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The challenges of changing demographics in a midwestern school district: administrative interventions and teachers' responses

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THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN A MIDWESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT: ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVENTIONS AND TEACHERS' RESPONSES

by

Heather Hyatt Kreinbring

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Policy and Leadership Studies in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

May 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Scott McNabb

ABSTRACT

America's school-age population is experiencing a demographic shift. In 1972, students of color represented 22% of the school-age population; in 2005, minority students accounted for 33% of public school enrollment (Statistics, 2007 Villegas, 2002). This study sought to explore how these changing demographics affected University Town Community Schools, the district's interventions, and teachers' perceptions to those interventions. This study also explored teachers' feelings of efficacy when teaching minority students. Using a qualitative study among third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade elementary school teachers, a random sample of 9 teachers from schools comprising a minority population of at least 40% were interviewed. Data analysis involved the use of themes that emerged from the interview data, observations, and quotations from participants.

The findings indicated that the district acted on a school-by-school basis, with no specific actions to target any one racial group. Meanwhile, teachers were inconsistent when discussing race, behavior, and learning. Teachers felt comfortable assigning behaviors based on race and culture, but were hesitant to assign learning strengths and weaknesses based on race or culture.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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To Dr. McNabb, whose insight helped clear the path of dissertation work;
My parents, whose encouragement and belief has allowed me to believe that all things are possible;

My sister, who has always supported any endeavor I've undertaken;

My husband, who put up with me throughout this journey;
And finally, to my daughter, whose impending birth and arrival gave me the motivation to finish this project.

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To my immediate family members—my parents, Sandy and Rick Pruett and Mike and Gladys Hyatt; my sister, Hollie; my husband, Koby Kreinbring; and my daughter, Hattie Kreinbring—thank you. My parents have always provided encouragement and the belief that I could complete any task. My sister has provided the support to complete any task. My husband has been patient and understanding

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To everyone who went on this journey with me, it is done!

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The future of the nation is on the shoulders of teachers and how they teach kids; the future of world is in the classroom where the teachers are. If you have any chance to guarantee a positive bridge to the twenty-first century, it is how we educate the children in the classrooms today.

-Richard Green

A review of the test scores, high school retention, dropout rates, and enrollment in advanced placement courses and post-secondary institutions supports the assertion that schools are not effectively educating all students successfully. Many minority students are placed at a serious disadvantage for being excluded from the benefits and opportunities that being well educated affords individuals. The accountability demanded by state and federal agencies necessitates that schools examine the reasons behind low performance of minority students.

Schools are becoming increasingly diverse, and their teaching staffs remain predominantly White and middle class. A need for the current study is reflected in the literature indicating that schools are responsible for the education of all students and achievement gaps showcase American schools are not adequately educating minority populations. The changing school-age population raises questions of actions that schools are undertaking to better educate the growing minority populations. Currently, most pre-service teachers are monolingual and prefer to teach in suburban and rural settings (Gibson, 2004), settings that most often mirror their own school experiences. The changing population of the United States will

soon affect many schools, particularly those in the most populated states, and today's pre-service teachers may not be teaching students who resemble themselves. Numerous factors create difficulty for multicultural understanding, namely, a lack of education concerning historical relationships between socio-economic classes and causes of lower academic performance displayed by many minority students; teacher deficiencies in knowledge of the social and cultural contexts of instruction in the areas of communication, transfer of knowledge, transfer of cultural values, and socialization and networking; and the fact that most teachers come from White, middle-class backgrounds and are deficient in interactions with other cultures. As such, this phenomenon can lead to a social, emotional, and academic disconnect between teachers and minority students (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991.)

An analysis of the research indicates the search for culturally relevant policy is becoming an important trend in education. Scholars have reviewed the approaches and actions of schools districts across the United States seeking to implement culturally responsive policy in order to assist other districts in their strategies for examining, reviewing, and employing their own culturally relevant policy (Farr, 2005; Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell Jones, 2005; Zanville, 2001).

Changing Demographics

Diversity in education is not a new concept. Much literature and research have been devoted to diversity issues in public education (Shaughnessy, 2007.) The focus on this issue is greater than ever. Standardized test scores, accountability, achievement gaps, special education referrals, and discipline referrals are indicatives that highlight discrepancies in the education of White, mainstream students and their minority counterparts. These issues have not only re-energized a discourse on the education of minority students, but also added strategies and school policy aimed at successfully educating students whose culture differs from that of school staffs.

As the student population of United States' schools becomes increasingly diverse, the teaching staff is becoming less diverse. Nationally, more than 90% of all teachers are White while less than 10% of all teachers are minorities (Epstein, 2005; Hodgkinson, 2002), although the exact ratios vary by state. These statistics are important because the disparities between teacher and student in regard to socio-economic and cultural experiences make an examination of school policy, school practice, and teacher cultural efficacy a necessity. As our society becomes more diverse, schools must respond to the demands of their student populations in order to provide learning opportunities for all students. Moreover, instruction and teacher beliefs affect students' academic achievement. Instruction and teacher beliefs should

be congruent with and cognizant of students needs. *Equity in Heterogeneous Classrooms: A Challenge for Teachers and Sociologists* states that contemporary rhetoric idealizes classrooms in which all children can learn and be seen as smart (Cohen, 1997).

The United States is becoming more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, a trend that is expected to continue. Immigration and higher birth rates among minorities, particularly Latinos and African Americans, are contributing to this phenomenon. Ethnic and racial diversification is most prominent among the school-age population. During the past 30 years, the composition of the school-age population has undergone a demographic shift. In 1972, students of color represented one fifth (22%) of the school-age population; by 2007, they accounted for one third (33%). Moreover, estimates project that by 2020 minorities will account for (39%), students of color will comprise a numerical majority of the student population in the United States and, by 2050, the "minority" population will account for 57% of the school population (Statistics 2007 & Villegas, 2002).

The statistics for African American and Hispanic students are grim. African American and Hispanic students tend to score much lower on standardized tests than other students. While the high school completion gap for African Americans is closing, a gap still exists for some students. These students are also less likely to complete high school compared to their White and Asian peers. Indeed, the national

average graduation rate for African American students is 81.1% and for Hispanic students is 58.5%, compared to 90.1% for White students and 87.6% for Asian students (Bureau, 2006). High school retention is tied to high school completion, which mean that Hispanic and African American students are still more likely to drop out of high school than their White and Asian counterparts. African Americans and Hispanics rank among the least likely to enroll in advanced placement courses as well as enroll in and attain a post-secondary education. Meanwhile, they are more likely to be enrolled in special education classes and receive disciplinary actions in the form of suspensions and expulsions (Lindsey, et al, 1999).

These numbers are particularly significant for a number of reasons. Schools' failure to provide a sufficient education for minority students mean that Hispanic and African American students are placed at risk of having a lower quality of life. Educational attainment is married to economic success in the United States. As a result of a lack of educational attainment, minorities, especially African Americans and Hispanics, are much more likely to live in poverty, lack health insurance, and need welfare assistance (Camarota, 2001). Overall, African Americans and Hispanics are likely to have a lower quality of life due to an insufficient education. Given the changing demographic trends, students' language, culture, and experiences will differ from their White teachers, posing new challenges that schools will have to address.

One area in which schools can address some of the inequities in education is through the examination of the role culture plays in schooling. Given that the racial, language, and economic composition of United States' teachers often differ from that of their students, a cultural mismatch is occurring between the teaching staff and students. Indeed, the number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students has increased 120% from the 1985-1986 school year to the 1995-1996 school year (Villegas, 2002). The largest majority of identified LEP students speak Spanish. As minority enrollment increases and teacher ethnicity remains the same, an examination of culture in the classroom is imperative if schools are to successfully teach their minority populations.

A cultural mismatch between teachers and students can affect student performance and learning. A cultural disconnect between teacher and student can manifest in the skills of minority students being overlooked while their White peers are labeled as talented based on limited criteria (Hale, 1994). The federal government does not mandate requirements for teacher certification, leaving such requirements to each individual state. However, the National Bureau of Labor and Statistics does recognize the need for diversity education classes (US Census Bureau, 2008-2009). Given that requirements for diversity education are left up to each state, multicultural/cultural competency classes vary from state to state. Some states have mandated a cultural competency component as part of teacher certification. Fifteen

states have generic cultural competency requirements, such as including a general statement of cultural competence in their state standards. Five states, Alaska, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire and North Dakota, require cultural course work requirements for certification. Massachusetts and Nebraska require one cultural course while Alaska, New Hampshire and North Dakota require two cultural courses pertaining to cultural responsiveness. Sixteen states have no certification requirement for cultural competence (Zanville, 2001). The one or two courses required are insufficient for educating pre-service teachers regarding the needs of their minority student population (Gay, 2000; Hale, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

School districts are beginning to recognize the role culture plays in learning, and many have begun exploring reasons for discrepancies between White and minority test scores. A review of existing literature confirms that schools have recently begun to look at culture as way of reaching minority students (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba 1991; Gay, 2002; Hale, 1994; Landson-Billings, 1994; Lindsey et al., 2005). In order to negotiate such differences between teachers and students, school districts have examined their student populations and implemented programs and services to bridge the demographic changes and cultural mismatches between teachers and students. States like California, Wisconsin, and Oregon are incorporating culturally relevant teaching strategies into state and district policy

(National School Boards Association, 2008; Farr, 2005; Mowry, 2005; Zanville, 2001). Indeed, states throughout the United States are examining ways to teach minority students more effectively.

University Town's Background

The current study will focus on one school district's efforts to bridge the demographic changes and cultural mismatches between teachers and students. University Town is located in the heart of the Midwest. With a population of 118, 038 as of 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), the community is known for its University, which is the heart of the community. The university provides many jobs for the city; hence, University Town consists of a transient population. University Town is an educated community, with 47.6 % of its population aged 25+ years having a least a bachelor's degree, which is significantly higher than the national average at 28% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

University Town is proud of its education system both at the K-12 and post-secondary levels. The local university has many top 20, nationally ranked programs, and its public schools continually rank in the top of the nation in terms of test scores and advanced placement courses offered to students ("Best Graduate Schools," 2008). The district continually scores above the national and state averages on standardized test scores (see appendix A) (University Town Community School District, 2008). The two high schools in the district, Central High and University

Town High, are considered college preparatory schools. University Town Schools ranks in the 83rd percentile on national standardized tests, meaning its students outperform 83% of students taking the test nationally (Daniel, 2008.)

University Town has been and still is a relatively homogenous community. In the past, the university has provided a diverse population through its faculty and students. In the last eight years, University Town has experienced an increase in the population of African Americans from Chicago and other urban areas. The promise of better housing and education as well at state and city council efforts to lure diverse populations to the state has attracted many inner-city Chicagoans and other minorities to the area (Reid, 2000.) In 2000, the African American population of University Town was 3.7%; by 2006, that percentage rose to 12.8% (U.S. Census Burea, 2006). There are many groups of African Americans that reside in University Town. Some are long-time residents of the state, others are affiliated with the university as with students or staff or children of students or staff. This research focuses on the urban African Americans that have migrated to University Town.

The population change in University Town has often been the subject of reporting for the local paper. Stories of incidents involving crime and articles concerning the changing demographics of district schools are routinely reported. The schools that educate the majority of inner city African Americans are perceived by some residents as inferior due to reports of low test scores on state tests. There is

a contingency of University Town community members that point out the negative influences inner city African Americans have brought with them to their new community as evidenced by local blogs. When the term changing demographic is used by the local paper or citizens it is often used in reference to incoming inner city African Americans.

University Town (the city) demographics are following the national trend. The University Town Community School District (UTCSD) is experiencing the fastest growth in the state in which it is located. Although the rest of the state is witnessing a declining birth rate, University Town County (the county in which University Town is located) has experienced an increase in the birth rate since 1997. Regular education (students not enrolled in special education) school enrollment increased by 548 students over the last 10 years, with 50% of the increase reported in the 2004-2005 and 2006-2007 school years (Behle, 2007). The increase in enrollment exceeded the district's and the local university's projections. The district's growth is tied to the city's growth. According to the state Workforce Development Agency (2006), long- and short-term jobs are on the rise in University Town and are additional contributing factors to the increasing population.

University Town's rapid growth has also included a significant increase in diversity. In the 2000-2001 school year, the district had a total minority population of 19.48%, with the largest group being African Americans (8.44% of the population),

followed by Asian Americans (6.23%), Hispanic Americans (4.24%), and American Indians (0.57%) (Behle, 2000). In the 2007-2008 school year, the district reported a total minority population of 31.1%, African Americans accounted for 16.6% of the population, Asian Americans comprised 7.1%, Hispanics 7.0%, and American Indians 0.4% (Behle, 2008) (see Appendix B). The overall minority population in University Town Community Schools has increased by 35% from five years ago. More than half of the student population consists of minority students at George Wythe and Rolfe Elementaries. Miriam Webber's minority enrollment is greater than 70%. Taft High School as well as King and Hargrove Elementaries is approaching a 50% minority population (Behle, 2008.) African American students are the fastest growing minority, up 50% from 5 years ago. In the 2007-2008 school year, 84 of the 152 incoming students to University Town High were African American (Behle, 2008).

University Town is a transient, college community. The focus for increased diversity among staff fostered through the university is not enough to offset University Town's similarity to national trends concerning the homogeneity of the district's teaching staff. One look at the district's web page confirms the district's efforts to recognize diversity, yet the composition of teaching staff reveals the lack of diversity among staff employees. The district employs 1,660 staff members, of which

7% are minority (University Town Community Schools District, 2008) (see Appendix C).

The current study provides a look at the teachers' experiences, a much overlooked area of research to date, in order to determine how teachers understand and feel about multicultural district polices as well as how effectively they are put into practice. Teacher buy-in and efficacy are paramount to any change. Hence, teachers recognize change is needed. This study will also explore how the district's teachers perceive their efficacy when teaching minority students, specifically African American students.

Rationale

According to many teacher education researchers, pre-service and in-service programs do not sufficiently prepare teachers to teach students from diverse backgrounds effectively (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Providing equal education to all students requires undertaking an examination of what schools are doing to address the teachers' needs. How teachers evaluate their abilities to teach a diverse student population is crucial for student success.

A relationship exists among culture, cognition, teaching, and learning. The construction of knowledge requires a connection to previous knowledge. Prior knowledge is informed by cultural norms and values. Learners identify the ways in which they can enter new learning events and select the most appropriate cultural

tools for the context and situation from their bank of prior knowledge, skills, cultural practices, and life experiences. Students then use these tools to build upon their prior knowledge to construct new knowledge (Sheets, 2005). In order for teachers to create learning opportunities for African American students and other minority students, teachers must be familiar with their culture. Teachers who know how to make connections between home and school can provide students with multiple forms of assistance, actively participate and assist in the construction of new knowledge, and create a learning environment for all students.

As school demographics change throughout the United States, many schools are focusing on culturally relevant practices. The current study explores how one particular school district is responding to this change as well as how teachers perceive the change in their students and the methods the district is undertaking to accommodate the changing student body. The need for this study is reflected in the literature that describes America's changing population and the need to teach to the needs and through the strengths of a diverse student body (Hale, 1994; Landson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). The questions driving this study focused on what actions did the district undertake to accommodate African Americans and what are teachers' perceptions of district interventions concerning minority students and how do they perceive their own efficacy when teaching minority students

Overview Of Methodology

This study analyzed teachers' attitudes and perceptions regarding their abilities to educate minority students as well as the district's response to their changing demographics over the last decade. The framework based on culturally competent school practices and practices and policies regarding the education of minority students was utilized to structure this research and is based on the research of Hale (1994), Landson-Billings (1994), Nieto (1996), and Villegas and Lucas (2002).

This qualitative research uses an ethnographic approach to examine how King, Hargrove, Rolfe, Miriam Webber, and George Wythe Elementary teachers perceive their aptitude when dealing with minority students, particularly African American students. These schools were chosen according to minority student enrollment. Interviews were conducted using a random sample of teachers from each of the schools that qualified for this study. Only teachers with at least six years of experience were interviewed as such teachers should have been in the district long enough to witness the changing demographics as well as district and campus strategies to accommodate population changes. Using an open-ended, semi-structured interview approach, administrators and teachers were asked questions that focused on the actions in which the school district had engaged to facilitate and accommodate the learning needs and styles of the incoming African American population. Additional questions also centered on their opinions of these actions

and what additional measures would be useful in their instruction of a diverse population. In addition, this study inquired about teachers' beliefs about their own classroom instruction and management. Given that teacher buy-in and efficacy are paramount to any change, this study also examined teachers' experiences, including how they understand and experience district polices to determine how effectively such policies are put into practice.

Furthermore, administrators were interviewed to determine what measures the district had undertaken to address the changing demographics of the student population. How had the district adapted to its changing student demographics? How has the district prepared its teachers for a diverse student population? How do teachers maintain they perceive these measures and their abilities to effectively teach a minority population? This research will address these issues in order to enable University Town to review this information and determine its strengths and areas that need attention. Other school districts currently undergoing or that will undergo the same changes can look to UTCSD to determine which measures have been successful and which interventions still need to occur to better educate students.

Research Questions

The examination of culture and the role it plays in education is a factor that can enable schools to successfully educate minority students. Gay (2000) and Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) asserted that culture determines how we think,

believe, and behave, which in turn affects how we teach and learn. These researchers observed that culture and education are intertwined. Teachers often unknowingly carry their personal cultural backgrounds into the classroom, thereby bringing inevitable prejudices and preconceptions. Teachers and students are influenced by their backgrounds and construct meanings of individual and group behaviors, conflict, accommodations, rejection and acceptance, and alienation and withdrawal around their own personal experiences rooted in a cultural context.

The following are central research questions to this study: (1) what actions the district had taken to accommodate incoming African American students and (2) what district teachers thought of those actions as well as their perceived efficacy when teaching minority students.

Significance Of Study

This study added to the literature concerning how school districts are adapting to their changing student population by analyzing how UTCSD is adjusting to its incoming and growing African American student population. Just as Zanville (2001) and Mowry (2005) have studied California and Oregon schools, this study extends the examination of cultural competence policy. This research also provides an often neglected analysis of how teachers perceive school policy and their feelings about competently teaching minority populations. To ensure

understanding about the issues discussed herein, the following section will define key terms used in the discussion.

Definitions Of Key Terms

School districts and states across the nation use different terms to describe their cultural polices. For clarification purposes, the following terms—as defined here—are used throughout this study.

Culture is a way of life for a group of people. Culture includes the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, usually without thinking about them, and pass on from one generation to the next through communication and imitation (Cohen, 1997).

Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. Such teaching recognizes the strengths of diverse students and teaches to and through these strengths. Culturally responsive teaching validates and affirms diverse cultures (Gay, 2000.) No universally accepted definition exists for culturally responsive teaching, but all definitions possess the same elements, identified herein. Meanwhile, *culturally responsive teachers* are teachers who: understand that a person's location in the social order influences how he or she sees the world; are favorably disposed to diversity; see themselves as active agents of change in social

institutions; understand and embrace constructivist views of knowledge, teaching, and learning; understand the necessity to learn about their students and have strategies for doing so; and design instruction to draw on students' strengths and address their needs (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Cultural proficiency is one's knowledge and understanding of how to interact effectively with people who differ from the individual in their environments (Lindsey et al., 2005).

Culturally relevant teaching describes a pedagogy that communicates knowledge, skills and attitudes to empower students socially, politically, intellectually, and emotionally, utilizing students' background, knowledge, and experiences as a frame of reference to inform teachers' lessons and methodology (Landson-Billings, 1994).

Examples of culturally relevant teaching practices includes teacher recognition that a student's culture may affect whether the students learning style is oral, visual or kinesthetic, use of instructional strategies that play to their students strengths and improve on learning weakness and using students' experiences to teach new concepts. A concrete example of culturally relevant teaching would use a student's written description of a visit home to Chicago to learn about adjectives. The student would circle any adjectives they used to describe the food they ate, their family

members and so on. This lesson draws on the students' personal experiences to link a home experience to new information.

African American for the purposes of this study African American refers to inner city African Americans that have migrated to University Town.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the changing demographics in the United States as well as in University Town. In addition, it has reviewed how culture is interconnected with education. The problem, related to demographic shifts in the school-age population, has been introduced. A rationale based on school districts' response to changing demographics utilizing a culture-based approach to educate minority populations in a more equitable manner has been presented. The purpose of this study—namely, to explore UTCSD's response to its changing student body and examine teachers' perceptions of the strategies employed by the district as well as their own efficacy in teaching minority students—has been explained. In addition, definitions of all relevant terms have been clarified. The following chapter will review the relevant literature.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

> You can't teach what you don't know.
> -Unknown

This literature review is divided into two sections. The first section explores research related to culturally responsive pedagogy, including culturally responsive beliefs and culturally responsive strategies that both schools and teachers employ. The second section explores culturally relevant practices and actions school districts across the United States are undertaking to better educate minority populations.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Theories

Several theories and belief systems provide important background information for the current study. The theories described in this section contribute to teacher beliefs and which knowingly or unknowingly affect instructional classroom practices. A number of theories are relevant to the discussion of culturally responsive school practices. Two theories must be included in the discussion of culturally proficient schools—the deficit theory and the social dominance theory—because long-held beliefs or influences color the way school staff thinks about students, their families, and the education of minorities. Both theories are based on access and positions of power in society. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Gay (2000), if schools are to be culturally proficient, teachers must recognize that power differences profoundly affect how one experiences the world. Teachers also

need to be aware of how society in the United States is stratified according to racial/ethnic, social class, and gender lines (Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

Indeed, teachers' beliefs about the deficit theory, social dominance theory, the myth of meritocracy, constructivist theory, social capital theory, and cultural capital theory can affect students' academic performance. These theories are not held by the students, but by the educators employed to facilitate the learning of all students equitably. In general, the deficit theory, social dominance theory, and the myth of meritocracy place blame solely on students for their academic performance, discounting all external factors that contribute to student academic success. Meanwhile, the constructivist theory as well as social and cultural capital theories seeks to explain some external factors—both historical and social—that contribute or inhibit students' academic achievement.

Deficit Theory

The deficit theory refers to IQ and cultural deficiencies. According to the IQ deficit theory, poor school performance is attributed to racial/ethnic background and lower socio-economic backgrounds (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Although the literature supporting these claims is dated, stereotypes and views from this literature still endure and influence perceptions about minority and lower income students. The achievement gap and IQ scores of minority students can give credence to these views. The deficit theory rests on the premise that intelligence is inherited; therefore,

a continuing discrepancy will exist between Whites' scores and African Americans' scores regardless of socio-economic status.

This theory also supports the assertion that IQ is a predictor of academic performance; hence, the reason behind lower IQ and test scores is attributable to genetic deficiencies. Since Darwin's theory, the debate on evolution and inherit characteristics has continued to persist and therefore influence thinking on academic capabilities of students. The deficit theory, becoming popular during the 1960s, regained popularity once again in 1994 with the publishing of *The Bell Curve* (Bolima, 2008; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), in which Herrnstein and Murray supported the argument that, since IQ is heritable, IQ variation between ethnic groups must also be genetic. *The Bell Curve's* premise argues that, since IQ is 60% heritable and given the standard deviation among scores of Asians, Whites, and African Americans, such environmental differences cannot account for the huge gap between Whites' and African Americans' IQ scores (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). However, *The Bell Curve* was ultimately not well received, and many critics cited the false assumptions made about intelligence upon which Herrnstein and Murray rested their argument.

The second premise of the deficit theory supports the conclusion that the academic gap is attributable to culture. The cultural deficit theory followed the genetic deficit theory. The cultural deficit theorists of the 1960s—namely, Hess,

Shipman, Englemann, Bereiter, and Deutsch—gained in popularity based on their views that social, cultural, and economic environments were influential in students' performance in school (Bolima, 2008). According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), the cultural deficit theory asserts that poor school performance stems from deficiencies in specific areas: home environment, which hinders academic performance; lack of parental interest and involvement in their child's education, which signals to school staff that parents do not value education and therefore do not support school learning; and students' lack of motivation to learn. This theory ultimately led to the assumption that these environments were depraved and, until corrected, led to academic deficiencies.

The commonality of both of the IQ and cultural deficit theories involves placing blame on the students and parents. A comprehensive picture of factors (e.g., cultural, environmental, socio-economic, school policy, curriculum, and students' needs) are not accounted for. Consequently, the assumption is that the educational system is fair and school success rests upon merit.

Social Dominance Theory

The social dominance theory argues that societies are stratified by age, sex, and groups (Sidanius, Pratto, Laar, & Levin, 2004). Group stratification is based on religion, ethnicity, and nationality, among other factors. The most powerful positions in society are occupied by hegemonic groups; less powerful groups occupy

less powerful positions. These less powerful groups are often blamed and negative associations are attached to them to explain their powerless status in society. Such negative associations include being lazy, being an addict, and not caring. Poorly achieving students from less powerful groups (e.g., minority groups) can be blamed for their lack of school success based on the negative associations assigned to these groups.

The social deficit theory and social dominance theory extend into America's classrooms. Teachers may attribute poor school performance to IQ and environmental factors, thereby attributing intelligence to students' inherent qualities. Rather than examining factors related to curricula and student learning needs, student failure rests with the students and their families. Researchers maintain that academic expectations are subsequently based upon these assumptions. Yet educational literature now recognizes that many other factors contribute to students' academic performance (Gay, 2000; Hale, 1994; Landson-Billings 1994; Villegas & Lucas 2002).

Myth of Meritocracy

The ideology of the "American dream" claims that one reaps the benefits of hard work on the basis of merit alone. An individual who is talented enough and works hard enough can achieve any dream in this "land of opportunity." This is true for all aspects of society, whether it be work, education, or athletics. Yet such a belief

leads to the conclusion that groups of students (based on ethnicity) are not working hard to achieve academic success based on a review of the data on student achievement.

Americans embrace the idea of merit (McNamee & Miller, 2004), especially in education. Grades, diplomas, degrees, and certificates are earned, not purchased. The more education an individual possesses, the greater access he or she has to job opportunities and, hence, wealth. Education leads to upward mobility through job careers and earning potential, meaning education is the gatekeeper through which one passes based on individual merit. The myth is that education is society's great equalizer, assuming the playing field is level. Students enter school with different abilities depending upon exposure to educational materials at home. As such, from the first day of school, all children perform at different levels and have different learning needs (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). The students who are most likely to succeed are those students whose learning at home is most congruent with school practices.

However, three theories question the assertion that student performance rests on talent and ability alone. These theories, constructivist theory, social capital theory, and cultural capital theory, argues that additional factors contribute to student academic success.

Constructivist Theory

The constructivist theory provides a foundation for culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive school practices are built on the premise of the constructivist approach, which is based on the assumption that learning stems from mental construction (Caine & Caine, 1991). Learning is achieved by adding new information to what students already know. Constructivists maintain that cognition (i.e., learning) is affected by the context in which it is taught as well as students' attitudes and beliefs. According to culturally competent school practices, if students are to acquire new information, it must be connected to their prior knowledge.

Vygotsky, Piaget, and Dewey argued that the only effective way for a child to learn was through learner-centered instruction in a social setting, known as constructivism (Tiny, 2008). The brain seeks meaning through patterns; these patterns give context to information we might otherwise find meaningless (Gibson & McKay, 2000). Piaget posited that reality is formed through structures of knowledge; knowledge is socially constructed and based on learners' intellectual development as reality and experienced through social and physical activity. Vygotsky added that knowledge is created through social and cultural contexts; therefore, learning is subjective and based on the learners' experiences. Effective teaching practices cater to students' needs. Thus, teachers should connect new information to students' prior knowledge.

Constructivist research is based on recent brain studies and coupled with knowledge about how learning occurs (Jonassen, 1991). Caine and Caine (1991) asserted that brain compatible teaching is based on twelve principles: (1) “The brain is a parallel processor" (p. 80). It simultaneously processes many different types of information, including thoughts, emotions, and cultural knowledge. Effective teaching employs a variety of learning strategies, (2)"Learning engages the entire physiology" (p. 80). Teachers cannot address just the intellect. (3) "The search for meaning is innate" (p. 81). Effective teaching recognizes that meaning is personal and unique and that students' understandings are based on their own unique experiences. (4)"The search for meaning occurs through 'patterning'" (p. 81). Effective teaching connects isolated ideas and information with global concepts and themes. (5) "Emotions are critical to patterning" (p. 82). Learning is influenced by emotions, feelings, and attitudes. (6)"The brain processes parts and wholes simultaneously" (p. 83). People have difficulty learning when either parts or wholes are overlooked. (7)“Learning involves both focused attention and peripheral perception" (p. 83). Learning is influenced by the environment, culture, and climate. (8)"Learning always involves conscious and unconscious processes" (p. 84). Students need time to process 'how' as well as 'what' they have learned. (9)"We have at least two different types of memory: a spatial memory system and a set of systems for rote learning" (p. 85). Teaching that heavily emphasizes rote learning does not

promote spatial, experienced learning and can inhibit understanding. (10)"We understand and remember best when facts and skills are embedded in natural, spatial memory" (p. 86). Experiential learning is most effective. (11)"Learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat" (p. 86). The classroom climate should be challenging, but not threatening to students. (12)"Each brain is unique" (p. 87). Teaching must be multifaceted to enable students to express preferences.

Based on these principles, changes in education curricula have moved from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered instruction (Catalano & Catalano, 1999; Gibson & McKay, 2000). Passive learning through teacher lectures is no longer an acceptable practice as evidenced through state standards that require teachers to incorporate active student engagement strategies into lessons plans. Active and engaged learning requires students to play an active role in their learning; teachers act as facilitators of learning while students are actively involved in their learning. Thus, teachers no longer stand in front of the classroom, delivering information, but rather provide opportunities for students to make connections between old and new information. As active seekers of knowledge, students are encouraged to construct their own understanding of material presented in class. If teachers are to use the constructivist approach successfully, they must be familiar with their students.

Social Capital Theory

Do all children have the same advantages, skills, and access to resources upon entering school? The social capital theory argues that some students have an advantage over other students based on their access to resources. Social and cultural capital often determines students' success in school. Two educational sociologists, Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, are considered the founders of thought concerning social capital. Their theoretical frameworks differ, but both sociologists agree that social networks can be used as resources to provide advantages to those who possess and utilize social connections.

Bourdieu and Coleman rejected the notion that students' abilities alone determine academic success (Burmheim, 2004). Social capital is the sum of resources an individual accrues by possessing exchange-based networks of persons of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1992). Coleman (1992) argued that social capital facilitates productive activity. This assertion applies to education in the sense that social capital allows its members to reassemble and reassert social power. The old adage "it is not what you know but who you know" is based on the idea of social capital. Parents who understand and possess social networks have the ability to get their children into rigorous courses and elite schools, thereby providing their children with opportunities that other children without those social networks cannot access. These opportunities are not based on merit, but upon social networking.

Cultural Capital Theory

In addition to the social capital advantage, some students also possess cultural capital. The term *cultural capital* was first used by Bourdieu (1977), who used the term to explain that economic factors alone did not account for academic disparities of students from different socio-economic classes (Weininger & Lareau, 2003). In addition to economic factors, "cultural habits and … dispositions" inherited from family are critical to school success (Weininger & Lareau, 2003, p. 567). Bourdieu argued that "cultural habits and dispositions" are resources that can be used to provide benefits to those who possess cultural knowledge and norms of those in power. Cultural capital can be monopolized and passed from one generation to the next. Furthermore, possessors of cultural capital benefit in societies that have a highly stratified social structure and educational system. Children of certain classes benefit from cultural capital because institutional structures impose standards of assessments that are favorable to those who possess certain types of knowledge. Some students have the resources to gain advantages to which other students do not have access based on their knowledge.

Neither social nor cultural capital rely on a student's abilities for school success, but rather on resources. When parents know to whom to speak in order to navigate the educational system or ask questions as well as which kinds of knowledge schools value, they are able to gain advantages for their children. Many

times students are placed in classes, gain acceptance to college, and are afforded opportunities that are not centered on student performance, but on possessing the "right resources."

Culturally Responsive School Practices

The literature also points to a relationship between culture and cognition (Gay, 2000; Hale 1994; Landson-Billings, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The focus on culturally responsive school practices has been spurred by the achievement gap and disproportionate referrals to special education for racially and linguistically diverse students (NCCRES, 2003). If African American students are to thrive and excel in classrooms, they need a culturally relevant education (Thompson, 2004). A culturally responsive education can increase the likelihood of students receiving an education that empowers them to be successful. A culturally relevant education allows students to think critically and become aware of options that are available to them. Students should be able to appreciate their cultural legacy (Hale, 1994), and teachers must be willing to address their own biases pertaining to black students and their culture and language in order to provide culturally relevant instruction (Gay, 2000; Hale, 1994).

Educational theorists have outlined strategies for effectively educating diverse students (Gay, 2000; Landson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Most of the research studies concerning cultural competence focus on policies that schools

should implement to facilitate culturally competent teaching practices or explore changes that are needed at the university level to create culturally competent teachers. The components of culturally responsive teaching are outlined by Gay (2000; 2005) and Villegas and Lucas (2002), who focused on creating a culture that is sensitive to diverse student populations.

Culturally responsive schools are schools that use cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate for them. Culturally responsive classroom and teaching practices teach to and through the strengths and knowledge and prior experiences of students (Gay, 2000). Gay (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) described culturally proficient characteristics as follows: they acknowledge the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum; teachers understand that their students may experience and perceive the need to see the world differently than they do. Worldviews are not universal, but shaped by each person's individual, social, and cultural experiences; teachers know their students; cultural proficiency builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities; cultural proficiency uses what teachers know about their students to support learning using a wide variety of instructional strategies

connected to different learning styles while building on their interests and strengths as well as incorporating new knowledge from a multitude of perspectives; cultural proficiency teaches students to know and praise their own and each others' cultural heritages; teachers have high expectations of their students; cultural proficiency incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all subjects and skills routinely taught in schools; a constructivist view is embraced in culturally responsive teaching practices.

In addition, Nieto (1999) and Hale (1994) emphasized the need for culturally responsive teaching and outlined approaches that meet the educational needs of minority students. These researchers also explored the cultural clash that occurs in classrooms and how teachers unknowingly exhibit cultural biases in teaching practices. Hale's and Nieto's research was built on the premise that teachers are important power brokers because their attitudes, beliefs, and values affect implementation of educational policy, instructional practices, and ultimately student learning. Nieto's (1999) research supported the assertions of Villegas and Lucas (2000). Nieto's research on language, culture, and diversity was compiled for more than a decade to help teachers think about their views on the language, culture, and diversity of their students as they relate to pedagogy and classroom practices.

Research has demonstrated the most effective way for teachers to make connections to classroom learning is to present material in a way that students can

relate to and draw on from their own experiences (Pettey-Taylor, 2008). Classroom practices can act to either enable or hinder students in their learning. Lessons that draw on student experiences energize them because they focus on those things that are most important in students' lives (Nieto, 1999). If teachers are to make these meaningful connections to learning, they have to be knowledgeable about their students' culture, experiences, and learning needs.

Nieto's (1999) research also viewed schooling through the lens of minority students. Student interviewees responded that teachers based their expectations on cultural or class differences. Many minority students felt that their teachers did not have the same expectations for them as they did their White peers (Nieto, 1999). Students were mindful of the cues teachers present, thus engaging in the Pygmalion Effect (Turner & Patrick, 2004).

The Pygmalion Effect recognizes the importance that high expectations play in students' achievement. Students who are expected to be academically successful tend to live up to those expectations. Just as having high expectations affects student performance, so do teachers who have low expectations for their students. Teachers who have low expectations for their students tend to have students who live down to those standards. Low expectations from teachers and school staff adversely affect student achievement.

Nieto's (1999) work is significant because she examined school beliefs, policy, and practices that affect students' academic performance. Nieto also examined teachers and students to understand their perspective as it relates to student success—an important endeavor as teachers and students are often not fully a part of the discourse on educational policy.

Meanwhile, in the discussion of African American education, the research of Janice E. Hale (1994) must be considered. Hale, a prominent researcher in the field of African American education, also recognized the significance of culture as it relates to learning. Her work stressed the need for African American students to have a positive acceptance and understanding of their history. Hale's work is notable because she outlined learning as it relates specifically to African American culture and learning. Hale (1994) maintained that African Americans' learning strengths are not recognized in American classrooms, thereby helping to prevent the academic success of African American students.

Hale's (1986) research on the education of African American children cites the conflict that exists between the teaching and learning that occur at home and in the community versus the teaching and learning that occur in school. The difference in learning between home and school can partly account for the underperformance of African American students in school. An example of this disconnect occurs in the form of the home placing an emphasis on oral tradition and verbal fluency in

language that is acceptable in the African American community, yet public schools may discount this knowledge and place importance on writing skills and correct English grammar. Hale also points out that, even if African American students were educated in the best White schools, a disconnect based on culture would still exist. Hale argued that solutions to dropout rates, retention, and under-performance of African American students cannot rest on the students, their families, or schools. The problem must be viewed through a much larger lens, one that provides a comprehensive view of how culture, curriculum, and environment affect African American students' performance. The examination of culture as it relates to learning and cognizance as well as sensitivity to ethnic and cultural differences that do not align to mainstream, White, middle-class schools is central to success of African American students.

Lindsey et al.'s (2005) contributions to cultural competency are in the form of providing direction for change for schools seeking to become culturally proficient. *The Culturally Proficient School: An Implementation Guide for School Leaders* (2005) seeks to address educational inequity by challenging the dominant deficit and at-risk characterizations of students from diverse backgrounds. An explanation of how systems of oppression obstruct the learning of certain groups of students while simultaneously benefiting others is provided to practitioners in the field. Leadership strategies are offered to schools that are cognizant about how and why some

students fail and at what cost other students succeed. Lindsey et al. also made an argument for why cultural proficient schools are necessary for educating a diverse population. The authors recognized that becoming culturally proficient is not a step or a process, but rather a way to view and experience a world in which the minority is becoming a majority.

Research Studies

Important studies that have addressed cultural competence provide a comprehensive picture of what states are doing to create culturally responsive environments as well as actions school districts should be and are undertaking to foster culturally responsive teaching. Most research studies are inclusive due to the recent implementation of policy practices. Yet each school district and each state have its own concepts of culturally competent school practices based on its needs. No uniform standard policy exists from state to state, which contributes to the blurred definitions and policies utilized by each schools, districts, and states.

A mixed method study conducted by West Ed, a non-profit research agency, using demographic and achievement data, teacher surveys, observations and interviews outlined factors that should be taken into consideration when planning professional development (Farr, 2005). The research of Nieto (1999), Delpit (1995), Gay (2000), and Hale (1994) recognized that learning does not occur in a vacuum and a myriad of factors affect student performance. One such factor is prior

knowledge embedded in cultural practices that students bring to the classroom. It is important that schools examine students' cultural backgrounds (Hale, 1994). An investigation of the measures schools districts across the nation have taken to facilitate cultural competence can provide an understanding of why and how culturally relevant strategies are implemented.

These studies are important as Farr (2005) outlines the process for a culturally relevant policy and its implementation. California recognizes the importance culturally competent teachers play in molding academically successful students. Thus, the California state legislature mandated a study based that found that 1) the California educational system failed to meet the needs of a diverse student population and 2) no system of accountability existed to ensure that teacher training in cultural differences or customs is available or effective. An independent evaluator was contracted to study the availability and effectiveness of cultural competence training for teachers and administrators in California (Farr, 2005). This study was conducted in 10 culturally diverse school districts that reflected the population of California after the evaluation of poor test scores and high dropout rates for minority students. California's study sought to meet the needs of minority students and help raise test scores, lower dropout rates, and increase cultural competence among California's educators.

The findings of the study focused on how schools can improve cultural competency training programs for teachers and administrators, what criteria should be used for culturally competent training programs, and what additional studies concerning availability of teacher training programs, schools, and features of effective programs were needed to provide information about culturally competent training programs as it relates to student success (Farr, 2005). This research found that cultural competency training for teachers and administrators varied widely depending on the university attended. Some respondents felt they had received adequate training while others felt they needed more. In regards to the type of training needed, the respondents were not sure what programs existed to provide such training. Cultural competency training was voluntary at the time of the study. The conclusion that can be drawn from the responses is that administrators and teachers were not required to take any culturally responsive training and were not sure what training opportunities existed.

The criterion for training was based on research for effective professional development. Professional development should: be seen as a process rather than an event; be organized to allow teachers to take control of their own learning; include a plan for professional development based on the needs of the school, align with long-term goals and be designed to ensure that teacher performance supports the learning of all students; be part of staff learning and be part of everyday school life;

use data based on student learning together with student learning styles; provide time for professional development to occur in a meaningful manner; respect and encourage leadership of classroom teachers; provide for and promote the use of continuous inquiry and reflection; and create broad-based support for professional development from all sectors of the organization and community (Farr, 2005). The intent of this study was to explore training programs for teachers that foster culturally relevant teaching skills.

Challenges to Cultural Competence

Many arguments indicate the need to implement cultural competence practices in school. Yet some schools are resistant to employing strategies that would benefit all students. Any change is ripe with challenges; change can be difficult to overcome. Challenges such as labels, time for professional development, and lack of pre-service diversity training impose obstacles with which all schools must grapple to foster change successfully.

Culturally competent practices include an examination of stereotypes and individual biases as well as realizing how upbringing, values, and beliefs affect how one thinks and behaves (Raheim, 2009). Many White educators work hard to gain the trust and rapport of their minority students and are very aware of the effects of –*isms*. Being labeled as a racist or sexist prevents open and honest dialogue between students and teachers as well as between professional colleagues (Lindsey et al.,

2005). pen discussions must occur for in order to foster a culturally responsive climate. In particular, in discussions involving race, gender, and sexual preference, open discourse is less likely to occur for fear of being perceived and labeled an *–ism* by students and peers.

Time for professional development also presents a challenge for many school districts trying to implement any change. The road to a culturally proficient school is not short (Gay, 2000; Lindsey et al., 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). It requires long-term systemic change, and results may not be immediate. Often times, schools are forced to focus on change where the results are immediate or else be labeled negatively and prevent students from graduating. In an era of accountability, schools are often focused on test scores to prevent being labeled as a failing school or a school in need of assistance by the federal government. Students in many states must pass standardized tests in order to graduate high school. A climate of fear permeates many school districts. The schools district most affected by these labels are the same schools that are most in need of culturally responsive school practices, namely, low income, largely minority schools (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Short-term efforts are focused on raising test scores for the current or following year. Professional development time is spent on test-taking strategies, increasing tutoring services, and employing reading, math, or written language strategies to immediately improve test scores.

Teacher training at the university level is another roadblock to culturally proficient schools. As previously stated, many states only require one diversity class in their teacher education programs, and most teachers graduating from teacher education programs are White. Many field experiences of pre-service teachers do not include an experience in a diverse setting. The current requirement for multicultural education classes is not enough to prepare teachers adequately for the changing population in the United States (Alexander West, & Ebelahr, 2007). Teachers are entering the field with inadequate knowledge and information to teach a diverse population.

Culturally Responsive District Practices

Finally, an exploration of the current actions schools district are undertaking in culturally responsive policy provides a view of how school districts across the nation are responding to their changing student populations. These studies are important for identifying the need for culturally competent teaching, outline the components that inform culturally responsive teaching, and look at current approaches schools districts in Wisconsin, California, and Oregon are utilizing to address culturally responsive teaching (Gordly, 1999; Jorgensen & Abplanalo, 2008). The definitions each district choose to use differ, but their reasons for implementing culturally responsive school policy is similar regardless of the district or state.

The Madison Metropolitan School District (Madison, WI) began its journey to a culturally responsive school 10 years ago. It was initiated at the behest of parents concerned about special education practices occurring in the district. This study (Madison Metropolitan School District, 2006) reviewed culturally responsive practices in response to the disproportionate number of minority students in special education, discipline referrals, and low test scores. The school district made a commitment to implement change from an old system structured on the principles of: categorical thinking, funding, and organizational boundaries; label-deficit driven; conflicting values and beliefs; and negative language. The goal was to transition to practices based on: the elimination of categorical barriers; needs; a foundation of strength; the sharing of common values and beliefs for all kids; and language that is positive affirming and respectful (Jorgenson & Abplanalo, 2008).

Significant events, key observations and data were gathered to help transition from the old practices to the new ones. Data were based on initial referrals and placements into special education and were further examined according to ethnic student placement in special education programs. In 2002, an instructional design was put into place that valued inclusive practices, collaborative teaming, and cultural responsiveness to students' needs. The goal of this instructional design was to serve all students in regular education classrooms, regardless of ability/disability,

language, or educational need. The plan is ongoing, and no data have been provided regarding the success of the Madison School District's efforts.

The Poway School District in San Diego (California) is also in the process of transitioning to a culturally proficient school district (DeClercq, 2008). Poway School District began its transition when school staff members noticed students behaving in culturally insensitive ways; staff displaying discomfort when discussing issues related to race, gender, religion, traditions, and socio-economics; and changing demographics within the district. Recent incidents in the school system highlighted the need for change. These actions included: low number of participation in Leadership Academy sessions on cultural proficiency; incidences of hate crimes at two district high schools; and inappropriate responses from some staff in reply to the hate crime incidences

The first steps in the process involved becoming a culturally responsive school district by: reading and attending a session on using *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* by Lindsey, Nuri Robins, and Terrell (2009); revisiting mission/vision documents on site for evidence of cultural proficiency; and applying for and receiving a grant to build a relationship with Dr. Delores Lindsey. An agenda was followed to ensure the first steps were completed by the end of the 2007-2008 school year. Dr. Lindsey served as a coach in staff development meetings. The Poway School Districts efforts to transition to a culturally proficient school are

important because district staff were trained by the author of *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders*.

One goal of the initiative was to open a culturally proficient school. To help meet this goal, students, parents, and staff participated in training sessions to help facilitate culturally responsive school practices. The staff meeting produced collective commitments from participants to promote a culturally proficient school environment. The focus on change centered on flexibility to change, openness to learning about cultures, and recognition and respect of differences in the community. Due to the infancy of the plan, the effects have yet to be examined.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (California) reviewed its data to arrive at the same conclusions as Madison and Poway school districts. An examination of data revealed that minority students were at risk for failure, dropping out of school, attaining lower reading and math scores, experiencing a higher rate of suspensions and expulsions, and less likely to be enrolled in advanced placement classes or attend post-secondary institutions (Lemoine, Maddahain, Patton, Ross, & Scruggs, 2006). The Los Angeles Unified School District identified the problem as follows:

> The gap in achievement for Latino and African American students in LAUSD schools is wide in part because these students' learning encounters with teachers are insufficiently aligned with their core cultural referents (Lemoine et al., 2006, p. 19).

In order to solve this problem, the Los Angeles Unified School District decided to employ a culturally relevant initiative in the district. In 2001, researchers and scholars were recruited to collaborate with district staff and community about the relationship among culture, teaching, and learning. Over the next five years, the school continued to focus on culturally responsive strategies, such as building on students' knowledge and understanding, increasing contact with parents, differentiating instruction, engaging in professional development, and working with parents and support programs (Lemoine et al., 2006).

In 2006, an assessment of the initiative using standardized tests, classroom evaluations of culturally responsive practices, and an examination of special education placement of African Americans and Latinos were collected to determine the effectiveness of the implementation. The results of the initiative were mixed. Areas of success included a reduction in the number of suspension rates for African Americans and Latinos, increased enrollment of African American students in college preparatory classes, closing the achievement gap in honors and advanced placement courses, and more than 50% of parents perceiving their experiences with teachers as positive (Lemoine et al., 2006). Areas that still needed improvement included closing the achievement gap, understanding referrals to special education of African American and Latino students, students not perceiving respect for cultural diversity from instructional staff, students not feeling they were treated

equally by teachers and administrators, teachers (less than half) not incorporating culturally responsive practices into instruction, finding limited evidence of mutual respect for cultural diversity and expectations for high achievement, and few parents feeling that their child's cultural experiences were incorporated into school experiences (Patton, 2004).

Some schools were more successful than others in achieving their goals. The data collected found that schools employing teachers with more years of experience were more successful in narrowing the achievement gap. Schools that had more hands-on administration, collaborative teaching and learning, and parent involvement in instruction were more likely to close the achievement gap. Higher-achieving schools exhibited positive student–teacher interaction, positive school staff relationships, quality professional development, and evidence of culturally responsive practices (Patton, 2004). In essence, schools that followed culturally responsive practices as previously outlined were more likely to achieve the goal set forth by the initiative.

The Los Angeles Unified School District's study was particularly important because it implemented a culturally responsive program in 2001 and was able to document results from these efforts. The findings allowed other school districts to review successes and areas that still need improvement. School districts trying to

put a culturally responsive policy into practice can strategize how best to avoid the problems encountered by the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Oregon Senator Avel Gordly first examined diversity issues in her state after a school shooting (Gordly, 1999). Gordly sought to improve the educational experience for minority students in her state and implement state-wide policy. After speaking with Oregon students, she began advocating for a curriculum that addressed the variety of cultures, ethnicities, and races that made up Oregon's population. Her campaign to pass legislation focusing on diversity issues began in 1996.

Gordly first introduced a bill that required Oregon schools to implement a diverse curriculum. The bill was defeated in 1993 and again in 1995. In 1999, Senator Gordly finally saw her bill SB103 approved. This legislation required the superintendent of the Department of Education to take specific steps to incorporate culturally competent practices into schools. These practices included evaluating the background of students when curriculum planning, examining how the public is informed about multicultural and diversity laws, identifying and reviewing multicultural curricula for each grade based on student needs, incorporating a multicultural curricula into other educational programs, and evaluating how current laws on diversity are implemented and applied throughout the school system (Gordly, 1999). Gordly's efforts resulted in Oregon becoming a leader in cultural

competence in its educational systems (Mowry, 2005). Oregon's policy implementation is new, and the effects of such efforts have yet to be measured.

Conclusion

As no one accepted definition exists for cultural competence, school policy differs from state to state as well as district to district. The elements of culturally responsive school practices are similar from school to school. Schools that are undergoing the process of moving toward cultural competence are doing so for the same reason—namely, to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

Areas that need further exploration include how schools and practicing teachers can progress toward a culturally competent curriculum and school. Teachers are the school employees who have the most direct impact on students and are change agents in the classroom. Yet most studies are limited to teacher education programs and students participating in graduate school classes. As such, the cultural efficacy of current teachers has been an overlooked area of study. Their experiences with multicultural education and their feelings about cultural competence can affect their personal attitudes concerning race, gender, and class.

Cultural competence is a relatively new policy in education. The effects of schools' efforts across the country have yet to be fully understood and explored. As schools implement policy regarding drop out rates, new methods of assessment will have to be explored. New methods of classroom instruction have been examined,

but assessments to gauge student learning have yet to be studied. Indeed, standardized tests are still used to measure student performance.

Cultural relevance in education will be a future area of research as schools more fully develop and implement policy and dropout rates, achievement gaps, and enrollment in advanced placement classes and post-secondary institutions can be examined to determine policy effects. Change is difficult for any organization, especially schools. How successful schools are implementing change is an area of future research.

This chapter has examined prominent researchers in the arena of culturally relevant teachers and schools. The components of culturally responsive teaching strategies were explored. The discussion summarized research studies that have focused on culturally responsive school districts, including view of current culturally responsive practices of school districts around the nation. The challenges to implementing culturally responsive practices were outlined and areas of deficiencies in the literature discussed. The next chapter will describe the methodological design for the current study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

I think the future's very bright. It's a community that's supportive of education. The community expects and wants a good school system. The goal is hopefully that all of our children are succeeding at a high level.
-Superintendent Lance Plow, University Town Community School District

The UTCSD has undergone a demographic shift in the last 10 years. The school district and local community have written and discussed how best to accommodate the changing student population. The current study involves random interviews with district elementary school teachers and principals as well as central office employees, conducted in two parts: 1) teachers and 2) district employees and building administrators. The first part of the study focuses on teachers' beliefs regarding the changing demographics and needs of their minority students. The second part focuses on district intervention and directives to accommodate the changing student body over the last 10 years.

Design

This research is designed to explore two avenues. The first part of this research focuses on district interventions at the administrative level at both the central office and building sites. Interviews of administrative staff and district office and campus sites and teachers will be collected to ascertain this information. The second part aims to describe and explore the beliefs of teachers concerning district intervention in relation to the changing demographics occurring in the UTCSD over the last 10 years and their efficacy when teaching minority students.

The target population is teachers who have taught at least six years in the district. Only third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade teachers at elementary schools consisting of minority populations of a least 40% are eligible to participate in this research. Teachers in UTCSD teach both third and fourth grades or fifth and sixth grades. Of the 18 elementary schools in UTCSD, 5 are comprised of minority student populations over 40% (Behle, 2008). District employees are eligible to be interviewed concerning initiatives and policies targeted to help minority populations. The research approach relies on qualitative data such as observations, interviews and information found on school websites.

Human Subjects

In compliance with the Code of Ethics at the University of Iowa, a formal application to conduct this study was filed with the Human Subjects Review Committee. On January 27, 2009, the application was approved with exempt status (see appendix D).

Gaining Access

As a teacher in the district, the barriers to entry may have been made easier. I am on the district e-mail and send correspondence via district e-mail. An e-mail (see appendix E) was sent to the assistant superintendent of UTCSD requesting permission to perform this study in the district. This study was approved through

the assistant superintendent of UTCSD. A copy of the IRB approval (see appendix F) form was sent to the district office, as requested, before any research was performed.

Access to teacher informants was also via district e-mail.

Sampling Process

Each elementary school eligible for the study was contacted to obtain a list of teachers who had six or more years experience teaching in the district. From the list of teachers provided by principals' secretaries, 23 teachers met the requirements of the study. These teachers' names were put in a box and randomly drawn and listed in order of drawing. All names were assigned a number based on interview order and code name. Individual e-mails (see appendix G) were sent to teachers requesting participation in the study. E-mails were sent individually to protect the privacy of study participants. E-mails were sent to the first 10 randomly drawn names. As teachers declined or a no response was received within two weeks, an e-mail was sent to the next person on the list. The first e-mails were sent January 31, 2009. A follow-up e-mail was sent to non-respondents February 5, 2009.

District employee interviews were based on positions held in the district ; thus, they were not random. District employees knowledgeable in the areas of budget, in-service topics, policies and initiatives, equity, and grants were interviewed. Principals of the five eligible schools that agreed to participate in the study were also interviewed.

Once agreement to participate in the research was obtained, an interview was scheduled at the interviewee's campus or district office. Teacher interview questions consisted of open-ended questions about their beliefs concerning district interventions targeted at the changing demographics and their beliefs concerning their effectiveness to teach minority populations. Administrative interviews focused on strategies the district undertook to help accommodate the incoming minority students at both district and school sites.

Summary Of Research Population

Nine teachers agreed to be interviewed, 6 teachers declined to participate and 8 teachers were non-respondents. All schools selected for this study were represented. Miriam Webster had the largest number of respondents with four interviewees (44.4%). Two teachers were interviewed at Hargrove (22.2%). George Wythe, Rolfe, and King each had one respondent (11.1%).

All nine interview teachers were of European descent. Two African American teachers at the participating schools met the criteria to be interviewed; one declined to be interviewed, and the other is a friend of the author and was familiar with the purpose of the study, so was not considered for the interviews to avoid skewed results. Six (66.6%) of the teachers interviewed were male and 3 (33.3%) were female. The years of teaching experience ranged from 6 to 16 years; seven teachers (77.7%)

have between 6 and 11 years of teaching experience and two (22.2%) have between 12 and 16 years of teaching experience.

Three district employees agreed to be interviewed. One interviewee was the Assistant Superintendent, one was the Assistant Director of Culturally Competent Programs and the last one was a building principal. Two of the interviewees had 15 + years of experience (66.6%). One (33.3%) of the district employees interviewed is African American and two (66.6%) are of European descent.

Interview Questions

Interview questions, developed by the researcher, were administered to randomly selected teachers and selected UTCSD staff and school principals who had agreed to participate in the study. Interview questions were open-ended and emergent; additional clarifying questions were also asked. A total of 17 teacher interview questions were asked (see appendix H) and five administration questions (see appendix I). The first half of the teacher interview questions focused on actions taken by the school district to accommodate minority students whereas the second half pertained to teacher cultural competency. Administration interview questions pertained to budget, in-service topics, policies, initiatives, and grants. Both teacher and administration interview questions were taken from the literature and reflected characteristics of culturally competent school practices.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in October 2008 to establish reliability and validity of the interview questions. The participants closely resembled the sample population (Bernard, 2008). Eight teachers participated in the pilot study. Interview questions were answered and then reviewed. Attention focused on clarity of questions, identification of confusing and/or ambiguous questions, and time for completion of interview. Corrections were made to the interview questions based on the feedback. The teachers who participated in the pilot study were teachers who taught at schools that did not qualify for the study.

Reliability Issues

To ensure reliability, only teachers teaching third through sixth grades at elementary schools were considered. The elementary school had to consist of a minority population of 40% or more. All five elementary schools containing a student population of 40% or more were represented in teacher interviews. Teachers in schools containing less than a 40 % minority enrollment were less likely to have been affected or have experience teaching minority students. The three local high schools were eliminated from this study because one has less than 40% minority population and one is an alternative school. The alternative school is likely to employ teaching strategies that are very different from the other two high schools, thus skewing results. Of the three junior high schools in the district, one is brand

new, and the other has a minority enrollment of less than 40%. The small sampling population of the junior highs eliminated their eligibility to participate in the study.

Another issue that concerns the reliability of this study is that this researcher studied a district in which I work. I have some insight into the issues that affect the district and could have formed opinions that may compromise the results of this study. Another reason that I chose elementary schools is that I am teacher at the one of the high schools and junior high schools and as such am familiar with their policies and practices. Hence, another reason I focused on the elementary schools. The district has allowed such a degree of autonomy that each school is allowed latitude to decide polices, curriculum and interventions. The in-services, polices, interventions and curriculum are vastly different at the high school, junior high and elementary levels. Even as a district employee, I was unfamiliar with the policies, interventions, and curriculum of the elementary schools.

Even though I am familiar with community concerns of changing demographics in the community I was not aware of what actions the district had taken at the elementary level to accommodate incoming African Americans. I was also unaware of elementary teachers' perceptions of those actions as never having interactions with elementary school teachers.

Data Collection

Procedures and Timeframes

Fetterman's (1989) and Bernard's (2008) data collection procedures were followed—namely, gaining access, interviewing, and analyzing data. The current study lasted approximately 12 months, with the first e-mails requesting interviews being sent on January 31, 2009 (follow-up e-mails requesting additional interviews were sent in February). Interviews began February 8, 2009, and ended February 27, 2009. From March 2009 through August 2009, data were transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted and the findings were written. From August 2009 through January 2010, the findings and conclusion were written; in addition the entire study was organized, edited, and revised.

Weeks

1	01-31-09	First e-mails to participants
2	02-05-09	Follow-up emails and new e-mails to participants
3	02-08-09	First interview
4-5	02-27-09	Interviews continue and conclude
6-8	03-14-09	Interviews are transcribed
9-22	04-18-09	Data analysis begins and concludes
23-26	07-29-09	Begin and conclude writing Chapter 4
27-29	08-23-09	Revise Chapter 3

30 - 38	Sep/Oct	Writing and revising Chapters 4 & 5
39-48	Nov/Dec	Editing, proofreading, and organizing all chapters

Data Analysis

A grounded-theory approach was used for data analysis. Grounded-theory employs a set of techniques for identifying categories and concepts that emerge from interviews and linking concepts into substantive and formal theories (Bernard, 2006). Once interview results were transcribed and reviewed, they were organized into emergent categories. A count was conducted of the number of respondents who shared comments in one or more categories regarding their beliefs about district interventions to accommodate the changing demographics within the district as well as their own beliefs concerning their efficacy to teach culturally diverse students. Then, categories were operationally defined, patterns of similar comments were identified as emergent themes, and quotes from interviewees were cited for each category.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 summarized the design of this study. The data collection method consisted of researcher-designed and -administered interviews among a set of participants who met specific criteria for eligibility. A description of the construction of the instrument was provided, along with procedures for establishing and providing reliability and validity. A summary of the research population and its

demographic characteristics were provided. Data analysis involved the use of themes that emerged from interview data and quotations from participants. Chapter 4 will describe the analysis of the interviews, provide an explanation of the research themes, and outline each phase of the data analysis process.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.
-Albert Einstein

This chapter describes the findings related to this study. As previously stated, the purpose of this study was twofold: to examine UTSCD schools to determine what interventions have been employed to accommodate the burgeoning African American population and to record and analyze how the district's teachers feel about the interventions employed by the district as well as how they perceive their abilities when teaching minority students.

The methodology used was qualitative in nature. Interviews were conducted with district employees and teachers of elementary schools who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. District employees were chosen based on their knowledge of programs, budget, policies, and initiatives that pertained to helping minority students. An analysis was used in which themes and patterns emerged from the data.

Themes emerged from the interviews as the participants' perceived and conveyed their experiences. More than 6½ hours of audio-taped interviews yielded 117 pages of single-spaced, typed transcript. Transcripts provided experiences and meanings as seen through the participants' lens of understanding. Themes presented in this chapter were generated based on respondents' knowledge,

reflections, and stories. To be considered as a theme or sub-theme, similar responses needed to be shared by 5 of the 9 teachers (55.5%) or 2 of the 3 administrators (66.6%).

This chapter is organized into two sections: results of findings at the district level and results of findings of teacher interviews. The results of findings at the district level will offer a summary of the respondents' knowledge concerning efforts exercised by the district to help incorporate incoming minority students. In addition, themes that emerged from the interviews will be defined and explained. Results of the findings of teacher interviews will describe how the teachers perceived the district's efforts to accommodate incoming African American students and how capable the teachers' perceive themselves to be when teaching minority students. The interviews also explored the self-described culturally relevant classroom practices teachers maintained that they utilized in their classroom.

Results Of Findings At The District Level

The district employees interviewed included the assistant superintendent, assistant director of cultural competency programs, and a building principal. District administration employees were asked a total of six questions that targeted if and how the district has changed its policies and practices according to the changing demographics and how the district has accommodated incoming minority students. Follow-up questions were asked as needed to expand or clarify answers. The

following themes emerged during the interviews: focus on academic/behavior needs; district actions responsive to changing population; district actions were not streamlined for all elementary schools and **n**ew direction for accommodating the needs of African American students.

Focus on Academic/Behavior Needs

One theme that emerged was the district's focus on meeting the academic and behavioral needs of all students. Interviewees stated that incoming minority students were not performing at the academic level of their peers. The district's focus for the last 10 years has been on how to support all students academically and behaviorally. Instead of singling students out based on race, the district tried to meet the needs of a majority of students by focusing on issues that affect many students, despite the fact that low test scores, poor attendance, and behavior issues tend to disproportionally focus on African American students. A general response was applied to address a specific issue regarding a specific group of students. According to the district assistant superintendent, the district was changed by the influx of inner-city African American students: "How it's affected our district is we have more students who are not proficient academically as measured by how we test the basic skills" (Jeff, Interview, February 10, 2009). The achievement gap of African American students as well as other minority students was a concern for the district, as summarized by Maggie, a building principal:

> The District's priority right now is to try to close this gap. We are a district in need of assistance. This district is going to—all districts are going to be in need of assistance and there is no way we can get that 100 percent, right? But I think that right now that's the focus. The focus is what can we do to increase the achievement among all kids. Which is a different question in different buildings (Maggie, Interview, February 19, 2009).

The administrators recognized that in order to meet the needs of all students in the district, decisions were made to concentrate on academics. Although academics were the focus, these administrators did note the inclusion of a cultural instructional approach. According to administrators, federal government labeling based on standardized test scores and budget constraints as well as a lack of resources had forced the district to make decisions concerning which areas of focus and how they were going to implement chosen programs. Title I funds provided after-school tutoring programs for students considered to be underachieving for their grade level. The after-school tutoring is not limited to one particular group of students based on race.

District Actions Lacked an Individual Response to Changing Population

District employees were asked to describe programs and policies the district utilized to help meet the academic/social/emotional needs of their incoming minority students. They indicated that no specific programs or services had been put into place to immediately deal with issues that affect minority populations. Programs employed were always a response to a need either recognized by the

district or individual schools. The main areas of concern for the district focused on general academic, behavior, and attendance issues. This theme was supported by teachers as well as district staff. Jeff, the assistant superintendent, described how his campus changed with the new demographic: "We have more students with behavior issues and probably more students with attendance issues. So it's, and particularly those issues show up with, more so with students having free and reduced lunch and minorities (Interview, February 10, 2009). According to Jeff, the district recognized issues affecting minority populations. These issues required district intervention to correct some of the attendance and behavior problems.

Principal interviews confirmed such assertions about achievement gap, attendance, and behavior problems. Maggie, a building principal, discussed the achievement gap as well as discipline and attendance problems encountered in her administration experience:

> So there's disproportionality in regard to student achievement, a student achievement gap, and then disproportionality in the number of students who are suspended from school for discipline offenses. You see disproportionality in the number of referrals to the attendance task force. Again, more so toward minority and students on free and reduced lunch (Interview, February 19, 2009).

Maggie's description provides examples of the kinds of knowledge incoming African American students have rather than school readiness skills.

> And a lot of our children do not come with that school knowledge. Now, I think a lot of our kids come with other kinds of knowledge. They know how to keep themselves occupied for long periods of times

> sometimes. They know the bus schedule in University Town and can get from one side of town to the other. But as far as academic ABCs and numbers, they don't have… And so some of them, they're readiness skills for reading and writing aren't quite where they need to be (Maggie, Interview, February 19, 2009).

Only when building principals recognized these issues and asked the district for assistance were supports put into place. District staff pointed out that behavior was an area of concern for incoming African American students; climate and program support was provided to schools when requested by each campus.

> From a budget—and then there's those where we've—another major initiative is positive behavior support, and that comes out of special ed, actually. And that will be specifically working on building-wide behavior plans and climate issues. (Jeff, Interview, February 10, 2009).

One building principal recognized the assistance the district had provided her building in the areas of behavior and academic skills. Maggie described the type of help she was able to obtain for her campus:

> I think the district has been supportive. Very supportive in trying to help us meet the needs of our kids. So when I talked about behavior, we have a behavior interventionist that's here four hours a day. That's more than other schools might have. We have more Title I support because our children don't come to school quite with the same background that other kids do. And so some of them, they're readiness skills for reading and writing aren't quite where they need to be. So we have more Title I. And we also have behavior interventionist for our kindergarten class (Maggie, Interview, February 19, 2009).

Such district actions were in response to a changing population. Data suggest that minority populations are increasing and will continue to increase in University Town as well as across the country. University Town has seen increasing numbers of

inner-city families moving into the district for a variety of reasons, including the availability of Section 8 housing, shelters, and access to better schools. When asked why Miriam Webster had a higher number of minority and free and reduced lunch students, Maggie described her understanding of the high minority representation in her building's attendance zone: "We see a lot of intercity Chicago students moving here because we have the homeless shelter in our neighborhood and so those students come here" (Maggie, Interview, February 19, 2009). A teacher at George Wythe also explained the high number of minorities attending his school.

> Well, when it was Section 8, they came because they get Section 8 housing and got it so easy and quickly. And we had people say that they would get online and say, "Where can I get a voucher, University Town? All right, I'll move there (Gavin, Interview, February 18, 2009).

Hollie, a teacher respondent, provided another reason why inner-city families are moving into their school attendance areas.

> Certainly, I think there are a couple of different things that happen. Certainly, if we have families that are coming to University Town that are already connected with another family, maybe a relative or something like that, I have often heard people say that they're satisfied or happy with the experience their student are getting here, and so they encourage family members and friends to find housing so that they can attend school here (Hollie, Interview, February 23, 2009).

Indeed, housing and shelters helped change some school demographics. Given the smaller size of the school district and city population, meaning citizens are very attuned to local politics, the fact that the city owns Section 8 public housing, built a homeless shelter and domestic violence shelter in Miriam Webster's

attendance zone, and offers affordable, lower income homes, it seems that the city would have informed the local school district that the population of some school attendance zones were likely to undergo changes. However, the interviewees yielded no evidence that the city communicated or tried to apprise the school district of the town's changing demographics or evidence that pro-active measures were put into place to deal with the changing demographics of UTCSD schools. The district tried to meet the needs of the new student demographic school-by-school at the request of principals as issues arose.

District Allowed School Autonomy for Decision Making

For the most part, for the last 10 years UTCSD allowed individual schools latitude in decision making for their academic programs/curriculum. The individual campus decision for academic programs/curriculum is based on each school's population and the requirements of that particular school's population. The assistant superintendent highlighted the district's philosophy in regards to how decisions were made.

> We have tried—that's probably another change. It's a good question because there was a period of time ten years ago when individual buildings had a great deal of latitude. I'm speaking—well, all K through 12, but particularly elementary, to design their own programs (Jeff, Interview, February 10, 2009).

He expands his point to include that the district has recently begun to standardize academic programs throughout the district.

> So what I think another change that's occurred is that we're trying to standardize the types of interventions we're using across the district. So if, for example, reading—we're expecting all of our elementary schools to use guided reading as a strategy, rather than use comprehension strategies. As opposed to buildings designing their own curriculum or selecting strategies that may be unique to their buildings. So there has been more of an emphasis to try to do it district wide (Jeff, Interview, February 10, 2009).

Each school has been allowed to decide what programs to employ based on its specific needs. Schools have chosen to adopt different programs and in-services based on the location of the school, which often dictates the needs of the school. School visits and interviews yielded specific observations concerning school location as it relates to services and programs implemented by the district in an effort to accommodate student needs. According to teacher and district staff interviews, district and building websites and campus visits and observations, the following information was obtained about each campus (building websites were not included in references to maintain anonymity of participating schools).

Miriam Webster: Shelter School

Miriam Webster attendance zone has homeless and domestic violence shelters. There is a higher number of Section 8 housing in the attendance area. The school's principal and teachers observed that many minority children come to school lacking the academic skill level of their peers. Teachers maintained that some students can be more aggressive because of the domestic violence they have witnessed in their lives. Miriam Webster used Title I funds to obtain after-school

tutoring, a behavior interventionist for the kindergarten classes, and an extra kindergarten associate and family resource liaison to help meet the needs of families so that students can be more engaged in school. The family resource counselor helps families by providing a wide range of services, from attaining glasses for children to providing transportation to after-school activities. The principal also sought help from outside the district, and a community mental health counselor is on site to help students who have been through traumatic situations. The school tries to increase parent involvement by having family night where food is served and parents can learn ways to help their children with school work at home. Some of the teachers attended a Ruby Payne conference, and speakers have been brought in to discuss the needs of diverse students (Observations and Teacher Interviews; February 19, 23, & 25).

George Wythe: Highway School

According to Gavin, George Wythe has a mix of low-income and middle-income kids in its attendance zones. George Wythe is geographically isolated because a major highway runs right by the school, providing hazardous crossings for many students who live across the highway. The school requested access to the town-owned community center to provide after-school activities for students so that they would not have to cross a dangerous road to playground access. George Wythe in the past had a Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program in place. The

school still utilizes Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), after-school tutoring, and after-school daycare. Teachers plan multicultural gender lessons, and the district arranged multicultural in-services. The school sends home standardized test scores and conference forms. George Wythe also has a family resource liaison. The family resource person helps provide transportation for parents to conferences as well as a babysitting services so that parents can attend (Observation & Teacher Interview; February 18, 2009).

Rolfe: International School

Rolfe is located on the west side of town near the university. Rolfe also has Section 8 housing, mostly housing graduate students; therefore, graduate student campus housing is in the attendance zone. The children of international graduate students attend the school. The graduate students represent a number of different countries; therefore, Rolfe has a higher number of international students than other elementary schools that participated in this study. Rolfe uses PBS and has a family resource person. Six or seven teachers attended PBS training so that they could teach PBS to the rest of the staff. Multicultural gender-fair lessons are also incorporated into the curriculum. Speakers have been brought in to address reaching every learner. In response to the many students from countries all over the world, Rolfe uses Connect Ed, a translation system, to negotiate the language barrier when contacting parents (Observation & Teacher Interview; February 8, 2009).

Hargrove: Large Hispanic Population

According to interviewed teachers Larry and Travis, Hargrove has experienced a changing demographic due to the availability or lack of availability to Section 8 housing. There is also a trailer court close to the school. A larger number of Hispanic students attend Hargrove than the other elementary schools that qualified for the study because of Section 8 housing. Speakers are brought in once a year to address diversity issues. The school has also secured a family resource person, offers after-school tutoring, uses multicultural gender-fair lessons, and practices PBS. Translators are provided for parent teacher conferences (Observation & Teacher Interviews; February 11 & 25, 2009).

King Business District School

King also practices PBS, integrates multicultural gender-fair lessons into the curriculum, and has obtained a family resource person. The family resource office provides free childcare, transportation, and translation services for parent-teacher conferences. The school newsletter informs parents of services the school provides to help parents struggling with food and clothing needs.

Many of the schools employed many of the same services or programs when trying to accommodate the needs of their students. All schools obtained a family resource person, used Title I funds for tutoring after school, and implemented PBS, although at different times. A district directive concerning multicultural lesson plans

was also in place at all of the campuses studied. The district requires teachers to submit lesson plans once a month detailing a multicultural lessons integrated into that month's lessons (Observation and Teacher Interview; April 4, 2009).

A New Direction for Accommodating the Needs of African American Students

In 2008 the District received a 1.2-million-dollar, 4-year renewable grant from Safe Schools Healthy Schools that enables and provides resources for the district to focus on culture as it relates to learning. The district employees and building administrators recognize the value of culture in the arena of education and have recently, in the last two years, focused their efforts to tap into culture to engage students in the learning process. District staff seemed optimistic about this new direction for the minority students. Melanie described the district's new direction in terms of accommodating minority populations.

> As a mother in this district, and as a grad student working on these issues as well—but also as a professional—I think this is a unique place in terms of we have as a community experienced a lot of growth in our numbers of diverse students in the last five years. But rather than continuing to kind of recapitulate the cycle of, "Oh well, Johnny can't read, and Johnny doesn't want to read. Well, we'll just write Johnny off," we're really striving hard to address the underlying issues of why Johnny can't read and what factors go into that and right them, so that in three to five years, Johnny will read, and Johnny will have a different outcome than he would have had if he never learned to read. And to me, that's exciting work, and it's not work that many school districts take on at the district level. You might have a school or so who takes it on but not necessarily at the district level. So it's a very unique place to be in at a unique time, and I think it's exciting, and that's really literally how I feel about it (Melanie, Interview, March 4, 2009).

A number of new programs have recently been put into place that focus on cultural competency, as the assistant superintendent explained.

> Yeah, so where we're bringing groups together—minority groups together to very specifically discuss—provide a support network to those students. The other area is we're doing in the summer—we started last summer what we're calling cultural academies—academic academies. That's not the exact word, but that's what they are. So it's a summer school for students—they're not behind on credits, but it's to bring together students who we feel we can tap into their potential more for increasing their achievement by studying their own culture more, learning more about themselves and their culture. And that becomes the theme for reading, writing, social studies, for the academic work. So we try to present a high interest curriculum in the summer that—and provide them a lot of academic support. It's pretty rigorous. With the academic support to do the work, and then ultimately the outcome is that, or the hopeful outcome is that they'll feel successful, and that will continue to carry over into the school year (Jeff, Interview, February 10, 2009).

Thus, district administrators are taking their efforts in a new direction. The cultural competency initiative is the avenue that district employees hope will help their minority students achieve academic success. The programs are in their infancy, so the success of these efforts has yet to been seen.

Overall Summary of District Employee Interviews

The district reacted to issues as they arose on each campus. District policy has been to allow autonomy for decision making and problem solving for each school. As a result, each school was allowed to determine actions and curriculum that best suited its individual needs. In the area of curriculum, the district is streamlining its curriculum, and schools have less leeway to decide which practices to employ.

UTCSD schools for most of the past 10 years have focused on the academic needs of students; as such, programs have targeted raising students' achievement levels. This was a narrow response to address the needs and issues that face minority populations. Multiculturalism, social/racial adjustment of students, and learning issues were not addressed by the district.

The district tried to be responsive to each individual school's needs, and a number of programs and monies were allotted to help meet students' academic needs. For example, as the number of low-income students increased, programs to address related issues were instituted according to the requests of each campus. Cultural competency is a new initiative recently introduced to target minority students in an effort to close the achievement gap. In the view of this researcher, it appears that the district had good intentions to help solve some of the issues that confront minority students, but lacked a comprehensive policy required to meet all the needs of minority students.

Results Of Findings Of Teacher Interviews

District teachers were asked to consider district interventions to help accommodate incoming African American students. They were also questioned about how the district could better enable them, the teachers, to teach minority populations. Follow-up questions were asked as needed to expand or clarify answers. Questions were designed to be open-ended to allow respondents to fully

elaborate on their thoughts about the district's interventions and their opinions of those actions. The following themes and sub themes emerged from the interviews: mixed feelings about the annual MLK Day diversity training in-service; self-described culturally competent practices; hesitancy to discuss race and culture openly as they relate to learning; frustrations over negative public perceptions of some district schools and help needed from the district.

Mixed Feelings about the Annual MLK Day Diversity Training In-Service

Teachers work the most closely with students and, as such, are the most familiar with the needs of their student population. Teachers are also very attuned to the help they need to educate themselves concerning their students, including the tools they need to meet the needs of their student population. Respondents were asked what actions the district had taken to accommodate the needs of the incoming African American students. To get the most complete answer, three questions were posed to the respondents that inquired about in-services, expert speakers brought into schools, and district-directed learning concerning the instruction of diverse students.

The respondents confirmed earlier assertions made by district employees that each school had autonomy to decide the direction of in-services; consequently, the response to the in-services varied depending on which campus the interviewed teacher taught. The respondents confirmed that the district had not undertaken

specific actions to help any one group of students. The interviewees also supported the notion that the only actions employed by the district to specifically address minorities (not just African Americans) occurred annually on Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Day.

When teachers were asked to describe any district-directed in-services that addressed the needs of minority students, the replies focused on an annual in-service to address diversity issues occurring on MLK Day. As Tony explained, "Okay, so we have the in-service on Martin Luther King Day" (February 8, 2009). This was the only in-service that Tony commented on. Gavin concurred: "We just had an in-service on Martin Luther King Day" (Interview, February 23, 2009). Hollie described the MLK day phenomenon as follows:

> Every year on Martin Luther King Day, we go to in-services that specifically talk about not just African-American students, but about all different types of minority student needs, and things that we can be doing as teachers (Interview, February 23, 2009).

Travis confirms the statements made by the other teachers, stating "Well, certainly our Martin Luther King in-service is always geared toward that" (Interview, February 11, 2009). Most of the respondents only recognized this one in-service as having anything to do with diversity or minority student needs.

When asked if the MLK in-service was informative, responses were mixed. Some respondents viewed the in-services as "unhelpful" or "of no value." When asked if the past years' in-services were helpful Tony stated, "No, it wasn't explicit

to multi-culturalism" (Interview, February 8, 2009). April elaborated on why the MLK Day in-services have been unhelpful: "Well, I have problems with the Martin Luther King Day in-service anyway. I certainly don't mind the topic. I think anytime you can hear that sometimes seems like the theme is the same year after year" (Interview, April 4, 2009).

Other teachers thought the in-service was helpful and the content appropriate to their students' needs. "Every year on Martin Luther King Day, we go to in-services that specifically talk about not just African-American students, but about all different types of minority student needs, and things that we can be doing as teachers" (Hollie, Interview, February 23, 2009). The content of the in-service was meaningful and hence Hollie's reaction was positive. Some respondents replied that some years were meaningful while other years were a repeat of the same material and not helpful.

> Sometimes those are helpful, sometimes they are not. But I think it's hard to sit there and go to an in-service and hear a blanket thing of how you need to do this because each kid is coming with a different set of circumstances, different issues, different problems (April, Interview, February 24, 2009).

The only MLK Day in-service that received a positive response from all nine of the respondents was the 2009 in-service, which showed a movie from students' perspective about moving from the inner city to a suburban college town. The movie addressed the challenges these students faced, from housing issues to educational

challenges. According to the teachers, this movie allowed them to view life through the lens of their inner-city students.

> We just had an in-service on Martin Luther King Day that we went to and saw a video about students coming from Chicago going to Champaign, Illinois and some of the challenges that they were facing there. And just how in Chicago, their neighborhoods have been torn down, and they've had to find other places to live, and their neighborhood schools have been torn down, and it's a big challenge for those families to find a place to call home; they've been displaced so many times. I thought it was great. I really enjoyed it. Again, it just kind of re-affirms and gives us an insight to what our kids are going through at our school (Jerry, Interview, February 10, 2009).

Jerry's description is a good example of why this particular in-service received such positive responses from respondents. The content was used in a manner in which all the respondents felt was applicable to their student population.

The differences in the response to the usefulness of the in-services stemmed from differences in the message of the in-services, which varied from building to building. The in-services used to provide knowledge concerning minority student populations were perceived as helpful. The building principals who focused on curriculum and standardized test scores as they relate to the achievement gap and brought in experts to discuss educating diverse populations received positive comments on their in-services. Addressing diversity issues their buildings were facing helped mold the attitudes of the teacher respondents. Hollie, at teacher at Miriam Webster, described the content of her MLK day in-services.

> Certainly, in a building like Webster, that does have a high minority population, all of your in-services have that in mind as we look at reading curriculum, or as we look at standardized test scores, we're always talking and thinking about how those types of things—is this curriculum one that would be biased, for or against minority students? Is this something that has background knowledge that they can connect? That sort of thing; are test questions biased, some of those things (Hollie, Interview, February 23, 2009).

Kate, another teacher, described a guest speaker whom the principal brought in to discuss issues that pertained specifically to their minority population.

> I know three years ago our principal at the time brought in a mentor of his from somewhere in Ohio, and he came out and met with our staff which was really nice because then we got to focus on what specific things we are doing for our students. A big focus here has been where can we meet our minority parents and families, where they're at, and how can we be involved in their community? How can we get to know them, and understand their day-to-day life? He worked with us on that (Kate, Interview, February 25, 2009).

Kate continued to describe another guest speaker brought in to speak about parental involvement.

> Kim Capp is a pretty well known family involvement gal, and she came and did a daylong in-service for Webster and a couple of other buildings four years ago. That was outstanding because we got some good advice from her just about involving our families here at school. Parent involvement doesn't mean getting them to show up for the bake sale, but it means getting them reading at home with their kids, and helping their kids with their work, and that sort of thing. How do you get families to do that? That was really good (Kate, Interview, February 25, 2009).

When the in-service was used to discuss issues perceived to be relevant to diversity issues that teachers faced in their classrooms, the response was positive. Meanwhile,

the building principals who did not bring in expert speakers or discuss issues that the teachers perceived as relevant to their student population and classroom instruction were viewed as unhelpful in their classroom practices. Teddy's description of the building in-service leaves out any mention of any activities that occurred on that day, leading to the possible conclusion that there was little substance to the in-services Teddy attended: "Multicultural days occasionally address some of the minorities" (Teddy, Interview, February 18, 2009). Respondents were asked if any other attempts had been made to address minority issues other than the annual MLK Day in-service. Tony described times when issues were discussed, but these were in response to a moment of crisis or in what appeared to be an unsuccessful attempt to engage staff in a dialogue.

> At the building level? Other than our previous Equity Director, Maria Kohl, that would come in, and primarily, when we were at a crisis moment, if there was some bullying or name-calling going on, she would come in and scare the beejeezus out of kids. And the current equity director came once with James Patterson but it really wasn't anything to do with multiculturalism or addressing needs of kids. Every once in a while, our principal has tried to do a little bit of watching a short video now and then. And we talked a little bit about Ruby Payne but I don't think that—other than trying to reach learners that are really struggling, I'm not sure that we've had anything multicultural (Tony, Interview, February 8, 2009).

When asked if the district had taken any action to help teachers in the areas of instruction and curriculum, most replies were that no training had been provided to teaching staff. Travis mentioned the once-a-year in-service: "Maybe once a year.

Martin Luther K" (Travis, Interview, February 11, 2009)." Gavin wasn't sure anything concerning multicultural instruction or district-provided instruction had occurred. "I'm not sure that we've had anything multicultural to help us with the instruction of minority students" (Gavin, Interview, February 18, 2009). Kate confirmed Gavin's allegation that no such training had occurred: "That the district has taken to help us? There aren't any that the district has done" (Kate, Interview, February 25, 2009). Tony concurred. "There haven't been any" (Tony, Interview, February 8, 2009).

Respondents were asked how they learned instructional techniques geared toward minority populations. Many respondents felt their knowledge pertaining to the education of minority students was self-taught or gained through years of teaching experience. Kate explained that she had learned her instructional practices through years of teaching experience. "I would say the majority of the things that we've learned ourselves is through experience, as opposed to being educated from the district level" (Kate, Interview, February 25, 2009)." April also said that she had learned how to better teach minority students from working with them: "I think a lot of that is just experience you get from working with them" (April, Interview, April 4, 2009). Some respondents indicated that they had taken classes to enhance their knowledge of their diverse student population. Travis replied that he took classes and learned from experience, so it was his own initiative that helped enhance

his classroom practices geared toward his minority population. “End up taking some classes along those lines over the years. I think a lot of that is just experience you get from working with them. Plus the things you do pick up from speakers here and there” (Travis, Interview, February 11, 2009).

A follow-up question was posed addressing how the respondents felt about the actions the district had taken to accommodate minority students. The responses were mixed. Some teachers who felt they had attended in-services that were useful to their instruction had positive responses. Larry, who had been in the district for 12 years and was familiar with the district’s efforts to accommodate minority populations, recognized the district’s efforts to help train staff about their changing student population. Like the district, he viewed incoming minority student’s adjustment in narrow terms and focused on academics.

> I don't think the district could be faulted in being laissez-faire about the needs to like bring up the scores of the African Americans for example. Our school is a GAP school. And this came up at a recent—well, last Monday in fact, there was a graph showing that minorities scored very poorly. And Perry Ross was showing a graph to all the teachers indicating that in math, minorities were scoring far less than Whites—their counter-parts. And so our school being a GAP school is trying to address those needs. So therefore, kids that aren't really on grade level, we're, teachers, meeting with five times a day. And those some of those same kids can also get Title 1 reading help four times a week in addition to the—I won't say individualized, but small groups, three maybe four to a group. So we're trying to address those reading needs (Larry, Interview, February 25, 2009).

Hollie's in-services were used in a way that delved into diversity issues and thus were viewed as helpful.

> I do think they're helpful. Some of them have been—certainly, they're different every year—but some of them have been very insightful, and very valuable. There was one I attended, probably three years ago, that has sparked a partnership that we have here where an African-American professor at the university now brings his students out here, and they volunteer in our after-school program. That was certainly one that I thought brought some good conversation to our building, and good insight (Hollie, Interview, February 23, 2009).

Other respondents perceived that their in-services had been unhelpful and the content of the in-service not used well. Again, the response can be attributed the direction the building principal chose to take the in-service. Tony elaborated on his feelings of the in-service. "I think there definitely is room for improvement in that creating awareness with people is a start, but it has to go a lot further with finding people who have been successful in teaching a diverse population" (Tony, Interview, February 8, 2009).

Self-Described Culturally Competent Practices

One theme that surfaced during the interviews was culturally competent practices employed by the respondents. A discussion of the practices teachers undertook to engage their students in learning showcased their feelings concerning their abilities when teaching minority students. The interviewed teachers felt very strongly about the academic abilities and potential of their students. The interviews revealed that many of the teachers deliberately sought out schools with high

minority populations, selecting schools that presented challenges. The teachers wanted to work with minority students because they felt they were needed, were interested in social justice, and enjoyed the success of their students. Gavin's description provided an example of teachers choosing the type of student they want to teach.

> Teachers—the teachers here are a different breed. The teachers here are a different breed because they want to be here. And there are teachers who have been here for many years—like myself, who could have gone to other buildings. We could have transferred out, gone someplace else (Gavin, Interview, February 18, 2009).

Hollie's concern was to help with racial justice in her city. "I hunted out a building that had the highest minority population, and wanted to look here because I just have a lot of interest in racial equality and some of those things" (Interview, February 23, 2009). She has worked in inner-city neighborhoods and continues to work with minority populations outside of her work day. Meanwhile, when Jerry moved back to the community, he wanted to continue to work in a school where he felt he could "make a difference." He is proud of the progress he is able to make with his students.

> When I was in Houston I taught at mostly Hispanic populated buildings with 70 percent Hispanic, also low socioeconomic numbers, so I'm kind of used to it and it's kind of the schools I've always been in. That's the ones I enjoy because I think you see the most progress at those schools (Jerry, Interview, February 13, 2009).

The teachers described a number of culturally competent practices they employed in their teaching. They were cognizant of their students' needs academically and emotionally and sought to address these needs. They stated that they recognized the challenges their student population faces and how those challenges impact their learning. Respondents recognized that issues outside of school affect student behavior and students' attitudes in school. Teachers were willing look past some student behaviors in order to reach out to make connections with their students in order to gain the trust required to be effective teachers. Jerry's description provides insight concerning the trust that must be built to establish a rapport and relationship with his students.

> Well, probably past experiences are gonna shape how they behave at first. They're gonna test you at first, but once they see that you're gonna stick around and you're going to work with them and try and help them out then they're gonna be accepting of you (Jerry, Interview, February 13, 2009).

Gavin explained how he looks past behaviors that are not considered acceptable in the school culture of University Town so that he can really listen to and understand his students.

> And sometimes I'll also say that, "Listen to what they're saying, not necessarily how they're saying it." Because you will probably hear more cursing from 12-year-olds than you've ever heard before from adults. But listen to what they're saying, not how they're saying it (Gavin, Interview, February 19, 2009).

Gavin's students' behavior as described here is not a mainstream behavior exhibited by most students in the district. Gavin was cognizant that kids come to school with culture learned at home; although students' methods of explaining themselves is not conventional, what they have to say it still important.

The respondents were also aware that some of their minority students came to school with different background knowledge than their mainstream kids. Kate summarized that what is learned in school is not always congruent with students' background knowledge and experience. The students who do not have the knowledge taught in school can get left out of conversations that occur when learning.

> I think so. I think so. I guess just because of our environment where we live, it's a rural community, farming community. And if your students come in and the text that you're reading has to do with things outside and activities, some of them aren't—maybe haven't seen a cow before. So maybe it's a little racially biased the readings and some of the activities that you do, but you've kind of got to adapt that and take that into consideration in working with those kids (Kate, Interview, February 25, 2009).

Respondents also recognized that the curriculum provided by the district did not always reflect their student population. The teachers, as a building or individually, brought in diverse curriculum materials to help engage their students in learning. The respondents were aware of the importance to students to see their histories and racial groups reflected in their learning materials. Hollie explained how she supplements the curriculum to reflect her student population.

> In February, it's Black History Month right now; I'm certainly doing a lot of extra things. Just small things, like my oral read-aloud book right now, that's not something the district tells us what we have to read aloud, so I'm reading a book about an African-American family that goes to Birmingham, Alabama right now. Just extra books that I have around the room. Right now, I have everything from famous African-Americans in history, I have one book over here that's just the history of African-Americans in the state, and I just make sure that I checked out as many of those types of books from the library as I could, and had them here accessible for my students. Just to have them available for them, and I'm not sure that I would—I know that's not in the curriculum, and I'm not sure that I would do that were I teaching at a school that didn't have a large African-American population. I think if I had a large amount of Sudanese students, or a large amount of Indian students, you would adjust to the students, I would hope. (Hollie, Interview, February 23, 2009).

Hollie was not the only teacher that encouraged her students to read about their race/culture. All of the teachers that taught History and Language Arts had posters and books in their classrooms that reflected students' culture as well as other cultures. Posters of Martin Luther King Jr, Cesar Chavez, Gandhi and Amelia Earhart were displayed in classrooms. Books entitled *The Underground Railroad, Rosa, Satch, Life and Death of Crazy Horse* and *Blood River* were supplemental books that teachers had provided for their students.

The respondents felt that the strategies practiced in their teaching fostered learning. Despite the many challenges their students face, the teachers, like Gavin, felt their students were making progress as evidenced by comparing year-to-year improvement on classroom and state tests. "Now, you want to tell me how that kid's doing, let's look at the previous years. Let's look at growth over time. So if you're

going to publish scores, would you please publish growth, too?" (Gavin, Interview, February 18, 2009). Kate was quick to point out that students that had been in attendance for a number of years scored well on state tests. "I think our scores show that kids that we've had here are from kindergarten to sixth grade, their ITBS scores are very good" (Kate, Interview, February 25, 2009).

A combination of factors enabled teachers to utilize different strategies (as they described them and supported with evidence from their classrooms) for their students. The culturally competent practices previously described herein are the result of years of teaching experience, wanting to work with minority students, supplementing curriculum and sensitivity to the issues, and understanding challenges that shape their students' learning. Some of the respondents did attribute some of their learning to the district and acknowledged some annual in-services enhanced their knowledge of minority students and that they had gained learning strategies and techniques from in-services.

A sub-theme that emerged from the teachers discussion of their culturally competent practices was that the respondents cited a number of cultural differences of their African American students. Questions were posed to respondents to access respondents' knowledge of their student population. This sub-theme is important for two reasons. First, knowledge of cultural differences among students is instrumental in gauging the usefulness of district interventions and determining

what actions the district could undertake to improve student learning. Second, such knowledge helps teachers gain an understanding of their student population. When respondents were asked questions regarding behavioral differences of African American students based on culture, most recognized that differences existed between African American students and their mainstream population. Kate described the effect of an absentee father on a young, African American girl's relationship with other males.

> A lot of our girls who don't have a biological father in their family, the only kind of interaction they've ever seen is a flirtatious one, and so a lot of times, that's the way they seek approval for boys. It's not like they've had a dad that they can see that nurturing relationship. That's totally different. The only thing they've seen on TV and with their mom is more of a relationship male and female. And so that's sometimes the way they relate to the boys, as opposed to brothers and fathers and things like that. So sometimes you see kids that are overly sexualized at very young ages (Kate, Interview, February 25, 2009).

Tony explained why some African Americans act out causing problem in class.

> So, anyway, I think when learners are frustrated because they know that they are not functioning at the same level as their peers, and I think you get more behavior issues and so that's one of the ways. There's maybe more, at least in the beginning, a propensity to fight. A lot of our University Town kids just don't go that route—you know if they've been at our school for five or six years—and obviously some of these are generalizations and there are going to be exceptions—but I think many of the children that come from Chicago are used to—that's how they solve problems. Mom and dad will even say, "If somebody is picking on you then don't take it; you need to fight back" (Tony, Interview, February 8, 2009).

Jerry provided another illustration of how African American behaviors are different than his mainstream students.

> They might be defiant or deny that they did anything wrong. They don't always problem solve; sometimes they just kind of react to the situation they're in. That's what we're trying to do is teach them more problem solving, you know, what was the problem, how can we fix it; not just to react (Jerry, Interview, February 13, 2009).

The respondents discussed the cultural differences between their minority and mainstream populations. These descriptions were based on African American city culture. When asked if there were differences in learning based on a student's background, the respondents were hesitant to make generalizations beyond behavior and transferring cultural differences to learning.

Hesitancy to Discuss Race and Culture Openly as They Relate to Learning

An important theme that emerged from the interviews was the hesitancy to discuss race/culture as it pertains to learning difference that may exist between different racial/cultural groups of students. Interviewees stated that a White teacher teaching students of color often has a hyper-awareness of stereotypes of students and a hesitancy not to make generalizations about students based on race. This was the case when questions concerning learning based on students' culture were posed. All but two of the respondents replied that their students were all the same, regardless of color. When probed further, teachers were still unwilling to assign any cultural learning strengths or weaknesses based race. There seemed to be a need to

be politically correct in the answers for this question, which is interesting as there was no hesitation when the same question was posed about behavior. When asked to describe differences concerning learning, Travis explained that he does not believe that African Americans have learning strengths or weaknesses that are different than their peers.

> Different learning strengths or weaknesses? For the most part, they learn just like every other kid. Again, it comes down to the individual kid, but at this age, I think the more involved in the learning and doing stuff, white or black or brown, it's going to help them more. Certainly, some of our African American kids are low readers. So certainly, if your math is heavy on language or social studies there's a lot of reading, or just reading in general in language arts and reading a book. I don't know if that's necessarily a weakness of African Americans. I mean, if they're low, they're low no matter what. So I guess, no, I don't think so (Travis, Interview, February 18, 2009).

Although Hollie recognized that home culture plays a role in the information and knowledge that students bring to school, she did not want to make the leap to generalize about the role that background and culture play in student learning.

> Depending on what home situation the students have come from, they come in with incredibly different amounts of background knowledge, so I don't think you can look at a group of students like that and say, "My African-American students are strong at one particular thing," because it just doesn't apply (Hollie, Interview, February 23, 2009).

Teddy supported Hollie's assertion that experiences shape one's learning, but was hesitant to talk about how culture and race shape those experiences.

> I believe that all students learn differently, whether African Americans or not. The biggest factor in the way that someone learns is their background knowledge and experience. There are many ways that this

> is developed, one of which is race, but more importantly their experiences in life (Teddy, Interview, February 18, 2009).

This theme is important because it indirectly showcases information the district is providing to teaching staff and the sensitivity of teachers to their students. The district maintained that behavior was an issue associated with inner-city African Americans and, in response, instituted a PBS program to try to correct behavior issues associated with inner-city African Americans. Behavior is a topic that the district has addressed; therefore, teachers appear to be comfortable discussing it. The limited response of the district to address the multicultural and social/racial adjustment as well as learning needs of a minority population seems to have hampered an environment in which teachers are aware and uncomfortable discussing racially sensitive issues. Race can be a sensitive issue for many people, and teachers were reluctant to recognize that race as it relates to culture does impact student learning. Based on the responses of the teachers it appears they were hesitant to point out or make generalizations about their minority students because they were very passionate about their student population and the success they have had with their students and they did not want to appear stereotyping their student population. The teachers interviewed did not want to fall into the trap of stereotyping their students.

Frustration with Negative Public Perception of Some Community Schools

Another theme that emerged from the interviews concerning the progress and academic success of minority students was the lack of action the district had taken to inform the community of federal labels and test scores. The respondents readily talked about how upset they were about the negative press their schools had received. All but one of the schools studied has been designated by the federal government as a school in need of assistance (SINOA) based on test scores. The local paper reports these scores to the community, and the respondents indicated that their schools received an unfair assessment by community members of their school based on test scores and labels. Respondents were upset over the community perception of their schools; they were defensive when discussing their schools. Teddy described his anger over the way certain schools are portrayed in the community and the prevailing attitudes of other school staff in the district concerning "those schools."

> When we have radio stations that speak about certain neighborhoods in jest it proliferates an attitude that needs to change. We have schools that are thought of as "less" because of their test scores and "those kids". Finally, we have other schools unwilling to accept their part in the "helping" process who would rather ignore the problem and push it aside. Attitudes must change, not this schools knowledge (Teddy, Interview, February 18, 2009).

Respondents felt the district should take some action to inform the community of how labels are assigned and disclose factors not taken into consideration when

labels are assigned to schools. Kate expressed her displeasure over the lack of action the district has taken to educate the community about federal labels.

> My feeling is that I would like for the district to stand up when people make comments about Webster because I feel like we don't get the backing in that way. It's hard to be a SINA school because basically, what you're being told is the reason the kids' scores are low is because obviously, you don't know how to teach and so all the programs go to educating, basically, you as a teacher to improve your teaching. And sometimes, it's what the kids come with and finding ways to be able to accommodate their needs when they come with such deficits (Kate, Interview, February 25, 2009).

The respondents felt that they were good teachers, taught in good schools, had wonderful families in their attendance zones, and worked with students who were making progress. They had a feeling of dismay that the district had not taken any action to inform the public about why test scores were low and that the scores were not accurate instruments to measure the learning and progress occurring at the schools studied. The respondents replied that, if the district was more proactive in discussing test scores in a public forum, community members would be educated as to the reasons schools have been assigned certain labels and the negative perception of their schools could be reversed.

Help Needed from the District

Respondents were asked what the district could do to enhance their knowledge of their minority students. All of the respondents were aware of the help they needed to better understand and teach their students. All interviewees

provided suggestions for ways in which the district could help improve their teaching. Most teachers wanted to learn about the experiences of their students by way of teacher exchanges or visits to communities their students were from. They really wanted to learn about the lives of their students and gain some of their experiences. Kate provided examples of what actions the district could take to help teachers instruct minority students.

> And that would be nice to have that because we've developed your own stereotype of what you think school has been like for these students. And you've always said, we'd like to go visit because I think that would give us a better perspective of where the kids and families are coming from…Yeah, I think learning more about what school is like in Chicago. What the expectations are would help. More information on different learning styles and how we can adapt our curriculum to different learning styles of the students that I have. And then educating the teachers who are just now starting to get the influx of children from Chicago. I think those are the things - being able to use those of us who have taught for 20 years at a school that's really changed to understand that you're maybe becoming an expert with students in urban areas. Those kinds of exchanges, I think, would really help everybody (Kate, Interview, February 25, 2009).

Hollie, like Kate, felt empathy for her students and wanted to learn more about her their lives.

> I taught summer school on the West Side of Chicago just for a summer, and gained some knowledge of what that's like, but that's been seven years ago now, and I would like to take some looks at larger urban school settings. What's happening on the West and South sides of Chicago? What's happening in St. Louis, and even Kansas City, and some different places? I think I personally would really benefit from getting in those schools and learning from them, looking at what's going on there just to have a little better understanding of where (Hollie, Interview, February 23, 2009).

Meanwhile, Gavin delved deeper into the cultural aspects of his students' home lives.

> I think being able to know where they come from. Just what is—and I can say that I can understand the environment that a lot of our families come from. But I haven't lived it. I haven't experienced it. I mean, I'm a white middle class male. I can't be more white bread than I am right now. But the funny thing is I'm still a minority. I'm a male elementary teacher. And there's one of me. Classroom teacher, there's only one of me in this building. And I think that we can say that we understand. But I haven't experienced it. I mean, I've made some parent visits where it was kind of amazing…But I do see priorities in those households being different. And along those same lines that Ruby Payne was talking about, how entertainment—to the poor, entertainment is extremely important. And I've seen that with some of the parent visits and some of the household visits that I have. I saw some of the things you've talked about. But it's not like that at my house. It's not like that when I grew up. I didn't know anybody who was like—who had homes where there were multiple families who lived there. The door was open and it was just—and food was constantly being cooked because you never knew when somebody was coming around. The noise or just the music that was playing, the activity levels of some of the houses of some of the African-American families, specifically. Or some of the smells or sounds that you hear when go you go to a Vietnamese house when you're not used to some of the cooking that they may have, or the music or just the din. It's just that sort of stuff (Gavin, Interview, February 18, 2009).

Tony was more concerned about the achievement gap and cited that he would like help in the instruction of students that exhibit a wide range of abilities.

> I guess I would like more—we've been talking a lot more about data collecting; we're doing tons of assessing. And I guess I would like to know more about how to use that data to make decisions about instruction and particularly when you have kids that are significantly below grade level. What am I supposed to do in a classroom with such a wide range of skills and abilities and reading levels? Maybe more

> cultural awareness; we talked about that a little but, interestingly, it's always by our principal who grew up in rural Midwest and is just as white as they come. It doesn't mean that she's not empathetic, but I'm not sure that she really grasps—I don't know that any of us do of what it would be like to move from Chicago to University Town and what's their existence like here (Tony, Interview, February 8, 2009).

Larry wanted to know about the environment from which his students were coming so that he could better provide for and help meet their learning needs.

> So I guess I'd like to have more knowledge of what they need from schools. If you saw the Pipeline movie, it did stimulate some thought. There was a boy that was trying to get his high school application filled out and talking with his dad that I'm guessing he didn't have much of a relationship with, and some of the other issues that happened there. And it's like, if I'm sending letters home and harping about trying to come to a parent teacher conference, it's probably maybe the last thing on their mind at this point. They may not have a job; they may not know where their food is going to come from or the rent. So I guess I would like to know more and I'm not sure how to ask them directly but get an idea of what we can do better as educators to make them feel like they're part of our community. We want to offer supports. I guess that would be it (Larry, Interview, February 25, 2009).

The teachers were able to describe what kind of help the district could provide to them to enhance the education of their non-mainstream students.

Summary of Teachers' Interviews

The respondents believed that the district focused on academic issues rather than address diversity issues. According to the teachers, diversity issues were mainly addressed on the annual MLK Day in-service. The teachers also indicated that the district did not provide training or curriculum materials to meet the needs of their diverse student population. The teachers described a number of culturally

competent practices they utilized in their classrooms. They stated that they tried to be sensitive to their students' cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and how those differences affected student behavior and learning. The teachers interviewed were upset over what they described as the unfair, negative perceptions concerning their schools and their student population. They were very passionate about their schools, the learning that was occurring, and their student population. They were very vocal that community education from the district and local paper concerning test scores and their student population was needed. The respondents were also aware of what learning they needed to better understand and, hence, educate their population of students. Teachers did exhibit some lack of knowledge concerning the learning strengths and weakness of their students based on culture. Overall, the district's teachers exhibited many characteristics of culturally responsive teachers and perceived themselves as successful when teaching minority students.

Conclusions

This chapter provided the results of the findings concerning what actions the district had taken to accommodate incoming African American students and what district teachers thought of those actions as well as their perceived efficacy when teaching minority students. The results provide evidence that district actions narrowly focused on academic, behavior, and attendance improvement aimed at all students rather than on a particular group of students, particularly as each school

was allowed autonomy in its decision making for what steps and actions were best for the student population. The district's actions came in response to requests by building principals to the changing demographics. Some schools had unique programs that addressed the problems of their schools based on location or issues related to their specific demographic. For instance, George Wythe has an after-school daycare in addition to use of the city's recreation facility so that kids do not have to cross the highway to have access to playgrounds, and Hargrove provides translators for their Hispanic population.

Teacher interviews revealed that the respondents had mixed reactions—sometimes negative—to the annual in-service diversity training. The reactions varied based on the content presented at the in-service. Content and speakers brought into schools were determined by each building principal. In-services perceived as relevant were viewed positively while those perceived as unhelpful glossed over diversity issues. The teachers discussed a number of culturally competent classroom practices that they identified as helping their students achieve academic success. Respondents also recognized cultural differences among their mainstream population and African American students. Respondents were hesitant to make the jump from behavior-based differences in culture to differences in learning abilities and styles based on culture. They were also upset that the district had failed to take action to inform the community about federal and state test scores.

Many respondents felt like their school was viewed negatively by the community based on published labels assigned to test scores. Teachers also felt the community had made an unfair assessment of their schools. Respondents identified actions the district could take to enhance their classroom teaching.

Chapter 5 will summarize the findings and situate them in the literature as well as discuss the implications of this study.

CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We can whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children…we already know more than we need to know in order to do that.
-Ron Edmonds

This chapter will summarize the study of UTCSD actions to accommodate the changing student population and teachers' perceptions of those actions. This chapter is divided into six sections: The first section will summarize of the findings from Chapter 4. The second section will talk about the conclusions responding to each research question. The third section will explain the implications of the research findings. The fourth section will outline the recommendations based on this study's findings and conclusions. Potential beneficiaries of this study will be discussed in section five. The last section will explain the limitations of this study and discuss the need for further study.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how UTCSD adapted to meet the needs of changing student populations. This study also examined how the district teachers felt about the district's interventions and their own perceived success when teaching minority students. District employees were interviewed about the changing demographics and what interventions the district had employed to accommodate incoming minority students—specifically, inner-city African Americans. The

summary of findings is provided in the order of the two research questions explored in this study.

Question 1:
What actions did the district undertake to accommodate incoming African Americans?

The district employed a number of programs and interventions to help students who were struggling academically and behaviorally. The application of programs was a general response to specific issues that disproportionally affect African Americans. No one program addresses the concerns associated with African American students at the schools involved in this study.

The issues of low test scores, attendance, and behavioral problems associated with incoming African American students are the same as cited by the study conducted by Farr (2005). As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the Madison Metropolitan School District, Poway School District, and Los Angeles Unified School District undertook new programs examining culture and learning to deal with the same concerns that University Town is now grappling to address. The district's focus was closing the achievement gap and providing behavior and attendance support, which disproportionately affected minority populations. No specific, district – wide, proactive measures were put into place to meet the needs of the new African American students. Requests for assistance were met school by school, as needs were recognized by building principals.

The district was very helpful in providing support to schools upon request for assistance. Some programs put into place included after-school tutoring services, after-school day care, a family resource person, translators, and access to facilities so that children could play in a safe area after school. District administrators allowed autonomy in decision making in the areas of curriculum, in-service content, and campus programs. Different schools have different needs, and the administrators were cognizant that programs needed at some schools were not needed at others. More recently, the district has begun to streamline curriculum throughout all schools. A new grant has allowed the district to focus on specific minority populations. Cultural competency education for staff is part of the grant.

Question 2:
What are teachers' perceptions of district interventions concerning minority students and how do they perceive their own efficacy when teaching minority students?

District teachers cited that only one day was set aside to discuss diversity issues, the MLK Day in-service. The in-service was perceived as helpful if the time was used constructively, discussing concerns that were important to teachers. Some building principals brought in guest speakers to discuss topics that were relevant to minority students, while others chose to focus on curriculum issues. Teachers in the buildings where the same material was repeated year after year viewed the sessions as a superficial glossing over of diversity material and, hence, did not recognize them as beneficial. Most respondents commented that the district had taken no

actions to provide information or training to enhance their instruction of minority students.

Despite the lack of district training, teachers described a number of culturally competent practices they employed in their classrooms. These culturally competent practices, such as building on students' knowledge and linking that knowledge to new material, incorporating diverse curriculum materials, and examining growth over time, are consistent with practices outlined in the literature (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002.).

Conclusions

Conclusions from this study will address both research questions in relationship to the findings. This study raises important issues for school districts affected by changing demographics and teachers educating a population that is racially and culturally different than themselves and their mainstream students. Recommendations for district actions pertaining to a changing student population are suggested based on the results of this study. As this study explores teachers' perceptions of district interventions, the findings add to the knowledge building of district interventions and the education of district teachers when trying to adjust to changing demographics.

Much literature has focused on various aspects of cultural competency, but fewer studies have examined school districts trying to accommodate their changing

student population. This researcher could not find any studies examining teacher reactions to district interventions. Hence, this study could provide a foundation for future studies, locally or nationally. This study's findings and conclusions are generalizable to school districts, locally and nationally, undergoing a demographic transformation of their student population. The following conclusions represent teachers' perceptions of district actions undertaken to help accommodate incoming minority students, specifically African American students.

White Educators and Their Minority Students

All of the teacher participants in this study were of European descent. This study comprised White teachers talking about issues that affect minorities. The opinions are those of the participants as they perceive these issues. The district allowed building principals to address issues of diversity and applied a "one size fits all" approach to specific problems disproportionally affecting minorities. Furthermore, teachers were unwilling to assign learning differences based on culture. It appears that issues are not directly confronted because of the race factor. Fear about handling situations correctly as perceived by the community or saying things that come across as politically incorrect may have hampered actions and frank discussion. As White educators try to tackle concerns that affect minority students, racial issues may impede effective interventions.

Culturally Competent Professional Development

The teachers who participated in this study work with diverse student populations that are racially and culturally different from the majority of their students. All of the interviewed teachers are White and, hence, often bring different experiences and ways of learning to their classrooms than their minority students. When asked what help the district could provide teachers when teaching a diverse population, the teachers provided a variety of suggestions for enhancing their knowledge of their students. The literature states that components of culturally responsive professional development could include diverse curriculum materials, how to incorporate students' prior experiences and knowledge into classroom instruction, consideration of the needs of each school, and appropriate responses to create forums for open discussions regarding race and learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Additional professional development that was not recognized by the teachers interviewed should focus on how students and parents who have social and cultural capital receive benefits while students who do not possess this knowledge can be hampered in their learning (Lindsey et al., 2005.) Professional development should also include discussions of race, outline strategies, and create environments in which teachers feel comfortable talking about racial issues that may make them feel uncomfortable. Lindsey et al. (2005) maintain that being labeled a racist hampers frank discussion. The teachers who participated in this study seem to support this

assertion as they were hesitant to assign learning strengths and weaknesses based on culture.

Professional Development Targeting the Instruction of Minority Students

Most teachers reported that district-directed professional development regarding the instruction of minority students was absent from their in-services. The hesitancy on the part of teachers to discuss race as it relates to learning could be attributed to the lack of experience and, hence, a sense of discomfort discussing the role that culture plays in learning. Gay (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) maintained that one of the elements of culturally responsive teaching is that teachers are cognizant of the different learning styles that students bring with them to the classroom and incorporate a variety of learning strategies to accommodate those learning styles. District teachers appeared resistant to assign learning strengths and weaknesses based on race and culture. Teachers claimed that they were aware that inner-city students brought different kinds of knowledge with them to the classroom and that they tried to incorporate their knowledge into the lessons, yet teachers felt uncomfortable discussing this topic, a contrast to their willingness to assign behavior differences based on race and culture. The stark difference in the answers to these to two questions seems to support that education is needed on race, culture, and learning.

Test Scores, Attendance Rates, and Behavioral Referrals of African American Students

District administrators cited that some of the effects of the changing demographics were in the areas of the achievement gap and attendance and behavior referrals of African American students, issues are congruent with the literature surrounding concerns situated around African American students. The literature supports that other school districts around the nation have instituted a culturally relevant policy in response to these issues. While UTCSD has employed other measures to try to correct these concerns, it is implementing culturally competent training starting in the 2009-2010 school year. The results have yet to be fully studied on the effectiveness of this policy when instituted by other schools, but district administrators appear hopeful about the new direction that specifically targets minority students—a change from previous interventions (Melanie, March 3, 2009).

Teacher Efficacy when Teaching Minority Students

Teachers appeared to believe that they were successful when teaching their minority students. They felt very strongly about the abilities and willingness to learn of their student population and many district teachers deliberately sought positions in schools that had high minority enrollment. Teachers based the belief of their success with minority students on their self-described classroom practices, high expectations, and long-term performance and growth on classroom tests and state

tests. Teachers discussed the desire for year-to-year growth to be published in the local papers to help dispel negative associations of their schools.

Hale (1994) argued that African American strengths such a oral fluency are not recognized in American schools since an emphasis is placed on skills that the African American community does not generally emphasize, like writing. Information concerning performance growth over a period of time rather than just on state tests can positively influence the community perceptions of the academic abilities of minority students as well as help change negative connotations associated with some district schools.

Implications

This study has implications for school districts undergoing changing demographics. This study supports previous researchers' assertions for the need for culturally competent training (Gay, 2000; Hale 1994; Landson-Billings, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), culturally competent school practices include respect and acknowledgement of students' cultural heritage. The literature supports that some school staff are insensitive to cultural issues. These findings imply that, since little or no diversity training has been provided to district teachers, the district has a responsibility to provide diversity training to its staff. These findings are based on teachers' responses that little or no district-directed diversity training had been provided to staff.

Differences between African American Students and the Mainstream Population

Burnheim (2004) and Coleman (1992) argued that academic ability alone does not determine success. Many minority students come to school lacking the knowledge that schools recognize and/or the social/cultural capital to secure advantages for their students. Although some district teachers recognized that their students came to school with different knowledge, they did not expand on the idea that their education may be hampered by their lack of the "right kinds of knowledge" as described in the literature. The district should include information regarding how some students benefit and other students are put at a disadvantage because of their lack of social and cultural capital.

Predominantly White Teaching Staff Educating Minority Students

All of the teacher participants of this study are of European decent. University Town has historically been a largely homogenous community. To help prevent a cultural disconnect based on understandings concerning the differences in values, social networks, and transmission of learning, continued education on these attributes must be studied. Although the teachers who participated in this study proclaimed to exercise some culturally competent practices as outlined by Villegas and Lucas (2002), contradictions emerged in some of their responses concerning the knowledge they possessed about the culture of their students. Given that the teacher responses lacked some insight into race, culture, and learning, it would seem that

further education in these areas are necessary if the district is to have teaching staff that can be considered culturally competent.

District Communications Regarding Services and Help for Minority Students

Teachers were questioned regarding the help the district had provided for minority students and teachers. Answers varied depending on the school attended, years of service, and committees on which the teacher participated. Some teachers, like Kate, had taught in the district for 17 years and were familiar with many district interventions that other teachers failed to mention in the interviews. Gavin, another veteran teacher of 16 years, was also knowledgeable about the actions the district had employed to help minority students. Larry and Tony were aware of some district actions because they participated on committees that tried to resolve some the minority issues the district was trying to address. Yet other teachers replied that the district had not really taken any action to help minority students. The discrepancy in answers may be attributed to the lack of or unclear communication concerning the availability of programs and services offered at each school. This breakdown in communication may have occurred at the district level or building level. It is important that the district educate its teachers about the programs and services provided at each campus.

Attendance and Behavior Referrals for African American Students

African American students in University Town, like other African American students attending American public schools, are disproportionally being referred for behavior and attendance issues. The interviews of district employees revealed this was an area of concern for the district. PBS and a family resource liaison were a few of the supports put into place to rectify these problems. The interventions employed by the district have not been successful enough to undo this phenomenon. Other tactics, such as culturally competent school practices, are necessary to try to correct this concern.

Recommendations

The findings from this study and the literature review support the following recommendations:

Diversity Training Emphasizing Culturally Responsive School Practices

Not all schools in the district have been affected by the changing demographics. As boundaries for school attendance zones are redrawn to accommodate new schools and citations by the state concerning some schools that have high numbers of free and reduced lunch recipients and racially isolated schools, more schools in the district will be affected by a changing population. Proactive measures such as professional development can help ensure better classroom practices to enhance minority student achievement. This training should

include cultural factors that may affect student learning and the application of culturally responsive school practices. The district allows time every Thursday for professional development; some of this time should be utilized for cultural competency training. The components of the cultural competency in-services should follow guidelines described in the literature.

Expert Speakers

Expert speakers should be brought in to foster discussions of culture and race as they relate to learning. Educators must understand the role that culture plays in learning in order to effectively educate all students. Culture molds cognitive development, students' behavior toward academic tasks, and behavior in an educational setting (Hale-Benson, 1982). Experts and local university professors should be brought in on in-service days to educate teaching staff concerning the role that culture plays in learning and to help facilitate discussions on race, culture, and learning. A willingness to assign learning strengths and weaknesses based on culture was not present in the interviews. If teachers are not aware of students' learning strengths and weaknesses, lessons capitalizing on those strengths and a focus on improving areas of weakness are not occurring in classrooms.

Another area of concern is the achievement of minority students. While the teachers interviewed spoke positively of the academic capabilities of their students

this belief is not universal. An examination of the cultural gap between White teachers and their minority students should be an area of focus for the district.

A fear of being perceived as racist or making generalizations seems to have prevented teachers from openly discussing race, culture, and learning. While generalizations and stereotypes are usually harmful, in this case these generalizations can help raise awareness of how students learn based on their culture as long as teachers recognize they are stereotypes and do not apply generalizations to all students. The hesitancy to openly discuss race and learning hampers the learning of students of color. Gay (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) argued that culturally responsive classroom teaching practices teach to and through the strengths and knowledge and prior learning experiences of students. Hence, if teachers are not participating in a discourse of students' learning strengths and prior experiences, it would appear that students are not fully engaged in learning. If district teachers are to practice culturally responsive teaching methods, an examination of cultural strengths and weaknesses needs to occur. In addition, White teachers need to be able to discuss psychological, language, and social issues that affect minority students.

Teacher Exchange Programs

Teachers were very clear on the help they thought would be beneficial to their knowledge and instruction of minority students. Hollie and Kate both felt that

teacher exchange programs would help teachers gain an understanding of the school culture, curriculum, and environment from which inner-city kids were coming. Other teachers expressed that they wanted to know more about what their students' lives were like before moving to University Town. Teacher visits or exchange programs would provide opportunities for teachers to gain the kind of information teachers want about their students. Multiple teacher exchange programs or visits would be required to gain the knowledge necessary to fully understand the community, home, and school experiences of minority students moving into the district from inner-city neighborhoods.

By gaining this information, teachers can better relate to their students and understand the experiences and culture they bring with them to their new schools. Additional benefits from teacher exchange programs and/or visits to inner city schools include providing teachers with information pertaining to the types of knowledge and experiences their students bring with them into the classroom and, hence, incorporate into the classroom.

Student and Parent Panels

One teacher wanted to learn what help students needed from the schools. A panel comprising students and parents should be formed to provide information as to what district interventions are needed and which ones are currently working as well as which ones need improvement. Without speaking and listening to students

and parents, it is hard to gauge what inner-city families need to help their students be successful in school.

Increased Focus on Parent Involvement

One element of culturally responsive school practices includes parent involvement (Delgado-Gaitain, 1991). Parents are the most influential factor in most children's lives; as such, schools should encourage parent involvement in their children's education. One ways in which some schools involved in this study have tried to involve parents in schooling at the elementary level was by hosting a parent night at which dinner was served and parents were taught how to help their children with homework. One school provided in-service training to teachers to educate them about how to get parents involved in school with their kids. This push should be reflected at elementary, junior high, and high schools across the district.

College Mentors

The school district is located in a university town and should take advantage of the benefits such a location affords its schools. College mentors already exist at the junior high schools for the purposes of after-school tutoring. College students can do more to help all local schools. Student organizations such as sororities and fraternities could be utilized to introduce junior high and senior high school students to college life. Black and Hispanic organizations could volunteer at local schools to serve as positive academic role models for students.

District-directed Communication to Local Media

Additional information about state tests and what counts toward federal labeling as well as what does not, in addition to performance of district students on state tests, needs to be explained to community members. Interviewed teachers were upset by the lack of effort by the district to help change negative community perceptions of their schools. The district could undertake proactive measures to educate the community via school newsletters, the local district TV channel, and local papers about how schools are labeled, what is measured, and what is not. A further explanation of test scores from students who have been in the district for three or more years versus a more transient population is needed. The district could also publish scores showing growth of students from year to year. Information concerning test scores disseminated to the public could have a two-pronged effect: 1) dispel many negative views community members have of certain district schools and 2) make teachers feel supported by the district.

Potential Beneficiaries Of This Study

The biggest recipients of this study would be the students who benefit from actions that target specific populations to enhance their academic achievement. The UTCSD is at the beginning stages of initiating its cultural competency component of its grant. The district has already requested that this researcher present at a district meeting concerning the teachers' needs in the district. An evaluation of teachers'

needs in regard to training and in-services could be useful for the district. School districts could also evaluate diversity training for school staff so that teachers gain knowledge and classroom practices that enhance their classroom instruction of minority students. Perhaps in-services and teacher training will become meaningful and relevant for classroom teachers.

Limitations

Several limitations existed in this study. Studies that involve race can be a sensitive subject for many people. Sensitivity to race prevented interviewees from commenting on learning/race issues, further demonstrating this limitation. The respondents interviewed agreed to be interviewed. They were willing to talk about race and how the district has been affected by the changing student population. Most teachers were passionate about their populations and taught in schools that had been labeled SINOA, and the schools in this study have been perceived negatively by some community members. The respondents clearly wanted to be heard and voice their opinions on the changes occurring in their schools. Many teachers chose not to be interviewed. In addition to the time factor, teacher unwillingness to be interviewed could be because of the nature of this study and the resistance to talk about issues that are sensitive to the district as well as the community. Another reason some teachers may have refused to be interviewed could be because they harbor negative perceptions about the new student

population and may not want to appear racist. Teachers could also fear reprisals in their job for speaking frankly on an issue that is such a controversial topic.

A second limitation to this study is that this study was conceived and carried out through the lens of a White, middle-class teacher. The author is from Appalachia, a culture perceived negatively by much of America and the American media, and had parents who lacked the social capital to afford the author opportunities provided other students. Although the author, as such, can relate to minority students, the author does not share students' struggles as a minority or the struggles that accompany a lower socio-economic class.

A further limitation to this study is that all but one interviewee was White. White teachers and administrators are trying to implement strategies that affect a minority population. Little input came from a person of color. The issues discussed in this study are viewed from a White perspective. White educators were having a conversation about race and issues that accompany race without the input of the people who were the topic of this study. As such, conversations may have been limited due to lack of knowledge about racial/cultural/social issues that affect minorities. An additional effect of White educators discussing issues that pertain to race is that educators may not have been as open or honest about issues for fear of being perceived a racist. A final effect of this study is that the results of this study may change if the researcher were a person of color.

An additional limitation to this study is that the researcher lives and works in the community and school district studied. There may be unknown biases that may have affected the study. Furthermore, teacher respondents may have been more open and willing to discuss issues with a colleague.

Need For Further Studies

From this study eight areas for further studies are suggested. These are discussed here.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Value of Culturally Competent School and Classroom Practices after Completing UTSCD's Grant

How cultural competency training is addressed by UTCSD over the span of the four-year grant is an area for further study. An ethnographic study of actions the district takes over the course of the next four years should be undertaken. The topic of in-services, speakers brought in to discuss cultural competency, and an evaluation of the monies spent on culturally competent training, curriculum materials, and additional professional development should be explored. Issues that focus on race should also be investigated. Such issues include; minority researchers' perspectives, minority family values, studies interviewing minority students and studies of how White teachers talk about race and why.

A Continued Study of UTSCD's Four-year, Renewable Grant

The cultural competency component should be studied to explore if the actions undertaken over the next four years have an impact in raising African

American test scores, improving attendance and behavior issues, and increasing enrollment into advanced placement courses as well as two- and four-year colleges. An examination of data would yield this information.

Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Cultural Competency Component of the Grant

The need to ask the questions previously identified is related to the actions the district has taken and will continue to undertake to help its changing student population and teachers' perception of those actions. Another area that could be explored is teachers' classroom practices. Are teachers' classroom practices culturally relevant to their student population? A review of literature suggests a number of classroom practices that are inclusive of minority populations (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The literature also suggests that, for students to learn, they must build on what they already know (Caine & Caine). Ultimately, teachers must buy in to a concept to implement it into their classroom. Not all teachers feel culturally relevant practices are necessary to effectively teach minority students. Which teachers are practicing culturally responsive teaching, which are not, and why? Extensive classroom observations would be useful in examining this area.

Further study is needed concerning the teaching materials teachers are using in their daily instruction. Are they inclusive of all populations? It is important for students to see their cultures represented and valued in schools (Hale, 1994). Are the materials district supplied or do teachers have to bring in their own resources to

help supplement existing curriculum material? The district administrators are trying to streamline its curriculum throughout the district. Does it require diverse material? District-mandated curriculum material at all schools would require teachers to use multicultural learning tools. A study of each of the three levels—elementary, junior high, and high school—would need to occur to determine the curriculum practiced.

Another area of study should include the disparity of responses in regard to willingness to discuss behavior issues as they relate to race and culture, but the hesitancy to openly discuss learning as it relates to race and culture. Why did this disparity occur? Perhaps teachers feared stereotyping or generalizing their student populations. Another more important reason would be the fear of being labeled a racist. What factors contribute to the resistance to speak frankly and assign learning strengths and weaknesses based on race and culture? Students do learn based on culture; the resistance to recognize this fact is counter-productive to student achievement. The work of Hale (1994) and Delpit (1995) cited the ways in which culture affects student learning. If district-directed open discussions and training were provided to teachers, perhaps this issue would not be so taboo. The local university has professors who teach classes pertaining to this topic and could be a valuable resource in teacher training and providing a forum in which teachers are not afraid to speak honestly about these issues.

To improve on this study of district actions to accommodate minority populations and teachers' perceptions of those actions, a more in-depth study should examine teacher reactions to their changing population and how they perceive the effect of the changing student body on their schools and classrooms. The literature indicates that schools' beliefs and practices affect students' academic performances (Nieto, 1999). The interviews provided examples of teachers who pointed out positive changes that have occurred because of the new student population. The research supports that teachers who have high opinions of their students have students who perform better than those teachers that have negative views. After examining teacher perceptions of students, a review of their students' performance over the year would be worth researching to determine if the findings are congruent with the literature.

Another improvement to this study concerns professional development in the district. Further examination of professional development as it relates to diversity issues and how professional development is implemented and received by district teachers should be conducted. The district has already implemented some culturally responsive practices, such as basing professional development on the needs of the school. The literature outlines components for effective culturally responsive professional development (Farr, 2005).

Studies that Focus on Race

One final improvement to this study would be to include research that focuses on students and their parents. Researchers of color should undertake some of these studies. It is important to have the perspective of minorities when discussing racial issues. The insight and the way White teachers discuss race may provide different viewpoints and results to the same study.

Additionally, an exploration of family values would help to improve the experiences of their students in school. Are parents' values congruent with school values? Are values that are not aligned with school values hampering the education of minority students? Furthermore, what are their perceptions of their children's teachers, curriculum materials, diversity issues, and district programs and services within the school?

Studies that involve the perspective of minority students should be investigated. What do students think of their teachers, school policy and curriculum? Do they perceive they are treated and educated fairly and equitably? What improvements would they suggest? The students are the ones that are ultimately receiving the education, positive or negative and hence; their input is significant in that it is their lives that are affected by their education. It is important that students and parents of color be included in any conversation that affects them.

Lastly, studies of how White teachers talk about race and why should be explored. This study found a hesitancy to discuss race related issues. How comfortable do White teachers feel discussing race, what are the barriers to open discussions, how do teachers approach racial issues and use of the "N" word in the classroom and reasons for why are a few of the studies that should be investigated.

Conclusion

The demographics of the United States are changing and will continue to change in the future, while America's teaching force will continue to remain primarily White. How will school districts across the country deal with different cultures and experiences that teachers and students bring with them to classroom? Prominent researchers in the field of culturally competency maintain that culturally responsive school policy and school practices are necessary to successfully educate increasing number of minority students and help close the achievement gap.

The current study calls for further studies to determine how one school district will adapt to its changing population and how effective such actions will be for minority students. These studies might begin to identify barriers to culturally responsive classroom practices and frank discussions about race and learning as well as methods to help foster discussions concerning race and learning and help improve culturally competent district training for teachers. To add to existing literature, this study calls for an explorations of teachers and their beliefs of their

students, perceptions of the value of cultural competency and their classroom practices, and a look at diverse curriculum as provided by the district administrators or its teachers. Additional study will further add to existing literature by exploring whether the efforts regarding implementation of culturally competent practices by the district at the conclusion of four years have been successful in increasing academic achievement of African Americans and decreasing attendance and behavioral referrals.

As the population changes, it is crucial that schools examine teachers' beliefs and classroom practices as they relate to their student populations. Eleanor Roosevelt stated that, "Today we must create the world of the future." Our future is changing. An examination of how schools should change to meet the needs of their populations is critical not only for the academic success of students, but for our future.

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APPENDIX A – TEST OF BASIC SKILL (ITBS) AND TESTS OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ITED)

Schools in the University Town Community School District use a Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Tests of Educational Development (ITED) as an accountability and improvement measure at the district and building level in reading, math, and science in grades 4, 8, and 11. Students in the University Town Community School District post generally high test scores.

Table A1.

State and National Comparison Using Proficiency Biennium Data

		4th Grade	8th Grade	11th Grade
Reading	Univeristy Town	78.0	76.2	85.2
	State	78.8	72.1	77.1
	National	60.0	60.0	60.0
Math	University Town	74.9	79.0	85.5
	State	80.7	75.6	78.6
	National	60.0	60.0	60.0

Source: Department of Education Website (2008)

APPENDIX B – UNIVERSITY TOWN COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT REPORT

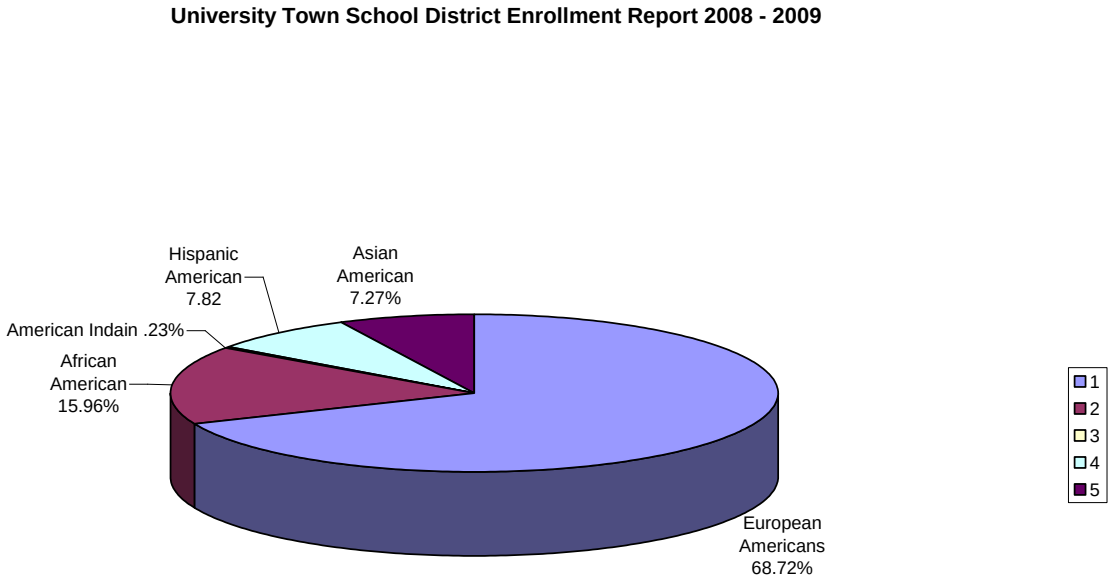

Figure B1. University Town School District Report 2008-2009

Note. The African American population represents the largest minority group. For the first time, Hispanic students make up the second largest minority group. Figure includes all K-12 resident, non-resident, regular education, and special education students and preschool students.

APPENDIX C – AFFIRMATION ACTION PLAN

The district is continually trying to diversify its staff to make it more reflective of the demographics of the student population that it serves. For the 2007-2008 school year, minority students made up approximately 31.0% of the total student population in the University Town Community School District (UTCSD). According to the district's 2006-2007 Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Plan, five hiring goals were established:

- 6% minority certified staff employees
- 10% minority support staff employees
- 20% male elementary teachers
- 50% female administrators
- 6% minority teacher applicants (UTCSD, 2008)

The district prides itself in hiring the most qualified applicants for open positions but, if all things are equal, the hiring process requires principals/supervisors to select the candidate that will move the district forward toward its hiring goals. The district employs approximately 1,660 staff members. As of October 1, 2008, the percentage of applicants and district staff are as follows:

- Total minority staff members: 7.0%
- Subgroups
  - Support staff: 11.9%
  - Administrators: 4.8%
  - Teaching staff: 3.6%
- Male elementary teachers: 14.9%
- Female administrators: 52.4%
- Minority teaching applicants: 4.4%

Given the district's reputation for educational excellence and its location, when teaching positions do become available, the pool of applicants is plentiful. However, the number of minority candidates that complete in the application process is very low. To be successful in meeting its minority hiring goals, the district has developed several strategies to attract more minority applicants. Expanding recruiting/advertising beyond the Midwest market, exploring ways in which to find resources for educational associates to receive their teaching degree, and pursuing the creation of future teacher student groups in secondary schools are three such strategies. If no highly qualified minority candidate exists for an open position, building principals seek candidates who have had life/work experiences working with diverse populations of students. Although the number of minority students has not increased, hiring a diverse staff is appropriate because it reflects the world in which the district's students live and work.

APPENDIX D – HAWK IRB APPROVAL

Summary | Project Details | Attachments | Research Team | Funding | REFs | Approval | Monitoring

IRB	IRB-02
IRB ID #	200811711
Title	University Town Community School District: Changing Demographics
Short Title	Changing Demographics
PI	Heather Kreinbring
Status	Open

Create Form
Modification/Update Form
Continuing Review Form
Modification/Update + Continuing Review Form
Reportable Event Form
Project Close Form

Subjects		**FDA**	
# Approved	33	IND Numbers	N/A
Minors	No	IDE Number	N/A
Pregnant/Fetus	No	HDE Number	N/A
Cognitively Impaired	N/A	Non-Significant Risk Device	N/A
Prisoners	No	Emergency Use	N/A
Review		**Other**	
Next Approval Due By	01/27/10	Certificate of Confidentiality	N/A
Closed to Accrual	N/A	IRB Authorization Agreement	N/A
		Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement	N/A

History

Form	Received	Agenda Date	Type	Status	Other Review
New	11/04/08		Exp	Approved on 01/27/09	Completed

 10/13/09 01:24:00

3.0.46

APPENDIX E – E-MAIL TO DISTRICT ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

From: Heather Kreinbring
Sent: Thursday, November 13, 2008 10:26 AM
To: Assistant Superintendent
Subject: Research

Hello,
I am doing some research for my dissertation on the district. I teach Basic English at Central and SPED at Suffolk and have a lot of students from the Chicago area and I'm interested in this population. I have included a paragraph from my proposal that sums up my research. I want to make clear this is an objective study and no conclusions will be made on how well the district or individual schools are performing or areas that need improvement. I am more concerned about the second part of the research that focuses on teacher efficacy and opinions regarding district interventions when dealing with minority populations. I feel that teachers are often left out of research studies. I would appreciate using you as a resource and having permission to interview teachers and administrators at George Wythe, Rolfe, Miriam Webster, and King. I know that each school is implementing different strategies so I would also like to interview administrators.
Thanks,
Heather

Reply

Heather,
It sounds fine. You need to go through the Cooperating Schools Program (I assume you are at UI) and seek approval from IRB since she has human subjects in her study. Once all paperwork is completed, please send to Patsy Eggert. Teachers will have the option to participate, we do not require teachers to be interviewed or complete surveys. It would be approved by the district.
Jeff

APPENDIX F – DISSERTATION PATSY EGGERT CORRESPONDENCE

Heather – thank you for a copy of the IRB approval form. As for your question about photos, I direct you to Melanie Nugent. If you are referring to the event this morning, I apologize for not responding until this afternoon.

Patsy Eggert

On 1/28/09 9:36 AM, "Heather Kreinbring" <Kreinbring.Heather@iccsd.k12.ia.us> wrote:

Hello,

I just wanted to let you know that I have finally received IRB approval for my research in the district pertaining to cultural competency. I have attached the approval form. I also would like permission to take photos of Friday's cultural competency dialogue.

Thanks,

Heather

APPENDIX G – TEACHER E-MAILS

Hello,
I am a teacher in the district as well as a Ph.D. student at the university. I am collecting research for my dissertation and am interviewing 3/4 & 5/6 grade teachers in the district. I think very often teachers are left out of the dialogue about events and policy that concern their classrooms. I am collecting teacher opinions about events occurring in the district. I would like to interview you, at your convenience, on your campus, concerning the changing demographics in the district. Of course, all interviewees and schools are not named and only I have access to participants. This research has been approved by Jeff Bond. If you would be willing to be interviewed just e-mail me back and we will set up a time for the interview (which will take about 30 min.) and send additional information. I would appreciate your input.
Thanks,
Heather Hyatt Kreinbring

APPENDIX H – TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe the changes in the student population during your tenure in the district.
2. Have these changes affected your classes? If so, how?
3. How has the change in student population affected the campus?
4. Describe any in-services you have attended that have addressed minority student needs.
5. Describe any experts who have addressed district meetings about minority students.
6. Describe any actions that the district has taken to help you teach minority students.
7. How do you feel about these actions? Were they helpful?
8. Describe your African American population.
9. Describe your average student.
10. Describe how incoming African Americans have acclimated to their new school environment.
11. Describe how African American students manifest positive/negative behaviors and attitudes.
12. Do these behaviors/attitudes differ from mainstream White students? If so, how?
13. Do you feel your curriculum utilizes minority authors, viewpoints, and history? Describe some lessons that include minority viewpoints.
14. What instructional classroom activity has the most impact on student grades?
15. Do you feel African American students have different learning strengths/weaknesses? Explain.
16. Describe any contact you've had with African American parents.
17. What training, if any, do you feel would be helpful to augment your knowledge concerning the education of minority students?

APPENDIX I – DISTRICT AND PRINCIPAL EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How has the changing student population affected your campus/district?
2. How has your campus/district dealt with the changing demographics?
3. Describe any polices or initiatives that were designed to help meet the needs of minority students?
4. What could the district do to support diverse student population?
5. What training has been provided to teachers to help enable them to better teach a diverse population in terms of budget, in-services, conferences, etc.?
6. Where do you see the district heading in regard to meeting the needs of diverse students?

APPENDIX J – ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOR

Attendance

The K-8 district average daily attendance for 2007-08 was 95.4%. The district met the state and federal goals for attendance.

Table J1.

Attendance according to Grade Level

Grade Level	Percentage of Attendance
Elementary	95.7
Junior High	94.1
Senior High	91.1

Graduates' Intentions

The class of 2008 was surveyed about postsecondary intentions, as summarized in Table J2.

Table J2.

Students' Postsecondary Intentions

Intention	Number of Students	Percent of Students
Post-Secondary	674	87%
Other Training, Employed, Military	33	4%
Unknown	69	9%

Graduation Rate

The percentage of students who graduated with a district diploma for the 2006-2007 school year was 91.9%, compared with the state graduation rate of 90.5%.

Thus, the district met the state goal. The range of graduation rates over the five-year period from 2003 to 2007 was 91.2% to 92.8%.

Dropout Rates

In 2007-2008, of the 2,077 7-12 students, 98 students (1.9%) dropped out during the school year—the same percentage as the prior year. The percentage of dropouts has increased slightly over the last six years from 1.3%. Compared to six years ago, 32 more students dropped out of school in 2007-2008.

The percentage of African American students who dropped out is disproportionate to the group's 7-12 enrollment percentage. African American enrollment increased from 660 students in 2006-2007 to 824 students in 2007-2008; the number of African American students who dropped out is the same as in the prior two years (i.e., 35 students). The number and percentage of IEP students who dropped out increased slightly.

Table J3.

Summary of Dropout Rates

Sub Group	Number of 7-12 Students	% of Total 7-12 Students	Number of Dropouts	% of Total of Dropouts
Male	2650	52%	56	57%
Female	2427	48%	42	43%
White	3592	71%	52	53%
African American	824	16%	35	36%
Hispanic	307	6%	11	11%
American Indian	19	0%	0	0%
Asian	335	7%	0	0%
With IEPs	806	16%	24	24%
Without IEPs	4271	84%	74	76%
Total	5077	100%	98	100%

Suspensions and Expulsions

The discipline report includes three types of data:

- 2007-2008 suspension data by trimester, which allows the district to monitor changes of data throughout the school year;
- Suspension data by specific categories that match data required by the State and those selected by the Board of Directors and administration. This report consists of only one year's data collected and analyzed over time. The categories were changed over the last two years, which has limited the analysis of district suspensions over time for this first year; and
- Police referrals, which reflect reports made to law enforcement by principals when they believe that a serious violation of a law may exist. Charges are determined by law enforcement and the county attorney and are not recommended by the principal.

Ninety-seven percent of junior high and high school students (junior high 97.6%; high school 96.8%) are not involved in serious offenses that result in out-of-school suspensions. The percent of students not involved in serious offenses has remained constant over the last seven years.

Drug-related, alcohol-related, physical fighting, disruptive behavior, weapon-related, and property-related data for 2007-2008 showed that, of the 3% of students involved in serious offenses, physical fighting and disruptive behavior resulted in the highest number of suspensions. The high schools reported significant decreases in fighting, from 56 student incidents in the first trimester to 12 each in the second and third trimesters. Decreases were also noted in the disrespect/insubordination offenses, from 95 in the first trimester to 38 in the third trimester. The junior highs reported decreases over the three trimesters in fights: 88 in the first trimester to 34 and 30 in the second and third trimesters, respectively. Decreases were also reported in the disrespect/insubordination offenses, from 93 in the first trimester to 48 in the third trimester. Elementary schools reported fewer fight offenses than the junior high and high schools, starting with 29 the first trimester and deceasing slightly. A similar trend is noted in the disrespect/insubordination category.

The 2007-2008 offenses in the twelve revised categories indicated that disrespect/insubordination recorded the highest number of incidents. The data divide physical confrontation into two categories—physical contact (not fight) and fight—in order to reflect fights more accurately. According to the data, physical contact (not fight) accounted for the second highest number of incidents. Bullying and harassment is divided into two categories: those that must be reported to the State because of the significant nature of the incident and those that do not meet the State standard because they are identified as lesser degrees of bullying and harassment. The district has only a few incidents that are significant and must be

reported to the State. The junior highs reported the highest number of non-reportable incidents among the three levels.

Two clarifications must be made of the revised categories data. The junior high schools use in-school suspensions more frequently because the district allocates staff for in-school suspension programs at the junior high level. The categories only report those incidents where in-school and out-of-school disciplinary action was assigned. Such data will under-report certain categories because lesser disciplinary actions may be assigned or the offender was unable to be identified. These categories include harassment/bullying, vandalism, and theft. Additional analysis of the 2007-2008 data shows:

- Of the 3% of the junior and senior high students who were suspended, 79% were involved in only one offense compared to 73% in 2006-2007, 82% in 2005-2006, 87% in 2004-2005, and 80% in 2003-2004.
- 135 students were suspended for more than three days in 2007-2008 compared to 88 in 2006-2007, 44 in 2005-2006, 28 in 2004-2005, and 57 in 2003-2004.
- There continues to be few property-, weapon-, alcohol-, or drug-related offenses.

Included in the out-of-school data are incidents in which students served some or all of their time in the off-site Transitions program. Students in grades 5-12 are the target population for Transitions. The Transitions program served 79 students (26 students fewer than in 2006-2007) for a total of 848 student days (57 fewer days than in 2006-2007). An average of 5 students per day served an average of 11 days. The lower number of students served is a result of the addition of the Conduct Disorder Classroom program. Of the 24 schools, 15 used Transitions for at least one student.

In addition to providing for students serving suspensions in a supervised setting, the program served students who required a short-term alternative setting while being transitioned from one special education program to another or from a residential placement. The program served students who were considered a safety risk in the building or who were waiting for an out-of-district placement.

The Conduct Disorder Classroom (CDC) was implemented in October 2007 and served 22 students who were involved in serious fights.

- Seven students were in special education and 15 in general education
- Six students successfully returned to their school
- One student returned to her school and was reassigned to CDC a second time
- Four students moved from the area

- Two dropped out of the CDC and enrolled in the UTCD Diploma program at Kirkwood Community College, where they received high school diplom**a**s
- Two students dropped out
- Seven have not successfully completed the program and will begin the school year at CDC

Physical aggression offenses are referred more frequently to law enforcement compared to other illegal offenses. Police referrals have decreased since the 2005-2006 school year. The decrease is attributed to the development of police referral guidelines and periodic meetings with law enforcement and the juvenile court system to monitor referrals.

Two expulsions occurred during the school year for weapons violations. A third expulsion hearing was cancelled when the student moved out of the district.