THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATORS

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Marta J. Fortunato
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Marta J. Fortunato

Approved May, 2024

Geraldine Mongillo, Ph. D
Chairperson of Doctoral Committee

Shannon Holder, Ph. D
Member of Doctoral Committee

Danny A. Robertozzi, Ed. D
Member of Doctoral Committee

ABSTRACT

Educators create lesson plans in order to guide instruction. This researcher will research and discuss how culturally responsive educators are influenced by mentoring and professional development. In order to understand how mentoring and professional development influence these lesson plans we must understand mentoring and professional development. Mentoring – if it existed at all in the culture of a school- was initiated as an informal response to a new teacher seeking help or assistance offered by an experienced colleague willing to share his or her own experiences (Portner, 2008). Teacher mentoring programs are increasingly promoted as an effective mechanism for improving new teacher quality, new teacher retention, and student outcomes (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). Effective professional development requires considerable time, and that time must be well organized, carefully structured, purposefully directed, and focused on content or pedagogy or both (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Those responsible for planning and implementing professional development must learn how to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of what they do (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Culturally Responsive Professional Development in Education comprehensively teaches the whole teacher-learner through explicit recognition, valuing, and discussion of the diverse ways that cultural and personal identities mediate styles of cognitive engagement, and explicitly honoring these styles in the instructional design of professional development (Farmer et al., 2005).

Keywords: culturally responsive, lived experiences. mentoring, professional development

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful and loving family. To my children Monty and Maelyn, I could not have completed this without your support. Thank you for your patience and understanding that "mommy had to go write." Thank you Monty, for reminding me that "I got this" and thank you Mae, for all those beautiful and inspirational love notes and drawings that I would get when I was writing. And to my best friend, love and amazing husband, Mike thank you for letting me go on this journey and supporting me in this enormous undertaking. Thank you for often being my editor, my barista and a shoulder to cry on. You are an unbelievable human being and I could not have done this without you. I love you all so much. We did it!

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In the mid-1980s a growing number of education reformers, policymakers, and researchers argued that many of the well-publicized shortcomings of the elementary and secondary education system in the United States are due to inadequacies in the working conditions, resources, and support afforded to school teachers (U. S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1997). Between 1998 and 2004 there was close to a 25 percent (from 21 to 33 percent) increase in the number of states that mandated beginning teacher support as part of their teacher induction (Hall, 2005 as cited in Porter, 2008). Mentoring and professional development activities are tools commonly used in school districts to support and continue to support teachers at various levels of their career.

In order to understand the impact that both mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educator we must understand the two concepts. Mentoring has become an important part of teacher education (Sundli, 2007). In the field of education, mentors are usually veteran teachers who support colleagues new to the profession, encourage them, and help them become better teachers (Portner, 2008). While the general goal of teacher induction is to transform a student of teaching into a competent teacher of students, many evaluations in the past have focused on program impacts on novice teacher retention (Hong & Hong, 2012) little research has explored how mentoring and professional development has influenced the creation of lesson plans.

Professional development is utilized as a tool for teachers to improve instruction and use data from academic assessments, to recruit and retain effective teachers, particularly in high need

subjects; and areas (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) mentoring is considered a comprehensive system of support for teachers to promote high-quality instruction. Professional development that is evidence-based and is focused on improving teaching and student learning and achievement, including supporting efforts to train teachers to—effectively engage parents, families, and coordinate services between school and community; help all students develop the skills essential for learning readiness and academic success; and develop programs and activities that increase the ability of teachers to effectively teach children with disabilities, English learners, and multi-cultural students. (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

According to the Every Student Succeed Act (2015), professional development activities for educators, including the following: Pre-service and in-service training and professional development programs to prepare teachers to develop appreciation for, and understanding of, cultures, values, and ways of knowing and learning in order to effectively address the cultural diversity and unique needs of students and improve the teaching methods of educators will enhance curriculum materials that are culturally informed and reflect the cultural diversity, languages, history, or the contributions, including curricula intended to preserve and promote culture. Professional development programs will prepare teachers to develop appreciation for, and understanding of, cultures, values, and ways of knowing and learning in order to effectively address the cultural diversity and unique needs of students (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Although mentoring and professional development have become more common practices in schools, little research has been conducted on how they influence lesson plans.

Ladson-Billings (2014) research explored practical ways to improve teacher education that would yield new generations of teachers who would bring an appreciation of their students'

assets to their work in urban classrooms populated with diverse students. Culturally relevant pedagogy is: (a) the ability to link principles of learning with deep understanding of, (b) appreciation for culture by focusing on student learning and academic achievement versus classroom and behavior management, (c) cultural competence versus cultural assimilation or eradication, and (d) sociopolitical consciousness rather than school-based tasks that have no beyond-school application. Students take both responsibilities for and deep interest in their education (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Teacher education programs throughout the nation have coupled their efforts at reform with revised programs committed to social justice and equity. Their focus has become the preparation of prospective teachers in ways that support equitable and just educational experiences for all student (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

A culturally responsive framework accepts, honors, and utilizes members' cultural orientations in supporting their work and needs. A cultural orientation is defined as an inclination to think, feel, or act in a way that is culturally determined (Insoon & Onchwari, 2018). In the context of mentoring, Lindsay-Dennis et al. (2011) stated that: culturally responsive pedagogy views students' cultures as a useful tool for teaching and learning. Cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students are valued and used to connect student to the curriculum. The goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to engage students in learning but also to help them to maintain their cultural identities. Therefore, to be culturally responsive, a mentoring program requires that the cultural orientations and experiences of members should be incorporated, in order to enrich each member (Bennet, 1988; Hofstede, 2009; Hofstede & McCrae, 2004; Rosinski, 2003)

According to Gay (2018) culturally responsive teaching is defined as using cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for

teaching them more effectively. This method of teaching is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (Gay, 2002). Teacher professional development means teachers' learning, how they learn to learn and how they apply their knowledge in practice to support pupil learning (Avalos 2011). Teachers can learn through participation in various courses, in school when they reflect on their own teaching and in observation of and reflection on others' teaching in co-operation with colleagues. Learning may occur in various ways, both formally and informally during professional development.

Professional development and mentoring are tools that are used in order to support new teachers. According to the current State of New Jersey's Performance Report (2022), the state of New Jersey has 119,000 teachers working in public school districts. 75.8% of teachers in the state of New Jersey have 4 or more years of experience in their districts and 24.2% of the teachers in the state have served 3 or less years in the field. Mentoring is intended to help facilitate communication and improve job performance. Many new teachers look for support when they accept teaching jobs in school districts. It is important to understand the lived experiences of how a mentoring program impacts a culturally responsive educator. The goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to engage students in learning but also to help them to maintain their cultural identities (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Therefore, to be culturally responsive, a mentoring program requires that the cultural orientations and experiences of members should be incorporated, in order to enrich each member (Bennet, 1988; Hofstede, 2009; Hofstede & McCrae, 2004; Rosinski, 2003).

Professional development is another form of support that new teachers look for. New Jersey's Definition of Professional Development and Standards for Professional Learning are intended to guide relevant and valuable professional learning opportunities – which are essential to the professional growth of all educators (Professional Development Regulations, n.d.). Professional development shall include the work of established collaborative teams of teachers, instructional, and educational services staff members who commit to working together to accomplish common goals and who are engaged in a continuous cycle of professional improvement focusing on: evaluating student learning needs through ongoing reviews of data on student performance, defining a clear set of educator learning goals based on the analysis of these data (Professional Development Regulations, n.d.). Culturally responsive educators learn how to apply teaching approaches that integrated students' background knowledge through professional development. Instruction needs to be firmly situated within the belief that instruction can be effective when students' background knowledge is incorporated. Culturally responsive professional development needs to provide clear, direct, and explicit instruction that incorporates students' previous learning and at the same time address learning challenges that are appropriate for students' needs (Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017). Culturally responsive professional development allows for the teacher to think about a more dynamic process that requires students to think about what they already know, and experienced. This teaching style not only includes explicit instruction in teaching but it matches student background knowledge with peer-learning opportunities and cooperative learning (Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017).

Research Questions

The following research questions will explore and describe the lived experiences of becoming a Culturally Responsive Educator:

RQ1: How do mentoring and professional development promote equity and social justice in the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator?

RQ2: What influence does mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educators' lived experiences?

Background

On March 1, 2021 the state of New Jersey adopted a new Diversity and Inclusion Law. This law mandated that diversity and inclusion be evident and implemented in instruction. Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, each school district shall incorporate instruction on diversity and inclusion in an appropriate place in the curriculum of students in grades kindergarten through 12 as part of the district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The instruction shall: (1) highlight and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging in connection with race and ethnicity, (2) examine the impact that unconscious bias and economic disparities have at both an individual level and on society as a whole; and (3) encourage safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students regardless of race or ethnicity (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021). A mentoring program and professional development that are deeply rooted in diversity are ones that will help drive organizations forward. Having staff that is diverse and is supported through equity will allow for inclusivity to take place. Mentoring and professional development opportunities need to encompass the cultural needs of the community that it serves and those that work within the

community. Leaders promoting and participating in opportunities of mentoring should be cognizant of the importance of diversity. Leaders must invest the time and energy in cultivating culturally responsive educators that nurture and enrich the practice in educational institutions. Leaders must look at culturally responsive educators as a key to moving equity and social justice forward (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally responsive educators should be supported and validated through a support system that helps them navigate through the levels of frustration that they encounter and the challenges of employment. Having culturally responsive experiences that are supportive and inclusive will foster growth and development for the students and teachers alike. Teachers need to believe that schools can be sites for social transformation even as they recognize that schools have typically served to maintain social inequities (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

A mentoring program that is deeply rooted in the identity of the new teacher as well as the identity of the students that they service will help empower school culture and social structure. To understand cultural responsiveness a teacher must be able to understand what equity pedagogy means in the classroom. Equity Pedagogy is an essential component of multicultural education. According to Banks (1995) equity pedagogy is defined as a teaching strategy and classroom environment that helps students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society. It is not sufficient to help students learn to read, write, and compute within the dominant canon without learning also to question its assumptions, paradigms, and hegemonic characteristics. Helping students become reflective and active citizens of a democratic society is at the essence of equity pedagogy.

Problem Statement

Mentoring is a critical element in the well-being, socialization, and professional identity development of newly qualified teachers and recently qualified teachers. Yet, little is known about the mentoring experience from the mentee's perspective. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to examine teacher educators' perspectives on and experiences with mentoring and professional development, how the two support a culturally responsive educator and how this is then transferred into culturally responsive lesson plans. In order to understand culturally relevant teaching strategies that promote equitable practices in education we must understand how equitable pedagogy fits in education (Schmeichel, 2012). According to Banks (1994) education within a pluralistic democratic society should help students gain the content, attitudes, and skills needed to know reflectively, to care deeply, and to act thoughtfully. Equity pedagogy creates an environment in which students can acquire, interrogate, and produce knowledge and envision new possibilities for the use of that knowledge for societal change. Equity pedagogy is guided by the following assumptions: all teachers need to be able to competently implement equity pedagogy and related teaching strategies because all students benefit from them, in- depth knowledge of an academic discipline, pedagogy, and students' cultures are prerequisites for teachers to successfully implement equity pedagogy, and competency in equity pedagogy requires a process of reflection and growth. Equity pedagogy challenges teachers to use teaching strategies that facilitate the learning process. Students in classrooms where equity pedagogy is used learn to generate knowledge and create new understanding.

Mentoring and professional development opportunities will help grow teacher knowledge, increase student awareness and improve job performance. Newly qualified teachers

often struggle with locating viable sources of information or feel as though they do not need information to help them understand their students and understand their roles as teachers. Teachers when given the opportunity to discuss their lived experiences may assist in understanding how mentoring and professional development can evolve into culturally responsive teachers. This phenomenological methodology allows participants to explore their own experiences to highlight the phenomena (Goh et al., 2017). Teacher education programs throughout the nation have coupled their efforts at reform with revised programs committed to social justice and equity. Their focus has become the preparation of prospective teachers in ways that support equitable and just educational experiences for all students (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Educators generally agree that effective teaching requires mastery of content and knowledge and pedagogical skills. Too many teachers are inadequately prepared to teach ethnically diverse students (Gay, 2002). Gay (2002) reported that part of the responsibility of teacher training programs is to prepare preservice and in-service teachers to work effectively with students from Culturally Diverse backgrounds. Gay (2002) identified five important areas (i.e., developing a culturally diverse knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula, demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, building effective cross-cultural communications, and delivering culturally responsive instruction) that need to be addressed when preparing teachers to work with the diversity in their classrooms. Gay (2002) defined Culturally Responsive Teaching as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. Culturally Responsive Teaching is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more

personally meaningful, have a higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (Gay, 2000).

Culturally responsive pedagogy includes the use of cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them (Gay, 2000). Teachers include various cultural identities in instructional methods and build on the culturally-based existing knowledge and experiences of their students and families (Moll & Gonzalez 2004). In addition to the recognition of the importance of infusing culture in pedagogy, teachers and teacher educators also noted the importance of culturally responsive teacher–student interactions and classroom management. This includes creating a caring student teacher relationship through emotional connectedness, holding high expectations, asserting authority, and maintaining culturally congruent communication. These culturally responsive instructional methods and student teacher interactions have been linked with academic achievement in students of color and increased student engagement (Cholewa et al., 2014). Indeed, Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) shows great promise in terms of educational outcomes; further, these results suggest that the positive impact of CRE can extend to improving the psychological well-being of students of color (Cholewa et al., 2014).

A leading figure of CRE, Geneva Gay (2010), outlines five guiding principles that underpin the approach: (1) Culture is fundamental to schooling as it shapes thinking, beliefs, actions, and communication, (2) conventional reform is insufficient, as it tends to adopt compensatory strategies that seek to address student and community deficits, (3) intention without action is insufficient, and (4) good intentions can compound concerning issues if they are not built upon critically informed and reflective pedagogical knowledge, skills, and courage,

connecting teaching and (5) learning to the social experiences and cultural resources that students arrive at school with can assist with engaging in learning and improving academic achievement, and understanding that test scores and grades are symptoms, not causes. According to Vass (2017) mentors need to be better supported to establish relationships with Initial Teacher Educators (ITE) that genuinely foster the culturally responsive learning environments needed.

An ongoing concern, however, as Nieto (2013) points outs, is that teacher education all too often fails to provide adequate, consistent, or relevant school-based experiences to equip graduates with sufficient knowledge, skills, and strategies, and while good mentoring programs can be very beneficial, efforts in this direction have not been widely effective to date either. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), field experience is a crucial dimension of preparing culturally responsive teachers as it is part of their socialization into the profession. Moreover, arguably one of the most important, but often downplayed, dimensions of practicum is the opportunity for Initial Teacher Educators is to reflect and learn from their efforts, rather than being evaluated in terms of demonstrating what they have learned in teacher education. Key ingredients in this regard are mentors that are predisposed to Culturally Responsive Schools and have a suite of skills and knowledge to assist the ITEs in this undertaking (Vass, 2017). Villegas and Lucas (2002) describe such mentors as having high degrees of sociocultural consciousness and affirming attitudes toward diverse students, are actively engaged in working toward equity and social justice, and practice culturally responsive teaching in their own classrooms.

The culturally responsive school framework centrally locates the experiences of learners as an influential dimension that helps explain engagement and achievement. Culturally Responsive Schools actively care for the well-being of young people as students and as people (Vass, 2017). Savage and colleagues (2011) describe this as an authentic caring relationship that

entails more than simple feelings of affect. It builds upon the premise that engagement improves when learning is contextualized in the lived experiences of students; that learning is more appealing and personally meaningful when embedded within cultural frameworks and filters that are familiar (Gay, 2002). In essence, it is an approach located within a resource (or asset) pedagogical framework that starts with an understanding that students (and their home communities/families) have funds of knowledge that they arrive at school with, and these cultural knowledge's (and practices) can be drawn on to assist teaching and learning in the classroom (Paris, 2012).

With the implementation of mentoring programs and professional development in school districts across the state of New Jersey little research has discussed how mentoring and professional development provide support to a culturally responsive educator. Limited research is available on how their lived experiences are influenced by culturally responsive mentoring and culturally responsive professional development.

In order to support the adopted State of New Jersey multicultural curriculum, it is necessary to incorporate throughout the curriculum the experiences, perspectives, and accomplishments of persons of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, and national origins that comprise the American society. It also means teachers must infuse a respect for self and others, an appreciation of diversity, and the acquisition of attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to function effectively with persons of diverse cultures (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021). Each district board of education shall ensure the school district's curriculum and instruction are aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). The district board of education also shall ensure its curriculum and instruction address the elimination of discrimination by narrowing the achievement and opportunity gaps, by providing equity in

educational activities and programs, and by providing opportunities for students to interact positively with others regardless of the protected categories (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021). Educators must ensure that they demonstrate the inclusion of a multicultural curriculum in their instructional materials such as lesson plans in order to ensure that students understand the basic tenet of multiculturalism.

Definition of Terms

For this study, the following terms are defined as such:

- Culturally Responsive- In the context of mentoring, Lindsay-Dennis et al. (2011) stated that: culturally responsive pedagogy views students' cultures as a useful tool for teaching and learning.
- Lived Experiences- This phenomenological methodology allows participants to explore their own experiences to highlight the phenomena (Goh et al., 2017).
- Mentoring- In the field of education, mentors are usually veteran teachers who support colleagues new to the profession, encourage them, and help them become better teachers (Portner, 2008).
- Professional Development- Professional development is utilized as a tool for teachers to improve instruction and use data from academic assessments, to recruit and retain effective teachers, particularly in high need subjects; and areas (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

Organization of the Study

This study follows the traditional dissertation structure. Chapter 1 introduces the topic at hand and presents the context and overview of the problem, purpose, rationale, theory, design and framework of the study. Chapter 2 delves into the literature most relevant to the overall themes of culturally responsiveness, professional development and mentoring. The influence that mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educator and how these lived experiences influence their practice. Chapter 3 presents the methodology of the study including the research design, participants and sampling, data sources and collection, data analysis, methods used for validity and reliability, and limitations. Chapter 4 outlines the study results, focusing on major thematic trends and findings. Finally, Chapter 5 includes the researcher's own interpretations and conclusions, as well as any recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Educators create lesson plans in order to guide instruction. In order to understand how mentoring and professional development influence these lesson plans we must understand mentoring and professional development. The literature review begins with an analysis of the development of mentoring and the need for mentoring, the literature then discusses the impact that mentoring has had on education, and it discusses the need for culturally responsive educators. The literature continues with an understanding of professional development and how it is used in public school districts and how culturally responsive professional development can improve the quality of instruction for the teacher and create a connectedness for students. It is through this experience that this researcher wants to understand how cultural responsiveness is evident in lesson plans and how mentoring and professional development influence these plans.

Historical Evolution of Mentoring

It is important to understand the deep rootedness of mentoring and the benefits of mentoring. The practice of mentoring has been an established process of development. In Homer's epic poem, The Odyssey (1614), Odysseus, is a great royal warrior, who has been off fighting the Trojan War and has entrusted his son, Telemachus, to his friend and advisor, Mentor. Mentor has been charged with advising and serving as guardian to the entire royal household. Mentor accompanies and guides Telemachus on a journey in search of ultimately a new and fuller identity of his own.

The account of Mentor in The Odyssey leads us to make several conclusions about the activity which bears his name. *First,* mentoring is an intentional process. *Second,* mentoring is a

nurturing process, which fosters the growth and development of the protégé toward full maturity. It was Mentor's responsibility to draw forth the full potential in Telemachus *Third,* mentoring is an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the protégé. *Fourth,* mentoring is a supportive, protective process. Telemachus was to consider the advice of Mentor (Anderson & Shannon, 1988). Clawson (1980) as cited in Anderson and Shannon (1988) asserts that it was Mentor's task to help Telemachus grow in wisdom without rebellion. It is also reasonable to conclude from Athena's activities in The Odyssey that role modeling is a central quality of mentoring. Taking human form, Athena provided Telemachus with a standard and style of behavior which he could understand and follow. Athena helps us comprehend that mentors need to make themselves available to protégés as role models and to understand how their modeling can stimulate perspective, style, and a sense of empowerment within the protégé (Anderson & Shannon, 1988). In order to understand how deep-rooted mentoring is, it is important to understand how it manifested itself early on in educational history.

To understand where mentoring is today we must explore the historical evolution of mentoring and its role in Education. In the 1940s and the 1950s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Legal Defense fund successfully pursued a campaign to dismantle state laws mandating racial segregation in the public schools. These efforts culminated in the U.S Supreme Court's landmark decision in Brown vs. Board of Education, which unanimously declared that "separate education facilities are inherently unequal" (Moran, 2021). One consequence of the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision to integrate schools, educational historians have held, was that large numbers of Black and African-American educators, were uprooted and displaced in mid-century, leading to a sharp decrease in the number of minority teachers (Fultz, 2004; Tillman, 2004; White, 2016). In research from R.

Ingersoll et al. (2019) when minority candidates sought to enter the teaching profession, the growth of occupational entry tests, coupled with lower pass rates on these tests by minority teaching candidates, meant that fewer minority candidates were entering the teaching profession. This decline meant less diversity and representation in the teaching profession as well as less diverse teachers being mentored. Educators during this time period were not being mentored equally, if at all, during their time in schools. This disparity created equity concerns that are persistent patterns of difference in educational opportunities and achievement among students (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005).

In the 1960s the release of the Equality of Educational Opportunity (EEO) better known as the Coleman Report, reported unexpected results when it came to equity in public schools. This report was controversial for its time. According to the report, what mattered more than conventional measures of school quality were the socioeconomic backgrounds and educational aspirations of the children students went to school with, students' sense of control over their own destinies, and, by far most important, the socioeconomic background of the individual child (Kantor & Lowe, 2017). Little emphasis was expressed in this report to the quality of support that teachers received during their time as teachers. The quality of instruction varied between schools as well as the preparedness of its teachers and the support they received. Much of the report confirmed what many already knew about the extent of racial segregation in the nation's schools (black and white students generally attended separate schools in both the North and the South) and the performance levels of students of different racial and economic backgrounds on achievement tests, black as well as Puerto Rican, Latino, and American Indian students performed substantially worse than white students ((Kantor & Lowe, 2017). The Coleman

Report failed to examine the impact that embedded teacher support such as mentoring had on students and on teachers themselves.

As a direct result of the Coleman Report, the National Commission on Excellence in Education formed by then-U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell released the report A Nation at Risk in April 1983. The most famous line of the widely publicized report declared that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (U.S. Department of Education, 1983 as cited in Park, 2004). This document known as, A Nation at Risk outlined and shared all of the commission's findings (National Commission on Excellence in Education (ED), Washington, DC & Gardner, 1983). The Commission found that teacher preparation programs need substantial improvement; that the professional working life of teachers on the whole was unacceptable; and that a serious shortage of teachers exists in key fields. (National Commission on Excellence in Education (ED), Washington, DC & Gardner, 1983). The report listed seven recommendations for improving teacher quality, including higher standards for teacher-preparation programs, teacher salaries that were professionally competitive and based on performance, 11-month contracts for teachers allowing more time for curriculum and professional development, career ladders that differentiated teachers based on experience and skill, more resources devoted to teacher-shortage areas, incentives for drawing highly qualified applicants into the profession, and mentoring programs for novice teachers that were designed by experienced teachers (Park, 2004). Mentoring and the need for it was clearly outlined as a recommendation of improving the quality of schools and the quality of education.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to revise, reauthorize, and consolidate various programs. In Title

II: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals of NCLB it revised ESEA title II, to replace and consolidate the Eisenhower Professional Development program by establishing A Teacher Quality and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund; and a National Panel on Teacher Mobility to study and report on strategies for increasing mobility and employment opportunities for highly qualified teachers, especially for states with teacher shortages and States with school districts or schools that are difficult to staff (*H.R.1 - No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, 2002). Title II: Part A—Supporting Effective Instruction of the ESEA Act assists local educational agencies in developing career opportunities. It provides advancement initiatives that promote professional growth and emphasize multiple career paths, such as instructional coaching and mentoring strategies that recruit and retain teachers in high-need academic subjects (Department of Education, 2010). It also provides new teacher induction and mentoring programs that are, to the extent the State determines evidence-based, and designed to improve classroom instruction and student learning and achievement, and increase the retention of effective teachers (Department of Education, 2010). NCLB forced all school districts to hire and recruit *only* highly qualified teachers. It also clearly outlined that school districts should have an embedded mentoring program for teachers. This mandate did not speak to how teachers were to be supported during their first years of teaching nor did it speak to what was considered to be *highly qualified*. In many school districts mentoring became an embedded support to meet the highly qualified requirement placed by NCLB (Department of Education, 2010).

Impacted by NCLB teacher education was expected to meet the new demands for qualified teachers (Sundli, 2007). Mentoring became an important part of teacher education, as an element in the professional development of schools and teachers (Sundli, 2007). Mentoring

meant guiding and supporting the new teacher to ease through difficult transitions; it was about smoothing the way, enabling, reassuring as well as directing, managing and instructing (Fletcher, 2000 as cited in Sundli, 2007). Mentoring means developing an individual's strengths to maximize their own professional and personal potential and also that of students who come under their care within a classroom situation. Mentoring goes far beyond supervision—mentoring is about active education of the mentee (Fletcher, 2000 as cited in Sundli, 2007).

Mentoring has become an important part of teacher education (Sundli, 2007). In the field of education, mentors are usually veteran teachers who support colleagues new to the profession, encourage them, and help them become better teachers (Portner, 2008). In the mid 1980's a growing number of education reformers, policymakers, and researchers argued that many of the well-publicized shortcomings of the elementary and secondary education system in the United States are, to an important extent, due to inadequacies in the working conditions, resources, and support afforded to school teachers (U. S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1997). Between 1998 and 2004 there was close to a 25 percent (from 21 to 33 percent) increase in the number of states that mandate beginning teacher support as part of their teacher induction (Hall, 2005 as cited in Porter, 2008).

Mentoring (if it existed at all in the culture of a school) was initiated as an informal response to a new teacher seeking help or assistance offered by an experienced colleague willing to share his or her own experiences (Portner, 2008). Quality mentoring supports a new teacher. Retaining teachers requires a comprehensive approach that ensures teachers are well prepared for the challenges of teaching and provides them teaching and learning environments that support their growth and help them to be effective (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Like Athena in the Odyssey, mentors need to make themselves available to protégés as role models

and to understand how their modeling can stimulate perspective, style, and a sense of empowerment within the protégé (Anderson & Shannon, 1988).

A mentoring program provides focus and support for new teachers. In trying to understand mentoring and its complexities it is important to understand overlapping themes that exist when examining mentoring. Mentoring needs to provide support for both the mentor and the mentee (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021). Teacher induction and mentoring are increasingly promoted as an effective mechanism for improving new teacher quality, new teacher retention, and student outcomes. Mentoring programs "pair novice teachers with more experienced teachers who can ably explain school policies, regulations and procedures; share methods, materials and other resources; help solve problems in teaching and learning; provide personal and professional support; and guide the growth of the new teacher through [observation and] reflection, collaboration, and shared inquiry" (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992, p.13). Mentoring has become a more and more important part of teacher education. High expectations and a large amount of money are put into the mentoring programs, and mentoring has almost become a new mantra for education (Sundli, 2007).

In the state of New Jersey reform in teacher effectiveness brought about a change in the support that novice teachers would be getting during their first year of the job assignment. Under the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act of 2012, it was adopted that a board of education shall implement a researched-based mentoring program that pairs effective, experienced teachers with first-year teachers to provide observation and feedback, opportunities for modeling, and confidential support and guidance in accordance with the Professional Standards for Teachers and the evaluation rubric. The mentoring program shall: enhance teacher knowledge of, and strategies related to, the core curriculum content

standards in order to facilitate student achievement and growth; identify exemplary teaching skills and educational practices necessary to acquire and maintain excellence in teaching; and assist first-year teachers in the performance of their duties and adjustment to the challenges of teaching (Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act., 2012). To the greatest extent mentoring activities shall be developed in consultation with the school improvement panels in order to be responsive to the unique needs of different teachers in different instructional settings. In addition, the TEACHNJ Act (2012) requires that ongoing professional development takes place. The local school district shall provide its teaching staff members with ongoing professional development that supports student achievement and with an individual professional development plan. Professional development opportunities shall be developed in consultation with the school improvement panels in order to be responsive to the unique needs of different instructional staff members in different instructional settings. The TEACHNJ act of 2012 support the idea that mentoring and professional development of teachers can provide a way to support new teachers (Fiene et al., 2009).

Mentoring experiences are intended to support the dramatic demographic shift in the United States. This shift is more apparent in the public schools than anywhere else. But this change in the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the student population is not the problem. The problem lies in the way educators have responded to that change. A positive or negative response could affect the self-esteem and academic success of students from these varied racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Brown, 2007). Teacher induction programs offer a means to help new teachers address diversity and equity (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005).

Many countries outside of the United States examine mentoring and its process critically. In other countries mentoring is used to attract and retain teachers and pressure has increased on

schools and teachers to improve pupil outcomes (Shanks, 2017). With a growing focus on pupil outcomes in schools across the world, there is a growing emphasis on improving teacher quality and their development.

Mentoring is structured to provide opportunities for candidates to become active members of learning in a community (Bentley et al., 2017). Mentoring takes time and the leadership that oversees the mentoring process needs to ensure that the support that they had as preservice teachers is continued and expanded for Newly Qualified Teacher's (NQT's). In research from Tonna et al., (2017) mentoring is widely recognized as an important adjunct to teaching, because it influences and fosters the intellectual development of learners. For preservice teachers and newly qualified teachers' development with the school is crucial. Expanding the mentoring process into a deeper context will lessen the frustration that new teachers face in the classroom.

The Framework of Mentoring

The needs of beginning teachers have been brought to the forefront of state and national policy due to increasing concerns about teacher quality and teacher shortage problems. Mentoring is a worldwide phenomenon and is generally regarded as an important tool in the development of an individual's competence, professionalism and personal growth (Fransson & McMahan, 2013). Mentoring needs to be sustained by leaders who understand the power of collaboration and professional growth. Mentoring needs to be cultivated by the school community in order for teachers to flourish and acquire the skills necessary to make education better. Rather than view the first years in the profession as a test of "sink or swim," educators are beginning to approach early career teaching as a phase that requires support in order to both retain teachers and develop them into quality professionals who impact student learning

(Achinstein & Athanases, 2010; Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012, Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999 as cited in Achinstein & Fogo, 2015)). Such thinking has maintained the development of teacher induction and mentoring programs. Mentoring pairs, the novice with an expert, veteran teacher focused on supporting the novice's professional development in his or her first few years of full time teaching (Achinstein & Fogo, 2015).

In the United States, 91% of novice educators participate in some form of induction or mentoring program (Ingersoll, 2013). Despite such international interest, mentoring and induction programs often do not hold robust ideas about subject-specific mentoring. This is particularly the case in the United States. (Achinstein & Fogo, 2015). In research from Achinstein and Fogo (2015) they found that mentors need to build a complex knowledge base in order to support novice teacher development. Mentors that provide content specific support to their mentees give more to them (Achinstein & Fogo, 2015). As described by Sundhi, (2007) good mentoring must become a personal and professional engagement, with the will and ability to share understandings and value.

Mentoring has the essential attributes of: a process; a supportive relationship; a helping process; a teaching-learning process; a reflective process; a career development process; a formalized process; and a role constructed by or for a mentor. The contingent attributes of the mentoring phenomenon appear as: coaching; sponsoring; role modelling; assessing; and an informal process (Roberts, 2000). Mentoring programs often rest on the theoretical framework developed by Kram (1985) as it considers the roles of mentoring in supporting professional growth (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). Similarities exist between Kram’s (1985) theoretical framework and the intentional process of mentoring as described in the Odyssey (1614). First, mentoring is an intentional process second, mentoring is a nurturing process, third, mentoring is

an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the protégé and fourth, mentoring is a supportive, protective process (Homer, 1614). Kram's (1985) framework provides a helpful lens through which we can consider mentoring practices for teacher induction. This is particularly true as beginning teachers might need mentoring support from multiple sources to meet the varied demands of their complex roles (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Jones, Young's, & Frank, 2013).

In the research from Kram (1985) the function of career support during the mentoring process is described. She describes career support functions as assisting new professionals to "learn the ropes" of the profession. These career functions involve help in navigating the steps of organizational advancement and protections against disadvantageous assignments. In teacher mentoring, Kram (1985) career supports can be interpreted as addressing the professional and instructional needs of new teachers, such as scheduling, managing student behavior, facilitating instructional strategies, and collaborating with parents and colleagues (Algozzine et al., 2007; Griffin et al., 2003; White & Mason, 2006). Kram (1985) and colleagues recognized the variability among mentoring relationships. Variability is often attributed to funding levels of mentoring and induction programs (Bartlett & Johnson, 2010; Stanulis & Floden, 2009) and includes differences related to mentoring programs' length of time, level of administrative advocacy for job-embedded supports (e.g., shared planning time), and the length and intensity of professional development for mentors to support new teachers.

The Need for Mentoring

The need for mentoring was a direct result of the inequity that existed among white students and students of color. Culturally relevant pedagogy is most obviously a part of retaining and cultivating highly qualified teachers and instructors in grades K-12 (Rychly & Graves,

2012). In research from Rychly and Graves (2012) it is described that four teacher practices are essential if teachers are going to effectively design and implement culturally responsive pedagogy. These four practices are: (1) that teachers are empathetic and caring, (2) that they are reflective about their beliefs about people from other cultures, (3) that they are reflective about their own cultural frames of reference, and (4) that they are knowledgeable about other cultures. The need that was recommended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) which amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) namely was driven by the inequity that existed in schools and teacher support.

Mentoring and the need for it was clearly outlined as a recommendation of improving the quality of schools and the quality of education as well as the quality of teachers. Quality teachers are believed to be the most influential in affecting students in the classroom. School systems across the country are grappling with the challenge of building and maintaining a high-quality teacher workforce for all students (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2019). When turnover contributes to teacher shortages, schools often respond by hiring inexperienced or unqualified teachers, increasing class sizes, or cutting class offerings, all of which impact student learning (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver, 2019). Both teacher inexperience and rates of turnover negatively impact student learning (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). Retaining teachers requires a comprehensive approach that ensures teachers are well prepared for the challenges of teaching, compensates them adequately for their labor, and provides the teaching and learning environments that support their growth and help them to be effective.

New teachers in the US, especially those underprepared, are disproportionately placed in classrooms with students of color, from low-income families, and with diverse language abilities. Even with basic preparation, most new teachers need continued support for this work (Achinstein

& Athanases, 2005). Today many new teachers are acquiring teaching credentials in a non-traditional way. For teachers on emergency credentials, support is even more critical. Without strong support for these new teachers, many students in their classes likely will be underserved. Many teachers themselves will despair at job dissatisfaction and unsupportive work conditions and leave the profession early (Ingersoll, 2001),

The need for mentoring has brought about the New Teacher Support Program (NTSP), it is an induction model aimed at helping novice teachers in the state's lowest-performing schools acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to raise the quality of their instruction, increase student achievement, and persist in teaching in their lowest-performing schools (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In his research, Rockoff (2008) finds that novice teachers spending more time with their mentors have higher student achievement gains in mathematics and reading than peers with fewer hours of mentoring. Mentoring supports teachers in becoming effective practitioners in the classroom leading to success for students. The findings in this research also support that teachers whose mentor had prior experience working in their school were more likely to return to teaching in their schools, and that other types of support for new teachers (e.g., common planning time, professional development) help increase retention, consistent with Smith and Ingersoll (2004).

Mentoring's Impact on Teacher Retention

Induction programs that include being assigned a mentor, meeting frequently, and focusing on high-leverage activities—observation and feedback; analyzing student strengths and needs; discussing instructional issues; and developing a professional growth plan—have been found to result in an improved impact of teacher retention (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Effectively retaining teachers is crucial to making sure there are enough well-

prepared and committed teachers to staff all of our nation's schools and that the teachers in our classrooms have the time and experience to effectively serve all students (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Many policy makers, reformers, and educators worldwide have turned their attention to teacher induction, given the needs for new teachers, the support necessary to retain them, and an urgency to meet ambitious teaching goals articulated by recent reforms (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005).

While induction programs do not always have measurable impacts (Glazerman et al., 2010), investing resources into novice teachers appears to be a promising way to retain them in the profession. Teacher induction and mentoring programs are increasingly promoted as an effective mechanism for improving new teacher quality, new teacher retention, and student outcomes. In research from Bastian and Marks (2017) findings suggest that creating a robust induction program often return positive retention and value-added results. Although the details of teacher mentoring programs differ considerably, all share the common goal of providing beginning teachers with a structured and supportive entry into the profession so as to ease their transition from university students to accomplished teachers (Bastian & Marks, 2017).

Benefits of Mentoring

Teachers, when engaged in intensive programs with mentors, benefit from this exchange (Bastian & Marks, 2017). Comprehensive teacher induction programs are one approach to take advantage of this ability for teacher improvement. Previous studies have found positive relationships between induction programs and teacher retention, the quality of teaching practices and student achievement gains (Fletcher et al., 2008; Rockoff, 2008). Furthermore, evidence suggests that strong induction programs and/or more intensive induction program participation

can benefit teacher outcomes (DeAngelis et al., 2013; Fletcher et al., 2008; Fletcher & Strong, 2009; Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007; Rockoff, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) show that having a mentor in the same subject area, combined with collaborative activities with other novice teachers, significantly lowers first-year teacher attrition rates.

Data also demonstrated that beginning teachers, in particular, report that one of the main factors behind their decisions to depart is a lack of adequate support from the school and its administration (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Teacher induction programs have a number of different, purposes. Teacher induction can also involve a variety of elements-workshops, collaborations, support systems, orientation seminars, and especially, mentoring. Mentoring is the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans, to beginning teachers in schools. During the past two decades, teacher mentoring programs have become the dominant form of teacher induction (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Today the two terms are often used interchangeably.

Mentoring participation varies from state to state and district to district. Induction programs can range from a single day orientation to more enduring activities that attempt to tie new teachers into cooperative and collaborative networks of new and experienced teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Mentorship programs, collaboration and planning time with teachers, seminars for new teachers, and regular communication with administrators or department chairs were the major components used to integrate teachers into a new school (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and were some of the reoccurring benefits of mentoring.

Induction programs offer a promising approach for mentoring beginning teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse settings and helping them teach in culturally responsive ways (Haberman & Post, 1998; Murrell, 2000; Quartz, 2003). Beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction performed better at various aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, using effective student questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrating successful classroom management (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Such programs not only lead to enhanced effectiveness, but also have the potential to improve teacher retention (Quartz, 2003). A key component of successful induction programs is the partnering of novices with true master teachers (Hilliard, 1997). The focus in mentoring often is socialization into a current system, with no challenge of dominant norms or beliefs. Mentors become local guides to the novice teachers. The most common form of new teacher support remains workshop focused on school policies and classroom management. These two concentrations of professional development are relied on heavily when mentoring novice teachers.

Professional Development

In the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the President and Congress send a clear message that professional development is essential to improving teaching and learning and should not simply be a fringe activity to be pursued as time and resources permit. The Eisenhower Program authorized support for professional development for teachers in all core academic areas. The Eisenhower Professional Development Program, established in 1984 and reauthorized in 1988 and 1994 as Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), is the federal government's largest investment solely focused on developing the knowledge and skills of classroom teachers (Porter et al., 2003). To receive

Title II funds, states were asked to describe their goals in helping teachers receive sustained, high-quality professional development tied to high content standards and their performance indicators and timelines for meeting program goals. The plan designed was to give teachers the knowledge and skills necessary to provide all students the opportunity to meet challenging state content and student performance standards (*Eisenhower Professional Development Program, Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), - ED.gov Search Results*, n.d.). Under the Elementary and Secondary School Act supporting effective instruction high quality professional development used, developed and provided high quality, comprehensive system of support for teachers to promote high quality instruction. The ESSA has had many notable reauthorizations since its establishment in 1965. Throughout its many adoptions Title II maintained that professional development activities must be supported. In December 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was adopted and it maintained that teachers needed to participate in professional development activities that are focused on improving teaching and student learning and achievement. Professional development opportunities were designed to increase effectiveness in instruction (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

According to Desimone and Garet (2015) a conceptual framework for effective professional development, suggests five key features that make professional development effective—content focus, active learning, coherence, sustained duration, and collective participation. According to (Borko et al., 2010) the focus in most of the current professional development literature is on providing a long-term, inquiry or learner-centered structure that supports teachers as they collaboratively develop the professional knowledge they need to use in their own context. This new vision of professional learning communities as a structure for professional development is closely connected to calls for instructional reform, both generally

and in specific content areas. In fact, there is widespread agreement that standards for student learning, instructional practice, and teacher professional development should be seen as interrelated components of broad-based educational reform. According to Borko et al., (2010) professional development activities should help teachers learn how to elicit and interpret their students' ideas, examine student work, and use what they learn about students' ideas and work to inform their instructional decisions and actions. Professional development that involves teachers' close consideration of student reasoning opens up opportunities for collective inquiry about issues related to subject matter and pedagogy. Professional development that is rooted in subject matter and focused on student learning can have a significant impact on student achievement (Resnick, 2005).

According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), professional development activities for educators, including the following: Pre-service and in-service training and professional development programs to prepare teachers to develop appreciation for, and understanding of, cultures, values, and ways of knowing and learning in order to effectively address the cultural diversity and unique needs of students and improve the teaching methods of educators will enhance curriculum materials that are culturally informed and reflect the cultural diversity, languages, history, or the contributions, including curricula intended to preserve and promote culture. Professional development programs will prepare teachers to develop appreciation for, and understanding of, cultures, values, and ways of knowing and learning in order to effectively address the cultural diversity and unique needs of students (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

Culturally Responsive Professional Development

American classrooms are experiencing the largest influx of immigrant students since the beginning of the 20th century (Gay, 2018). The data in the 2020 U.S Census show 1 in every 4 children, 25.7% (18.8 million), in the United States were of Hispanic origin in 2020, up from 23.1% (17.1 million) in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). These changes are evident with the students in classrooms. The US teaching force has grown increasingly white, female, and middle class, and many of these teachers have personal histories shaped by white privilege that the broader culture perpetuates. Such privilege may impede teachers' abilities to grasp needs of those with other perspectives and experiences (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005).

Effective professional development requires considerable time, and that time must be well organized, carefully structured, purposefully directed, and focused on content or pedagogy or both (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Those responsible for planning and implementing professional development must learn how to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of what they do (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). According to a report by Yoon et al. (2007) providing professional development to teachers had an effect on student achievement. This report found that teachers who received substantial professional development—an average of 49 hours boosted their students' achievement by about 21 percentile points. If professional development had an effect on student achievement, it is important to understand what influence it has on a culturally responsive educator. Having culturally responsive professional development will allow teachers to see their culturally responsive practice critically.

Recognizing that being culturally responsive in designing and delivering products and services to their respective clientele improve their effectiveness (Gay,2018) is needed for

teachers in our schools. If the potential of culturally responsive pedagogy is to be realized, then widespread instructional reform is needed, as well as major changes in the professional development of teaching personnel. It requires teachers who have thorough knowledge about the cultural values, learning styles, historical legacies, contributions, and achievements of different ethnic groups, the courage to admit that something is seriously wrong with existing educational systems, and the skills to act productively in translating knowledge and sensitivity about cultural diversity into pedagogical practices (Gay, 2018).

According to Ling and Mackenzie (2015) teachers find it easier to alter specific behaviors or routines that do not require new knowledge. This may be in part because simpler behaviors are not as dependent. Focusing on culturally responsive professional development the theory of learning, could be that specific behaviors targeted by professional development are more powerful levers for improving student learning (Ling & Mackenzie, 2015). In research from Ling and Mackenzie (2015) teachers come to Professional development with varying levels of experience and content knowledge, and from various classroom contexts—for example, some teachers have substantial numbers of English language learners, while other have substantial numbers of students with behavior issues.

These factors may influence what teachers want to and are able to learn. This variation in teacher response to the same professional development implies that it should be calibrated to individual teacher needs. Often described as “differentiated Professional Development,” this professional development can take two forms. One is to provide a catalog of professional development opportunities (online experiences, workshops, readings, and other activities), linked to areas of teacher practice measured in teacher observations. Teachers may then select

opportunities in areas where they need improvement and areas in which they can support their students (Ling & Mackenzie, 2015).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

A culturally responsive framework of working with people accepts, honors, and utilizes members' cultural orientations in supporting their work and needs. A cultural orientation is defined as an inclination to think, feel, or act a way that is culturally determined (Insoon & Onchwari, 2018). In the context of mentoring, Lindsay-Dennis et al. (2011) stated that: Culturally responsive pedagogy views students' cultures as a useful tool for teaching and learning. Cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students are valued and used to connect students to the curriculum. The goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to engage students in learning but also to help them to maintain their cultural identities.

Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the beliefs that all culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors when their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning and development, and they are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999). Culturally responsive educational systems instill ethics of care, respect, and responsibility in the professionals who serve culturally and linguistically diverse students (Klingner et al., 2005). Culturally responsive educational systems benefit all children. When educators strive to develop the individual self-worth of each child, everyone gains. Exposure to a variety of experiences enriches lives by broadening perspectives and validating each person's

uniqueness and sense of belonging to a larger whole (Nichols, Rupley, Webb-Johnson, & Tlusty, 2000).

Individual excellence in culturally responsive teaching can only become collective tradition when the contexts in which teachers practice and learn are able to support, sustain and expect culturally responsive practice (Klingner et al., 2005). To engage in substantive transformation of our current educational systems requires changes in fundamental assumptions, practices and relationships, both within school systems and between school systems and the outside world (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000; Conley, 1997; Elmore, 1996, 2000; Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedscleaux, 1999). Christensen and Dorn (1997) emphasize that such efforts must begin with an examination of assumptions about social justice. One path to creating culturally responsive systems is by working at systemic reform (Townsend, 2002; Utley & Obiakor, 2000). Schools have the potential to ground the next generations of practitioners in culturally responsive teaching and learning and, in doing so, transform a one size fits all approach to teaching and learning to a diverse and personalized program for each child (Klingner et al., 2005). For these partnerships to be successful, higher education must itself become more culturally responsive and implement powerful teacher education programs that promote models of culturally responsive practice that are committed to goals of social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Culturally responsive teachers have developed the dispositions that support all students' learning and are knowledgeable and skilled in implementing effective instructional practices. Gay (2000). These teachers help their students bridge borders between their home and school cultures, recognize and understand differences in the social milieus, and build on the knowledge and skills that their students bring with them to school learning. In doing so, these teachers demonstrate their care, respect and commitment to each student's learning abilities, desires, and

potentialities. (Klingner et al., 2005). Culturally responsive teachers specifically acknowledge the need for students to find relevant connections among themselves, the subject matter, and the tasks they are asked to perform ((Montgomery, 2001; Salend, et al., 2002). They know that students learn best when their experiences and interests serve as the basis for curriculum connections, making learning relevant to their lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally Responsive Mentoring

To be culturally responsive, a mentoring program requires that the cultural orientations and experiences of members should be incorporated, in order to enrich each member (Bennet, 1988; Hofstede, 2009; Hofstede & McCrae, 2004; Rosinski, 2003). In order to understand how mentoring affirms a culturally responsive educator we must know how a culturally responsive framework for mentoring works. A culturally responsive framework of working with people accepts, honors, and utilizes members' cultural orientations in supporting their work and needs. A cultural orientation is defined as an inclination to think, feel, or act a way that is culturally determined (Insoon & Onchwari, 2018). In the context of mentoring, Lindsay-Dennis et al. (2011) stated that: Culturally responsive pedagogy views students' cultures as a useful tool for teaching and learning. Cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students are valued and used to connect students to the curriculum. The goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to engage students in learning but also to help them to maintain their cultural identities (Lindsay-Dennis et al., 2011).

In research from Lindsay-Dennis et al (2011) as cited in Insoon and Onchwari (2018) they termed a culturally relevant mentoring program of including the following benchmarks:

safe space for sharing stories and exploring multiple identities, collective meaning from individuals and shared experiences is developed, guidance from peers and elders. This provides nurturing, and emotional support, development of trust and interdependence, capturing of strengths rather than focusing on risk factors, opportunities to create positive change that benefit individuals as well as the community and opportunity for members to design, implement, and evaluate the program.

In research from Rychly and Graves (2012) in order to be fully effective, culturally responsive pedagogy relies on several teacher qualities. These qualities are in addition to the necessary benchmarks of a culturally responsive mentoring experience. Teachers must be caring and empathetic. Caring is used in the literature not as a synonym for nice or kind, but as a descriptor for teachers who are unwilling to tolerate underachievement. Gay (2002) describes caring teachers as those who care so much about their culturally diverse students that they insist on holding them to the same standards as other students. Irvine (2003) uses caring to describe one-to-one student-to-teacher relationships, as well as the teacher's role in the greater community. Empathy, as described in the work of McAllister & Irvine (2002), appears to be not a separate teacher characteristic, but a refined element of caring. Specifically, empathy refers to the teacher's ability to understand the classroom from her students' perspectives. The caring teacher will be more successful if she approaches her goal of holding all students to the same rigorous standards by seeking first to understand where her students are. Empathy is also necessary for other characteristics. A culturally responsive educator must be given the opportunity to engage in a culturally responsive mentoring experience.

When working in various environments culturally responsive educators should be fully aware of their own cultural reference. This is called the worldview by Howard–Hamilton (2000)

and McAllister & Irvine (2002). An illustrative example of the way teachers' worldviews can influence their classroom practice is provided by Gay (2002). Gay (2002) explains how symbolic curriculum images, symbols, icons, mottoes, awards, celebrations, and other artifacts that are used in bulletin boards and other classroom displays quietly teach students about whom and what is important. Robins, et al. (2006) write about cultural blindness, which they define as any policy, practice, or behavior that ignores existing cultural differences or that considers such differences inconsequential (Robbins, 2006). They explain that cultural blindness can cause unintended harm to minority groups by perpetuating the sense that they are invisible. If teachers have not done the work of uncovering their own worldviews, then this frame of reference could stealthily undermine students' feelings of empowerment and belongingness, which all of the researchers reviewed attest will likely lead to minority students' lack of success in school (e.g., Nieto, 2004, Banks, et al. 2001, Howard–Hamilton, 2000). Culturally responsive pedagogy requires that adjustments be made to mainstream teaching practices in order to reach students with learning styles other than those of the dominant culture, it follows that teachers will have to have knowledge of the learning styles of these cultural practices in order to adjust instruction appropriately.

The role of mentoring and coaching as a means of supporting the well-being of educators and students is essential. Mentoring thus becomes a relationship between less experienced colleagues (mentees) and more experienced colleagues (mentors), where the latter aim to support the mentee's learning, development and their integration into the cultures of both the organization in which they are employed and the wider profession (Kutsyuruba & Godden, 2019).

Culturally Responsive Lesson Plans

On March 1, 2021 the state of New Jersey adopted a new Diversity and Inclusion Law, this law mandated that diversity and inclusion be evident and implemented in instruction. Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, each school district shall incorporate instruction on diversity and inclusion in an appropriate place in the curriculum of students in grades kindergarten through 12 as part of the district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The instruction shall: highlight and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging in connection with race and ethnicity, examine the impact that unconscious bias and economic disparities have at both an individual level and on society as a whole; and encourage safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students regardless of race or ethnicity (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021).

According to the State of New Jersey multicultural curriculum means to incorporate throughout the curriculum the experiences, perspectives, and accomplishments of persons of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, and national origins that comprise the American society. It also means to develop among students a respect for self and others, an appreciation of diversity, and the acquisition of attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to function effectively with persons of diverse cultures (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021). Each district board of education shall ensure the school district's curriculum and instruction are aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) provide clear and consistent learning goals across nine distinct content areas to help prepare students for postsecondary success.

These nine content areas include the following: Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills (CLKS), Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, Computer Science & Design

Thinking, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Language. This researcher will examine eight out of the nine content areas. The NJSLS-CLKS provides a framework of concepts and skills to be integrated into the foundational, academic and technical content areas to prepare students to engage in the postsecondary options of their choice. This integration is to establish meaningful connections among the major areas of study and this framework therefore the ninth content area is embedded cross-curricular.

The NJSLS standards demonstrate what students are expected to learn at specific grade levels so that teachers can understand and support student learning (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023). New Jersey State Learning Standards offer the foundation on which school districts within the state build coherent curriculum and plan instruction to prepare each New Jersey student with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed. The district board of education also shall ensure its curriculum and instruction address the elimination of discrimination by narrowing the achievement and opportunity gaps, by providing equity in educational activities and programs, and by providing opportunities for students to interact positively with others regardless of the protected categories ensuring schools demonstrate the inclusion of a multicultural curriculum in its instructional content, materials, and methods, and ensuring students understand the basic tenet of multiculturalism cultures (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021).

The following New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) within lesson plans grades 9-12 in the content areas of English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Visual and Performing Arts and World Language connect the teacher and the New Jersey Diversity and Inclusion Law (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023). In English Language Arts Grades 9-10 standard RL.9-10.6. Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience

reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature. An additional reading standard in English Language Arts RI.9-10.9 asks the student to analyze and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance, (e.g., Washington's Farewell Address the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail", Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, etc.), including how they relate in terms of themes and significant concepts (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023).

In English Language Arts Grades 11-12, standard RL.11-12.9 asks students to demonstrate knowledge of and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics. English Language Arts reading standard RI.11-12.9. asks students to analyze and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes and rhetorical features, including primary source documents relevant to U.S. and/or global history (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023). The following Science standards in Grades 9-12 LS4.D/HS-LS4-6/ HS-LS2-7- Biodiversity and Humans -Humans depend on the living world for the resources and other benefits provided by biodiversity. But human activity is also having adverse impacts on biodiversity through overpopulation, overexploitation, habitat destruction, pollution, introduction of invasive species, and climate change. Sustaining biodiversity so that ecosystem functioning and productivity are maintained is essential to supporting and enhancing life on Earth. Sustaining

biodiversity also aids humanity by preserving landscapes of recreational or inspirational value (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023).

In the Social Studies grades 9-12 learning standards the following standards support educators in implementing the Diversity and Inclusion law, 6.2.12. Civics HR.4.a: Analyze the motivations, causes, and consequences of the genocides of Armenians, Ukrainians, Jews in the Holocaust and assess the responses by individuals, groups, and governments and analyze large-scale atrocities including 20th century massacres in China, 6.2.12. History CC.4.g: Use a variety of resources from different perspectives to analyze the role of racial bias, nationalism, and propaganda in mobilizing civilian populations in support of total war. 6.2.12. History CC.5.h: Analyze how feminist movements and social conditions have affected the lives of women in different parts of the world, and evaluate women's progress toward social equality, economic equality, and political equality in various countries (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023).

The following Visual and Performing Arts standards in grades 9-12 support the Diversity and Inclusion law: 1.3D.12 nov. Re7b: Identify and describe how interest, experiences and contexts (e.g., personal, social) effect the evaluation of music, 1.5.12 acc.Cn11a: Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts., 1.5.12acc.Cn11b: Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural and historical contexts and make connections to global issues, including climate change (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023).

The following World Language grade 9-12 learning standards will be explored 7.1.IL.IPRET.3: Compare and contrast the use of verbal and non-verbal etiquette (i.e., the use of gestures, intonation, and cultural practices) in the target culture(s) and in one's own culture,

7.1.IL.IPRET.6: Using contextual authentic cultural resources, identify reasons for climate change in the target culture and in students' own community, 7.1.IM.IPRET.4: Recognize the use of verbal and non-verbal etiquette (i.e., gestures, intonation, and cultural practices) in the target culture(s) to determine the meaning of a message, and 7.1.IM.PRSNT.7: Compare cultural perspectives regarding the degradation of the environment of the target culture(s), including the effects of climate change, with those of students' own culture. The above standards support the implementation of the Diversity and Inclusion law adopted in the State of New Jersey. These standards have been created to guide teachers in creating lessons that are culturally responsive.

A lack of understanding of potential culturally related behaviors, between teachers and students exists as a result preservice teachers, who resemble the current teaching force, have limited understanding or training of what it means to teach in diverse classrooms. When this lack of understanding is coupled with teaching in diverse school settings with large populations of students from culturally diverse backgrounds, classroom management and instruction that is evidence based and culturally responsive is essential (Watson et al. 2006 as cited in Green & Stormont, 2017). Therefore, it is critical that teachers develop lesson plans that are both culturally responsive and include a variety of evidence-based instructional practices (Banks & Banks, 2012).

First, it is important to stress the importance of creating strong lesson plans. Teachers who write and follow lesson plans tend to be more effective than teachers who do not (Everhart et al., 2004), and lesson plans written with more detail appear to correlate with student achievement (Panasuk & Todd, 2005). Students of teachers who follow lesson plans generally have higher levels of academic achievement and lower levels of problem behaviors compared to students in classrooms with teachers who do not follow lesson plans (Gunter & Reed, 1997).

Additionally, academic achievement is enhanced and problem behavior reduced when teachers prepare scripted and explicit lessons inclusive of how they will explain the content, which questions will be asked, including the expected correct responses from students (Scheuermann & Hall, 2008), and implementation with fidelity.

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) has emerged in the multicultural education literature as a way to ameliorate the effects of cultural discontinuity, the mismatch between a student's culture and the teacher's culture, and assist teachers in interacting with the diversity found within their classrooms. Further, CRP addresses the mismatch between teaching styles in the classroom and the home and community culture of students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The incorporation of CRP in instruction has significant implications for the reorganization of educational experiences for students from diverse backgrounds who may already be facing barriers and challenges (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Kohl (1994) as cited in Green and Stormont (2017) explained that some students from racially or culturally diverse backgrounds engage in *willed not-learning*, that is, choosing not to learn from teachers from different backgrounds because of their prior negative learning history with individuals from their teacher's background and society. This is often mistaken by teachers for failure to learn or the inability to learn. Students engage in willed not-learning in an effort to refuse molding by society and preserve their identity and self-respect. Kohl (1994) as cited in Green and Stormont (2017) posited that to reach these students, teachers must acknowledge and be willing to confront oppression in school and society. Culturally responsive pedagogy is a way to address mismatches between the students' language and the language found within schools or between the students' experiences and the kind of experience presupposed by their teachers or the reading texts. Instruction that is culturally responsive ensures all students receive adequate opportunities to

learn through validated culturally responsive practices implemented with fidelity by skilled teachers before receiving a diagnosis of a behavior disorder (Klingner et al., 2005).

A lesson does not always have to explicitly focus on culture for it to be culturally responsive. In fact, culturally responsive lessons should be seamlessly integrated into the core curriculum. Further, the culture being explored should represent the variety of cultures (e.g., ethnicity, religion, gender) in the world and not simply those found in the classroom. Research has demonstrated that teacher use of evidence based practices increases students' academic engagement and reduces challenging behavior (Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). The following evidence based practices can help teachers be more culturally responsive in their lesson planning, Pre-correction (PC) by using PC, teachers will spend less time redirecting students and more time creating positive climates and opportunities to use praise to reinforce appropriate behaviors (Stormont & Reinke, 2009), Opportunity to respond (OTR) is any teacher behavior that provides a set of circumstances in which students must actively respond to academic material or a request (e.g., asking questions, reading aloud, writing answers to a problem; Kern & Clemens, 2007). Direction instruction (DI), general instruction that is teacher led and provides clear and explicit instruction (Scheuermann & Hall, 2008), has been proven to increase academic achievement (Gunter, Coutinho, & Cade, 2002). As Green and Stormont (2017) indicate students can benefit from teachers who with fidelity invest in lesson plans that focus on evidence based practices and are culturally responsive.

Lived Experiences

It is important to understand the lived experiences of how a mentoring program impacts a culturally responsive educator. The goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to engage students

in learning but also to help them to maintain their cultural identities (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Therefore, to be culturally responsive, a mentoring program requires that the cultural orientations and experiences of members should be incorporated, in order to enrich each member (Bennet, 1988; Hofstede, 2009; Hofstede & McCrae, 2004; Rosinski, 2003). In trying to understand mentoring and its complexities it is important to understand overlapping themes that exist when examining mentoring. Mentoring needs to provide support for both the mentor and the mentee (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021. Mentoring programs pair novice teachers with more experienced teachers who can ably explain school policies, regulations and procedures; share methods, materials and other resources; help solve problems in teaching and learning; provide personal and professional support; and guide the growth of the new teacher through observation and reflection, collaboration, and shared inquiry (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). Mentoring has become a more and more important part of teacher education. High expectations and a large amount of money are put into the mentoring programs, and mentoring has almost become a new mantra for education (Sundli, 2007). According to Ling and Mackenzie (2015) studies suggest that in designing professional development, we should consider carefully the ease with which the professional development can be integrated into teacher lessons. We ought to take on the issue of alignment with lessons more deliberately, and include support, guidance, and practice for teachers to integrate the knowledge or pedagogy into their daily instruction, rather than leaving that burden to them when they return to the classroom. The dramatic demographic shift in the United Sates is more apparent in public schools than anywhere else. But this change in the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the student population is not the problem. The problem lies in the way educators have responded to that change. A positive or negative response

could affect the self-esteem and academic success of students from these varied racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Brown, 2007).

In order to understand the impact that both mentoring and professional development had on a culturally responsive educator this researcher needed to understand the two concepts. Through a phenomenological research approach this researcher was able to explore the lived experiences of culturally responsive educators.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

This phenomenological research studied the lived experiences of how high school teachers imbedded cultural responsiveness in lesson plans and how mentoring and professional development impacted the creation of their lesson plans. Throughout this study, the following research questions explored the lived experiences of becoming a Culturally Responsive Educator:

RQ1: How do mentoring and professional development promote equity and social justice in the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator?

RQ2: What influence does mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educators' lived experiences?

This researcher used phenomenological qualitative methods to conduct this study. It was the goal of this researcher to contribute to the further development of culturally responsive schools and reveal what teachers have experienced in their mentoring and professional development and how this influenced them as educators, especially when creating and implementing lessons plans.

The Setting

This Northern New Jersey high school is the 11th largest district, with over 11,000 students across 19 schools, this district is a diverse community with over 62 languages spoken at home. The selected high school is home to 2,939 students in grades 9-12. This high school has a diverse population as evidenced by 61.7% of the student population is identified as Hispanic, 4.5% of the population is Black or African American, 5.9% of the population is Asian and 27.0%

of the population is white. The white subgroup is made of students who are also Arabic and Muslim. 29.7% of students speak Spanish, 5.1% of students speak Arabic, 1.5% of students speak Polish and 1.4% of students speak Guajarati. The high school employs 213 full time certificated staff members. The high school employs 213 full time certificated staff members with 25.8% of the teachers having less than four years of experience of teaching in a high school setting. The following demographic breakdown represented the teacher population, 87.8% of the teachers are white, 8% of the teachers are Hispanic, 0.9% of the teachers are black, 2.8% of the teachers are Asian, and 0.5% of the teachers are American Indian (NJ School Performance Report, 2023).

The Participants

Participants were recruited from a high school based in the Northern part of the state of New Jersey. This research defined high school as teachers working within 9-12 grades in a school building. The participants were identified as culturally responsive educators through a review of their lesson plans using the New Jersey State Standards as a framework. Additionally, the recommendation of an immediate department supervisor and building principal served as an identifier of a culturally responsive educator. The participants had evidence of culturally responsive lessons within their lesson planner. This researcher used experiences in accredited professional development to meet the professional development criteria. Participants had a minimum of six hours of professional development. Participants were asked to discuss with the researcher about their culturally responsive work and lesson planning. This researcher looked at the various forms of professional development opportunities received and asked questions about the actual professional development and how they impacted their teaching. In this district teachers are required to attend a professional development opportunity that speaks to Cultural

Responsiveness. This professional development opportunity is provided to staff at the beginning of the school year or in the middle of the school year.

Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment initially required the assistance from one of the following: Chief School Administrator, Human Resource Director or content supervisor within a New Jersey school district. It was the content supervisor that offered the most assistance in recruiting participants. The content supervisor directly connected to the teacher provided the most beneficial support with this selection criterion. They were able to provide concrete examples of how this teacher was culturally responsive in their practice. This researcher selected participants based on the recommendation provided by their immediate department supervisor. Participants were capped between six and 10 new high school staff that were new to the profession and or new to the school district. If the data had not been saturated additional participants would have been recruited. This did not need to take place.

The following criteria was required for any participant in this research: they must have been, or have, actively worked with a mentor as part of a new teacher induction program. They must have had lesson plans that incorporated instruction on diversity and inclusion in appropriate places of the 9-12 curriculum. Participants recruited must have also completed professional development in cultural responsiveness. They must have been employed full time, contracted with the public school district and they must have agreed to participate in interviews. These participants were also willing to share lessons samples that highlighted lessons that were culturally responsive.

Participant Selection

Participant selection occurred on a purely optional basis. Participants were not coerced into participating and were not compensated for their participation. Participants were informed that all information shared and disclosed would be kept confidential and names, positions, and locations of employment would not be shared. This information would only be accessible to the researcher. Participants were selected from various ethnic groups, gender and socio-economic groups. Purposive sampling reflects intentional selection of research participants to optimize data sources for answering the research question. For example, the research question may be best answered by persons who have particular experience (critical case sampling) or certain expertise (Johnson et al., 2020). It was the goal of this researcher to recruit, Recently Qualified Teachers (RQT's), teachers who according to the state of New Jersey were within the first 1-5 years of their teaching careers.

Description of the Selected Participants

The participants in this study were selected using the criteria discussed. The six participants selected were educators in the high school setting who worked with students in grades 9-12. These educators taught in courses that were identified as College Prep (CP), Advance Placement (AP), Limited English (LE) and Honors (H). These educators implemented lesson plans that were culturally responsive, 3 out of 6 of them (50%) infused these lesson 3 or 4 times a week during their instruction (see Table 1).

Table 1

Identification of Participants

Participant pseudonym	Course Weight	Student Grade Breakdown		Years in LEA	Lesson Plan use
April	AP=2 CP=3	GR9= 0 GR10= 0	GR11= 0 GR12= 103	2	≥ 4 times a week
June	H= 5	GR9= 0 GR10= 0	GR11= 0 GR12= 118	3	≥ 3 times a week
Kate	CP= 5	GR9= 2 GR10= 66	GR11= 43 GR12= 5	2.1	≥ 2 times a week
Mae	CP=5	GR9= 0 GR10= 4	GR11= 102 GR12= 1	4	≥ 3 times a week
Howard	CP=5	GR9= 18 GR10= 11	GR11= 29 GR12= 41	2	≥ 1 time a week
Reynaldo	LE=4 CP=1	GR9= 50 GR10= 36	GR11= 69 GR12= 2	2	= 1 time a week

Note. AP=Advance Placement; CP=College Prep; LE= Limited English; H=Honors

Purposeful Sampling

Purposeful sampling is a qualitative research technique used for the identification and selection of individuals. This involved identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. This researcher wanted participants that were able to provide and share their experiences.

Purposive sampling reflects intentional selection of research participants to optimize data sources for answering the research question (Johnson et al., 2020). Participants in this study were purposively selected because these participants were able to identify attributes that made their

mentors culturally responsive. They were able to discuss what it took to be a culturally responsive mentor in addition to sharing their own lived experiences during their mentoring process. General considerations included: age, race, religion, ethnic and cultural factors, gender and political and economic factors. Essential criteria included: the research participant had experienced the phenomenon, was intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings, was willing to participate in a lengthy interview and members check, granted the investigator the right to tape-record the interview, and publish the data in a dissertation (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

The following were the data sources and collection procedures that were used when conducting this research. This researcher used interviews, lesson plans, professional development and field notes to conduct this research. The professional development used was called Culturally Awareness 6-12. A professional development presentation that was created by professional developers in the district. Two interviews took place one for no more than 20 minutes and the second for no more than 60 minutes. All interviews were conducted in person with the consent of the participant. The participants opted to have these interviews conducted in person. Lesson plans from five out of the six participants were reviewed using Realtime©, an information system used in this public school district and one set of lesson plans were reviewed using a traditional lesson plan book, and professional development opportunities were discussed as well. Participants were asked to discuss their professional development opportunities within a culturally responsive framework. And lastly, field notes were used, which helped the researcher gather and collect any nonverbal cues that were visible during the in-person interview. These field notes were collected at the end of the second interview. This allowed the researcher time to write down field notes from the interview. These field notes enhanced data and provided rich

context for analysis. According to Muswazi and Nhamo (2013) good field notes should be descriptive to include verbal portraits of the participants, a reconstruction of the dialogue, and a description of the physical setting as well as accounts of particular descriptions of the observer's behavior. Notes can have many uses in research.

Interviews

Participants in this research participated in two interviews one interview was what this researcher called the screener interview and the second interview was the research interview. After both interviews were conducted the participants received a members check. Interviews were used as a qualitative data collection process. The design selected allowed for this researcher to better understand the lived experiences of the participants and how they were influenced on becoming a culturally responsive educator during the mentor relationship and professional development opportunities had in their public school district. In order to understand the impact that both mentoring and professional development had on a culturally responsive educator this researcher needed to understand the two concepts. The two interviews allowed insight to these two concepts. The interviews were audio recorded only, the participant and the researcher were the only two voices recorded on audio. A transcription of the audio recording was also created using an outside company specializing in transcriptions. In order to ensure accuracy, the researcher read along the transcription as the audio recording played. The researcher followed along as all words were matched to what had been transcribed. Each participant was coded with a pseudonym.

Lesson Plans

The lesson plan review consisted of a review of actual lesson plans created and submitted by the participants either in Realtime© or in an actual lesson plan book**.** The researcher looked at the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) within their lesson plans in the content areas of English Language Arts, Science, and Visual and Performing Arts. The initial intent of the researcher was to have an ideal sampling of each content area represented within the participants. After reviewing lesson plan submissions participants in the content area of Social Studies did not submit lesson plans aligned to the standard accordingly. Their submission was based on unit plan submissions. This researcher reviewed lesson plans looking for standards that support diversity, equity, and inclusion. These were not evident in the way that Social Studies teachers wrote their lesson plans. Five out of the six participants submitted their lesson plans in Realtime©. Realtime© Information Technology is software that tracked standards taught and allows the user the opportunity to create lesson plans that were aligned with state specific standards. Realtime© records and stores lesson created by teachers, it tracks standards used throughout the year. With the use of Realtime©, this researcher was able to identify staff who used diversity standards within their content area. Using the New Jersey student learning standards (NJSLS) this researcher used the content standards embedded with diversity and inclusion (see Appendix D). Lesson plans reviewed did not use the recently adopted state standards that supported the Diversity and Inclusion law. This researcher looked at Realtime © as a guide to isolate and select the Diversity and Inclusion standards embedded within the selected content areas. This researcher used the number of times each standard was used by the participant as a criterion for selection. This researcher checked the frequency of use for these standards within the pre-set interval of time: October 2022- May 2023, if the said interval of time

did not yield any lesson plans that represent culturally responsive lessons the researcher would have moved the interval to the previous school year and/or until June 2023. Lesson plans that had been used with frequency containing key language that indicated diversity and inclusion were lessons that led the researcher to the identification of participants.

Professional Development

Participants were asked to discuss professional development opportunities that were culturally responsive. Participants were asked to share all professional development they had experienced and what those lived experiences looked like. As an initial criterion a participant must have participated in professional development that had culturally responsive connections. For five out of the six participants this culturally responsive professional development was implemented at their school district. One out of the six participants, participated in this professional development in another school district. None of the six participants found the professional development to be influential them being culturally responsive. Participants were also asked to share any additional information about professional development that they had experienced elsewhere, if applicable.

Field Notes

This researcher used field notes. Field notes serve many functions. Predominately, they aid in constructing thick, rich descriptions of the study context, encounter, interview, and document's valuable contextual data (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Field notes, during this study, were collected for the sole use of this researcher; in order to ensure that there was additional information gathered during the interview process. Field notes about interviews can be generated at multiple times (Mulhall, 2003). For this researcher this was typically done after the

interviews were conducted. Many researchers unobtrusively take small, keyword-based notes during the event, while maintaining participation and eye contact with participants. These short notes can be helpful in remembering important aspects for creation of a detailed field note following the interaction (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Field notes collected in this study were conducted shortly after each interview in the following format; they were written. It did not interrupt the flow of the moment or distract the researcher or the participant. Following the interview, it was suggested to dictate the field notes, this allowed for a free-flow of ideas, unimpeded by writing and grammar, and allowed the transcript of the field notes to be placed adjacent to the interview transcript for ease of use (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). This researcher did not participate in dictated field notes nor in visual sketches. The field notes gathered allowed the researcher to take small notes during the interaction, it assisted this researcher's memory when conducting the data analysis. Field Note examples collected included notes on facial expressions when recalling interactions with their mentors in addition to body language when describing professional development, participants sat upright, shrugged their shoulders or had a blank facial expression.

Data Collection Criteria

The following phenomenological process outlined by Moustakas (1994) will include the Epoche, the researcher will set aside prejudgments and opening the research interviews with an unbiased, receptive presence will then work with phenomenological reduction, bracketing the topic or question, horizontalization, identifying that every statement has value and determining the type of value that each statement has such as delimited horizons, invariant qualities and themes, individual textured descriptions and composite textural descriptions. Participants were thorough in their responses and were forthcoming with their lived experiences. Pre-approved

questions (see Appendix A) were submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval before they were shared with the participants. At the conclusion of the interview session, the researcher began to transcribe the interview collected from the participants. Transcriptions of interview notes were recorded and maintained in a hand-written notebook. In addition, this researcher went through field notes collected (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). After noting pertinent details of the interview, this researcher spent a few moments intentionally reflecting on the whole of the interview and the performance as a participant in the narrative and as an interviewer. Critical reflections may come easily immediately following the interview or may unfold over time. Although it is important to spend time focusing on reflection soon after the interview, information can be added at any point to create a comprehensive documentation useful in later data analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008 as cited in Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). This moment of reflection allowed the researcher to absorb the information provided by the participants.

Participants had the opportunity to ask follow up questions to seek clarification if needed. Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is a technique for exploring the credibility of results. Data or results are returned to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Member checking is often mentioned as one in a list of validation techniques (Birt et al., 2016). Participants submitted a signed non-disclosure form (see Appendix B), before any interviewing and recordings took place. No interview was conducted without confirming the written consent of the participants. Each participant interview took place in a single interview session. Each interview was transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. If the researcher was audio recording data collection, then the recordings must be transcribed verbatim before data analysis can begin (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Many

qualitative methodologies encourage ongoing analysis of data throughout the study to enhance trustworthiness, permit emergent design, or assess for saturation. The researcher also ensured that the professional transcription created was accurate with what the participant had stated and what had been transcribed. If the saturation of data had not occurred additional participants would have been recruited. Additional participants were not selected.

Once interview participation had been completed it was the goal of the researcher to describe the central contributions of this research and its significance in advancing the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator through mentoring. Bracketing is a step in the phenomenological reduction in which the focus of the research is placed in brackets, everything is set aside so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and questions (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher reviewed all data collection processes to ensure that all information had been recorded and preserved. The researcher also used the recording feature on the researcher's mobile device as a backup plan should there be an issue with connectivity during the interview. It was the goal of the researcher to begin identifying similarities and differences from prior theories and research findings that would help in this process. The researcher would begin to describe the contributions the findings make (e.g. elaborating on, challenging or supporting prior research or theory) and how findings can be best utilized (Parrish, 2022).

Adoption of the interpretivism paradigm led to generation of high-level validity in data as it is based on personal contributions with consideration of different variables (Myers. 2008). The interpretive paradigm as discussed above enabled the researcher to consider different factors such as behavioral aspects based on participants' experiences, and this helped to describe reality given the assumptions and beliefs of the interpretivist researcher (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Interpretivists look for meanings and motives behind people's actions like: behavior and

interactions with others in the society and culture (Whitley, 1984 as cited in Chowdhury, 2014). It was the goal of the researcher to describe the actions of the participants as evidence in their lesson plans.

Data Analysis

Organization of the data began with this researcher placing the transcribed interviews through a process called phenomenal analysis. This procedure included horizontalizing the data and regarding every horizon or statement relevant to the topic and question as having equal value ((Moustakas, 1994). An example of horizontalizing included when Kate shared that she knows what her students are going through. From the horizontalized statements, the meaning or meaning units were listed. These were clustered into common categories or themes, removing overlapping and repetitive statements (Moustakas, 1994). The clustered themes and meanings were used to develop the textural descriptions of the experience. From these structural descriptions and an integration of textures and structures into the meanings and essences of the phenomenon were constructed. This is how the themes were identified in the data analysis. When discussing the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator, the following themes were discovered in the use and frequency of lesson plan as influenced by mentoring:

- Mentoring is an influential factor when designing an inclusive curriculum
- Participants shared that mentors taught them that cultural awareness needs to be an embedded process in lesson planning
- Lesson plans that are rooted in student engagement contribute to equity and social justice
- Building a collaborative setting was a learned process that participants acquired from their mentor.

The clustered themes and meanings were used to develop the textural description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). From the textural descriptions, structural descriptions and an integration of textures and structures into the meanings and essence of the phenomenon were constructed (Moustakas, 1994).

According to Alase (2016), data coding requires three generic cycles. The *first* generic cycle is a process that gradually codes the sometime lengthy and convoluted responses by research participants into meaningful chunky statements (or sentences). This process is meant to help researchers break-down the responses into a format (i.e., block of sentences or statements) that they, the researchers, can condense and manage (Alase, 2017). This process also helped researchers be mentally aware of some key words or phrases that were repeated or expressed by the participants. It was important for the researcher to do this during data analysis. In fact, in some cases, these phrases meant the 'core essence' of the participants' lived experiences as it related to the research project subject-matter. In this *first* cycle this researcher coded the information gathered into the following categories culturally responsive philosophy and work, professional development, mentoring and lesson plans.

The *second* generic cycle is another condensation process that further helped the researcher reduce the first generic statements into fewer words to move closer to the core essence' of what the research participants were actually expressing. This second data condensation gave the researcher another opportunity to extrapolate in very few tangible words the true gist (or core essence) of what the research subject-matter meant to the lived experiences of the participants. Alase (2016) stated that even though the first [and second] coding process[es]

will break down the participants' responses into manageable format, the condensed coding will still accurately represent the thoughts and lived experiences of the participants.

The *third* and final generic cycle stage is what Alase (2016) described as the category phase (or stage). This stage allowed the researcher to narrow down to extremely few words the responses of the participants. In this final stage, the category stage, what the researcher tried to do was capture the core essence of the central meaning (meaning unit) of the research participants' lived experiences in one or two words. Alase (2016) stated that utilizing the generic coding method allows the researcher to meticulously and methodologically break down the participants' responses without diminishing or misrepresenting the core meaning of their responses or lived experiences. Finally, the researcher also used the same process to develop the research themes identified. By utilizing similar process, the researcher positioned herself to capture and represent the core essence of the lived experiences of the research participants without distorting or misrepresenting the core essence of what the participants had experienced.

Reliability and Validity

The member checking will allow this researcher to ensure that the data collected have been collected accurately during the interviews. Participant notes and feedback will be gathered by the researcher and reviewed and authenticated through the member checking (Birt et al., 2016) Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is a technique for exploring the credibility of results. It helps with the trustworthiness of results. Data or results are returned to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Member checking is often mentioned as one in a list of validation techniques. Trustworthiness had been provided by the triangulation of data sources. Through this approach this researcher will help report the findings of this research.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Mentoring is a critical element in the well-being, socialization, and professional identity of recently qualified teachers. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teacher educators' perspectives on and experiences with mentoring and professional development, how the two support a culturally responsive educator and how this was then transferred into culturally responsive lesson plans.

This chapter presents the findings that were identified based on the content analysis of the data gathered from the data sources identified in Chapter III. Those data sources were interviews, field notes and lesson plan review. Data analysis was conducted using the data analysis procedures described in Chapter III. The findings present the answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: How do mentoring and professional development promote equity and social justice in the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator as evidenced in lesson plans?

RQ2: What influence does mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educators' lived experiences as evidenced in lesson plans?

Throughout this study the following can be reported as a result of the four themes that emerged: Mentoring is an influential factor when designing an inclusive curriculum, participants shared that mentors taught them that cultural awareness needs to be an embedded process in lesson planning, lesson plans that are rooted in student engagement contribute to equity and social justice, and building a collaborative setting was a learned process that participants acquired from their mentor. The four themes: (1) designing an inclusive curriculum, (2) demonstrating cultural awareness, (3) developing student engagement, and (4) building a

collaborative setting were evident after review of participants' responses. These themes as evidenced in lesson plans and interviews supported the research that; instruction that is culturally responsive ensures all students receive adequate opportunities to learn through validated culturally responsive practices implemented with fidelity by skilled teachers (Klingner et al., 2005).

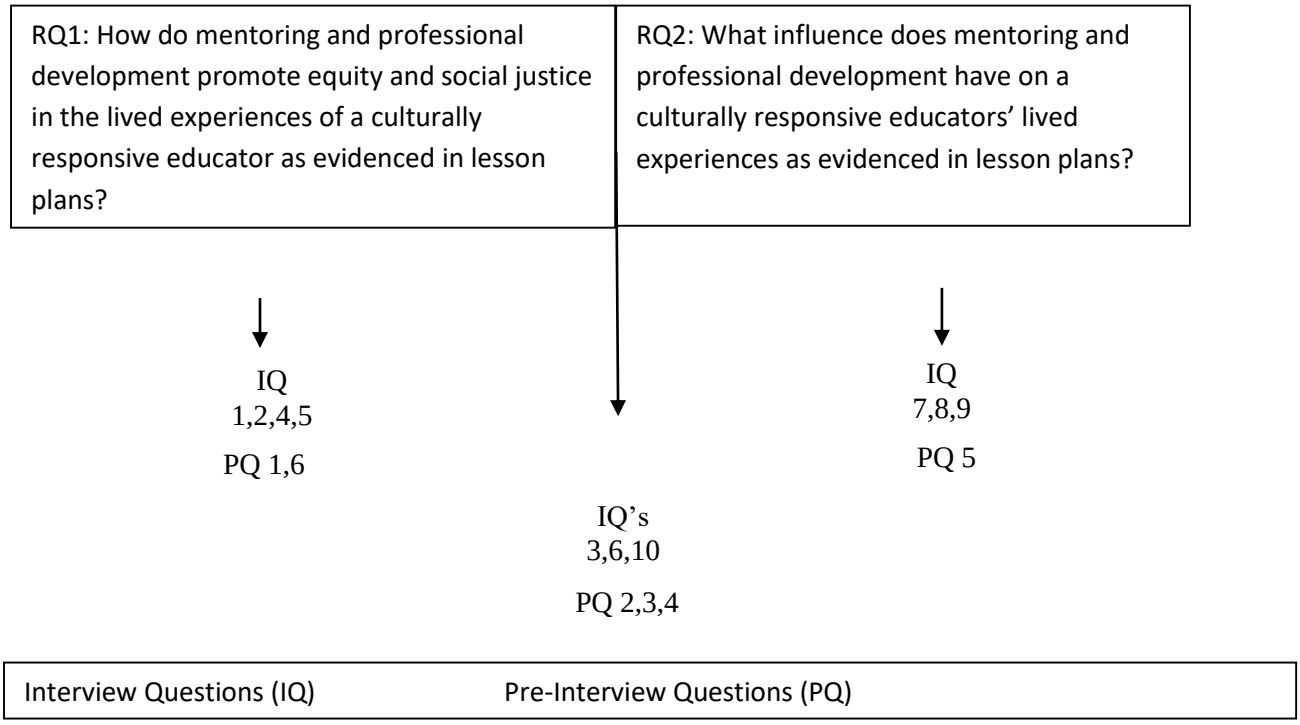
This researcher used two research questions to guide this study. These research questions were divided by question one asking participants about their mentoring and professional development and how they help promote equity and social justice. With this research question it was the goal of the researcher to ask participants about their lived experiences regarding mentoring and professional development. Research question number two asked how mentoring and professional development influenced their cultural responsiveness as evidenced in their lesson plans. With question two participants were asked to discuss how they make lessons culturally responsive and what influence if any, mentoring and professional development had on them as educators. Interview questions were sorted in order to target in on each research question. Pre-Interview questions also supported the responses that answered the two research questions in this study. Figure 1, Research Matrix highlights what interview questions and pre-interview questions targeted each research question (RQ1 and RQ2) in this study.

The four themes that emerged supported the two research questions. The following themes demonstrating cultural awareness and developing student engagement helped support research question one that asked how do mentoring and professional development promote equity and social justice in the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator. Mentoring is an influential factor when designing an inclusive curriculum and lesson plans that are rooted in student engagement contribute to equity and social justice. The following two themes; designing

an inclusive curriculum and building a collaborative setting supported research question two that asked, what influence does mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educators' lived experiences. These two themes supported that mentoring is an influential factor when designing an inclusive curriculum and building a collaborative setting was a learned process that participants acquired from their mentor.

Figure 1

Research Matrix



Note. The figure demonstrates the pre-interview questions (PQ) and interview questions (IQ) that supported each research question within the study. As shown specific pre-interview (PQ) and interview questions (IQ) were aligned in order to determine how mentoring and professional development promote equity and social justice and what influence does mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educator.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked, how do mentoring and professional development promote equity and social justice in the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator as evidenced in lesson plans? When equity and social justice were discussed with participants in the context of education, equity and social justice referred to the following for 6 out of 6 (100%) participants; instructional practices were continuously aimed at ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their backgrounds, identities, and circumstances in the classroom. These instructional practices included the use of diverse texts, exemplars in the respected field of instruction and the infusion of students own cultural identity as a way to connect instruction to students. This allowed for discussions of similarities and differences to take place regarding identity and culture, for example. In the context of mentoring, Lindsay-Dennis et al. (2011) stated that: Culturally responsive pedagogy views students' cultures as a useful tool for teaching and learning. Students' cultural identity (for these participants) facilitated a clearer connection to content for students. For recently qualified teachers to make this connection early on in their career supports the need in transforming the one size fits all approach to teaching and learning to a diverse and personalized program for each child (Klingender et al., 2005). Equity and social justice in the classroom, for 100% of the participants, acknowledged that different learners require different levels of assistance to achieve the same outcomes.

As indicated in the interviews the goal of these participants was to promote equity by eliminating disparities in educational achievement and outcomes based on factors such as socioeconomic status, race, gender, ethnicity, disability, or language proficiency. It was Kate and Reynaldo who emphasized the importance of knowing the socioeconomic hardships that their

students experienced, it was Kate who emphasized the need to be more empathetic to her students' life situations as these circumstances impact learning and instruction, she expressed that she would often give her students breaks with deadlines, classwork, homework and the scheduling of assessments and assignments in order to accommodate working schedules, caring of younger siblings and truancy issues caused by instability at home. Reynaldo similarly, expressed that he would look at where his kids were coming from and what hardships they would carry with them. The two were in tune to the first generation of learners who were being educated in the United States. They understood that many of their students acted as income providers for their families and did not have to only worry about school. It is through this lens that these two participants were able to understand the need for culturally responsive lesson planning. They understood that for many of their student's instruction needed to be meaningful and accessible.

Through their planning the additional participants incorporated social justice in their instructional practice by adopting culturally responsive teaching strategies that validate and incorporate their student's cultural backgrounds and experiences as well as provided instructional resources that were culturally connected and relevant. It was through supplemental resources that April was able to make a connection to Bram Stoker's Dracula, by providing resources that were not only from a white European male. She used examples of present-day activists and authors that allowed for more meaningful connections to Dracula to take place for her students. Many of her students are not of the Christian faith and struggled with making connections to the texts until she was able to draw parallels to authors who they could relate to Stoker. Similarly, June executed similar tactics, she used culturally diverse authors to help explain the meanings in Othello written by William Shakespeare, another white European male.

She elaborated on the themes of race and racism found in Othello by bringing current day events that speak to race and racism. She expressed that this connection allowed for her students to understand these key elements while they read Othello and be provided the opportunity to ask questions and share their own experiences of being marginalized.

The connection that three of the participants (Kate, Mae and Howard) shared was that they all made their students visible in class. In their classrooms they created environments where students from Palestine and Egypt, for example, would be represented in literature and in the display of notable contributions to the world. They were made visible in the sense of where they came from, what music they listened to and the contribution that their culture has had on the world. By doing so as expressed by Howard, “I get a peek into what their life looks like and I get to play that music in class for them. They get to see, like I'm honoring their experience.”

When analyzing research question 1, it was unanimous that all the participants felt that their mentoring experience had been an influential part of their cultural responsiveness. Participants reported that it was with their mentors that they were able to learn, acquire and apply the skills of being culturally responsive. They learned from firsthand accounts of successes that their mentor had had in their own classrooms, they learned about the value of connecting self-identity with the learner. Participants shared that their mentors provided them with examples of lessons, lesson plans and texts that made connections with their students. Mentors also expressed to participants the value of telling their own lived experiences. Mentors taught them how to modify lessons and choose supplemental materials that were more culturally representative and inclusive. There was a purposeful selection of representation in texts, scientists, authors and artists infused in participants’ classrooms. Having a mentor that was culturally aware of the

diversity that exists in classrooms provided participants a direct model of behavior. Participants described being able to see cultural responsiveness in action as a way to replicate that behavior.

According to all of the participants being able to understand the value and need for diversity in the classroom through lessons and lesson plans confirmed that they were building classrooms that were equitable and filled with social justice. Participants shared that diverse lessons, diverse texts and culturally diverse content materials helped build equity. Participants shared that they infused topics of discussion that were rich in social justice as discussion points in the classroom. They indicated that these discussions helped build an extension of what was learned to the need for social justice and the importance and value that it has on society.

It was through their responses that this researcher was able to determine that the following themes demonstrating cultural awareness and developing student engagement helped support research question one. For these participants mentoring was an influential factor when designing an inclusive curriculum and lesson plans that are rooted in student engagement contribute to equity and social justice.

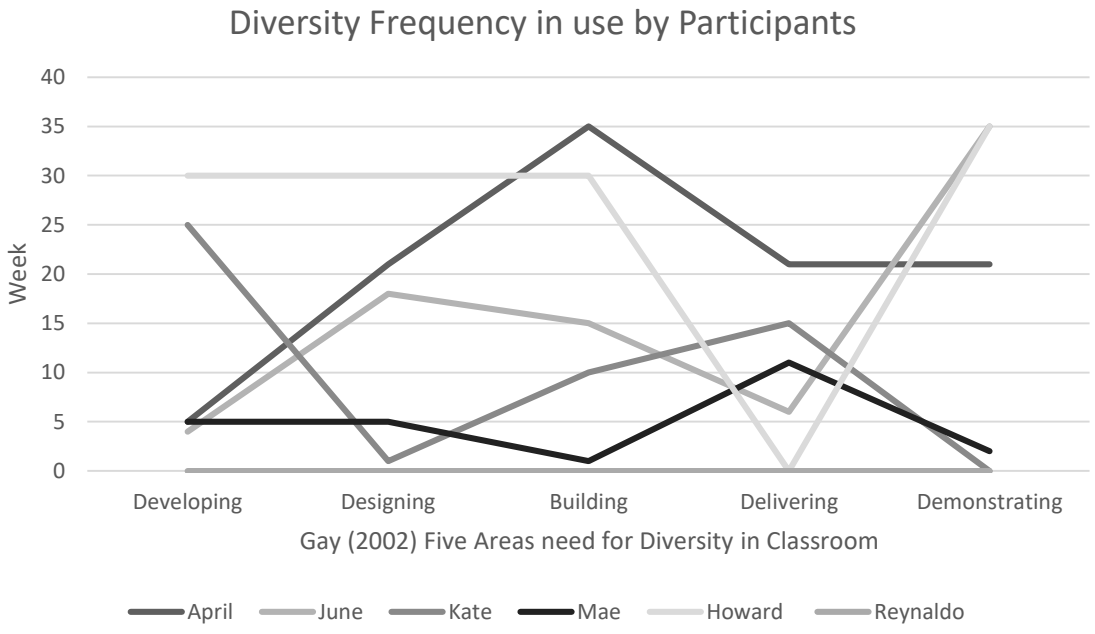
Lesson Plans and Instruction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine educators' perspectives on and experiences with mentoring and professional development and how the two supported a culturally responsive educator and how this was then transferred into culturally responsive lesson plans. This researcher used Realtime© Information Technology to analyze the frequency of use of classroom inclusivity as described by Gay (2002) Diversity in the classroom. When analyzing the collected data from the participants a direct connection was made to what Gay (2002) identified as five important areas (i.e., developing a culturally diverse knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula, demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community,

building effective cross-cultural communications, and delivering culturally responsive instruction) that need to be addressed when preparing teachers to work with the diversity in their classrooms. Out of the five important areas discussed by Gay (2022) four of these areas presented themselves as themes within this study. These areas presented themselves for five of the six participants (83%) involved in this research during their lesson plan discussion as evidenced by the interval of time used, October 2022- May 2023. These participants had these themes integrated in their instructional practices and lesson plans (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Diversity in the Classroom (Gay,2002)

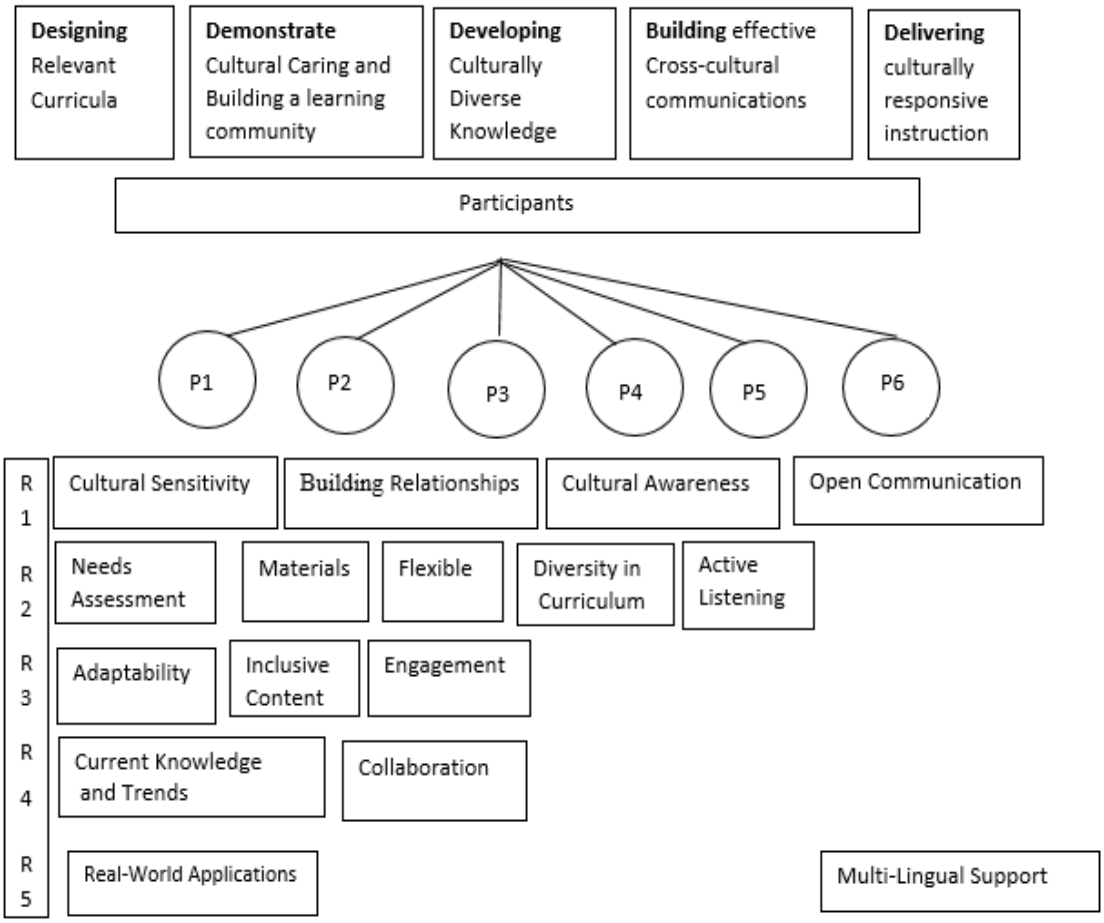


Note. Figure 2, Diversity in the classroom, represents the frequency that each of the 6 participants had within the classroom using the five important areas identified by Gay (2022). Looking at the lesson plan submissions by the participants they coincided with their responses.

When describing their lived experiences in the classroom, participants shared how they expressed diversity in the classroom. Based on their responses Figure 3 indicates how these five important areas were depicted in each of their classrooms. All participants (100%) discussed one various form of the key important areas as identified by Gay (2022) without knowing that they were exhibiting that feature in the classroom.

Figure 3

Diversity in Classrooms (Gay, 2002) as Discussed by Participant.



Note. Diversity in Classrooms, Gay (2022) depicts the common themes that were shared amongst participants. As the rows descend the correlations between the participants and their shared experiences begins to minimize in row two, 5 out of 6 participants (83%) shared the listed commonalities, in row three, only 3 out of the 6 (50%) shared the listed commonalties, in row

four, 2 out of 6 (33%) and in row five, two participants shared two different implementations of diversity in the classroom, 1 out of 6 shared (16%).

Theme 1: Designing an inclusive curriculum.

In this research 6 out 6 participants (100%) shared that mentoring was an influential factor when designing an inclusive curriculum. This theme was expressed by participants sharing that it was the influence of their mentor that prompted them to think critically of the diverse cultures and perspectives in their classroom. It was through this lens that they created lessons that were culturally diverse and inclusive. This involved highlighting articles, showcasing stories, and locating information from diverse authors and contributors. Table 1 expresses what participants had to say about how they made their curriculum more inclusive as a result of the influence of their mentoring experience.

Table 1

Theme 1- Designing an Inclusive Curriculum

Theme 1:	Designing an Inclusive Curriculum	
Participant pseudonym	Evidence of Inclusive Curriculum	(PQ, IQ) Alignment
April	*Always looking for something to add to the curriculum.*	PQ6
June	*Always researching.*	PQ6
Kate	*I try to relate to them, and I try to find middle ground.*	PQ6
Mae	*Continue to grow by continuing to look at texts or look at other ways that I can implement more .*	PQ6
Howard	*I try to do research on important figures for social justice movements.*	PQ6
Reynaldo	*Look at kids culture, where they are coming from.*	PQ1

From the data analysis, designing an inclusive curriculum was evident during the following interval of time October 2022- May 2023 for the participants in this study. During this interval of time participants in this study designed lessons that were culturally responsive. For

participants this lesson design was influenced by the time that they had spent with their mentor. This influence came with participants learning how to feature articles, stories, and information from diverse authors and contributors. Within their lesson plans they identified lessons that highlighted culturally diverse texts and activities. These participants learned how to create environments where every learner had the resources, representation and support needed to succeed and make a connection to instruction and content area.

With participants who taught English; authors, short stories and news events from various cultures were used to make connections to historical pieces of literature such as Othello or Dracula. News events that spoke about equity and social justice were infused into their lesson plans when issues found in Othello were discussed. Present day news articles help make connections to the literature that students were able to follow. The goal of these participants was to promote equity by eliminating disparities in educational outcomes. Through their planning the educators in this study aimed to enforce inclusivity in their instructional practice by adopting culturally responsive teaching strategies that validate and incorporate their student's cultural backgrounds and experiences. These practices drew direct comparisons to literature and their own personal experiences. For all participants this practice was influenced by their mentoring experience. Mentors stressed the importance of making the connections with their students. Participants shared how their mentors modeled the designing of lessons that were inclusive. When analyzing the submission of the participants' lesson plans, participants highlighted cultural diverse texts, using discussion questions that connected to students, applying what they had learned from their own person experiences and extending what they had learned as elements that presented themselves during the planning of lessons.

The State of New Jersey's multicultural curriculum means to incorporate throughout the curriculum the experiences, perspectives, and accomplishments of persons of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, and national origins that comprise the American society (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021). It is the goal of the state of New Jersey to entrust local school boards with ensuring its curriculum and instruction addresses the elimination of discrimination and provide equity in educational activities and programs, by providing opportunities for students to interact positively with multicultural curriculum in its instructional content, materials, and methods, and ensure students understand the basic tenet of multiculturalism (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021). The New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) aligned with ensuring equity was used within lesson plans in grades 9-12 in the content areas of English Language Arts, Science and Visual and Performing Art (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023). In creating diverse lessons participants in this study supported the state standards for their students.

Theme 2: Demonstrating cultural awareness

When demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community 4 out of 6 (67%) of the participants involved themselves with creating an inclusive and supportive educational environment that valued and respected diverse cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives. They went beyond simply acknowledging cultural differences but rather, actively worked to promote understanding, collaboration, and a sense of belonging among students. They ensured that the learning materials reflected a broad range of voices and experiences. Table 2 demonstrates the correlation with the participants and cultural awareness. It is through their own lived experiences that they were able to express the need for having cultural awareness embedded in the learning process.

Table 2

Theme 2- Demonstrating Cultural Awareness

Theme 2:	Demonstrating Cultural Awareness	
Participant pseudonym	Evidence of Inclusive Curriculum	(PQ, IQ) Alignment
April	*If they see themselves in what they're being taught, they'll have more internal motivation.*	PQ1
June	*Relating everything back to how does it matter, why does it still matter?*	PQ1
Mae	*It is important that my students understand that people of their backgrounds exist.*	PQ1
Howard	*Giving students the information to see these different life experiences.*	PQ1

The educators in this study knew it was necessary to incorporate throughout their lesson plans the experiences, perspectives, and accomplishments of persons and students of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, and ethnicities within their classroom. According to participants this was a key point that they learned from their mentor. Through their lessons and lesson plans they infused a respect for self and others, an appreciation of diversity, and an acquisition of skills, and knowledge needed to function effectively with persons of diverse cultures (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021). They did this by demonstrating cultural awareness. The educators in this study ensured that the inclusion of a multicultural curriculum was evident in their instructional materials such as outside texts, supplemental resources and real world applications of discussions. Evident in their lesson plans were texts that were not in district pacing, authors that were culturally diverse and tasks that required students to apply what they had learned to themselves and their own lived experiences. Mentors shared specific advice on how to infuse cultural awareness and how they help promote equity and social justice.

Theme 3: Developing student engagement

In the third theme participants in this study felt that developing strong relationships with students based on trust and mutual respect allowed for an enhanced amount of student engagement to take place in the classroom. Four out of 6 (67%) participants cited that they made connections with their students when creating lessons that were engaging they made a connection with students' cultural backgrounds and acknowledging their individuality. Table 3 presents a correlation with the participant and the pre-interview question (PQ) and the interview question (IQ).

Participants in this study created lessons that continuously asked students to apply, connect and infer content into their own lives. This engagement according to participants forced their students to think about their own lived experiences and how it connects with what they are learning. Lesson plans analyzed found that having students apply skills and knowledge aligned with making connections to their own backgrounds and what they were learning. The outcomes resulted in students creating projects, completing labs and writing essays that were more reflective of what they had learned while using materials that were more culturally diverse. During the interview participants emphasized that they were continuously looking for methods and modalities to keep students engaged, always wanting to connect with students in forms that they can relate to them in their everyday lives. They wanted their students to apply what they had learned, connect to the content and make inference to the information that they had learned in creative format. Mentors provided them with their own ideas and lessons that worked to help them think about the types of lessons that they can create.

Table 3

Theme 3- Developing Student Engagement

Theme 3	Developing Student Engagement	
Participant pseudonym	Evidence of Inclusive Curriculum	(PQ, IQ) Alignment
April	*That creates a good opportunity to talk about equity and talking about what is equal.*	IQ7
June	*Why would he feel empowered by putting someone down?*	PQ1
Mae	*Enforcing with my kids how impactful language can be. I always adjust texts to my slides.*	Q9
Howard	*Virtual check ins. then I get kind of a peek into what their life looks like.*	PQ5

Theme 4: Building a collaborative setting

In theme 4, when building a collaborative setting the participants took into account the diversity of their students. All participants (100%) within this study referenced the diversity within their classroom. They want their students to be a part of the planning and be part of the process. As discussed by Kate, “It’s important where you came from and to remember who your ancestors were and the struggles that people have gone through to be where you are today.” It is through this learned philosophy from her mentor that she practices a collaborative setting for her students.

Building a collaborative setting was a learned process that participants acquired from their mentor. In this theme, participants in this study made a direct correlation with the influence that their mentors had on them. Participants cited the benefits of culturally responsive lessons linked directly to what they had learned from their mentors. The mentors referenced in this study provided participants with the importance of cultural awareness and the value of empathy. Participants shared that their mentors brought to their own practices the desire to connect with their students and have their students represented in the curriculum that they were required to

teach. They emphasized the need for being able to understand where their students came from and the value of that diversity. The mentors partnered influenced participants to be aware of themselves and their own cultural identity as well as the cultural identity of the students in their classrooms. A collaborative setting was cultivated as students in these classrooms were allowed to be represented. Table 4 highlights personal testimonials shared by participants about the importance of building a collaborative setting.

Table 4

Theme 4 - Building a Collaborative Setting

Theme 4:	Building a collaborative setting	
Participant pseudonym	Evidence of Inclusive Curriculum	(PQ,IQ) Alignment
April	*I like using them for, essentially, kind of new ideas.*	IQ8
June	*So just being open to everything instead of one avenue.*	PQ5
Mae	*Where I see gaps with my students. I want to make sure everyone is basically covered.*	IQ6
Kate	*I tried to have countries that my students were from and places that they are used to seeing.*	PQ5
Howard	*It's going to be inclusive, it's going to make sure that everybody feels comfortable doing the work.*	IQ9
Reynaldo	*I do look at what's working and not working, trying to figure out what can do better.*	IQ7

Research Question 2

In this study research question 2 (RQ2) asked, what influence does mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educators' lived experiences as evidenced in lesson plans? Five out of 6 (83%) of the participants in this study credited the influence and positive experience they had with their mentor on being a culturally responsive educator. The following interview questions (IQ) were aligned with investigating this research

question. This research question addressed what influence mentoring and professional development had on them as a culturally responsive educator through their lessons.

When analyzing research question 2, participants drew direct reference to the influence that mentoring had had on them. Continuously they referred to the interaction and the influence that their mentor had on them as a direct correlation of who they are as a culturally responsive educator. Participants referenced the value placed on diverse curricular materials by their mentors that helped them infuse diversity into their planning and implementation of lesson plans. It was through the lens of the mentors own lived experiences that mentees were able to learn how to look at the learner and their cultural diversity. It was shared that mentors taught them how to think of instruction differently. Five out of the 6 participants expressed that they did not have diverse lived experiences and could not relate to the learners. It was through the time that they had with their mentor that they were able to look at the learner and the diversity of the learner. This exposure made them build curricular connections with their students in their lesson plans. Only one of the participants shared that it was their own diverse cultural background that acted as a commonality between them and their mentor. This connection allowed them to think critically of lessons and lesson planning together and share stories about their similarities and differences.

It was through their responses that this researcher was able to determine that the following two themes; designing an inclusive curriculum and building a collaborative setting supported research question two. These two themes supported that mentoring is an influential factor when designing an inclusive curriculum and building a collaborative setting was a learned process that participants acquired from their mentor.

Lived Experiences

When discussing lived experiences this referred to the personal, everyday encounters, events, and situations that individuals go through in their lives. These experiences encompassed a wide range of aspects, including cultural background, upbringing, relationships, work, education, and various life events. These lived experiences shaped the participant's perspectives, beliefs, values, and identity. The participants' lived experiences are highly subjective and unique to each individual. It was through the coding process of the data that this researcher was able to identify the following categories of how participants own lived experiences influenced their practice. They were influenced by personal interpretations, emotions, and perceptions of events. When examining key points about the lived experiences amongst these participants the following was shared amongst the participants of this study (see Table 5).

- Cultural Context: Cultural background significantly influences lived experiences. Cultural norms, traditions, and societal expectations contributed to how individuals navigated and interpret their experiences.

- Identity Formation: Their Lived experiences play a crucial role in shaping their identity. This included aspects such as racial or ethnic identity and socioeconomic status.

- Learning and Growth: Participants learned from their lived experiences, whether positive or challenging. These experiences contributed to personal growth, resilience, and the development of coping mechanisms.

- Influence on Perspectives: Lived experiences influence attitudes, beliefs, and the way participants approach relationships and decision-making.

- Intersectionality: Lived experiences are often interconnected and influenced by multiple factors, creating a complex web of influences. Intersectionality recognizes that various aspects of identity intersect and impacted a participant's experiences

Table 5

Lived Experiences Correlation to Participant

Participant pseudonym	Cultural Context	Identity Formation	Learning and Growth:	Influence on Perspectives	Intersectionality
April	√	√	√	√	√
June	√	√	√	√	√
Kate	√	√	√	√	√
Mae	√	√	√	√	√
Howard	√	√	√	√	
Reynaldo		√	√	√	

Participants shared the following when discussing their own lived experiences and how these lived experiences shaped the participant's perspectives, beliefs, values, and identity. It is through their own lived experiences that they think critically of who they are as professionals and how they can connect more so to their students. Both, Howard and Kate capitalized on their connectedness to their student by their age and by their similar socio-economic upbringing. Howard made connections with students by understanding the dependency that students have on the internet and their phones. As expressed by Howard, "I know what they're going through with the internet and having the phone with them. And everything that's happening in the online culture and in social issues as well, it impacts them very deeply." This sensitivity allows Howard to think about his practice critically and how to ensure that his lessons are sensitive to the online culture that exists for students today. Kate's heartfelt connection stems from her own hardships, her lived experiences echo the broken homes, dependency filled homes that some of her students

come from. Her ability to understand that some students may feel as though the world doesn't see, hear or accept them was her lived experience that allowed for her cultural responsiveness in the classroom. Kate knows what it is like to, "…growing up in a community being one of the only students of color, and so that was very hard."

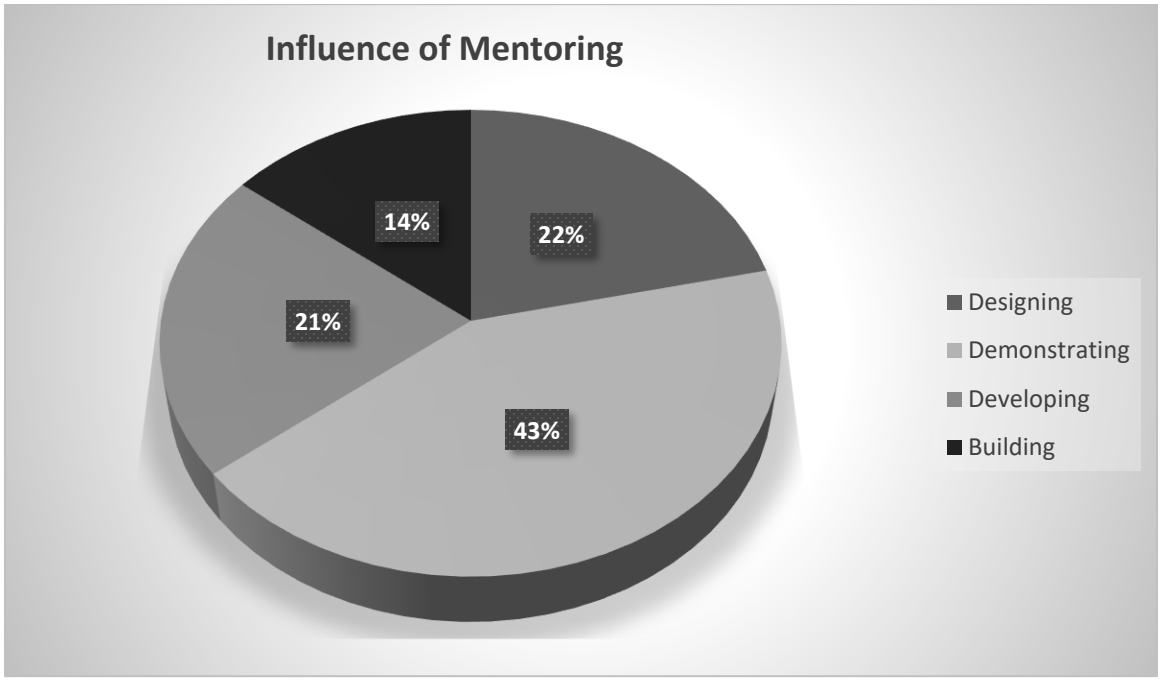
April's lived experiences speak to identity formation and learning growth. It is through April's lens that we see the identify formation that she underwent when she started teaching. It was through an understanding that certain characteristics of classroom management would never be able to be used or adopted by her because of her gender and cultural identity. She learned that there are certain types of classroom management techniques that she could not carry off, just because students would not like that on her as a woman, whereas on a man, they might respect that. This experience she described "colored her teaching experience." It is through this lived experience that forced her to think about her classroom management and how to tackle strategies that her students will respond will to when implemented.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a worldwide phenomenon and is generally regarded as an important tool in the development of an individual's competence, professionalism and personal growth (Fransson & McMahan, 2013). In this research participants in this study all had an interaction with a mentor. Figure 4 shows the correlation with mentoring and the four themes discussed in this data analysis.

Figure 4

Influence of Mentoring and the Identified Themes



Note: Mentoring had the following influence for the participants in this study. Forty-three percent of the participants had been influenced by their mentor on how to demonstrate culturally responsive lessons in their classrooms. Twenty-two percent learned how to design lessons that were culturally responsive. Twenty-one had learned how to develop culturally responsive lessons by the modeling that had been provided by their mentor and fourteen percent of the participants' had started to build lessons that were culturally responsive based on the time that they had spent with their mentors.

The following themes were reinforced when analyzing the data collected about the mentoring experience.

- Designing an inclusive curriculum
- Demonstrating cultural awareness
- Developing student engagement
- Building a collaborative setting

These themes reoccurred when analyzing the interview questions in this study. These themes were embedded in the responses shared by participants. Figure 4 depicts the influence that the mentoring experience had had on these themes. Forty-three percent of the participants were influenced by their mentor to demonstrate cultural awareness in their lessons. Twenty-two percent of the participants shared that as a result of their mentoring experience they were influenced to continuously designing an inclusive curriculum. Twenty-one percent were influenced to develop student engagement and lastly, 14% of them were influenced by their mentors to build a collaborative setting.

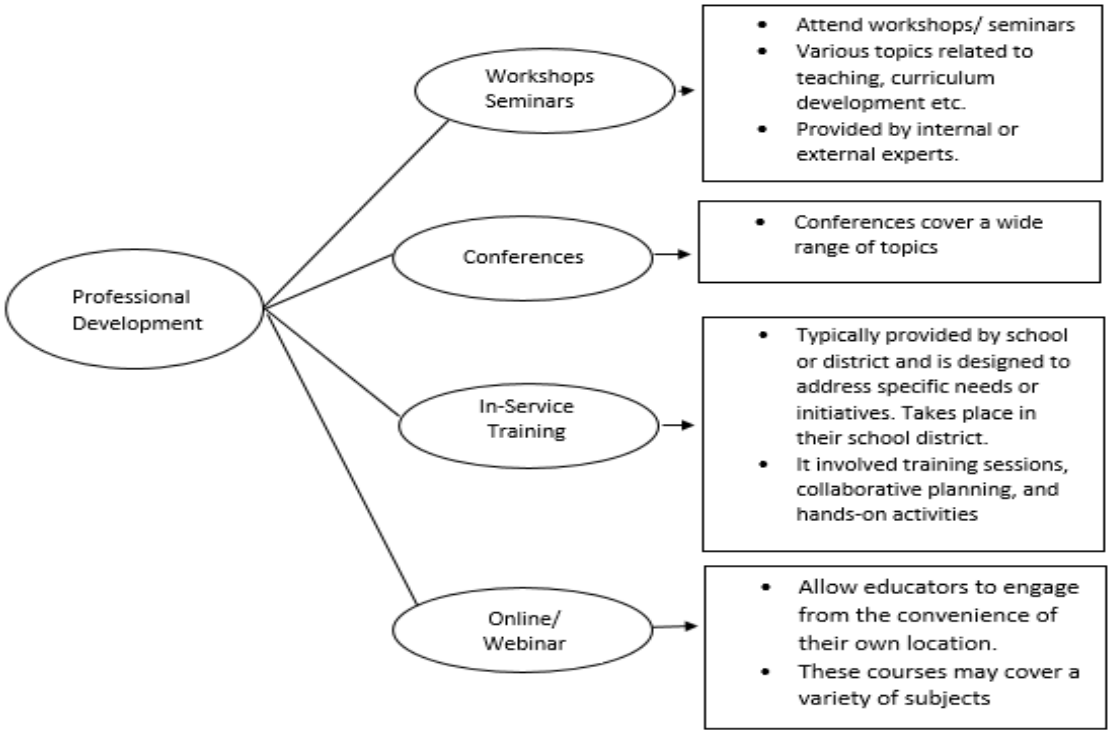
Mentoring to all participants was an influential contributor to their cultural responsiveness. When discussing the influence that mentoring had on participants, Mae, April and Kate shared that their mentoring experience was a positive experience. They discussed the influence that their mentor had had on them and how they were able to learn from their mentor about being culturally responsive. Mae shared that her mentor was “culturally responsive and that definitely brushed off on her, in allowing her to choose better texts” for her students. It is through this influence that she is able to have poetry slams that allow her students the opportunity to experience poets from diverse ethnic groups. April and Kate both expressed a similar regard that their interaction with their mentor was casual and responsive that it perpetuated them to have a more at ease relationship as mentor and mentee.

Professional Development

Professional Development refers to the continued process of acquiring and enhancing knowledge, skills, and competencies to improve teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Professional development in this study was defined as the following (see Figure 5):

Figure 5

Professional Development Breakdown



According to the participant's, effective professional development is often differentiated, responsive to the needs of educators, and aligned with broader educational goals and initiatives. It is a dynamic and ongoing process that contributes to the growth and success of educators and the improvement of student outcomes. All of the participants in this study would modify and change one or more aspects of professional development. When discussing the influence that

professional development (PD) had on the lived experiences of these participants. Table 6, depicts the professional development sentiment and evidence statement shared for each participant in this study:

Table 6

Professional Development Sentiment and Evidence Statements

Participant pseudonym	PD Good	PD Bad	Neither Good/Bad	Form of PD	Evidence statement
April		√		Not indicated	*Most of the time it does not live up to the expectation.*
June	√	√		Not indicated	*Some are really great, and others just feel like I've heard this song and dance 1,000 times.*
Kate	√	√		In-Person	*I don't like some of the professional development up until this year, first PD I thought was a great time.*
Mae	√	√		In-Person	*I think it can be a hit or miss.*
Howard	√	√		In-Person/Webinar	*So at times it's really positive or really negative or it's a little all over the place.*
Reynaldo			√	In-Person	*You had to go that was pretty much it.*

Professional development (PD) was not a contributing factor in making these participants culturally responsive. According to the participants' professional development received was neither good nor bad, it was taught in isolation. Participants felt that much of the professional development that was had lacked connection to what they were teaching. PD was never connected, it was never followed through with and it often was isolated in reason and purpose. PD was an obligation that needed to be filled.

With regard to how it influenced equity and social justice, it did not. Participants shared that much of the professional development had was inconsistent, it was either inappropriate to what they taught or it failed to make connections with them as educators or with their students. Participants performed the action of attending professional development without any of the engagement necessary to grow as educators. Lesson plans did not provide evidence to either support or negate the influence of professional development, it was through the interview process that participants shared their lack luster experiences with professional development.

The overall shared sentiment about professional development did not uphold the benefits of professional development.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine culturally responsive educators' lived experiences with mentoring and professional development and how the two supported them in lessons and lesson planning. This chapter presented findings that were identified based on the content analysis of the data gathered. Those data sources were lesson plan reviews, interviews and field notes gathered by the researcher. The findings presented the answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: How do mentoring and professional development promote equity and social justice in the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator as evidenced in lesson plans?

RQ2: What influence does mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educators' lived experiences as evidenced in lesson plans?

The six participants selected were educators in the high school setting who worked with students in grades 9-12. These educators taught in courses that were identified as College Prep (CP), Advance Placement (AP), Limited English (LE) and Honors (H). These educators implemented

lesson plans that were culturally responsive. This researcher can report that the following occurred as a result of the themes that were discovered in this study:

- Mentoring was an influential factor when designing an inclusive curriculum
- Cultural awareness was an embedded process in lesson planning
- Lesson plans rooted in student engagement contributed to equity and social justice
- Building a collaborative setting was a learned process that participants acquired from their mentor

In this study 100% of participants were influenced by their mentor. Their mentor influenced designing an inclusive curriculum, demonstrating cultural awareness, developing student engagement and building a collaborative setting. Sixty-six percent of the participant indicated that professional development was neither good nor bad in their influence to becoming culturally responsive. Their lived experiences encompassed cultural background, upbringing, relationships, work, education, and various life events.

These lived experiences shaped the participant's perspectives, beliefs, values, and identity as culturally responsive educators. It is through these lived experiences that conclusions, discussions and recommendations can be made.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter V is the concluding chapter of this study and provides a discussion on how culturally responsive educators were influenced by mentoring and professional development as evidenced in lesson plans. This chapter discusses the conclusions on how equity and social justice present themselves in participants' lesson plans. This chapter will also discuss the disproportionate level of influence that mentoring had on participants' implementation and creation of lesson plans versus the influence that professional development had on them. Lastly, this chapter discusses recommendations and the impact that this study has on equity and social justice.

In this study mentoring is defined as the pairing of a novice with an expert, veteran teacher focused on supporting the novice's professional development in his or her first few years of full-time teaching (Achinstein & Fogo, 2015). Professional development (PD) is viewed through the lens of being rooted in subject matter and focused on student learning, acknowledging that it can have a significant impact on student achievement (Resnick, 2005). In this study, mentoring was an influential component on culturally responsive educators and their lesson planning and lesson implementations, while professional development was not a mediating factor in the creation and implementation of lesson plans. In the case of the majority of participants, PD was something that fulfilled a requirement, it checked off a box.

When analyzing the collected data from the participants the data supports a direct correlation to what Gay (2002) identified as five important areas; (1) developing a culturally diverse knowledge base, (2) designing culturally relevant curricula, (3) demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, (4) building effective cross-cultural communications,

and (5) delivering culturally responsive instruction that need to be addressed when preparing teachers to work with the diversity in their classrooms. Four out of the five important areas discussed by Gay (2022) were present and had been adapted in the lesson plans for each of the six participants involved in this research. Intuitively, these participants had these themes integrated in their instructional practices and lesson plans. The frequency of use varied for each of the participants during the course of the thirty-one-week interval of time that was analyzed during the 2022-2023 school year. The following research questions aimed to explore the lived experiences of a Culturally Responsive Educator:

RQ1: How do mentoring and professional development promote equity and social justice in the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator as evidenced in lesson plans?

RQ2: What influence does mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educators' lived experiences as evidenced in lesson plans?

Mentoring Conclusions

When discussing the lived experiences of a culturally responsive educator, this researcher can report that the following occurred as a result of the themes that were discovered in the use and frequency of lesson plans as influenced by mentoring:

- Mentoring was an influential factor when designing an inclusive curriculum
- Participants shared that mentors taught them that cultural awareness needs to be an embedded process in lesson planning
- Lesson plans that were rooted in student engagement contributed to equity and social justice
- Building a collaborative setting was a learned process that participants acquired from their mentor.

Culturally responsive teachers specifically acknowledged the need for students to find relevant connections among themselves, the subject matter, and the tasks they are asked to perform (Salend et al., 2002). They know that students learn best when their experiences and interests serve as the basis for curriculum connections, making learning relevant to their lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Beginning teachers who participated in some kind of mentoring performed better at keeping students on task, using effective student questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrating successful classroom management (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). It is through the partnership of mentoring that these participants were able to credit their commitment to creating collaborative settings. Villegas and Lucas (2002) describe such mentors as having high degrees of sociocultural consciousness and affirming attitudes toward diverse students, are actively engaged in working toward equity and social justice, and practice culturally responsive teaching in their own classrooms.

Professional Development

Conclusion 1

Participants shared that professional development did not influence them in becoming culturally responsive and it did not assist in helping them to create culturally responsive lesson plans. Professional development opportunities were designed to increase effectiveness in instruction (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015) and in this study this did not occur for these participants. With unanimous agreement participants felt that those responsible for planning and implementing professional development must learn how to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of what they do (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

Recommendation for Improving Mentoring Practices

Research

Mentoring is a worldwide phenomenon and is generally regarded as an important tool in the development of an individual's competence, professionalism and personal growth (Fransson & McMahan, 2013). In this study 100% of the participants credited the influence and positive experience they had with their mentor to them being a culturally responsive educator. The data in this research supported that mentoring had a direct impact on these participants as they were influenced by the mentors they were assigned. In many school districts mentoring has become an embedded support to meet the highly qualified requirement placed by NCLB (Department of Education, 2010). The accounts of mentoring in this study support the accounts of Mentor in The Odyssey. *First*, mentoring is an intentional process. *Second*, mentoring is a nurturing process. *Third*, mentoring is an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied. *Fourth*, mentoring is a supportive, protective process (Anderson & Shannon, 1988). Clawson (1980) as cited in Anderson and Shannon (1988) asserts that it was Mentor's task to help Telemachus grow in wisdom. Like Mentor in The Odyssey, the mentors that worked with these educators nurtured them, provided them with wisdom and supported them in growing as culturally responsive educators as indicated by the participants.

Despite research to support the benefits of mentoring many school districts do not invest enough time and resources to support such a program to its fullest capacity. Many school districts leave it up to the mentor and the mentee to coordinate and work around pre-existing schedules, often leaving them to meet for a few minutes at a time or meeting virtually into the evening hours of their day, making this time less effective. With research to support a rationale for the need for mentoring, school districts still struggle with the operational methods in which

mentoring takes place. Mentorship programs, collaboration and planning time with teachers, seminars for new teachers, and regular communication with administrators or department chairs were the major components used to integrate teachers into a new school (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and were some of the reoccurring benefits and challenges of mentoring.

Practice

In the context of mentoring, Lindsay-Dennis et al. (2011) stated that culturally responsive pedagogy views students' cultures as a useful tool for teaching and learning. Cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students are valued and used to connect students to the curriculum. Delivering culturally responsive instruction involves tailoring teaching methods, curriculum, and learning environments to meet the diverse needs of students from various cultural backgrounds. The participants in this study learned this from the mentors that they had worked with. The mentors they were partnered with exposed them to the value of diversity as expressed in their interviews. The goal for these educators was to create an inclusive and supportive educational experience that recognized and valued the cultural identities of all learners. All participants expressed that as a direct result of their time with their mentor they were able to set time aside to get to know their students, this awareness allowed them to openly discuss with their students the cultural differences that exists amongst them. Mentors provided advice and guidance on how to build lessons that promoted equity and how they used these lessons to discuss and introduce social justice.

Mentors and mentees should be given the opportunity to collaborate during the day with a designated time to meet, discuss and plan. An ongoing concern, however, as Nieto (2013) points out, is that teacher education all too often fails to provide adequate, consistent, or relevant school-based experiences to equip teachers with sufficient knowledge, skills, and strategies, and

while good mentoring programs can be very beneficial, efforts in this direction have not been widely effective to date either. Eighty-three percent of the participants in this study indicated that they learned a great deal from their mentoring but logistical constraints were present, it was hard to coordinate a meeting time and the paper work that was required often took time away from discussions.

Recommendation for Improving Professional Development Practices

Research

According to the participant's effective professional development is often differentiated, responsive to the needs of educators, and aligned with broader educational goals and initiatives. It should be a dynamic and ongoing process that contributes to the growth and success of educators. All of the participants in this study indicated that they would modify and change one or more aspects of professional development. When discussing the influence that professional development (PD) had on the lived experiences of these participants; 83% of the participants would agree that some of the received professional development was both bad and good and it did not influence them as culturally responsive educators. While 16% of the participants were indifferent to professional development. Participants in this study did not express a direct contribution of professional development to cultural responsiveness. According to a report by Yoon et al. (2007) providing professional development to teachers has an effect on student achievement. This report found that teachers who received substantial professional development—an average of 49 hours boosted their students' achievement by about 21 percentile points. If professional development had an effect on student achievement, it is important to understand what influence it has on a culturally responsive educator. Though

research supports the value that professional development has on student achievement none of the participants discussed the impact that it had on their student achievement.

Policy

In this study professional development activities were met with mixed reviews. According to the participant's professional development did not support the development of their instructional practice nor their culturally responsive awareness. In the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the President and Congress sent a clear message that professional development was essential to improving teaching and learning and should not simply be a fringed activity to be pursued as time and resources permit (Porter et al., 2003). Professional development opportunities were designed to increase effectiveness in instruction (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Professional development that is rooted in subject matter and focused on student learning can have a significant impact on student achievement (Resnick, 2005).

Practice

According to Smylie (2014) as reported in (Smylie et al., 1989) large proportions of teachers felt that professional development opportunities provided by their schools and school districts are among their least valuable sources of learning and not particularly useful for addressing classroom problems. School districts should invest in professional development teams that are directly attached to curriculum guides and student learning standards in order to directly correlate professional development with curriculum. Most professional development opportunities that teachers experience consist of formal short-term or one-shot workshops, conferences, and training sessions. Intensity and duration of learning experiences are low. Very

few teachers have the opportunity to study any aspect of teaching for more than a day or two (Smylie, 2014).

In addition, school districts should invest in professional development that is culturally responsive. Districts should be willing to keep teachers abreast of strategies in which they can target their learner. Culturally responsive professional development can improve the quality of instruction for the teacher and create a connectedness for students. Having culturally responsive professional development will allow teachers to see their culturally responsive practice critically. Recognizing that being culturally responsive in designing and delivering products and services to their respective clientele and improve their effectiveness (Gay,2018) is needed for teachers in our schools.

Ling and Mackenzie (2015) propose that when designing professional development, it is imperative to meticulously assess how seamlessly the professional development can be incorporated into teachers' lesson. We ought to take on the issue of alignment with lessons more deliberately, and include support, guidance, and practice for teachers to integrate the knowledge or pedagogy into their daily instruction, rather than leaving that burden to them when they return to the classroom. The results suggest that the following is not happening when planning for PD; Effective professional development requires considerable time, and that time must be well organized, carefully structured, purposefully directed, and focused on content or pedagogy or both (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). And that those responsible for planning and implementing professional development must learn how to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of what they do (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). In this study the data collected supports that professional development was not a direct influence on culturally responsive educators. Participants in this study did not draw reference to the influence of professional development and their cultural

responsiveness. Professional development did not support them in becoming culturally responsive.

Recommendation to explore the lived experiences

Research

Limited research exists on information pertaining to the lived experiences of culturally responsive educators and how mentoring and professional development influence their practice. With the implementation of mentoring programs and professional development in school districts, little research has discussed how mentoring and professional development provide support to a culturally responsive educator. Limited research is available on how lived experiences are influenced by culturally responsive mentoring and culturally responsive professional development. Teachers, when given the opportunity to discuss their lived experiences, may assist in understanding how mentoring and professional development can evolve into molding culturally responsive classrooms. Therefore, the benefit of this study is to add to the existing literature to better understand how mentoring and professional development influence culturally responsive educators.

Policy

In this study the interaction between the mentor and the mentee supported the literature that although mentoring programs differ considerably, all share the common goal of providing beginning teachers with a structured and supportive entry into the profession so as to ease their transition from students to accomplished teachers (Bastian & Marks, 2017). Research does not indicate the impact that these lived experiences have on them as culturally responsive educators. The literature supports the concepts in isolation. The TEACHNJ act of 2012 supported the idea that mentoring and professional development of teachers can provide a way to support new

teachers (Fiene et al., 2009) but it does not discuss how lived experiences influence them as culturally responsive educators.

Practice

School districts should provide teachers with the opportunity to discuss and share their lived experience as part of their practice. According to Farrell (2020) learning from the experience of others is one of the greatest opportunities we have as a species, yet we sometimes mistrust human experience, reverting instead to external, rational sources of information Learning from the experiences of others is essential for education researchers and for this reason it is recommend that school district allow the opportunity to train and practice the art of reflection and sharing life experiences.

Equity and Social Justice

Gay (2018) highlights that American classrooms are currently witnessing the most significant surge in immigrant student enrollment since the dawn of the 20th century. The U.S. teaching force has grown increasingly white, female, and middle class, and many of these teachers have personal histories shaped by white privilege that the broader culture perpetuates. Such privilege may impede teachers' abilities to grasp needs of those with other perspectives and experiences (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). To be successful, education must itself become more culturally responsive and implement powerful education programs that promote models of culturally responsive practice that are committed to goals of social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

The dramatic demographic shift in the United Sates is more apparent in public schools than anywhere else. But this change in the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the student

population is not the problem. The problem lies in the way educators have responded to that change. A positive or negative response could affect the self-esteem and academic success of students from these varied racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Brown, 2007). In this research it was the goal of the researcher to address equity and social justice through the following Research Question (RQ1): How do mentoring and professional development promote equity and social justice in the lived experiences of a labeled culturally responsive educator as evidenced in lesson plans? In the context of education, equity and social justice referred to the principles and practices aimed at ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all students, regardless of backgrounds, identities, or circumstances. These concepts identified by the participants recognized and addressed systemic inequalities within their classrooms.

Equity and social justice in the classroom, for 100% of the participants, acknowledged that different learners require different levels of assistance to achieve the same outcomes. For these students to be successful, teacher preparedness must itself become more culturally responsive and implemented to promote models of culturally responsive practice that are committed to goals of social justice (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Within these classrooms equity in education focused on ensuring fairness and equal opportunities for students that inhabit these rooms. Social justice seeks to address broader systemic issues and advocate for positive changes in policies and practices to create a more inclusive and just educational system. Both concepts are crucial for fostering an educational environment that supports the success of all students.

This study focused on mentoring novice teachers with experienced mentors to support their professional development in their early teaching years. It emphasized the importance of subject-focused professional development in impacting student achievement. Mentoring

significantly influenced culturally responsive educators' lesson planning and implementation, unlike professional development, which was seen as a checkbox requirement. Participant data analysis aligned with Gay's key areas for teacher preparation in diverse classrooms, integrated intuitively into instructional practices and lesson plans, with varying frequency throughout the school year.

Focusing on culturally responsive education and social justice, highlights educators' impact on student self-esteem and academic success. By examining how mentoring and professional development influenced culturally responsive educators, the study aimed to promote equity and social justice in lesson planning, stressing fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunities in education while addressing systemic classroom inequalities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Participants will be asked to respond to the following, as part of their participation process:

1. Tell me about your culturally responsive philosophy and work.
2. Tell me about your mentoring experience as a mentee. What did that look like?
3. Have you always considered yourself a culturally responsive educator? When did you start? What prompted the change?
4. What do your culturally responsive practices look like in the classroom?
5. How do you continue to grow as a culturally responsive educator?

Appendix B

The researcher will focus on one main question with the following probes to help expand on the phenomenon of a culturally responsive educator during the mentoring relationship. The following questions will be used during the interview process if needed.

Main Question

1. Tell me how being culturally responsive is evident your lesson plans.

Probing Interview Questions

1. What aspects of the mentoring program stand out for you? Notable? Good or bad?
2. How did these experiences affect your practice or affect you as an educator?
3. What has been your personal experience with being culturally responsive?
4. What is your process for creating your lesson plans? How do you incorporate diverse backgrounds and perspectives?
5. How do you infuse the new standards into your lesson plans?
6. How do you infuse culturally responsive pedagogy in your lesson plans?
7. How does your cultural background and experiences shape your views and interactions with your students?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to share with regard to your mentoring experience and have you shared all that is significant with regard to your professional development experience?
9. What influence does mentoring and professional development have on a culturally responsive educators' lived experiences?
10. How do your lesson plans promote equity and social justice in your culturally responsive classroom?

Appendix C

The following question will be used when conducting the member check-interview

1. After reading your description is there anything else that I missed or that you would like to share?

Appendix D

New Jersey State Standards for Diversity and Inclusion

The following New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) within lesson plans in grades 9-12 in the content areas of English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Visual and Performing Arts and World Language connect the teacher and the New Jersey Diversity and Inclusion Law (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023) will be reviewed.

- ELA standard RL.9-10.6- Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
- ELA standard RI.9-10.9 asks the student to analyze and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance, (e.g., Washington's Farewell Address the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail", Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, etc.), including how they relate in terms of themes and significant concepts (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023).
- ELA standard RL.11-12.9 asks students to demonstrate knowledge of and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
- ELA standard RI.11-12.9. asks students to analyze and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes and rhetorical features,

including primary source documents relevant to U.S. and/or global history (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023).

- Science standards LS4.D/HS-LS4-6/ HS-LS2-7- Biodiversity and Humans -Humans depend on the living world for the resources and other benefits provided by biodiversity. But human activity is also having adverse impacts on biodiversity through overpopulation, overexploitation, habitat destruction, pollution, introduction of invasive species, and climate change. Sustaining biodiversity so that ecosystem functioning and productivity are maintained is essential to supporting and enhancing life on Earth. Sustaining biodiversity also aids humanity by preserving landscapes of recreational or inspirational value (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023).
- Social Studies standard 6.2.12. Civics HR.4.a: Analyze the motivations, causes, and consequences of the genocides of Armenians, Ukrainians, Jews in the Holocaust and assess the responses by individuals, groups, and governments and analyze large-scale atrocities including 20th century massacres in China.
- Social Studies standard 6.2.12. History CC.4.g: Use a variety of resources from different perspectives to analyze the role of racial bias, nationalism, and propaganda in mobilizing civilian populations in support of “total war”.
- Social Studies standard 6.2.12. History CC.5.h: Analyze how feminist movements and social conditions have affected the lives of women in different parts of the world, and evaluate women’s progress toward social equality, economic equality, and political equality in various countries (New Jersey Student Learning Standards, 2023).
- Visual and Performing Arts standards1.3D.12 nov. Re7b: Identify and describe how interest, experiences and contexts (e.g., personal, social) effect the evaluation of music.

- 1.5.12 acc.Cn11a: Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts.
- 1.5. 12acc.Cn11b: Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural and historical contexts and make connections to global issues, including climate change.
- World Language standards 7.1.IL. IPRET.3: Compare and contrast the use of verbal and non-verbal etiquette (i.e., the use of gestures, intonation, and cultural practices) in the target culture(s) and in one's own culture.
- World Language standard 7.1.IL. IPRET.6: Using contextual authentic cultural resources, identify reasons for climate change in the target culture and in students' own community.
- World Language standard 7.1.IM. IPRET.4: Recognize the use of verbal and non-verbal etiquette (i.e., gestures, intonation, and cultural practices) in the target culture(s) to determine the meaning of a message.
- World Language Standard 7.1.IM. PRSNT.7: Compare cultural perspectives regarding the degradation of the environment of the target culture(s), including the effects of climate change, with those of students' own culture.

VITA

Marta J Fortunato

Education: Doctor of Education, William Paterson University of New Jersey, 2024

Master of Arts, The College of New Jersey, 2012

Master of Arts, William Paterson University, 2008

Bachelor of Arts, Rutgers University, 2001