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Exploring Cultural Competence as a Best Practice in K-12 Public Schools

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS

EXPLORING CULTURAL COMPETENCE AS A BEST PRACTICE IN K-12 PUBLIC

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Twyla J. Baylor

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Exploring Cultural Competence as a Best Practice in K-12 Public Schools

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Abstract

Teachers should embrace cultural competence as classrooms become culturally diverse to ensure that the learning environment promotes inclusion. Teachers must explore instructional practices that connect to a student's background knowledge to engage and motivate learning. By building on the knowledge that a student has, teachers create an environment where students can experience academic achievement. "Teachers who create caring classroom cultures improve the overall learning experience (Tarbutton, 2018, p.5). The student's learning experience can also be the teacher's lived experience to determine the effectiveness of instructional practices utilized in the classroom. This study's findings revealed that K-12 public school teachers' ethnic background and lived experiences influenced the teacher's willingness to acknowledge cultural competence and view it as a best practice in the classroom.

Chapter 1

Teachers prepare for a new school year and reflect on their classroom structure and practices. Those practices can include classroom management practices and instructional practices. However, it has become evident that cultural competence should be included in those practices. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2022), of the nearly 50 million K-12 students enrolled in the fall of 2021, 22.4 million were white, 14.1 million were Hispanic, 7.4 million where black, 2.7 million were Asian, 2.3 were of two or more races, 0.5 million American Indian/Alaska Native, and 182,000 were Pacific Islander. These data provide evidence that cultural competence is relevant in education.

When teachers stand before classrooms filled with students from diverse backgrounds, they are responsible for engaging them through instruction, discussions, and activities. Taking time to reflect on their perspective of cultural competence could address unknown biases. Hidden biases create barriers and obstacles in a classroom with students from various ethnic backgrounds. Ethnic groups are defined as a "unity of persons of common culture and language or of common blood and descent" (Hamer et al., 2020, p. 31). A teacher's job is to encourage students to become well-rounded thinkers. "A teacher is among the components in education whose role is to produce quality students and to promote cultural understanding and tolerance in a multicultural society" (Sudirman, 2019, p.21). Teachers are responsible for creating an environment where students feel safe connecting their ethnic background to ideas and concepts and having open classroom discussions where students can express their thoughts. When teachers understand that connecting to a student's background can impact their

academics, they demonstrate cultural responsiveness (Lew et al., 2016). This can only be accomplished if teachers are open and flexible regarding cultural competence and cultural experiences. Embracing others builds bridges by dismantling walls. Elosua (2015) introduced "security in identity," which is knowing who you are while being open to understanding others and their journey.

A preservice teacher's perception of multiculturalism can impact their thoughts about engaging with students of various ethnic backgrounds (Kahn et al., 2014). Teachers who are willing to learn about diverse cultural traditions become learners with their students. When teachers learn about various cultures and their differences, they can begin to understand how to help their students appreciate their ethnic backgrounds while mastering curriculum content (Sudirman, 2019). Exploring opportunities to ensure all students have access to an equitable educational experience, regardless of their cultural background, promotes cultural competence (Asian 2018). Learning about other culture and learning from them can also encourage academic and social growth. Classrooms are filled with knowledge beyond reading a book or researching information online. Allowing students to share their ideas and lived experiences can encourage rich conversations, critical thinking, and constructive debates. Allowing students to have a voice by sharing their ideas opens the door for them to demonstrate their ability and knowledge. Ladson-Billing was asked, "What teachers in successful classrooms look like?" Part of her reply was, "Teachers focused on the kids' abilities not their disabilities. They have a very strong belief in the capability of children" (De Silva, 2018, p.25).

As teaching programs prepare future teachers to enter classrooms, new teachers recognize they are unprepared to meet diverse learning environments' demands (Yang &

Montgomery, 2011). Reiter et al. (2011) believe there is a disconnect in education because there is a continued challenge with teachers being prepared to facilitate diverse classrooms. Teachers have two purposes: teaching content for knowledge and encouraging their students to appreciate other cultures. Teaching requires dedication, effort, and openness to view things from a broader perspective. As teachers become receptive to cultural competence, they can explore how to incorporate it into best practice. "Teachers who are not aware of the effects of a cultural environment or context on the learning of students are not able to design an effective learning-teaching process" (Hutchinson, 2006, cited by Karatas, 2020, p.99). A teacher's understanding regarding managing a diverse classroom connects to their ability to engage with their students via their cultural background (Sleeter et al., 2011). The background knowledge of preservice teachers when entering a teaching program connects to their lived experiences. That knowledge can play a significant role in their perception and interaction. (Dedeoglu et al., 2011). Creating an environment rich in cultural acceptance provides an inclusive learning environment and opportunities to expand social skills and knowledge. When teachers embrace cultural competence and view it as a best practice, they open the door to global thinking for their students and themselves.

Chapter one will expound upon the need and benefit for teachers to embrace cultural competence as a best practice by addressing the problem of practice. It will also address the national, situational, and personal context of public-school teachers acknowledging cultural competence as a best practic

Problem of Practice

Cultural competence has become an important and controversial topic (Baylor, 2023, p.4). "The concept of cultural competence dates as far as the 1800s. However, it wasn't until the 1980s that a "concerted effort emerged in the social science field to promote cultural competence as a best practice in the delivery of health and social services" (Satterwhite and Teng, 2007, as cited in Carrizales, 2019, p.29). Although not mentioned, the educational system has also seen a need for cultural competence as a best practice. As classrooms become more diverse, administrators and teachers must adapt to a culturally diverse environment. Teachers must be culturally competent so they can embrace diversity in their classrooms and prepare students to live and work in a global economy/environment" (Macqueen, Reynolds, Ferguson-Patrick, 2020, p. 113). Educators who increase their knowledge about cultural competence can transfer that knowledge to a best practice that facilitates and promotes inclusion. "The ability to understand and respect other people, to develop a culture of interethnic relations and to adapt to the conditions of life in a multiethnic society is facilitated by multicultural education" (Sleptsova, Ushnitskaya, 2018, p. 126). The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to determine if cultural competence is viewed as a best practice in the educational system as it relates to classroom practice, interaction, and a teacher's perception.

National Context

Culturally diverse classrooms have become visible nationwide (Baylor, 2023, p. 4). Lehman (2017) stated that the diverse student population continues to exceed the number of teachers with diverse backgrounds. Yuan (2018) noted that public school teachers represented the white ethnic background. This finding was significant because this shows the lack of emphasis regarding teacher diversity in education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), the cultural demographics of elementary and secondary high school classrooms consisted of White, black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaska Native, and two or more unidentified cultures. The data showed that students of color comprised at least 75% of total enrollment in 2019. The students of color included "Hispanics (60 %), Black (59 %), and Pacific Islander (54 %) students attended public schools". The enrollment in 2009 showed Black students at 17 %, Hispanic students at 22 %, and Pacific Islanders with no representation (See Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 National Center of Educational Statistics
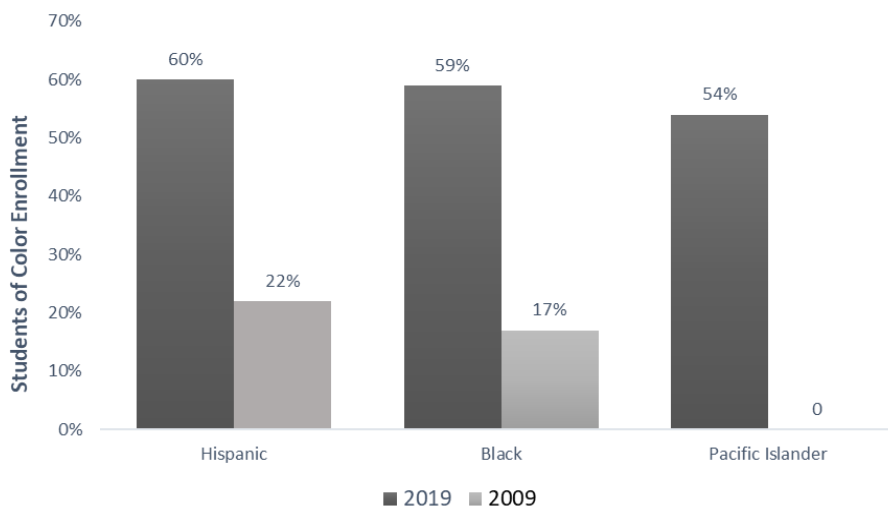
According to the 2019 census, which includes student demographics for public and private schools, 51% were non-Hispanic White students, 55% were Asian students, 25% were White students, and 15% were black students (See Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 2019 Census
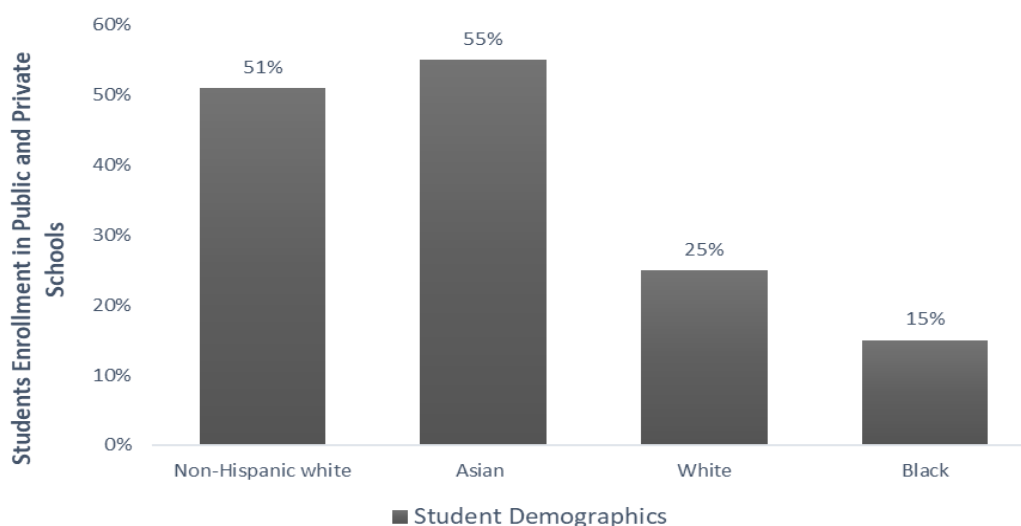
Although some cultures have higher representation, every student is entitled to have access to an equitable educational experience. Therefore, teachers are responsible for creating an inclusive environment. The need for cultural competence stretches beyond the national level. It has also become a global initiative. Educational systems in other countries also focus on cultural competence. Asian (2018) conducted a study in Turkey that focused on teachers' perceptions of multicultural education. The researcher wanted to know how teachers facilitate learning in a diverse classroom, what issues they encounter, and how they are addressed. Facilitating diverse learning will continue to be a complex issue. As nations, states, cities, and communities experience an influx of various cultures, schools will also continue to experience a cultural shift (Baylor, 2023, p.5).

Situational Context

The cultural demographics of classrooms can look different depending on the population demographics of a region (Baylor, 2023, p.5). According to data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in a midwestern state in the United States, student enrollment for the 2020-21 school year consisted of White, Pacific Islanders, Multiracial, Hispanic, Black, Asian, and American Indian students. The highest enrollment was White students, representing 69.6%. The lowest enrollment was Pacific Islanders and American Indian students, who represented 0.4 %. Asian students represented 2.1%, Multiracial students represented 4.9%, Hispanic students represented 7.2%, and black students represented 15.4%. When comparing the National Center for Education Statistics and data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in a midwestern state, the one noticeable difference is the representation of multiracial students in this midwestern state. The National Center for Education Statistics did not include multiracial students. Also, when comparing the numeric representation, White students are the highest number of students enrolled in a public school. Hispanic and black students have a more substantial presence than Asian, Pacific Islander, and American Indian students. Culturally diverse classrooms require culturally diverse teachers. Creating an open and comfortable environment where students can share their cultural background and learn about other cultural experiences promotes cultural competence. A culturally diverse environment can also foster opposing thoughts and engaging conversation topics relating to their cultural background.

The educational system has become a political target regarding diversity. With the stroke of a pen, an executive order halted DEI training in government agencies. The

Supreme Court recently ruled to dismantle affirmative action in higher education. According to the Associated Press, "they want institutions of higher education to look for new ways to achieve diverse student bodies." (Sherman, 2023, para. 1). By dismantling affirmative the opportunity to embrace and learn about cultural diversity diminishes. However, learning about diversity can also come in the form of literature. According to The Guardian, 30% of the banned books had characters of color and books that focused on race and racism (Creamer, 2023). Critical Race Theory and the 1619 Project have also been banned from being included during instruction. It was suggested that the material's content does not align with a state's law and educational value (Pend Harker, 2023). According to U.S. News (2023), a Midwest school district board decided to reinstate Black history courses after voting to have the classes removed. This decision was met with concerns from those opposing the decision. However, the decision did come with a revision to the curriculum. The board president and the superintendent stated that the curriculum will be "rigorous and politically neutral." Although this decision to reinstate the courses was favorable, the founder of the Missouri Equity Education partnership raised a concern. She stated that "Black history and Black literature cannot be taught from a 'politically-neutral' perspective because our entire experience in America has been impacted by sociopolitical movements" (Unknown, 2023). As obstacles and barriers continue to minimize cultural competence in education, advocates want to ensure cultural competence is incorporated into the educational system. For example, Oberty et al. (2023) stated that the Washington state senate passed a bill (Washington State Senate Bill 5433) regarding the teaching of "state tribal history."

As school districts grapple with the political fallout of cultural competence, a district in the Midwest decided to devote time and effort to promoting cultural competence in its policies and interactions. The leadership of this district hired an outside DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) consultant to lead this endeavor. They assembled a focus group that consisted of teachers and parents. Next, the consultant conducted student interviews. The interview consisted of thirty questions. The questions and responses were organized into seven categories: classroom culture, engagement, learning, sense of belonging, confidence, and comfort around race-related topics. The responses were recorded according to the ethnic background of the students. For example, the question was asked, "How often do you have opportunities to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, and cultures in your classes?" The results were recorded in the categories: almost never, sometimes, frequently, and almost always.

American Indian was the highest percentage for *almost never* (18%), Asian was the second highest (17%), Black or African American (9%), Hispanic or Latino (6%), and White (6%). Two more groups were identified as *other* (13%) and *prefer not to say* (17%). They also asked, "How often do your teachers include aspects of your identities and the communities you live in into your classroom? American Indians had the highest percentage, almost never followed by the Asian population. The two lowest were Black or African American (14%) and White (7%). The survey included other questions such as "How often do teachers at your school have important conversations about race even when they might be uncomfortable and "When there are major events in the world related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with students? American Indian students and Asian students had the highest percentage for almost never. The

initiative to address and promote cultural competence transformed into the district

creating anti-racist standards (see Table 1.1).

The district's mission for creating and implementing anti-racist standards is to

"maximize student excellence and social justice; the district is on its journey to becoming

an anti-racist organization that furthers educational equity for all students, especially our

most marginalized students." The anti-racist standards of this district can serve as a

model for other districts to ensure they provide an equitable and culturally competent

environment through best practices (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Anti-Racist Standards

Anti-Racist Standards	Description
1.Student & Family Empowerment & Rights	Family engagement that allows families to voice their concerns. Families also can connect with community and expand learning opportunities.
2. Student Development & Progress	Engage in listening to the students and determining their needs. Ensure that consequences are fair and free from racial profiling.
3. Communication, Dialogue, & Community Engagement	Establish the lines of communication for the well-being of the students.
4. Leadership	Leadership reflects the demographics they serve. They also focus on training that promotes practices free from creating possible obstacles towards students of color.
5. Teaching & Learning; Curriculum & Assessment	Provide culturally competent curriculums. Making sure that vendors understand their vision.
6. Policy, Governance, Procedures, Administration	Incorporating anti-racist language into the district policies.

7. Adult Learning & Recruitment	Equity in employing and retaining people of color. Provide advancement opportunities. Evaluations are anti-racist.

Personal Context

As educators, it is essential for teachers to be culturally competent and to incorporate cultural competence as a best practice. However, if teachers are going to understand the cultural experiences of their students, they must be open to self-reflecting on their personal beliefs and practices. "Cultural and racial reflection is necessary for all teachers---even preservice teachers of color—because many preservice teachers of color have internalized, validated, and reified pervasive, counterproductive stereotyped about themselves and others" (Milner, 2006, p.356). Successful teaching only occurs when students feel comfortable, safe, and included. It is important to remember that culturally competent teachers must be strategic, thoughtful, and creative. Teachers must determine how to capture the attention of the students collectively. Cultural competence as a best practice will help teachers facilitate those characteristics. Teachers must know how to make relevant connections with their students through instruction (Ashokan, 2019). Connecting with students is essential to learning, participating, and creating an inclusive environment. They must be open to shifting their thinking, perspective, and action. "Teachers who are an important component of the school system, could increase the quality of the learning-teaching process if they are aware of the cultural experiences of students and the environmental conditions in which they grow" (Karatas, 2020, p. 99). When teachers understand their students' cultural experiences and environmental conditions, they can use that information as a foundation for embracing cultural competence as a best practice.

As an African American teacher, I see the need for cultural competence as a best practice in instruction and choosing appropriate material for the students. Although publishers consciously try to create culturally diverse material, there is still more work. A curriculum should have a universal theme, allowing all students to connect. However, if I want my students to grasp a concept and become critical thinkers, I must create a pathway that connects the information to their background knowledge. That background knowledge can be connected to the ethnic background. How teachers facilitate their classroom practices can determine how successful students are. If a teacher has limited knowledge about the content they are teaching, the students will have limited understanding. If teachers do not know how to reach their students, they risk giving them an inequitable learning experience. They must go the extra mile when planning lessons and delivering lessons. Students rely on teachers to make information clear and concise. The pathway to clear and concise instruction includes knowing your students and what instructional approaches work best. The approaches used in the classroom can have a positive or negative impact. Students learn differently for many reasons, such as learning styles, academic ability, and cultural background, which could include the culture of the household or community.

Although educators cannot wrap every learning style in one instructional moment, they can use best practices to encourage all students to participate and share how they view specific topics or concepts. Thinking about your students when planning lessons and activities is also essential. Cahapay (2020) conducted a study that focused on unpacking curriculum. "It is the connecting process that transpires between curriculum planning and curriculum implementation" (Cahapay, 2020, p.1). Unpacking the

curriculum allowed the teacher to determine how to present information to the students in a way that would produce positive results. Unpacking a curriculum also allows teachers to understand what they are teaching and choose the best approach. If teachers are required to teach for mastery and students are required to master concepts, teachers must think about their students beyond their academic ability. They must think about the ethnic and cultural background of their students. Cultural competence should be included in instructional strategies and how teachers communicate and interact with their students. A teacher's duty stretches beyond facilitating. They must ensure that students from every cultural background know and feel welcomed (Barrios et al., 2020). This is important because learning will be challenging if students are not welcome. As the classroom leader, teachers set the tone for the environment. Students need to see what embracing cultural differences looks like. They must also hear how to embrace cultural differences. Teachers must provide that model daily.

In 2018, I had a student take a leave of absence from school to visit her father's homeland in Liberia. I thought it would be a great learning opportunity for my students to observe and hear about the cultural differences of that country. With the administration's permission, I scheduled a time for the students to talk with the student using a social media site. This experience was enlightening and hopefully motivated them to want to learn more. Seeing a part of the world that looked so vastly different allowed my students to question why things are different in certain parts of the world. Expanding students' learning experience in the 21st century is essential because it can extend their thoughts beyond their local community. It can also motivate them to want to see the world and experience the beauty of various cultures one day. Alemu (2017) suggested that students

should be prepared to exist in a culturally diverse society. Macaluso (2022) conducted a study to determine "if immigrant students lived multicultural experiences provided them with the competencies necessary for successful participation in an interconnected world" (Macaluso, 2022, p. 33). The participants of the study were immigrants and non-immigrants. The results revealed that the immigrant students had more skill sets and knowledge to be successful in the global society than the non-immigrant students. As an educator, this is concerning because as I educate my students, I must be mindful that preparation goes beyond preparing them for the next grade or assessment. I am preparing them to be ready to enter a global society. Therefore, if teachers are going to be effective educators, they must embrace cultural competence and be willing to use this information to develop best practices.

As I watch the political landscape take an active role in determining what can be taught in schools as it relates to race, I find it disheartening. Learning about slavery and the contributions African Americans made to the United States should not be viewed negatively. Educators should be allowed to teach that not all people are viewed and treated equally. If an individual is not culturally competent, they are susceptible to misinformation. Therefore, teachers must be mindful of what they say and how they say it. Students should feel safe when expressing their opinions about topics that concern them. Ruiz Mesa et al. (2019) addressed this in best practice number four, explain why difficult dialogues are needed. Students can learn as they voice their opinions. This approach can also help teachers learn how to dialog with their students. If teachers approach a situation incorrectly, it could cause students to shut down.

Before becoming a teacher, I had the opportunity to travel to Durbin, South Africa. This experience enlightened me because it allowed me to see people who look like me but live differently. I was amazed at the cultural differences. Although our ethnic backgrounds were similar, the living conditions and educational opportunities differed. During this mission trip, I knew nothing about cultural competence; however, I knew how to listen and learn. Through listening and learning, I understood how to talk with the people I met without offending them or their culture. Years later, I returned to Durbin, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. This second trip was easy because I understood Durbin's culture. Approximately five years later, I went to St. Petersburg, Russia. It was vastly different, challenging my comfort level; however, I was willing to learn, and the experience was valuable. These experiences taught me a lot about myself as a person. I realized that I had to be flexible in my thinking, find common ground, value differences, and be willing to adjust and expand my intellectual growth. Those experiences have shaped me as an educator because I can reflect on them during instruction and class discussions. Teachers with a worldview perspective can encourage their students to view the world as an open classroom.

Conclusion

As teachers stand before a multicultural class, they must be able to relate to their students through instructions, discussions, and activities. Understanding cultural competence will allow teachers to serve their students holistically. However, this will require teachers to open their invisible knapsack to ensure no obstacles hinder them from connecting with their students. It is not enough to understand cultural competence; teachers must transfer that knowledge into best practices. They should be included in

instructional and non-instructional moments. Learning will not always come from textbooks; teachers can provide students with strategies to navigate challenging situations. However, if teachers want to provide insight for their students, they must seek to understand how to reach their students. That level of understanding will require them to understand their student's culture. Chapter two includes a literature review that explores cultural competence, best practices, instructional strategies/approaches, and activities. Chapter two will also include the epistemological stance and the theoretical frameworks that promote cultural competence as a best practice.

Chapter Two-Literature Review

The national and situational context shared in Chapter One provided evidence that the demographics of classrooms have continued to evolve. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) showed that students of color made up at least 75% of total enrollment in 2019. However, a classroom can only be culturally competent if the teacher is culturally competent. A teacher's willingness to embrace a culturally diverse classroom personifies inclusion and acceptance. The educational system cannot be viewed from a single cultural perspective. The objective of a culturally competent classroom is to prepare students to exist in a diverse society (Sleptsova1, 2018). As school districts continue to find the right approach, the Midwest urban school district mentioned in chapter one has taken proactive steps to ensure all students and staff have equitable access to advanced educational opportunities. Nonetheless, more work must ensure cultural competence is viewed and incorporated as a best practice.

Chapter two will focus on the theoretical framework and the epistemological stance for this study. It will also include a literature review focusing on cultural competence, best practices, teacher preparation, instructional approaches, and activities. It will conclude with a summary of the chapter and confirm the need for this study.

Theoretical Frames

The theoretical framework chosen for this study was culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy) encourages students to use their background knowledge to understand society from their cultural perspective (Flory et al., 2019). The purpose of creating this framework was "to address pervasive gaps in the educational experience" (Allen et al., 2017, as cited by Flory et al., 2019, p. 1320). According to Gadsden

Holliday (2021), culturally relevant pedagogy also includes strategies to facilitate academic improvements for marginalized students. However, Gadsden Holliday (2021) mentioned another approach for teaching in a diverse setting created by Geneva Gay. That approach is "culturally relevant teaching. Culturally relevant teaching is "defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002, as cited by Gadsden Holliday, 2021, p.34). Gadsden Holliday (2021) stated that this strategy was created from the perspective that when the educational background skillset is connected to the lived experiences of a student, they become more engaged. Although both frameworks focus on creating an equitable learning environment, culturally relevant teaching references lived experiences as a characteristic. Nonetheless, both frameworks fit this current study's scope because they can be utilized as a best practice.

Epistemological Stance

The researcher's epistemological stance for the current study was supported by this study's intentions to analyze the impact of K-12 public school teachers' ethnic background and lived experiences on embracing cultural competence as a best practice. Lived experiences defined through the lens of the study's literature is a collection of moments in an educational setting that allow the teacher to determine instructional strategies or approaches that will be equitable for students. (Shandomo, 2010; Beal, 2020; Gowindasamy, 2017). As classrooms become diverse, the teacher's knowledge of cultural competence should increase and their willingness to incorporate cultural competence as a best practice in their instructional strategies and lesson preparation. Viewing their students as individuals from different ethnic backgrounds and experiences

will positively impact the social and instructional climate and promote acceptance and inclusion. The atmosphere and tone of a school start with the teacher; therefore, it is essential to gain the teacher's perspective.

Cultural Competence

Although cultural competence is widely used today, it is not new. According to Carrizales (2019), cultural competence was referenced as early as the 1800's. It was incorporated as a best practice in the 1980s in the medical and non-medical fields (Carrizales, 2019). However, as classrooms become diverse, educational leaders embrace cultural competence to ensure that education is equitable for all students. Cooke's et al. (2017) suggest that cultural competence focuses on creating an environment where individuals can work together. Carnes (2019) stated when a teacher becomes culturally competent, their understanding and willingness to engage with those of a different cultural background increase. Landa et al. (2017) suggested that cultural competence begins with self-reflection to understand oneself. Linquis (2006) suggested that cultural competence is embracing differences and applying that knowledge to bring change. Macqueen et al. (2020) suggested cultural competence is evaluating one's perspective to address a broader issue. Villalobos-Buehner (2019) described cultural competence awareness as being mindful of key attributes that separate individuals based on their ethnic background and embracing those differences. However, Blackburn included those characteristics in one definition by stating that:

> "Cultural competence is the ability to recognise the significance of culture in
> one's own life and in the lives of others; and to come to know and respect diverse

cultural backgrounds and characteristics through interaction with individuals from

diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups" (Blackburn, 2020, p.230).

Cultural competence also embraces differences and rejects biases. According to Yang

(2011), cultural competence encourages individuals to be knowledgeable and mindful of

others and factors that oppose cultural competence. Therefore, cultural competence

begins with self-reflection, which can impact an individual's willingness to be open-

minded to accepting and valuing differences.

Best Practices

When teachers explore classroom management strategies or instructional

strategies, they often try to meet the needs of their students. However, can those

strategies be considered a best practice? Best practice is defined "as a method, technique,

or process that consistently provides superior outcomes compared to results achieved

through other means" (Bardach, 2011, as cited by Washington, 2021, p. 5). Washington's

(2021) study focused on the impact of "culturally relevant best practices" in different

educational settings such as adult education, correctional education, and higher

education. The study suggested that teachers and administrators who embraced cultural

competence supported their students by allowing them to navigate challenges

successfully. To embrace best practices, teachers seek to provide a safe environment that

acknowledges and accepts cultural differences. (Tarbutton, 2018). Therefore, best

practices are designed to create an environment where all students can thrive

academically and socially. Ruiz-Mesa et al.'s (2019) study focused on ten best practices

that can be incorporated in a collegiate setting. Each best practice can allow the teacher to

facilitate classroom discussions while enabling the students to take ownership of their

learning. (See table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Best Practice

Best Practice Number	Best Practice Title	Best Practice Description
Best Practice #1	Set the Stage	Give clear and concise directions to the class so they understand the expectations for the class. Provide a framework for learning new information by connecting it to the information they know.
Best Practice #2	Explain Why Difficult Dialogues Are Needed	Help students understand information that may be controversial but embrace the information for growth.
Best Practice #3	Create Ground Rules	Establish proper classroom etiquette as it relates to discussions. The students will also participate.
Best Practice #4	Model Disagreement with Ideas, Not People	Create an environment where all voices can be heard regardless of personal perspective. Listen with the intent to offer an opposing opinion respectfully.
Best Practice #5	Cultivate a Safe Space	Create an environment where constructive dialog can occur on difficult topics.
Best Practice #6	Inoculate Students Against Potential Trauma	Providing an opportunity for students to speak on world and societal topics.
Best Practice #7	Be Prepared to Intervene	Teachers interject themselves in a discussion to keep the discussion focused.
Best Practice #8	Defend Dissident Voices and Perspectives	The teacher keeps the classroom environment safe by not allowing a student to be singled out

		negatively because of their point of view.
Best Practice #9	Maintain Instructor Immediacy	The teacher ensures that the classroom environment remains safe for all students.
Best Practice #10	Facilitate Positive Classroom Closure	The teacher ensures that the environment remains inclusive and not divided or hostile after a classroom discussion.

Although these practices are not connected to incorporating cultural competence in a classroom, each practice can set the tone for an inclusive environment. Best practices are designed to create a pathway for success for students.

Teacher Preparation

Addressing the need for culturally competent teachers requires suggested solutions such as tools and training that can prepare them to meet the needs of a diverse classroom. The need to prepare pre-service teachers came because of the educational struggles of students and the lack of teacher preparedness to facilitate learning (Cherng et al., 2019). Effective teachers are well-prepared before being in the classroom (Celik et al., 2012). According to Cochran-Smith (2022), President Obama had an initiative called "Our Future Our Teachers." This initiative focused on teacher preparation at the federal level, not the state and local levels. The goal was to provide "federal resources" to schools that employed teachers from teaching programs that aligned with the policies of local, state, and federal agendas. Well-prepared teachers are the product of well-structured teaching programs. Therefore, preparation begins in university classrooms where preservice teachers receive initial training. Slanda et al. (2020) conducted a study on preservice teachers' training. For example, Slanda suggested that preservice teachers

should be exposed to credible instructional strategies to provide an equitable learning environment. Slanda et al. (2020) also suggested that teacher preparation programs should focus on how data can be used as an instructional guide.

Teachers need to be equipped with strategies, approaches, and resources to facilitate their classroom. Fenwick suggested that four factors align with a student's success. Those factors are "quality of resources, school conditions, curriculum, and teaching of that student's experience" (Fenwick, 2022, p.13). However, preservice teachers struggle with understanding how to facilitate an educational setting that is unfamiliar to them (Celik et al., 2012). Teachers who encounter ethnic backgrounds different from theirs may find it challenging in the classroom. (Brown et al.,2016). Equipping preservice teachers with tools and knowledge that can meet the needs of their students provides a pathway to success that benefits both the teacher and students (Uyar, 2016). When teachers understand the student's experience, they can begin to understand how their students learn. Planning lessons and interacting with students and families will become more purposeful. As classrooms become more diverse, teachers must understand how to create a culturally inclusive classroom. Yang (2011) suggested that culturally competent teachers are critical to a successful diverse classroom. "There is a demand for a special kind of teacher, the teacher capable of executing the social and professional impact of education and form, first of all, the personality of a new century, capable of creativity, self-realization" (Fakhrutdinova et al., 2020, p.84). Learning does not start in the classroom; it begins with teachers reflecting on and confronting ideologies that may hinder their success in the classroom. Gallavan (2005) stated that understanding your student starts with understanding your thoughts and ideas by opening your *invisible*

knapsack. When teachers become transparent by exposing hidden biases that impact how they perceive people differently, they can begin to embrace differences and change. "Preservice and practicing teachers benefit significantly from guided opportunities to learn more about themselves personally, professionally, pedagogically" (Gallavan, 2004; Kincheloe, 2003, 2004 as cited by Gallavan, 2005, p.36).

The National Education Association (2021) created an opportunity for teachers to engage in training focusing on cultural awareness and how it connects to cultural competence. They reflected on how cultural competence impacted their teaching practices and what strategies were utilized to encourage cultural competence (Hamdan et al., 2022). Allowing teachers to share how they perceive and implement cultural competence promotes reflective learning and constructive discussions. When teachers are encouraged to share their thoughts about cultural competence, they also can begin to understand the obstacles diverse students face (Taylor, 2010). Those obstacles can include students who do not complete their high school education, assessment results, and a high number of students in special education (Taylor, 2010). Brown et al. (2016) suggested that teachers from a different ethnic background than their students may perceive a student's actions from a negative perspective instead of viewing it through a cultural lens. However, obstacles can become obsolete when teachers believe they can positively impact their students' academic success (Ryan, 2006). Therefore, teachers who represent a cultural background different from their students can serve their students effectively by increasing their knowledge regarding diversity. The knowledge that the teachers receive can also be transferred to their students to inspire them to embrace differences (Vittrup, 2016).

Districts and higher education courses address cultural competence from a theoretical point of view. However, cultural differences can be understood by interacting with students outside the classroom. Keller (2019) mentioned how community engagement can be used as a tool that will encourage teachers to compare their experiences to their perspectives about cultural competence and their instructional approaches. Lewis et al. (2015) also suggested that teachers become involved in community service with their students. By doing this, teachers and students learn to appreciate their differences. Community service can also assist the teacher with facilitating their classroom instructions. When teachers understand their students, they create the right environment through management, and instruction becomes purposeful. Extending their preparation beyond the classroom can also be a helpful tool.

Successfully facilitating a diverse classroom can be challenging; proper training and preparation can minimize those challenges. Nonetheless, "School systems do not provide adequate professional development pertaining to cultural competence" (Gadsden Holiday, 2021, p. 37). When teachers are not trained sufficiently, teaching and learning are compromised. Lin et al. (2014) suggested that teachers who do not understand their students from a cultural perspective will not understand how to instruct them.

Ozturgut's (2012) study focused on the challenges new teachers face in multicultural classrooms and how teacher preparation programs choose to address those issues. Parker et al. (2017) study focused on the Cultural Inquiry Process (CIP). This approach focuses on determining if a student's behavior connects to their cultural background. During the process, the teacher collects data about the student. That data is used to create an intervention for the student. Although CIP is not an instructional

approach, the article suggests that it can be a tool to support a culturally diverse classroom.

The social part of cultural competence includes creating an environment within the four walls of your classroom where students feel like they are a part of something bigger and do not feel left out. Creating that environment requires teachers to know their students beyond their assessment performance. "Cultural differences can contribute to the students' learning progress; knowledge of his or her culture will help in understanding their thought process" (Daniel & Hoelting, 2008, cited by Mendoza, 2017, p. 2). Building a cohesive environment can be beneficial for the students and the teacher. "The profound impact of teacher quality on student learning requires our attention more than ever as the student population has continued to change" (Lin et al., 2014, p. 28). Preparing teachers to manage a diverse classroom requires reflecting on their perspective of cultural competence and how their personal perspective can impact your teaching and interaction.

Instructional Strategies

As teachers try to create inclusive classroom environments, some strategies may not be used during classroom time. Shandomo (2010) discussed an instructional strategy called "reflective teaching" (p.103). Reflective learning encourages teachers to analyze a particular moment, possibly while instructing or interacting with students. During reflecting, they explore other ways of instructing or interacting with their students. Teachers who choose not to engage in reflective teaching fail to see flaws in their thinking. They also may unconsciously assume that their students understand the concept being taught. Choosing the right instructional strategy can have a long-lasting impact on students' success. Understanding the students from a cultural perspective can benefit the

teacher and students. When teachers use their students' cultural backgrounds, they become invested in their learning. It is also beneficial for the teachers to encourage the students to participate in selecting creative instructional approaches (McBain, 2018). This approach can also positively impact the students by giving them an active voice in their learning.

Beal (2020) conducted a study focusing on a preservice teacher assisting a young African American girl with reading. She used reading material that included African American characters to ensure the student would be engaged. Connecting a student's cultural background during instruction can engage them and create a bridge to information that may be challenging. Diverse classrooms require teachers to explore nontraditional strategies. Wang (2018) suggested that students who engage in learning a second language should be encouraged to embrace that culture. By embracing and understanding the culture, learning becomes less challenging. Encouraging students to explore new things can promote critical thinking and open the students' minds to embrace something new. Academic achievement for culturally diverse students is achievable when instructional approaches are culturally relevant (Vakil et al., 2021). Therefore, teaching requires reflection, instructional modification to meet the moment, and a willingness to self-critique.

Jackson et al. (2017) conducted a study regarding facilitating mathematics from a cultural perspective that addressed equity. Jackson suggested that equity in mathematics provides a pathway for students to engage in learning at a higher level while dismantling the traditional way of learning. Jackson also suggested when students make cultural connections they are encouraged to tap into their prior knowledge. One of the

participants stated that "cultural identity is very important to everyone, and to incorporate that into your mathematics instruction is to engage students on their personal level" (Jackson & Jong, 2017, p. 73). Through engagement, teachers can make a connection while allowing the students to explore other cultural backgrounds for in-depth class discussions. Tural & Cubukcu's (2011) study focused on "intercultural awareness." This strategy used stories to connect to the student's cultural backgrounds.

Teachers seek to understand how students process information (Ismajli et al., 2019). Therefore, understanding how students learn and what interests them is information that can assist teachers (Ginja et al., 2020). This information can provide insight into choosing an instructional strategy/approach. Although Tomlinson (2017) did not focus on cultural competence, she introduced the concept of "complex instruction." Complex instruction can promote cultural competence by encouraging students to use their background knowledge to learn new information through critical thinking. (Tomlinson, 2017). Tomlinson also uses growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), which encourages students to be open-minded to receiving added information. Complex instruction and growth mindset can be valuable tools to help students expand their thinking about academic information and issues that focus on cultural differences.

Activities

Just as teachers think about culturally competent instructional strategies, the activities also require a culturally competent theme. Activities allow students to apply their knowledge independently or collaboratively. Choosing appropriate activities that will challenge students to think on a broader level is the duty of teachers (Ismajli et al., 2019). However, not all activities will be tangible; some will require students to engage

in a cognitive process. For example, Gowindasamy's (2017) study explored the "reflective development model." Although used in a collegiate environment, the reflective development model can engage the students to work on developing cultural competence from a personal perspective while learning how to interact with others from diverse cultural backgrounds in education and the work force utilizing "reflective learning" (Gowindasamy, 2017). Reflective learning allows the students to reflect on their experiences using four stages: awareness, experiences, reflection, and assessment. Awareness encourages students to identify their internal level of cultural competence (Deardoff, 2016, as cited by Gowindasamy, 2017). The experience motivates students to explore other cultural experiences by leaving what is familiar or routine. The students also become insightful and aware of other cultural differences (Feng, 2016, cited by Gowindasamy, 2017). Reflection was described as the "most challenging." The students are encouraged to determine similarities and differences. The last stage in the reflective learning process is assessment. This stage focuses on students being culturally aware through social skills and developing their ability to think in-depth about cultural competence (Morris et al., 2014, as cited by Gowindasamy, 2017).

As the reflective development model allows students to use their background knowledge as a tool for learning, "cultural literacy" is an activity that can further a student's reading experience by appreciating culturally rich information without having a biased opinion. (Damaianti et al., 2017). Cultural literacy encourages students to become grounded in cultural integrity by opening the door for them to understand past events. It also encourages "critical literacy." Through critical literacy, students determine the facts by analyzing information. Critical literacy also promotes an open mind and not

expressing your thoughts until sufficient evidence is gathered (Damaianti et al., 2017). Making cultural connections when choosing activities is critical to engaging a diverse classroom. Students can tap into their background knowledge to bring understanding and clarity. It can also promote collaborative conversations that increase students' knowledge and social skills. Vitali (2016) mentioned another reading activity called "story telling." This activity was used in a teaching program. Storytellers presented their stories orally; however, to ensure they were structured academically, they were guided by preservice teachers. Nonetheless, it is a tool that can engage students while creating an inclusive environment.

Creating connections within a classroom does not take away from the learning objectives to be mastered. Using cultural connections can impact a student's ability to understand and master a desired objective. For example, another activity that can be utilized in the classroom is "efficient comprehension." This strategy enables students to use their prior knowledge or background knowledge while reading (Wang, 2018). Encouraging students to use their prior knowledge can be a powerful tool because it can motivate students to question why an author wrote a certain way and encourage comparing their perspective to the author's or characters' perspective in a story. Efficient comprehension can encourage students to talk openly about cultural themes with peers. It can create a visual image for students to understand how characters change and impact a story (Fenny et al., 2020). The students can also obtain insight and clarity about the characters through mentalization and text-to-self connections.

Although reading is a tool used to promote cultural competence, written expression is also a tool. Manoharan's (2020) study focused on reading and writing. She

introduced diversity in cultural backgrounds and disabilities. Exploring cultural diversity and disabilities can create a complicated environment. Manoharan was able to use writing and reading to learn various writing styles. It also allows students to share their thoughts about their community using a story or passage. As students make those connections, they can explore reading from various perspectives.

Feeney et al.'s (2020) study focused on helping students use "intercultural communicative competence" (ICC) using short stories with cultural themes. "ICC is defined as having the skills and mindset to effectively communicate, interact, and appreciate different cultures" (Barrow, 2023, p.3). However, Lazar (2020), as cited by Fenny et al. (2020), stated that ICC also includes interacting with other cultures and understanding cultural characteristics. Intercultural communicative competence has five dimensions: interpreting and relating skills, discovery and interaction, knowledge, intercultural attitudes, and critical cultural awareness. Interpreting and relating skills involve understanding how someone may think or feel from a cultural point of view. Intercultural attitude is the ability to apply the knowledge learned from another culture. It also displays a sense of appreciation and gratitude regarding other cultures and a willingness to embrace differences (Vos, 2018, as cited by Fenny et al., 2020). The five dimensions work in correlation with selected reading to increase cultural awareness and academic progress (Fenny et al. 2020)

Just as reading and writing present opportunities that can facilitate culturally competent lessons, math can achieve the same goal. Gok (2020) conducted a study regarding math being taught using games. University students created the games. Gok determined that the structure of one game was connected to the "Chinese remainder

theorem." Chinese remainder theorem is a concept based on skip counting by a certain number, producing a remainder. This method was also called the "secret calculation" in ancient China" because it was used to put soldiers in a particular order to keep the enemy from knowing the actual number of soldiers (Ding, Pei, & Salomaa, 1996 as cited by Gok[1], 2020). This game was played in a village by those who did not have a mathematical foundation.

Nonetheless, their ability to play the math game created using CRT proves that making a cultural connection, even in math, can benefit all learners. Although this method was unconventional, the approach to teaching math by incorporating a cultural connection was successful. Cultural connections can be implemented in any instructional approach, curriculum, or activities. However, teachers must determine the best resources for their classroom environment.

Cultural competence is an issue that will continue to evolve in the educational system. How new and veteran teachers are prepared to meet the challenges of a diverse classroom environment is a question that will have many answers. Fakhrutdinova et al. (2020) suggested that teachers need to be unique in understanding how to reach their students through creativity. This level of creativity goes beyond their academics. However, creativity is an evolution because each student within the same culture is unique. Before determining how to reach the students, self-reflection will encourage teachers to examine their thoughts regarding cultural differences. Through self-reflection, teachers can understand how their thoughts can impact their ability to facilitate learning in their classroom successfully. As teachers become self-reflective, they also engage in reflective learning, encouraging them to share their thoughts.

Instructional strategies are a vital component in any classroom. How students receive information can determine their ability to understand and apply information independently. Instructional approaches are designed to facilitate learning information; however, as Gadsden (2021) stated, describing culturally relevant pedagogy (CPR) requires including the student's background knowledge. Instructional approaches also ensure that learning is equitable for all students. Facilitating learning in the classroom is the responsibility of the teacher. Therefore, understanding what works and does not work encourages teachers to engage in reflective teaching. When teachers decide not to embrace reflective teaching, obstacles and challenges will arise. Providing culturally competent instruction requires exploring all areas of differences, social interaction, family values, and language.

As teachers explore instructional strategies, it is also beneficial for students to ensure that the selected strategies are considered best practices. Therefore, choosing instructional strategies will continue to be a high priority for teachers as they seek to mee the needs of their students collectively.

Literature Overview

When teachers consider instructional strategies or activities to facilitate those instructions, ensuring the activities include all students and connect to the lesson content is crucial. However, activities do not always need to be pencil and paper. Activities can be non-tangible for all ages. The challenge is knowing when to incorporate tangible and non-tangible activities. For elementary students, the reflective development model may be overwhelming because it requires an elevated level of critical thinking. However, reflective learning is an activity that younger students could engage in because it

encourages them to pull from their background knowledge as a beginning activity that can be the building blocks for the other components. Cultural literacy is one activity that can be used for students of all ages because it uses reading literature.

The literature can be age, grade, and learning level appropriate. Although reading can facilitate cultural competence, Manoharan's study focused on writing. It was suggested that writing encourages students to share their thoughts. Even though writing can be a reflective activity for students, one concern would be how this activity can be modified to meet the needs of students who speak English as a second language, students who struggle with writing, and students with a disability. This question will require teachers to understand their students' cultural backgrounds and learning styles. For students who are visual learners, how do teachers meet their needs in a diverse classroom? Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) suggests using short stories with cultural themes. It visually represents cultural differences in a brief and to-the-point story.

Although each researcher had a different name for their approach to embracing cultural competence, the recurring focus points were self-reflection, cultural background, background knowledge, and differences. Teachers who engage in self-reflection and fully embrace how their thoughts impact their ability to present culturally competent lessons can provide an equitable learning experience for their students. Allen et al. (2017) also stated that preservice teachers must self-reflect to understand how racial inequalities can impact certain cultures. For example, reflective teaching encourages teachers to reflect on an instructional moment and consider adjusting their approach if needed. This benefits the teacher and students because it may be challenging to think about pivoting during

moments of instruction. However, reflective teaching allows teachers to reflect personally and make future changes. Connecting a lesson to a student's background can increase engagement and encourage students to build on their knowledge. For example, Gok's (2020) study focused on a concept used in the Chinese military that influenced a math game. This is significant because it shows that cultural background knowledge can be a powerful tool even in a non-educational setting.

Conclusion

Cultural competence will continue to shape the landscape of education. However, for educators to understand how to incorporate cultural competence into their daily routines, they must first understand what cultural competence is and what a culturally competent environment looks like. The first step is teacher preparation to address any misconceptions and biases that hinder progress. Although teachers are the direct recipients of teacher preparation, students do benefit from teachers being sufficiently trained. As Yang (2011) suggested, culturally competent teachers are key to a successful diverse classroom. They set the tone for the culture of the classroom. But, as Gallavan (2005) stated, if teachers are going to understand their students, they must first understand who they are. Therefore, it starts with the teacher's perception of cultural differences, which creates a connection or disconnect between the teachers and their students.

As Gadsden (2021) suggested, culturally relevant pedagogy provides an equitable pathway to academic success for marginalized students. Although instruction and activities are different approaches to facilitate learning, they do connect. Activities allow students to express their thoughts and apply what they have learned independently or

collectively with their peers. Therefore, creating or choosing activities requires teachers to think about their students holistically. For example, Damaianti's (2017) study focused on cultural literacy. Not only does it address reading, it also encourages students to embrace rich literature in a cultural context. It also promotes critical thinking. As teachers explore to find instructional strategies and activities for their classroom they must know their students. Lesson planning in a diverse classroom will require teachers to look beyond the curriculum objectives. They will have to think about how to engage their students as a collective body while ensuring the students' individual needs are being met. Although a strategy or activity may appear to be a good choice in theory, teachers must determine how it will impact their students. Hence, teachers must know their students beyond their academic ability. Teachers will also have to explore best practices with the understanding that what worked in the past may not work in their current setting.

Chapter three includes the study design, the setting of the study, and demographic data about the participants. It will also include the research questions and instruments used to collect data. Lastly, chapter three will consist of the data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and threats to validity and dependability.

Chapter 3 – Methodology and Analysis Procedures

Chapter two provided the theoretical frames, epistemological stance, and research-based literature to support this study. The literature review provided in-depth insight into defining cultural competence, best practices, and how it can be applied in instructional strategies and activities. Chapter three describes the setting, participants, and the role of the researcher. It will also provide data sources, collection methods, and analytical strategies for analysis. The data collection methods were chosen for this study because they provided a visual picture of how K-12 public school teachers think about cultural competence from an educational perspective. The methods also provided a visual picture of how teachers implemented cultural competence as a best practice in designing lesson plans.

Study Design and Permissions

The researcher's overall aim and approach were to determine if the ethnic background and lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers impacted their perception of cultural competence as a best practice. This was a qualitative phenomenological study. A qualitative approach was chosen because "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p.15 as cited by Burkholder et al., 2020, p.82)."A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell et al., 2018, p.75). Convenience sampling via professional contact with the researcher was used to obtain the sample for this study. Convenience sampling allowed the researcher to gain needed participants according to

their availability. "Convenience sampling refers to selecting a sample based on availability" (Burkholder et al., 2020, p. 63). Using convenience sampling gave the participants autonomy regarding when they would be accessible for the virtual interview or completing the electronic survey.

This study consisted of two participant groups: teachers who agreed to be interviewed and teachers who agreed to take the electronic survey. Each participant received a formal consent letter via their personal email address (See Appendix A). The form was signed, dated, and returned to the researcher's personal email address. Once the consent was received, the researcher set an interview time or sent the electronic survey (See Appendix B).

Setting/Participants/Sample Demographics

This study was conducted in the Midwest and the Southwestern parts of the United States using five elementary and three middle schools. Fourteen K-12 public school teachers responded. There were nine elementary teachers and five middle school teachers. The participants' teaching experience ranged from two to 33 years. The elementary schools represented were urban, with an African American student population of about 80%. (see Table 3.1). Only one of the middle schools was urban, with a large African American student population. The other schools had a large population of White students (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.1 Elementary Schools Student Demographics

Elementary School E-A	Elementary School E-B	Elementary School E-C	Elementary School E-D	Elementary School E-E
Total Student Enrollment 154	Total Student Enrollment 333	Total Student Enrollment 334	Total Student Enrollment 406	Total Student Enrollment 202
African American – 97.9%	African American - 97.9%	African American - 97.9%	African American – 89.6.%	African American – 90.1%
White – 7.1%	White – 1.2%	White – 1.2%	White – 7.1%	White – 4.5%
Hispanic – 1.3%	Two or More Races – 0.6%	Two or More Races –0.6%	Hispanic – 1.7%	Hispanic – 2.5%
Asian – 0.6%			Asian or Asian Pacific Islander – 0.6%	Asian – 2%
Multiracial – 0.6%			Two or More races – 0.6%	Multiracial- 0.5%
Native American – 0.6%			American Indian or Alaska Native – 0.6%	Native American- 0.5%
International – 0%				International 0%
Pacific Islander – 0%				Pacific Islander 0%
Unknown – 0%				Unknow 0%

Elementary Schools

School E-A was in an urban residential neighborhood. Ninety-eight percent of the student population receive free or reduced lunch. This was an intermediate school with grades three through five. There are fourteen full-time teachers. School E-B is in a residential neighborhood. Sixty-five percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. There are approximately twenty-three teachers on staff. School E-C was in an urban residential neighborhood. Ninety-nine percent of the student population receive free or reduced lunch. There are twenty-one full-time teachers. School E-D was in an urban

residential neighborhood. Ninety-nine percent of the student population receive free or reduced lunch. This was an intermediate school with grades three through five. There are twenty-six teachers. School E-E was in an urban neighborhood. Ninety-nine percent of the student population receive free or reduced lunch. This was a pre-K, K- through sixth grade school.

Table 3.2 Middle School Student Demographics

Middle School MS-F Student Enrollment 462	Middle School MS-G Student Enrollment 629	Middle School MS-H Student Enrollment 662
White - 66.2%	African American – 88.8%	Whtie – 41.7%
Hispanic – 11.5%	White – 6.4%	Hispanic 30.5%
African American – 10%	Multiracial - 5.6%	Multiracial – 9.5%
Multiracial – 9.7%	Hispanic – 3.8%	African American – 9.4%
Asian – 1.7%	Asian – 0.1%	Asian – 5.3%
Native American – 0.6%	Native American – 0.1%	Native American - 3%
Pacific Islander – 0.2%	Pacific Islander – 0.1%	Pacific Islander – 0.6%
International – 0%	International 0%	International – 0%
Unknown – 0%	Unknown – 0%	Unknown – 0%

Middle Schools

School MS-F was in a residential, non-urban neighborhood. This school is in southwest Missouri. Fifty-six percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. This school has grades sixth through eighth. There are thirty-two teachers on staff. School MS-G was near a residential neighborhood and heavily populated business area in the Midwest. One hundred percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. This school has grades seventh through eighth. There are forty-six teachers on staff. School MS-H was in a non-urban neighborhood in the Southwestern part of the United States. Fourteen percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. This school has grades five through eight. There are thirty-eight teachers on staff.

Research Questions

Overarching Research Question: How does the lived experiences and ethnic background of K-12 public school teachers impact their perception of cultural competence?

RQ1. How do K-12 public school teachers include cultural competence in their daily instruction and approach?

Sub Questions

RQ2. In what ways, if any, do K-12 public school teachers' ethnic background influence their perception of cultural competence?

RQ3. In what ways, if any, do the lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers influence their willingness to acknowledge cultural competence?

RQ4. In what ways, if any, do the lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers influence their capability to apply cultural competence as a best practice?

Instruments

Three instruments were used in this study. The first instrument was an electronic Google form to administer a nine-question survey (See Appendix B). The second instrument was a virtual interview using Zoom. The interview consisted of two questions and a scenario with two questions (See Appendix C). The participants were also asked to supply two lesson plans with a cultural competence theme.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher had to receive approval from the university's institutional review board before soliciting and collecting data. After receiving approval, the researcher solicited participants via social media and professional contact. After gathering the

participants, the researcher sent each participant an electronic consent form. The

participants were sent the survey as the consent form was returned via email. The

interview participants required a scheduled date and time for the interview. The

procedure used to collect the survey data included a Google electronic form. The

participants' responses were captured in Google electronic form and stored on a secure

computer only accessible by the researcher. The interviews were conducted via Zoom on

an agreed-upon date and time. The Zoom link was sent to the participant on the interview

day. Each interview was video recorded, and an mp4 audio file was created using Zoom.

The participants were informed about the recording. Once the interview was complete,

the recording was stopped. Zoom created a video file and an mp4 audio file. The zoom

audio file was imported into Microsoft word. Microsoft word converted the file into a

transcript displaying the interview questions and responses.

Data Analysis Procedures

The survey responses were analyzed by comparing the ethnic background of the

participant, grade level that the participants teach, length of teaching, demographics of

the student population, geographical setting, personal reflection of cultural competence,

definition of best practice, examples of incorporating cultural competence in their

teaching practice and lesson plans. The interview and scenario responses were analyzed

to determine codes and common themes. The responses were also analyzed for

comparison. The lesson plans were analyzed using a content analysis chart focusing on

four categories relating to cultural competence. All three instruments were utilized to

answer the research questions (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Survey and Interview Questions Aligned to answer Research Questions

Research Question	Data Source(s) to Answer Research Questions
Main Research Question: Do the ethnic backgrounds and lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers impact their perception of cultural competence as a best practice in K-12 public schools?	Survey Questions 1. What is your ethnic background? 2. What grade do you teach? 3. How long have you been teaching? 4. What are the student demographics of your school? 5. Would you consider your school urban, suburban, or rural? 6. In what ways, if any, has your teaching environment emboldened you to reflect on cultural competence? 7. How would you define best practice? 8. Provide some examples of how you incorporated cultural competence into your teaching practice and lesson plans. 9. Describe a situation that impacted your thoughts about cultural competence.
RQ1. In what ways, if any, does a K-12 public school teacher's ethnic background influence their perception of cultural competence?	Survey Questions 1. What is your ethnic background? 6. In what ways, if any, has your teaching environment emboldened you to reflect on cultural competence? 9. Describe a situation that impacted your thoughts about cultural competence.
RQ2. In what ways, if any, do lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers influence their willingness to acknowledge cultural competence?	Survey Question 2. What grade do you teach? 3. How long have you been teaching? 4. What are the student demographics of your school? 5. Would you consider your school urban, suburban, or rural? 9. Describe a situation that impacted your thoughts about cultural competence.
RQ3. In what ways, if any do the lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers influence their capability to apply cultural competence as a best practice?	Interview Questions How would you define best practice? (Interview Scenario Question) You are planning a social studies lesson about foods from different cultures. After

	the lesson, the students will research and do a presentation on two foods from two countries. 1. How would you ensure that this lesson is culturally competent?
	2. Provide two instructional strategies. How would you ensure those strategies are culturally competent and a best practice?
	Submitted Lesson Plans

Threats to Dependability and Validity

"Dependability means that there is evidence of consistency in data collection, analysis, and reporting" (Burkholder et al. 2020, p. 91). The survey and interviews were dependable because each survey participant received the same survey, and each interview participant was asked the same questions. The survey and interview responses were also analyzed using the same process to determine codes and themes. Each lesson plan was analyzed using the content analysis chart to determine if the lessons contained culturally competent components.

Validity can be viewed as truth because it is based on a person's perspective and how they view things from their background knowledge (Burkholder et al., 2020). There was no measure for right or wrong answers in the open-ended questions because the responses were based on the participant's perspective. The two threats to this study were there was no second reviewer for the lesson plan content analysis and the researcher's bias from a teacher's perspective regarding a culturally competent curriculum.

Conclusion

Chapter three included the methodological and analytical procedures used to gather and analyze data for this study. It also provided information on the chosen participants and the student demographics. Chapter three included the research questions that the study was designed to answer. Lastly, chapter three focused on threats to the reliability and validity of the methods used to gather and analyze the data. Chapter four will begin with a connection to chapter three. It will include the reliability of the chosen measures. I will also focus on the procedures and findings of each research question. Chapter four will conclude with a summary of the study findings.

Chapter 4 – Results and Findings

Chapter three included the design utilized for this study. It also provided the process that the researcher used to solicit teachers. Chapter three will contain information regarding the teachers, such as the geographical region of the schools, demographic information about the student population, and the range of teaching experience. The researcher also provided the research questions and the instruments used to gather data. Chapter three concluded with an in-depth explanation of the data collection procedures, the data analysis procedures, and threats to reliability and validity. Chapter four will provide the survey results, interviews, and content analysis of lesson plans. The results were also used to answer research questions.

Analysis

Chapter four will provide a detailed analysis of the data gathered from the interviews and the survey. Both the survey questions and interview questions focused on how K-12 public school teachers define and perceive cultural competence as a best practice in their daily instruction. The data sought to determine if the ethnic background and lived experiences of teachers impact their perception of cultural competence and cultural competence as a best practice. The interview and survey responses were analyzed to determine codes and themes to answer the research questions. Lastly, lesson plans were submitted by the interview participants and analyzed using a content analysis. The content analysis was utilized to determine if the lesson plans contained instructional approaches and activities aligned with the content analysis chart's four categories (vocabulary terms, cultural background, culturally competent instruction, and culturally

competent activities) (see Appendix D). The content analysis data were presented in a

content analysis results table and used to answer research question three.

Reliability of Chosen Measures

Reliability often refers to the stability of responses to multiple coders of data

sets." (Creswell et al. 2018, p.264). It was stated that reliability can be increased when

information is captured by "good-quality devices" and "by transcribing digital files."

(Creswell et al. 2018). It is also important that the "recording be transcribed to indicate

the trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps." (Creswell et al. 2018, p. 264). When

determining the reliability of the protocols used in this study to capture the data related to

Creswell et al. (2018), the interviews were reliable because they were recorded on a

digital platform programmed to create an MP4 and audio file. The audio was transcribed

using Microsoft Word. As the interviews were transcribed, Microsoft Word detected any

pauses and overlaps. The transcribed file was uploaded into a web-based application to

determine the codes and themes.

The codes and themes were not determined by the software but by the researcher.

However, the researcher was able to make that determination because the data was

reliable. The survey responses were captured electronically using an electronic Google

form. To determine the codes and themes from the survey, the researcher created a file

containing the questions, the participants, and their responses. The file containing the

responses was downloaded into the coding software. The reliability of the codes and

themes was contingent upon the researcher making sure the correct response connected to

the correct participant and question. The lesson plan content analysis contained four

categories that reflected cultural competence. The structure of the content analysis chart

was created using the content analysis chart used in the researcher's pilot study. One of the structures used was the frequency count to determine if the lesson plans contained specific or related information in the content analysis. The lesson plans were manually analyzed to determine if they contained exact or related information in the content analysis. Although the data from the lessons were not digitally analyzed, the instrument was reliable because content analysis was designed to determine specific information related to cultural competence.

Participant Demographics

The survey contained nine questions (see Appendix B). Questions one through five focused on teacher and school demographic questions. The responses for questions one through five were analyzed and grouped according to the ethnicity of the teachers (see Table 4.1). Questions six through nine were open-ended questions.

Ten teachers completed the electronic survey, which is referred to as T1-T10. Of the ten teachers, four were African American, four were White, and two were multiethnic. Five of the teachers were elementary teachers and five were middle school teachers. Two of the ten teachers have over 20 years of teaching experience, and two have 16 years of teaching experience. Four teachers have between 10 and 12 years of teaching experience, and two have two years of teaching experience.

Four teachers stated that African American students represent over 90% of their student demographics. One teacher indicated their student demographics were evenly split between African American, White, and Hispanic students. They also mentioned having a small number of Swahili students. Two teachers stated their student population was Black/African American and White. One teacher described their student

demographics as 43%-White, 29%-Hispanic, 10%-Black/African American, 6%-Asian,

8%-multiracial, 4% -Native American or Alaska Native, and 4%-Hawiian or Pacific

Islander. When the teachers were asked to describe their school, six teachers stated their

school was urban, three teachers stated their school was suburban, and one teacher stated

their school was urban/suburban (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Teacher and Student Demographics

Teachers	Years taught	Current Grade Teaching	Student Demographics	School Setting
African American Teachers				
T1	33	Pre-K	African American, White low income mostly single families	Suburban
T4	22	8th	95% Blacks, 3% Hispanics 2% Whites	Urban
T7	7	2nd	97% African American, majority male population 55%, girl population 45%	Suburban
T9	12	3rd-5th	Blk/African American	Urban
White Teachers				
T2	2	8th	Evenly split percentage of black, White, Hispanic, and Asian students. We also have a few students who are Swahili.	Urban
T3	2	8th	No information given	Urban
T6	12	5th	Majority of my students are African American	Urban/Suburban
T10	16	2nd	Close to 99% African American	Urban
Multiethnic Teachers				

T5	9	7th & 8th	43% White, 29% Hispanic, 10% Black or African American, 6% Asian, 8% multiracial 4% Native American or Alaska Native, and 4% Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Suburban
T8	16	7th & 8th	No Information Given	Urban

The responses from questions six through nine were inductively analyzed using Taguette to determine codes and themes (Taguette, n.d.). There were 11 codes and five themes. The codes included classroom management, safe environment, continued education, antiracist professional development, personal reflection, personal perception, educational resources, instructional approach, cultural awareness, cultural acceptance, and culturally relevant. The themes were classroom culture, teacher education, self-reflection, learning environment, and cultural responsiveness (See Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Survey Themes and Codes

Themes	Classroom Culture	Teacher Education	Self-Reflection	Learning Environment	Cultural Responsiveness
Codes	Classroom Management	Continued Education	Personal Reflection	Educational Resources	Cultural Awareness
	Safe Environment	Antiracist Professional Development	Personal Perception	Instructional Approach	Cultural Acceptance
					Culturally Relevant

Main Research Question: Do the ethnic backgrounds and lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers impact their perception of cultural competence as a best practice in K-12 public schools?

RQ 1. How do K-12 public school teachers include cultural competence in their daily instruction and approach?

To determine how K-12 public school teachers include cultural competence in their daily instruction and approach, two of the five themes were analyzed and compared: classroom culture and learning environment.

Themes – Learning Environment and Classroom Culture

Five teachers' survey responses showed how cultural competence was included in their daily instruction and approach. The following table shows their ethnic background, grade level, student demographics, and responses (responses with quotation marks are the actual quotes and responses without quotation marks were synthesized) (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Learning Environment and Classroom Culture

The ethnicity of teachers mostly represented in noted themes	Grade Level	Student Demographics	Themes related to cultural competence in daily instructions and approaches.	Participant Responses
(T1) White	8th	Evenly split percentage of black, White, Hispanic, and Asian students. We also have a few students who are Swahili.	Learning Environment	"I have ELL students in an intervention reading and writing class, I do a lot of translating." "Giving them assignments that align with their

				culture and native language" "Learning about student's families and traditions. Teaching students about my family and traditions."
(T2) White	5th	Majority of my students are African American.		
				"There are many books about African American influencers and the history of African Americans in our country. We also explore other cultures."
(T3) Multiethnic	7th-8th	No Data		"Allow students to share their experiences, provide diverse reading material.
(T4) African American	8th	95% Black, 3% Hispanic, 2% White		"I try to make my teaching relevant and relatable to gain students participation and interest"
(T5) White	8th	Evenly split percentage of black, White, Hispanic, and Asian students. We also have a few students who are Swahili.	Classroom Culture	"We had a conversation about how at school we can't say racial slurs because others may feel offended or uncomfortable (no matter the color of their skin). And it is my job to make the classroom a

safe place for
everybody."

These data showed how cultural competence can be included in a teacher's daily instruction and approach. For example, T1 mentioned translating information for students and providing assignments that align with their cultural background. T2 mentioned learning about their students' families and traditions and sharing their own traditions. T2 also mentioned while having reading material that reflects the student's cultural background, they also explore other cultural backgrounds. T3 mentioned allowing students to share their experiences and provide diverse reading materials. T4 mentioned making information relatable for the students. T5 response was different from the other responses because the teacher facilitated a conversation regarding language being used in the classroom that was viewed as offensive. Although this conversation did not focus on curriculum content, it was facilitated as an instructional moment.

RQ2. In what ways, if any, does a K-12 public school teacher's ethnic background influence their perception of cultural competence?

Two of the five themes were analyzed to determine if the ethnic background of K-12 public school teachers influenced their perception of cultural competence: teacher education and self–reflection. Martinova et al. (2013) suggested that self-reflection is an internal system that can be used to determine the impact of a choice.

Themes – Teacher Education and Self Reflection

There were four teachers whose responses aligned with teacher education and self-reflection. Of the four teachers, one was multiethnic. Also, the response from the White teachers overlapped with both themes (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Teacher Education and Self-Reflection

The ethnicity of teachers mostly represented in noted themes	Themes related to the perception of cultural competence	Participant Responses
Multiethnic (T1)	Teacher Education	"Completing the anti-racist training at my last place of employment."
White (T2)		"When I became a teacher, I took the Harvard bias test and learned that I had many biases. Since then, I have been doing a lot of work like book studies (White fragility, so you want to talk about race, caste, how to be anti-racist).
White (T3)		"As a staff we did the "Privilege Walk" where people took steps forward or backward depending on various circumstances. At the time I felt embarrassed and kind of angry we had to do this activity because I felt it created a further divide between Blacks and Whites. Now I understand the activity. It's made me reflect on unconscious bias I have and how to "turn those off." It also made me aware of the white privilege I have."
White (T4)	Self-Reflection- Martinova et al. (2013) suggested that self-reflection is an internal system that can be used to determine the impact of a choice.	"Many students that I work with have a different home life than what I grew up with. This has led me to learn and grow as a teacher as I begin to understand cultural differences."
White (T2)		"When I became a teacher, I took the Harvard bias test and learned that I had many biases."
White (T3)		As a staff we did the "Privilege Walk" where people took steps forward or backward depending on various circumstances. At the time I felt embarrassed and kind of angry we had to

do this activity because I felt it created a further divide between Blacks and Whites. Now I understand the activity. It's made me reflect on unconscious bias I have and how to "turn those off." It also made me aware of the white privilege I have.

The teacher responses reflected that their ethnic background impacted their perception of cultural competence through training and reflecting on their personal perception of cultural competence. For example, T2 mentioned becoming aware of biases after taking a bias test. T3 mentioned participating in a "Privilege Walk" that evoked embarrassment and anger. However, T3 reflected on biases that were unknown due to the training. T4's reflection did not occur during training but in the classroom. All the responses had a connection to the ethnic background of the teachers because of the comments about becoming aware of bias. "Bias can affect beliefs teachers hold about students' achievements, behaviors, and backgrounds" (Batchelor et al., 2019, p. 1). The response was also more prevalent among teachers whose ethnic background was White or multiethnic.

RQ3. In what ways, if any, do lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers influence their willingness to acknowledge cultural competence?

To determine if the lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers influence their willingness to acknowledge cultural competence. Lived experiences defined through the lens of the study's literature are a collection of moments in an educational setting that allow the teacher to determine instructional strategies that will be equitable for all students. (Shandomo, 2010; Beal 2020; Gowindasamy, 2017). One of the five themes

was analyzed: cultural responsiveness. Fallon et al. (2021) defined cultural

responsiveness as accepting and understanding an individual.

Theme – Cultural Responsiveness

Five teachers had responses that aligned with the theme of cultural

responsiveness. The responses also reflected lived experiences in the classroom. Two of

the teachers were African American and three were White. (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Cultural Responsiveness

The ethnicity of teachers mostly represented in the noted theme.	Theme related to lived experiences influencing a willingness to acknowledge cultural competence.	Participant's Responses
African American (T1)	Cultural Responsiveness- Fallon et al. (2021) defined cultural responsiveness as accepting and understanding an individual.	"As a general music teacher working with children ages 8-11, I take into consideration the subject matter of the lyrics, cultural relevance."
African American (T2)		"My teaching environment encourages me to approach different topics in my classroom with knowledge and respect with the understanding that certain norms in my culture are different from norms in other countries or different parts of our country."
White (T3)		"The other day I had to diminish a situation where black students were saying racial slurs (in their eyes they weren't in the wrong and I understand where they were coming from). I had to realize that a lot of people who are brown or black use racial terms at home as their everyday language and it isn't a bad thing. We had a conversation about how at school we can't say racial

	slurs because others may feel offended or uncomfortable (no matter the color of their skin)."
White (T4)	"I have always taught students who looked different from me and therefore felt it important to understand my own personal bias and the backgrounds of my students in order to better serve the students I'm teaching"
	"I have also made sure to be a part of other cultures in my personal life so that I am Around people that do not look like me at more than just school for example at church, sporting events, my neighborhood, social gatherings, etc."
White (T5)	
	"Currently, I have ELL students in an intervention reading and writing class. I do a lot of translating and giving them assignments that are aligned with their cultural, native language."

The responses in the above table reflected the lived experiences of the teachers.

However, T1, T2, T3, and T5 reflect lived experiences in the classroom regarding

interacting with their students on an instructional and non-instructional level. T3

responses reflect non-instructional interaction because the teacher had to facilitate a

situation regarding offensive language. T4's first response focused on serving the

students better by reflecting on their biases. The second response focused on interacting

with other cultures beyond the school setting. Although this response did not occur in an

educational setting, it could impact how T4 chooses to apply instructional approaches in

the classroom. In the literature review in chapter two, Keller (2019) and Lewis et al. (2015) conducted research that focused on community involvement. Keller suggested that community involvement would encourage the teachers to compare their experience to their perspective of cultural competence. Although Keller (2019) suggested that teachers become involved in the community where their students live, this approach aligns with T4's response because this teacher chooses to be a part of social settings where cultural differences are visible.

Interview Responses and Lesson Plan Content Analysis Results

Four teachers were interviewed via Zoom according to their availability. The interviews comprised two questions and a two-part scenario question (see Appendix C). The interviews and lesson plan content analysis were conducted to understand how teachers perceive cultural competence and how it can be implemented as a best practice in their daily instruction. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Word. After the interviews were transcribed, they were analyzed to determine codes and themes using Taguette (Taguette, n.d.). Eight codes merged into four themes. The codes were antiracist professional development, personal perception, personal reflection, instructional approach, educational resources, cultural awareness, culturally relevant, and cultural acceptance and understanding. The themes were teacher education, self-reflection, learning environment, and cultural responsiveness (See Table 4.6). The demographic data were grouped according to the ethnic background of the participants (see Table 4.7). Tables 4.7 through 4.9 data were used to answer research question three.

Interview Codes and Themes Table 4.6

Themes	Teacher Education	Self-Reflection	Learning Environment	Cultural Responsiveness
Codes	Antiracist Professional Development	Personal Perception	Instructional Approach	Cultural Awareness
		Personal Reflection	Educational resources	Culturally Relevant Cultural Acceptance Understanding

Of the four teachers, two were White and two were African American. T1 and T2 had over 18 years of teaching experience. T3 and T4 had less than 12 years of teaching experience. Of the two teachers with over 18 years of teaching experience, T1 was African American, and T2 was White. Both teachers currently teach at the same school. The student demographics for that school was over 90%-African American, 1.2% White, and 0.6%Two or more races. T3 and T4 had less than 12 years of teaching experience. They currently teach in urban schools within the same district. T3 was White, and T4 was African American. The student demographics for T3 was 89.6%-African American, 7.1%-White, 1.3%-Hispanic, 0.0%-Asian, and 0.6%-multiracial. The student demographics for T4 were 97.9%-African American, 1.5%-White, 0.3%-Asian or Asian American/Pacific Islander. (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Interview (Teacher Demographics)

Participants	Ethnic Background	Length of Teaching Experience	Grade Level Taught	Student Demographics	Suburban, Urban, Rural
T1	African American	21 years	2nd	97.9 African American and 1.2 White Two or more races 0.6	Suburban

T2	White	19 years	2nd	97.9 African American and 1.2 White Two or more races 0.6	Suburban
T3	White	10 years	4th	89.6 African American 7.1 White 1.3 Hispanic, 0.0 Asian, 0.6 multiracial	Urban
T4	Black	3 years	5th	97.9% Black/African American, 1.5% White, 0.3% Asian or Asian American /Pacific Islander	Urban

RQ4. In what ways, if any, do lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers to apply cultural influence their capability competence as a best practice?

To determine if the lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers influence their capability to apply cultural competence as a best practice. Lived experiences defined through the lens of the study's literature are a collection of moments in an educational setting that allow the teacher to determine instructional strategies that will be equitable for all students. (Shandomo, 2010; Beal, 2020; Gowindasamy, 2017). The length of teaching experience, the lesson plan content analysis, and two of the four themes were analyzed and compared: cultural responsiveness and learning environment.

Themes - Cultural Responsiveness and Learning Environment

Three of the four teachers had responses that aligned with the themes cultural responsiveness and learning environment. One teacher had responses that only aligned with the theme learning environment. The table included the ethnicity of the teachers, length of teaching experience, grade level they teach, and their responses (responses with quotation marks are the actual quotes and responses without quotation marks were synthesized) (see Table 4.8).

Table 4. 8(Cultural Responsiveness and Teacher Experience)

The ethnicity of the teachers mostly represented in the noted theme.	Grade Level	Teaching Experience	Themes related to the capability to apply cultural competence as a best practice.	Participant Responses
African American (T1)	2nd	21 years	Cultural Responsiveness- Fallon et al. (2021) defined cultural responsiveness as accepting and understanding an individual.	"Being supportive of different cultures" "People are treated differently from different cultures" "Whenever I teach, I try to make sure it's relatable" "Expose them to just different types of people and their culture"
White (T2)	4th	19 years		"Understand other people's culture"
White (T3)	4th	10 years		Acknowledge diversity in your classroom.
			Learning Environment	
African American (T1)	2nd	21 years		"Expose them to just different types of people and their culture"

White (T3)	4th	10 years	"Incorporate their different cultural backgrounds into teaching"
African American (T4)	5th	3 years	Use websites that are credible. Freedom to choose resources. Rephrase questions

During the interview, the teachers were asked two questions and presented with a scenario that included two questions. The questions focused on describing cultural competence and describing an event that impacted their thoughts about cultural competence. To conclude the interview, they were given a scenario regarding having their students research two countries and two foods from that country. They were asked how they would ensure the lesson aligned with the research assignment was culturally competent. They were also asked to provide two instructional strategies and how they would ensure that the strategies were a best practice.

Of the four teachers interviewed, T1, T2, and T3 had responses that aligned with the themes cultural responsiveness and learning environment. Their responses showed how lived experiences can influence a K-12 public school teacher's capability to apply cultural competence as a best practice. T2 and T3 were asked, "How would you describe cultural competence"? T3's response was "incorporating their different backgrounds into teaching" aligns with the definition of lived because it represents an equitable instructional approach by including the different backgrounds of the students. T2's response was "understanding other people's culture." T2's response reflects a lived experience because the response embraced understanding other people's culture. T1's

response, "expose them to just different types of people and their culture," reflects an instructional approach that can be used in the classroom to make a background connection and encourage the students to view other cultural perspectives. However, this response was not connected to a question. This response was given because T1 was asked if they wanted to add additional information.

Nonetheless, T1's response could have been used to describe cultural competence. These responses were from teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. T4 responses aligned with the theme learning environment. However, the responses did not reflect that lived experiences influenced the capability to apply cultural competence as a best practice. The difference between T1, T2, T3, and T4 is the length of teaching experience. T4 has three years of teaching experience, which could be connected to less-lived experiences in the classroom. The other teachers have 10 or more years of teaching experience, which aligns with their lived experiences being more in-depth in the classroom.

Lesson Plan Content Analysis Results

The four teachers were asked to submit two lesson plans showing how cultural competence was incorporated. Each lesson plan was analyzed using a content analysis table. The table consisted of four categories (see Appendix D). The content analysis results showed the frequency count for the categories found in the lesson plans (see Table 4.9).

Of the four teachers, T4 lesson plans aligned with all four categories. T4 had less teaching experience than the other teachers. T4 and T1 teach in the same district. T1 lesson plans did not have any categorial alignment. T2 and T3 teach at the same school.

T2 lesson plans displayed information that aligned with three of the categories. T3

displayed information that aligned with two of the categories. (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9 Lesson Plan Content Analysis

Teacher/Lesson Plans	Vocabulary Terms	Cultural Background Connection/ Location	Culturally Competent Instruction and Location	Culturally Competent Activity(s) and location	Frequency Count
T1					
T2	Yes	Yes	Yes/Question Prompts	Yes	3
T3		Yes		Yes	2
T4	Yes	Yes/Engage, Hook, Launch	Yes/Learning Target	Yes/Engage, Hook, Launch/Elaborate and Write	4

The lesson plan content analysis findings revealed that lived experiences can

influence the ability to apply cultural competence as a best practice in lesson planning.

Although the T4 lesson plans aligned with all the categories in the content analysis, they

were written using a lesson plan template. A cultural disclaimer was included in the

template. The disclaimer states, "Please be mindful to include specific learning activities,

vocabulary strategies, instructional methods, differentiation, and check for understanding

in each component of the lesson, as appropriate. Cultural context differentiation and

blending learning should be integrated into all components of the lesson plan." It could

be suggested that the disclaimer provided guidance when writing the lesson plans.

However, T1 also uses the same lesson plan template because both teachers are from the

same district, but different schools did not have any components aligned with the

categories. T2's lesson plans were not created using a lesson plan template. T3 used a generic lesson plan template. T2's math lesson plan focused on aligning cultural competence to multiplication. For example, the objective stated, "Students will understand and apply multiplication strategies while including different cultures in word problems. T3's lesson plan focused on reading. Within the lesson plan's instructional plan component, the student had to answer a question about a character's ethnic background. Both lesson plans reflect how lived experiences in the classroom can influence the capability of a K-12 public school teacher to apply cultural competence as a best practice because they choose to use instructional approaches that can engage the students.

Conclusion

The results from the survey, interviews, and lesson plan content analysis provided information regarding if lived experiences and the ethnic background of K-12 public school teachers impacted their thoughts and actions surrounding cultural competence and cultural competence as a best practice. Although ethnic background can be a significant factor of influence, the results from the survey, interviews, and content analysis revealed that lived experiences were the primary factor regarding how teachers perceived and applied cultural competence as best practice in their classrooms. For example, a question on the survey asked, "In what ways, if any, has your teaching environment emboldened you to reflect on cultural competence? A teacher from the survey responded, "Having to deal with a situation where Black students were saying racial slurs." Another teacher responded, "Many students that I work with have a different home life than what I grew up with." Another teacher stated, "My teaching environment encourages me to approach different topics in my classroom with knowledge and respect." These responses align

with the teacher's lived experiences, as defined by this study as a collection of moments in an educational setting that allows the teacher to determine instructional strategies that will be equitable for students (Shandomo, 2010; Beal, 2020; Gowindasamy,2017). The responses from the survey and the interviews were associated mainly with the themes of learning environment and cultural responsiveness. Both themes reflected experiences that occurred in the classroom. The responses also exhibited the teacher's willingness to embrace cultural competence related to instructional and non-instructional moments, and activities which included the resources they utilized. The teachers demonstrated they were open to understanding their students from a cultural perspective.

The lesson plan content analysis visually represented a culturally competent lesson. However, teacher T2's lesson plans demonstrated how to design a culturally competent math lesson. T2's lesson plan aligns with Gok's study in chapter two, which focused on teaching math from a cultural perspective. This finding suggests that cultural competence can go beyond reading and writing. Math can be taught with a cultural theme. In chapter one, it was suggested that "a teacher is among the components in education whose role is to produce quality students and to promote cultural understanding and tolerance in a multicultural society" (Sudirman, 2019, p.21). When teachers understand the purpose of their position, they will be able to fulfill that purpose.

Chapter five will provide an overview of the study. It will also include a correlation between the literature review, theoretical framework, and study findings. It will explain the study limitations, implications for practice, an organizational improvement plan based on the findings, and concluding thoughts regarding the study.

Chapter 5

Chapter four provided a detailed explanation regarding the reliability of the chosen measures (the instruments used to collect data). It included information about the participants, an analysis of the survey and interview responses, and a content analysis of the lesson plans submitted by the teachers interviewed. Chapter four concluded with a summary of the study findings.

Chapter five will provide an overview of the study and study findings. It will discuss the relationship between extant literature, the theoretical framework, and the study findings. It will also provide study limitations and discuss implications for practice. Chapter five will conclude with an Organizational Improvement Plan and closing thoughts.

Study Overview

This study focused on cultural competence as a best practice in K-12 public schools. The data referenced in this study showed classrooms are becoming more diverse nationally and locally. For this reason, the literature examined three components where cultural competence is beneficial: teacher preparation, instructional strategies/approaches, and activities. The study included research-based strategies/approaches and activities. The study findings provided insight into how K-12 public school teachers perceive cultural competence and how cultural competence is incorporated into their instructions and activities.

Overview of Study Findings

The study's findings revealed that the ethnic background and lived experiences of K-12 public school teachers impacted their perception of cultural competence as a best practice in K-12 public schools. For example, the teachers who participated in antiracist training engaged in a lived experience that encouraged them to reflect on their perception of cultural competence. Their ethnic background also plays a significant role in self-reflection because self-reflection begins with who a person is, which is connected to their ethnic background. For example, in table 4.4 of chapter four, teacher T3 stated, "As a staff, we did the "Privilege Walk" where people took steps forward or backward depending on various circumstances. At the time, I felt embarrassed and kind of angry we had to do this activity because I felt it created a further divide between Blacks and Whites. Now I understand the activity. It made me reflect on the unconscious bias I have and how to turn those off." Although the teacher experienced anger, those feelings transformed into an understanding why the training was necessary.

Nonetheless, most of the responses reflected experiences in the classroom that align with the study's definition of lived experience as a collection of moments in an educational setting that allows the teacher to determine instructional strategies that will be equitable for students (Shandomo, 2010; Beal, 2020; Gowindasamy,2017). For example, responses such as "allowing students to share their experiences and provide diverse reading material" suggest that the lived experience in the classroom influenced their instructional approach. Another teacher stated, "I try to make my teaching relevant and relatable," this instructional approach aligns with the definition of lived experiences used in this study. The lesson plan content analysis provided a visual of how cultural

competence can be incorporated into daily instruction and activities. For example, vocabulary terms, reading material, and questions regarding the reading material can be used to promote cultural competence.

Study Findings and the Theoretical Frameworks

This study aimed to determine if lived experiences and the ethnic background of K-12 public school teachers influenced their perception of cultural competence, willingness to acknowledge cultural competence, and the capability to apply it as a best practice. As discussed in chapter two, the two frameworks chosen for this study were Culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching. Culturally relevant pedagogy is not considered a strategy but an approach. Culturally relevant teaching is a teaching strategy. Culturally responsive pedagogy encourages students to use their background knowledge to understand society from their cultural perspective (Flory et al., 2019). The purpose of this framework was "to address pervasive gaps in the educational experience" (Allen et al., 2017, as cited by Flory et al., 2019, p.1320). CRT is "defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002, as cited by Gadsden Holliday, 2021, p. 34). Gadsden Holliday (2021) stated that this strategy was created from the perspective that when the educational background skillset is connected to the lived experiences of a student, they become more engaged. The study findings in Tables 4.3, 4.5, and 4.8 revealed that the teachers consciously tried to align their instructional approach to the student's cultural background. For example, it allows students to share their experiences, aligns activities to the student's background, uses resources that reflect

the students' cultural background, and is mindful of how topics are presented and aligned with (CRP) and (CRT).

The Study Findings and the Literature Review

The study findings aligned with the literature because both focused on the importance of teachers being culturally competent and applying cultural competence in daily instructions and activities. The findings revealed that the teachers wanted to connect educational materials, activities, and instructional strategies to the cultural background of their students. For example, in Table 4.3, Teacher T1 stated, "I have ELL students in an intervention reading and writing class, and I do a lot of translating." This same teacher also said, "Giving them assignments that align with their culture and native language." This response aligned with the definition of cultural competence referenced in the literature as "the ability to recognise the significance of culture in one's own life and in the lives of others" (Blackburn, 2020, p.230). It also aligns with culturally competent instructional strategies/approaches. A study by Jackson et al. (2017) suggested that when instruction is facilitated from a cultural perspective, students are encouraged to become critical thinkers by exploring nontraditional ways of learning.

Three teachers in Table 4.4 mentioned participating in antiracist training. Two of the three expressed how the training impacted them as individuals. For example, teacher T2 stated, "When I became a teacher, I took the Harvard bias test and learned I had many biases." Teacher T3 said, "As a staff, we did the "Privilege Walk" where people took steps forward or backward depending on various circumstances. At the time, I felt embarrassed and kind of angry we had to do this activity because I felt it created a further divide between Blacks and Whites. Now I understand the activity. It has made me reflect

on the unconscious bias I have and how to "turn those off." It also made me aware of the white privilege I have." The responses also show how the teachers self-reflected on their perspective regarding culture and obstacles that would prohibit them from being culturally competent. These responses align with Gallavan (2005), who suggested that understanding your student begins with understanding who you are, your thoughts, and your ideas by opening your *invisible knapsack.* Taylor (2010) suggested that understanding your students' challenges begins with being transparent about your thoughts regarding cultural competence. Addressing personal bias opens the door to embracing cultural competence.

The findings also revealed that the instructional approaches chosen by all teachers were not only culturally competent, but a best practice as defined by Bardach, 2011 as cited by Washington, 2021 who suggested that best practice is a process that can produce meaningful results. The instructional approaches were meaningful because they allowed the students to connect through the reading material by sharing their experiences, giving them a voice and ownership in their learning. The activities also encouraged the students to explore and learn.

Study Limitations

The limitations of this study included the small sample size and convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is "selecting a sample based on availability." (Burkholder et al., 2019, p.63). The participants were selected based on their willingness and availability to participate in the study. Golzar et al., 2022 suggested that convenience sampling can lead to sampling biases. Although this was convenient for the researcher

and allowed access to a small sample of participants, the sample was not large enough to be translatable to the general population.

Implications for Future Practice

Although the study findings were reliable in determining how K-12 public school teachers perceive and incorporate cultural competence as a best practice in their classrooms, further research is needed. Further research should include a larger sample size for the survey and interviews to gain a broader perspective of cultural competence as a best practice in K-12 public schools. The interviews should also be in-person to reduce distractions such as technical glitches. In-person interviews will also create a comfortable environment for the researcher and the participant. Scheduled classroom observations would be significant because they would allow the researcher to observe and document how teachers incorporate cultural competence during instruction and how activities are selected and aligned with instruction. More importantly, it would enable the researcher to observe how students respond to culturally competent instructional strategies and activities. The survey can remain electronic because it provides easy access, reduces paper use, and provides a secure data storage location.

Organizational Improvement Plan

Based on the study findings, this researcher believes that an organizational improvement plan focusing on professional development training regarding cultural competence as a best practice would provide further insight and tools for teachers to facilitate a diverse classroom. Cultural differences can create barriers and walls that can hurt academic achievement. Therefore, building bridges must start with dismantling walls

of biases. The organizational improvement plan would also address biases and other challenges teachers may encounter or have encountered in the classroom. The suggested structural frameworks for the OIP are the Bennett Scale and Kotter's Model. The Bennett Scale was created by Milton Bennett in 1986. Although Milton Bennett's model does not directly address cultural competence as a best practice, the theory does focus on how cultures interact. He explained why some people's interaction skills progressed while others did not. (Bennett, 2023). Bennett believed if he were "able to explain why this happened, trainers and educators could do a better job of preparing people for cross-cultural encounters" (Bennett, 2023, para. 4). John Kotter created Kotter's model. He understood that addressing a potential problem requires strategic thinking and planning. His model consists of eight steps that promote a call to action for a more significant cause.

Like the Bennett Scale, Kotter's model does not address cultural competence as a best practice. However, the steps from Kotter's model will be aligned with the stages in the Bennett scale to address the importance of cultural competence as a best practice. The steps from Kotter's model would be the themes for the professional development training sessions, and stages from the Bennett Scale would be the session topics. For example, denial, defense, and minimization from the Bennett scale would be taught under the theme *enable actions by removing barriers* because they focus on how cultural differences are perceived. Acceptance, adaptation, and integration will be the session topics for the theme *generate* short-term wins because they focus on the importance of being open-minded toward cultural differences. Within the sessions and the activities, the participants will be encouraged to reflect on and identify unconscious and conscious

biases that could impact their ability to become culturally competent and embrace it as a

best practice. Due to the study findings, the sessions would also include information about

how to find common ground, build relationships with your students, address complex

topics, and culturally align instructional strategies. (see Table 5.1).

Organizational Improvement Plan Session/Topic Alignment Table 5.1

Kotter's Model Steps Themes for the Training Sessions	The Bennett Scale Topics
(Enable) Actions by Removing Barriers	Minimization, Acceptance, Defense, Denial
	(How to find common ground) (How to build relationships with your students) (How to address complex topics)
(Generate) Short-term wins	Adaptations and Integration
	(How to culturally align instructional strategies)

The information in Table 5.2 shows how other steps in Kotter's Model will be

utilized as a framework when creating the structure for the training sessions, such as

choosing facilitators and mentors, training throughout the year, and future training. For

example, the steps that *form* a strategic vision and initiative and *create* a sense of urgency

are the steps for creating the sessions' structure and purpose. *Build* a guiding coalition and

enlist a volunteer army are the frameworks for soliciting future training session

facilitators and mentor volunteers. *Sustain* acceleration and *institute* change are the steps

to ensure that training will continue throughout the year while planning for future training

sessions (see Table 5.2).

Professional Development Structural Design Table 5.2

Kotter's Model Steps	Session Training Structure
(Form) A strategic vision and initiative	Session structures
(Create) A sense urgency	Setting the purpose for the sessions
(Build) A guided coalition	The session facilitators
(Enlist) A volunteer	Mentor for mentoring sessions.
(Sustain) acceleration	Continued training throughout a school year
(Institute) change	Plan for future training sessions

The timeframe for the training will be contingent upon the school's needs and professional development training schedule. The training facilitators will initially be selected professionals from the educational community with credentials in cultural training. However, as teachers complete the training, they can become trainers for future sessions. The mentors for the mentoring sessions will also be selected educational professionals with credentials in cultural training. However, veteran teachers will be asked to volunteer as mentors as they complete the training. This OIP will have a twofold purpose: to provide cultural competence training and prepare teachers to lead this initiative.

Tools were selected that would be instrumental during the professional development sessions. The tools include mini-lessons, activities, mentoring sessions, and time set aside for collaborative conservations. These tools will encourage participation and engagement during the sessions. For example, the mini-lesson topics will set the tone for discussions and conversations. Each training session will have an overarching theme from Kotter's model. The activities will align with the mini lesson. However, they will

alternate between hands-on and role-playing (scenarios). The collaborative conversation tool will also align with the mini lessons. The flexibility will consist of the participants being able to share individual experiences that may not connect to the session topic. The mentoring sessions will not follow the same format. However, they will be a part of the sessions. Professionals will initially lead them from the educational community. However, teachers who have undergone the training would be asked to volunteer as mentors. They will address information from the sessions and any obstacles that arise in the classroom, celebrate successes, and be a support system. As participants return from each session or for their next session, their conversation should show signs of growth toward embracing cultural competence as a best practice. They should be able to articulate their thoughts and vision regarding a culturally competent classroom. The mentoring sessions should become more of a time to celebrate successes.

As I reflect on the training sessions, activities, and mentoring sessions, I must be able to detect problems that could hinder the participants from meeting the objective. The most effective tool is a survey. The survey will contain questions regarding the training and mentoring sessions. The school's administration will analyze the responses from the survey to determine if any changes need to be made. This process will make the sessions meaningful and relevant because it will allow the participants to express what worked, what did not, what was missing, and how the training can be more effective.

Limitations are an inevitable reality within any organizational plan. The key is having viable solutions to address them without compromising the OIP's mission. Therefore, limitations have been factored into the plan. One limitation is the timeframe. District leaders are very strategic with dates and times because there is much to cover

during a school year. Therefore, a suggested timeframe for the training will be included in the OIP but with the flexibility to adjust. Budgeting could be a limitation because districts have funds designated for yearly expenses. They may not have the funds for additional training. Although cultural competence training is essential, it may not be a pressing issue for some leaders. Therefore, district and school leaders must see the educational and social benefits. Although the sessions will have a generic format, leadership can request modifications if they do not align with the school's vision. Choosing activities that are relevant and beneficial in professional development is essential. School leadership can request activities to be modified to meet the current needs of the teachers.

The OIP will be detailed and transparent. Therefore, addressing limitations will not compromise the benefit of implementing the plan. Creative thinking is necessary to overcome limitations. They should be viewed as opportunities to grow, not as obstacles. The key is having workable solutions to address the limitations without compromising the OIP's mission.

Conclusion

Cultural competence will continue to be a concern as classrooms become culturally diverse. However, school districts must determine how cultural competence will be addressed. Political perspectives will continue to be infused into the conversations as districts grapple with meeting their students' needs. Nonetheless, teachers are the stakeholders responsible for standing before a classroom of diverse learners daily, presenting lessons, leading discussions, and providing purposeful activities. Students depend on teachers to give them the tools they need to succeed. Therefore, knowing the needs of the students will require teachers to understand their students beyond their

academic ability. They must be willing to understand who they are culturally. When

teachers go the extra mile to become familiar with their students' cultural backgrounds,

they can begin to learn how to connect with their students academically. That level of

understanding becomes valuable as teachers plan lessons and choose instructional

strategies/approaches and activities. When teachers embrace their students' cultural

backgrounds, they create an environment where all students feel included. However, this

can only be achieved if teachers embrace cultural competence as a best practice. Although

training cannot cover everything, it can become a resource for teachers to pull from.

If students are going to be successful in the classroom, teachers must be given the

tools to create an environment that promotes success. Success goes beyond knowing how

to teach from a textbook. The teacher must know how to present that information

methodically that will engage, enlighten, and motivate students. Teachers must be willing

to use the cultural background of their students as an instructional approach. Students

may have a wealth of information that never manifests in an educational setting because

teachers may be unaware of the connection between prior knowledge and cultural

background.

Although instruction is essential to a student's success, teachers must embrace the

importance of activities because they allow students to show their abilities independently.

Vitali (2016) mentioned "storytelling," Manoharan's (2020) study mentioned reading and

writing as activities, and Gok's (2020) study focused on games to teach math that aligned

with the "Chinese remainder theorem." By incorporating cultural competence into

activities, the students can connect with something familiar while learning something

unfamiliar. Therefore, as teachers receive training about instructional

strategies/approaches, they must be taught how to select or create activities that students can connect to.

Culturally competent teaching requires thinking creatively. Culturally competent teachers are unique because they see things from a multicultural lens. They view their classroom as a community with different perspectives, ideas, and opinions. They also view themselves as learners because as their students explore new and exciting things, so do they. To be a culturally competent teacher also means you are willing to take a hard look at yourself regarding culture. Just as the teachers in the survey did when they engaged in antiracist training, that experience was transformative and transparent because they were encouraged to look from within. As mentioned in chapter two, Gallavan (2005) stated that understanding your student begins with understanding who you are, your thoughts, and your ideas by opening your *invisible knapsack*. If teachers want to provide the best learning environment for their students, they must be willing to take personal inventory regarding who they are. When teachers engage in this process, they discover things about themselves, as the teacher from the survey did while participating in the privilege walk. Yang (2011) suggested that culturally competent teachers are essential for a successful, diverse classroom. However, that success is also connected to the instructional strategies teachers use. As Vakil et al. (2021) suggested, academic achievement for culturally diverse students is achievable when instructional approaches are culturally relevant. Therefore, it is not enough to understand cultural competence; teachers must know how to apply their cultural knowledge in the classroom.

Appendices

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of Cultural Competence as a best practice in K-12 public schools. I, Twyla Baylor, hope to learn if the ethnic background and lived experiences impact a K-12 public school teacher's perception about incorporating cultural competence as a best practice. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a K12 classroom teacher.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an electronic Google form survey. The survey will be completed one time with nine questions. You will also be asked via interview to respond to two survey questions and one scenario question with an (a) and (b) part. Lastly, you will be asked to submit two lesson plans in which you include cultural competence. The interviews will be conducted virtually. The lesson plans will be emailed to a password-protected email account. All data collected will be stored on a password-protected computer.

There are certain potential benefits and risks associated with your participation in this research. The benefits are adding your voice to help the researcher's understanding of teachers' perceptions of cultural competence as a best practice. Another benefit is understanding the importance of cultural competence as a best practice in a K12 classroom. The risks may be feeling uncomfortable with sharing your thoughts about this topic.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In any written reports or publications, you will not be identified or identifiable.

Your decision whether to participate will not affect your future relationship with Fontbonne or your place of employment in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationship(s).

If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any additional questions later, please contact Dr. Jamie Doronkin at jdoronkin@fontbonne.edu and we will be happy to answer them.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

+++

You are making a decision whether to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had your questions answered, and you have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Note: Questions and Concerns can also be referred to the IRB Committee Chair at: jfish@fontbonne.edu

_____   _____
Signature
                                                                            Date

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

FBUIRB10022024-TB

Appendix B

Teacher Survey

My name is Twyla Baylor, and I am doing a study regarding cultural competence as a best practice in K-12 public schools . Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input will be beneficial and vital to understanding how cultural competence is incorporated into a best practice. If you choose to continue to participate, please answer the questions. After completing the survey, please click on the submit button and close your browser. If you choose not to participate, you may close your browser.
FBUIRB10022024-TB

tjb041970@gmail.com Switch account

Not shared

1. What is your ethnic background?

Your answer

2. What grade do you teach?

Your answer

3. How long have you been teaching?

Your answer

4. What are the student demographics of your school?

Your answer

5. Would you consider your school urban, suburban, or rural?

Your answer

6. In what ways, if any, has your teaching environment emboldened you to reflect on cultural competence?

Your answer

7. How would you define best practice?

Your answer

8. Provide some examples of how you incorporated cultural competence into your teaching practice and lesson plans.

Your answer

9. Describe a situation that impacted your thoughts about cultural competence.

Your answer

Submit   Clear form

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe cultural competence?
2. Describe an event that impacted your thoughts about cultural competence.

Interview question/ Scenario: You are planning a social studies lesson about foods from different cultures. After the lesson, the students will research and do a presentation on two foods from two countries.
   a. How would you ensure that this lesson is culturally competent?
   b. Provide two instructional strategies. (How would you ensure those strategies are culturally competent and a best practice?)

As you reflect on cultural competence and best practice can you provide two lesson plans where you incorporated cultural competence?

Appendix D

Lesson plan content analysis

Teacher/Lesson Plans	Cultural Background Connection	Culturally Competent Vocabulary Exact Term (s)	Cultural Relevant Instruction	Culturally Relevant Activity (s)
Teacher E-A Lesson Plan 1				
Teacher E-A Lesson Plan 2				
Teacher E-B Lesson Plan 1				
Teacher E-B Lesson Plan 2				
Teacher E-C Lesson Plan				
Teacher E-C Lesson Plan 2				
Teacher E-D Lesson Plan 1				
Teacher E-D Lesson Plan 2				

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