felt to be highly appropriate in cultural aspects of youth norms. Although this was only a brief snippet of what he does, she noted that she sees that sometimes “the little, tiny things make the biggest difference.” She further noted, “I know also that he goes out of his way to make sure that all of the kids are comfortable in the class.”

“Maria” was one of the students in the second of Ken’s English classes that I observed. Maria, perhaps because her actions indicated that she wanted to be invisible, stood out to me as an observer in the class. Maria was somewhat of a larger young lady with long, brown hair. Maria entered the room, found her seat and did not move from that chair for the remainder of the class. Maria remained firmly rooted to her seat for the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon entering the room and locating herself in her seat, Maria quickly put on earphones and those remained attached to her for the entire period as well. Maria spoke to no one in the class with the exception of Ken. Only one exchange occurred and I almost missed it. Ken was working with a student across the room from Maria and she quietly asked a question, seemingly oblivious to the fact that he was working with another student. Ken responded to her question and then continued working with the other student. At the first opportunity he went to Maria to ensure that she continued to be engaged and that he had indeed answered her question. In the interview with Ken, he noted this about Maria:

I have one student in particular, will rarely talk, or engage in class at all. She does her homework, but she will rarely do homework in class. What I’ve heard from other teachers is that this is a particular person who doesn’t feel comfortable in groups at all, so

she always has an iPod. I was told by a para-educator that that is her way of drowning out everything that is going on around her. Most of the time, I don't even think that she is listening to music. I think she just has it in so kids won't talk to her.

Ken demonstrated through his actions and through his words that he understands the students in his class, even the "Marias" in his class and he works with them in the manner that best meets their needs. Respect is important to Ken.

Ken did share that he does try to be respectful of students and their need for privacy. He observed that it may seem that there is not a whole lot of order in his classroom, but that is because he tries to give all students an opportunity to speak when they want to talk. If one student begins to abuse the situation and becomes disruptive, he will ask that student to go into the hall and wait for a conversation with him, in the hall. He stated, "I don't like to belittle kids, I don't like to create a big "me" little "you" situation. His actions demonstrated that this belief was not just talk. I heard him use the following comments when the need arose:

Teacher – Please, just listening right now.

Teacher – Ladies, please.

And when specifically reminding students about their behavior while viewing Channel One, the following exchange took place:

Teacher – Remember the expectations for Channel One

Student – No talking or sleeping.

Teacher – Correct.

In another instance, a student belched loudly and all it took was for Ken to look at him. The student then said, "Excuse me?" and Ken responded, "Thank you."



The teaching of English provides Ken with multiple opportunities to introduce his students to issues of culture, much needed in this fairly homogenous community. He noted that the literature studied in his classes is based in a variety of cultural settings and the background of the authors is varied. He noted as well, that he does have a foreign-born student in one of his classes. He stated that he tries to give this student, and all of his students, the opportunity to contribute about their own culture when they are talking about culturally relevant issues. Ken believes that his students appreciate the opportunity to hear about other cultures and also appreciate having the opportunity to share about their own culture.

Ken noted as well that his work responsibilities with coaching forensics can be somewhat controversial culturally. He said that students will often pick pieces that may be controversial and that he needs to guide them in selecting appropriate pieces. Ken additionally noted the challenges of having an African American student on a forensics squad, especially in Kansas.

Whenever a forensics team in Kansas has the opportunity to have an African American student on their squad, there's automatically a list of poems and poetry that they know that this kid can perform because it's about that culture. In the forensics community, we like to be able to see that, because there's not a lot of diversity on the Kansas high school forensics circuit. So we talk about why we want them to do a particular piece. I never make kids do a particular piece. I suggest things to them and ask them if they think that they would like that and basically explain to them why. Sometimes they choose to do that and sometimes they don't and that's all right.

What rapidly becomes apparent in conversations with, and observations of, Ken is his respect for the individual student. Ken's mentor agreed and noted that Ken shows his students respect and then he expects respect in return. She further noted that Ken expects his students to demonstrate

respect for each other. Ken also demonstrated that he had a strong grasp of understanding human behavior and he was able to use that understanding in helping him develop his own relationships with students.

Ken noted that in one of his English II classes he has four African American students. He related that these are students that are all either basketball players or football players or both. He learned very quickly that these are four individuals that the other students look up to and that are also individuals that others will follow, no matter what they are doing; even if it's something that they should not be doing. Over the course of the first semester, Ken was able to develop a positive relationship with these students and in his own words, "they've come to like me and respect me." Ken is able then to use this mutual respect to ensure that they are appropriate and positive leaders in his classroom. He did mention that these relationships require effort and one of the ways that he engages those particular students is to visit with them about their interests. He was quick to note that he didn't want to suggest that their interests were specific to African American culture, but he did mention that they talk about college basketball and music that they both like. Ultimately, however, Ken mentioned that it is just all about making connections.

A specific focus of instructional methodology at Leadville is the use of "quantum learning" as a teaching and learning instructional tool. Ken mentioned that he had been trained in quantum learning and used that primarily in his classroom. He noted that very little of the time will he just lecture, in fact he stated that he tries not to lecture. His mentor noted, "He's using quite a wide variety of teaching methods. He does lecture, like we all do have to on occasion, but he tries to limit that." He employs group and partner work, learning diagrams, "power pegs," and mnemonic devices. At this point he felt that he was attempting to try a number of strategies and determining which were most successful in his work with his students. He noted, "I'm just trying

things out and learning more as I go. I'm finding out what works for me." His mentor added that she saw Ken's instructional activities as following departmental guidelines, but that he added his own flair to the implementation. She stated:

One of the things that he really does well is that he gives the kids a couple of minutes at the beginning of class to just get situated. He has younger kids so this is more important to give them a minute to get their little discussions out of the way, do all of that. He's started doing that this semester; where he just lets the music play while he's doing attendance, checking emails, whatever, and then, when the music is off, it's time to go. And he has really improved his communication with his kids because they know that's their time to talk to him or talk to their buddies and he's not having to fight for the control of the classroom. So again that's a management piece that still those are things that he's changing and modifying to make sure they work.

I believe this statement effectively encapsulates the behavior, mannerisms, and view of students that Ken has incorporated in his teaching style. It demonstrates his respect for the students and their needs, it demonstrates an understanding of human behavior and learning, it demonstrates the reflective thinking necessary to be an effective teacher, and it serves as an effective management tool. Although she is only in his classroom occasionally, his mentor mentioned that she notices students' reactions to Ken in the hall as she states, "The responses that I see from the kids, like out in the hall, suggest that he's connecting with those kids in a very positive way. Even if it's just a look; you know, sometimes that's all you get."

When Ken began teaching and seeing student work, reality began to set in. Ken noted that he began teaching with, as he describes, very high expectations. He described it this way because although he was teaching physically in a high school setting, his mind was still focused

on his own writing at the college level. As a side note, I believe that this would not have been as much of an issue for the English teacher that had the opportunity to experience an English classroom while student teaching. Ken, on the other hand, student taught in a speech classroom and added the English endorsement by testing. He had no previous experience working in an English classroom prior to his experiences at Leadville High School. So, when Ken started his expectations were somewhat skewed as he notes:

There's a level of writing and there's a level of reading that I just expected, so when I started teaching English I, and kids didn't know the difference between adjectives and adverbs, or prepositions and verbs, it was a reality check. I'm still trying to figure out how much, I should be expecting of them. I don't expect them to know as much as I do, but I show them what it is that I expect of them, even though it's not realistic.

Ken does receive some help from departmental guidelines in helping him establish his expectations. His mentor mentioned that with sophomore English, for example, all of the teachers followed the same curriculum and so at any moment in time they should all be at the same place in the sequencing of the course. She felt that this provided Ken with the guidelines to effectively establish appropriate expectations for his course.

Ken distinguished himself from other students in the Bethel College Teacher Education Program as he noted that he decided rather late in his college career that he wanted to be a teacher. As such, his program was much more condensed, taking his education courses in a concentrated period of time. He felt that this put him at a disadvantage because he didn't feel he was able to give each course the specific focus that it deserved. Ultimately he felt that the cyclical nature of the material could be better achieved when the course work is taken over a longer period of time. He noted that he felt his ability to actually reach all children, including

students with varying cognitive abilities and racial differences, was highly impacted by his communication arts classes. He demonstrated that his understanding of multiple intelligences was critical in helping all of his students demonstrate success in his classroom and that this knowledge came more from the “doing” aspect of his communication courses. Interestingly, when describing his first couple of months in this new position, Ken stated:

You know, at first, I honestly felt unprepared. I don't know if that's because I was teaching outside of my area of expertise, but, I gained confidence as the semester went on. There came a point in the semester where I realized, “You know, this isn't something that I can't do. Once I stop freaking out about it, I can do this.” One teacher always told me, “Fake it until I make it.” But, once I actually did realize that, “Yes, I do know what I'm doing, I do know this information.” Then I was able to calm down and relax and gained better control of the class, that kind of thing. Confidence helped my classroom management skills. A lot.

I observed Ken in March of 2010 and by the time I interviewed and observed him he was demonstrating more confidence in his classroom management skills.

Once I completed all of my case study interviews and observations, I deployed my open-ended electronic survey of the rest of the graduates from the two cohorts. The data gathered from that survey are provided in the next section of this chapter.

#### On-Line Survey

As part of the research design for this research study, I conducted an electronic survey of program completers from the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years. As described in the research design for this study, all graduates from those two years who were practicing teachers at the time of the survey were invited to participate, with the exception of the six graduates who participated

in the observation and interviews. During the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, 35 individuals completed the teacher education program at Bethel College. Of the 35, 30 took the assessments to become licensed to teach. Of the 30, 21 graduates entered the teaching field. Six of those 21 teachers were selected to participate in interviews and observations, leaving a total of 15 program completers to be invited to participate in the on-line survey. These graduates were invited to participate in the survey via an email invitation. One of these invitations was repeatedly returned due to an inaccurate email address and no current address could be obtained. As such, there were a total of 14 viable program completers from the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years. Each of these fourteen program completers was female. Although there were other male program completers from these years, two were interviewed and observed, one had incorrect contact information, and the others did not enter the teaching field.

The purpose of this survey was to provide data demonstrating the validity of the responses received during the interviews. The surveys were conducted anonymously and the identity of each respondent was not requested or provided. The interviews, by their very nature, were based on full disclosure of the identity of the individual. I had some concern that the nature of the interviews, although confidential, may provide biased results due to the fact that I had a preexisting professional relationship with each of the respondents. The anonymous survey was designed to check for consistency and accuracy of the interview process.

This electronic survey was conducted using the software package, eListen, and was made operational during the month of March, 2010. The fourteen selected teachers were emailed an invitation to participate with a link to the survey provided. Instructions indicated that by *clicking* on the link, the teacher was giving consent to participate in the survey. Seven of the fourteen teachers submitted responses to the questions, providing a 50% response rate. Upon first glance,

I was disheartened when I only received a return rate of 50%. But then I realized that had I excluded the six individuals who participated in the interviews and observations; they might have submitted a response. I received data from thirteen graduates: six participants through interviews and observations and seven participants through the survey. There were a total of twenty viable participants. This gives a total participation rate of 13 out of 20, or 65%. I believe that this 65% participation rate gives credence to the data.

Page one of the survey contained questions asking for demographic information from the graduates: the year graduated from the program, their gender, the grade level of their teaching assignment, rural/suburban/urban designation of their teaching assignment, and whether the individual had pursued further education. The subsequent pages of the survey were grouped by topic and were the same questions that were asked of the teacher interview participants.

#### *Discussion and Analysis of Survey*

Items on the survey were divided in to three distinct sections. The first section asked candidates to provide basic demographic information. The second section provided the respondent the opportunity to respond to questions and probes about culturally relevant pedagogy, as identified through the literature review of this study. The final section of questions asked respondents to provide information about the Teacher Education Program at Bethel College. A discussion and analysis of the survey data is being provided here.

#### *Demographic Information*

Demographic data received from survey participants indicate that two of the respondents completed the program in 2007-08 and five of the respondents completed in 2008-09. Although approximately equal numbers of graduates from each year were invited to participate, given the low total numbers, the results appear to be skewed more favorable toward recent graduates

completing the survey. Of the respondents, all seven were female. Based on the gender of the overall population, there were no males invited to participate in the survey. Two of the respondents replied that they were teaching in an elementary school, one was teaching in a middle school, and four were teaching in a high school. Six of the respondents identified their teaching assignment as being located in an urban district and one identified her teaching assignment as being located in a rural district. One survey respondent replied that she had continued coursework in higher education.

### *Reflective Practice*

In the first question of the survey, respondents were asked to describe how they engage in reflective thinking in their professional practice. All seven respondents provided a description of reflective practices. These practices included both formal and informal practice, with some mandated by the district; in all cases, respondents provided voluntary instances of reflective practice. As formal practice, one respondent indicated that reflection was included in the evaluation process: “During the evaluation process with my administrator I am asked to reflect on my lesson plans and how they went during the lesson observed.” One respondent indicated a more frequent process with an instructional coach: “I am currently being videotaped about once a week by the instructional coach, and then viewing the video tapes and reflecting on my instruction methods.” Other instances of reflection included respondents reflecting while engaged in the teaching process, reflecting between classes and making adaptations from one lesson to the next, making notes at the end of the day, and creating journals.

The next question allowed respondents the opportunity to provide a specific example of their reflective thinking. Each of these specific responses indicated a change based on understandings of the students in their classes. One respondent indicated the need to provide



more specificity on an assignment in an effort to eliminate student confusion. Another indicated the need for more classroom structure with a particular activity. In each instance, the respondents gave a specific instance of reflection as the following sample indicates:

Recently my seniors completed a project over Frankenstein. I made some changes this year that I knew I had to make based off last year's projects. For example, I changed and specified the expectations I wanted my students to meet. I also made the project more challenging but at the same time giving my students choices on how they wanted to complete their project. In the end, my students' projects were more-detailed and overall better than last year's class. I was very happy with the outcome of the projects and will use the project again next year.

Other responses, similar in nature to this, demonstrated that all of these respondents use the art of reflective thinking.

The final question on reflective practice asked respondents to discuss the impact of reflective thinking on their professional practice. All respondents indicated support for reflective thinking in improving their instructional skills and practices. The following respondent summed up the thinking effectively:

Every day is an evaluation of my own skills. How each day goes affects how I teach on the following days. I feel that I am constantly in the process of updating and improving on my teaching methods due to the kind of reflective methods that the Bethel education program promotes. In fact, I don't think that it is possible to become an effective educator without reflection and adjustment.

Another respondent provided a response that focused more fully on the individual students when she stated, "Reflective thinking has changed my professional practice on a daily basis. Each

situation is different and each child is different, therefore I need to adjust my teaching to them.”

### *Cultural Literacy*

The next question asked respondents to focus on what a visitor to their classroom would see that indicates that the teacher is culturally literate. Two of the respondents responded that the visitor would probably not *see* anything indicating cultural literacy, but indicated that the visitor would *hear* much to demonstrate cultural literacy. She stated,

I will admit that you probably wouldn't "see" anything that says I'm culturally literate, but if you listened to my class discussions you would know that I am, especially right now. My juniors are reading *The Bean Trees*, so my classes are having very insightful discussions about their culture and topics like deportation and poverty, which many of my students are very familiar with. Reflecting on my classroom, I do need to bring in more culturally literate posters, etc.

The other respondent that not much would be seen indicated that this was because she was teaching in a small room and that the posters on the walls were more in line with her content, including music symbols, etc. This respondent also remarked that the visitor would hear much that would be considered culturally relevant, especially in terms of music from different cultures. The other respondents gave specific examples of cultural literacy, which would be found in their classroom, ranging from items in the room to teaching styles used. One respondent wrote, “Maps from around the world and relevant to the subject area; a variety of teaching methods tailored to different learning styles.” And another wrote, “Various artworks from artists around the globe. Artworks inspired by other cultures.” Yet another wrote about the content of the curriculum, including the books that the students were reading and a final respondent discussed student work as being an example of cultural literacy. She wrote:

Posters of Mohandas Gandhi, Michael Jackson, Barack Obama and Dr. Martin Luther King. You would also see student's names in Arabic on the doors; you would see many culturally informative books on the bookshelf. You would see student-made artifacts on the wall that encourage dialogue about racism.

In each instance, it appeared that the respondent tailored cultural literacy to their content.

The second question in this section of the survey asked respondents to identify activities designed to help all children learn. Respondents provided a wide range of activities in use in their classrooms, including, but not limited to the following: cooperative learning, individual learning, use of PowerPoint and other visual aids, handouts, lecture, class discussions, group projects, individual projects, research papers, and a host of activities related to specific content areas. Using capital letters, one respondent emphatically wrote:

What activity should a teacher EVER do that is NOT designed to help all children learn?

I think the best way I try to accomplish this is by offering a wide variety of activities that will hopefully match many different students' needs. I change activities several times during the course of the hour, most activities lasting around 10 minutes. I try to vary my activities: hands on, listening, writing, playing, partner, whole class and single work.

In many regards, this respondent captured the essence of the responses from each of the others.

### *Community of Learners*

Within the next section of questions, respondents were asked to identify questions regarding how they build a community of learners within their classroom. One of the respondents identified creating a safe learning environment, where respect and trust are modeled and expected. Another indicated that she provided opportunities for her students to share their lives with each other as a part of her normal classroom activities. Yet others responded that they

encouraged open discussions and aimed to meet the individual needs of the students through teaching to different learning styles. Yet another respondent stated, “Through hard work and adaptations to each student’s learning, I can build a community of learners. I have support in and out of the classroom to help students who need that extra push. I check for understanding and adapt to those who need extra help.” And another wrote

I think it helps to build a community of learners when students see value in what is taking place. I always try to involve students with responsibilities such as forming class rules at the beginning of the year, having daily helpers, and connecting the lessons we do with other core subjects they are studying in their regular classroom.

One of the respondents demonstrated concern for herself and her students in the area of building a community of learners. She stated, “I am still kicking myself every night trying to figure this out ... it’s SO hard when you teach middle school because they spend so much time picking on each other.”

The next question, dealing with connections with student’s families, elicited a mixed response. Two of the respondents indicated that this was hard for them or that they needed to improve in this area. One of those two stated, “It was awkward to make phone calls home to discuss student misbehavior when I didn’t have a relationship with the parent. Others responded indicating that they made phone calls, sent emails, or sent cards and letters home. Several responded that they connect with parents through parent teacher conferences, although one of the high school respondents expressed frustration with the lack of parent attendance at these events. One of the respondents provided this response:

I call or send a postcard when I want to share good news, I make sure and call when I am seeing a child's behavior change...if a student doesn't do their homework/forgets it, they

have to call their parents during class and tell them that they're not doing their job as a student. Our school also builds in an evening each year where students bring their parents to play board games with teachers.

One indicated that she is a coach and so she has the opportunity to get to know her students on a different level, providing her with the opportunity to get to know many of the parents. This same respondent stated, "I also try to attend student activities and volunteer at school functions to get to know the students."

### *Respect for Diversity*

The first of the questions on respect provides a connection between building a community of learners and demonstrating respect for students and their culture. On the survey, this question was in fact linked more closely to the questions on building a community of learners. This question asked respondents to share how they demonstrate respect for their student's language and culture. Each of the respondents seemed to differ on their view of how they demonstrate respect for their student's language and culture. One of the respondents simply wrote that she attended their outside events. Three of the respondents use the content of their lessons to provide opportunities for students to share about their culture including show and tell and music. One of these stated that her content area lends itself well to comparing the subject matter to the student's own lives, language, and cultures. Two of the respondents discussed asking the students questions about their lives, language, and customs. The first stated:

I listen to their ideas, thoughts and opinions. I ask for their expertise or what their culture might do instead. It's also very interesting to hear what my foreign exchange students have to say too. They bring new ideas to the table and their viewpoints are interesting, because they view our culture in a totally different way. I also love hearing how their

home country is different and I think the rest of the students enjoy it too!

The second of the respondents expressed that she will sometimes do this in private so as to not call attention to the differences of the students. Again, this respondent commented about the unique nature of middle school students. By being responsive to the needs of her students for privacy, this respondent is demonstrating sensitivity to the needs of her students.

The next question about respect asked respondents how they demonstrate respect for all students in their classroom. Two of the respondents replied matter-of-factly in stating that they treat all students equally, showing no favoritism. Another stated that she tries to address students on an equal level. She stated further stated, “I make a point to interact individually with each one of them during the hour, asking them about their needs. I try to protect their pride and self-consciousness and make my educational challenges to them as non-threatening to them as possible.” Another remarked that she tries to give them “one-on-one attention at least once per class period.” Still others responded that they try to take time to listen and allow the students the opportunity to tell their stories. Yet another indicated that in addition to listening to her students she tries to ensure that her students demonstrate respect for each other.

The next question on respect asked respondents to indicate how they would introduce a lesson on topics of diversity and culture. Of all the questions on this survey, this question elicited the least response. In several instances, the respondent simply stated that the response would depend on the lesson. Another indicated that the question was too open-ended, while another respondent suggested that she was unsure as to how to answer. A couple tried to create a general scenario and then built a response based on the created situation. For example, one stated:

For Kindergarten, diversity and culture is hard to understand because to them everyone is the same. I would introduce a lesson by reading a book that deals with the topics and

allow the students to speak out on what they think these topics are. I will explain that we are all different but we need to be treated the same no matter what. In Kindergarten, we are all friends no matter if we are black, white, male or female. We learn to work together!

Another respondent answered in a more general fashion with this response, “When you teach things like this, it is imperative to stress similarities and celebrate differences. The best way to introduce lessons on this is to highlight similarities alongside differences.”

The final question from the section on respect provided respondents with an opportunity to express how they demonstrate respect for diversity. It became apparent that one of the respondents was becoming weary of the questions on respect because she simply responded, “Same as above, treat everyone as equal.” Other responses were shorter in length, but tried to simply answer the question. One wrote, “There are many ways to succeed in my classroom, and I think this rewards the diverse strengths and needs that students bring to my classes.” Another wrote of how her marriage to an individual of Hispanic decent has allowed her to share stories of what she has learned about a culture that is different from her own. She added that this has helped her gain an understanding of her Hispanic students. Another of the respondents simply stated, “Share about artists from all backgrounds regardless of sex, sexual orientation, or race.” Given these responses, it appears that each finds ways, within their value system, to demonstrate respect for diversity.

### *Culturally Relevant Instructional Methodology*

The next probe, “Please share with me the different methods of instruction that you use in the classroom” was very similar in nature to an earlier question, “What activities do you engage in that are designed to help all children learn?” As such, many of the responses to those two

questions were similar. Only one of the respondents provided detail to her list as she wrote:

I use a wide variety of instructional methods in my classroom. I use direct teaching when I am teaching basic skills like reading notes. I do cooperative learning activities for times when we do composition activities. I use lecture or lecture with discussion when I share composer information. I show videotapes or clips after a discussion time to help demonstrate the new information (like maybe the sounds of steel drums make.) I use worksheets for students to practice new things like note writing and rhythm compositions.

The following responses are a comprehensive list: worksheets, quizzes, tests, lecture, classroom discussions, group discussions, cooperative learning, projects, visual aids, direct instruction, note-taking, partner work, stations and centers, demonstrations, and research. One was a bit more specific to her content as an elementary teacher as she wrote, “Kagan strategies, anticipation guides, marking texts, writing to learn, and vocabulary squares.”

The second question under methodology and curriculum was “How do you know that you are teaching to all children and that all children in your classroom are learning?” Two of the responses seemed to address the entire question. One wrote, “I keep tabs on the progress of each student through various formative assessments, and try to alter my teaching as necessary, or address more extreme issues individually by meeting with students in study hall or after school.” The second respondent expressed concern over meeting this challenge in her content area. She wrote:

This is a little more difficult to gauge in music but I always try to take daily notes after a new concept is taught of how many students grasped it. If I feel like it wasn't understood well, I'll usually try to teach it again with a different approach or through a different



method. I'll do short quizzes after we learn something new, like note values, to have written work to gauge whether students are learning the concept too.

The rest of the responses seemed to focus on either the first half or the second half of the question. One respondent focused on only the first half of the question and wrote that she gives “a lot of individual help”. The rest of the respondents just focused on the second half of the question and wrote that they use assessments, rubrics, quizzes, oral feedback, and/or scaffolding.

### *High Expectations*

The final question based on the research of culturally relevant pedagogy asked respondents to explain how they demonstrate high expectations for their students. Each of their responses was unique and to summarize them doesn't capture the essence of the individual respondent. Thus each response is provided here in its entirety.

#### Respondent One:

I flat out tell my students what I expect from them, which is [that] they come to class prepared, listen and ask questions, and they complete the work. That's very basic; it's more detailed than that. I make sure that my assignments are challenging and will push my students.

#### Respondent Two:

I try to show students that the responsibility for their success rests on their own shoulders by giving them the tools they need to succeed, but being very clear about my expectations including deadlines and achievement.

#### Respondent Three:

Always push them to challenge themselves on their projects....

#### Respondent Four:

You have to really look at the difference between laziness and their actual learning disability; once I recognized this, I knew when to push students to strive for more.

Respondent Five:

I set my expectations high for my class and really stress to the class these expectations at the beginning of the year. Throughout the week, I watch my students and if they are doing what they need to be doing and either give them a sticker and recognize them for their good work. I tell my class as a whole how great of a job they are doing. We earn compliments from other teachers or staff members we get a party after we receive the maximum amount of marbles we can earn as a class. The class works together to reach the goals we have set together.

Respondent Six:

I don't let kids get away with complaining about too much work, or something being too hard. I tell all my kids that I didn't go to college to be a babysitter, and that my job is to make sure they learn. If they know that I take my job seriously, they take their learning seriously.

Respondent Seven:

I expect that all students participate in classroom activities whether they feel they are good musicians or not. I encourage them to at least try even if they are nervous about singing or unsure about playing an instrument. I am strict about no negative criticism from other students to make the environment "safe" for students to try out new musical concepts.

#### *Pre-Service Training at Bethel College*

Additional questions were asked respondents specific to their training in the Teacher

Education Program at Bethel College. The first question asked respondents to identify which courses at Bethel significantly impacted their ability to teach all children. Each response seemed to relate very directly to the individual experiences of the respondent. The first wrote that the methods classes were of major importance, but also important was a course on working with exceptional children. The second stated matter-of-factly that her art courses provided her with this training. The third expressed that all of her courses had impacted her ability to teach all children in some way. Another suggested that her music methods courses provided her with the “first-hand practical knowledge of how to teach a wide variety of musical concepts to children.” One wrote that her student teaching impacted her ability greatly, but added that all of her courses created some foundation to help her ability to teach. The sixth stated, “School and Community reaffirmed my desire to teach urban kids and offered a little bit of insight into the different ways that culturally and racially diverse children learn.” The seventh respondent did not complete this question.

The next question in this section asked respondents what they felt could be enhanced in the teacher education program at Bethel College. Two of the respondents wrote that classroom management could be enhanced to include information on more strategies, as well as more opportunities to interact with students and practice classroom management strategies prior to entering the classroom. Another suggested that Bethel should offer a course on how to prepare students for state assessments. After providing that response, that individual also suggested that the course, EDU 310 School and Community, should be revamped and provided specific suggestions on what changes should take place. Three of the respondents provided suggestions based specifically on their content area (art, elementary, and music) and asked for specific methods courses within those contents. Two of the respondents called for more time in the

classroom prior to student teaching.

The third question asked respondents to consider what could be enhanced for all graduates. Two of the respondents did not answer this question, while one of the respondents wrote that she was not able to think of anything. Another suggested that all graduates should be required to study abroad for a semester. This candidate did remark that she felt Bethel was going in the opposite direction by cutting majors that would lend themselves to a study abroad experience, Spanish and German. One of the respondents requested more one-on-one time with professors. The final two respondents suggested that pre-service teachers should be required to spend more time, prior to student teaching, in the field, working with experienced teachers and gaining firsthand experience. One of these two stated, "I think the more time graduates get to spend in real classroom situations, the better. Nothing can replace the live interactions and situations that come from first-hand situations." The second added that, as a former teacher education student, she realized that students were already required to be in classrooms a lot, but more early experiences could and should be required of pre-service students.

Survey fatigue may have set in by this time as only one of the respondents answered the question "What did I not ask that I should have?" The one response to this question was N/A.

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to give additional comments. Again the responses were minimal, but one of the respondents wished me luck with this and hoped that her responses were helpful. The second affirmed that she loves Bethel and wished that we could help her with paying back her student loans.

### Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of Bethel College, the setting for the training which the participants involved in this study received. Following that, I provided case studies for

six first- and second-year teachers given the pseudonyms “Molly,” “Joni,” “Kylie,” “Dylan,” “Ken,” and “Kathy.” Following the case studies, I provided a discussion of the results of the on-line survey, focusing on the constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy, which emerged in the literature review.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

Bethel College and the Bethel College Teacher Education Program ascribe to the ideals of social justice, making this concept an important component of the curriculum. Prior to this study, data collected on completers of this program indicated that upon completion, program completers accepted teaching positions in a variety of venues: in Kansas, and out of state; urban, suburban, and rural; private and public. The institution further gathered data on completers of the program as they concluded their first years of teaching and this data suggested that completers of the program demonstrated success. Data were not collected, and subsequently less information existed, regarding program graduate's actual use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their educational practice. Thus, the purpose of this study was to describe how Bethel College program completers use culturally relevant pedagogy in the P-12 classroom setting. This study reflected the empirical research on social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy that called for additional study on the manifestation of social justice and culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom setting. Through this study, the literature on the topic of culturally relevant pedagogy has been enhanced.

This study sought answers to the following overarching question: How do completers of the Bethel College Teacher Education program use culturally relevant pedagogy in the P-12 classroom? As a result and in alignment with a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, this research was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the program completer describe his or her use of culturally relevant pedagogy in his or her classroom?

2. How does the program completer's description of culturally relevant pedagogy translate into action in his or her classroom (curriculum design and implementation, student assessment, and classroom organization)?

In an effort to answer these questions, I utilized research uncovered through the literature review to create constructs to guide my questioning, both in the interview setting and in the on-line survey. As noted in my research design, the case studies were created based on information gained through an observation of the graduate's classroom that lasted approximately one half of a day, an interview with the graduate, and an interview with either the graduate's mentor or principal. In one instance I did not secure permission to interview the graduate's mentor or principal and so that case study was written using only my own observations and the interview with the graduate.

The major focus of the case studies was the graduates' use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their classroom. From the literature review, there were six constructs supported by the research that were the focus of the case studies: (1) Reflective Practice (Fuller, 1994; Grant & Gillette, 2006; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Phuntsog, 1999; Schön, 1987), (2) Cultural Literacy (Au & Blake, 2003; Fuller, 1994; Gay, 2002; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Phuntsog, 1999; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Weinstein, et al., 2004), (3) Community of Learners (Au, 2006; D. F. Brown, 2004; Gay, 2002; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995), (4) Respect for Diversity (Phuntsog, 1999; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), (5) Culturally Relevant Instructional Methodology (Fuller, 1994; Gay, 2002; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Phuntsog, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), and (6) High Expectations (Au, 2006; Fuller, 1994; Grant & Gillette, 2006).

For the purposes of this research and in an effort to answer my research questions, I utilized three different methods to gather data. I collected data through a survey instrument, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. As noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), in naturalistic studies triangulation of data is important as this provides the researcher the opportunity to validate each piece of evidence against another source. Lincoln and Guba further stated: “No single item of information (unless coming from an elite and unimpeachable source) should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated” (p. 283). Patton (2002) suggested that triangulation of data is important because it serves to increase the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

As such, I gathered data from surveys, interviews, and observations. With the permission of interview participants, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to a Microsoft Office Word document. References to individuals and locations were given pseudonyms in all documents. Extensive field notes of observations were taken and transferred to a Microsoft Office Word document. No additional documents were identified through the individual interviews and observations to be included in the data analysis. Following the transcription of the interviews and the observations, all transcriptions were unitized to the smallest component and subsequently imported into the computer software program, Microsoft Office Excel, which aided in the coding and sorting of the transcribed data. I was then able to look for trends, patterns, and relationships that could be inferred from the data, especially as they related to my central research questions. Throughout the process, I communicated and discussed the findings of my research with my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Randall Turk, to ensure completeness of the data analysis. As an additional check for reliability in this qualitative study, I utilized a peer examination of my data and findings. Dr. Stuart Berger served in this role. In an effort to present



my findings in an organized fashion, I have decided to present the findings as they related to each of the constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy as identified in the literature review.

### Reflective Practice

In a general sense, Schön (1987) sought to reconcile the perfection of theory with the messiness of practice in the educational setting through the art of reflective practice. As noted by Fuller (1994), research indicated the continued need for teachers to engage in the practice of reflection while working with children from diverse backgrounds. Drawing on his literature review, Phuntsog included self-reflective analysis within his “Five-Spoked Wheel of Culturally Responsive Teaching” (1999, p. 10). McAllister and Irvine (2002) further noted that although the focus of their research was on the role of empathy in teaching culturally diverse students, their research supported the value of self-reflection as a strategy aimed at fostering appropriate multicultural educational practice. Stated in another manner, Grant and Gillette additionally found that “to be ‘culturally responsive’ means that effective teachers must not mouth the words; rather, they must be willing to be introspective about themselves and their teaching” (2006, p. 294).

As such, the first construct of culturally relevant pedagogy for which I gathered data was around the concept of self-reflection. In each instance, including all interviews with graduates, mentors or principals, and the on-line survey, the respondents provided examples of reflective practice on the part of the graduate. In all cases, the respondents gave examples of reflective thinking, which occurred at both the macro and the micro level of instructional planning and implementation. Molly seemed to summarize various levels of reflection of her practice when she stated:

People have said that about me here as well, being reflective. Just going through lesson plans and reflecting on those and then after lessons reflecting on how it went; what I could have done differently and how I'm going to change it the next time I do a lesson; similar to it, or even next year when I do a project or something like that.

Unrelated to the training the graduates received in reflective practice, a number of the respondents indicated that reflection was embedded within school procedures, some formal and some informal. Molly and her mentor indicated that in her first year, formal meetings were held to reflect on Molly's practice. Joni described her reflective practice, but her principal more fully described her informal practice of staying late and reflecting out loud in the presence of others, though not looking for a response. Kylie and her principal both described a process that was embedded formally in the evaluation process and informally through team discussions. Dylan indicated that his new principal required the faculty to engage in reflective practice in faculty meetings, in-services, and on-line. The only two graduates teaching outside of the content area in which they had been trained, Kathy and Ken, as well as their mentors, indicated that their unique situation required reflection in their practice, although Ken's mentor mentioned that she felt this reflective practice was a part of his personality. The administration in the schools in which Kathy and Ken worked did not require reflection formally or informally.

The responses of the on-line survey participants provided additional data. All seven respondents provided a description of reflective practices. These practices included both formal and informal practice, with some mandated by the district; in all cases, respondents provided voluntary instances of reflective practice. As formal practice, one respondent indicated that reflection was included in the evaluation process: "During the evaluation process with my administrator, I am asked to reflect on my lesson plans and how they went during the lesson

observed.” One respondent indicated a more frequent process with an instructional coach: “I am currently being videotaped about once a week by the instructional coach, and then viewing the video tapes and reflecting on my instruction methods.” Other instances of reflection included respondents reflecting while engaged in the teaching process, reflecting between classes and making adaptations from one lesson to the next, making notes at the end of the day, and creating journals.

In five instances (interviews and online) involving four of the graduates, the respondent provided a description of a student teacher interaction that required the graduate to be introspective in their thinking regarding their beliefs and biases. For example, one of the graduates and her principal both described a situation where a Muslim student was caught cheating on an assignment. The mother of the student refused to believe that her daughter had cheated and this required reflective thinking and processing on the part of a number of people in order to move forward. Kathy, another of the graduates involved in the interviews and observations shared a story about a student in her class that was being raised as Kathy had been raised. She identified that her own upbringing allowed her to identify with her student.

Given these data, the following findings emerged:

- *All graduate participants in interviews and observations demonstrated use of reflective thinking in their professional practice.*
- *Some schools required teachers to engage in reflective practice as part of the evaluation process.*
- *Some graduates were engaged in reflective practice regarding their beliefs and biases.*

## Cultural Literacy

To be effective in their use of culturally relevant pedagogy, teachers needed to have knowledge about cultural diversity beyond awareness of and a general recognition of differences that exist between differing groups of people (Gay, 2002). Gay further stated that teachers must acquire “detailed factual information about particularities of specific ethnic groups” to bring the content alive for the children (p. 107). Additional research (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) suggested that teachers should expand their sociocultural consciousness, that is their thinking, behaving, and being as influenced by micro-cultures, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and language. Ladson-Billings (1995) described three broad propositions regarding culturally relevant pedagogy, the first of which was “conceptions of self and others” looking at our own values and beliefs as well as looking at the values and beliefs held by others. Ladson-Billings found that successful teachers held strong in their beliefs regardless of the opinion of others. In more general terms, Grant and Gillette (2006) suggested that teachers using culturally relevant pedagogy need to be learners themselves, know their students, and use their knowledge in the classroom. The idea that teachers should be culturally literate is drawn from each of those specific components and additional research (Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995) stated that teachers must demonstrate an attitude of respect for cultural differences, teachers must demonstrate knowledge of students’ culture and background, and teachers must make connections between home and school. Drawing on the work of others, Phuntsog (1999) described this critical condition of culturally responsive practice as being culturally literate. Fuller (1994) noted that teachers must recognize the changes in student populations and that to effectively educate all children, teachers must be prepared to work with diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic students. Finally, Au and Blake (2003) noted that pre-service teachers who differ in background

from their students would benefit from programs designed specifically to prepare them to work in a diverse community while Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran (2004) stated that a lack of multicultural competence can create and expand difficulties experienced by the novice teacher.

The second construct, which I identified, was cultural literacy. In the interviews I asked graduates and their mentors or principals to answer questions about how their cultural literacy manifested itself in their classroom. I asked the same questions of the participants in the on-line survey. Molly and her mentor provided similar responses, yet in different words. Molly shared instructional strategies and items around the room, but in her response she focused on relationships with the individual student. Her mentor stated that Molly is “aware of each student as an individual” and in her planning “she tries to find ways to make things relevant to her kids.” Joni also talked about relationship building with her students, stating that she greets her children when they arrive and that she tries to check up on them, because, as Joni noted, her students have different types of family setups. Her principal’s response was more in line with the content covered in her elementary special education classroom. She stated that Joni was trying to help her students “walk a mile” in another man’s, a Haitian’s, shoes. She stated that Joni was struggling to be able to help her students understand the realities of living in Haiti following the earthquake; but she provided examples of moderate success. Kylie reminded me of the lack of diversity in her building and stated that she had tried to build a climate where all students in her class are treated on the same level. Her principal also focused on the relationship building aspect of Kylie’s classroom as she noted that Kylie had created a “nice level of respect and good rapport with her students.” Kathy, teaching in a room that was not her own, focused her response primarily on cultural activities hosted by the Center for International Studies, for example a

Chinese banquet, and visitors that she had invited to class, such as visitors from primarily Muslim countries. Kathy's mentor didn't feel that he had seen enough to be able to answer. Dylan's response indicated that cultural literacy in his classroom was demonstrated through his use of teaching strategies, including cooperative learning, and his focus on helping all students to be successful. Ken stated that cultural literacy in his classroom could be seen in both his rapport and the relationships that he had established with his students and the strategies that he uses to help his students be successful. His mentor focused primarily on the strategies, which he utilized to engage all of the students on their level.

Respondents on the on-line survey were asked the same questions as the graduates involved in the interviews. The respondents were asked to focus on what a visitor to their classroom would see that indicates that the teacher is culturally literate. Two of the participants responded that the visitor would probably not *see* anything indicating cultural literacy, but indicated that the visitor would *hear* much to demonstrate cultural literacy. One respondent stated:

I will admit that you probably wouldn't "see" anything that says I'm culturally literate, but if you listened to my class discussions you would know that I am, especially right now. My juniors are reading *The Bean Trees*, so my classes are having very insightful discussions about their culture and topics like deportation and poverty, which many of my students are very familiar with. Reflecting on my classroom, I do need to bring in more culturally literate posters, etc.

The second respondent indicated that "not much would be seen" because she was teaching in a small room and that the posters on the walls were more in line with her content, including music symbols, etc. This respondent also remarked that the visitor would hear much that would be

considered culturally relevant, especially in terms of music from different cultures. The other respondents gave specific examples of cultural literacy, which would be found in their classroom, ranging from items in the room to teaching styles used. One respondent wrote, “Maps from around the world and relevant to the subject area; a variety of teaching methods tailored to different learning styles.” And another wrote, “Various artworks from artists around the globe. Artworks inspired by other cultures.” Yet another wrote about the content of the curriculum, including the books that the students were reading, and a final respondent discussed student work as being an example of cultural literacy. She wrote:

Posters of Mohandas Gandhi, Michael Jackson, Barack Obama and Dr. Martin Luther King. You would also see student's names in Arabic on the doors; you would see many culturally informative books on the bookshelf. You would see student-made artifacts on the wall that encourage dialogue about racism.

In each instance whether involved in the interview or in the on-line survey, the respondent tailored their response regarding cultural literacy to their unique situation.

The second question focused on the graduates’ activities designed to help all children learn. The two graduates teaching at the elementary school level focused on teaching to varying learning styles and to differing multiple intelligences. All four of the teachers trained for the secondary level focused on the use of cooperative learning as a teaching strategy to help all children learn. The mentors and principals provided specific examples of the teachers’ ability to help all children. Two participants specifically mentioned the teachers’ ability to provide developmentally appropriate instruction and to provide instruction at the learner’s level. One of the principals remarked, “Everything that she does is designed to help all children learn.” Survey respondents provided a wide range of activities in use in their classrooms, including, but not

limited to the following: cooperative learning, individual learning, use of PowerPoint and other visual aids, handouts, lecture, class discussions, group projects, individual projects, research papers, and a host of activities related to specific content areas. Using capital letters, one respondent emphatically wrote:

What activity should a teacher EVER do that is NOT designed to help all children learn?

I think the best way I try to accomplish this is by offering a wide variety of activities that will hopefully match many different students' needs. I change activities several times during the course of the hour, most activities lasting around 10 minutes. I try to vary my activities: hands on, listening, writing, playing, partner, whole class and single work.

In many regards, this respondent captured the essence of the responses from each of the others.

While conducting the first interview with Molly, and while talking about respect for diversity, Molly volunteered that her students don't treat each other differently and added that neither does she. She stated, "I don't know if it's just the age of kids that it [diversity differences] doesn't matter, or maybe with our generation that it's not an issue anymore." She went on to state that she believes that her generation, and the generation following hers, "Generation Z" or the "Digital Natives," does not have a problem with diversity. She did note that she does notice a difference between the way that she views diversity and the way that teachers representing previous generations view diversity, as she stated, "I notice that a lot of the older teachers that we have here view things like that [diversity] differently. I think that this generation, my generation even, doesn't have a problem with it, so it's less of an issue." Following this response, I began to ask each of the other millennial-age graduates-Kylie, Dylan, Kathy, and Ken-for their perception of their generations' views on diversity. Each of the remaining four millennial graduates expressed that they believed that their views of diversity were different than previous



generations' views of diversity. The most extreme of the responses came from Kathy who appeared to just realize the complexity of the diversity within her classroom. From her responses, it appeared that prior to this point she had not overtly recognized the student diversity within her classroom. She noted, "I'm just now realizing that I have a very diverse population of students."

As such, the following findings emerged:

- *Teachers interpreted their own cultural literacy based on their environment.*
- *Teachers used multiple strategies to help all children learn.*
- *The five participants belonging to "Generation Y," the millennial generation, stated that they believe their generation viewed diversity much differently than previous generations.*

#### Community of Learners

Research on culturally relevant pedagogy demonstrated that important to the effective teaching of all children was the need to build a community of learners (Au, 2006; D. F. Brown, 2004; Gay, 2002; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Rodriguez & Sjoström, 1995). Rodriguez and Sjoström noted through their research that teachers must have "skills in building cultural bridges between home and school (p. 307), and Au suggested that teachers should seek to connect home and school experiences. Gay stated that in culturally responsive teaching, building community is an essential element. In his qualitative study of 13 urban educators, Brown found the creation of caring learning communities to be an important component of culturally responsive pedagogy. Specifically he noted that "a community of learners is created so students feel like a family" emerged as a common theme within his research (p. 276). Additionally, Grant and Gillette concurred and stated that effective culturally responsive teachers should "build a 'community of learners' in the classroom and connect with students' families" (p. 294). Finally, Ladson-Billing

(1995) noted that “the term culturally responsive appears to refer to a more dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture” (p. 467).

Given the research base providing evidence for creating a community of learners in the classroom, my next group of questions focused the graduates and their mentors and principals on this construct. Specifically I asked the respondents to identify how the graduate built a community of learners in their classroom, including identifying connections made with students’ families, and how the graduate demonstrated respect for the students’ language and culture. Throughout the interviews and embedded in the responses to the on-line survey, respondents provided a wide variance in answers to the questions including, but not limited to: instructional methodology, expectations, respect, classroom climate, and communication styles. Joni identified that she has set high expectations for her students and she holds her students to those expectations, working with her students if they don’t achieve the goals. Her principal’s response included the content that she teaches as well as the interactions that she encourages between herself and her students and between her students; she noted that these interactions are encouraging and supporting. Kylie noted difficulty in taking the time to create a sense of community due to the stress of the state assessments, but she did note that she tries to spend time with each of her students, connecting on a different level. Her principal noted that she shares a lot of herself with her students. Kathy shared a number of stories involving her students and, like Kylie, attempted to connect with her students on a different level. Kathy’s caring spirit for the individual student in her classes was apparent in this story that she shared with me about a young lady in one of her classes, a young lady with a background very similar to Kathy’s background. She noted that she had invited students over to her house to help her students understand more about the Arabic culture. She shared that one student’s mother went to drop her daughter off and

when she saw “guys” at the house she didn’t like having to drop her student off. Kathy explained that she had gone outside and explained to the mother that she and her brother were there to chaperone the kids and monitor their actions. The student’s mother still would not leave her child at the house and she left with her daughter. Later she found an opportunity to visit with the student privately and she stated:

Well, one of my girls at [HVHST] is covered, and I know that she feels that she can identify with me, because I totally understand where she is coming from. And I told her, “I get it, you don’t have to explain it to me. I know exactly what went down and I understand and that’s fine.” I think it helped her. And she’s really open with me. Every time I bring food, she says, “Can you make it “Halal” so I can eat it?” I was like, “Absolutely, there’s not a problem with that.” I try to be as respectful as possible; no matter what.

Ken also noted that he tries to build connections with his students and notes that he at times uses music to aid in that effort. His mentor focused on his ability to create learning examples geared to connect with the students. Other respondents in the interviews focused primarily on teaching strategies, specifically the use of cooperative learning and a tool to increase engagement.

Each of the on-line survey respondents provided a response to this question as well. One of the respondents identified creating a safe learning environment, where respect and trust are modeled and expected. Another indicated that she provided opportunities for her students to share their lives with each other as a part of her normal classroom activities. Yet others responded that she encouraged open discussions and aimed to meet the individual needs of the students through teaching to different learning styles. Yet another respondent stated:

Through hard work and adaptations to each student's learning, I can build a community of learners. I have support in and out of the classroom to help students who need that extra push. I check for understanding and adapt to those who need extra help.

And another wrote:

I think it helps to build a community of learners when students see value in what is taking place. I always try to involve students with responsibilities such as forming class rules at the beginning of the year, having daily helpers, and connecting the lessons we do with other core subjects they are studying in their regular classroom.

One of the respondents demonstrated concern for herself and her students in the area of building a community of learners. She stated, "I am still kicking myself every night trying to figure this out ... it's SO hard when you teach middle school because they spend so much time picking on each other."

In making connections with families and guardians, prominent in the responses was the support that their schools provide in this area by hosting parent teacher conference nights. Five of the graduates mentioned parent teacher conferences as one avenue utilized to create connections with students' families, and two of the mentors mentioned the same. Beyond those, the responses appeared to be geared to the age level and the content covered. Molly and her mentor both mentioned that in her first grade classroom, parents regularly drop off and pick up their child, providing an opportunity for interaction. Joni mentioned that in her special education classroom she is making phone calls home on almost a daily basis. Her principal noted that she regularly picks parents up for Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Both Kylie and her principal noted that Kylie sends emails to all of her students' parents early in the semester so that she has had at least one form of communication before she should actually need to communicate

with them. Her principal noted that this seemed to be appreciated in their “ultra-connected” community. Each of the high school teacher respondents noted specifically the parent teacher conferences, but Kathy added that her numbers are small and she does try to send a post card home. She did note that in one instance she gave the post card directly to the student, out of respect for the student’s wishes.

For the on-line survey respondents, this question elicited a mixed response. Two of the respondents indicated that this was hard for them or that they needed to improve in this area. One of those two stated, “It was awkward to make phone calls home to discuss student misbehavior when I didn't have a relationship with the parent.” Others responded indicating that they made phone calls, sent emails, or sent cards and letters home. Several responded that they connect with parents through parent teacher conferences, although one of the high school respondents expressed frustration with the lack of parent attendance at these events. One of the respondents provided this response:

I call or send a postcard when I want to share good news, I make sure and call when I am seeing a child's behavior change...if a student doesn't do their homework or forget it, they have to call their parents during class and tell them that they're not doing their job as a student. Our school also builds in an evening each year where students bring their parents to play board games with teachers.

One of the respondents indicated that she also served as a coach and so she had the opportunity to get to know her students on a different level, providing her with the opportunity to get to know many of the parents. This same respondent stated, “I also try to attend student activities and volunteer at school functions to get to know the students.”

The final question for the construct of “community of learners” helped to provide a transition to the next construct “respect.” This question asked respondents to identify how they demonstrate respect for and value their students’ language and culture. The responses indicated that many of the teachers did not have much diversity in their classes. Molly’s mentor noted that she felt that Molly is “open with [her students] and accepts them for who they are and makes them feel like they’re not different from each other.” Joni noted that she always calls students by their preferred name, or calls them “Sir” or “Miss.” She additionally provided examples demonstrating the ability to actively listen to and be supportive of her students. Kylie said that she tries to recognize that everyone comes to her classroom with different backgrounds and different needs. She stated that she works to meet the needs of the individual, as opposed to trying to give all of her students the same, regardless of need. She also mentioned that she looks at commonalities between peoples. The high school teachers provided references to being involved in their students’ activities and showing an interest in the students’ interests. The respondents of the on-line survey provided similar responses. Four indicated that they try to incorporate the students’ language and culture into the lesson content. One indicated that she attends activities that the students are involved in, while another expressed that she treats each student with respect. The last noted that she personally asks them questions about their language and culture, but does so in a setting that will not draw undo attention to the students or cause the student to be embarrassed.

From these data, the following findings emerged:

- *Teachers built connections with students and their families in many ways.*
- *Elementary teachers provided for strong communication with students families.*

## Respect for Diversity

The fourth construct identified in the literature was that of respect; respect for cultural differences (Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995) and a respect for diversity (Phuntsog, 1999). Phuntsog stated that “respect for diversity, caring and inclusive classroom, and self-esteem are interdependent” (p. 11), while Rodriguez and Sjostrom, supporting the work of Ana Maria Villegas through their research, identified that an “attitude of respect of cultural differences” was necessary for teachers in a multicultural society (p. 304). Villegas and Lucas (2002) added that teachers in a culturally diverse society need an “affirming attitude toward students who differ from the dominant culture” (p. 23).

Demonstrations of graduates’ exhibition of respect could be seen in all aspects of the data collection for this study. I saw the graduates exhibit respect for their students in their voice, their language, their tone, and their actions. Again, I asked three questions of the respondents aiming to gain a sense of how they demonstrate respect for all children in their classrooms. All participants provided examples of respect on the part of the graduate. Molly stated that the curriculum provides an opportunity for students to see representations of themselves, their language and their culture in the materials while her mentor said that Molly is very consistent in her expectations of the students. She said that throughout the year Molly has been kind and generous to the students, and very receptive to their needs. She further stated that the children know that she wants what’s best for them.

Joni was also teaching the younger students and was in the process of teaching the students about an earthquake that had recently struck Haiti. She used the teachable moment in her attempts to exhibit respect for her students while teaching her students to respect others. She noted that quite often students will have little “squabbles” and she will sit down with the students

and have the students work through the problem. Even at this age, she didn't solve the problem for the students, but rather took the time to help the students resolve the issues. Joni also shared her classroom rule for having a substitute. Her stated rule was that "You can't have a bad day with a sub." Not only did Joni provide the rule to the students, but she worked with the students to help them understand the rule as well. Joni provided multiple examples of demonstrations of respect. Joni's principal responded that she sees respectful behavior exhibited in Joni in how she treats her students. She said she never raises her voice. She further stated that if a student is in the office for an infraction in another class, Joni never sends students to the office, Joni is there working with the student encouraging them and helping them transition back into the classroom.

As a look at the demographics of Kylie's school will infer, there is little racial diversity in the building. However, a look around Kylie's classroom indicated that respect is important to Kylie. One of the bulletin boards in Kylie's room contained information and pictures about Kylie's favorite things, while another bulletin board had the words "Welcome to Language Arts." One of the banners displayed classroom rules including: Always respect property (return things in same condition, no graffiti or vandalism, stay out of other people's spaces, and ask for permission). Always respect yourself (be confident, don't write on yourself, believe in yourself, make your own decisions, don't let other people bring you down, do your best), and Always respect others (cheer people up, treat others better than you want to be treated, be kind, listen, compliment and encourage others, help others, stand up to bullies). Another banner included essential vocabulary: 1) Respect, 2) Thank You, 3) Please, 4) Right, 5) Privilege, 6) Can, and 7) May. Her principal noted, "Well, they've talked about respect as a concept and I know that she has essential vocabulary for her room and she has things like respect and manners." She went on to mention that she felt that Kylie was very respectful of the students' time and demonstrated that



by organizing her classes for maximum learning. Kylie mentioned that although there is little diversity, she does work to treat each student the same and that if she does need to work individually with a student she attempts to do so quietly and off to the side so that the student is not embarrassed.

Kathy provided me with a number of stories whereby she was able to demonstrate respect toward her students, their families, and their culture. Kathy, a Muslim herself, and teaching Arabic to her students, a highly diverse group of individuals, found no shortage of stories. As she noted, “it’s very cultural every day.” She talked about how on Fridays, she and the students “do” culture day and every other Friday she will bring food for the students. She said this provides an opportunity for her classes to compare cultures. She also uses the teachable moment and uses those opportunities with food to talk about table manners. Kathy mentioned that prior to one of these occasions one of her female, Muslim students approached her and asked whether she could make the food “Halal” and Kathy, understanding where the student was coming from said, “Absolutely, there’s not a problem with that.” She also shared that she encourages her students to attend cultural events, making sure that they have information about the events. In class, I observed an interaction between Kathy and one of her students; in this situation, Kathy was adamant that the student not speak poorly of his mother.

Dylan was the first of the graduates to mention his faith base and its impact on how he treats people. In fact, he stated that his religious beliefs help him tremendously in his work with students. He noted that he strives to treat all students the same, to treat all students fairly, and to give them the respect that he expects from them. While observing in his class, I observed Dylan using his knowledge of his students to de-escalate situations, infusing humor as appropriate. In one class Dylan was working with lower functioning students and yet he demonstrated patience

and respect in working with these children. His care was evident as he repeatedly asked one student whether she was feeling okay and whether she needed to see the nurse.

Ken was the last of the high school teachers that I observed and interviewed. Ken admitted that while his school is lacking in diversity he does have some students of color in his classes. He further noted that this lack of diversity had infiltrated the Kansas high school forensics circuit as well, in many instances prompting coaches to engage in stereotypical behaviors. He noted that within the forensics circuit there had been few African American team members and when one did surface, a certain body of literature was expected of them. He noted that with him, he provides his minority team members with the information so that they can make the decision for themselves. He also shared that he has a foreign-born student in one of his classes and he works to provide opportunities for this student to share from his own cultural background. Ken shared another snippet about his ability to relate to his students. He demonstrated an understanding of human behavior as he noted that his relationship with four African American young men in his classroom could either make him or break him in the classroom. He found ways to respectfully connect with those students on their level, areas of interest to the students, and was ultimately successful in using those relationships to create a positive learning environment in his classroom. Finally, Ken talked about his disciplinary procedures and stated that he does not like to “create a big ‘ME’ little ‘you’ situation.” He would rather create situations where the student could maintain dignity; yet fully understand Ken’s concerns. His mentor added to this conversation by noting that Ken gives respect and he expects respect in return, but moreover, Ken expects his students to provide respect to each other.

Although each of the respondents on the on-line survey was able to provide examples of demonstrations of respect, their stories varied. The first question about respect asked respondents

how they demonstrate respect for all students in their classroom. Two of the respondents replied matter-of-factly in stating that they treat all students equally, showing no favoritism. Another stated that she tries to address students on an equal level. She further stated, "I make a point to interact individually with each one of them during the hour, asking them about their needs. I try to protect their pride and self-consciousness and make my educational challenges to them as non-threatening as possible." Another remarked that she tries to give them "one-on-one attention at least once per class period." Still others responded that they try to take time to listen and allow the students the opportunity to tell their stories. Yet another indicated that in addition to listening to her students she tries to ensure that her students demonstrate respect for each other.

The second question on respect asked respondents to indicate how they would introduce a lesson on topics of diversity and culture. Of all the questions on this survey, this question elicited the least response. In several instances, the respondent simply stated that the response would depend on the lesson. Another indicated that the question was too open-ended, while another respondent suggested that she was unsure as to how to answer. A couple tried to create a general scenario and then built a response based on the created situation. For example, one stated:

For Kindergarten, diversity and culture is hard to understand because to them everyone is the same. I would introduce a lesson by reading a book that deals with the topics and allow the students to speak out on what they think these topics are. I will explain that we are all different but we need to be treated the same no matter what. In Kindergarten, we are all friends no matter if we are black, white, male, or female. We learn to work together!

Another respondent answered in a more general fashion with this response, “When you teach things like this, it is imperative to stress similarities and celebrate differences. The best way to introduce lessons on this is to highlight similarities alongside differences.”

The final question from the construct on respect provided respondents with an opportunity to express how they demonstrate respect for diversity. It became apparent that one of the respondents was becoming weary of the questions on respect because she simply responded, “Same as above, treat everyone as equal.” Other responses were shorter in length, but tried to simply answer the question. One wrote, “There are many ways to succeed in my classroom, and I think this rewards the diverse strengths and needs that students bring to my classes.” Another wrote of how her marriage to an individual of Hispanic decent has allowed her to share stories of what she has learned about a culture that is different from her own. She added that this has helped her gain an understanding of her Hispanic students. Another of the respondents simply stated, “Share about artists from all backgrounds regardless of sex, sexual orientation, or race.” Given these responses, it appears that each finds ways, within their value system, to demonstrate respect for diversity.

Given these data, the following findings emerged:

- *Teachers demonstrated a limited view of diversity among people.*
- *Teachers demonstrated respect for diversity in many ways.*
- *Some teachers’ faith and belief systems provided moral guidance in the classroom.*

#### Culturally Relevant Instructional Methodology

The literature was replete with research on culturally relevant instructional methodology. Grant and Gillette (2006) provided that teachers must be life-long learners and must vary the

instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students. Their research, however, called for more study in this arena. Although pre-service teachers were presented with a wide variety of teaching strategies and although these same pre-service teachers benefitted from multicultural courses and field experiences, research (Fuller, 1994) stated that these same pre-service teachers lacked the ability to connect the appropriate teaching strategy with the appropriate environment. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that these same pre-service teachers should be provided with a more expansive look at pedagogy, as well as an introspective view of themselves, so that they could more adequately help all students experience success. Further research (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) indicated that it would be unrealistic to expect a pre-service teacher to gain the full complement of culturally relevant teaching strategies while in an undergraduate teacher training program, but that these skills only developed with experience. Given this, Gay (2002) noted that “culturally responsive teachers know how to determine the multicultural strengths and weaknesses of curriculum designs and instructional materials and make the changes necessary to improve their overall quality” (p. 108). Finally, research conducted by Phuntsog (1999) showed that “the key to meeting the needs of all culturally different students may lie in developing even more effective culturally responsive teaching strategies that ensure curricular relevance and excellence for all learners” (p. 13).

Two questions were asked of all respondents within the construct of culturally relevant instructional methodology: 1) Please share with me the different methods of instruction that you use in the classroom and 2) How do you know that you are teaching to all children and that all children in your classroom are learning? All participants, both interviews and on-line, provided responses to questions within this construct. Each provided me with a synopsis of their teaching methodologies and, in the case that I was unclear, provided me with a more complete

explanation. The teachers interviewed provided the following list of instructional strategies: cooperative groups, hands-on activities, activities designed to teach to multiple intelligences, computer-based instruction, one-on-one instruction, instructional technology, direct instruction, constructivist activities, daily oral language, pair work, small group work, quantum learning, modeling, and lecture. Some of the teachers further described that they have established routines with their students and one mentioned that she attempts to change activities every 15 minutes. The mentors and principals provided a similar list as they stated: research-based strategies, hands-on strategies, student-centered strategies, cooperative learning activities, phonics and DRA as a diagnostic tool, one-on-one instruction, computer-based instruction, direct instruction, “read alouds,” graphic organizers, modeling, use of Promethean board, daily oral language, small group activities, media, acting, and lecture. Although this list was provided, a couple of the respondents noted that they were unsure as to whether the graduate came with those skills or whether the graduate received training enhancing their methodological skills. For example Molly’s mentor noted additional training in diversity, a focus of the district and Kylie’s principal noted that she had received district training in differentiated instruction.

Each of the respondents on the on-line survey provided a response as well; however, it appeared that survey fatigue might have been occurring as primarily brief answers were given. Only one of the respondents provided detail to her list as she wrote:

I use a wide variety of instructional methods in my classroom. I use direct teaching when I am teaching basic skills like reading notes. I do cooperative learning activities for times when we do composition activities. I use lecture or lecture with discussion when I share composer information. I show videotapes or clips after a discussion time to help demonstrate the new information, like maybe the sounds that steel drums make. I use

worksheets for students to practice new things like note writing and rhythm compositions.

The remaining respondents provided the following comprehensive list of instructional activities: worksheets, quizzes, tests, lecture, classroom discussions, group discussions, cooperative learning, projects, visual aids, direct instruction, note-taking, partner work, stations and centers, demonstrations, and research. One provided a list, which was a bit more specific to her content as an elementary teacher. She wrote, “Kagan strategies, anticipation guides, marking texts, writing to learn, and vocabulary squares.”

Responses to the second of the questions were varied as well, but the graduates related their responses to the cues and clues given to them by their students. Kylie noted that she knows they are learning by watching their levels of engagement, whether she is teaching or whether the students are engaged in an activity. She further mentioned that she has learned to ask questions that require the students to share information with her as opposed to “yes” or “no” questions. Dylan focused his response on assessment strategies, including chapter tests and quizzes. He noted that he also reads students faces, looking at facial expressions as he mentally processes which of his students are answering questions and determines if there are some that are not engaged. He does try to ensure that all students are engaged in answering questions and that responses to questions are not just coming from one student. Joni’s principal remarked that additional support for monitoring student achievement is given at the school-wide level, specifically given that Joni teaches in a special education classroom. In each nine-week period, school personnel get together to go over the progress of the students and then determine if changes need to occur to get the student where they need to be. Other mentors expressed that this

was difficult for them to evaluate because they weren't as familiar with this aspect of their mentee's instruction.

Five respondents provided input for this second question. Two of the responses seemed to address the entire question. One wrote, "I keep tabs on the progress of each student through various formative assessments, and try to alter my teaching as necessary, or address more extreme issues individually by meeting with students in study hall or after school." The second respondent expressed concern over meeting this challenge in her content area. She wrote:

This is a little more difficult to gauge in music but I always try to take daily notes after a new concept is taught of how many students grasped it. If I feel like it wasn't understood well, I'll usually try to teach it again with a different approach or through a different method. I'll do short quizzes after we learn something new, like note values, to have written work to gauge whether students are learning the concept too.

The rest of the responses seemed to focus on either the first half or the second half of the question. One respondent focused on only the first half of the question and wrote that she gives "a lot of individual help." The rest of the respondents just focused on the second half of the question and wrote that they use assessments, rubrics, quizzes, oral feedback, and/or scaffolding to ensure that students are learning.

Thus the following findings emerged:

- *Teachers considered individual learning style of students during teaching cycle.*
- *Teachers demonstrated understanding of learning styles of children.*
- *Teachers benefitted from on-going professional development.*



## High Expectations

The final construct of culturally relevant pedagogy supported by the literature was that to be effective teachers of multicultural students, teachers must have high expectations for their students (Fuller, 1994). Au (2006) further suggested that teachers must seek the academic success of all students, and most especially their students from diverse backgrounds. Grant and Gillette (2006) added to this and stated that teachers, to be effective, must believe that all children can learn and further they must hold high expectations for all of their students.

The final question regarding culturally relevant pedagogy asked of participants was for participants to identify how they demonstrate appropriately high expectations for all children. All participants responded to this question, with the exception of one of the on-line survey respondents.

Molly and Joni, both teaching at the elementary level began with a focus on their classroom rules. Molly indicated that in her first grade classroom it was important to teach the rules from the beginning so the students knew what to expect. She said that she and the students created a list and they came back to that list periodically, but generally the students knew the expectations. Joni additionally discussed her classroom rules; initially Joni stated that there were three classroom rules but they added a fourth. In our conversation, Joni referred to a fifth rule. Joni and Molly both referred to their students' behavior when there is a sub in the classroom. Molly indicated that usually her students get a good report, while Joni created a rule for that occasion. Molly's mentor indicated that she sees Molly demonstrating high expectations through her consistency. She added that Molly modeled the behaviors that she expects. Joni's principal focused more fully on student achievement in Joni's classroom than she did on student behavior. She stated that because Joni has a firm grasp on where her students need to be, she has set

challenging IEP goals with the expectation that it is easier to reduce gaps at a younger age than it is to reduce gaps later on in life.

Kylie, the only observed participant at the middle level, focused her high expectations on how her students treat each other. She noted that this is, in part, how they interact with each other, but also includes the ability to be engaged with the rest of class during instruction. Kylie also noted that she does not accept excuses for late work; if a student does not complete an assignment, she expects the student to present a plan for completing the work. Kylie stated that she considers middle school, and especially sixth grade, to be a transition for the students; further, she stated that she expects that students are gaining responsibility for their actions and their work and feels that it is her goal to help them with this growing process. Her principal shared that she feels Kylie does a nice job of reading and analyzing student data, and then setting down with the student to create learning goals. She noted that Kylie works to help each student achieve his or her best. She further noted that Kylie does provide differentiated instruction when the situation calls for that, but for the most part, her student population is not at the low end. Finally, she noted that Kylie works very well with the high students, asking high-level thinking questions, and holding high expectations.

Dylan started out his response by stating that he feels that “a good teacher should have high expectations for all of their students.” He clarified this, then by stating that high expectations may not be the same for all students. He noted that for some students, a “C” might be holding high expectations, and for others an “A” might be high expectations. He said that knowing the student and their abilities allows him the flexibility to respond to each question appropriately. He uses this knowledge of his students to help him as he is working to ensure that all students in his class are engaged. He will ask questions of all of his students, and makes sure

that as he is selecting questions that each student will be capable of answering. He further notes that this strategy appears to give the individual students more confidence in answering questions in the future.

Kathy and Ken, the two teachers who are teaching content other than that in which they were trained, were two that expressed concern that perhaps they were not doing well in holding high expectations for their students. Kathy's situation was perhaps a bit more unique than even was Ken's. Kathy was licensed with an endorsement in Arabic while all of her teacher preparation was in the area of history and government. Kathy accepted a teaching position after the school year had begun. Kathy was assigned to teach in two high schools in a large suburban school district. In one building, Kathy was taking over courses previously taught by an unlicensed teacher who had taught in the program for 15 years. At the time Kathy took over the classes, school had been in session for approximately one month. Kathy expressed concern over her knowledge of Arabic. As such, Kathy's students began the school year under another teacher's rules, procedures, and teaching. Kathy believed this teacher to be much loved by her students and additionally believed that this teacher was much more lax in her expectations than Kathy would have been. As such, Kathy experienced difficulty in making changes to behavioral expectations. She feared that the entire Arabic program would suffer if she attempted to radically change the expectations. Her mentor on the other hand expressed that he has observed Kathy's high expectations for her students.

Ken's struggle with high expectations came from a very different line of reasoning. Ken received his teacher training in speech and theater. Due to a passing test score in English, Ken was able to add English as an endorsement on his teaching license. Entering the English classroom, Ken noted that he had high expectations for student achievement, but that this

achievement was based on his tutoring of college students and were not realistic for high school students. At this point, he expressed that believes that he is still determining how much he should be expecting of them, but noted that he still tries to show the students what he expects of them, even though it is not realistic. He mentor expressed this was harder to address because she only sees little snippets. She stated that she does hear Ken provide positive encouragement to his students and reminders that they are completely capable of accomplishing a task. She did note that she and Ken had discussed his unrealistic expectations and felt that the district curriculum guidelines were helpful in re-establishing appropriate expectations.

Each of the seven participants in the on-line survey provided a response to this question of having high expectations. Each of their responses was unique and to summarize them doesn't capture the essence of the individual respondent. Thus each response is provided here in its entirety.

Respondent One:

I flat out tell my students what I expect from them, which are they come to class prepared, listen and ask questions, and they complete the work. That's very basic; it's more detailed than that. I make sure that my assignments are challenging and will push my students.

Respondent Two:

I try to show students that the responsibility for their success rests on their own shoulders by giving them the tools they need to succeed, but being very clear about my expectations including deadlines and achievement.

Respondent Three:

Always push them to challenge themselves on their projects....

Respondent Four:

You have to really look at the difference between laziness and their actual learning disability; once I recognized this, I knew when to push students to strive for more.

Respondent Five:

I set my expectations high for my class and really stress to the class these expectations at the beginning of the year. Throughout the week, I watch my students and if they are doing what they need to be doing and either give them a sticker and recognize them for their good work. I tell my class as a whole how great of a job they are doing. We earn compliments from other teachers or staff members we get a party after we receive the maximum amount of marbles we can earn as a class. The class works together to reach the goals we have set together.

Respondent Six:

I don't let kids get away with complaining about too much work, or something being too hard. I tell all my kids that I didn't go to college to be a babysitter, and that my job is to make sure they learn. If they know that I take my job seriously, they take their learning seriously.

Respondent Seven:

I expect that all students participate in classroom activities whether they feel they are good musicians or not. I encourage them to at least try even if they are nervous about singing or unsure about playing an instrument. I am strict about no negative criticism from other students to make the environment "safe" for students to try out new musical concepts.

Thus the following finding emerged from the data:

- *Teachers teaching a content in which they were trained were more confident in their ability than teachers teaching a content in which they were not trained.*

#### Additional Survey Questions

In addition to questions over the aforementioned constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy, participants were asked questions about the training they received at Bethel College. The first question asked participants to identify courses, which significantly impacted their ability to teach all children. The second question asked participants to identify changes to the program that could be made to ensure that all students have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach all children. The final question asked participants to identify additional questions, which should have been asked. As these questions do not specifically relate to the topic of this research study, only the significant data are being presented here.

Although most of the graduate participants, interview and on-line survey, identified education courses as significantly impacting their ability to teach all children, two participants identified their specific content courses as holding significance to them. This question was not asked of the mentors or the principals. With regard to the second question, one of the mentor/principal respondents noted that the Bethel Teacher Education Program might consider training pre-service teachers in how to use a mentor and to encourage them to utilize mentors when they become teachers. A more overwhelming, in sheer numbers, response from most of the graduate participants and some of the mentor/principal participants was that the Bethel College Teacher Education Program should require more actual pre-service teaching experiences, especially prior to student teaching. Additionally receiving multiple comments from respondents was the suggestion that classroom management could be enhanced.

Other findings, based on data gathered from the final three survey questions:

- *Participants expressed support for increased pre-service field experiences.*
- *Participants expressed support for increased training and experience in classroom management.*
- *One participant expressed support for candidate training in the use of a mentor.*

### Summary

In this chapter I presented a brief overview of the context within which I conducted this study. I reiterated the research questions, the research methods, and the methods of data collection. Following that I presented a summary of the data gathered from interviews, observations, and an on-line survey. I organized the presentation of this data around the constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy as found in the literature review. At the end of each section I concluded with significant findings, which were inferred from the data. Fourteen findings were inferred from the data surrounding culturally relevant pedagogy and three additional findings were inferred from additional questions asked of participants. In Chapter Six I will present my conclusions and the implications of my study.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this final chapter of my research on Bethel College graduate's use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms within their first two years of teaching, I will provide the reader with conclusions drawn from the data and supported by the literature. I will then provide recommendations based on the conclusions and follow that with implications, both implications for the field and implications for future study.

#### Conclusions

I will begin with the six conclusions, which I derived from my study. The six areas of conclusions include culturally relevant pedagogy, on-going professional development, pre-service training, pre-service field experiences, reflective practice, and Millennial graduate views of diversity.

#### *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

The first two conclusions, based on my research, are meant to be presented in tandem as there are qualifiers that bring validity to each. The first of the conclusions is: *Teachers are able to use constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy with limited success to work with all children.* As demonstrated in the findings, each of the graduate participants in this study employed the constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy, at varying levels of proficiency, as was verified by their mentor or principal. Having high expectations provided the most trouble for Kathy and Ken, although that may have been primarily due to the circumstances of their situation. Their mentors, though recognizing the situations in which Kathy and Ken were teaching, provided support that each did indeed exhibit high expectations for their students. Each of the on-line participants also indicated that they had experienced various levels of success in their use of the



constructs. Again, in the area of high expectations, one respondent admitted that area could use improvement. I conclude that these participants were effective to a degree, but that with more experience and training will become more so.

Much research has been previously provided regarding the importance of the selected constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy identified and examined in this study. In their work, Tate, Ladson-Billings, and Grant (1993) state that teachers must acknowledge that there is no one best way for students to learn, use varied instructional methods actively engaging their students, and provide a respectful learning environment that enhance student's self-concept. They further state that interactive teacher, parent, and students interactions will be fundamental to the "practice of the expansive model of education" (p. 272). Further research (Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995) provides evidence that both novice and experienced teachers were able to use effective strategies in working with diverse students. They concluded that when teachers are taught to use diversity in their teaching, they do. This research by Rodriguez and Sjostrom, did note differences between the novice and the experienced teachers. They state:

The novice focused more attention on selecting materials and organizing instructional content, appeared less willing to deviate from the instructional plan, and was less demanding of his teaching during reflection. The experienced teacher, on the other hand, was more attentive to student outcomes, monitored student performance in class more clearly, and seemed more willing to deviate from the planned lesson if the situation required it.

Given their research, Grant and Gillette (2006) suggest that we now need to understand how teachers interpret culturally relevant pedagogy and that we further need to understand how that interpretation impacts student achievement.

### *On-going Professional Development*

Given that participants in this study were experiencing limited success and given their lack of experience, the second conclusion inferred from the data and supported by the literature is: *Teachers benefit from on-going professional development in use of culturally relevant pedagogy.* Perhaps the most repeated comment from the respondents in this study was a call for increased pre-service field experiences. This is expressed by both the graduate interviewees and their mentors and principals. This is reiterated by the respondents in the on-line survey. Specifically, these participants express a desire to have experiential learning and by its very nature this occurs when the graduates are on the job. Of support for this conclusion as well, is the repeated comment from mentors and principals that they aren't sure if an observed behavior is the result of training at Bethel or on-going training provided by their district. This identifies a challenge in evaluating previous training that one has received.

Interestingly, Deveney's (2007) research suggests that a teacher's cultural responsiveness is not learned while in their pre-service training, and her research further suggests that teachers do not necessarily need to be involved in specific training to become effective in diverse classrooms. She does encourage mentoring as she notes, "you learn a lot from colleagues." Garmon (2004) on the other hand suggests that the dispositional and experiential factors included in his study could provide teacher educators with a basis for making entrance decisions. Other research (Causey, et al., 2000; Jordan, 1995; McAllister & Irvine, 2000) is replete with researchers detailing the need for teachers to receive additional training in working with diverse students. Finally, Brown (2004) notes that he found no conclusive explanation for participants in his student learning particular behaviors other than through direct experience in urban schools.

### *Pre-service Training*

On a related vein, data gathered from participants in this study provided much information about the curricular content of the teacher education program at this institution and thus the next conclusion is: *Current teacher training is not adequately meeting the needs of “Generation Y” pre-service teachers.* Program completers, both interviewee and on-line participants, were quick to point out strengths of the program, but additionally pointed to areas that could be improved. Responses from the participants in both the interviews and the on-line survey varied and included suggestions for program improvement such as: more methods courses, more strategies for working with special needs students and their specialized teachers, and more strategies for working with behavior management. One suggestion specifically resonated with my understanding of current traditional students belonging to “Generation Y,” the “Millennials.” The suggestion provided by this mentor was to guide program completers in their understanding of how to use mentors. She remarked that this graduate was very confident, a trait of Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 2003), and as such, did not seem to recognize the need for support in her teaching and in her classroom.

Again, there is much support for changes in teacher preparation programs, from simply enhancing programs to radically overhauling programs. Ladson-Billings (2000) states programs that prepare teachers should reexamine the course work to ensure that historically weak areas, programmatically, the teaching of concerns and perspectives of African Americans, are presented fairly and accurately, as opposed to “problems” in American history. Ladson-Billings (1999) further states that preparing teachers is more than just reading, it is about understanding and comprehending the meaning, including a more expansive view of education (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Others (Rodriguez & Sjoström, 1995) suggest that teachers in teacher

preparation programs must model the approaches that they teach their students, while McAllister and Irvine (2002) discuss the importance of the development and nurturing of dispositions while designing teacher education programs. Gay (1993) requires that action be taken immediately and expects that teacher education programs must be “transformed at their fundamental core” (p. 298).

### *Pre-service Field Experiences*

As noted previously, and of significant note in the findings, participants provided specific suggestions for improving the institution’s teacher education program and the next conclusion is inferred based on that data: *Teacher education programs need to include pre-service field experience opportunities earlier, and more often, to give students practical experiences on which to build their academic knowledge.* One graduate noted, “More hands-on experience before student teaching,” while another noted, “more in classroom time,” and a third stated he wished there was a way to become more involved prior to student teaching. One of the principals was able to compare her Bethel teacher with a teacher from another institution and stated that the other institution requires more actual experience, as opposed to observations, in the classroom prior to student teaching. The on-line survey participants provided input on this issue as well with one of the respondents specifically requesting practice in working on classroom management, learning styles, and practice in keeping all students engaged. Although these comments did not specifically refer to working these early field experiences occurring in a multicultural setting, these graduates referred specifically to experiences in areas in which they saw a need for more training. Ultimately, these field experiences need to be specific and directed to a particular focus.

Researchers in this area certainly provide additional evidence that these early field experiences are necessary. Garmon (2004) states that pre-service teachers participating in experiences with diversity and the subsequent processing of those experiences may be influential in “developing greater multicultural awareness and sensitivity” (p. 212). Research by Brown (2004), focusing on culturally responsive management techniques, provides support that these early experiences in urban settings are necessary to “adopt and implement” appropriate attitudes and behaviors for working with multicultural children. Groulx (2001) states that life experiences working in urban neighborhoods is a predictor of successful urban teaching. Au and Blake (2003) state that the cultural background of a pre-service teacher should influence the types of coursework and field experience training that should be included in their program. McAllister and Irvine (2002) caution that support must be provided to pre-service teachers in multicultural placements to alleviate the danger that accompanies high-risk environments. They mentioned that pre-service teachers should be challenged, but not far beyond their comfort zone. In her work, Ladson-Billings (2000) provides further support for this thought and notes the field experiences that pre-service teachers experience leave lasting impressions, as such, these experiences must be accompanied by conversation and support. Finally, these field experiences must be sequenced and well-planned; participation cannot be left up to individual choice (Gay, 1993).

### *Reflective Practice*

The first culturally reflective pedagogy construct, which I studied, was that of reflective practice. All graduate participants demonstrated use of reflective thinking in their professional practice, especially as the reflections related to instructional planning and presentation. Some schools required teachers to engage in reflective practice as part of their school processes. Not all

graduates noted that they use reflective practice to be introspective about their beliefs and biases, nor did they consistently note that they use self-reflection as a process to challenge their belief structures. Thus the next conclusion is: *Although all graduate participants discussed their use of reflective thinking in their professional practice, with those participating in interviews expressing their reflective practice in detail; not all graduates discussed their use of reflective practice to be introspective about their beliefs and biases and to challenge those belief structures.*

As noted, all of the graduate participants were aptly able to provide examples of their reflective practice; however with few exceptions these graduates limited their examples of reflective practices to instruction, and were not consistently utilizing reflective practice in examining beliefs and biases to challenge their belief systems. In most cases, reflective practice was limited to the content of their lesson plans, presentation of the plans, or in some cases the student response to the plans. This aspect of their reflective practice was well implemented, as one of these graduates noted that others have commented about her strong reflective abilities. The mentor of another graduate recognized strong reflective abilities in her mentee, but felt that this reflective behavior may have been as much a part of the personality of the individual as it was a part of the training that he received. As noted in the findings, in five instances involving four of the graduates, interviewed and surveyed, examples of reflective practice involving a look at the belief structures of the graduates took place. In the general area of reflective practice, there is much congruence with the literature, however, when considering in depth study of beliefs and biases, the data from this study just does not exist.

Greenman and Kimmel (1995) support the conclusion that reflective practice is important in training for multicultural education and further note that that the discomfort or disequilibrium

that is felt is necessary so that growth can occur. Fuller (1994) notes that although training in multicultural education is necessary and appropriate for teacher candidates, her research indicates that these candidates were not equally successful in adopting teaching strategies for the environment. Critical analysis must occur to ensure congruence. This coupled with multicultural field experiences will provide teachers with the foundation or frame of reference on which to build. Milner (2007), through his research, adds that teacher educators need to provide spaces for teacher candidates to engage in this thinking process, adding that dialogue with another may be helpful, so that the teacher candidates are able to make informed curricular and instructional decisions. As a recommendation from their research, McAllister and Irvine (2000) recommend that pre-service teacher education programs provide their teacher candidates with opportunities to engage in reflection and support groups that challenge the individual. Deeper understanding of core beliefs must occur in a supportive environment.

#### *Millennial Graduate Views of Diversity*

Interestingly, when I asked graduates, and their mentors and principals, questions about diversity, many reminded me that they do not teach or work in a diverse school or district. They would then proceed to tell me about the racial composition of their student population. I specifically noticed this because they are taught about multiple forms of diversity in the Bethel teacher education program. Eventually they came around and shared with me about other forms of diversity that they have in their classes, but the initial reaction was around racial diversity. Additionally, the graduates falling within the “traditional” college student age range and thus belonging to the Millennial generation, state that they believe that their generation and generations following them have a unique view of diversity. One noted that she believes that the distinction of differences between groups of people is less important to them. Another noted that

her students seem so “American” and so she doesn’t notice the diversity. Thus, the last of my conclusions is: *Teachers participating in this study have a unique view of racial diversity*. Again, there is congruence between these data and evidence found in the literature.

Initially, Fuller’s (1994) research indicates that teacher education programs must expand their treatment of diversity to include a broader definition, including socioeconomic status, poverty, and family structure. Fuller further notes that teacher candidates must have experiences in working with all components of this expanded definition of diversity. Valli (1995) provides a discussion of the two contradictory maxims, “If you don’t see the color, you don’t see the child” and “Teachers should be color blind,” examined in her research. She notes that both are problematic and should not be taken as absolutes. She states, “Seeing color is often an imposition of stereotypes and prejudice. Not seeing color blinds White teacher interns to their own dominating culture and behaviors” (p. 126), and as such, summarizes her research by stating, “Teachers must both see and not see color. Color does not singularly define any two people in the same way. It is not all that we are” (p. 126). More recent research by Johnson (L. Johnson, 2002) follows the journey of six, white classroom teachers. This research supports the findings of Valli. Research conducted by Au and Blake (2003) confirm the results of previous studies indicating that teacher training programs should move away from what is termed a “colorblind attitude.” Rather teachers should learn about institutional racism in schools. Although little empirical evidence exists to support her claims, Broido (2004) provides an understanding of the Millennial generation and their views of diversity. She notes that “Most indicators point toward Millennials having more open attitudes toward issues of diversity and social justice, although there are a number of trends challenging that perspective” (p. 76). She further notes that for Millennials, race is no longer a black and white issue, but includes other persons of color.



Finally, she notes that “an increasing number of students are citing more positive attitudes toward race-related issues and support for affirmative action” (p. 78). Her discussion of Millennials is not limited to race, but includes gender, sexual orientation, political attitudes, and social justice behaviors.

### Implications

Based on the findings and conclusions of my research, I have identified the following implications. Teacher educators may find benefit in investigating whether considering these implications for use in their own institutions would be helpful.

*Provide early structured opportunities for teacher candidates to engage in field experiences allowing teacher candidates the opportunity to practice teaching strategies prior to clinical experience semester.* Noted repeatedly in the interviews and in the on-line survey responses are suggestions that although the currently practice of early field experiences at Bethel occurs, more could be done. Graduates note that at the time that they were enrolled in courses they didn't fully appreciate the value of the experiences, but now that they are in the field, they understand the value and wish that there had been more. Groulx (2001) notes there are certain characteristics that can help to determine whether teachers may become successful teachers in an urban setting. One of the characteristics she identifies is prior experiences in working with young people. Brown (2004) further notes the importance of learning through direct experience. Causey, Thomas, and Armento (1999) call for further study into factors that might influence teachers' beliefs, including prior experiences.

A corollary to the first implication is: *Ensure that each field experience is properly founded in theoretical knowledge linking practice with the theory.* Au and Blake (2003) state “a well-designed pre-service program requires a balance of academic courses and field experiences”

(p. 204) and Valli (1995) notes the importance of the dialogue that occurs with students who are engaged in learning experiences in the field that are linked to theory in the classroom.

A second corollary to the first implication is: *Provide early structured opportunities for teacher candidates to engage in multicultural experiences, challenging candidates to engage in critical self-reflection, examining beliefs and biases, yet in a supportive environment to maximize candidate growth experiences. Sufficiently infuse these experiences with tension so that all candidates experience growth.* I am not fully able to explain why graduates focused primarily on the instructional aspect of their teaching as they practiced their reflective behaviors. One reason could be that as beginning teachers, instruction is on their minds. This reasoning was supported by Rodriguez and Sjoström (1995) who note differences between novice and experienced teachers. A second reason could be that perhaps this type of reflective thinking was not expected or required in their undergraduate program. This reasoning was supported by Johnson (2002) who describes in her research that changes in behavior only occur when individuals are taught about the behaviors. Gay (1993) notes that field experiences must not be left to choice, but rather they must be carefully planned and they must be mandated. Ladson-Billings (2000) further notes that these field experiences “may play a role in addressing the stereotypes and racist attitudes that [future teachers] may hold” (p. 212). McAllister and Irvine (2002) conclude that:

the learning experiences must balance risk with support and scaffold immersions from most familiar to least. Constructing learning experiences to manage the level of risk will provide enough support so that teachers are challenged but are not far beyond their comfort zones (p. 442).

And finally, Greenman and Kimmel (1995) note “reflective analysis is essential in multicultural education training and that a level of discomfort or disequilibrium is necessary to reach that stage of learning and change” (p. 367).

*Utilize student teachers and beginning teachers as a resource in Pre-Kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade schools.* Schools have an asset in younger teachers that should be used as a resource for helping older teachers reenergize in their profession. One of the mentors who participated in my study remarked that working with a mentee, or working with student-teachers, provided him the opportunity to grow as a teacher, to learn new methods from the mentee, and to regain a sense of excitement. This is not a new phenomenon as I hear this from cooperating teachers regularly. Deveney (2007) notes the importance of the mentor-mentee relationship, restating the maxim “you learn a lot from colleagues” and that tends to be a two-way street. According to a report from the Learning Point Associates (Coggshall, Ott, Behrstock, & Lasagna, 2010) who published six findings toward retaining teacher talent in Millennial teachers, “all teachers desire collaboration with their colleagues, not just younger ones” (p. 15). These relationships can be beneficial at several levels within an organization.

*Use college Millennial faculty as a resource toward meeting the needs of Millennial college students.* My own experience with the faculty at my institution is that we are a diverse group of people. We are not racially diverse, but our teaching styles are radically diverse. We have some faculty who are comfortable with their teaching and see no need to change their practice. We have others that continually update their methods to meet the perceived changing needs of their students. Some of the faculty is receptive to change, while others are not. Much of the literature referenced in this study support the need for continually updating teaching

strategies to meet the changing demographics of students. Phuntsog (1999) specifically notes that this is key to meeting the needs of all students.

*Judiciously encourage teacher candidates to add endorsements to their teaching license, especially noting that specific training in the specific content and content specific methodology may be helpful in the transition to the classroom as a teacher of that content.* This implication is drawn solely from the data gathered in my study and most specifically the data provided by Kathy, Ken, and their mentors. The practice at Bethel College has been to encourage graduating teachers to add endorsements to their license to increase their marketability. Data show that several graduates have taken advantage of this opportunity. The data, from the case studies on Kathy and Ken, infer, if I can extrapolate from these data, that teacher confidence can suffer when teachers have not been fully trained in a content area in which they are hired to teach. I believe that this is an area that would be beneficial to colleges of education, prospective teachers, school districts, and state departments of education and as such I believe that this is an area for future study.

*More research is needed on the characteristics of traditional college-age students, the Millennials, as well as the following generation, the “Digital Natives.” Work with college faculty to more adequately provide educational experiences using understanding of generational characteristics as a guide.* More research is needed on Millennial students and teachers to support teacher preparation institutions in meeting their needs and the needs of their students. As noted in Broido’s (2004) work, there is little empirical research on “Millennial” teachers and their “Digital Native” students. Thus, improved student achievement will occur as teachers continue to utilize research and best practices in working with their students.

## Summary

As noted initially in this study, research is replete with data demonstrating the importance of beliefs and dispositions toward social justice on a teacher's classroom setting and instruction (Causey, et al., 2000; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Phuntsog, 1999; Tatto, 1996). However, what is less clear, and has little research data, is how these beliefs translate into action in the teacher's classroom. Thus, this study will provide researchers and higher education institutions a description of how constructs of culturally relevant pedagogy taught in a teacher education program are manifested in the P-12 classroom. This research has added to the literature on effective implementation strategies of culturally relevant pedagogy in the P-12 classroom setting. The impetus for this study centered on my personal interest in social justice and my subsequent investigation into culturally relevant pedagogy. As the chair of a teacher education program, I further have an interest in providing a high quality program. As such, the results of this study will further the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and will also provide input for program improvement within my own institution.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TEACHER INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM



*Department of Educational Leadership  
Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142*

November 10, 2009

Dear Teacher Interview Participant,

As a doctoral student at Wichita State University, I am conducting dissertation research with Bethel College Teacher Education Program completers to understand your use of culturally relevant pedagogy in your classroom based on your training at Bethel. Your voluntary involvement will consist of participation in an interview that will last approximately 45 minutes. Interviews will be scheduled at the participants' convenience at your school. I do not anticipate any risks for participants. The results of this study will help Bethel College improve the effectiveness of program completers' use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. Findings from this research may be presented at regional, national, or international conferences and may result in publication in scholarly journals. In any publication, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity, as well as the identity of your location.

Your interview responses will remain confidential and you and your school will not be personally identified in the final report or any publications or presentations. With your agreement, the interview will be audio recorded to assist me in accurately describing your responses. Recordings will be erased following the data analysis process. The interview will terminate in a process that will allow you to validate the meaning of responses.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. Your decision not to participate will not affect your future relations with Bethel College or WSU. If you have questions please contact Randall Turk at WSU at (660)723-1723 or at [randy.turk@wichita.edu](mailto:randy.turk@wichita.edu). If you have any questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, 67260-0007, or telephone (316) 978-3285.

By signing one copy of this form you are granting your permission to participate in this interview. You may also give your consent to allow me the opportunity to visit with your supervisor with questions pertaining to this research. You are welcome to keep a copy of the form to provide you with contact information. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and voluntarily agree to participate in the study. You may also withdraw your data from the study without penalty or fear of reprisal. Thank you for assisting me in this important study.

Sincerely,

Allen W. Jantz

I agree to participate in an interview.

---

Participant Signature

Date

I give my permission to allow my supervisor to participate in an interview to address questions pertaining to this study.

---

Participant Signature

Date

## APPENDIX B

### SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM



*Department of Educational Leadership  
Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142*

November 10, 2009

Dear Supervisor Interview Participant,

As a doctoral student at Wichita State University, I am conducting dissertation research with Bethel College Teacher Education Program completers to understand their use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their classroom based on their training at Bethel. Your voluntary involvement will consist of participation in an interview that will last approximately 45 minutes. Interviews will be scheduled at the participants' convenience at your school. I do not anticipate any risks for participants. The results of this study will help Bethel College improve the effectiveness of program completers' use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. Findings from this research may be presented at regional, national, or international conferences and may result in publication in scholarly journals. In any publication, pseudonyms will be used to protect each participant's identity, as well as the identity of the participant's location.

Your interview responses will remain confidential and you and your location will not be personally identified in the final report, publications, and presentations. With your agreement, the interview will be audio recorded to assist the researcher in accurately describing your responses. Recordings will be erased following the data analysis process. The interview will terminate in a process that will allow you to validate the meaning of responses.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. Your decision not to participate will not affect your future relations with Bethel College or WSU. If you have questions please contact Randall Turk at WSU at (660)723-1723 or at [randy.turk@wichita.edu](mailto:randy.turk@wichita.edu). If you have any questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, 67260-0007, or telephone (316) 978-3285.

By signing one copy of this form you are granting your permission to participate in this interview. You are welcome to keep a copy of the form to provide you with contact information. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and voluntarily agree to participate in the study. You may also withdraw your data from the study without penalty or fear of reprisal. Thank you for assisting me in this important study.

Sincerely,

Allen W. Jantz

I agree to participate in an interview.

---

Participant Signature

Date



APPENDIX C

TEACHER OBSERVATION CONSENT FORM



*Department of Educational Leadership  
Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142*

November 10, 2009

Dear Observation Participant:

As a doctoral student at Wichita State University, I am conducting field research with 2007-2009 Bethel College Teacher Education Program completers to understand program completers' use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. Six program completers will participate in interviews and observations, and all program completers from 2007-2009 will be invited to participate in a survey. I do not anticipate any risks for participants. Your involvement will consist of participation in your routine teaching responsibilities. Observations of your teaching will be scheduled at the participants' convenience in your school. The results of this study will help Bethel College to improve the effectiveness of instruction in culturally relevant pedagogy. Findings from this research may be presented at regional, national, or international conferences and may result in publication in scholarly journals. Your observation interactions will remain confidential and you will not be personally identified in the final report. In any publication, pseudonyms will be used to protect each participant's identity, as well as the identity of the participant's location.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. Your decision not to participate will not affect your future relations with Bethel College or WSU. If you have questions please contact Randall Turk at WSU at (660)723-1723 or at [randy.turk@wichita.edu](mailto:randy.turk@wichita.edu). If you have any questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, 67260-0007, or telephone (316) 978-3285.

By signing one copy of this form you are granting your permission to participate in this observation. You are welcome to keep a copy of the form. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and voluntarily agree to participate in the study. You may also withdraw your data from the study without penalty or fear of reprisal. Thank you for assisting us in this important study.

Sincerely,

Allen W. Jantz

I agree to participate in an observation.

---

Participant Signature

Date

## APPENDIX D

### TEACHER ON-LINE SURVEY CONSENT FORM



*Department of Educational Leadership  
Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142*

November 10, 2009

Dear Bethel College Teacher Education Program Completer:

You are invited to participate in a study of Bethel College Department of Teacher Education Program completers' use of culturally relevant pedagogy in your classrooms. I hope to learn gain an understanding of impact of teacher preparation coursework as it manifests itself in your classroom with the added benefit of improving Bethel's Teacher Education Program.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you completed the Bethel College Teacher Education Program during the 2007-08 or 2008-09 school years and are currently teaching in a P-12 school. All Bethel College Teacher Education Program completers during that timeframe are being asked to participate in this survey.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete this online survey by answering the questions as listed. The questions have been designed to help me gain an understanding of the impact of the Bethel College Teacher Education Program on your use of culturally relevant pedagogy in your classroom. It is anticipated that this survey will take 15 minutes to complete.

In this survey, you will be asked to critically analyze and describe your experiences in your current classroom that relate to the education you received at Bethel College. No risks or discomfort are anticipated. It is anticipated that with your participation, the teacher education program at Bethel will be enhanced.

Any information obtained in this study in which you can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Findings from this research may be presented at regional, national, or international conferences and may result in publication in scholarly journals. In any publication, pseudonyms will be used to protect each participant's identity, as well as the identity of each participant's location.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University and/or Bethel College. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you have questions please contact Randall Turk at WSU at (660)723-1723 or at [randy.turk@wichita.edu](mailto:randy.turk@wichita.edu). If you have any questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, 67260-0007, or telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in the study. Your completing and returning this questionnaire will be taken as evidence of your willingness to participate and your consent to have the information used for the purposes of the study.

You may keep this cover letter and explanation about the nature of your participation in this study and the handling of the information you supply.

Sincerely,

---

Allen W. Jantz

Date

## APPENDIX E

### TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Hello, my name is Allen Jantz, and I am a doctoral student from Wichita State University. I appreciate your willingness to help me. My research consists of working with Bethel College Teacher Education Program completers and their home districts to determine their ability to use culturally relevant pedagogy in their classroom.

You were selected because you completed the Bethel College Teacher Education Program in the last two years and you teach in a district that is rich in diversity. Please keep in mind that I am interested in your perceptions.

Before we begin, I would like to share a few procedures for our conversation. Although we will be on a first name basis, no names will be used when we report the results of this session. Names of your school and district will also be held in confidence. You can be assured of complete confidentiality. With your permission I would like to audio-record our session today so that I will be able to more carefully listen to your comments. The recording will only be used for the purpose of note taking and will be destroyed following the completion of the study. This session will last approximately 45 minutes.

#### Questions

Please tell me your name, position in your school district, and how long you have been with this district.

1. As you recall, at Bethel College we stressed the use of reflection in improving practice. Would you please tell me how you engage in self-reflection in your professional practice?

- Probe: Can you please share with me an example of one of your reflections, or a reflection of a recent classroom activity?
- As a result of your reflective thinking, how has your professional practice changed?
2. If I walked into your classroom, what would I see that tells me that you are a culturally literate teacher?
- Probe: What activities do you engage in that are designed to help all children learn?
3. How do you build a community of learners in the classroom?
- Probe: How do you connect with students' families?
- How do you show respect for and value your students' language and culture?
4. How do you demonstrate a respect for all children in your classroom?
- Probe: How would you introduce a lesson that addresses topics of diversity and culture?
- How do you demonstrate respect for diversity?
5. Please share with me the different methods of instruction that you use in the classroom?
- Probe: How do you know that you are teaching to all children and that all children in your classroom are learning?
6. Would you please tell me how you demonstrate high expectations for all children?
7. Which courses at Bethel College significantly impacted your ability to teach all children?

8. When considering the coursework at Bethel College, what could be enhanced to ensure that you have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach all children?

Probe: Beyond “you,” what could be enhanced for all graduates?

9. What questions did I not ask that I should have?

## APPENDIX F

### SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Hello, my name is Allen Jantz, and I am a doctoral student from Wichita State University. I appreciate your willingness to help me. My research consists of working with Bethel College Program completers and their home districts to determine their ability to use culturally relevant pedagogy in their classroom.

You were selected because you completed the Bethel College Teacher Education Program and your district is rich in diversity. Please keep in mind that I am interested in your perceptions.

Before we begin, I would like to share a few procedures for our conversation. Although we will be on a first name basis, no names will be used when we report the results of this session. You can be assured of complete confidentiality. With your permission I would like to audio-record our session today so that I will be able to more carefully listen to your comments. The recording will only be used for the purpose of note taking and will be destroyed following the completion of the study. This session will last approximately 45 minutes.

#### Questions

Please tell me your name, position in your school district, and how long you have been with this district.

1. At Bethel College we stress the use of reflection in improving practice. Would you please tell me how \_\_\_\_\_ engages in self-reflection in his or her professional practice?

Probe: As a result of his or her reflective thinking, please describe what changes you have observed in his or her professional practice?



2. What have you observed in \_\_\_\_\_'s classroom that tells you that you that he or she is a culturally literate teacher?

Probe: What activities have you observed \_\_\_\_\_ engage in that are designed to help all children learn?

3. How does \_\_\_\_\_ build a community of learners in the classroom?

Probe: How does \_\_\_\_\_ connect with students' families?

How does \_\_\_\_\_ show respect for and value his or her students' language and culture?

4. How does \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrate a respect for all children in his or her classroom?

Probe: How do \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrate respect for diversity?

5. Please share with me the different methods of instruction that you have observed \_\_\_\_\_ use in the classroom?

Probe: How do you know that \_\_\_\_\_ is teaching to all children and that all children in his or her classroom are learning?

6. Would you please tell me how \_\_\_\_\_ demonstrates high expectations for all children?

7. Would you please share with me any gaps that you have observed in \_\_\_\_\_'s knowledge, skills, or dispositions based on their training at Bethel College?

8. What questions did I not ask that I should have?

## APPENDIX G

### ON-LINE TEACHER SURVEY

- 1a. As you recall, at Bethel College we stressed the use of reflection in improving practice. Would you please tell me how you engage in self-reflection in your professional practice?
- 1b. Would you please share with me an example of one of your reflections, or a reflection of a recent classroom activity?
- 1c. As a result of your reflective thinking, how has your professional practice changed?
- 2a. If I walked into your classroom, what would I see that tells me that you are a culturally literate teacher?
- 2b. What activities do you engage in that are designed to help all children learn?
- 3a. How do you build a community of learners in the classroom?
- 3b. How do you connect with students' families?
- 3c. How do you show respect for and value your students' language and culture?
- 4a. How do you demonstrate a respect for all children in your classroom?
- 4b. How would you introduce a lesson that addresses topics of diversity and culture?
- 4c. How do you demonstrate respect for diversity?
- 5a. Please share with me the different methods of instruction that you use in the classroom?
- 4b. How do you know that you are teaching to all children and that all children in your classroom are learning?
6. Would you please tell me how you demonstrate high expectations for all children?
- 7a. Which courses at Bethel College significantly impacted your ability to teach all children?

- 7b. When considering the coursework at Bethel College, what could be enhanced to ensure that you have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach all children?
- 7c. What could be enhanced for all graduates?
- 8. What questions did I not ask that I should have?



