

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AND POSITIONALITY IN A
NORTHEASTERN U.S. REGION: INSIGHTS FROM DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION,
AND BELONGING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examined K-12 teachers' perspectives on inclusive teaching practices and positionality following professional development (PD) focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in a northeastern U.S. region. Grounded in critical race theory (CRT) and positionality theory, this research aimed to understand the effects of DEIB PD on teachers' self-efficacy implementing inclusive teaching strategies and their positionality awareness. The study used an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, with quantitative data collected through a demographic questionnaire, the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) scale, and a positionality scale. These instruments assessed teachers' self-reported competency in inclusive pedagogy and positionality awareness. A qualitative phase followed, incorporating interviews with educators who had and had not recently received DEIB PD. The findings revealed significant disparities in perceptions of inclusivity and self-awareness between these groups, emphasizing the necessity of sustained, research-based DEIB PD. Teachers who participated in DEIB PD reported increased confidence in incorporating culturally responsive practices, while those without such training highlighted a lack of institutional support and preparedness. This research contributes to the growing discourse on social justice leadership in education by reinforcing the importance of intentional DEIB PD in equipping teachers to navigate systemic inequities in schools. The study's findings can inform best practices for DEIB PD, and include recommendations for educational leaders seeking to implement effective, equity-driven professional learning initiatives.

Keywords: Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), critical race theory (CRT), positionality, inclusive teaching practices, professional development (PD).

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation with love and gratitude to my parents, Ronald and Patricia Krup, and to my brother, Conor Krup. To my parents, a lifetime of thanks would not be able to explain how grateful I am for your love and guidance. You each have demonstrated what hard work and dedication look like, and more importantly how consistency of the two can build lasting, loving relationships. My brother and I have had the privilege of growing up in a household with a mother and father who provided us with every opportunity that they were never given. You reveled in our successes alongside us, just as equally as you felt the pain of our losses. I was raised to never question whether my dreams were attainable, just to question how hard I was willing to work to achieve them. You both have always valued the importance of education, and after over 25 years as a student, that value is equally as strong within me. Thank you for always supporting me, providing me with guidance at every turn, and never allowing me to linger in uncertainty.

To my brother, Conor, I want to thank you being a little brother I have looked up to my entire life. Your humor, loyalty, and support are pillars I lean on for strength during the good times and bad. I can see the best parts of our parents in you: your unrelenting work ethic, the love you have for your friends and family, and the drive to be better than those who came before you. Thank you for being someone I can so easily be proud of, someone I strive to be more like, and someone who is always there for me. If sibling rivalry comes down to which of us can keep moving the needle for our collective dreams and successes, it is a competition I will happily take on with you for the rest of our days.

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The driving force behind this research topic needs to be acknowledged as well, especially when facing the weaponization of and backlash against DEIB within our country. This research topic was chosen to emphasize the need for continuous DEIB conversations, legislation, and education in all facets of our society. Understanding and valuing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is only the first step in implementing lasting, meaningful change. The success of future generations will be dependent on social justice leaders being change agents and taking action to ensure the inclusion and equity of diverse communities. This research was intended to shed light on the work that has been done and the innumerable steps that must continue to be taken.

LIST OF TABLES

Table

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Survey Participant Demographics..... | 36 |
| 2. Interview Participant Demographics..... | 38 |
| 3. Research Questions and Data Analysis Methods Used to Answer Them | 43 |
| 4. Responses to Inclusive Teaching Practice and DEIB PD Questions | 48 |
| 5. CRTSE Scale Results by Group | 50 |
| 6. Positionality Scale Results by Group..... | 54 |
| 7. No DEIB PD Interview Questions..... | 56 |
| 8. Coding Themes, Codes, and Interview Excerpts for the No DEIB PD Group..... | 61 |
| 9. DEIB PD Interview Questions..... | 63 |
| 10. Coding Themes, Codes, and Interview Excerpts for the DEIB PD Group..... | 68 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------|
| Abstract | iv |
| Dedication | v |
| Acknowledgements | vi |
| List of Tables | vii |
| Table of Contents | viii |
| Title Page | xii |
| Chapter 1. Introduction | 1 |
| Overview | 1 |
| Problem Statement | 1 |
| Impetus of This Study | 5 |
| Research Questions | 5 |
| Definition of Terms | 6 |
| Theoretical Framework | 8 |
| Significance in Equity, Fairness, and Social Justice | 10 |
| Summary | 11 |
| Chapter 2. Literature Review | 13 |
| Incorporating CRT in PD | 13 |
| Social Justice Training, Awareness, and Action in PD | 18 |
| The Importance of Effective PD for Teacher Practice | 23 |
| Positionality and the Importance of Educators' Self-Awareness | 28 |
| Limitations of Existing Research | 30 |
| Conclusion | 31 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter 3. Method | 33 |
| Research Design Overview..... | 33 |
| The Researcher | 34 |
| Study Participants | 35 |
| Participant Recruitment and Selection Process..... | 35 |
| Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria | 36 |
| Participant Demographics | 36 |
| Researcher-Participant Relationships | 38 |
| Institutional Review Board Approval..... | 38 |
| Data Collection | 39 |
| Phase 1. Quantitative Data Collection | 39 |
| Phase 2. Qualitative Data Collection | 40 |
| Data Analysis..... | 41 |
| Chapter 4. Results | 43 |
| Introduction to Data Analysis..... | 43 |
| Data Preparation | 44 |
| Phase 1. Quantitative Data Preparation | 44 |
| Phase 2. Qualitative Data Preparation | 44 |
| Data Analysis..... | 45 |
| Survey Data..... | 45 |
| Interview Data..... | 45 |
| Presentation of Quantitative Findings | 47 |

| | |
|---|----|
| RQ 1. How Do K-12 School Districts in a Northeastern Region Address DEIB PD for Teachers?..... | 47 |
| RQ 2. What Are Teachers’ Perceptions of Inclusive Teaching Practices After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ? | 49 |
| RQ 3. What Are Teachers’ Awareness Levels of Their Positionality in School Settings After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ? | 53 |
| Presentation of Qualitative Findings | 55 |
| Interviewees with No DEIB PD Within the Past 2 Years..... | 55 |
| Interviewees with DEIB PD Within the Past 2 Years..... | 63 |
| Summary..... | 70 |
| RQ 1. How Do K-12 School Districts in a Northeastern Region Address DEIB PD for Teachers?..... | 70 |
| RQ 2. What Are Teachers’ Perceptions of Inclusive Teaching Practices After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ? | 71 |
| RQ 3. What Are Teachers’ Awareness Levels of Their Positionality in School Settings After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ? | 72 |
| Conclusion | 72 |
| Chapter 5. Discussion | 74 |
| Interpretation of Results | 74 |
| RQ 1. How Do K-12 School Districts in a Northeastern Region Address DEIB PD for Teachers?..... | 74 |
| RQ 2. What Are Teachers’ Perceptions of Inclusive Teaching Practices After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ? | 76 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| RQ 3. What Are Teachers' Awareness Levels of Their Positionality in School | |
| Settings After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ? | 77 |
| Implications | 78 |
| The Need for More DEIB PD | 78 |
| The Need for Teacher Feedback and Constant Reflection | 79 |
| The Need to Address Teachers' Discomfort in Engaging with DEIB Topics | 80 |
| The Need to Bridge the Gap Between DEIB Theory and Practice | 81 |
| Limitations | 81 |
| Conclusion | 82 |
| References | 84 |
| Appendices | 92 |
| Appendix A | 92 |
| Appendix B | 94 |
| Appendix C | 99 |
| Vita | 102 |

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine teacher perceptions of inclusive teaching practices and their positionality after participating in professional development (PD) focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). Specifically, this study intended to understand PD centering on DEIB (denoted as DEIB PD hereafter) and teachers' inclusive teaching practices within the classroom. The theoretical frameworks underpinning the study include critical race theory (CRT) and positionality theory. This research highlights the promotion of fairness, equity, and social justice among educators and provides evidence that supports the necessary implementation of DEIB PD within U.S. public school districts.

Problem Statement

CRT, pioneered by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1970s and 1980s in the legal field, is a cornerstone theory frequently dissected and deliberated upon within higher education settings (Mensah, 2019). In recent times, CRT has been inaccurately wielded as a weapon by mainstream media, particularly in the context of educational institutions. Benson (2022) explored the emergence of a post-truth era, where ideological biases shape news consumption and misinformation proliferates through social media and partisan outlets. The rise of fake news, fueled by ideological and profit motives, has exacerbated political polarization and undermined trust in traditional institutions. Benson specifically analyzed the effect of misinformation centering on CRT, arguing that the controversy surrounding CRT in schools is symptomatic of deeper societal issues, including media polarization, declining civic engagement, and the erosion

of truth in public discourse. This misrepresentation has led to CRT being unfairly blamed for many politically charged issues and branded as detrimental and divisive.

The weaponization and misrepresentation of CRT within education were highlighted as well by Parker and Gillborn (2020), who addressed the misunderstandings that CRT asserts all White people are inherently racist or that it aims to undermine meritocracy. Parker and Gillborn further argued that CRT provides a valuable framework for understanding and addressing systemic racism in society, including education. They emphasized the importance of accurately understanding CRT to engage in informed discussions about race and inequality. Misinformation about CRT and its actual uses within K-12 educational frameworks has dealt a severe blow to social justice endeavors, and there is a sizable gap in understanding regarding CRT's integration into PD programs within the nationwide K-12 educational landscape (Kohli et al., 2015).

At the same time, some educational institutions have added belonging to the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) framework to emphasize the emotional and psychological safety of all students in education spaces. Töre (2025) described how Indiana University integrated belonging into its institutional DEI strategy, shifting from isolated diversity efforts to more holistic, community-centered approaches. This evolution underscores that cultivating socially just educators is not only about increasing their awareness of equity and inclusion, but also about creating environments where students and staff feel valued, supported, and connected. DEIB encourages educators to move beyond policy to practice, actively shaping classroom and school communities where every learner's identity is honored and empowered.

However, the backlash fueled by misconceptions about CRT has bred resistance and opposition to DEIB efforts within school systems. Rather than comprehending the relationship between CRT and DEIB within educational contexts, parents are increasingly mobilizing to

challenge and impede these initiatives during school board meetings. For example, the group Moms for Liberty challenges curriculum content and library books they portray as ideologically biased (Williams, 2022). Their tactics involve organizing events, leveraging social media, and collaborating with like-minded figures and parent advisory committees. Moms for Liberty's censorship is part of a broader conservative movement targeting school boards, particularly around the sensitive topic of CRT. Framing their mission as defending parental rights, they work to influence local elections and reshape education policy.

The growing influence of national politics on local education governance raises concerns about the future of public schooling and democratic norms. While school boards and parents engage in heated debates over curriculum implementation and PD geared toward diversity and inclusion, teachers find themselves ill equipped to navigate these complexities (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2016). They may also be denied PD tailored to DEIB, which adversely impacts both them and their students.

Building on the need for effective DEIB PD, an essential component of fostering socially just educational environments is teachers' awareness of their positionality. Teachers' positionality refers to the ways in which a teacher's identity, background, and personal experiences influence their perspectives, interactions, and practices in the classroom. It encompasses aspects such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, cultural background, and personal beliefs (Milner, 2007b). Wechsler and Silva (2019) explained that positionality in teaching involves "self-awareness about one's social identity and how it influences perspectives, interactions, and understanding" (p. 10). They argued that educators who critically reflect on their positionality are better equipped to address issues of equity and social justice in education. For example, an educator who is aware of their privilege based on race, gender, or

socioeconomic status may be more attuned to systemic inequalities within their educational setting. This awareness can inform strategies such as intentionally incorporating diverse perspectives into the curriculum, advocating for inclusive classroom policies, or actively addressing instances of discrimination and bias. Positionality and DEIB in teaching are interconnected, as educators' awareness of their social locations and identities directly influences their ability to promote equity, inclusion, and belonging for their students. Critically reflecting on positionality allows educators to approach teaching with a deeper understanding of how their perspectives and actions impact students' experiences and learning outcomes.

While existing literature examines PD frameworks and their effectiveness, there remains a conspicuous gap in research focusing explicitly on DEIB PD. Acton et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of consciously incorporating cultural sustainability into teacher education and school curriculums. This approach to DEIB PD and teacher practice included understanding positionality and how it affects the classroom. Understanding positionality encourages educators to appreciate the multifaceted nature of their students' identities, promoting a more inclusive and responsive approach to teaching and learning. Positionality awareness is also critical for educational leaders, who directly shape school culture, policies, and practices. Acknowledging their positionality can help leaders create inclusive environments and dismantle systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality in education based on race, class, or ability. The connection between positionality and social justice leadership is essential for creating positive changes in society, particularly within educational institutions. When they understand how their own identities and experiences intersect with systems of privilege and oppression, leaders and teachers can more effectively advocate for equity and inclusion and create environments where all individuals can better thrive.

Therefore, this study analyzed teachers' perspectives regarding how DEIB PD affected their understanding of positionality and their teaching practices. Perspectives from teachers can offer insights into the impact of their positionality awareness in the classroom, as well as how DEIB initiatives translate into everyday classroom dynamics and student interactions. They also can provide valuable feedback on the implementation of DEIB principles into their practice, which is essential for refining and improving DEIB PD. By examining this topic, this study intended to fill this research gap and provide a clearer understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in DEIB PD within K-12 educational settings.

Impetus of This Study

School districts across the United States vary in size, organizational structure, and governance framework (Rorrer & Skrla, 2017). Some districts encompass entire municipalities, while others serve specific regions within larger urban areas. States are divided into counties or other administrative divisions, each containing multiple school districts that cater to elementary, middle, and high school students, as well as specialized schools offering unique educational programs. U.S. school districts are typically overseen by elected or appointed boards that set policies, approve budgets, hire staff, and make decisions that impact overall functioning and educational outcomes. Collaboration among board members, school administrators, educators, parents, and community stakeholders is often pivotal in shaping the educational experiences of students. This study included a variety of teachers from urban, suburban, and rural districts to provide an accurate representation of the diverse US school population.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand how schools in a northeastern region of the U.S. are addressing the need for DEIB PD and explore how DEIB PD affected teachers'

practices and awareness of their positionality in school settings. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ 1. How do K-12 school districts in a northeastern region address DEIB PD for teachers?

RQ 2. What are teachers' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices after DEIB PD or without DEIB PD? Do these perceptions differ significantly between the two groups?

RQ 3. What are teachers' awareness levels of their positionality in school settings after DEIB PD or without DEIB PD? Do these perceptions differ significantly between the two groups?

Research Question 1 sought to identify how K-12 public school districts in a northeastern region of the U.S. provided their teachers with DEIB PD. Research Question 2 sought to understand the relationship between DEIB PD and any perceived changes to the teachers' inclusive teaching practices. Research Question 3 sought to understand if DEIB PD affected the teachers' understanding of their positionality. The exploration of these research questions provided data that can be utilized by administrators and teachers when implementing purposeful and productive DEIB PD programs for their districts.

Definition of Terms

Belonging. In the context of education and social justice, the process by which students, particularly those from historically marginalized groups, develop a sense of connection and acceptance within their educational settings. It involves the recognition of students' identities, the validation of their experiences, and the provision of opportunities for them to engage meaningfully with the curriculum and the school community (Rosa & Mensah, 2016).

Critical Race Theory. “A practice of interrogating the role of race and racism in society that emerged in the legal academy and spread to other fields of scholarship” (George, 2021, p. 1).

Diversity. “Collective mixture of differences and similarities along a given dimension, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation” (Thomas, 1991, p. 10).

Equity. “The state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair” (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003, p. 254).

Inclusion. “The dynamic state of operating in a manner that fosters engagement with diversity by which the involved entities and actors experience a sense of belongingness and well-being through concurrent, individual and collective engagement that enhances organizational functioning on the basis of principles of access and equity” (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006, p. 947).

Inclusive Teaching Practices. “Pedagogical strategies that address the needs of students with a variety of backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities, fostering an environment where all students have equal access to learning and feel valued and supported” (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 170).

Pedagogy. “The art or science of teaching; methodical instruction, concerned with the techniques and practices or the study of the techniques and practices of instruction” (Alexander, 2008, p. 3).

Positionality. “The social and political context that creates your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status. Positionality also describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding of and outlook on the world” (Takacs, 2003, p. 27).

Professional Development. “Activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise, and other characteristics as a teacher. Effective professional development is seen as structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 4).

Social Justice. “Distributing resources fairly and treating all students equitably so that they feel safe and secure—physically and psychologically” (Álvarez, 2019, para. 1).

Theoretical Framework

This study was framed within two theoretical perspectives: positionality and CRT. As stated previously, the research questions sought to understand how DEIB PD was provided for teachers by their district, teachers’ inclusive teaching practices, and teachers’ understanding of their positionality. Consistent and effective PD centered on social justice and DEIB prepares teachers to confront and teach these issues within the classroom. DEIB PD that focuses on positionality helps teachers understand their own complex social identities and the roles those identities play in their work. Thus, CRT and positionality theory drove this research because they are the basis for successful and effective socially just teacher education.

Positionality refers to the concept that an individual’s social position, including factors such as race, gender, class, and other identities, influences their perspectives, experiences, and interactions with the world around them (Kincheloe, 2002). Understanding positionality as an educator is crucial for fostering inclusive and effective learning environments. In this study, understanding positionality helped educators recognize how their own identities shaped their teaching practices and interactions with students. By critically reflecting on their positionalities, educators can better navigate power dynamics in the classroom and create more inclusive learning environments. Recognizing positionality in education also acknowledges students’

diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives; educators need to understand their own positionality and that of the students they teach. Positionality theory, which “grew from postmodern feminist theory...[and] from social psychology,” emphasizes the dynamic nature of individuals’ identities within educational settings (Acevedo et al., 2015, p. 32). As Acevedo et al. (2015) suggested, student and teacher identities vary across contexts, and they both shape and are shaped by their positions in the learning environment. The theory (Acevedo et al., 2015) emphasizes that social roles and expectations play a large part in shaping positions, but it also recognizes the subjective histories and personal attributes that affect behavior and interactions within social contexts.

CRT, developed primarily within legal studies and later expanded into various disciplines, focuses on the intersections of race, power, and law, aiming to uncover and challenge systemic racism and inequities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It provides a theoretical framework for understanding how systemic racism operates within educational institutions and shapes educational experiences and outcomes for students of color. Centering CRT in DEIB PD can give educators a deeper understanding of how race intersects with other social identities and power structures, enabling them to address racial injustices more effectively in their teaching practices. CRT views race as a social construct, created and enforced by White people in power to oppress people of color socially and legally. It identifies how legal policies and constructs were created to alienate minority groups in Western civilization. In education, CRT is a lens through which educators can understand the historical impacts of these institutions on people of color and how those impacts are still seen and enacted today. For leaders in the educational field, understanding CRT is vital when attempting to teach, connect with, and effectively educate

students from various backgrounds and cultures. Furthermore, CRT can help teachers to understand their own positionality and their role of power as educators.

In this study, the CRT framework helped clarify the gaps in PD provided for teachers and how those gaps needed to be addressed. When educators understand their positionality and unintentional biases, they can begin to learn how the societal structure of the education system has impacted their views and behaviors. At that point, educators can use CRT as a lens through which to analyze their own role as educators and the actions needed to practice socially just leadership behaviors. By investigating how DEIB PD influences educators' awareness of their positionalities and their ability to integrate CRT principles into their teaching, this study aimed to contribute to the growing body of literature on socially just teacher education. Ultimately, by grounding the study in the positionality and CRT frameworks, the research sought to uncover insights that could inform the design and implementation of more effective DEIB PD initiatives, thereby promoting greater equity and justice in education.

Significance in Equity, Fairness, and Social Justice

This study holds significant implications for the advancement of inclusive education practices within K-12 settings. By analyzing the experiences of teachers participating in DEIB PD programs, it sheds light on how these programs affect inclusive teaching practices, which are important in cultivating equitable learning environments for students. Moreover, the study's exploration of positionality shows how teachers' awareness of their own social positions, biases, and privileges can influence classroom dynamics and interactions. By integrating insights from CRT, which illuminates the systemic nature of racism and power dynamics, this study aimed to provide educators with a framework to critically examine and address inequities within

educational spaces. Ultimately, this research can inform the development of more effective PD programs that empower teachers to enact socially just practices benefiting all students.

Summary

This study can promote equity, fairness, and social justice among the next generation of organizational leaders in several ways. First, by examining the experiences of teachers participating in DEIB PD programs, the study provides valuable insights into the efficacy of such initiatives in fostering inclusive teaching practices. Armed with this knowledge, future organizational leaders can advocate for and implement more effective PD programs that equip educators with the tools and resources needed to create equitable learning environments. Second, the study's exploration of positionality underscores the importance of self-awareness and accountability among educators. By understanding their own social locations, biases, and privileges, teachers can better recognize and mitigate the impact of systemic inequalities within educational settings. This heightened awareness of positionality can translate into leadership practices that prioritize equity and fairness, both within classrooms and across organizational structures.

Furthermore, by integrating insights from CRT, the study equips future organizational leaders with a critical lens through which to analyze and address inequities. Armed with an understanding of CRT principles, these leaders can advocate for policy changes, curriculum revisions, and institutional reforms that promote social justice and dismantle oppressive structures within educational organizations. By informing the development of more effective PD programs and fostering self-awareness and critical consciousness among educators, the findings of this study have the potential to cultivate a generation of organizational leaders who are committed to advancing equity, fairness, and social justice within educational institutions and

beyond. This, in turn, can contribute to the creation of more inclusive and equitable educational opportunities for generations to come.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aimed to understand the relationships between DEIB PD and positionality for educators. The reviewed literature fell into four thematic categories: CRT, social justice in education, PD studies, and positionality in education. Historical aspects of CRT and social justice movements were analyzed to understand their implications for the changes necessary in the future; PD frameworks and approaches were examined to understand the best practices for teacher preparation; and positionality was investigated to understand its influence on educators' effectiveness and students' experiences. There was significant subject crossover between the themes, as each study focused on some aspect of DEIB within education, and these themes were studied and synthesized to identify gaps in DEIB PD research.

Incorporating CRT in PD

Leaders within education need to prioritize their roles as change agents, specifically to address the needs of underrepresented, marginalized, and oppressed student populations. Within this research, that priority was viewed through the lens of CRT. Recently, CRT became a highly politicized topic within education, and many parents, educators, and politicians have debated its influence on America's youth. However, it is evident that many parties involved lack a clear understanding of what CRT is and its role in the curriculum. The fact that public school curricula vary by state only adds to the confusion on a national level. The studies reviewed below offer insight into the history of CRT, how it benefits educators and students, and why it is necessary to understand and fight for.

Leathers et al. (2024) explored the impact of CRT-informed PD and found that CRT provided a framework for teachers of color to process racialized experiences, build community,

and reclaim professional agency. Their findings emphasized the importance of creating spaces where teachers can engage in healing and justice-centered learning, reinforcing the need for CRT-based approaches in teacher development.

In a review of research in education, Tate (1997) discussed Crenshaw's contribution to CRT as it pertained to education. Specifically, Crenshaw's approach to equity through the intersectionality framework was analyzed through an educational lens. "The three variants of the intersectional theme—structural, political, and representational—provided a conceptual framework for analyzing the interplay of race, class, and gender in educational contexts" (Tate, 1997, pp. 233-234). Tate went on to define CRT and its function within the educational field. Rather than simply acknowledging the systemic racism within the United States, it is crucial for educators to understand its interconnecting layers within education. Tate suggested shifting the focus to examining how established interests and cultural traditions function as mechanisms that restrict and constrain the educational opportunities available to students of color. For educators, it is important to understand how race affects students through the CRT lens and how to prevent future oppression from a position of leadership.

Tate's (1997) exploration revealed that the application of CRT principles has far-reaching implications for educators. Tate discussed intersectionality, laying the groundwork for understanding the interplay of race, class, and gender within educational contexts. Educators delved into the layers of CRT, moving beyond merely acknowledging systemic racism to comprehending how these intersecting factors shaped students' experiences. Teachers recognized the impact of race on educational opportunities and gained insight into how traditional interests and cultural artifacts inadvertently limited students of color. This understanding made it clear that integrating CRT into K-12 curricula was not just a theoretical debate, but a practical

necessity to foster inclusive teaching practices. Embracing CRT in educational settings was crucial for addressing gaps in PD and empowering educators to navigate their roles within a system that historically perpetuated oppression.

Crenshaw (2011) explained that CRT developed both as a challenge to institutional debates about race and to bring race-conscious perspectives into academic discussions. She explained the importance of comprehending the theory in various career fields. In education, it is vital to understand CRT's implications for students of color. Educators need to understand how systemic racism affects their schools, the allocation of resources, and the experiences of their own students. Crenshaw pointed out that significant changes in societal perspectives do not come from conforming to dominant views, but from expanding awareness of unjust systems of power, and then highlighting the need for imminent change. Educators have a responsibility to understand the history of CRT and its relation to their educational systems, and administrators have a responsibility to ensure that their educators are prepared to unpack and respond to issues of race effectively.

Building on the significance of understanding CRT within education, other studies indicate that understanding one's positionality within a school setting is imperative. Earick (2018) shed light on the importance of White educators comprehending their roles, privilege, and power within the social justice movement. By acknowledging and actively addressing these aspects, educators can move from passive supporters to antiracist advocates in both their actions and curriculum.

In a related study, using CRT as a framework, Lee (2018) examined the repercussions of academic advisors being unprepared to connect with or understand students of color. The study underscored the necessity for enhanced support and training for advisors working with students

of color. Like teaching, advising does not focus solely on academic achievements: advisors must forge genuine connections with students, fostering an environment of trust and support. Lee highlighted the significance of advisors embracing social justice principles and understanding CRT's historical context to effectively connect with and advocate for their students. Advisors were encouraged to view CRT as a lens through which to comprehend the oppression and racism students faced, shifting their focus from academic success to the holistic well-being of each student. Lee concurred with Earick (2018), emphasizing the need for academic advisors to take antiracist actions and to acknowledge their privilege in relation to their students' experiences.

In another study dealing with positionality in school settings, Mensah (2019) documented a female African American science teacher's experience of losing her voice within teacher education. Using the CRT framework, the participant and researcher were able to challenge the systemic racism and oppression operating within the education system (Mensah, 2019). This phenomenon of losing one's voice is common for Black educators, and the study emphasized the need to encourage and keep Black educators in the world of education. Similarly to Earick (2018) and Lee (2018), Mensah (2019) and the participant found that intersectionality among educators should be understood and included in teacher education.

Ledesma and Calderón (2015) reviewed literature that specifically focused on the history of CRT in K-12 education. Their review pointed to the importance of CRT being utilized throughout K-12 education, and emphasized that meaningful evaluation, response, and advancement in educational research and practice must acknowledge the deeply embedded influence of White supremacy in the U.S. They concluded that it was not as simple as pointing to differences in race and racism as issues, and that educators must understand racism's effects on the systemic framework of the U.S. education system.

Milner (2007b) outlined how CRT emerged in legal studies in the late 20th century, aiming to critically examine the ways in which race intersects with law and power structures. Over time, CRT has expanded into various disciplines, including education, where scholars have used its framework to analyze issues of race, power, and equity within educational systems. Milner (2007a) highlighted that while CRT has been influential in advancing discussions about racial justice and equity in education, it has also faced significant opposition. Critics argue that CRT promotes divisive ideologies and undermines traditional educational principles such as meritocracy and colorblindness. Milner discussed how these criticisms have led to debates and controversies in educational policy, curriculum development, and teacher training.

Connecting these diverse studies and perspectives on CRT within education reveals broader implications for the educational system. Lee's (2018) study on academic advisors emphasized the need for a CRT-informed approach in academic advising. This aligned with Mensah's (2019) study of the experiences of a Black science teacher, which underscored the importance of addressing systemic racism and oppression within teacher education. Earick (2018) and Lee (2018) both noted the significance of educators, advisors, and administrators adopting antiracist actions and understanding their own privilege to better connect with and support students of color. Additionally, Ledesma and Calderón's (2015) literature review emphasized the historical context of CRT within K-12 education, asserting that recognizing the influence of White supremacy is crucial for educators to understand the deep-rooted effects of racism in the U.S. education system. Together, these studies show the need for a comprehensive and systemic application of CRT principles in education to foster an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Educators clearly need to understand what systemic racism is, how it has shaped and influenced the educational system, and how it continues to affect students in today's

classrooms. It is imperative that educators understand their own positionality and biases that could affect their effectiveness as teachers. Furthermore, through the analysis of these studies, it can be concluded that administrators have a responsibility to provide teachers with adequate training to address and teach CRT. CRT must be understood within education historically, educationally, and presently.

In summary, CRT serves as an essential framework for understanding systematic inequities in education, yet its application in K-12 curricula has been widely misunderstood and weaponized through politics. Research demonstrates that CRT provides a lens through which educators can examine the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, allowing them to better understand and approach the challenges faced by marginalized students. Despite the insights highlighted in this literature review, gaps remain in the research, particularly regarding how CRT can be effectively implemented in PD for teachers. While current studies acknowledge the need for systemic changes, there is limited research on practical strategies for integrating CRT into educational policies, curriculum design, and PD programs.

Social Justice Training, Awareness, and Action in PD

The studies reviewed within the social justice theme analyzed the impact and importance of preparing, training, and retaining socially just educators in the classroom. To best serve students, educators need to be social-justice-minded in their everyday practice. However, this approach to education needs to be purposefully and carefully cultivated. Social justice is a lens through which all aspects of education must be viewed. Educators and administrators who are culturally responsible can best connect with and instruct their students.

Recent research supports the need to embed social justice into PD to foster educators' critical awareness and encourage them to take meaningful action in their school communities. In

a 2-year study, van Vijfeijken et al. (2024) found that teachers who engaged in a structured social justice PD program developed a broader sense of purpose, extending their roles beyond the classroom to advocate for equity across their schools. Through dialogue and reflective practice, participants in the study became more confident in addressing systemic inequalities and leading schoolwide change. This study highlighted that giving teachers intentional opportunities to develop their social justice agency led to teachers being better equipped to create inclusive classroom and community environments.

Grant and Gibson (2013) investigated social justice education in the context of human rights and through a historical context to understand how certain movements (the Declaration of Human Rights, Civil Rights Movement, and Women's Rights Movement) correlated to social justice education today. The researchers studied historical and human rights documents and identified correlations and discrepancies between the history of social justice and today's social justice education. They found that to successfully infuse social justice into education, it was vital for the historical context to be linked into these conversations. Educators must be prepared to adequately teach about the history of human rights when teaching with a social justice approach. Maton and Stark (2021) reported similar findings in their study centered on the relationship between teachers' personal political education and their ability to teach about social justice issues. They found that teachers needed to participate in PD that examined education politics to be effectively socially just.

In a related vein, Capper and Young (2014) sought to understand the question "What does it mean to practice socially just educational leadership?" They identified ironies and limitations of educational leadership for social justice. Their findings showed that effective social justice educators needed to have a shared understanding and agreement as to what

inclusion/integration meant, prioritize successful student learning, and become experts on their own and their students' intersections and positionalities. Responsibility for this social justice work rested on the educators and the community, not specific individuals. Capper and Young observed that this work could not be done successfully without intentional and specific training for educators and administrators. Implementing a social justice lens for education takes time and purposeful training.

Diem and Carpenter (2012) also emphasized the urgent demand for social justice and leadership preparation, particularly in classroom settings. They outlined where to begin this work by identifying issues within the curriculum and classroom that needed to be rectified. The most glaring issue was that conversations centered around race were entirely absent from the classroom, as teachers felt unprepared and uncomfortable holding these discussions. The responsibility to address these shortcomings, as noted by Diem and Carpenter, rested on the shoulders of school leaders. Leaders within education systems must realize the importance of educating teachers thoroughly so they are confidently prepared to hold social justice conversations within their classrooms.

To build on the insights of Capper and Young (2014) and Diem and Carpenter (2012), Pantic and Florian (2015) explored several theories relating to the call for teachers to become more socially just and culturally responsive—to be not just educators but change agents. Assorted studies were synthesized to understand the relationship between what was asked of teachers and how they could be prepared to do what was asked of them. Their study found that to be effective change agents, teachers needed to actively collaborate with other inclusive educators, actively think about and enact change within their school and curriculum, understand their students' backgrounds, and respond effectively to students' needs. Again, understanding

students as individuals, understanding their positionality as leaders in the classroom, and collaborating with other educators were emphasized within this study.

Other studies also noted the significance of collaboration among teachers in fostering meaningful change within educational settings. For example, Ness et al. (2010) analyzed a “self-directed PD group” that met with the goal to expand and deepen their understanding of social justice, as well as to critically analyze their current teaching practices. This PD group found that by developing a problem-solving community, they were able to execute more socially just actions within their own practice. This study supported collaboration between teachers, holding uncomfortable conversations, and analyzing current practices to identify areas of needed change. Leibowitz and Bozalek (2016) also found that holding uncomfortable conversations had benefits for teachers, with a direct and positive connection between learning and discomfort. Educators and administrators need to be open and willing to have uncomfortable conversations surrounding race and social justice to identify their own biases, learn from their past practice, and improve for the future.

A leader who employs a social justice and culturally responsive approach understands their effect on others and the impact they have as a leader, including their attitude, positionality, and treatment of others. By being a culturally responsive leader within education, an educator works toward social justice goals for themselves and their students. Mugisha (2013) identified culturally responsive leadership in education as “those purposeful, well-intentioned, creative, and collaborative actions that a [leader] takes to enhance the academic engagement and achievement of minority-culture students” (p. 15). Mugisha offered examples of ways for education leaders to emulate this approach, such as valuing minority students’ perspectives, including minority students’ cultures within the curriculum, and attending PD opportunities that specifically

addressed culturally responsive instruction and leadership. Culturally responsive principles and concepts must be learned and often revisited to be implemented successfully.

Culturally responsive school leadership is a well-researched field and uses CRT as one of its main lenses of focus. Khalifa et al. (2016) conducted a comprehensive study focusing on culturally responsive school leadership and attempting to analyze specific behaviors of socially just educators. They summarized and identified common themes within the actions of school leaders who trained their teachers to be culturally responsive leaders. The study categorized leadership behaviors as either actions taken by principals or established school policies, such as optimizing resource allocation or organizational structures. All behaviors mentioned were collected and analyzed, identifying those directly impacting school climate, curriculum, policies, teaching methods, and student achievement. The study connected behaviors to student outcomes and identified actions that school administrators and leaders must take in terms of providing their faculty and staff with effective PD centered on social justice.

Social justice in education needs to be intentional and specifically cultivated to meet the needs of students. Administrators and educators need to work together within the community to learn about their students' needs and backgrounds. Furthermore, administrators and educators must collaborate, learn from their past biases, and work to become social justice change agents through all aspects of the education they provide for their student population. Educational leaders need to understand and implement CRT initiatives into their teacher training, curriculum, and school community guidelines to effectively address systemic inequities within educational systems and dismantle oppressive structures that perpetuate inequality. This proactive approach will enable school leaders to create more inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued and supported.

In summary, the reviewed research on social justice in education underscored the need for intentional preparation, training, and leadership development to equip educators to implement socially just practices effectively. Studies emphasized the roles of historical context, personal education, collaboration, and PD in shaping educators who can confidently engage in discussions on race, equity, and inclusion. However, gaps remain in current research regarding the long-term efficacy of social justice training for educators, the specific strategies needed to sustain these efforts beyond initial implementation, and how to measure meaningful impact on student outcomes. Additionally, there is limited exploration of how systemic barriers, such as standardized testing and rigid curriculum mandates, hinder the integration of social justice practices in education.

The Importance of Effective PD for Teacher Practice

PD is a vital component of molding socially just and culturally responsible educators and school administrators. PD that focuses on social issues must be consistent, effective, and targeted to the specific needs of the community it serves (Dover et al., 2019). Furthermore, educators must have the opportunity to provide feedback on the PD they need, the PD they are receiving, and how effective they feel their teacher education is.

In addition to these considerations, the importance of PD centered on DEIB lies in its transformative impact on educational environments. DEIB PD equips educators with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to create inclusive classrooms that celebrate diversity and foster a sense of belonging among students from various backgrounds. By engaging in DEIB training, teachers gain a deeper understanding of cultural competencies, social justice principles, and equitable teaching practices, allowing them to better address the diverse needs of their students. Furthermore, teachers who receive ongoing DEIB PD are better equipped to navigate

and challenge systemic inequalities, contributing to the creation of a more just and equitable educational system.

Effective PD, particularly when delivered through thoughtful, well-designed formats, has been shown to significantly improve teacher competencies and classroom practice. Stavermann (2025) found that PD programs with interactive components such as collaborative activities, coaching, and blended delivery models led to measurable changes in teacher knowledge and pedagogical implementation. These findings underscore the importance of ensuring DEIB PD is not only conceptually sound but structured for the maximum impact. When teachers participate in PD that is active, reflective, and aligned with real classroom needs, the potential for long-term, systemic change in educational equity becomes much more attainable. Schools need to invest in PD models that are research-based and responsive to teacher feedback in order to effectively promote socially just teaching practices (Stavermann, 2025).

When discussing PD in general, it is necessary to understand what effective PD looks like for educators. Pak et al. (2020) directed their study to explicitly understand how administrators were using PD to meet intended curricular goals for students. They urged educators and administrators to focus on creating a “culture of deep learning” rather than slight changes to teaching techniques (Pak et al., 2020). However, the study did not directly address the need for social justice PD for teachers. While it is beneficial to understand what effective and engaging PD looks like for teachers, it is also important to understand how to fit social justice and DEIB into said PD.

Administrators must encourage teachers to give feedback on PD. To understand if the PD is effective, administrators need to take teacher feedback and teachers’ needs seriously. Sprott (2019) found that teachers’ descriptions of the PD they received helped to mold future PD

services to better accommodate their needs. The study indicated that collaboration and reflection were necessary for teachers to grow as educators and there was a need for outside influences to be heard (Sprott, 2019).

Parkhouse et al. (2019) investigated the impact of PD on students. Specifically, they sought to understand how PD programs improved teacher success when working with culturally diverse students. The findings showed more differences than similarities across 40 different literature reviews of PD programs for PK-12 educators. Ultimately, they identified a need for PD to guide leaders through challenging and uncomfortable conversations when meeting resistance from educators, as well as further research into how teachers view diversity and inclusion and how those views impact the education they provide for their students (Parkhouse et al., 2019). As stated previously, navigating uncomfortable conversations and breaking down one's own biases is an essential part of becoming a socially just educator. There is an immediate need for this PD to be provided for teachers.

In terms of the importance of inclusive practices, Kohli (2019) found that to retain teachers of color within the field of education, racial-literacy-centered PD was vital. They observed the need to shift to a critical PD format to strengthen racial literacy and find critical communities to support retention in their profession (Kohli, 2019). PD needs to focus on issues such as social justice and DEIB in interactions between teachers, not just between teachers and students. Kohli et al. (2015) also previously investigated the issue of not implementing critical PD for teachers. This study found that PD often made teachers of color feel devalued, and that even if it was engaging for teachers, it rarely met the needs of social justice educators. Critical PD is needed for educators to understand their positionality with their colleagues and their students.

Holmqvist and Lelinge (2021) conducted an in-depth literature review on collaborative teacher PD for inclusive education. They reviewed over 20 articles, but their findings did not identify many specific patterns or themes. However, Holmqvist and Lelinge were able to identify specific research gaps concerning collaborative PD centered on inclusive education and how consistent PD could be designed to address challenges teachers faced in their classrooms, with the goal of fostering growth for both educators and students. They also concluded that teachers who participated in collaborative PD focused on inclusive education felt more positive about inclusion within their classrooms.

In another literature review on PD addressing race, Matschiner (2022) emphasized the need for PD due to the overrepresentation of White teachers, harm experienced by students and teachers of color, and broader issues such as disinvestment and market-driven reforms. Matschiner noted that scholars frequently highlighted how specific practices in schools perpetuated racial inequality, justifying the need for PD centering on racial equity. However, there was less focus and research on how teachers engaged with these issues in their classrooms. The study emphasized that often racial-equity PD addressed individual biases and self-reflection without unpacking and understanding the systematic foundation of racism within the education system.

This need to improve racial-equity-focused PD is complemented by Guskey's (2002) study advocating a comprehensive evaluation approach for PD programs. Guskey emphasized the importance of multi-level assessments, considering not only immediate reactions and teacher learning but also the long-term impact on instructional practices, student learning, and broader educational outcomes. This approach is aligned with contemporary research and underscores the necessity of evidence-based decision-making in shaping and improving PD programs. Guskey

encouraged educators, policymakers, and administrators to employ rigorous research methodologies to assess the impact of PD programs.

Analyzing PD programs provides educational leaders with feedback on the effectiveness of the PD and how transferable the learning is to teachers' actual classroom experiences. In a similar fashion to Guskey's (2002) study, Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2017) analysis of teacher PD underlined the importance of personalized, ongoing, and active development, challenging the conventional one-size-fits-all approach to PD and encouraging a purposeful and individualized model.

Continuing the exploration of effective PD initiatives, Ghamrawi (2013) performed a mixed-methods study evaluating a specific PD model within a private K-12 school setting and its capacity to cultivate both teacher and student leadership within the educational community. The model employed a constructivist approach, with teachers training their colleagues and high school students providing ushering services during PD events. The study collected data through focus group interviews with teacher trainers, surveys of teacher trainees, and statements from student ushers. The findings emphasized the positive impacts of the PD model on the school and highlighted its potential for nurturing not only teacher leadership but also student leadership. This research offered important insights for those involved in designing PD programs in educational settings.

Together, these studies further support that effective PD centered on DEIB is necessary for K-12 educators. It is evident that educators and administrators need to participate in continuous PD that focuses on self-reflection, dismantling their own pre-existing and unconscious biases, and understanding their positionality as educational leaders. However, there are many gaps within the research regarding what effective PD looks like.

Positionality and the Importance of Educators' Self-Awareness

Understanding positionality is not just an academic exercise: it has profound implications for educators and their practice. Educators serve as mediators of knowledge, shaping the experiences and perspectives of their students. Thus, awareness of their own positionality is crucial for creating inclusive learning environments and promoting critical thinking. When educators understand how their social, cultural, and personal backgrounds influence their perspectives, they can better relate to and support the diverse needs of their students. For example, a teacher who recognizes their privilege may be more attuned to the experiences of marginalized students and strive to create a classroom environment that validates their voices and experiences (Gorski, 2008). Similarly, educators who understand the intersections of their identities, such as race, gender, and class, can foster empathy and understanding among students by modeling inclusive behavior and challenging stereotypes (Acker, 2006).

Building upon the importance of teacher positionality, Motti Ader et al. (2023) emphasized that engaging with one's positionality is an essential component of teaching practice. Their study showed that educators who intentionally reflected on their identities, using tools such as positionality statements and identity mapping, became more adept at recognizing the impact of their personal influence on classroom dynamics. This self-awareness enabled them to navigate power imbalances and build trust with students by creating intentional spaces where diverse voices and experiences were acknowledged and valued. By integrating these reflective practices, educators were better positioned to facilitate discussions around identity and equity.

Furthermore, an understanding of positionality can inform curriculum development and pedagogical approaches. Educators who acknowledge their biases are more likely to critically examine the content they teach, ensuring that it reflects diverse perspectives and experiences

(Au, 2012). They may also adopt teaching strategies that empower students to critically analyze societal structures and interrogate dominant narratives (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Positionality is intertwined with the concept of culturally responsive teaching, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing students' cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2000). Educators who understand their own positionality are better equipped to engage with students from diverse cultural backgrounds authentically, fostering a sense of belonging and academic success (Howard, 2003). In essence, educators' understanding of positionality is not only about self-reflection, but also about promoting equity and social justice in education. By critically examining their own identities and biases, educators can create more inclusive learning environments, empower students to critically engage with the world, and contribute to broader efforts towards social change.

Studies using a CRT lens have also shown that it is imperative for educators to understand their positionality within a school setting. Earick (2018) conducted a study aimed at understanding how White educators perceived their role as White individuals within educational settings. This study spanned over 6 years, during which conversational data and meeting minutes were gathered and synthesized. The aim was to discern various White social justice archetypes that either hindered or propelled the social justice movement within education. The findings of the study delineated several types and their actions, dialogue, and beliefs within the discourse on social justice. Additionally, Earick emphasized the need for White educators to grasp privilege and power dynamics, moving beyond mere cultural and background studies, to transition from passive supporters of social justice to active antiracists.

Research on the impact of DEIB PD on teachers' understanding of their positionality is imperative because DEIB PD aims to provide educators with the knowledge and skills to create

more inclusive and equitable learning environments. Assessing how it influences teachers' understanding of their positionality can indicate its effectiveness in promoting self-awareness and cultural competence (Gorski, 2018). Secondly, understanding how DEIB PD shapes teachers' perspectives on their own identities and biases can inform the development of more tailored and impactful PD initiatives. Ultimately, such research will contribute to the improvement of DEIB PD practices and support the cultivation of more culturally responsive and socially just educational environments.

In conclusion, understanding positionality is essential for educators as they navigate the complexities of teaching in diverse classrooms. When they critically examine their own biases and identities, educators can create more equitable spaces where all students feel valued and supported. Continued research into the effectiveness of DEIB PD will not only inform the development of more tailored PD initiatives, but also contribute to the ongoing improvement of educational practices aimed at fostering DEIB and social-justice-centered educators and leaders.

Limitations of Existing Research

Research has consistently highlighted the positive impact of employing CRT in educational settings, particularly in how teachers and administrators engage with students. By adopting a CRT approach, educators are better equipped to connect with students from diverse backgrounds and address systemic inequalities within the education system. It is also crucial for teachers and administrators to be thoroughly informed about the historical context and contemporary implications of systemic racism, especially within education. PD studies have documented the efficacy of CRT training for educators, emphasizing the importance of ongoing education and awareness regarding race, power dynamics, and social justice issues in pedagogical practice.

Extensive research has been conducted on effective PD strategies for teachers, recognizing the significance of continuous evaluation and collaboration in refining educational practices. These studies indicate that PD programs should prioritize reflective practice, cultural competence, and the application of theory into classroom realities. Positionality, the awareness of one's social location and perspective, is a key concept intersecting CRT and PD and offers a framework for teachers to enhance their social justice teaching. However, there remains a notable gap in research exploring how teachers' understanding of their own positionality influences their instructional practices and interactions with students. Closing this gap is essential to advance equitable education and empower educators to dismantle systemic barriers in learning environments.

A related gap in the research involves how DEIB PD shapes teachers' evolving understanding of their positionality over time. While current studies highlight the immediate benefits of DEIB training in fostering culturally responsive teaching, less is known about how these professional learning experiences influence teachers' long-term self-reflection and ability to critically assess their role within systems of power and privilege. Without examining how teachers internalize and apply these concepts beyond an initial PD session, it is difficult to determine whether the training leads to meaningful, sustained shifts in their pedagogical approaches and self-perception. Addressing this gap in the research is crucial to ensure that DEIB PD supports ongoing, transformative learning that directly impacts educators' inclusive practices and engagement with students.

Conclusion

CRT has become a pivotal framework in education, particularly in discussions surrounding social justice, equity, and diversity. When considering its connection to PD and

social justice leadership in education, it is essential to recognize the profound implications for educators and educational leaders. CRT emphasizes the examination of power structures and how they perpetuate racial inequalities; PD programs that incorporate CRT and DEIB provide educators with the tools to recognize and address systemic injustices within educational settings. This may involve exploring historical and contemporary issues of race, privilege, and oppression and how race intersects with other forms of marginalization.

DEIB PD fosters social justice leadership among educators and educational leaders. Such leadership involves advocating for inclusive practices, challenging discriminatory policies, and promoting equitable opportunities for all students. An important aspect of DEIB PD is the exploration of intersectionality and positionality in teacher practice. Understanding how educators' positionalities intersect with those of their students is crucial for creating culturally responsive teaching practices.

This research study further explored how teachers' backgrounds and perspectives influenced their instructional approaches, interactions with students, and classroom dynamics. Furthermore, by analyzing the relationships between positionality, teacher practices, and DEIB PD, this study may inform PD efforts aimed at enhancing educators' ability to implement CRT effectively.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Research Design Overview

This exploratory study examined the implementation and impact of DEIB PD in K-12 schools, particularly in the face of increasing resistance to socially just education initiatives and the challenges of providing meaningful DEIB PD. By comparing the perspectives of teachers who had participated in DEIB PD and those who had not, this study explored the extent to which these programs influenced educators' inclusive teaching practices and their awareness of their positionality. Additionally, it investigated whether current DEIB PD offerings adequately equipped teachers with tools and strategies to address DEIB within their classrooms. The findings may provide valuable insights for school administrators, policymakers, and educators seeking to create DEIB PD initiatives that foster equitable and socially just learning environments for all students.

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was chosen to allow in-depth exploration of data in two phases: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative phase helped in understanding the extent and scope of the phenomenon under study, while the qualitative phase explored these findings in more depth, providing detailed insights into the context, reasons, and experiences behind the patterns identified earlier (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design also enabled a triangulated analysis of the data, integrating quantitative and qualitative findings to offer a holistic view of the research topic and questions. Survey data provided a broad overview of the teachers' efficacy and demographics, and qualitative interviews offered detailed narratives that explained the underlying reasons and personal contexts. This comprehensive approach allowed me to draw

more robust conclusions about the impact of DEIB PD on teachers' perceived inclusive teaching practices and their awareness of their positionality.

The units of analysis for RQs 1, 2, and 3 were the teacher participants who responded to the survey and participated in the interviews. These participants provided quantitative data indicating if their school districts were providing DEIB PD and if it affected their inclusive teaching practices, as well as qualitative data focusing on their experiences, perceived inclusive teaching practices, and awareness of their positionality. The individual accounts and responses of each teacher participant provided a unique outlook on the DEIB PD experiences of K-12 public school teachers in the U.S. and the effectiveness of these PD initiatives.

The Researcher

I was a teacher in a New Jersey middle school for 8 years. I hold a Bachelor of Arts in English, a master's degree in English Education (Grades 6-12), a master's degree in Literacy (Grades K-12), a reading specialist certification, and a supervisor certification. I also previously conducted a successful qualitative study when earning my MA. My positionality as a White, straight, cisgender, able-bodied, non-religious woman from an upper-middle-class background shaped my perspective and interactions within the classroom. Awareness of these identities significantly influenced my teaching practices by fostering a commitment to inclusivity and respect for diversity. Recognizing my privilege as a White person enabled me to actively challenge biases and promote equitable opportunities among students, and my gender informed my approach to cultivating collaborative and empathetic relationships with students. Overall, my awareness of my positionality served as a guiding principle, prompting ongoing reflection and refinement of my teaching methods to better meet the diverse needs and experiences of all learners in the classroom. I conducted this study due to the lack of DEIB PD training in my own

teaching experience, which exposed many shortcomings I noticed within my teaching procedures and the school district's overall climate.

I acknowledged my potential bias as a former teacher during the research process. During the interviews, it would have been possible to connect more easily with female educators due to my experience as a teacher in a very female-dominated field. I made conscious efforts to adhere to the interview questions rather than engaging in familiar conversation over similar experiences.

Study Participants

Participants were teachers from K-12 public school districts across the northeastern U.S. who were voluntarily recruited online. Efforts were made to ensure that rural, urban, and suburban school districts were represented within the participant pool. The northeastern U.S. was chosen as the study location due to my location and the contact systems available to recruit study participants. Participation in this study was voluntary.

Participant Recruitment and Selection Process

Research participants were recruited via social media outlets and listservs for professional education associations, such as the American Educational Research Association, the National Association for Multicultural Education, and the New Jersey Education Association. Participants in the survey portion of the study included 58 teachers from a variety of K-12 public school districts in four states in the northeastern U.S.

All participants who completed the survey were invited to participate in the interviews, but only six were selected to be interviewed. Interview participants included three teachers who had received DEIB PD over the past 2 years and three teachers who had not. They were contacted via email to complete the interview portion of the study, following their initial completion of the survey.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

To be eligible to participate in this study, participants were required to be teachers working at K-12 public schools in the northeastern U.S. The only exclusion criteria were if a participant was not an educator in a K-12 public northeastern U.S. school district.

Participant Demographics

The survey participants had varying levels of teaching experience and a range of backgrounds. The participant pool was predominantly female (50) and White (43), with fewer participants identifying as Black or African American (four), Hispanic or Latino (five), and mixed race (four). The majority were between 25 and 54 years old, with the largest groups being 35-44 years of age (19 participants) and 25-34 years of age (15 participants). Most (42) had over 11 years of teaching experience to reflect on, while 11 participants had 6-10 years and five had 1-5 years. The majority of participants worked in urban districts (28), followed by rural districts (26), and then suburban (four). Most taught middle school students and/or multiple grade levels. They were located in New Jersey (39), New York (2), Maryland (two), and Massachusetts (15). Finally, 40 participants had participated in DEIB PD provided by their school district within the past 2 years, while the other 18 participants had not. Table 1 and Table 2 summarize the demographic data for the survey and interview participants.

Table 1

Survey Participant Demographics

| Demographic and background | Participants |
|----------------------------|--|
| Gender | Female: 50 Male: 8 |
| Race | Asian: 1 Black or African American: 4 Hispanic or Latino Origin: 5 |

| Demographic and background | Participants |
|----------------------------|--|
| Work experience | Mixed Race: 4 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 0 White or Caucasian: 43 Other: 0 Prefer Not to Say: 1 |
| Age | 1-5 years: 5 6-10 years: 11 11+ years: 42 < 25 years old: 1 25-34 years old: 15 35-44 years old: 19 45-54 years old: 11 55-64 years old: 11 65+ years old: 1 |
| State | New Jersey: 39 Maryland: 2 Massachusetts: 15 New York: 2 |
| Grade level | PK-2nd Grade: 10 3-5th Grade: 7 6-8th Grade: 18 9-12th Grade: 11 Multiple: 12 |
| Subject area | English Language Arts (Reading/Writing): 11 Mathematics: 6 Science: 4 Social Studies/History: 6 Special Education: 2 Other: 7 Multiple: 22 |
| District type | Urban: 28 Rural: 26 Suburban: 4 |

Table 2*Interview Participant Demographics*

| Interviewee's initials | State | Gender | Race | Grade levels taught | DEIB PD | District type |
|------------------------|-------|--------|------------|---------------------|---------|---------------|
| AS | NJ | Male | Mixed race | 9-12 | No | Rural |
| MH | NJ | Female | White | 6 | No | Suburban |
| SE | NJ | Female | White | 2 | No | Suburban |
| VR | NJ | Female | Hispanic | K-2 | Yes | Urban |
| MD | NJ | Male | White | 9-12 | Yes | Urban |
| JH | NJ | Male | White | 2-6 | Yes | Suburban |

Note. DEIB PD = diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging professional development.

Researcher-Participant Relationships

I purposefully avoided choosing participants in my own district so that no participant had a direct personal relationship with me, eliminating the possibility of a conflict of interest within the execution and/or results of this study.

Institutional Review Board Approval

The primary sources of data were responses to surveys and interviews. Before data collection began, approval from the Institutional Review Board was obtained to ensure that all research procedures adhered to ethical standards for the human subjects' protection. This process involved a review of the research design, including participant recruitment and data collection methods.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation, ensuring that they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The survey and interview phases each required a signature from each participant to indicate consent. Participants' names and school districts were kept confidential and were not identified in the publication of this study. Only the grade level taught and type of district (rural, suburban, urban) for each teacher were mentioned within the data analysis and overall study. Additionally, all data were stored and accessed only by me. These measures aligned with ethical research standards and practices to ensure the study maintained the trust of the participants while contributing meaningful information to the educational research field.

Data Collection

Phase 1. Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative survey was administered to participants via Google Forms. It included a Participant Demographic and Background Information Questionnaire (see Appendix A) that gathered demographic data and determined whether teachers had participated in DEIB PD provided by their district within the past 2 years. It also included the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) scale (Siwatu, 2007) and a positionality scale (see Appendix B).

The CRTSE scale is a validated instrument that assesses educators' self-efficacy regarding key aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy, including the ability to modify curriculum to reflect students' cultural backgrounds, use culturally relevant examples in instruction, and foster an inclusive learning environment (Siwatu, 2007). In this study, the CRTSE scale was utilized to evaluate teachers' self-reported efficacy in implementing inclusive instructional practices within their classrooms.

The positionality scale used in this study was adapted from a scale by Bramesfeld and Good (2016), specifically the section focusing on “Awareness of Personal Privilege.” It provided quantitative data on teachers’ understanding of their own positionality and privilege. Wording of items was altered to change “Canada” to “US” and “society” to “classroom environments as a teacher.”

The demographic questionnaire answered RQ 1, providing quantitative data that represented whether U.S. public schools were addressing their DEIB PD needs in terms of teacher participation. The CRTSE scale and the positionality scale addressed RQ 2 and RQ 3, providing quantitative data that addressed the teachers’ perceived inclusive teaching practices and understanding of their positionality.

Phase 2. Qualitative Data Collection

Following the survey, a subset of six participants were selected for in-depth exploration of their experiences through open-ended interviews. These individual interviews were conducted through Zoom, and included 10 questions that varied depending on whether the teacher had received DEIB PD in the last 2 years (see Appendix C). During the interviews, the focus revolved around the teachers’ experiences with or without DEIB PD and the potential influence on their perceived inclusive teaching practices, particularly examining if their awareness of their positionality had been altered.

The interviews addressed RQs 1, 2, and 3. These questions provided the teacher participants with an opportunity to expand on the DEIB PD they had or had not received and how it had or had not impacted their own perceived practices. Furthermore, these questions focused on if and how the teachers’ awareness of their own positionality altered their teaching practices.

The interviews were recorded, and to maintain the integrity of the study, were transcribed verbatim. The study took place from February 2024 to February 2025. Human participants were involved until December 2024.

Data Analysis

In this exploratory sequential design study, the data analysis integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain comprehensive insights into the teacher participants' experiences and understand the research questions. This triangulation was crucial, as the validation and corroboration of findings across different data sources enhanced the credibility and depth of the study.

The survey data were analyzed to identify trends and whether teachers' self-efficacy in perceived inclusive teaching practices and awareness of their positionality changed after DEIB PD participation. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic information and the current status of DEIB PD participation, while inferential statistics, via the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-Test, was employed to examine differences between groups (e.g., those who had and had not participated in DEIB PD) in relation to understanding of their positionality awareness and their self-efficacy in perceived inclusive teaching practices.

For the qualitative data, the interviews were transcribed verbatim to capture the full depth of teachers' experiences with/without DEIB PD and perspectives on their perceived inclusive teaching practices and positionality awareness. Inductive thematic analysis was then used to identify recurring themes and patterns in the transcripts. The process began with coding, where meaningful segments of text were labeled to capture key concepts and ideas related to DEIB PD experiences and their influence on teaching inclusive practices and positionality awareness. These initial codes were refined and organized into broader themes through iterative coding and

constant comparison, which involved continuously comparing new data with existing codes to ensure consistency and depth in the analysis. This thematic analysis revealed overarching patterns and insights across participants' narratives.

Once both sets of data were analyzed independently, I conducted a triangulation of analysis. Comparing the results from the survey and interviews, I identified points of convergence and divergence, thereby validating the findings and uncovering nuanced insights that may not have been apparent from a single data source. This integrative approach ensured a robust and holistic interpretation of the data, which ultimately led to more informed and actionable conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction to Data Analysis

I utilized a mixed-methods approach to answer the three research questions, using both quantitative and qualitative data. As seen in Table 3, multiple data sources were used to answer each of the research questions for this study. To answer RQ 1, quantitative data were collected through the inclusive teaching practice questions on the survey, while qualitative data were collected from interviews. To answer RQ 2, quantitative data were collected through the CRTSE Scale, and qualitative data were again collected via interviews. Finally, to answer RQ 3, quantitative data were collected using the positionality scale, and qualitative data were collected through the interviews. This approach allowed me to triangulate findings and present a deep understanding of the role of DEIB PD.

Table 3

Research Questions and Data Analysis Methods Used to Answer Them

| Research question | Methods |
|---|---|
| RQ 1. How do K-12 school districts in a northeastern region address DEIB PD for teachers? | Questions developed by the researcher: Quantitative (Descriptive statistics) Interview Questions: Qualitative (inductive thematic analysis) |
| RQ 2. What are teachers' perceptions of inclusive teaching practices after DEIB PD or without DEIB PD? Do these perceptions differ? | CRTSE Scale: Quantitative (Descriptive statistics and the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-Test) Interview Questions: Qualitative (inductive thematic analysis) |

| Research question | Methods |
|--|---|
| RQ 3. What are teachers' awareness levels of their positionality in school settings after DEIB PD or without DEIB PD? Do these perceptions differ? | Positionality Scale: Quantitative (Descriptive statistics and the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-Test) Interview Questions: Qualitative (inductive thematic analysis) |

Note. CRTSE = Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy; DEIB PD = diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging professional development.

Data Preparation

Phase 1. Quantitative Data Preparation

The quantitative data for this research were initially gathered through an electronic survey designed in Google Forms. The data were then transferred to Google Sheets. The next step of the data preparation process was converting responses into numerical values to enable statistical analysis. The following coding system was applied: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Disagree Somewhat (3), Agree Somewhat (4), Agree (5), and Strongly Agree (6). After coding, the data were imported into IBM SPSS 29 for statistical analysis. The responses were coded into two distinct categories: those who had received DEIB PD within the past 2 years (40 participants) and those who had not received DEIB PD within the past 2 years (18 participants).

Phase 2. Qualitative Data Preparation

To ensure accurate transcription, the interviews were audio-recorded using the transcription platform Otter.ai. This automatic service provided a written transcription of each interview, which I compared to the video recording to ensure accuracy. Once the transcriptions were edited and finalized, I conducted a thematic analysis of the responses.

Data Analysis

Survey Data

Given that the number of participants in each group was fewer than 30, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-Test was employed to determine whether there were significant differences between the two groups (DEIB PD and no DEIB PD).

Interview Data

Step One. Familiarization of the Data

I employed inductive thematic analysis to identify patterns across the interview responses. I began by reviewing each transcript multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the data, each interviewee's perspective, and the context of the responses. This step allowed me to deeply familiarize myself with the material and use the content to drive the analysis, rather than working from any preconceived notions or known theoretical frameworks. Understanding the raw data also allowed me to begin identifying commonalities between the interviewees' responses and experiences.

Step Two. Generating Codes

After rereading the interview transcripts, I moved into the coding phase of the qualitative data analysis. I assigned codes to segments of the interview transcripts, which were short phrases that reflected each participant's experience as an educator. These codes were based on the response content and relevance to the research questions. Rather than utilizing a pre-established coding scheme, I allowed the codes to emerge from the data itself through similarities across participants' responses. For example, phrases such as "Reactive vs. proactive DEIB PD" were coded to reflect key issues raised by multiple interview participants.

Step Three. Identifying Themes

After the initial coding was complete, I grouped related codes to identify broader themes across the participants' experiences and responses. I was focused on discovering patterns across the participants' teaching experiences within the two groups (DEIB PD and No DEIB PD). For example, codes such as "acknowledging personal bias," "understanding different students' perspectives," and "understanding background and experiences of students" were combined into the theme "Positionality Awareness." The inductive thematic grouping allowed me to connect individual responses, viewpoints, and experiences of the interviewees to larger trends being seen in education.

Step Four. Reviewing Themes

Following the identification of the overarching themes within each interview group, I revisited the transcripts to ensure that each theme accurately represented the qualitative data. Some codes were reassigned to more appropriate themes to better organize the participants' shared experiences.

Step Five. Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme was named to reflect the central idea and connect to each participant's response. For example, the theme "Positionality Awareness" was present in both interview groups, as many of the questions specifically addressed the participants' positionality awareness and how (if at all) it was affected by DEIB PD.

Step Six. Development of the Narrative

Finally, I synthesized the findings into tables presenting the inductive themes, the codes within the themes, and direct quotes from each of the interviewees (Tables 8 and 10). This step

allowed me to directly explain and present the correlations between the interviewees' responses and experiences.

Presentation of Quantitative Findings

The findings of the study are presented in the context of the research questions.

RQ 1. How Do K-12 School Districts in a Northeastern Region Address DEIB PD for Teachers?

Table 4 presents the survey data assessing teachers' sources of knowledge on their current inclusive teaching practices, as well as the impact of DEIB PD on their own confidence to implement said practices. The first inclusive teaching practice question (INTP 1) examined where teachers' knowledge of their inclusive teaching practices derived from. Notably, both groups of teachers reported acquiring knowledge from various sources, including district-provided PD, personal studies, undergraduate or coursework, teaching experience, and other sources. The second question (INTP Q2) was directed specifically at the teachers who had received DEIB PD within the past 2 years. They were asked to evaluate the extent to which the PD had influenced their confidence in applying inclusive teaching practices within their classrooms. On a scale of 1 to 6, the average confidence score among DEIB PD participants was 4.20, indicating a generally positive impact. The responses suggest that while DEIB PD contributed to teachers' confidence in the implementation of inclusive teaching practices within their classrooms, they continued to draw on a variety of experiences and sources to inform their approaches. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of teachers' professional learning and the role that both formal PD and individual experience play in shaping inclusive teaching practices.

The table also presents data on the availability and perceived effectiveness of DEIB PD. Of the participants surveyed, 44 (69.8%) reported that their district had provided DEIB PD within the past 2 years, while eight (12.7%) indicated no such offerings, and six (9.5%) were unsure. Participation in this PD was also examined, with 40 teachers indicating they had engaged in DEIB PD within the past 2 years, while 18 had not. Three teachers who received DEIB PD rated it as “Highly Effective,” 28 as “Effective,” six as “Ineffective,” and three as “Highly Ineffective.” Thus, 73.8% of teachers rated the PD as “Highly Effective” or “Effective,” while 21.4% rated it as “Ineffective” or “Highly Ineffective.” These figures suggest that while most participants had access to DEIB PD, perceptions of its effectiveness varied, with a majority finding it beneficial but a notable percentage indicating otherwise. The content areas of the PD varied: two teachers reported it included diversity, three reported equity, five reported inclusion, and three reported belonging. Additionally, 26 participants indicated that their PD covered multiple DEIB topics, while 17 selected “N/A,” and two noted other content areas.

Table 4

Responses to Inclusive Teaching Practice and DEIB PD Questions

| Question | Frequency |
|--|--|
| INTP Q1: Where does your knowledge of inclusive teaching practices derive from? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District provided PD: 31 • My own personal reading/studies: 45 • Undergraduate/graduate studies: 30 • Teaching experience: 56 • Other: 4 |
| INTP Q2: If you HAVE participated in DEIB PD within the past two years, please answer the following question: The DEIB PD you received impacted your confidence level of utilizing inclusive teaching practices when answering the questions above. | PD ($N = 65$): 4.20 out of 6 Response Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly Disagree (1) • Disagree (2) • Disagree Somewhat (3) • Agree Somewhat (4) • Agree (5) |

| Question | Frequency |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly Agree (6) • N/A |
| District offering of PD within the past 2 years? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes: 44 • No: 8 • Unsure: 6 |
| Was the DEIB PD effective? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly Effective: 3 • Effective: 28 • Ineffective: 6 • Highly Ineffective: 3 • Did not receive PD within the past two years: 18 |
| Participated in DEIB PD in the past 2 years? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes: 40 • No: 18 |
| Content of DEIB PD? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity: 2 • Equity: 3 • Inclusion: 5 • Belonging: 3 • N/A: 17 • Multiple: 26 • Other: 2 |

Note. DEIB = diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging; INTP = inclusive teaching practice; PD = professional development.

RQ 2. What Are Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Teaching Practices After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ?

Table 5 presents data from the CRTSE scale, which identified teachers' perceived inclusive teaching practices. For each question, mean scores are given for two groups: teachers who had participated in DEIB PD within the past 2 years (PD) and those who had not participated in DEIB PD within the past 2 years (NO PD). The differences in mean scores between NO PD and PD were relatively small, and for most questions, p values were above .05,

indicating the differences were not statistically significant. The composite scores listed at the bottom of the table are overall averages across all questions in the CRTSE scale: 30.81 and 26.58 for teachers with PD and teachers with no PD respectively. This difference was also not statistically significant ($p = .377$).

A few individual questions stood out with a statically significant difference in mean scores. Question 20 asked if teachers “Use assessments that are culturally responsive” (PD: 4.52; NO PD: 3.89, $U = 223.5$, $p = .017$) and Question 24 asked if teachers “Collaborate with colleagues to improve culturally responsive teaching practices” (PD: 4.53; NO PD: 3.56, $U = 228$, $p = .021$). Overall, despite higher scores in the DEIB PD group for most questions, the differences were minimal, lacking in statistical significance.

Table 5

CRTSE Scale Results by Group

| Question | Group | Mean score | p value |
|--|--------|------------|-----------|
| CRT Question 1: Adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students | PD: | 5.42 | .608 |
| | NO PD: | 5.56 | |
| CRT Question 2: Use a variety of teaching methods | PD: | 5.58 | .290 |
| | NO PD: | 5.39 | |
| CRT Question 3: Develop lessons that incorporate students’ cultural backgrounds | PD: | 5.03 | .607 |
| | NO PD: | 4.89 | |
| CRT Question 4: Use culturally relevant examples in my teaching | PD: | 5.00 | .873 |
| | NO PD: | 5.00 | |
| CRT Question 5: Modify my teaching strategies based on the learning needs of my students | PD: | 5.50 | .473 |
| | NO PD: | 5.39 | |
| CRT Question 6: Create a classroom environment that respects diverse cultures | PD: | 5.65 | .576 |
| | NO PD: | 5.72 | |

| Question | Group | Mean score | <i>p</i> value |
|---|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| CRT Question 7: Use students' cultural experiences in the classroom | PD: NO PD: | 5.15 4.94 | .747 |
| CRT Question 8: Incorporate multicultural perspectives in my teaching | PD: NO PD: | 5.10 4.78 | .146 |
| CRT Question 9: Identify the cultural assets that students bring to the classroom | PD: NO PD: | 5.02 5.17 | .472 |
| CRT Question 10: Integrate students' cultural knowledge into my lessons | PD: NO PD: | 4.90 4.78 | .777 |
| CRT Question 11: Build on students' cultural strengths to enhance their learning | PD: NO PD: | 4.75 4.78 | .958 |
| CRT Question 12: Understand the cultural backgrounds of my students | PD: NO PD: | 4.83 5.22 | .178 |
| CRT Question 13: Address the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds | PD: NO PD: | 5.07 5.06 | .831 |
| CRT Question 14: Communicate effectively with students from diverse cultural backgrounds | PD: NO PD: | 5.05 5.22 | .492 |
| CRT Question 15: Develop strategies to support students from diverse cultural backgrounds | PD: NO PD: | 5.02 4.89 | .502 |
| CRT Question 16: Foster a classroom climate that values diversity | PD: NO PD: | 5.63 5.44 | .200 |
| CRT Question 17: Challenge students to think critically about cultural issues | PD: NO PD: | 5.03 4.56 | .109 |
| CRT Question 18: Encourage students to share their cultural perspectives | PD: NO PD: | 5.20 4.94 | .419 |
| CRT Question 19: Facilitate discussions on cultural diversity | PD: NO PD: | 4.75 4.44 | .350 |
| CRT Question 20: Use assessments that are culturally responsive | PD: NO PD: | 4.52 3.89 | .017* |

| Question | Group | Mean score | <i>p</i> value |
|---|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| CRT Question 21: Create an inclusive classroom environment | PD: NO PD: | 5.53 5.61 | .623 |
| CRT Question 22: Reflect on my own cultural biases | PD: NO PD: | 5.13 5.22 | .659 |
| CRT Question 23: Engage in professional development to enhance my culturally responsive teaching | PD: NO PD: | 4.95 4.22 | .088 |
| CRT Question 24: Collaborate with colleagues to improve culturally responsive teaching practices | PD: NO PD: | 4.53 3.56 | .021* |
| CRT Question 25: Advocate for the inclusion of multicultural perspectives in the curriculum | PD: NO PD: | 4.75 4.67 | .916 |
| CRT Question 26: Seek out resources to support culturally responsive teaching | PD: NO PD: | 4.88 4.28 | .133 |
| CRT Question 27: Establish positive relationships with students from diverse cultural backgrounds | PD: NO PD: | 5.57 5.61 | .798 |
| CRT Question 28: Recognize the cultural strengths of my students | PD: NO PD: | 5.23 5.22 | .956 |
| CRT Question 29: Respond to cultural differences in my teaching | PD: NO PD: | 4.97 4.83 | .539 |
| CRT Question 30: Promote respect for cultural diversity among students | PD: NO PD: | 5.70 5.83 | .288 |
| CRT Question 31: Support the academic success of students from diverse cultural backgrounds | PD: NO PD: | 5.68 5.56 | .663 |
| CRT Question 32: Encourage students to respect and appreciate cultural diversity | PD: NO PD: | 5.63 5.61 | .763 |
| CRT Question 33: Create learning experiences that are relevant to students' cultural lives | PD: NO PD: | 4.88 4.56 | .482 |
| CRT Question 34: Develop culturally responsive classroom management strategies | PD: NO PD: | 4.85 4.50 | .205 |

| Question | Group | Mean score | <i>p</i> value |
|--|--------|------------|----------------|
| CRT Question 35: Use cultural knowledge to guide my teaching practice | PD: | 4.73 | .915 |
| | NO PD: | 4.61 | |
| CRT Question 36: Involve families from diverse cultural backgrounds in the educational process | PD: | 4.53 | .101 |
| | NO PD: | 4.00 | |
| CRT Question 37: Adapt curriculum materials to reflect students' cultural backgrounds | PD: | 4.50 | .086 |
| | NO PD: | 4.00 | |
| CRT Question 38: Address cultural stereotypes in my teaching | PD: | 4.58 | .797 |
| | NO PD: | 4.61 | |
| CRT Question 39: Help students understand the impact of culture on learning | PD: | 4.43 | .833 |
| | NO PD: | 4.39 | |
| CRT Question 40: Use cultural references to make learning more meaningful | PD: | 4.75 | .248 |
| | NO PD: | 5.00 | |
| Composite | PD: | 30.81 | .377 |
| | NO PD: | 26.58 | |

Note. PD = professional development.

* $p < .05$.

RQ 3. What Are Teachers' Awareness Levels of Their Positionality in School Settings After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ?

Table 6 presents data from the positionality scale, which measured teachers' awareness of their positionality within school settings. Again, mean scores are given for the PD and NO PD groups and varied only slightly between these groups. Participants who participated in PD had mean scores from 2.55 to 4.08, while participants with no PD had mean scores from 2.50 to 4.61. Most questions yielded *p* values above .05, indicating no statistically significant difference. The composite mean score for the PD group was 29.76, while the composite score for the NO PD group was 28.92. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-Test indicated that the *p* value of the

composite scores was .960, indicating a lack of significant difference in teachers' awareness of their positionality because of DEIB PD. Overall, while there were some differences in mean scores between the two participant groups when looking at specific questions, the results suggest that DEIB PD did not have a major impact on teachers' awareness of their positionality within school settings.

Table 6

Positionality Scale Results by Group

| Positionality questions | Group | Mean score | <i>p</i> value |
|--|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| POS Question 1: Relative to other people within the United States, I have a lot of unearned privileges and opportunities. | PD: NO PD: | 4.08 4.39 | .426 |
| POS Question 2: My gender/gender identity grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment. | PD: NO PD: | 3.45 3.28 | .699 |
| POS Question 3: My sexual orientation grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment. | PD: NO PD: | 3.50 3.56 | .891 |
| POS Question 4: My race/ethnicity/ skin color grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment. | PD: NO PD: | 3.68 3.44 | .789 |
| POS Question 5: My disability status (or lack of disability) grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment. | PD: NO PD: | 3.80 3.72 | .904 |
| POS Question 6: My socioeconomic status (i.e. wealthy, middle class, working class, or poor) grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment. | PD: NO PD: | 3.73 3.72 | .877 |
| POS Question 7: My successes as a teacher in the classroom environment are determined largely by my own actions and my own efforts, independent of my demographic characteristics. | PD: NO PD: | 4.78 4.61 | .779 |
| POS Question 8: My successes as a teacher in the classroom environment are determined largely by | PD: NO PD: | 3.43 3.56 | .580 |

| Positionality questions | Group | Mean score | <i>p</i> value |
|--|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| characteristics of mine that have been present since birth and are largely outside of my control. | | | |
| POS Question 9: I have had to work less hard for the successes and opportunities available to me as a teacher in the classroom environment relative to people from different demographic groups. | PD: NO PD: | 2.85 3.00 | .959 |
| POS Question 10: I have had to work harder for the successes and opportunities available to me as a teacher in the classroom environment relative to people from different demographic groups. | PD: NO PD: | 3.70 3.17 | .184 |
| POS Question 11: The mistakes that I make as a teacher in the classroom environment will lead to harsher negative consequences for myself relative to people from different demographic groups. | PD: NO PD: | 2.55 2.72 | .663 |
| POS Question 12: The mistakes that I make as a teacher in the classroom environment will lead to less harsh negative consequences for myself relative to people from different demographic groups. | PD: NO PD: | 2.88 2.50 | .413 |
| Composite | PD: NO PD: | 29.76 28.92 | .960 |

Note. PD = professional development.

Presentation of Qualitative Findings

Interviewees with No DEIB PD Within the Past 2 Years

Table 7 lists the interview questions for the three participants who had not received DEIB PD within the past 2 years and the corresponding research questions. The interview questions were crafted to explore how educators conceptualized DEIB PD, how they understood their own positionality, and how they perceived their own preparedness to practice inclusive teaching without formal DEIB PD.

Table 7*No DEIB PD Interview Questions*

| Interview question | Research question addressed |
|--|-----------------------------|
| What does Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) mean to you as an educator, considering your own positionality and experiences? | RQ 2 and RQ 3 |
| As an educator, is it important for you to be aware of your own positionality within the classroom setting? Why or why not? | RQ 3 |
| How integral is the concept of DEIB-centered instruction to your professional teaching practice, and how does your personal background influence this approach? | RQ 1, RQ 2, and RQ 3 |
| In your opinion, is DEIB professional development essential for all educators? How, if at all, has your own understanding of your positionality influenced this perspective? | RQ 1 and RQ 3 |
| Reflecting on your positionality and experiences, do you feel adequately equipped to address DEIB issues within the specific context and community of your classroom? How has your lack of DEIB PD contributed to this readiness? | RQ 1, RQ 2, and RQ 3 |
| You indicated that you have not received DEIB PD within the past two years. Could you describe how, if at all, your school district is addressing DEIB initiatives without providing teachers with PD? | RQ 1 |
| Without recent DEIB PD, what aspects of your understanding of inclusive teaching practices do you feel might be lacking in relation to creating an inclusive classroom environment? | RQ 1 and RQ 2 |
| In what ways, if any, does your own understanding of DEIB impact your inclusive teaching practices? | RQ 1 and RQ 2 |
| In what ways, if any, does your awareness of your own positionality within the classroom impact your teaching practices? | RQ 1 and RQ 3 |
| Can you describe, without specifics, an instance where you believe insights from DEIB PD might have helped you address a sensitive topic or issue within your classroom, considering your own background and its potential influence on the situation? | RQ 1, RQ 2, and RQ 3 |

Note. DEIB PD = diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging professional development; RQ = research question.

The interview data for participants with no DEIB PD were thematically analyzed and coded to identify five major themes: Positionality Awareness, Need for DEIB PD, Cultural Differences, Inclusive Teaching Practices, and Reactive vs. Proactive. The sections below provide a detailed explanation of each theme. Table 8 lists the five themes, associated codes, and related quotes from interview participants.

Theme 1: Positionality Awareness

Each of the interview participants demonstrated an awareness of the significance of positionality in shaping their interactions and effectiveness within diverse school settings. They acknowledged that understanding their own biases, lived experiences, and social positions was essential in fostering meaningful connections with students whose backgrounds differed from their own. This self-awareness is particularly critical in the classroom, where educators must navigate their own perspectives while ensuring they remain open to the perspectives and experiences of their students. Without an intentional reflection on positionality, educators risk reinforcing unexamined biases that may inadvertently create barriers to student engagement and inclusivity.

However, interviewees emphasized that while they recognized the value of positionality awareness, they felt limited in their ability to translate this awareness into actionable teaching strategies. They expressed a strong need for structured PD that would provide concrete methods for acknowledging and mitigating bias, fostering inclusive dialogues, and enhancing cross-cultural understanding. Without such training, their ability to effectively support students from diverse backgrounds relied largely on personal reflection rather than institutional guidance and resources.

Theme 2: Need for DEIB PD

All three interviewees underscored the pressing need for structured DEIB PD in their schools. They expressed a shared sentiment that, while they recognized the importance of fostering an inclusive learning environment, they felt largely unprepared to do so due to the absence of formal training. They noted that their current approach to addressing DEIB relied heavily on their own experiences, trial and error, and informal peer discussions rather than on evidence-based strategies and best practices. The lack of formal DEIB training left them feeling less confident in their ability to navigate complex classroom dynamics, address issues of discrimination or bias, and support students from marginalized backgrounds in meaningful ways.

The interviewees also expressed frustration with the limited resources allocated for DEIB initiatives, saying that while their schools often acknowledged the importance of diversity and inclusion, they failed to provide the necessary PD to equip teachers to enact meaningful change. Without structured and ongoing DEIB PD, educators were left to navigate these challenges on their own, resulting in inconsistencies in implementation and a reliance on motivation rather than institutional support.

Theme 3: Cultural Differences

The interview participants articulated a collective desire for deeper cultural sensitivity and a stronger understanding of their students' diverse backgrounds. Participants described various instances in which cultural differences created barriers to effective teaching and student engagement. Many of these challenges arose due to a lack of formal training on cultural competence, leaving teachers to rely on personal experiences or interactions with colleagues to bridge these gaps. The participants expressed frustration with their inability to fully comprehend or address the unique cultural needs of their students, often feeling that their lack of knowledge

impeded their ability to foster truly inclusive learning environments. Interviewees shared that they attempted to compensate through informal strategies such as engaging students in discussions about their cultural identities or implementing classroom activities that celebrated diversity. However, without a structured framework to guide them, these efforts were often inconsistent and insufficient. They pointed out that cultural competence should not be left to individual educators to develop on their own; rather, it should be an integral part of PD to ensure that all teachers are adequately prepared to address cultural differences with knowledge, sensitivity, and confidence.

Theme 4: Inclusive Teaching Practices

The interviewees unanimously agreed that fostering equity and inclusion was a foundational aspect of their teaching philosophy. They expressed a strong commitment to creating classroom environments where all students feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed. However, they also noted significant challenges in implementing inclusive teaching practices systematically, primarily due to the absence of formal DEIB PD. Without structured guidance, they found themselves relying on personal judgement and ad-hoc strategies to promote inclusivity, rather than research-based best practices. The interviewees emphasized that inclusive teaching goes beyond simply acknowledging diversity; it requires intentional planning, culturally responsive pedagogy, and proactive strategies to address the unique needs of all students. They expressed concerns that without adequate DEIB PD, their efforts to create inclusive classrooms remained fragmented and inconsistent. Furthermore, they highlighted the need for instructional resources, mentorship, and administrative support to strengthen their ability to implement inclusive teaching practices. Ultimately, the participants conveyed a deep commitment to equity,

but recognized that their ability to achieve it in a meaningful and sustainable way was hindered by the lack of comprehensive PD.

Theme 5: Reactive vs. Proactive

One of the most prominent concerns expressed by the interviewees was about the reactive nature of DEIB initiatives within their school districts. They described how diversity and inclusion efforts often took the form of one-time events, tokenized celebrations, or last-minute curriculum add-ons, rather than being integrated into a holistic and sustained framework. Examples mentioned included lessons designed for Black History Month or Hispanic Heritage Month that were distributed with little to no guidance on how to incorporate them into broader curricular goals. The participants voiced frustration over the lack of a proactive, long-term commitment to DEIB within their schools. They noted that their districts often emphasized core curriculum requirements to the extent that DEIB become a secondary consideration, implemented only in response to specific events or external pressures. This reactive approach, they argued, failed to create meaningful, lasting inclusive educational environments. The interviewees called for a shift toward a proactive DEIB PD framework with continuous training, embedded inclusive curricula, and administrative policies that prioritized DEIB as foundational rather than optional. They expressed that without this shift, efforts to support diverse student populations would remain superficial and ineffective.

Table 8*Coding Themes, Codes, and Interview Excerpts for the No DEIB PD Group*

| Theme | Codes | Excerpts |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Positionality Awareness | Acknowledging personal bias | “It’s important to understand when our positionality may have been skewed ... it may allow you to discriminate if you don’t recognize it.” |
| | Understanding different students’ perspectives | “I need to understand the perspectives of students who are different than me, the same as me.” |
| | Understanding background and experiences of students | “My background, my upbringing, my economic status ... I have to be open to understanding other children’s lives.” |
| Need for DEIB PD | Lack of DEIB PD in teaching experience | “I think it’s very important ... more professional development would help make sure that we’re hitting each different targeted group.” |
| | Need for better preparation in addressing minority experiences | “I don’t feel adequately prepared to deal with the minority experiences that a lot of my kids are coming with ... more support would be helpful.” |
| | Lack of resources and formal professional development in DEIB areas | “I think it’s very important ... we don’t put enough resources, we don’t utilize enough resources to include DEIB in our classrooms.” |
| Cultural Differences | Adjusting to cultural differences in the classroom | “It’s something that I have to do by myself without any training, but I do try to recognize and start warm-up activities.” |
| | Difficulty understanding diverse cultural backgrounds | “I feel like there’s that big cultural piece that we have with many different cultural backgrounds ... I think it would be helpful to have a better understanding.” |

| Theme | Codes | Excerpts |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Inclusive Teaching Practices | Struggles to relate to students' cultural differences and lack of formal PD | "It's hard for me to relate to my students sometimes ... I learned a lot from my para who was Muslim, but nothing formal from above me." |
| | Advocating for equity within the classroom | "Equity has always been something very important to me ... fighting for the equity for my students has always been important." |
| | Creating a classroom of equity and understanding students' strengths | "The ability to see them for who they are and understand their strengths as well as challenges is so important to creating that classroom." |
| | Teaching all students inclusively and incorporating DEIB when possible | "It's important for me to still teach about it ... even if I don't have a child filling one of those boxes, I think it's important to still include it." |
| Reactive vs. Proactive | Reactive DEIB measures from the school district | "It seems that the lessons do go out ... last minute lessons for Hispanic Heritage Month ... it's reactive rather than proactive." |
| | Lack of proactive DEIB support from school administration | "I think that it's still difficult without the piece of sensitivity ... more support in these areas would definitely be helpful." |
| | Reactive DEIB approach due to heavy curriculum focus | "Our district is so heavy on curriculum that we don't have much time to include specific DEIB-centered lessons ... it's a reactive approach." |

Note. DEIB = diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; PD = professional development.

Interviewees with DEIB PD Within the Past 2 Years

Table 9 lists the interview questions for the three participants who had received DEIB PD in the past 2 years and the associated research questions.

Table 9

DEIB PD Interview Questions

| Interview question | Research question addressed |
|--|-----------------------------|
| What does Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) mean to you as an educator, considering your own positionality and experiences? | RQ 2 and RQ 3 |
| As an educator, is it important for you to be aware of your own positionality within the classroom setting? Why or why not? | RQ 3 |
| How integral is the concept of DEIB-centered instruction to your professional teaching practice, and how does your personal background influence this approach? | RQ 1, RQ 2, and RQ 3 |
| In your opinion, is DEIB professional development essential for all educators? How, if at all, has your own understanding of your positionality influenced this perspective? | RQ 1 and RQ 3 |
| Reflecting on your positionality and experiences, do you feel adequately equipped to address DEIB issues within the specific context and community of your classroom? How has DEIB PD contributed to this readiness? | RQ 1, RQ 2, and RQ 3 |
| Could you describe how your school district typically structures DEIB professional development for teachers? | RQ 1 |
| What was the focus or theme of the most recent DEIB PD session you attended, and how did it (if at all) intersect with your understanding of your own positionality? | RQ 1 and RQ 3 |
| In what ways, if any, did the recent DEIB PD training impact your inclusive teaching practices? | RQ 1 and RQ 2 |

| Interview question | Research question addressed |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Can you share, without specifics, an instance where you applied insights from your DEIB training to address a sensitive topic or issue within your classroom, considering your own positionality and its influence on the situation? | RQ 1, RQ 2, and RQ 3 |

Note. DEIB = diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; PD = professional development.

The interview data for the DEIB PD group were thematically analyzed and coded to identify five major themes: Positionality Awareness, Need for Ongoing PD, Inclusive Teaching Practices: Curriculum and Communication, Systemic Inequities, and DEIB Leadership and Community. The sections below provide a detailed explanation of each theme. Table 10 lists the five themes, associated codes, and quotes from interview participants that relate to each theme.

Theme 1: Positionality Awareness

The concept of positionality awareness emerged as a crucial theme among all three interviewees. They emphasized that awareness of their positionality directly affected their ability to build meaningful and trusting relationships with students, particularly those from different backgrounds. Two of the interviewees, both White male educators, specifically reflected on their racial and gender identity in relation to their students, acknowledging the inherent power they held in their classrooms. They recognized that failing to engage in self-reflection on their positionality could lead to unintentional harm, reinforcing existing inequities and disconnecting them from the lived experiences of their students. All three educators agreed that understanding positionality was not a passive exercise, but an active and ongoing process that influenced their teaching strategies, student engagement, and overall classroom dynamics. This awareness

allowed them to be more intentional in creating inclusive, equitable learning environments where all students felt valued and respected.

Theme 2: Need for Ongoing PD

All three participants underscored the necessity of continuous DEIB-focused PD rather than a one-time or sporadic approach. They observed that while standalone DEIB PD sessions might provide valuable insights, they did not lead to sustainable change in educators' beliefs and practices. Instead, they advocated for ongoing DEIB PD that encouraged continuous learning, self-reflection, and practical application. One participant pointed out that without consistent reinforcement, it was easy for educators to revert to ingrained biases and traditional training methods that might not serve diverse student populations equitably. Another participant noted that growth in DEIB competencies was a gradual process, requiring educators to engage in continuous self-education, dialogue, and practice. They shared personal experiences of how repeated exposure to DEIB training helped them become more self-aware, culturally responsive, and effective in addressing biases within their teaching. The participants agreed that for DEIB efforts to be truly impactful, PD must be embedded into the culture of schools and districts, rather than treated as an optional or occasional initiative. Sustainable DEIB PD fosters an environment of accountability, reflection, and long-term commitment to equity and inclusion in education.

Theme 3: Inclusive Teaching Practices: Curriculum and Communication

The interviewees reported that their participation in DEIB PD had led to meaningful shifts in their teaching practices, particularly in curriculum design and classroom communication. They emphasized the importance of adapting curricula to be more representative and inclusive, ensuring that all students saw themselves reflected in their learning materials. One

participant noted how DEIB PD had encouraged them to critically evaluate traditional texts and resources and identify biases and gaps in representation that might marginalize certain student groups. They shared examples of incorporating diverse perspectives, multiple ways for students to engage with content, and discussions that encouraged critical thinking about issues of equity and identity.

In addition to curriculum, the participants discussed the role of communication in creating inclusive learning environments. They mentioned the need to establish open, respectful dialogue in the classroom, allowing students to share their experiences and perspectives without fear of judgement. One educator said that self-reflection played a key role in this process—by recognizing their own biases and communication styles, teachers can adapt their approaches to be more inclusive and culturally responsive. Collectively, the participants highlighted that inclusive teaching was an ongoing process that required educators to remain flexible, receptive to feedback, and committed to continuous improvement.

Theme 4: Systemic Inequities

The recognition and active challenge of systemic inequities emerged as a central theme among all three interviewees. They acknowledged that inequities in education extended far beyond individual classrooms and stemmed from broader social, economic, and historical structures that disproportionately disadvantaged certain student populations. The participants discussed the necessity of educators developing a critical awareness of these systemic barriers and actively working to dismantle them. One interviewee reflected on their realization of how underserved communities faced significant structural disadvantages, prompting them to rethink their role in advocating for their students. Another participant noted that addressing systemic

inequities required both an individual and a collective effort, emphasizing that change could not occur in isolation but must be supported by institutional commitment and policy changes.

The interviewees also recognized that many educators, particularly those working in affluent or predominantly White communities, might have limited exposure to discussions on systemic inequities. They expressed the need for more intentional conversations within schools to raise awareness and push for more equitable policies and practices. While they acknowledged that tackling systemic inequities was challenging and often met with resistance, they emphasized that it was essential to achieve just and inclusive educational environments. Ultimately, they agreed that DEIB PD should include a strong focus on systemic inequities and give educators the knowledge and tools to identify and confront them in their classrooms and beyond.

Theme 5: DEIB Leadership and Community

The final theme that emerged from the interviews was the role of DEIB leadership and the importance of fostering a sense of community within schools. The participants agreed that DEIB work should not be confined to individual classrooms, but should be integrated into schoolwide leadership practices and community engagement efforts. One interviewee shared their involvement in a DEI committee, emphasizing that such initiatives were essential for creating systemic change within schools. They expressed that DEIB committees provided a platform for educators to collaborate, share strategies, and advocate for policies that promote equity and inclusion.

Another key aspect of DEIB leadership discussed was the need to create school environments where students felt a strong sense of belonging. One participant stressed the importance of celebrating students' diverse backgrounds and ensuring that their cultural identities were acknowledged and valued within the school community. They noted that students

should not feel the need to separate their home and school identities, but rather should experience an educational environment that fully embraces who they are.

The interviewees also pointed to the necessity of school leaders setting the tone for DEIB efforts and making inclusion a priority at all levels of decision-making. Without a commitment from administrators and leadership teams, DEIB initiatives risk being performative rather than substantive. The participants concluded that an inclusive community required a collective, ongoing effort—one that engaged educators, students, families, and community members in meaningful, action-oriented dialogue and initiatives. By embedding DEIB principles into leadership and community practices, schools can create more inclusive, equitable, and affirming environments for all students and staff.

Table 10

Coding Themes, Codes, and Interview Excerpts for the DEIB PD Group

| Theme | Codes | Excerpts |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Positionality Awareness | Helps to build better relationships with students from diverse backgrounds | “If I don’t take the time to understand my biases, then I would not be able to relate or teach the students in the way they need to be taught, loved, cared for, and respected.” |
| | Recognizing power dynamics is crucial to foster trust | “You have to recognize that yes, you have power, and that power is complicated ... if you’re not self-aware of that, you could probably cause a decent amount of harm.” |
| | Acknowledge student experiences and how they differ from mine | “It’s very hard to walk in other people’s shoes and understand, you know, what they’ve been through. So I think that when you show that you’re really trying to gain a deep understanding of their past ...” |
| Need for Ongoing PD | Vital to improving teaching and addressing biases | “If you’re not constantly trying to educate yourself and be better ... yearly PD would definitely help me become a better educator.” |

| Theme | Codes | Excerpts |
|---|--|--|
| Inclusive Teaching Practices: Curriculum and Communication | Necessary for a lasting impact on educators | “I think it’s important, but it’s incredibly difficult, and it has to be sustained ... without that reinforcement, it’s very easy to slip back into your own ways.” |
| | Essential for continued growth | “I feel better than I did in the past, and that was through training ... I think there’s always so much more growth that people can have.” |
| | Adapt teaching to be more inclusive and accessible | “It kind of aligns with what I’m already doing ... offering multiple choices, giving different opportunities for my students to learn.” |
| | Encouraging critical engagement within literature | “After a couple semesters of grad school ... I was like, this book is incredibly problematic, and there’s so much stuff to talk about.” |
| Systemic Inequities | Reflect on biases and adapt more inclusive practices | “Fostering inclusive classrooms, improving communication, and just addressing more inequalities that are seen throughout the district.” |
| | Increased awareness of systemic challenges students face | “Understanding how underserved this population is, and made me self-reflect on again, like I am Hispanic, but if you looked at me, you would never know.” |
| | Recognizing systemic inequities has reshaped role as an educator | “It’s vital, but it’s not easy, and it’s hard work ... to get somebody to understand who they are in the world in a different way” |
| | Address systemic inequities in classroom and school community | “In a very... affluent area, people aren’t really exposed or have deep knowledge about some of the systemic inequities ...” |
| DEIB Leadership and Community | Focusing on diversity promotes belonging and growth | “Highlighting the student backgrounds so that ... it’s not just like they’re one person in school and then one person at home, it’s who they are at home is who they are in school.” |
| | Participation in DEI committee helps to lead efforts for inclusivity | “I’m a member of our DEI committee ... it’s vital to address these issues within the context and community of your classroom.” |

| Theme | Codes | Excerpts |
|-------|---|--|
| | Provide strategies for creating supportive and inclusive school environments. | “The most recent [DEIB PD] we had was on inclusive leadership and developing strategies for leaders to create and support inclusive environments.” |

Note. DEIB = diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; PD = professional development.

Summary

RQ 1. How Do K-12 School Districts in a Northeastern Region Address DEIB PD for Teachers?

The findings revealed a varied landscape of DEIB PD across K-12 school districts. While a significant number of teachers (44 out of 58) reported that their district had offered DEIB PD within the past 2 years, there remained a notable subset (eight) whose districts had not provided it, with an additional six unsure about the availability of DEIB PD. Teachers’ sources of knowledge on inclusive teaching practices were diverse, with the most frequently cited sources being personal studies (45 respondents) and teaching experience (56 respondents). Formal district-provided PD, while present, was only cited by 31 respondents as source of their inclusive teaching knowledge, highlighting the supplemental role of personal learning in fostering inclusive teaching practices.

The perceived effectiveness of DEIB PD was mixed. Of those who had received DEIB PD, three participants rated it as “Highly Effective” and 28 as “Effective,” while six considered it “Ineffective” and three “Highly Ineffective.” The data suggest that while DEIB PD contributed to teachers’ confidence in inclusive practices (with a mean confidence score of 4.20 out of 6), it was not the sole determinant of their preparedness: teachers also relied on personal reading, formal education, and classroom experiences.

The qualitative findings further reinforce these trends. Interview participants who had not received DEIB PD expressed a strong need for structured training, often describing their districts' DEIB efforts as reactive rather than proactive. Many noted that DEIB initiatives in their schools were tied to specific events or months rather than being integrated into ongoing professional learning. Without sustained DEIB PD, teachers reported feeling less equipped to navigate cultural differences and implement inclusive strategies systematically.

RQ 2. What Are Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Teaching Practices After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ?

The CRTSE scale data demonstrated that teachers who had received DEIB PD had slightly higher mean scores on most inclusive teaching practice items, but the differences were generally not statistically significant. Two questions did show significant differences: teachers who had participated in DEIB PD were more likely to report using culturally responsive assessments and collaborating with colleagues to improve culturally responsive teaching practices. These findings suggest that while DEIB PD may not dramatically shift overall teaching efficacy, it can have a targeted impact on specific inclusive teaching behaviors.

The qualitative data further contextualized these findings. Interviewees who had participated in DEIB PD described a heightened awareness of their teaching practices and how they could better integrate inclusive strategies into their classrooms. They cited increased attention to student backgrounds, more culturally relevant pedagogy, and greater self-reflection on bias. However, they also emphasized that DEIB PD must be ongoing to be effective, and noted that a one-time DEIB PD session did not provide sufficient reinforcement for long-term change.

RQ 3. What Are Teachers' Awareness Levels of Their Positionality in School Settings After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ?

The positionality scale results also did not show significant differences between teachers who had received DEIB PD and those who had not. This suggests that DEIB PD did not significantly impact teachers' awareness of their positionality. However, in the interviews, the teachers who had received DEIB PD demonstrated a deeper understanding of how their positionality influenced their reactions with students. These educators expressed increased self-awareness regarding their own biases and privilege and acknowledged how their identities shaped classroom dynamics. Interviewees who had not received DEIB PD also recognized the importance of positionality, but said they lacked structured guidance on how to apply this awareness in their teaching practices.

Teachers in the DEIB PD group emphasized the role of positionality in building trust and meaningful relationships with students. Some explicitly mentioned that their training had helped them reflect on their identity and power dynamics in the classroom. They also noted that increased awareness of systemic inequities had reshaped their role as educators, prompting them to critically examine their instructional approaches and advocate for more equitable school policies. Conversely, the teachers who had not received DEIB PD expressed a strong desire for training in this area and described feeling unprepared to navigate cultural differences or discuss systemic inequities ineffectively. Many relied on personal experiences or trial-and-error approaches, reinforcing the need for more structured and continuous DEIB PD.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings suggest that DEIB PD can contribute to teachers' confidence in inclusive teaching and awareness of positionality, but the impact is limited by a lack of

sustained, ongoing training. While the quantitative data indicated minimal statistical differences between teachers who had received DEIB PD and those who had not, qualitative findings suggested meaningful shifts in mindset and teaching practices among those who engaged in DEIB PD. The study underscores the need for PD that is not only available, but also continuous, embedded, and actionable, to create lasting change in educators' abilities to foster inclusive learning environments.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that DEIB PD must move beyond isolated sessions and be integrated into a long-term, systemic approach to professional learning. Schools must prioritize not only the availability of DEIB PD, but also the depth and consistency of these trainings. Teachers require support in translating DEIB principles into daily instructional practices, and without ongoing reinforcement, initial progress may be lost over time. Additionally, while self-awareness regarding positionality and systemic inequities is an essential first step, real transformation in school culture and teaching practices will require a collective commitment to equity-driven professional learning at the institutional level. This study highlights the pressing need for school districts to evaluate their DEIB PD frameworks and ensure that training is not simply a checkbox, but a sustained effort towards inclusive and equitable education.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Results

This study examined the impact of DEIB PD on teachers' inclusive teaching practices and awareness of their positionality. The discussion presented here interprets the findings in relation to existing literature, research questions, and theoretical frameworks, particularly those rooted in social justice education and equity-focused pedagogy. This chapter also discusses the broader implications of these findings for policy, practice, and future research.

Findings of this study indicate that teachers who participated in DEIB PD demonstrated a greater understanding of their positionality and more confidence in implementing inclusive teaching practices. These results align with CRT, which emphasizes that educators' self-awareness and ability to navigate diverse classroom contexts are integral to equitable teaching (Crenshaw, 1991). Furthermore, the results align with existing literature that emphasizes the necessity of PD to foster equitable classroom environments (Kohli et al., 2015; Mensah, 2019).

RQ 1. How Do K-12 School Districts in a Northeastern Region Address DEIB PD for Teachers?

Findings from this study indicated that the implementation of DEIB PD in the participants' school districts was inconsistent. While some districts had well-structured, ongoing PD initiatives focused on DEIB, others offered limited or one-time sessions that did not allow for sustained teacher growth in inclusive teaching practices. This inconsistency reflects broader systemic inequities in PD access, as described by Nieto (2010), who observed that districts serving historically marginalized communities often lack resources for comprehensive teacher training.

Teachers from school districts that provided DEIB PD reported greater confidence in implementing inclusive teaching practices and a deeper awareness of their positionality. These findings align with existing literature, such as Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), that highlights the importance of sustained and embedded PD. However, despite the benefits of DEIB PD, teachers in this study noted barriers such as lack of administrative support, limited time, and reluctance from colleagues or communities resistant to discussing equity and inclusion. These challenges underscore the necessity of leadership commitment to DEIB initiatives (Theoharis, 2007). Without strong administrative advocacy and integration of DEIB principles into district policies, educators will struggle to sustain meaningful changes in practice.

The findings from this study also demonstrated that DEIB PD is often treated as supplementary rather than integral. A notable finding was that more teachers derived their knowledge of inclusive teaching practices from personal studies (45 respondents) and teaching experience (56 respondents) than from formal district-provided PD (31 respondents). This suggests that while educators are committed to self-improvement, the responsibility for developing inclusive teaching strategies often falls on individual initiative rather than institutional PD structures. From a CRT perspective, this reflects structural inequities in resource allocation that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, perpetuating cycles of exclusion in professional learning and classroom practice (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Reliance on self-directed learning also raises concerns about consistency in DEIB PD implementation. Without structured, research-based training, teachers may lack access to best practices and a critical understanding of systemic inequities that shape their classrooms. This underscores the need for school districts to prioritize comprehensive DEIB PD that is embedded within

educators' professional growth, rather than treating it as an optional supplement to their independent efforts.

RQ 2. What Are Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Teaching Practices After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ?

Teachers who participated in DEIB PD reported increased confidence in implementing inclusive teaching practices and described greater awareness of how their own biases and positionality influenced classroom dynamics and curriculum delivery. Teachers also reported improved strategies for fostering student belonging and addressing structural inequities within the education system (Freire, 1970; Paris & Alim, 2017). However, some teachers expressed concern that, despite their personal growth, they lacked concrete implementation strategies or schoolwide support to enact systemic changes. Existing literature supports these findings. Specifically, Gay (2000) and Kohli et al. (2015) argued that while DEIB PD enhances teacher awareness, it must be coupled with clear instructional strategies and institutional backing to create meaningful impact.

While quantitative data showed minimal statistical differences between teachers who had participated in DEIB PD and those who had not, qualitative responses revealed deeper shifts in teachers' self-perception and instructional approaches. Teachers who had undergone DEIB PD were more likely to engage in culturally responsive assessment practices and collaborative discussions about inclusive pedagogy. These shifts, while not always measurable in quantitative terms, align with CRT's assertion that equity-driven change is often obstructed by systemic inertia and requires intentional, continuous efforts rather than isolated interventions. Without structural support and continued training, the impact of DEIB PD may be diluted, reducing its potential for transformative change in classroom practices. Schools should therefore not only

provide DEIB PD, but also offer coaching and collaborative learning opportunities that allow teachers to develop and refine their inclusive teaching practices over time.

RQ 3. What Are Teachers' Awareness Levels of Their Positionality in School Settings After DEIB PD or Without DEIB PD? Do These Perceptions Differ?

The interview responses revealed that DEIB PD improved teachers' awareness of their positionality. Educators who engaged in structured reflection exercises as part of their DEIB training were more likely to recognize how their social identities influenced their interactions with students and colleagues. This finding aligns with Milner's (2007a) work on racial consciousness in teaching, which asserted that educators must actively interrogate their biases to create equitable learning spaces. Despite these gains, some teachers still struggled with how to address their biases in real-time classroom interactions. They expressed a desire for additional coaching and guided discussions that could help them navigate these challenges effectively. Therefore, future DEIB PD should incorporate ongoing self-reflection exercises, structured peer discussions, and mentorship opportunities to help educators translate their increased awareness into actionable, equitable teaching practices.

While teachers in this study acknowledged the importance of positionality, some felt unprepared to actively address power dynamics and bias within their classrooms. CRT underscores the necessity of this ongoing reflection, as systems of privilege and marginalization are deeply embedded within educational institutions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Without sustained engagement, teachers may recognize their positionality but lack the tools to transform this awareness into meaningful pedagogical changes. Additionally, teachers from historically privileged backgrounds may struggle more with acknowledging their positionality in ways that directly challenge systemic inequities, further emphasizing the need for scaffolded, ongoing

DEIB PD rather than isolated workshops or one-time PD sessions. Additionally, drawing from Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, ongoing critical reflection can facilitate the deep cognitive shifts necessary for long-term change in educators' beliefs and practices.

Ultimately, without institutional reinforcement and continued opportunities for growth, teachers' awareness of positionality may remain an abstract concept rather than an actionable driver of equitable educational change.

Implications

The findings of this study contribute new knowledge to the field of social justice education by providing evidence for the effectiveness of DEIB PD in fostering inclusive teaching practices. This study builds on existing literature by demonstrating how sustained and structured DEIB PD enhances teachers' awareness of their positionality and ability to implement inclusive pedagogy. These findings highlight the need for educational institutions to embed DEIB initiatives into long-term PD strategies rather than treating them as one-time interventions.

The findings have implications for both teachers and administrators who can advocate for and implement long-term, sustained change within school communities. Furthermore, this research shows the importance of administrative support, structured mentorship, and practical implementation strategies in ensuring the success of DEIB PD programs.

The Need for More DEIB PD

Findings of this study indicate that teachers require ongoing, well-structured DEIB PD to develop confidence in discussing social justice issues and implementing inclusive teaching practices effectively. This study contributes to the field by demonstrating that DEIB PD strengthens teachers' ability to apply inclusive practices in diverse classroom settings, bridging the gap between theoretical DEIB concepts and their practical implementation.

PD programs that provide consistent, scaffolded learning experiences are essential, as observed by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who advocated for sustained and context-driven teacher training. This research extends prior studies by highlighting that sporadic DEIB workshops failed to produce significant long-term changes (Gorksi, 2018). Without ongoing reinforcement, teachers may struggle to apply DEIB principles effectively, leading to inconsistent implementation across different classrooms and schools. Future DEIB PD initiatives should be embedded within long-term professional learning communities that foster collaboration and sustained engagement with inclusive teaching methodologies. Finally, administrators must ensure that DEIB PD is a continuous process woven into the professional culture of the school. Teachers should be provided with follow-up sessions, resources, and ongoing mentorship to reinforce learning. Incorporating DEIB PD into annual teacher evaluations and professional growth plans can help to ensure accountability and sustained application in teaching practices.

The Need for Teacher Feedback and Constant Reflection

Teachers expressed the need for a safe environment to discuss their challenges and receive constructive feedback. The importance of psychological safety in PD was also supported by Ness et al. (2010), who found that collaborative PD groups encouraged educators to engage in critical reflection and refine their inclusive teaching practices. This observation expands current understanding of how DEIB PD initiatives can be structured to maximize impact. Implementing structured peer feedback and mentoring systems can enhance the effectiveness of DEIB PD initiatives in school districts.

Furthermore, this study suggests that self-reflection should be an integral part of DEIB PD programs. Providing educators with structured opportunities to analyze their biases,

positionality, and teaching strategies can improve the depth and authenticity of their inclusive teaching practices. School and district administrators should consider incorporating reflective journals, discussion forums, and mentorship opportunities to help educators critically assess their development and identify areas for growth. To ensure that reflection leads to meaningful change, teachers should be encouraged to set personal and professional goals related to DEIB practices. These reflective practices foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement, contributing to the broader discourse on sustainable, evidence-based DEIB implementation in education.

The Need to Address Teachers' Discomfort in Engaging with DEIB Topics

Despite the benefits of DEIB PD, some teachers reported feelings of discomfort in addressing race, privilege, and systemic inequities in their classrooms. Existing research by Leibowitz and Bozalek (2016) suggested that discomfort can be a catalyst for meaningful learning when facilitated appropriately, and Bell's (1997) theory of social justice education suggests that educators must embrace discomfort as part of the process of developing critical consciousness. The teachers interviewed in this study contributed insights about how structured DEIB PD incorporating guided discussions and reflective exercises could transform teacher discomfort into a productive learning experience, leading to more effective and confident engagement with DEIB topics.

It is essential that PD programs provide educators with tools to manage difficult conversations effectively. Equipping teachers with conflict resolution strategies and frameworks for navigating resistance—whether from students, parents, or colleagues—can enhance their confidence in engaging with DEIB topics. Future research should also explore the impact of role-playing scenarios and peer coaching in preparing teachers to lead these discussions successfully.

The Need to Bridge the Gap Between DEIB Theory and Practice

Although many studies highlight the importance of DEIB in education (Gay, 2000; Kohli et al., 2015), there remains a lack of research on how to implement these principles effectively in daily classroom interactions. This study underscores the need for practical strategies and structured implementation frameworks that support teachers in integrating DEIB concepts into their pedagogy. Research by Muhammad (2020) on “cultivating genius” emphasized that teachers must have access to clear instructional models that align DEIB principles with curriculum standards. This study builds on this perspective by providing empirical evidence that without structured implementation strategies, DEIB efforts remain theoretical rather than transformative. By offering a model for sustained DEIB PD that includes practical applications, this research advances understanding of how educators can effectively translate equity-driven frameworks into tangible classroom practices.

A key recommendation from this research is the need for school districts to develop clear DEIB implementation guidelines. Without explicit strategies, teachers may struggle to transition from theoretical knowledge to practical application. School leaders should consider developing curriculum maps, lesson plan templates, and classroom activity guides that provide concrete examples of inclusive teaching practices.

Limitations

While this study provided valuable insights into the impact of DEIB PD on teachers’ inclusive teaching practices and awareness of their positionality, there were several limitations. First, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias, where participants provide responses they perceive as favorable rather than entirely accurate

reflections of their teaching experiences. Future research should incorporate observational methods and classroom evaluations to assess the real-world application of DEIB principles.

The study sample consisted of teachers from four states in the northeastern U.S., limiting the generalizability of findings to all K-12 educators nationwide. Different states and districts may have varying levels of commitment to DEIB PD, and future research should expand the participant pool to include educators from more states and regions.

Third, this study focused on teachers' own perceptions of their practices and self-efficacy, and did not measure student outcomes. Future research should explore how changes in teachers' inclusive teaching practices influence student engagement, academic performance, and overall classroom climate.

Lastly, the study did not account for varying levels of prior DEIB PD among participants. Some teachers may have had extensive prior experience with DEIB PD, while others were engaging with these topics for the first time. Future studies should investigate how different levels of DEIB familiarity impact PD effectiveness.

Conclusion

By addressing the aforementioned gaps, future research can inform policies and practices that create more equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students. Future research should focus on a long-term study of DEIB PD programs within school districts to analyze their impact on teaching practices before and after implementation. Policymakers should consider incorporating DEIB training into state-mandated teacher certification requirements, ensuring that all educators receive foundational training in inclusive teaching practices. Additionally, districts should assess the effectiveness of their DEIB PD initiatives through ongoing data collection and program evaluation, relying heavily on teacher feedback.

This research has demonstrated that DEIB PD is crucial for the future of teachers, students, and American society. By equipping educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster inclusive and equitable classrooms, we lay a foundation for a more just and empathetic society. Students who feel seen, heard, and valued in their learning environments will have better academic and social outcomes with long-term success. Furthermore, as America continues to diversify, preparing future generations of educators to address DEIB issues will be vital in creating stronger, more cohesive communities. Investing in DEIB PD is not just about improving teaching practices, but about shaping the values and attitudes of future leaders who will drive meaningful and necessary change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Participant Demographic and Background Information Questionnaire: Qualtrics Pre Screening
Tool

(Part One: Addressing RQ 1)

1. Please select your age group
 - <25 years old
 - 25-34 years old
 - 35-44 years old
 - 45-54 years old
 - 55-64 years old
 - 65+ years old
2. How would you describe yourself?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary/third gender
 - Prefer to self-describe: _____
 - Prefer not to say
3. How long have you been an educator?
 - 1-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11+ years
4. Which state do you currently teach in?
 - Drop down menu
5. What grade level(s) do you currently teach?
 - PK-5th
 - 6-8th
 - 9-12th
6. Which subject area(s) do you currently teach?
 - ELA
 - Math
 - Science
 - Social Studies/History

- Other
7. How would you describe your school district?
- Urban
 - Suburban
 - Rural
8. Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be
- White or Caucasian
 - Black or African American
 - American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Hispanic or Latino origin
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - Other
 - Mixed Race
 - Prefer not to say
9. DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging) professional development (PD) for educators involves training and initiatives designed to enhance understanding and practices that foster an inclusive and equitable learning environment. This PD focuses on equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to address and support the diverse needs of all students, ensuring that everyone feels valued and has a sense of belonging. Has your school district offered any DEIB PD within the past two (2) school years?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
10. Have you participated in any DEIB PD offered by your school district within the past two (2) school years?
- Yes
 - No
11. If you HAVE participated in DEIB PD within the past two (2) school years, how effective did you find the instruction?
- Scale (very effective to ineffective)
12. If you HAVE participated in DEIB PD within the past two (2) school years, what was the content of the PD?
- Drop down (options including other)
13. If you are interested in participating in a virtual individual interview, please list your email address and times and days of the week that work to schedule an interview.
- _____

Appendix B

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) Scale

All questions are asking if teachers utilize these inclusive teaching practices within their classrooms.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Disagree Somewhat | Agree Somewhat | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| CRTSE Scale (Part Two: Addressing RQ 2) | | | | | |
| CRT Question 1: Adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 2: Use a variety of teaching methods. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 3: Develop lessons that incorporate students' cultural backgrounds. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 4: Use culturally relevant examples in my teaching. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 5: Modify my teaching strategies based on the learning needs of my students. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 6: Create a classroom environment that respects diverse cultures. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 7: Use students' cultural experiences in the classroom. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 8: Incorporate multicultural perspectives in my teaching. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 9: Identify the cultural assets that students bring to the classroom. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 10: Integrate students' cultural knowledge into my lessons. | | | | | |
| CRT Question 11: Build on students' cultural strengths to enhance their learning. | | | | | |

| | |
|--|--|
| CRT Question 12: Understand the cultural backgrounds of my students. | |
| CRT Question 13: Address the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. | |
| CRT Question 14: Communicate effectively with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. | |
| CRT Question 15: Develop strategies to support students from diverse cultural backgrounds. | |
| CRT Question 16: Foster a classroom climate that values diversity. | |
| CRT Question 17: Challenge students to think critically about cultural issues. | |
| CRT Question 18: Encourage students to share their cultural perspectives. | |
| CRT Question 19: Facilitate discussions on cultural diversity. | |
| CRT Question 20: Use assessments that are culturally responsive. | |
| CRT Question 21: Create an inclusive classroom environment. | |
| CRT Question 22: Reflect on my own cultural biases. | |
| CRT Question 23: Engage in professional development to enhance my culturally responsive teaching. | |
| CRT Question 24: Collaborate with colleagues to improve culturally responsive teaching practices. | |
| CRT Question 25: Advocate for the inclusion of multicultural perspectives in the curriculum. | |
| CRT Question 26: Seek out resources to support culturally responsive teaching. | |

| | |
|--|--|
| CRT Question 27: Establish positive relationships with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. | |
| CRT Question 28: Recognize the cultural strengths of my students. | |
| CRT Question 29: Respond to cultural differences in my teaching. | |
| CRT Question 30: Promote respect for cultural diversity among students. | |
| CRT Question 31: Support the academic success of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. | |
| CRT Question 32: Encourage students to respect and appreciate cultural diversity. | |
| CRT Question 33: Create learning experiences that are relevant to students' cultural lives. | |
| CRT Question 34: Develop culturally responsive classroom management strategies. | |
| CRT Question 35: Use cultural knowledge to guide my teaching practice. | |
| CRT Question 36: Involve families from diverse cultural backgrounds in the educational process. | |
| CRT Question 37: Adapt curriculum materials to reflect students' cultural backgrounds. | |
| CRT Question 38: Address cultural stereotypes in my teaching. | |
| CRT Question 39: Help students understand the impact of culture on learning. | |
| CRT Question 40: Use cultural references to make learning more meaningful. | |
| INTP Q1: Where does your knowledge of inclusive teaching practices derive from? Drop Down options: District provided PD, my own personal reading/studies, undergraduate/graduate studies, teaching experience, other | |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>INTP Q2:</p> <p>If you HAVE participated in DEIB PD within the past two (2) school years, please answer the following question:</p> <p>The DEIB PD you received impacted your confidence level of utilizing inclusive teaching practices when answering the questions above?</p> <p>(SCALE)</p> | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Positionality Scale (Part Three: Addressing RQ 3)</p> | |
| <p>POS Question 1:</p> <p>Relative to other people within the United States, I have a lot of unearned privileges and opportunities.</p> | |
| <p>POS Question 2:</p> <p>My gender/gender identity grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment.</p> | |
| <p>POS Question 3:</p> <p>My sexual orientation grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment.</p> | |
| <p>POS Question 4:</p> <p>My race/ethnicity/ skin color grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment.</p> | |
| <p>POS Question 5:</p> <p>My disability status (or lack of disability) grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment.</p> | |
| <p>POS Question 6:</p> <p>My socioeconomic status (i.e. wealthy, middle class, working class, or poor) grants me unearned privileges as a teacher in the classroom environment.</p> | |
| <p>POS Question 7:</p> <p>My successes as a teacher in the classroom environment are determined largely by my own actions and my own efforts, independent of my demographic characteristics.</p> | |
| <p>POS Question 8:</p> <p>My successes as a teacher in the classroom environment are determined largely by characteristics of mine that have been present since birth and are largely outside of my control.</p> | |
| <p>POS Question 9:</p> | |

| | |
|---|--|
| I have had to work less hard for the successes and opportunities available to me as a teacher in the classroom environment relative to people from different demographic groups. | |
| POS Question 10: I have had to work harder for the successes and opportunities available to me as a teacher in the classroom environment relative to people from different demographic groups. | |
| POS Question 11: The mistakes that I make as a teacher in the classroom environment will lead to harsher negative consequences for myself relative to people from different demographic groups. | |
| POS Question 12: The mistakes that I make as a teacher in the classroom environment will lead to less harsh negative consequences for myself relative to people from different demographic groups. | |

Appendix C

Interview Questions

(Part Four: Addressing RQ 1, 2, &3)

Before the interview begins, I will provide a brief explanation of what positionality is for the interviewees. The explanation will be read to the interviewees as followed:

“Positionality is defined as “the social and political context that creates your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status. Positionality also describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding of and outlook on the world” (Takacs, 2003, p. 27). Understanding one’s positionality means they are aware that various aspects of their identity, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, etc., can influence their perspectives, identity, and experiences.

Questions for teachers who have had DEIB PD within the past two years:

1. What does Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) mean to you as an educator, considering your own positionality and experiences?
2. As an educator, is it important for you to be aware of your own positionality within the classroom setting? Why or why not?
3. How integral is the concept of DEIB-centered instruction to your professional teaching practice, and how does your personal background influence this approach?
4. In your opinion, is DEIB professional development essential for all educators? How, if at all, has your own understanding of your positionality influenced this perspective?
5. Reflecting on your positionality and experiences, do you feel adequately equipped to address DEIB issues within the specific context and community of your classroom? How has DEIB PD contributed to this readiness?
6. Could you describe how your school district typically structures DEIB professional development for teachers?

7. What was the focus or theme of the most recent DEIB PD session you attended, and how did it (if at all) intersect with your understanding of your own positionality?
8. In what ways, if any, did the recent DEIB PD training impact your inclusive teaching practices?
9. In what ways, if any, did the recent DEIB PD training impact your awareness of your own positionality within the classroom?
10. Can you share, without specifics, an instance where you applied insights from your DEIB training to address a sensitive topic or issue within your classroom, considering your own positionality and its influence on the situation?

(Part Four: Addressing RQ 1, 2, &3)

Questions for teachers who have NOT had DEIB PD within the past two years:

1. What does Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) mean to you as an educator, considering your own positionality and experiences?
2. As an educator, is it important for you to be aware of your own positionality within the classroom setting? Why or why not?
3. How integral is the concept of DEIB-centered instruction to your professional teaching practice, and how does your personal background influence this approach?
4. In your opinion, is DEIB professional development essential for all educators? How, if at all, has your own understanding of your positionality influenced this perspective?
5. Reflecting on your positionality and experiences, do you feel adequately equipped to address DEIB issues within the specific context and community of your classroom? How has your lack of DEIB PD contributed to this readiness?

6. You indicated that you have not received DEIB PD within the past two years. Could you describe how, if at all, your school district is addressing DEIB initiatives without providing teachers with PD?
7. Without recent DEIB PD, what aspects of your understanding of inclusive teaching practices do you feel might be lacking in relation to creating an inclusive classroom environment?
8. In what ways, if any, does your own understanding of DEIB impact your inclusive teaching practices?
9. In what ways, if any, does your awareness of your own positionality within the classroom impact your teaching practices?
10. Can you describe, without specifics, an instance where you believe insights from DEIB PD might have helped you address a sensitive topic or issue within your classroom, considering your own background and its potential influence on the situation?

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