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# Stakeholders' Perceptions and Practice of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in a Private School

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# Stakeholders' Perceptions and Practice of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in a Private School

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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## Abstract

Many culturally responsive theorists support culturally responsive pedagogy for closing the achievement gap in the rapidly changing demographics of America's education system. The purpose of this case study was to examine stakeholders' perceptions and practice of culturally responsive pedagogy in St. Andrew Academy (pseudonym), a Catholic NativityMiguel school located in a Midwest metropolitan area. The goals were: (a) to examine middle school teachers' and the principal's perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy and extent of culturally responsive teaching implemented in the school, (b) to examine how parents perceived culturally responsive caring relationships with teachers and the principal, and (c) to examine the degree to which St. Andrew Academy demonstrated culturally responsiveness in staff meetings, professional development training, parent-teacher conferences, and school social events.

The results of this study revealed that middle school teachers and the school principal were unanimous in their lack of comprehension and practice of culturally responsive pedagogy. The teachers in their response indicated that they did not receive adequate professional development or training consistent with culturally responsive teaching. The principal in his response indicated that he was in fact a culturally responsive leader but argued that his staff did not understand culturally responsive pedagogical procedures. The survey results indicated that parents were unanimous in their perception that the teachers and the principal of St Andrew Academy provided a positive caring school environment. The results also suggested that the parents at St. Andrew Academy had a passive versus collaborative role in participating and making decisions about their children's education. The results of the study showed that staff at

St. Andrew Academy lacked the ability to communicate verbally with most parents because of their inability to speak the Spanish language.

This study offered a number of recommendations. The results showed that St. Andrew Academy could make the following improvements: (a) challenging social inequalities by examining their own bias and prejudice (b) undergoing a process of learning about and embracing all the cultures represented in their school, (c) providing true academic diversity in their teaching strategies and school environment, (d) implementing well-designed culturally responsive professional development training and (e) taking the initiative to improve the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy through partnership with parents, the school staff and culturally responsive stakeholders. It is the administrator's responsibility to challenge all school staff to embrace culturally responsive pedagogy in order to enrich academic success for every student.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

At the time of this writing, many education scholars concurred that teaching to prepare students for academic and life success was the foundation of the American education system, but the system was dysfunctional for several decades. The greatest challenge for educators throughout the nation was closing the achievement gap. A number of schools, both public and private, faced an even greater challenge, because American schools reflected the diversity of families living in the country. Although a more diverse student population indicated the need for the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy, many school staff still relied on traditional teaching methods. While some educators recognized the need to develop different approaches to helping their students learn, many school programs failed to address the learning needs of all students.

Culturally responsive pedagogy was a systematic body of procedures and techniques of teaching in which students' unique cultural strengths were recognized and developed to promote successful learning and a sense of well-being about the students' cultural place in the world (Lynch, 2011). Ideally, the various names for culturally responsive pedagogy included culturally responsive culture compatible, culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, culturally relevant, and multicultural education (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Eliminating the achievement gap and identifying techniques that empowered racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse (RCELD) students was the primary reason some educators focused on culturally responsive instructional methods. Research, theory, and practice substantiated the positive outcomes of culturally responsive educational practices (Gay, 2002a, 2010a). Some education scholars were

unified in their belief that culturally responsive education was a highly successful approach for meeting the learning needs of a diverse student population (Ford, 2010; Gay, 2000, 2010a; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2010). Educators must develop an in-depth understanding of the strategies and practice of culturally responsive pedagogy to address the learning needs of the students they teach.

A number of educational reforms operated as precursors to culturally responsive pedagogy, one of which was social justice education (Taylor & Sobel, 2011). Those students may come from households of various racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse backgrounds. According to Banks (2006) it was imperative to provide education that was relevant, meaningful, and congruent with students' diverse classes, languages, and cultural beliefs. While historically, it was customary and expected for immigrants, or people of various cultural backgrounds, to acknowledge and adapt to American lifestyles, the 'melting pot' society had become subordinate to the presence of different cultures and ethnic traditions throughout the nation. According to Martin and Midgley (2010), over one million immigrants who arrived in America annually were changing the ethnic and racial makeup of the United States (U.S.). The U.S. Census Bureau (2011a) reported that 308.7 million people lived in the U.S., which was an increment of 27.3 million people between 2000 and 2010 (p. 3). The 9.7 % increase also indicated that more than half of the growth in the American population was due to the increase in individuals who reported their race as other than White. Since the country reflected an increase in RCELD families, schools also experienced higher enrollment of diverse students.

While an achievement gap continued to permeate into the American education system, disparities among RCELD students, specifically in large urban communities placed students at a greater risk socially and economically (American Psychological Association [APA], 2012). Upon further analysis, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP, 2010) reported that persistent disparities of academic achievement in some cases increased over the past decade, at the time of the report, for RCELD student populations (as cited in National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010]. As a result in some schools, a new paradigm existed advocating the use of culturally responsive instructional methods to address the cultural diversity in schools and to improve learning outcomes for all students.

Studies recent to this writing, also suggested that RCELD students then-currently faced greater risk factors for school success. Terry and Irving (2010) found demographics of schools in the U.S. reflected 70 different cultures and languages (p. 13). The Illinois State Board of Education (n.d.) acknowledged that many schools had a variety of support systems in position to address learning problems that RCELD students encountered, but often implemented in a fragmented and marginalized way that resulted in limited effectiveness.

Consequently, the rapid increase in RCELD students in the nation's schools presented problems for educators who did not receive formal instructions in their teacher preparation programs or professional development in culturally responsive teaching. The drastic change in demographics and learning environment of schools was significant and demanding for many educators who worked with RCELD students. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2005) stated,

> Many educators are now struggling to connect with a completely new set of learners, with cultural backgrounds distinctly different from each other and from their teachers. Across the country and throughout our region, educators are embracing the notion of cultural responsiveness as a means of helping all students reach high standards. (p. 2)

Public school systems in years recent to this writing accomplished several milestones for significant improvement of student outcomes, although an academic achievement gap between certain student populations still existed. Making certain that students in urban schools had culturally responsive teachers and programs in place was important for designing effective school systems for the 21st century. Private schools in the U.S. also reported urban students needed knowledgeable educators to connect the core curriculum to life success (National Institute for Urban School Improvement, 2005).

According to Manning and Kovach (2003), the civil rights movement initially addressed the achievement gap because of its role in continued social and economic inequality in the U.S. Noguera (2010) argued that American schools had never been expected to educate all children in the past, and for the first time in American history, closing the achievement gap was a national priority. In the 21st century, debate over raising the achievement of minority students broadened to include Black, White, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American groups. The debate in years recent to this writing, by educators, parents, and concerned stakeholders was how to design educational systems that responded to the needs of all students regardless of their race, culture, or ethnic background.

The term 'culturally responsive teaching' was originally introduced by Ladson-Billings (1992a) to address the academic achievement of African American and other students not served by public schools. "Culturally relevant teaching empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 18). Classrooms then-currently needed teachers with the talent and competencies to teach all students. It was imperative for instructors to be skilled in using effective instructional strategies and culturally sensitive curricula to accommodate the learning needs of their students (Irish & Scrubb, 2012).

In the event that RCELD students left school early, the effect generally caused a negative impact on their lives and their opportunity to succeed in life (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). Research from various studies showed that students of RCELD faced a greater risk of failing and dropping out of school early. They were likely to end up unemployed, underemployed, and poverty-stricken (Child Trends, 2014; Statistics Portal, n.d.; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

Researchers and analysts concluded the dropout rate caused a trickle effect on the nation's economy and resulted in an economic crisis. According to Rouse (2005), a professor of economics and public affairs at Princeton University, a high school dropout gave an estimate of $60,000 less in taxes over a lifespan (p. 2). In addition, each dropout costs the nation approximately $260,000 over his or her lifetime (p. 2). Alliance for Excellent Education (2006) reported America could save an additional $17 billion in Medicaid and spending for healthcare by graduating students (p. 1). Some educators

agreed that intervention programs should be in operation as early as middle school to help students prepare for success in high school (Pearson Learning Services, 2016, p. 1).

**NativityMiguel Model**

This qualitative case study focused on the beliefs and experiences of educators working in one NativityMiguel middle school in a Midwestern urban area. The NativityMiguel school model was an instructional program originally designed to offer families of low socioeconomic status in urban communities a quality education. The Nativity Miguel Network of Schools' Programs was modeled after the Nativity Mission Center which opened its doors in 1971 to middle school boys growing up in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The school opened to focus on a program to help boys excel academically, socially, and spiritually. Many of the boys who were new to the country were testing two and three grades below their grade level. The teachers at Nativity Mission Center implemented a new system that included extended school days, low student-to-teacher ratio, extended school year, and a commitment to follow the students through high school and on to college.

By the late 1980s schools modeled after the Nativity Mission Center opened. In 1993, the first Miguel school was opened by the Christian Brothers in Providence, Rhode Island. These schools shared the same attributes and objectives of the Nativity school. In 2006, the NativityMiguel Network was established through a merger between the two networks that grew out of duplication of this school model nationally, and 64 schools were classified as NativityMiguel schools (NativityMiguel Network of Schools, 2007). The Network was a non-profit organization located in Washington, D.C., which managed the financial reporting and fundraising for the NativityMiguel Schools until closure in

June, 2012. In the 2014-2015 school year, 35 faith-based NativityMiguel schools partnered and developed an organization named the NativityMiguel Coalition to support the goals of the program (NativityMiguel Coalition, 2015).

The program's original long-term goals were for middle-school students to complete high school and continue on to successfully graduate from college. NativityMiguel Network Schools aspired to

> Nine Mission Effectiveness Standards; they were faith-based, served the poor, and marginalized, provided a holistic education, partnered with the families, provided extended school day and year, offered a commitment beyond graduation, provided an effective administrative structure, engaged in ongoing assessment and inquiry, and maintained active network participation. (NativityMiguel Network of Schools, 2009, p. 1)

Approximately 80% of the NativityMiguel schools were private Catholic schools and operated by the Catholic Archdiocese. Coday (2010), a staff writer for the *National Catholic Reporter* wrote, "Educators hoping to revitalize the traditional Catholic education, discovered a way to void closures of urban-based Catholic schools through implementing and networking the NativityMiguel model in 27 states serving more than 4,400 students" (p. 2). Although the NativityMiguel teaching model was originally designed to focus on middle school for low socioeconomic families in urban communities, it emphasized long-term goals for students to complete high school and college. In addition, the graduate support program was in place to assist students from all backgrounds.

Some school reformers and scholars supported successful middle school programs that operated with the support of parents, stakeholders, and dedicated school personnel. Fenzel's (2009) research study indicated teachers and administrators of NativityMiguel schools put in long hours of service to educate the children in order to provide the best possible education. In addition, community volunteers devoted hours of service as tutors, homework companions, nurses, substitute teachers, and guest speakers. Frenzel also stated, "Evidence that the Nativity model schools have been effective in accelerating the academic progress of urban children placed at risk is strong" (pp. 88-89). According to research, students enrolled in NativityMiguel schools, demonstrated higher academic achievement compared to students attending urban public middle schools (Fenzel, 2009, p. 50; Fenzel & Hessler, 2002, p. 34).

**Statement of Problem**

There was evidence that supported disparities in the education of RCELD students that caused an educational deficit over a period of time (Ladson-Billings, 2006a). The most critical unresolved issue facing educators in the K-12 education system in America, at the time of this writing, was the academic achievement gap in RCELD students. Most then-current studies indicated that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, English language learners, and racial/ethnic minorities faced the greatest potential risk for failure in school. Although a more diverse student population indicated the need for the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy, many schools still relied on traditional teaching methods. While some educators were recognizing the need to develop different approaches to helping their students learn, many school programs did not address the learning needs of all students.

Latino, African-American, and Native American students were more likely to abandon school before high school graduation. Studies, recent to the time of this writing, maintained that when school systems provided an optimal learning environment and support system conducive to allow all students a learning opportunity, high school graduation rate increased. This in turn would better prepare students with more options to succeed in college and later in life. A number of students may not become school dropouts but remained at-risk of performing academically and graduated from high school lacking the skills to pursue higher education or successful employment (Greene & Winters, 2005). This case study focused on the beliefs and experiences of educators working in one NativityMiguel middle school in a Midwestern rural area who then-currently taught RCELD learners on a daily basis.

The mission of NativityMiguel was to provide a faith-based school program to prepare middle school students for college or advanced education, after high school graduation. The coalition reported 75% of the students attending the 35 member schools supported by the organization were eligible for national free lunch and 13% met the requirements for the reduced lunch program (NativityMiguel Coalition, 2015, p. 4). In addition, various diverse populations of students were represented in the schools. On average, 49% of the students were African-American, 38% Latino, 5% Mixed ethnicity, 2% Asian, 2.5% Caucasian, 2% Caribbean and 1.5% Native American (NativityMiguel Coalition, 2015, p. 4). The organization reported 90% of the students who completed eighth grade in the NativityMiguel Program also graduated high school in four years (NativityMiguel Coalition, 2015, p. 13). Of the students who graduated high school, the organization reported 63% enrolled in a four-year college or university, 22% in a two-

year college, 4% in vocational school, and 1% joined the military (NativityMiguel Coalition, 2015, p. 1).

This qualitative research study examined five critical areas outlined by Gay (2010b) that were essential when educating culturally diverse students: (1) develop a culturally diverse knowledge base, (2) design culturally relevant curricula, (3) demonstrate cultural caring and building a learning community, (4) build effective cross cultural communications, and (5) deliver culturally responsive instruction. The goal of educating all students in the U.S. was not met because educational systems were failing to close the achievement gap between all students. Some educators, especially in schools where a high percentage of diverse students attended, did not comprehend the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy as it related to academic achievement and closing the achievement gap. There was a need for schools, especially those teaching students of RCELD background, to have a deeper understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy in order to help students achieve academic success. Culturally responsive educators understood if they were unable to connect with their students' interests, needs, or experiences, that high levels of engagement and learning would not take place in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

**Purpose of the Study**

A report issued by Child Trends (2015) indicated that the nation's high school dropout rate among 16 to 24-year-olds decreased more than half since 1967, from 17% to 70% in 2014; but, significant disproportions by race, Hispanic origin, and foreign-born status continued to exist (p. 1). The report also revealed in 2014 that 5% of Whites aged 16 to 24-years-old were not enrolled as students and had not finished high school,

compared to 7% of Blacks and 11% Hispanic (p. 1). This case study investigated the culturally responsive teaching at St. Andrew Academy (pseudonym). St. Andrew Academy was a Catholic NativityMiguel School located in a Midwestern metropolitan area. The school was known to be an urban school with a multicultural and diverse populations of students. In years recent to this writing, it attracted an increasing number of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students, students with unique academic learning needs, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The study (a) examined five middle school teachers' perceptions and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in the school: (b) principal's perceptions and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in the school, and (c) 17 parents' perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy in their children's school. In the study, triangulation was achieved through qualitative data: (a) acquired through teacher and principal interviews (b) acquired through parent surveys, and (c) non-participant observations of school staff meetings, professional development, and social events. Culturally responsive teaching required teachers to create a learning environment where all students felt welcomed and supported, and provided with the best opportunities to learn, regardless of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Barnes, 2006). Leaders set the tone for creating an environment for a culturally responsive school environment. According to Schmidt and Ma (2006), a principal must understand there is no certain checklist to measure whether a teacher is culturally responsive, but there were certain characteristics common within their pedagogical practices and beliefs.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1) How, and to what extent, is Saint Andrew Academy implementing culturally responsive pedagogy, based on the perceptions of parents, teachers, and the school principal?
2) How, and to what extent, is Saint Andrew Academy implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in professional development training, staff meetings, parent/teacher conferences, and school social events?

**Limitations of Study**

This study had the following limitations:

This case study was limited to one Catholic school in a Midwest metropolitan area practicing the NativityMiguel Program. The study sample was not representative of other NativityMiguel schools in the Midwest metropolitan area. The results of this study may be exclusive to St. Andrew Academy and would not be practical if generalized to other NativityMiguel programs nationally. The findings did not include conclusions based on data gathered from other private or public schools nationwide.

Data for the study were collected for the school year 2013-2014. The researcher conducted interviews and observations during this timeframe. However, she was not in the building every day of the school year. Thus, the data represent a snapshot of various events and meetings, etc., rather than a continuous year of data from every day.

A major limitation in conducting the surveys was a low survey response rate. To improve the response rate, the researcher sent a second and third invitation to participants who failed to respond to the initial survey.

There are benefits of using qualitative research studies, but this also creates the potential of researcher bias as collection and analysis of data may reflect the researcher's

perspective (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). To overcome personal bias the researcher refrained from reporting her own perceptions, convictions, and expectations of the research findings. The researcher used qualitative coding techniques to verify her analysis.

Interviews can provide information about peoples' attitudes, their values, what they think and do, and how they feel about something (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The researcher had no control of minimizing bias or distortion if participants responded misleadingly to the survey questionnaire. To reduce potential risk, the researcher attempted to increase the sample size by sending a second invitation to participants who failed to respond to the initial survey.

There were several factors and interventions that may have influenced a student's overall academic success beyond culturally responsive pedagogy. Bergeson (2007) found nine characteristics found most often in high-performing schools: (1) a clear and shared focus, (2) high standards and expectations for all students, (3 ) effective school leadership, (4) high levels of collaboration and communication, (5) curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state standards, (6) frequent monitoring of learning and teaching, (7) focused professional development, (8) a supportive learning environment, and (9) high levels of family and community involvement. In this study however, the researcher focused specifically on culturally responsive pedagogy and factors related to culturally responsive teaching.

A potential limitation of observation could be that the behavior of those who were observed might be influenced by the researcher's purposes and presence. The participants may show atypical behavior when they know they are being observed, so the data from

the observations would not be representative of how the participants normally behaved (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Osher, Cartledge, Oswald, Artiles, & Coutinho, 1990) Observations were also limited in focusing only on external behaviors, so the observer could not see what was happening inside people (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Observations required good listening skills and careful attention to visual detail (Creswell, 2005).

**Assumptions**

In designing and conducting this study, it was assumed that school principals and teachers of RCELD students were the most knowledgeable professionals, with regards to implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in their schools. It was also assumed that parents who enrolled their children in private schools by choice would be willing to participate in a study conducted to share their beliefs about a caring school environment and parent involvement in their child's school. Finally, it was assumed that participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study would provide accurate and reliable information in response to interview and survey questions. Being aware of the assumptions described in this qualitative case study, the researcher focused on the process of gathering data and analyzing the research findings.

**Definitions**

**At- risk students.** A student who struggles in one or more of the following areas: low academic achievement, absenteeism, discipline problems, family structure, poverty, or other factors that cause students to fail in school (Meader, 2012).

**Cultural competence**. A self-awareness of one's own cultural identity and acceptance of differences in other individuals, therefore having the ability to learn from

various races, cultures, and ethnic groups. The ability to acknowledge and celebrate the uniqueness of those groups (National Education Association, 2013).

**Culturally responsive pedagogy**. For the purpose of this study, culturally responsive pedagogy was be used to define teaching practices that empowered students academically, socially, emotionally, and politically through use of ethnic referents to disseminate knowledge, talents, attitudes (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997).

**Culturally responsive teaching**. Culturally responsive teaching is using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more effective. It acknowledges cultural customs of different ethnic groups. Culturally responsive teaching builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school relationships. Culturally responsive education systems use a variety of instructional strategies connected to different learning styles. Educators who practice culturally responsive pedagogy teach students to know and praise their own and others' cultural heritages (Gay, 2000).

**Multicultural education.** Multicultural education was an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal was to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who were members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups would have an equal chance to achieve academically in school (Banks & Banks, 2005, p. 1).

**Parent**. A legal guardian or other person standing in loco parentis (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare) (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

**Parental involvement.** The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities (U. S. Department of Education, 2004b).

**Pedagogy**. The art or science of teaching children (Knowles, Holten, & Swanson, 2005). The act of teaching together with its attendant discourse. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted (Alexander, 2004).

**Vertical teaching.** A group of educators from various grade levels who collaborate to implement a vertically aligned program, focused on helping students achieve academically (Birdville Independent School District, 2016).

## Rationale for the Study

At the national level, American schools were found ineffective in closing the achievement gap between RCELD students. Educators Cartledge and Kourea (2008) stated that students in America's schools represented a vast variety of ethnicities and cultures. With an increase in diverse student populations comes a greater need for educational systems that are able to operate outside the box and design programs that will engage their students in learning. This research differs from prior research addressing components of culturally responsive pedagogy, because its focus explored three groups of stakeholders' perceptions and practice. The study may provide data to educators to effectively improve instructional strategies for advancing academic achievement, growth, and development of RCELD students. The study may also inform school leaders, administrators, and school districts for improving professional development training to close the achievement gap.

**Summary**

For the last few decades, previous to this writing, many educational systems in the U.S. implemented plans for school improvement to meet the learning needs of RCELD student populations. Although there was no one solution to bridging the learning gap, research pointed to culturally responsive pedagogy as a component for all schools to develop into their school improvement plans. The practice of culturally responsive pedagogy emerged in conjunction with school improvement programs in many educational arenas as a solution to improving school outcomes and academic performance of all students. The design of this study was qualitative to provide a deeper understanding of how stakeholders (teachers, parents, and principals) perceived and implemented culturally responsive pedagogy to close the achievement gap between RCELD students enrolled in a NativityMiguel school program.

Chapter One presented an introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, described the purpose of conducting the research, and listed the specific research questions to be answered. In addition, it included limitations of the study and definitions of the terms used throughout this study. Chapter One concluded with a discussion of the rationale for conducting this study on culturally responsive pedagogy. In order to help close the achievement gap in American school systems, educators must incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy into their procedures and processes to create a learning environment that is culturally congruent for all students to achieve academically. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive overview and related studies that serve as a foundation for this proposed study.

## Chapter Two: The Literature Review

The purpose of the review of literature is to explore the central issues connected to this study and report research findings relating to the rationale for the study. The literature reviewed was organized into the following topics: (a) Brown vs. Board of Education; (b) achievement gap; (c) reasons for achievement gap; (d) students at-risk; (e) the dropout problem; (f) NativityMiguel schools; (g) multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP); (h) studies in CRP; (i) culturally responsive behavior systems; (j) culturally responsive caring schools; (k) parent involvement; and (l) conclusion. The researcher focused on CRP as it related to closing the achievement gap in one NativityMiguel Catholic school in a mid-western state and did not evaluate NativityMiguel schools nationally. This chapter provides and summarizes a synopsis of the literature that presented background for the study.

### Brown vs. Board of Education

Several decades passed since the well-known court case Brown v. Board of Education was decided on May 17, 1954. The court ruled 'separate but equal' public schools for African American and White students was unconstitutional; and therefore, the judgment served as a forerunner of the civil rights movement and education reform nationally (The Leadership Conference, 2015). *Brown v. Board of Education* was not the first legal action to seek fair and equal education in the U.S., but it was a major initiative to defuse a then-longstanding problem in the nation's educational system. The nation's effort to close the achievement gap had a long history. Research, dated back to the 19th century, indicated laws protected school districts in the operation of separate schools for African American and White students. Although segregation was supported by the

federal law under the *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1886) ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) reversed *Plessey v. Ferguson*, arguing separate educational facilities was instinctively unequal (Cornell University Law School, n.d.). In response to the Soviet Union's successful launch of *Sputnik*, the U.S. federal government passed the National Defense Education Act in an effort to support the training of American students as skillful and talented mathematicians and scientists to compete with the Soviets.

*Brown v. Board of Education's* (1954) original plan was ineffective, because schools were not segregated. Demanding that all schools be held to a common standard of achievement would was, at the time, unthinkable (Greenspan, 2014). In addition, it was evident that 50 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* the nation's schools were not equal. However, *Brown v. Board of Education* was not the first legal action to seek fair and equal education in public schools in the U.S. The nation's effort to close the ethnic academic achievement gap had a long history.

**Achievement Gap**

The achievement gap was not just an urban educational crisis, although most research data showed large urban school districts were plagued by the failure to meet adequate yearly progress during the decade previous to this writing, and many focused primarily on the urban nature of the gap (Daniels, 2002; Wang & Kovach, 1996; Wang & Reynolds, 1995). The gap was more visible in urban communities where poor and minority students resided. The components of the achievement gap exceeded the conditions found in urban schools. The NAEP presented one approach to examine achievement gaps on a national level. However, the achievement gap was defined, evaluated, and approached from various viewpoints (Anderson, Medrich, & Fowler,

2007). Achievement gaps were routinely analyzed by national test score data (NCES, 2013; Vanneman, Hamilton, Anderson, & Rahman, 2009), dropout rates, graduation or completion rates, and grade point averages (Anderson et al., 2007; Ebner, 2013).

Despite the argument of some educators and stakeholders, the gap, which appeared early in life and persisted into adulthood, could not be attributed to race (Taylor, 2009). However, research showed differences in achievement between African American and Latino males and females; Caribbean and Continental born Blacks; and between middle and lower class minority students. According to Barton and Coley (2009), minority students encountered barriers academically, in the classroom, as well as away from school. Barton's research concluded that minority students may be subject to teachers' low expectations of their ability to succeed; and furthermore, they could be exposed to more rigorous coursework, due to inadequate preparation. Kozol (2005) and Lavin-Loucks (2006) determined that the achievement gap continued to exist between low income, disabled learners, ethnic/linguistic minorities, and more affluent White students at an alarming rate.

According to Carnoy and Rothstein (2013) and Steinberg (2014), the achievement gap was not restricted to RCELD students, but also exists between gender and various age groups. The National Bureau of Economic Research (2015) reported, in kindergarten boys and girls did equally as well on tests of reading, general knowledge, and mathematics. By third grade, boys had slightly higher mathematics scores and slightly lower reading scores. As children grew older, these gaps widened. Between 9 and 13-years-of-age, the gender gaps approximately doubled in science and reading. Between 13 and 17, the gap in science continued to expand, but there was little growth in the math or

reading gap. Cornbleth (2008) argued, the gaps may be closing for some student populations, grade levels, and subjects, but they continued to be unacceptable.

To adequately address the issue of improving student outcomes, Empson and Knudsen (2006) defined the achievement gap more broadly as a significant disparity in standardized test scores between a certain mass of White, largely middle-class students and other students identified as not White or middle class. The Oregon Department of Education (2005), revealed, the gap affected the poor, minority, and disenfranchised youth for over 30 years, since first measured in the 1970s. Furthermore, the gap was reflected most clearly in graduation rates, placement in special education and advanced placement courses, and suspension and expulsion rates (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2009).

U.S. education theorists argued, the achievement gap was one of the most severe problems facing the nation's education system and, ultimately, the U.S. economy. (University of Colorado, n.d.). Educators also debated whether the achievement gap created a main concern of fairness; suggesting that future generations of deprived and minority families may remain trapped in poverty. Kosar's (2005) book, *Failing Grades: The Federal Politics of Education Standards*, pointed out that 'evaluating the level of educational achievement in the United States' was no straightforward matter. In his investigation, Kosar acknowledged, although public schools were required to educate children, assessment of state standards and accountability determined that few states held high-quality standards. Subsequently, state's standards-based accountability systems continued to be underdeveloped and below standard. Many scholars examined and challenged the problems in student learning to better understand the reasons for the

achievement gap (Forum on Educational Accountability, 2007; Learning First Alliance, 2015; Shavelson et. al., 2010; Stretcher & Kirby, 2004).

**Factors That Contributed to the Achievement Gap**

The roots of the achievement gaps were multiple and complexly interrelated and varied from school-to-school, district-to-district, and community-to-community (National Education Association, 2015). Historically, the achievement gap existed for a long time and was debated upon both in the U.S. and other nations (Banks, 2004). A 2009 study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that children who lived in poverty and read below grade level by the time they reached third grade were three times as likely to not graduate high school as their peers (Hernandez 2011). Narrowed curriculum strategies and scripted curriculum were becoming more prevalent, making acknowledgement of culture, diversity, history, and personal experience obsolete (Renter et al., 2006; Rosenbusch, 2005).

The learning disparity among students may also have been the direct result of testing bias and instructional practices that conflicted with culturally responsive learning styles (Gay, 2000; Santamaria, 2009). Making developmental practices responsive to cultural differences presented a significant challenge for teachers, requiring them to adopt role definitions, curricula, and teaching practices that challenged, rather than reflected the values of the wider society and themselves (Garcia & Dominquez, 1997; Nasir & Hand, 2006). Researchers suggested that cultural dissonance existed between home and school and that this was a contributor to low school performance (Artiles, Trent, Hoffman-Kipp, & Lopez-Torrez, 2000; Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007).

There were research findings and implications supporting the rationalization for the existence of achievement gaps among certain groups of students, such as race, culture, sex, learning disabilities, and those from low income families (Education Week, 2011; Hernnandez, 2011). Table 1 lists the factors that contributed to the achievement gap (Education is Freedom Program, 2015; Miksic 2014, National Education Association [NEA], 2014). Although the scholars differed on some attributes and factors contributing to the achievement gap, many common factors among researchers were found. Family, teacher, and family-related factors place students at risk and contributed to gaps.

Given the challenges schools faced, due to the diversity of students, the biggest issue for some educators remained how they would address the factors that impeded student achievement. While some studies suggested ways to close the achievement gap, many urban school districts and schools recognized the need to focus on student who were identified as at-risk of failing in school.

**Students at Risk**

The phrase 'at-risk' came about in the report, *A Nation at Risk,* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (as cited in Gardner, 1983). The report revealed that the quality of education in the U.S. fell short of teaching students skills required to compete in the global marketplace. Vaughn, Bos, and Schumm, (2007) reported that prior to the 1980s, phrases, such as educationally disadvantaged and culturally deprived, were frequently used in reference to at-risk students.

Table 1

*Factors Contributing to the Achievement Gap*

| **Miksic** | **National Education Association** | | **Education Is Freedom Program** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Within School's Control*** | ***Within School's Control*** | ***Outside School's Control*** | ***School-Based Sources*** |
| Teacher expectations and treatment of students of color.<br>Varying academic standards in schools.<br>Differences in school quality.<br>Differences in school resources. | Low Expectations for student achievement.<br>Lack of rigor in the curriculum.<br>Large Class Size.<br>Tacking groups of students into a less demanding curriculum.<br>Unsafe schools.<br>Culturally Unfriendly environments.<br>No instructional leadership.<br>Inexperienced Teachers.<br>Insensitivity to different cultures.<br>Low expectations of students.<br>Inadequate resources.<br>Lack of Family Participation.<br>Families' Lack of Education.<br>TV watching and at home learning | Economic opportunity for students' families.<br>Access to health and social services.<br>Community Safety.<br>Access to libraries, museums to support student development.<br>Access to childcare and after school programs and facilities.<br>Families income level.<br>Students' birth weight.<br>Students' diet and nutrition at home.<br>Students' mobility.<br>Students' primary language.<br>State budget deficits.<br>Unfunded federal mandates.<br>Inequalities in funding among school districts.<br>Time family members support learning.<br>Societal bias (racial, poverty, and class). | Teacher Experience and Attendance.<br>Technology Assisted Instructions.<br>Rigor of Curriculum.<br>Teacher Preparation.<br>Society Safety.<br>Class Size<br><br>***Home Based Sources***<br><br>Hunger and Nutrition.<br>Parent Participation.<br>Television Watching.<br>Parent Availability.<br>Student Mobility.<br>Lead Poisoning.<br>Reading Habits.<br>Birth Rate |
| ***Outside School's Control***<br><br>Varying educational attainment of parents.<br>Variation in levels of community infrastructure.<br>Increasing economic inequality in America.<br>Demographic changes in structure of the family (i.e. single family households.<br>Differences in families' social and cultural capital. | | | |

*Note:* Information from Education is Freedom Program; 2015. Miksic, 2014; NEA, 2014.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation focused on students at-risk of school failure and dropout in the U.S. (NCES, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Pruett, Davidson, McMahon, Ward, & Griffith, 2000). Students at-risk included youth of ethnic minorities, low socioeconomic status, students with disabilities, and ESL. In addition to categories of at-risk-students described by NCLB, students diagnosed with mental health or behavioral problems, homelessness, and adolescent pregnancy were substantially at risk for inadequate school performance (Price, Pepper, & Broacato, 2006; Prodente, Sander, & Weist, 2002).

In a 2015 report entitled, *Income and Poverty in the United States 2014*, 21.1% of the nation's children (15.5 million) were poverty-stricken. Statistical data from the report also revealed that the poverty level in 2014 for Whites was 10.1%, 26.2% for Blacks, 12% for Asians, and 23.6% for Hispanics. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014, p. 1). According to the report, one in every five children in America was living in poverty, with more than 60% of fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade public school students' reading and math performance scores below grade level. Because poverty had such a negative effect on the lives and academic performance of children, educators sought to understand how to successfully teach at-risk students. Rothstein (2004) pointed out, low income and minority children could benefit fully from good schools, only if they entered these schools ready to learn. So, narrowing the achievement gap required early childhood education programs, staffed with professional teachers and nurses, and with curricula that emphasized, not only literacy, but appropriate social and emotional growth.

**The Dropout Problem**

Consequently, in research dated back to 1997, Garnier, Stein, and Jacobs found in a 19-year longitudinal study that dropping out of school was influenced by several factors, beginning with early influences in childhood and including family and individual factors. The study specifically found that individual and family stressors, together with lower sixth-grade school accomplishment, lower high school achievement and motivation, and drug use were associated with a higher probability of dropping out. Thus, the decision to drop out of high school may be determined in middle school. Researchers (Garibaldi, 1992; Jackson, 2007; McWhorter, 2000; Noguera, 2008) reported a disproportionate number of minority males failed to graduate from high school. In some schools classrooms were described as chaotic because teachers and administrators were challenged with meeting the educational needs of minority students.

The researchers conducted a longitudinal study of risk and protective factors for problem behaviors of 595 inner-city youth in a Northeastern public school system (Frey, Ruchkin, Martin, & Schwab-Stone, 2009). Students with a greater level of violent behaviors or destructive beliefs, perceived school climate more seriously, and had lower academic motivation. Consequently, students with consistently high attachment to school had lower levels of violent behavior and aggressive beliefs, and perceived school had lower levels of violent behavior and aggressive beliefs (Frey et al., 2009, p. 7). The ethnic composition of the sample was 54.4% African-American and 22.7% Hispanic American. Most of the students came from divorced (25.9%) or never married families (23.9%). The sample population was from socio-economically disadvantaged students, with 59.2% qualifying for free or reduced lunch (Frey et al., 2009, pp. 3-4).

Moreover, researchers also pinpointed additional factors that dramatically contributed to certain students dropping out of school. According to Neild and Balfanz (2006), eighth graders who missed five weeks of school or failed math or English had a 75% chance of dropping out of high school. Furthermore, future dropouts may be identified as early as sixth grade and many can be identified even earlier. Rumberger and Lim (2008) acknowledged research showed two factors, which predicted whether students would graduate from high school. One factor was linked with the institutional characteristics of the student's families, schools, and communities; the other was linked with the characteristics of the students themselves. Rumberger and Lim (2008) also pointed out that families, schools, and communities impacted students' decisions to drop out in a number of ways. For example, students in two parent households had lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates. Other predictors of lower dropout rates were suggested as parents' income, parenting approaches, monitoring a child's progress in school, communicating with the school, and knowing the parents of their children's friends.

Prior to establishing a dropout intervention, it was imperative to make an assessment of the student and the school (Sullivan, 2009). The first step toward an effective dropout prevention strategy involved tracking and analyzing basic data concerning which students were showing early warning signs of dropping out. Some other key indicators that researchers identified as predicative of who was most likely to dropout were poor grades, failure to be promoted to the next grade, disengagement in the classroom, and behavior problems (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007).

School systems should focus dropout prevention efforts in the beginning of the middle grades (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007). Studies current at the time of this writing revealed that middle school marked a critical transition for students. The evidence suggested that students' attendance, test scores, and grades during the middle school years could strongly predict whether they would graduate from high school (Balfanz, 2009; Keiffer, Marinell, & Stephenson, 2011; Kurlaender, Reardon, & Jackson, 2008). A number of private and public middle school programs accepted the challenge to improve learning outcomes and high school graduation in U.S. schools. One group of private schools focused on improving high school and college graduation for middle school students for the 40 years previous to this writing was the NativityMiguel Program.

**NativityMiguel Schools**

While many public and private school systems were struggling to educate a diverse and possibly poverty-stricken population, NativityMiguel Schools claimed to offer an alternative program for diverse students. Educational systems that implemented the NativityMiguel model reported the program was successful in lowering the high school dropout rate in their schools by focusing on academic achievement at the middle school level. According to the NativityMiguel Network (2009), the original NativityMiguel school model followed nine mission effective standards. They included a faith-based program; service for the economically poor and marginalized; offer of holistic education; partnership with the family; extended day and year scheduling; graduate support programs; ongoing assessment and inquiry; small class sizes; and effective administrative structure (p. 6). At the time this study took place, over 46 NativityMiguel schools were in operation. More than half of the schools in operation partnered together

to form a support group called the Nativity Coalition. The Coalition was originally formed to establish accountability of the program and give schools the opportunity to report financial and donor contributions (NativityMiguel Network, 2009).

The characteristics of NativityMiguel's core curriculum were consistent with factors researchers historically acknowledged as essential qualities of successful middle schools (George & Alexander, 2003; Lipsitz, 1984; Trimble, 2004). Studies recent to this writing (Fenzel et al., 2009; Fenzel & Domingues, 2009; Fenzel & Monteith, 2005), found that NativityMiguel students performed academically higher on standardized tests of reading and mathematics than students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds who were enrolled in parochial or public school systems. According to Fenzel (2009), college completion of NativityMiguel students who finished high school was 92% (p. 5).

Fenzel (2009) observed the following mission-effective standards implemented, as outlined by the NativityMiguel Network examined in this case study:

> Small classrooms, small advisories led by teachers, interdisciplinary team teaching, ongoing professional development for educators, and parental involvement. In addition, NativityMiguel schools accommodated an after school enrichment program to assist students in tutoring or homework assignments. The schools held mandatory summer programs to address academic development, social, character, leadership, physical, and spiritual development. These schools continued to support graduates, both programmatically and financially through high school and into college. (pp. 18-19)

In a 2008 study, Fenzel and Monteith found that NativityMiguel students perceived the learning and social climate in their classes to be higher and more enjoyable,

as compared to other learning environments experienced. NativityMiguel students felt their teachers were more supportive and focused on engaging them in learning activities. Students also believed their peers were more respectful, friendly, and enjoyed participating in group projects with their schoolmates. With respect to school climate, NativityMiguel students also indicated their teachers displayed caring and fairness and communicated clear expectations to a greater extent. Fenzel's and Monteith's (2005) research also concluded that NativityMiguel students perceived there was more parental involvement in their schools than observed in previous schools they attended.

Table 2

*Student Enrollment in NativityMiguel Network of Schools 2007-2008*

| **School** | **Grades** | **Gender** | **Ethnicity** | **High School** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Grades 6-8 | Male | Black | Graduation |
| 32% | 39% | 55% | 51 % | 83% |
| Female | Grades 5-8 | Female | Hispanic | Retained |
| 16% | 37% | 45% | 39% | 6% |
| Coed | Other | | White | Lost Contact |
| 52% | 14% | | 3% | 7% |
| | | | Multiracial | GED |
| | | | 3% | 1% |
| | | | Asian | Dropped Out |
| | | | 2% | 3% |
| | | | Native | |
| | | | American | |
| | | | 2% | |

Note. Compiled from NativityMiguel Network of Schools (2008). National Data Report for the 2007-2008 School Year.

According to the NativityMiguel Network of Schools National Data Report for the 2007-2008 school-year, 4,401 students of diversity were enrolled in network schools. The report indicated that 87% of students met eligibility requirements for free and reduced lunch (p. 3).

The graduation rate for NativityMiguel Network schools for the 2007-2008 school year was 83% (see Table 2), compared to the national average of 68% in the same year (NativityMiguel Network, 2008). In 2009, NativityMiguel Network reported an 11.8% increase in students enrolled in network schools from the previous year.

Table 3

Stu*dent Enrollment in NativityMiguel Network of Schools 2008-2009*

| **School** | **Grades** | **Gender** | **Ethnicity** | **High School** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Grades 6-8 | Male | Black | Graduation |
| 32% | 35% | 54% | 51% | 83% |
| Female | Grades 5-8 | Female | Hispanic | Retained |
| 17% | 50% | 46% | 37% | 6% |
| Coed | Other | | White | Lost Contact |
| 51% | 15% | | 3% | 7% |
| | | | Multiracial | GED 1% |
| | | | 3% | |
| | | | Asian | Dropped Out |
| | | | 2% | 3% |
| | | | Native | |
| | | | American | |
| | | | 1% | |
| | | | Other | |
| | | | 3% | |

Note. Compiled from NativityMiguel Network of Schools (2009). National Data Report for the 2008-2009 School Year.

The network schools operated at 84% capacity, with a total of 4,921 students enrolled for the 2008-2009 school year (see Table 3). The data on student eligibility for free or reduced federal meals indicated that 87% of the students were eligible for free or reduced meals, which was consistent with the 2009-2010 school year.

Table 4 shows a small variation in student demographics and an observable increase in the high school graduation rate, compared to the 2009-2010 school year.

Table 4

*Student Enrollment in NativityMiguel Network of Schools 2009-2010 School Year*

| **Schools** | **Grades** | **Gender** | **Ethnicity** | **High School** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Grades 6-8 | Male | Black | Graduation |
| 32% | 34% | 55% | 52% | 82% |
| Female | Grades 5-8 | Female | Hispanic | Retained |
| 15% | 48% | 45% | 38% | 6% |
| Coed | Other | | White | Lost Contact |
| 53% | 18% | | 3% | 7% |
| | | | Multiracial | GED 2% |
| | | | 3% | |
| | | | Asian | Dropped Out |
| | | | 2% | 2% |
| | | | Native | |
| | | | American | |
| | | | 1% | |
| | | | Other | |
| | | | 1% | |

Note. Compiled from NativityMiguel Network of Schools (2010). National Data Report for the 2009-2010 School Year.

In 2010 the NativityMiguel Network of Schools published an executive summary of students enrolled in network schools. The summary concluded that 79% of eighth grade graduates in the Class of 2005 finished high school in four years compared to the national average of 60% from students of low income families (p. 3). The report also showed that 4,956 students were enrolled in the 2009-2010 school year (p. 3). Most of the students enrolled qualified for the Free or Reduced Federal Lunch Program. The report concluded that 87% of students attending NativityMiguel schools were eligible for free and reduced lunch (p. 3). Table 4 highlights student demographic information and high school graduation rate for students enrolled in NativityMiguel Network of Schools for the 2009-2010 school year.

The NativityMiguel Network also reported in comparing the high school graduation rate for the school year 2009-2010 compared to the national percentages; 75% for all students; 62% for Blacks; and 64% for Hispanic students were significantly higher (p. 21). Access Academies (2015) reported that NativityMiguel students often entered in school with below average skills and by graduation academically performed at or above grade level. Graduates were placed in excellent high schools and offered essential academic resources, financial support, and individual guidance during high school, through the efforts of their school's Graduate Support Program. Approximately 90% of NativityMiguel alumni graduated from high school in four years, 63% enrolled in a 4 year college or university, 22% enrolled in a 2 year college, 4% enrolled in a vocational school, and 1% joined the military (NativityMiguel Coalition, 2015, p. 1).

In 2006, schools from the former networks of Nativity Schools and San Miguel Schools formed an association and operated under the name of the NativityMiguel

Network. This network provided marketing for funding and support for 5000 students in 64 schools across 27 states (Goldschmidt & Walsh, 2011, p. 22). While The NativityMiguel Network formally dissolved in June 2012, over 50 former network schools were in operation around the U.S. and Canada, at the time of this writing (Cornelia Connelly Center, 2015). After the NativityMiguel Network dissolved, more than 45 schools continued to assume the responsibility for marketing of private funding and reporting of student academic yearly progress independently. Since the majority of NativityMiguel schools were private Catholic or Jesuit schools, they were also affiliated with a local parish and managed by the archdiocese or church. Therefore, the schools were operated based on the administrative policies outlined by the church with which they were affiliated. While most of the schools followed the original model of the nine mission-effective standards outlined earlier, NativityMiguel Schools often solicited new students, promising that the culture and climate of their schools were positive learning environments for students of diversity. The instructional core of NativityMiguel schools abided by the original principles of the program, which were focused on educating at-risk students.

**Multicultural Education and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

CRP supported the multiculturalism ideal, except on a larger scale. Multiculturalism focused on the classroom practices and CRP incorporated all aspects of the educational system. CRP and multicultural education both concentrated on equal and equitable education for all students (Ortiz, 2012). A distinction must be made between culturally containing students from the same culture and the responsive pedagogy and multicultural education. Education that was multicultural could be delivered to a

classroom content-presented, as representative of various cultural perspectives. CRP, on the other hand, must respond to the cultures actually present in the classroom. It connected new information to students' background knowledge, and presented the information in ways that responded to students' natural styles of learning. Multicultural education may be a heading under which CRP existed. Implementing CRP was one means to the ultimate objective of multicultural education for all (Rychly & Graves, 2012).

CRP was based upon the principle that teacher attitudes and methods of teaching students of color built on cultural competence and could impact student achievement. The theory behind culturally responsive teaching was founded, in large part, upon multicultural education's focus on increasing educational equity for all students. In 1994 Ladson-Billings, education scholar, introduced the term 'Culturally Relevant Teaching,' to illustrate the method of teaching that integrated a student's culture, knowledge, and community experiences into the curriculum, life, teaching and the learning experiences that happened in the classroom. Ladson-Billings proposed three major recommendations for educators to support this pedagogy: (a) high expectations for all students, (b) teaching students to be culturally competent, and (c) guiding students in becoming culturally conscious. CRP recognized students' individuality and differences (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Ladson-Billings urged that culturally relevant pedagogy was a life changer by preparing students for revolutionizing the world and not just living in the world. Ultimately, culturally relevant pedagogy empowered students to defy their then-present learning situation (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2010). Ladson-Billings' work was based on

the premise of three ideas that teachers must convey in the classroom to their students: (a) academic achievement, (b) cultural competence, and (c) sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Ladson-Billings also acknowledged that the goal of culturally relevant pedagogy was not only to increase the academic performance of students, but to affirm their cultural identity and provide them with an appreciation of humanity. As Ladson-Billings (1994) wrote in her book, *The Dreamkeepers*, culturally relevant teaching used student culture, in order to maintain it and transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture (p. 17). For teachers, then, cultural competence involved, not only gaining knowledge about their students' cultures, but also developing an understanding of what culture meant within their own personal lives (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

> CRP is applying cultural knowledge, past experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective for them; it teaches to and through strengths of these students. Gay introduced at least five important characteristics related to culturally responsive teaching: (a) It acknowledges the legality of the cultural traditions of diverse ethnic groups, (b) It creates connections of value between home and school experiences, academic abstractions and lived socio-cultural events, (c) it uses different learning styles, (d) it teaches students to know and praise their own and other's cultural heritages, and (e) it incorporates multicultural information, resources and all traditional subjects taught in schools. (Gay, 2000, p. 29)

Four characteristics of CRP were summarized by Gay (2000) as caring, communication, curriculum, and instruction. The first characteristic, caring, entailed

more than stakeholders stating they cared about their students. They must demonstrate and validate that they care by engaging in ongoing communication, participating in school events, extracurricular activities, and incorporating instructional procedures for students. The second component of CRP stressed the importance of communication. A culturally responsive educator may supplement instructional techniques with various teaching tools, including visuals, kinesthetic activities, and sharing stories and information to meet the needs of his or her students. The third component of CRP was curriculum. Gay (2000) argued that textbooks and curriculum material should be selected based on the issues and perspectives of diverse groups of people. According to Gay (2000), schools needed assistance from community leaders, students, parents, and cultural groups to select textbooks and teaching materials. The fourth component for CRP that Gay focused on was instruction. A critical issue in culturally responsive teaching was for educators and stakeholders to understand how to implement various learning modalities, cooperative learning, technology, and a variety of instructional methods.

Culturally responsive educators were wholeheartedly committed to regarding the academic capability of their students. They believed that the dynamics of learning involved a person's "intellectual, academic, personal, social, ethical, and political dimension" (Gay, 2000, pp. 45-46). Gay (2002a, 2002b) suggested that culturally responsive teaching was based on the foundation of multicultural education and entailed many factors, such as curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and performance assessments. In addition,

she believed that culturally responsive educators effectively connected students in active learning in the classroom through utilizing a variety of instruments and resources.

Many researchers analyzed CRP from the perspective of five important assumptions (Banks, 2007; Gay, 2010a; Grant & Sleeter, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2010; Milner, 2010). The first is that the culture of the teacher, the student, and the school influences teaching and learning. Secondly, Gay (2010a) emphasized that traditional reforms created to improve the academic achievements of students of color were ineffective if they failed to focus on culture, ethnicity, and other personal issues identified to affect student achievement. A third assumption was that a teacher's admiration for students was not sufficient. Gay (2010a) pointed out, neither colorblind nor the "missionary zeal" of certain teachers who chose to teach in schools attended by low-income students of color would facilitate in closing achievement gaps (p. 14). Another assumption was the acknowledgement of cultural diversity as a strong point, not an inadequacy and finally, the fifth assumption was the idea that test scores and grades were symptoms of achievement gaps, not causes (Gay, 2010a). These assumptions form the foundation for the conceptual framework for this study.

When discussing the five general characteristics of CRP, Gay (2010a) described the impact of multicultural education on the development of CRP from a historical perspective. Although described here within Gay's (2010a) framework, others, such as Banks (2007), Grant and Sleeter (2011), Ladson-Billings (2010), and Milner (2010), expounded on similar characteristics in their own extensive research on multicultural education and CRP.

As outlined by Gay (2010a), the first characteristic of CRP was that it was validating and affirming to students, because it acknowledged the legitimacy of their own culture and how it shaped their dispositions, values, and approaches to learning. It was also validating because "it builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences, as well as between academic abstractions and lived socio-cultural realities" (p. 31). Gay (2010a) further stated that CRP was validating and affirming because it promoted the use of a broad range of instructional strategies based on these learning styles. Gay (2010a) also indicated it taught students to acknowledge various cultures by using multicultural resources, versus a one-day, 26-episodic cultural celebration, sometimes referred to as the heroes and holidays (Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 1998) approach. A second characteristic of CRP included the notion that it was comprehensive because "teachers of CRP develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by using cultural resources to teach knowledge, skills, values and attitudes" (Gay, 2010a, p. 32). Third, Gay (2010a) stressed that CRP was multidimensional in that it covered curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, classroom management, and performance assessments.

Next, Gay (2010a) posited that CRP was empowering and transformative to students, in part because it explicitly utilized students' cultural experiences during teaching and learning without succumbing to the false notion that utilizing cultural and ethnic affiliations in the classroom was anti-academic. It also empowered students by teaching them how to analyze the impact of inequities faced by ethnic individuals and to act upon them. Students learned about cultural hegemony in the classroom and how to act upon it, as well. The International Association for Language Education Policy Studies

(2013) defined hegemony as the idea that a society could be ruled or manipulated by a dominating cultural group. As a result, the ideals of the dominating class became the norm. Lastly, Gay (2010a) emphasized that CRP was an emancipator. It freed students from the constraint of believing that the only legitimate ways of knowing and being in the world were those aligned with the mainstream, Western Eurocentric canon, which historically was perpetuated in the institution of school.

Three educational perspectives of culturally responsive teaching were revealed in the scholarly literature (Utley, Obiakor, & Bakken, 2011). The first perspective defined by Ladson-Billings (1995a) emphasized the authenticity of diverse cultures and ethnic groups. In the second perspective, Gay (2000) described how learning could be more appropriate when teaching was focused on cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of RCELD students. Nieto and Boder (2008) defined the third perspective of culturally responsive teaching as actively constructed learning connected to learning influenced by cultural differences, developed within a social context and created within a community (p. 3). Teachers should demonstrate a responsibility of high expectations for their students and motivate them to achieve their goals academically. Gay (2000) advocated that successful teachers showed support, used different learning materials in the classroom, channeled positive self-efficacy values, and celebrated students' successes.

The second factor Gay (2000) pointed out was culturally responsive teaching was transformative and not originated from conventional instructional methods for students of color. Alternatively, culturally responsive teaching appreciated RCELD students' culture and comprehension for learning. The third factor was culturally responsive teaching was

emotionally and mentally liberating, in addition to freeing teachers from using standard teaching methods and focusing on diversity awareness with students (Gay, 2000, pp. 29-33). According to Gay (2000), teachers in their practice of teaching could analyze formal lessons and instructional methods in designing curriculum to ensure cultural congruence (Gay, 2002a). Multicultural educators posited that African Americans, Latinos and Asians fell short without culturally responsive teaching (Banks & Banks, 2005; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings 1994, 1995a; Nieto, 2000).

Teachers were knowledgeable about multicultural education, but not properly trained on exactly how to teach all students. Currently, at the time of this writing, many teachers instructed students who brought a wide range of diversity into a classroom environment. Subsequently, there was no universal approach of teaching; therefore, teachers need to be aware of the special needs their students brought into the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2006b). Ladson-Billings (2006b) also emphasized, teachers who were confident enough to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy into their classroom curriculum created greater learning opportunities for all students. Gollnick and Chinn (2002) reported a growing need for schools to implement CRP in schools, as more students from RCELD backgrounds populated classrooms in the 21st century. Richards et al. (2007) expressed, in order for teachers to achieve this, teachers should build a positive and culturally responsive school environment for students, regardless of their diverse background.

In a 2006 study, Schmidt and Ma conferred with Gay (2000) and recommended seven characteristics imperative to the success of schools implementing CRP: high expectations, positive relationship with families and communities, cultural sensitivity,

active teaching methods, teacher as facilitator, student-directed lessons, and instruction around groups and teams. Schmidt and Ma (2006) further recommended that schools show clear contacts with students, families, and communities, in reference to instructional content and relationships (p. 121). The main objective of CRP was to convey an understanding of students' prior knowledge and language to form strong relations to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds within family and community environments (Algozzine, O'Shea, & Obiakor, 2009; Dukes & Ming, 2006; Jackson, 2007; McCaleb, 1994; Menchaca, 2001; Milner, 2010; Nichols, Rupley & Webb-Johnson, 2000; Reyner, 1992). Johnson, Johnson, Farenga, and Ness (2007) described schools that practiced CRP as facilities where "critical consciousness exists between students and teaching staff to confront discrimination in the larger society" (p. 51).

The framework of CRP existed in three dimensions. These dimensions included institutional, personal, and instructional (Kea, Campbell-Wheatley & Richards, 2006; Richards et al., 2007). The institutional dimension was a mirror image of the administration and the operating practices that the administration conveyed school wide. The personal dimension related to confronting whatever was on the inside of one's mind and learning how to understand and deal with it, along with the emotions expressed as teachers become culturally responsive in their routine of teaching every day. Teachers' cognitive and emotional attitudes were evaluated in this dimension, as both factors were vital in order for them to put culturally responsive teaching into practice. Self-reflection was a significant part of the personal dimension. As teachers examined their beliefs about themselves and others, they were then able to challenge their biases that affected their value systems (Richards et al., 2007, p. 65).

**Studies in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

An ethnographic study by Ladson-Billings (1994) of successful teachers of African American children was foundational in defining the central premises of CRP. Participants included five African American and three White teachers, who ranged in teaching experience from 12-to-40 years and had taught in a wide range of settings including rural, suburban, urban, segregated, integrated, public, and private contexts. By interpreting snapshots of the teachers' practice, Ladson-Billings (1994) synthesized commonalities in educators' philosophy and pedagogy into a cohesive theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, which "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 18).

In 1994, Ladson-Billings made an important distinction between culturally relevant versus assimilation practice, along several dimensions: teachers' conceptions of self and others, educator approaches to social relations, and beliefs of knowledge. Counter to assimilation practice, which sought to homogenize students into one American identity, culturally relevant teachers supported students in making connections between their community, national, and global identities. They built a "community of learners" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 55), rather than a competitive classroom culture oriented toward individual achievement and adopted a critical stance toward the canon of knowledge legitimized by educational institutions. Ladson-Billings (1994) emphasized that no recipe could be formulated for culturally relevant teaching, but that such instruction must develop in response to particular pedagogical situations and contexts. In a related work, Ladson-Billings (1994) developed the concepts of socio-cultural

competence and socio-political competence, which together with a focus on students' academic achievement, comprised three central premises for culturally relevant pedagogy. Socio-cultural competence "refers to the ability of students to grow in understanding and respect for their culture of origin" (p. 111). This concept was important for considering how students could develop facility in navigating between home and school culture.

The perspectives of Delpit (1995) paralleled the philosophies of Ladson-Billings' (1994) work and other culturally responsive scholars. Delpit examined relationships between language and power in society and educational institutions. Through an analysis of skills-based versus. process-based approaches to language arts instruction, she argued that educational institutions' approaches to literacy positioned standard edited English as a 'code of power' to which students of different races and socioeconomic status received differential access, thus widening the achievement gap. Delpit (1995) postulated that culturally responsive teaching was effective teaching, and effective teaching addressed the academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness of students. She maintained that the goal for the culturally responsive teacher was not to create individualized instruction for each student for every learning task, but to be aware of when a student was not able to learn because of a cultural barrier.

The findings of Sullivan's (2009) study supported Ladson-Billings' (1994) previous research on CRP and concluded that teachers' perceptions about their African American adolescent male students acted as a motivation for the use of the instructional and classroom management practices they implemented. According to Sullivan (2009), all the participant teachers demonstrated a genuine concern for the academic welfare of

students who participated in the study. Sullivan (2009) found that teachers valued their students' cultures, as well as their own and implemented instructional strategies that improved their male students' academic success. Sullivan (2009) employed classroom observations, and teacher and student interviews and questionnaires. Questions focused on teachers' individual background, instructional strategies, classroom management strategies, and philosophy of teaching were solicited. A student questionnaire was employed to request students' learning experiences, feelings, and perceptions about the effect their teachers' instructional strategies and classroom management practices had on their education. Teachers should continue to seek what is relevant to students and find ways to connect with them in a variety of cultural ways. This study revealed how teachers believed cultural affirmation and identity were important aspects to the educators' native population's success; however, teachers were not always implanting CRP at a high level.

In a study, Irvine (2002) connected her research findings with previous studies on culturally responsive teaching. Irvine interviewed African American teachers who implemented culturally responsive teaching strategies into their curriculum. The teachers acknowledged the following principles critical to culturally responsive teaching: (a) Teaching demonstrating effective classroom management, providing effective feedback to assess student performance, providing a caring community for learners, and using culturally responsive teaching strategies; (b) Teaching requires educators to engage in 'other mothering' or a feeling of relationship toward their students, (c) Teaching is having faith one's own teaching and talents to impact the achievement of students;

specifically, teachers should be culturally competent, (d) Teaching is holding high expectations of students, and (e) Teaching is a vocation that has an exceptional purpose.

To reinforce the concepts of CRP, Banks (1999) presented another approach to a multicultural content model that influenced teachers to focus on transformative teaching and social action. Banks also presented his idea that culturally responsive curriculum provided opportunities for students to view issues from multiple lenses. In addition, students could think about issues from a critical lens, engage in authentic problem-solving, and address issues of social justice. Banks (1999) perceived that this model was not only for students in K-12 settings and must be used in teacher preparation programs so that educators would know how to develop curriculum that was multicultural (Ford, 2010).

Banks' (1999) multicultural content model had four approaches that moved toward high quality multicultural curriculum: contributions, additive, transformation, and social action. The Contributions Approach was the least effective and involved focusing on cultural aspects, such as holidays, traditions, food, heroes, and heroines, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Kwanzaa. Heroes and events are chosen were compared to White heroes, supported dominant culture's ideologies and, values and often give a distorted and incomplete account of history. Cultural traditions and practices were presented without the benefit of a discussion about the meaning and significance to students of color. The traditional curriculum remained unchanged and stereotypical views were often reinforced.

The second approach Banks (1999) addressed was the Additive Approach when books and materials were added to the existing curriculum in an attempt to add

multicultural content, but the concepts and objectives of lessons were unchanged and did not include the lens or perspectives of students of color. For example, the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* may be added to the reading list, but the discussion that follows may not include the historical context that influenced his thoughts and actions and its impact on African Americans.

The third approach Banks (1999) described was called Transformation Approach, which enabled students to view issues from multiple perspectives and to be more empathetic. The curriculum, concepts, and objectives were changed to include voices that were previously distorted or excluded. Students were often moved to examine and challenge their own values and beliefs. Banks (1999) argued that a unit exposing students to the cultural differences in celebrating holidays could be a unit exploring cultural conflict.

Finally, Banks (1999) defined a fourth approach, the Social Action Approach, which was a natural progression as students were able to further their investigation and engage in authentic problem-solving as they explored ways to affect change. At the core of social action was social justice, making a difference, and addressing inequities. Banks (1999) presented an example of assigning students a lesson focused on the topic of immigrants and allowing them to write letters to political leaders to express their views about new laws.

May's (2011) study addressed Banks' (2010) explanation of using the Contributions Approach in selecting culturally relevant teaching material in the classroom. May (2011) observed that the teacher found it easier to implement comprehension strategies from professional development literature focused on students'

personal and out of school experiences, as opposed to comprehension standards from the state's curriculum. May (2011) contended the difficulty in aligning the curriculum standards with CRP was that the test made the comprehension strategy the end goal, as opposed to the students comprehending texts by making connections with their experiences.

In a comparison study, Rozansky (2010) also found that even teachers with a disposition for CRP had difficulty implementing it in their classrooms. Rozansky's (2010) study played a critical role in understanding Banks' (2010) conceptual framework of the Social Actions Approach and addressing inequalities in the classroom. One teacher she studied had a developing knowledge of critical pedagogy and CRP. The teacher demonstrated increased understandings and applications of CRP, but many of her applications of CRP were impaired by classroom management issues and lack of clarity when giving students instructions. The teacher was adamant about honoring students' prior experiences, although she rarely connected those conversations to curriculum or used them to generate new lessons. According to Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke (2003), an important strategy in creating CRP in schools was for teachers to use positive behavior systems that were culturally relevant.

**Culturally Responsive Behavior Systems**

Studies recent to this writing concluded that RCELD students were at the greatest risk of suspension and expulsion from school, due to their misbehaviors. The consequences of these administrative measures were ineffective and likely to cause students to become more defiant (Lewis-Palmer, Sugai, & Larson, 1999; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Researchers also maintained that students with the greatest need for school

support were often punished for minor infractions (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Morrison, Anthony, Storino, & Dillon, 2001).

Though the U.S. population increased significantly in the number of RCELD students, the teaching force was somewhat homogeneous, comprised of mainly European American, middle-class women. This could create problems where teachers misunderstand the behavior of culturally diverse students (Gay, 2000; Morse & Cole, 2002). For example, Monroe (2005) offered additional confirmation that teachers perceived African American students' excessive verbal communication as disrespect, horse playing as aggression, and habitual joking as verbal abuse. Subsequently, culturally responsive teachers perceived such incidents as genuine problem behaviors as a learning possibility, rather than justifications for punishment.

Yet, other researchers confirmed that African American and Native Hispanic students were at higher risk of exclusion than European American students. Also, when reviewing data, findings indicated harsh punishments proved ineffective (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006). In his research Losen (2007) pointed out that expelling and excluding students due to misbehavior was predictive of poor academic performance and also consistently correlated disproportionately to special education more than any other factors. Green and Winters (2005b) supported other researchers' works by emphasizing that culturally responsive teachers invested time in understanding the students' culture, as well as their own.

Even further research indicated that various beliefs between the home and school lives of students may be why disproportionate discipline was seen (Cartledge, Tillman, & Johnson, 2001; Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; Skiba, Michael, Nard,

& Pederson, 2002; Townsend, 2000). In most educational systems classroom norms and standards frequently lined up with White middle-class ideals and aspirations, like personal praise (Lerman, 2000), competition (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Gay, 2000), individuality (Boykin et al., 2005), and linear belief and communication patterns (Hale-Benson, 1986; Swartz, 2004).

Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) with cultural and linguistic variables will helped to develop positive behavior in RCELD students. PBIS required individualized and continued decision-making, development, and examining, which were connected with instructional foci aimed at behavioral expectations. The PBIS model was effective proactively in creating a safe school climate on a small scale. On a larger level PBIS not only improved inappropriate behaviors, but taught correct behavior (Banks & Obiakor, 2015).

Some educators believed students would respond to evidence-based practices and did not regard a teacher's professional judgment as a significant component in the academic path of the students' lives (Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Christiansen, 1983; Beswick, Willms, & Sloat, 2005; Leiter & Brown, 1985). According to the findings of Sanchez-Fowler, Banks, Anhalt, Devore, and Kalis (2009), White teachers evaluated a greater number of students as extremely externalizing and less pro-social, whereas African American teachers evaluated more students as extremely externalizing and extremely pro-social. The researchers advocated that African American teachers in the study were more culturally responsive to the behavior of the African American students than with White students.

Gay (2000, 2002a, 2002b) and Noguera, (2003) noted that teachers had low expectations and negative attitudes toward students with disabilities, therefore expecting them to display bad behaviors, which was characteristic of their lack of progress (Gay, 2000, 2002b; Noguera, 2003). Bal (2011) developed the Culturally Responsive Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (CRPBIS) to introduce cultural responsiveness in the content of PBIS. In addition, CRPBIS was structured for developing culturally responsive behavioral systems in district schools using crisis intervention team of various local stakeholders designed to evaluate and improve behavioral support systems in their district schools.

CRPBIS was a system that valued RCELD students and the need for them to culturally fit in and meet behavioral goals and objectives that schools expected them to accomplish. CRPBIS evaluated, celebrated, and acknowledged students' cultural backgrounds as essential to promoting learning and academic progress (Klingner et al., 2005). Consequently, to be effective, school-wide behavior supports must be proactive and support a positive, culturally responsive environment that is productive to learning for all students. Stakeholders were aware that what was perceived as correct behavior was influenced by cultural expectations or what different cultures perceived as inappropriate behavior (Obiakor, 2008, 2012). CRBIS viewed environment and incompetence as problematic and worked to transform them, not like traditional behavior management that viewed the individual as the major problem and sought to fix the individual by immediately eliminating the defiant behavior (Banks & Obiakor, 2015).

While a large amount of literature centered around culturally responsive academic instruction, Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, and Swain-Bradway (2011)

recommended at least six guiding principles for culturally responsive teachers to support positive student behavior: (1) develop staff members' cultural knowledge, (2) increase staff members' cultural self-responsiveness, (3) authenticate others' culture, (4) strengthen cultural relevance, (5) develop cultural validity, and (6) accentuate cultural equity (pp. 221-222). Schools may find it difficult to change their system to support positive behavior due to social dominance and hegemony, although there were several reasons for why this implementation needed to occur for culturally responsive behavioral and instructional support strategies. Cantu (2008) concluded that it was imperative for teachers to understand the importance of managing classrooms, while understanding how to respond to the personal and academic needs of the students. Cantu (2008) argued, this practice was complicated and involved awareness of the students' lives.

**Culturally Responsive Caring Schools**

In addition to respecting the cultural backgrounds, ethnic identity, and humanity of students, teachers who cared held students accountable for academic, social, and personal performance and made certain the accountability occurred. Teachers were demanding but facilitative, supportive, and accessible both personally and professionally. They may not be from the same ethnic background to accomplish this (Gay, 2010c). Culturally responsive teachers built caring relationships between students and taught them how to cultivate and maintain these types of relationships with one another (Gay, 2010c; Grant & Sleeter, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2010).

According to Darling-Hammond, Austin, Lit, and Nasir (2003), teachers could display caring attitudes when they show an interest in linguistically diverse learners' language and culture. Consequently, teachers became knowledgeable about students'

cultural backgrounds through discussions, journals, parent meetings, or home visits, to become more culturally competent. Davis (2011) stated that successful teachers not only needed to demonstrate a caring attitude toward their students, but should also show they cared for themselves. She suggested that teachers first learn to take a break from working and learn to rest and relax during the day. It was important for teachers to have a strong support system of positive people in their lives. Also, teachers must enjoy free time every day and become involved in some leisure hobby or favorite pastime. Finally, Davis (2011) said that teachers who nurtured themselves relieved stress with laughter and often laughing by at themselves.

Many teachers had low expectations shaped by inaccurate assumptions regarding the relationship between race, academic ability, and intelligence (e.g., African-American students are uncooperative and unmotivated) (Gay, 2002a; Meyer & Patton, 2001). In her book, *In Search Of Wholeness: African American Teachers and Their Culturally Specific Classroom Practices*, Irvine (2002) interviewed teachers who practiced culturally responsive teaching:

> The teachers acknowledged the many beliefs about culturally responsive teaching; teaching is caring for the whole student, providing honest feedback to students about their performance, maintaining authority in the classroom, and using culturally specific instruction. Teaching requires educators to engage in other mothering or a feeling of kinship toward their students. Teaching is belief in one's own teaching and ability to influence the achievement of students. That is, teachers must have multicultural self-efficacy. Teaching is demanding the best of students holding them to high expectations. (pp. 141-145)

Irvine (2010) reported that some educators believed culturally relevant pedagogy basically recognized ethnic holidays, incorporated popular culture into the curriculum, and approved of slang speech. Educators also believed culturally relevant was limited to teachers of color, inappropriate for White students, caring teachers of RCELD students lacked classroom management skills; and the purpose of culturally relevant pedagogy was to encourage RCELD students to feel good about themselves (p. 58).

According to Gay (2002a, 2002b), caring teachers were those who 'cared so much' about their culturally diverse students that they insisted on holding them to the same standards as other students. Irvine (2003) used caring to describe one-to-one student-to-teacher relationships, as well as the teacher's role in the greater community. However, research indicated that the success of a professional educator ultimately, possibly depended on the development of necessary dispositions, such as caring for others, sensitivity to student differences, fairness, and strength in making decisions and getting things done (Burden & Byrd, 2003; Cotton, 1995; Grant & Gillette, 2006; Sockett, 2006; Stronge, 2002; Wildy & Louden, 2000).

Five ways that help educators demonstrate caring in their practice of teaching were established by the NEA (2015). The first way was for teachers to listen to students and help them express their viewpoints and how they want to be respected. The second way was to help students express their feelings with other people. The third way was to help students care about people who served the community (i.e. policeman, military personnel). The fourth way was help parents show an interest and become involved in their children's education. Finally, the NEA recommended that teachers enhance their practice by learning new updated information and seeking feedback from their students.

While most teachers cared about imparting knowledge to their students, the most effective teachers were concerned with building a relationship with their students. These teachers ultimately formed a trusting and caring bond that helped students become aware of the connection that they had with the teacher (p. 2). Garza, Alejandro, Blythe, and Fite (2014) examined teacher behaviors that demonstrated caring in elementary and middle school classrooms (pp. 3-5). The researchers concluded that teachers perceived four factors significant in caring behaviors; promoting a feeling of belonging, getting to know students personally, encouraging academic achievement, and focusing on the physiological needs of students.

Nurturing students was important, but teachers should not confuse caring and supportive with coddling; rather, nurturing meant holding students accountable, while providing the support they needed to succeed. When students had a secure relationship with their teachers, they were more comfortable taking risks that enhanced learning, such as tackling challenging tasks, persisting when they run into difficulty, or asking questions when they were confused. Adolescents reported they worked harder for teachers who treated them as individuals and expressed interest in their personal lives outside of school (Stipek, 2006). Students need a classroom environment where a strong sense of community exists, there is no fear of bullying, a teacher cares about them and holds high expectations for their success. Teachers need to practice the habit of welcoming students to the classroom daily (Davis, 2012).

In a study conducted by Strobel and Borsato (2012) 1,700 middle school students in grades 6 through 8, represented by eight different public schools, were surveyed to evaluate students' perceptions of classroom exercises that reflected caring in regards to

their teachers (pp. 5-6). Four key findings were concluded in the study: (a) motivation of students was significant to learning and academic achievement; (b) with increase in students' motivational perceptions care could be conveyed in many different ways and students succeeded when teachers focused on student achievement, scaffolding learning, attended to the whole child, and communicated high expectations; (c) between sixth and eighth grade students had a higher perceptions of caring practices than seventh grade students who showed a decrease in their perceptions of care; and (d) students who demonstrated an advanced skill or proficiency in math perceived more caring practices in their classrooms compared to students who were below proficiency (pp. 5-6).

In a 2010 study, Tosolt discussed the differences in students' perceptions, based on his findings. He discovered by surveying 50 fifth-through-eighth grade African American, White, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students their perceptions of caring contradicted stereotypical views. The study concluded that students represented by underserved populations valued academic caring over interpersonal caring. Ironically, girls and African American, rather than White students identified academic behavior as caring. The study showed that boys valued interpersonal caring behaviors associated with hugging, which was normally perceived to be favored by girls. Also, the study provided a framework for educators to understand how some students regarded teachers' caring, which could help them develop and express their care in culturally-relevant ways (pp. 146-150).

Adelman and Taylor (2005) believed caring had moral, social, and personal components, and when all factors existed, they could speak to issues, encourage students, and facilitate the process of learning. Good schools were capable of addressing the needs

of students by providing a caring school environment to students from all backgrounds, including students with special needs, such as emotional or behavioral disorders. Darling-Hammond et al. (2003) recommended that culturally responsive classrooms were secure, caring places, where it was okay to 'take risks,' and where the classroom was a 'safe space,' which created a refuge from external pressures. Also, when teachers established standards in the classroom for respectful and caring behavior at the beginning and throughout the year, they provided an environment of safety for students. Nieto (2000) pointed out that caring could be conveyed by the demonstration of patience and the time teachers invested to prepare motivating lessons to engage students in learning.

**Parent Involvement**

Parent involvement was connected with a variety of advantages, including an increase in children's academic achievement across academic settings (Abel, 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kim, 2009; Zhan, 2006). The U.S. Department of Education (2004a) defined parental involvement as the participation of parents in on-going, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, inclusive of the decision-making and partnering with educators to accomplish the goals of educating students. NCLB guidelines required public schools to develop and implement programs to increase parental involvement in schools. For schools to qualify for federal funds under NCLB, Title I, they were required to agree to use the funds to partnership with parents. Schools that failed to comply with plans like Title I were subject to loss of their federal funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

More traditional definitions of parental involvement stressed investment of time and financial support from parents, and those would not be able to contribute were

labeled as unconcerned (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Parent involvement activities were grouped into the two general categories of home-based parent involvement and school-based parent involvement Deplanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Epstein et al., 2009; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). Home-based parent involvement included practices connected to children's education that occurred outside of the school, usually within the home. These practices were found to possibly be directly related to learning, including assisting with homework (Eccles & Harold, 1993).

School-based parent involvement occurred when parents actually made contact with the school and included participating in general school meetings, communicating with teachers and administrators, attending school functions, and volunteering at the school (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008). Researchers also proposed that parents' positive attitudes about education and their communication of expectations concerning academic achievement to their children represented additional components of parent involvement (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill & Tyson, 2009).

At younger ages, prior to attending school, children learned behaviors and habits from parents that helped to shape the environment around them. The development of a child's formal education was directly related to parental involvement in a child's preschool education (Deniz-Kan, 2008). Also, many correlational studies listed parental involvement as an effective measure in raising academic achievement in schools (Barnard, 2004: Desimone, 1999; Hill & Craft, 2003; Hill & Taylor, 2004: Wooden, 2010; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). In addition to facilitating academic achievement, parental involvement was found to improve parent-teacher relationships, teacher morale,

school climate, student attendance, student behavior, mental health of children, and increased parental confidence (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 37).

When schools supported parents' involvement in their children's learning, regardless of the families' income, education level, or ethnic background, children were more likely to earn higher grades and test scores and enroll in higher-level programs, as well as to be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits; attend school regularly; have better social skills; show improvement in behavior and adapt well to school, and graduate from high school followed by postsecondary education (Christenson, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999).

Strong parental involvement in a child's education and school environment was essential to the success of the child and the school. Such parental involvement was an ongoing, comprehensive, purposeful, and relentless process designed to ensure parents' connection to the school's culture, purpose, and organization. Despite these findings, meaningful parental involvement traditionally eluded schools. It was typically limited to parent-teacher conferences, and even then, teachers voiced parents' inconsistent attendance or continued absence (King & Goodwin, 2002, p. 5).

Even in schools where parental involvement was considered strong, only some parents were involved, or they were invited to the school by the teachers or administrators. Dedicated parental involvement existed only when there was a system in place to include all parents in the life and development of the school (King & Goodwin, 2002, p. 5). There was a consensus among parents, educators, and researchers that parent involvement was an important factor related to academic success in children (Szente,

2006; Wright & Willis, 2004). Many researchers agreed that parent involvement was shown to be positively linked to children's academic performance (Barnard, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Feuerstein, 2000; Jeynes, 2003; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004) and could possibly mediate the effects of poverty, parents' educational attainment, and race/ethnicity on achievement (De Civita, Pagani, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2004; Eamon, 2002; Schreiber, 2002). Increasing parent involvement was been identified as a possible strategy for reducing the achievement gap.

Researchers found that parent involvement was beneficial for when parents continued with their school involvement activities during the middle school years, since this participation continued to be related to school success for the students (The Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 2004). Some researchers concurred that parental involvement was an important factor related to student development and achievement (Wright & Willis, 2004), yet data current at the time showed a lack of parental involvement in some instances and a decline in parental involvement in the comparison between early grades to middle school grades (Szente, 2006; Wright & Willis, 2004).

In 2007, Anderson and Minke surveyed parents at three elementary schools concerning their roles in their children's education. The most notable findings were related to the addition of resources and specific teacher invitations. Teacher invitation had the strongest relationship with parents' involvement behaviors and role constructions. Therefore, invitations were likely influential in encouraging parents to participate. The perception of being invited may be particularly important for low-income parents, because they were often viewed as having lower levels of participation.

In the case of addressing language barriers, most school strategies included some bilingual services to help educators communicate with families about school programs and children's progress. Many schools successfully used bilingual parent liaisons, instructional aides, counselors, and parent volunteers to reach out to families through a variety of school-home communications, as well as the use of parent workshops or classes (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004).

Some researchers believed there was a distinct difference in parental involvement among African American, Latino, and White families; therefore schools should consider race and ethnicity when considering parental involvement strategies (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Education scholars believed that African American families tended to devote more time in home-based activities than their White counterparts, and it was difficult for schools to evaluate home-based involvement. The reason was schools often disregarded home-based activities as parental involvement (Barbarin, McCandies, Coleman, & Hill, 2005). According to Martinez-Cosio (2010), parent groups were successful as a strategy for African American families in providing parents with information about their child's school, networking with other families, and supporting students as a cooperative group. DeGaetano (2007) suggested that African American and Latino parental involvement may not align with the norms of White middle class. Latino families tended to respect the role of the school and teacher and were less likely to make contact with the school regarding potential problems, especially when English was not their primary language. Consequently, when families did not speak English, schools perceived their lack of communication as a lack of involvement, rather than an act of respect.

Parent involvement was positively correlated with student academic performance, and increased parent involvement could possibly reduce the achievement gap between high and low-performing students (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Sheldon (2005) used a structural equation model to examine parent involvement in a partnership program by exploring its implementation and the outcomes of parent involvement for the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). NNPS was established in 1996 at the Johns Hopkins University. This model proposed that students experienced school success to a greater degree if educators, families, and the community worked together to support this experience. Structural changes in the school, as well as with planning and evaluation of involvement activities were part of the model. There were six types of involvement and activities related to volunteering, decision-making, collaboration with the community, learning at home, communication, and parenting. Important elements of the program included internal collegial support and external district support. Study findings supported the ideas that family structure, poverty, and lack of parental education were also related to poor student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2004c). Pomerantz et al. (2007) articulated that parental involvement could be positively correlated to the child's mental health, where "competence and heightened engagement in school, particularly when it is accompanied by persistence, predict decreased emotional distress among elementary and middle school children" (p. 395).

Carreon, Drake, and Barton (2005) described how RCELD families participated in their children's formal education. The authors contended that parent involvement should not be limited to formal school environment or be school-centered; but rather it should be identified as a process in which parents could be an active part. Jeynes (2011)

investigated meta-analyses of parent engagement that indicated the most significant elements of parent involvement were not straightforward and were indirectly connected to school. These included upholding high expectations for the children, and expressing love, understanding, and compassion (pp. 748-749). Based on the findings of Auerbach and Collier (2012), parents perceived that the most significant contribution they made to their children's education was teaching their own customs, beliefs, and values. These findings implied that the most successful school interventions supported family values and customs. Additionally, the study concluded that home-based involvement had a greater impact on academic achievement than parents' visibility at school.

The NCES (1998) listed significant barriers to parent engagement in schools. At least 87% of the schools surveyed perceived that parents' lack of time was the main reason for non-participation in their child's education (p. 1). About 53% of the schools surveyed perceived that barriers to parent involvement existed due to staff's lack of time (p.1). According to Wherry (2009), parents expected schools to answer their concerns about learning issues; however, schools failed to provide practical advice to parents that would help their children. Wherry (2009) also pointed out that schools failed to inform parents in a timely manner when children had problems in school (p. 7).

According to Blitz (2013) and Greenberg (2012), despite the then-recent focus on parent engagement, many barriers prevented collaboration and worked against shared interests. Logistical barriers are straightforward and simple to define. These barriers related to concerns like transportation and scheduling of school events, which hinder parent participation. Also included among these barriers were child-care obligations, financial issues, work schedules, communicating with schools, and conflicts with the

schedules of family obligations. Many low income families lacked the finances to provide resources for their children, like internet access and college-board test preparation, that were perceived as critical to academic achievement. According to Randolph, Teasley, and Arrington (2006), the most apparent barrier to parental involvement was parents' inability to support fundraisers or pay for admission fees for school programs. Yet, logistical barriers had a huge effect on parents' ability and motivation to make a connection with their children's education.

Families of low socioeconomic backgrounds faced challenges in regular parental involvement due to work schedules, lack of transportation, or childcare which ultimately prevents them from participating in school events or volunteering in the school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). In addition, when families of low socioeconomic backgrounds expended their efforts in informal conversations and unscheduled visits to demonstrate their involvement to the school (Freeman, 2010), these unplanned connections were considered by school personnel as intruding (Fields-Smith, 2007). In addition to financial and time restriction barriers, low-income families may also undergo psychological barriers. For example, low-income parents who struggled to provide for their families' basic needs could experience mental health problems, including depression, which could limit parents' participation in school functions (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007).

Research studies showed that some teachers may not encourage parent involvement, because of their dissatisfaction with low-achieving and low SES-students (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007), or because they believed a student's family was the reason for their academic failure (Griffith, 1998; Trotman,

2001). Some teachers tended to hold negative perceptions about the efficacy and competence of low-income parents, as well as teachers' beliefs in the effectiveness of parental involvement with this group (Kim, 2009). Yet, many parents who were low-income also had limited education, which placed limitations on the amount of support they could offer their children. Kim (2009) and Koonce and Harper (2005) further concurred that parents of limited educational background could lack the self-confidence to network with teachers and follow their child's education program.

Studies recent to the time of this writing indicated that parental involvement also increased social capital, or networks designed to leverage resources (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Lee & Bowen, 2006). With increase of social networks, students benefitted from the availability of more support or resources, such as tutoring, enrichment opportunities, and extended time outside of school to learn in order to achieve academically (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Many educators possibly presumed that limited involvement suggested families lacked concern for their children's education and failed to explore opportunities offered by schools. Most parent involvement activities in schools were not culturally responsive, since school activities were based on the idea that families' agendas, finances, and preferences were the same as educators' in the schools. Schools rarely respected the cultural backgrounds and interests of parents when planning family involvement (Williams, Pemberton, & Dyce, 2012).

In 2008, Rodriguez, Bosque, and Villarreal (2008) proposed a list of effective strategies for educators to use to incorporate meaningful parent engagement in schools. The researchers emphasized establishing high standards for parent engagement developed

an open door policy and the room to plan. They also believed that parents were concerned about their children and were aware of their own families' needs. Rodriguez et al. (2008) also emphasized the importance of for educators to partner with communities to provide resources for students' parents. Finally, educators needed to openly acknowledge parent involvement, communicate frequently with parents, monitor their involvement, and become a supporter of parent involvement in schools (pp. 2-3).

The first step toward culturally responsive involvement is for educators and families to collaborate is to identify, discuss, and dispel assumptions, biases, and stereotypes. Initiating culturally responsive parental involvement called for teachers and administrators take direct steps to openly communicating (King & Goodwin, 2002). Educators must be prepared to support and assist parents in becoming more involved in their children's education. King and Goodwin (2002) and Rodriguez et al. (2008) recommended seven strategies for teachers and administrators to initiate culturally responsive parental involvement. For culturally responsive educators to create a positive environment for parent engagement, they must include the following critical elements: engage parents in school decisions that impact the quality of education provided, create an environment where parents are seen as important partners, and implement specific steps for parent involvement. Table 5 provides a summary of strategies for implementing culturally responsive parent involvement in schools, as outlined by King and Goodwin (2002) and Rodriguez et al (2008).

Table 5.

*7 Strategies for Culturally Responsive Parent Involvement*

| King & Goodwin | Rodriguez, Bosque & Villarreal |
|---|---|
| Inventory parents' concerns, perspectives, and ideas. | Engaging parents in school decisions that impact the quality of education provided. |
| As a community generate multiple ways to involve parents in, and inform them about schools. | Create a partnership with parents to increase student achievement. |
| Commit to at least two of these activities (to start), either individually or with a group of colleagues | Articulating high expectations for success in the engagement process |
| Plan a series of parent teacher seminars or parent-teacher team-building activities based on survey/interview findings | Implementing specific steps for parent engagement and evaluating the impact on student success. |
| Assign a family liaison | Involving school staff and parents in a community of practice. |
| Create family space/room | Developing and posting a school effective parent engagement. |
| Clearly express commitment to meaningful and cultural responsive parental involvement by writing a mission statement and setting goals | Measuring regularly and ensuring that the quality of engagement is high and focused on the anticipated outcome of success for every student |
| Develop a school cultural resources binder | |

*Note*. Compiled from NativityMiguel Network of Schools (2010) National Data Report for the 2009-2010 School Year. King & Goodman (2002); Rodriguez, Bosque & Villarreal (2008).

Teachers' and principals' perceptions about CRP and how they implemented the strategies in the classrooms had a great effect on student achievement. Parent involvement was also supported as vitally important to create a culturally relevant school

system. Therefore, when schools build strong partnerships with parents they become a constant voice in the decision making about the child's education.

**Summary**

This review of the literature on educators' beliefs and practices, cultural responsive pedagogy, and parental involvement also addressed a key issue in education: the lack of student achievement among RCELD students. There was limited research on culturally responsive education and effective school programs that modeled CRP in professional development for teachers, classroom instructional strategies, and parental involvement. While many schools nationwide focused on the achievement gap and strategies for school improvement, both educators and researchers concurred that CRP was an essential component to increasing student achievement. A review of literature of CRP determined there was a shortage of qualitative empirical research where a case study was used to evaluate educators' perceptions and practice in middle school settings.

In Chapter Three, the methodology of this study is addressed, including the problem and purpose of the study, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

# Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions and instructional procedures of the stakeholders, teachers and principal, at St. Andrew Academy School (pseudonym) with respect to culturally responsive pedagogy. The study also evaluated parents' perceptions of a caring school environment and their involvement in regards to culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy, when implemented with fidelity, proved to be valuable to all students, increasing their engagement in learning and improving academic achievement (Banks, 2006; Gay, 2000; Harriott & Martin, 2004; Jones, 2007; Saifer & Barton, 2007). Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study including: (a) research questions, (b) research design, (c) instrumentation, (d) research site, (e) participants, (f) data collection, (g) ethical considerations, (h) research bias, and (i) summary.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1) How, and to what extent, is Saint Andrew Academy implementing culturally responsive pedagogy, based on the perceptions of parents, teachers, and the school principal?
2) How, and to what extent, is Saint Andrew Academy implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in professional development training, staff meetings, parent/teacher conferences, and school social events?

## Research Design

Qualitative research encompasses a number of methods that are, in several aspects, somewhat distinctive from one another. Qualitative approaches have two things

in common. First, they center on occurrences that take place in natural settings or the real world. Second, they entail investigating those occurrences in their complexity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). A qualitative case study approach ensures that the issue is not observed through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It was important to identify the most appropriate research design that allowed the researcher in this study to answer the research questions. Individual interviews, surveys, and non-participant observations were employed to meet the proposed criteria of the study. The use of multiple data collection methods enabled the researcher to triangulate the interpretations of the study designed. Creswell (2007) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) concurred that the application of multiple approaches was a strategic attempt to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. This strategy increased the probability of accuracy and depth of the study and validated the data obtained.

**Instrumentation**

**Observations**. Through selected, observations the researcher was a non-participant observer. Prior to data collection, the researcher met with the principal of St. Andrew Academy to begin a retrospective plan to observe school events, professional development training, staff meetings, and parent-teacher conferences. An informal meeting was scheduled with the principal, and he provided a calendar of events for St Andrew Academy for the 2013-2014 school year. A number of staff meetings and a parent meeting occurred in the month of July, prior to the study. The principal briefly discussed the format of staff meetings and explained that one meeting held in November 2013 was funded by the district Archdiocese and only Catholic school educators were

eligible attend. The researcher explained that the data would be collected through the method of non-participant observation using a researcher designed protocol, the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy School Observation Tool (see Appendix E), and audio recording, whenever possible.

The researcher collected data regarding the existence of culturally responsive pedagogy in school staff meetings, professional development for teachers, parent teacher conferences, and school social events. Each of the school events and meetings were audio taped, but due to the high noise factor most of the recordings were of poor quality. The researcher relied on field notes taken during the observations for accurate data analysis. The researcher observed five staff meetings from September 2013 to December 2013. Each meeting lasted approximately two hours. The principal held staff meetings and professional development training for K-8 teachers together instead of separate meetings for the NativityMiguel Program. Approximately 20 staff members, including 12 teachers, the graduate support specialist, office manager, and teacher assistants, were also in attendance.

Approximately 200 participants attended the Fall Festival held in September 2013. Students from the K-8, their families, and staff members were observed interacting. Although the researcher observed participants in conversation, she was unable to interpret what was said, because most of the participants spoke in Spanish. The researcher observed the event for approximately five hours. In October 2013, the parent-teacher conference took place after the students were dismissed for a half day. The researcher observed teachers and 11 parent participants for four hours. Observation data was collected and analyzed using a researcher developed instrument, the Culturally

Responsive Pedagogy School Observation Tool (see Appendix E). The observation tool was designed as a result of various studies (Gay, 2002a; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1994, 2006a, 2006b), based on the strategies used in practicing culturally responsive pedagogy and Gay's (2000, 2010a) five principles for culturally responsive schools.

The Culturally Responsive Pedagogy School Observation Tool was then evaluated by two committee members during the developmental process of the instrument. Recommendations were made by both committee members to refine and change some of the components of the instrument to reflect the objectives of culturally responsive pedagogical standards, principles, and strategies. The observation protocol was modeled from the review of literature based on five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002a). The measurement that defined the objects to be studied was based on a four-point rating: 1= Not Observed, 2=Observed Once, 3= Observed Multiple Times, 4= Observed Constantly. The ratings were based on the researcher's observation of school meetings, professional development for teachers and social events.

**Interviews.** The researcher followed up the informal meeting with the principal by sending an email to all four middle school teachers and the permanent substitute teacher, inviting them to schedule an appointment for an interview. The researcher gave teachers the option to schedule an appropriate time that would be convenient for them to interview. Teachers agreed that the best time to meet with them would be during the students' lunchtime, or before or after school. One teacher responded promptly and scheduled an interview for after school during the month of October 2013. The interview

was cancelled and later rescheduled for the month of November 2013. Two teachers were interviewed during the month of November 2013. The first teacher interview was held after school in the teacher's classroom after students were dismissed for the day. The other interview took place outside the classroom in the hallway during class. The last two teacher interviews were held in December, 2013. The fourth teacher interview took place in the classroom, while students participated in quiet reading time. The last interview was scheduled off campus. The interview was held in a classroom during the afternoon while students were out of the class eating lunch.

The principal interview took place in January 2014. The interviews lasted between 20-30 minutes, and when possible, were audio taped for posterity and transcribed immediately after the end of the interviews. The researcher also took field notes during all interviews.

The Culturally Responsive Principal Interview Questionnaire and Culturally Responsive Teacher Questionnaire (see Appendix A; Appendix B) were researcher-designed questionnaires, based on then-current review of literature. The researcher refined the questionnaires upon recommendations from a dissertation committee member. The interview instruments were reviewed and approved by the dissertation chair. The open-ended interview questionnaires also allowed participants to answer general information such as: education, certification, grade level taught, total years of teaching experience (including years at the then-current location and grade). The researcher refined and developed the interview questions to reduce interviewer bias (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). The individual interview instruments focused on teacher and principal perceptions and practices relative to culturally responsive pedagogy. The written

responses focused on the teachers' and principals' education, professional development, experiences with RCELD students, and classroom implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies. To collect the necessary data, the principal and teacher questionnaires were very similar. This provided the researcher with; (1) congruence and incongruence between the school principal and teachers' views regarding the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy and (2) with questions related to student achievement (Menlo & Collet, 2015).

**Surveys**. The survey items used to collect data for this study were based on two existing instruments. Permission to modify the Positive Climate Toolkit was granted by the Minneapolis Public Schools, and permission was also granted by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to modify the Checklist for Addressing disproportion in special Education (CADSE). The researcher utilized questions from the two instruments to develop the Positive School Climate Parent Survey (Appendix, D; Appendix E). The researcher met with the office manager of the school, who agreed to assist by including a parent survey in every middle school student's weekly folder that the school sent home to parents every Thursday. A letter of explanation, parent survey, informed consent, and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity was sent home by each middle school student at the beginning of October 2013. The survey was made available in both English and Spanish (see Appendix D; Appendix E) which gave parents an option of completing either version. The Positive School Climate Parent Survey was a 27-question instrument, aimed to gather information about culturally responsive pedagogy. The response choice of the survey items were reported on a Likert-type scale that ranked the answers as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. A three-week window of

opportunity was provided for parents to voluntarily participate by returning the survey by mail, in a self-addressed envelope, to a designated P.O. Box. The survey was sent home with students a second time due, to lack of response the first distribution of the surveys. The researcher spoke with the middle school teachers, who all stated that they reminded students to tell their parents to return the survey. The researcher spoke with the office manager to ensure that the surveys were sent home by every middle school student. The office manager assured the researcher that she made sure a survey was sent home with every middle school student two times.

**The Research Site**

The site for this study was in a middle school, called St. Andrew Academy for the purpose of anonymity. Prior to selecting St. Andrew Academy as the research site, the researcher contacted four other NativityMiguel Schools in the Midwestern Metropolitan area. One school principal of a single-gender school for girls was contacted by telephone and the researcher gave an overview of the study. The principal stated she could not see any potential benefits of her school participating in a study based on culturally responsive pedagogy, and therefore was not interested. A second principal of a single-gender school for boys was interviewed at the school site, and she agreed to participate in the study. Shortly after the researcher met with the principal, she was no longer employed at the school and the researcher was not able to establish communication with the new principal of the school. A third school was contacted by telephone, and the principal reported that all classes at the school had been cancelled due to pending closure. A fourth principal was interviewed and expressed an interest as a potential participant, but failed to return the researcher's email and phone messages after the initial meeting.

St. Andrew Academy was a K-8 private, elementary Catholic school located in a large (approximately 250,000 residents), urban area of a Midwestern state. The school was founded in 1908 by the Catholic Church, with the purpose of educating boys attending the local parish. In the fall of 2004, St. Andrew began operation of the NativityMiguel Academy. The following year, in 2005, the Archbishop designated St. Andrew Academy as a personal parish to serve its Hispanic community.

The students at St. Andrew participated in daily prayer and teachings of Jesus, according to the Catholic tradition. Students were invited to join the Catholic faith and participate in the baptism, literary, sacrament, prayer, and teachings of the church. Approximately 85% of the students were Catholic and attended the church associated with the school. Students and their families had a choice of attending a mass for Spanish-speaking or English-speaking populations. When new students were admitted to St. Andrew Academy, the parents and students were given a statement to read and sign that supported their belief in God, belief in Jesus Christ, agreement to engage in prayer and acknowledgement of the Catholic Church.

Access Academies (2014) reported that the average household income for families of students at St. Andrew Academy was $23,000 and 35% of households were headed by a single parent. Approximately 94% of the students qualified for the federal Free/Reduced Lunch Program in 2014 (see Table 6). The school served K-8, and about 85% of the student population represented the Hispanic race (see Table 7). The majority of the students in 2013-2014 academic school-year were bilingual and spoke English as a second language. Consequently, the Catholic Church affiliated with St. Andrew School also served a predominantly Hispanic population.

Table 6

*St. Andrew Academy Report of Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch*

| 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No Data | No Data | 67% | 70% | 74% | 80% | 76% | 87% | 79% | 89% |

*Note*: Comprised from Access Academies (2013). Graduate Support Program Outcomes.

Table 7

*St. Andrew Academy Eighth Grade Student Demographic Report*

| Class | Catholic | Other Christian | African American | Hispanic | White |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2005 | 87% | 0% | 0% | 60% | 40% |
| 2006 | 86% | 10% | 10% | 38% | 52% |
| 2007 | 90% | 0% | 5% | 38% | 67% |
| 2008 | 73% | 18% | 0% | 45% | 55% |
| 2009 | 89% | 5% | 16% | 63% | 16% |
| 2010 | 80% | 0% | 10% | 70% | 10% |
| 2011 | 84% | 11% | 16% | 68% | 11% |
| 2012 | 80% | 5% | 15% | 80% | 5% |
| 2013 | 95% | 5% | 0% | 79% | 21% |
| 2014 | 88% | 6% | 12% | 82% | 12% |

*Note*: Comprised from Access Academies (2013). Graduate Support Program Outcomes.

The average student-teacher ratio at St. Andrew was 12 to 1, but the middle school ratio was about 18 to 1. The school initially reported an enrollment of 55 middle school students, however the total reported during the study was 54 students. The school followed the NativityMiguel Program for the middle school sixth through eighth grade, while K-5 was a traditional Catholic school program. St. Andrews School had a population of nearly 200 students in grades K-8, and a staff of about 22 teachers (Access Academies, 2014).

All the students attended classes in a single three-story brick building. Students in the sixth through eighth grades were enrolled in the NativityMiguel Program, which teachers and staff refer to as the 'Academy.' Because the school was a NativityMiguel school, it included a college preparatory curriculum, extended school day Monday through Thursday from 3:00 until 4:30 p.m., graduation support services to assist students in focusing on success in high school and college, and a mandatory three-and a-half week summer session (Access Academies, 2014). At the time of the study, a permanent substitute teacher was assigned to the seventh grade classroom, while the permanently-assigned teacher was on medical leave. The school principal was the designated administrator for the NativityMiguel Program and the K-5 grades. Additional staff members assigned to the NativityMiguel Program included an academy director and graduate support specialist, a part-time music teacher, and a physical education teacher. The music and physical education teacher also worked with students in grades K-5. The school also employed an office manager who managed the front office, greeted visitors, and made sure people were monitored by signing in and out as they entered and left the building. Some parents of the students spoke limited or no English. The principal, office manager, one middle school teacher, and a few other teachers in the lower grades also spoke enough fluent Spanish to communicate with parents who did not speak English.

St Andrew Academy was selected as the site of this study because the school was recognized for its focus on decreasing high school dropout and closing the achievement gap between RCELD students. The researcher first contacted the principal from the study school in January 2012 and gave a brief demonstration of the research proposal of this study. Table 8 shows the average graduation rate from 2005-2010 was 98% for St

Andrew Academy students who participated in the NativityMiguel program all four years of high school (Access Academies, 2013)..

Table 8

*St. Andrew Academy Eighth Grade Graduation Support Program Outcomes*

| | 8th Grade Class | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Total | % |
| Number of students graduated | 15 | 21 | 21 | 11 | 19 | 10 | 172 | 100 |
| Graduation Rate % | 93 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 95 | 100 | | 98 |
| Number of students who graduated with high school diploma | 14 | 21 | 21 | 10 | 18 | 7 | 91 | 98 |

*Note*. Compiled from Access Academies (2013). Graduate Support Program Outcomes.

**Participants**

Five middle school teachers, principal, and 17 parents from St. Andrew Academy participated in the study. Four teachers were female, and one male. Four teachers were White, and one was African American. The principal was a White male. Their experience in the teaching field ranged from six to 30 years.

**Data Collection**

Prior to collecting data the researcher submitted a request for review of proposal to the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The proposal for the study was reviewed and approved by the IRB at Lindenwood University. The notice of approval from the IRB of the University was issued on August 5, 2013. A letter was sent to the principal of the school requesting permission to conduct the study in St. Andrew Academy. The researcher attended a mandatory workshop held by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Louis on April 19, 2012, entitled Protecting God's Children, which

was a requirement for all volunteers or prospective employees who planned to work with children in a school or agency. The researcher was formally introduced by the principal of St. Andrew Academy during a weekly staff meeting September 18, 2013. The researcher briefly presented an overview of the study and invited all middle school teachers and the principal to participate. Data was collected between September and December 2013 (see Table 9.).

**Timeline of Data Collection**

The data collection lasted approximately four months. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), "The challenge throughout data collection and analysis is to make sense of large amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework in this regard" (p. 123). In order to simplify the process of the data analysis, the researcher incorporated a categorizing and coding procedure. This gave the researcher an opportunity to classify the most significant "features and elements that make up the experience and perception of the people involved in the study" (Stringer, 2007, p. 98). After categorizing and coding the data, the researcher identified patterns and themes that transpired from the data collection (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

**Ethical Considerations**

Secondary data surveys were documented anonymously, only identifying the social position of the participant (parents) in order to organize the information. Interviews were audio recorded without the name of the individual participant mentioned, and recordings were destroyed after completion of the study.

Table 9

*Timeline of Data Collection*

| Data Collected | Date Collected | Provided By |
|---|---|---|
| Staff Meeting | 09-18-13 | Principal/Consultant |
| Fall Festival | 09-21-13 | Researcher |
| Staff Professional Development | 09-27-13 | Archdiocese |
| Parent/Teacher Conference | 10-04-13 | Teachers |
| Parent Survey | 10-11-13 | Researcher |
| Parent Survey | 10-15-13 | Researcher |
| Staff Meeting | 10-16-13 | Principal |
| Parent Survey | 10-17-13 | Researcher |
| Parent Survey | 10-18-13 | Researcher |
| Teacher Interview | 11-16-13 | Researcher |
| Parent Survey | 11-22-13 | Researcher |
| Teacher Interview | 11-22-13 | Researcher |
| Staff Meeting | 11-20-13 | Principal/Consultant |
| Parent Survey | 11-25-13 | Researcher |
| Parent survey | 11-26-13 | Researcher |
| Teacher Interview | 12-04-13 | Researcher |
| Parent Survey | 12-11-13 | Researcher |
| Parent Survey | 12-12-13 | Researcher |
| Teacher Interview | 12-12-13 | Researcher |
| Teacher Interview | 12-17-13 | Researcher |
| Staff Meeting | 12-18-13 | Principal |
| Parent Survey | 12-19-13 | Researcher |
| Parent Survey | 12-23-13 | Researcher |
| Principal Interview | 02-07-14 | Researcher |

*Note*. ** The school principal and an external consultant co-facilitated the meeting. After the data collection was completed, the researcher coded and analyzed the data collected.

Selected observations were audio-recorded, and recordings were destroyed after completion of the study. Names of individuals were not identified in the final transcribed documents. The researcher changed the name of the school in the final report to ensure confidentiality. Every participant in the study was provided with an Informed Consent Form, explaining the degree to which collected responses data were kept confidential. Names and other identifying information were not used in the study, only to first identify social position of the participant, (parent, teacher, principal). All participants in the study signed an Informed Consent Form, prior to participating.

**Summary**

This chapter described the methodology used to examine the data collected. An overview of the target population, the research design, and procedures for conducting the research were discussed. Data collection, analysis methods, and procedures were also provided. Chapter Four details the findings from the surveys, interviews, and observations.

# Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore stakeholders' (teachers, parents, and school principal) perceptions of instructional practice as it relates to culturally responsive pedagogy in St Andrew Academy, a NativityMiguel Middle School located in Midwestern Metropolitan area.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1) How, and to what extent, is Saint Andrew Academy implementing culturally responsive pedagogy, based on the perceptions of parents, teachers, and the school principal?
2) How, and to what extent, is Saint Andrew Academy implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in professional development training, staff meetings, parent/teacher conferences, and school social events?

The researcher conducted a qualitative case study to determine how teachers and a school principal describe their beliefs and practice of culturally responsive pedagogy in their school. This study also evaluated parent's perceptions of caring and parental involvement in their child's school. This research design provides multiple perspectives that would define the school environment of St. Andrew Academy as it relates to a culturally responsive teaching and learning environment. The study draws on an inductive process in which themes and categories emerge through analysis of data collected by interviews, observations, and surveys.

**Findings from Interviews**

The teacher interview questionnaire elicited teachers' perceptions on knowledge and practice of major element of culturally responsive pedagogy. The questionnaire consisted of nine items including five demographic questions. Participants were asked to indicate the highest level of education they completed and whether they were (certified and the area of study, or non-certified), the grade level taught, years of experience teaching their current grade level, the number of years they have taught in the current grade level, the number of years teaching experience at the present school and the number of years in the education field.

**Question 10**. What is the highest level of education completed?

Table 10

*Participants' Level of Education*

| Teacher | Education | Certification |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher A | MA Civil Engineering | Certification/Math 5-8 |
| Teacher B | BA Elementary Education | Certification/K-8 |
| Teacher C | BA Social Studies | Certification/Middle School |
| Teacher D | BA Elementary Education | Certification/Math/Language Arts |
| Teacher E | Less than BA | Pursuing BS Music Education |

*Note.* Comprised from the Positive School Climate Parent Survey results.

Based on the responses of this question, four teachers (80%) have a teacher certification. One teacher stated she needs one semester to complete a degree and teacher certification. One teacher 20% reported receiving a Master of Arts degree. Although teaching certification is not required in a private school, it is desirable.

**Question 11**. What grade level do you teach?

Table 11

*Grade Levels Taught by Participating Teachers*

| Teacher | Subject Taught | Grade Level |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher A | Math, Writing | 7th, 8th Grade |
| Teacher B | Science, Reading | 7th, 8th Grade |
| Teacher C | Religion, Social Studies | 7th, 8th Grade |
| Teacher D | Language Arts, Reading, Science | 7th, 8th Grade |
| Teacher E | Music | 7th, 8th Grade |

*Note*. Comprised from the Positive School Climate Parent Survey results.

**Question 12.** How many years have you taught in your current grade level?

Table 12

*Participants' Teaching Experience*

| Teacher | Years of Teaching Experience |
|---|---|
| Teacher A | 4 |
| Teacher B | 30 |
| Teacher C | 6 |
| Teacher D | 6 |
| Teacher E | 15 |

*Note*. Comprised from the Positive School Climate Parent Survey results.

Based on the responses from this question, two teachers 40% have experience teaching in their current grade level. Two teachers (40%) reported having over five years of experience teaching at their current grade level.

**Question 13.** How many years have you taught in your current school?

Table 13

*Participating Teacher's Years Teaching at Current School*

| Teacher | Years Teaching at Current School |
|---|---|
| Teacher A | 5 |
| Teacher B | 9 |
| Teacher C | 6 |
| Teacher D | 6 |
| Teacher E | 1 |

*Note*. Comprised from the Positive School Climate Parent Survey results.

Based on the responses from this question 100% of the teachers have less than 10 years teaching at St. Andrew Academy. Three teachers 60% reported having more than five years teaching in their current school.

**Question 14.** How many years have you been in the education profession?

Table 14

*Participants' Years of Experience in the Education Profession*

| Teacher | Participants' Years of Experience in Education |
|---|---|
| Teacher A | 5 |
| Teacher B | 30 |
| Teacher C | 16 |
| Teacher D | 9 |
| Teacher E | 15 |

*Note*. Comprised from the Positive School Climate Parent Survey results.

Based on the responses from this question, four teachers 80% have more than five years of experience in the field of education. Teacher A has a bachelor's degree in Math and a master's degree in civil engineering. She teaches sixth-eighth grade math and science at St. Andrew Academy. She has taught at St. Andrew Academy for

approximately four years. She has nearly five years in the teaching profession. Prior to teaching, she worked as an engineer in a corporate environment.

Teacher B has a bachelor's degree in education with a K-8 lifetime certification. She is a permanent substitute teacher at St. Andrew Academy. She teaches sixth-eighth grade science and reading. Teacher B is a veteran teacher with over 30 years of teaching at the middle school level. She works for the Archdiocese and works long term teaching assignments at two other NativityMiguel schools locally. Teacher B has worked in the teaching field for about 30 years.

Teacher C has a bachelor degree in social studies with a certification to teach fifth-eighth grade. He teaches sixth grade religion and social studies and is the only male teacher in the middle school Teacher C has about six years of experience teaching middle school students. He has been employed at St. Andrew for six years. Teacher C has about 16 years of teaching experience.

Teacher D has a bachelor' degree in elementary education. She teaches sixth-eighth grade reading and science. She has approximately six years of experience teaching middle school students. She has been employed at St. Andrew Academy for about six years. Teacher D has nine years of experience in the educational profession.

Teacher E is one half a semester from earning a bachelor's degree in music. She is however certified to teach music. She is a part-time teacher for K-8 and also works part-time for another NativityMiguel School. She has taught K-8 for about 15 years. Teacher E has been employed for St. Andrew Academy for about a year. She has been in the education profession as a music teacher for 15 years.

**Question 1**. How often does your school acknowledge and celebrate diversity?

Overall, teachers interviewed shared a common voice that the school celebrated diversity by acknowledging the Hispanic culture in the classroom and through school sponsored social events. Teacher A felt that the school acknowledged the diversity of Hispanic students by planning an event every year called Day of the Dead

She stated:

> This is a Mexican celebration every year at the end of October to remember and pray for family and friends who have died. We build a large altar with the help of the art teacher. I think we celebrate diversity in our own classrooms in different ways informally looking at stories in reading and our textbooks providing diversity in the regions that the characters are found.

Teacher B believed the school acknowledges diversity by supporting ESL students with translators, accepting everybody into the school, and allowing parents to help out in the school.

Teacher C, the only male teacher, stated:

> I am not sure what a working definition of diversity is but here it seems like we do something which I would qualify as a celebration of diversity once or twice a month. We made an altar of the dead. At my old school I would think of that as diversity, but here it's just part of their broader culture. We are 80-90% Hispanic. I don't look at 80-90% of one group as being diverse. Mostly something church related.

Teacher D also concurred that the school celebrated Hispanic holidays, with Mexican dance, fish fries with the church. She believed that projects are done every month to celebrate different cultures throughout the school and in classrooms.

Teacher E shared:

> I think with the after school program they really do that. They have Mexican Dance and a couple of other programs they run. Last year there was nothing, no program, nor any acknowledgement. The computer teacher had the students look up some Latin history facts, but they did not do Hispanic History month at all.

While the school had made strides from the previous year, the celebration of diversity seemed to be concentrated on monthly after school program events. While teachers may individually use materials in their classroom, the school-wide events were isolated from the regular curriculum.

**Question 2.** What measures does your school have in place to implement a positive behavior support system for all students?

The majority of teachers concurred that the school implemented some measure of a positive behavior support system.

Teacher A stated:

> I think more with the middle school, 6th, 7th and 8th grade. We have a program that we just started to implement this year called Refocus. One part of it is trying to teach students to pay attention. And it puts it on them to think through what they did wrong and how to correct it. The other half is procedures we developed. We use a red card, yellow card system for the whole school. That is more of a consequence like communicating with parents. The red card is detention that's more of a punitive behavior. We also have Eagle Awards for the middle school. If there's something positive that a student does we can highlight that, present an

award and enter their name in a drawing. That was strong last year but died out this year.

Teacher B revealed that the school hired an outside educator to teach on a Positive Sharing Community. She also acknowledged that the school also schedule retreats with three other NativityMiguel schools. Teacher C explained that he used the game of soccer to communicate positive behavior with the students. He issued the yellow card for lesser offenses like not turning in homework and the red card for an incident like fighting or using foul language. He stated that he believed the sixth grade homeroom teacher was a good role model for leadership at the school. Teacher C also believed that the school's Director of School Climate developed a different strategy to implement positive behavior similar to a system called Top 20. He stated that this approach focused on the problem and not the student's behavior. He also felt that a consultant the school hired to train the teachers helped them focus on getting students motivated intrinsically. Teacher D responded to the question by stating that the once a month awards for good conduct, acknowledgement of honor roll students, parties, and end of year certificates for math and science achievement was part of the school's positive behavior support system. Teacher E believed that the school counselor worked with teachers when they have problems of discipline with students.

**Question 3.** What are the greatest challenges in implementing culturally responsive instruction in your school? How do you plan to overcome those challenges?

Teacher A responded:

Most of the students are behind academically. I think communication with the parents is difficult. It is difficult for parents to help students with their homework

> if the parents have limited education or limited knowledge of English. Building a relationship with the parents is difficult. I speak Spanish not perfectly, but enough to get a message across. It is not the same when I try to get parents to help with math. If the cultural background is similar I can easily send a text or email, but if a parent does not speak English I am trying to fumble through the Spanish. It is more difficult to bring them into a leadership role with limited education or cultural background. I would love to do more parent socials and just things for fun to get the community involved. We did a 5K race with the students in the fall. I would love to have a parent 5K. The more fun we are having with families the easier it is to have those conversations about academic behavior.

Teacher B also concurred: 'Talking to parents and not speaking Spanish is a challenge.' He recommended smiling, learning how to say hello, and goodbye in Spanish was an effective way to communicate with parents who did not understand English. 'Get help from an interpreter when meeting with parents who do not speak English,' Teacher C answered by referring to feeling the pressures of teaching and the need to get through the objectives of teaching. He felt that better planning would help to overcome those challenges. Teacher D stated, 'Getting information to parents and a lack of knowledge about different cultures was a challenge.' She felt by talking more in the beginning is helpful and searching out professional development classes. Teacher E is a music teacher and the only African American teacher. She felt that music is a challenge because she knows very little about the culture of her students. She stated, 'So I try to be very careful about being African American and stereotypical by asking my students before I do anything is this something they do at home?'

**Question 4.** Describe ongoing professional development, classroom instructions, or training that you received to help develop a culturally diverse knowledge base.

Most of the teachers believed that their school provided very limited professional development or classroom instructions on cultural diversity. The majority felt that they received some form of training or education to help them develop a culturally diverse knowledge base. Teacher A stated that most of her training was not formal. She elaborated:

> I had classes through my master's degree in education on ESL. I spent 5 months in Chihuahua, Mexico working in an orphanage. That's where I learned most of my Spanish informally as well as in college. I don't think I have attended any professional development that addressed cultural diversity directly. The diocese puts on workshops at the very beginning of the school year that focus on religious aspects for Catholic educators. I went to one that was focused on cultural diversity specific to the Hispanic which I did not find helpful. We attended a teaching series every year to hear the man really focuses on brain development in boys vs. girls.

Teacher C felt that the previous school where he worked offered more training and professional development in cultural diversity. He believed that the school struggled in the past with African American students.

> I think there is just a lot more awareness that we need. It seems okay that White culture is standard. It was like we didn't really see it at first. We would meet and talk about what kids did in class. We started looking at information provided to us and realized there is something different. If I go to an all-African American

> school there is a different energy. I think some of the children were coming and bringing a lot of energy in the classroom.

**Question 5.** How do you demonstrate caring as a culturally responsive educator?

Teacher A felt that felt it is important to find out how her students live at home. An example she gave was having knowledge that one of her student's parent was deported. She believed it is important that she understands most of her parents did not have access to cell phones and the Internet. She stated that she extends deadlines for certain students and promotes using the library for students who do not have the resources at home.

Teacher B shared that she sponsored foster children for over six years. She stated that she had over 100 children in her home on weekends and nights for almost two years. She stated that she gives students what they need. She shared that she gives them hugs to stay on track, or even if they need something simple as a band aid.

Teacher C stated that he used harsh chastisement but also tells students that he loves them. He elaborated:

> It helps to know their younger siblings who also attend the school. I remember to ask them about their families. I try to keep up with their interests and extracurricular hobbies to show that I care.

Teacher D shared that she asks her students a lot of questions pertaining to the Spanish culture and how they celebrate holidays. Teacher E was the part-time music teacher at one other NativityMiguel school, and she felt that she was very aware of the differences in her students' culture and how to teach them. She believed she comes off

very strong and as old school but admits to students when she has made a mistake and apologizes.

**Question 6.** How do you use culturally responsive materials, content, and teaching strategies in the classroom?

All the teachers except for one believed that they use culturally responsive materials, content, and teaching strategies in the classroom. Teacher A stated that she uses connections to everything. She elaborated whenever she teaches math she makes a connection to something that they have had in enrichment classes. Teacher B felt that she uses stories and literature on the Hispanic culture. She uses more pictures. She likes to bring culture into reading assignments and she allows students to share stories about their families (ex. My mom cleans bathrooms). Teacher C admitted that he does not practice culturally responsive teaching at his present job. He felt that at his previous school he may have practiced culturally responsive teaching.

Teacher D elaborated that the school uses science books with definitions in Spanish for Hispanic students. Teacher E shared that she is still learning as a teacher but she has met with the Pastor of the church to help incorporate culturally diverse music in the school. She stated that her main focus was getting her students to sing.

**Question 7.** What are the greatest challenges in collaborating with parents of (RCELD) racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic diversity? How do you overcome those challenges?

All the teachers agreed that the greatest challenge collaborating with parents was language and most of them felt that a translator was the solution to helping teachers communicate better with parents. Teacher A elaborated:

> The other challenge is racially because there are different styles of behavior management. I notice we as a school still struggle to serve the African American population and the students have left or been asked to leave based on behavior or academics. I don't know if there's something there that we are not able to serve that population as well as the Hispanic population as a whole school.

Teacher B stated that the principal speaks Spanish.

Teacher C stated he does not understand enough Spanish to communicate with families. He also stated:

> It's just really awkward to make that home call and I don't know enough Spanish. Sometimes when the kids translated they are not saying everything that the person talking is saying. In fact, an 8th grader told him when a teacher had him call home to relate a message to his parents in Spanish he dialed his number and spoke in Spanish nodding his head as if he was speaking to his parent. Not being able to talk directly to parents some things get lost in the translation.

Teacher D felt that understanding the culture of her students was difficult. She admitted that the Mass for Hispanic students was different. She also shared that some Hispanic students reported stay up late on Sunday night with the families participating in Mexican parties. In addition, school attendance was not always a high priority, as students would miss on test days.

**Question 8**. How does your school seek involvement and decision making input from parents?

Most of the teachers agreed that the school does minimum to involve parents in decision making. Teacher A said:

> We have had parent meetings, but it's finding out information and not asking for input. I know the principal probably does a lot of informal input with parents in communicating with them. We need parents to understand what we are trying to do even if they do not have a high school education they can still be involved and understand what we are trying to do. We use to have a board and I don't think there are any parents on that, it dissolved when we became Archdioceses. But I think we could definitely use more parent input informally where they will have the opportunity to voice.

Teacher B stated that the school sends home notes on their weekly letters. Teacher C shared that the Academy coordinated with the office to schedule monthly meetings. She also stated that parent involvement at the school was limited to the eighth grade class fundraising for the school's mystery trip. Teacher D stated, 'We have semester meetings with the parents.' Teacher E mentioned, 'When it is input from a discipline issue there are meetings that go on with parents and students'.

**Question 9**. How does the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy affect student achievement in your school?

Teacher A responded:

> Right now I feel like we are increasing in that pedagogy in being able to focus more on in our test scores and where our kids are falling behind. In the past our problems have been like…are we going to stay open? Does the student have food to eat? Is there a place for the child to go? But now I feel like we are moving in a positive direction to be able to address that. We started a class this year called Study Skills. We have a learning consultant, which her position is new this year

> similar to our resource teacher last year. This is an enhanced program so the learning consultant can work with our students on what are the words that you see on a data based tester how do you study and do homework.

Teacher B said: 'The learning consultant can work with our students on words, how to study, and do homework'. Teacher C said he was not sure how the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy affects student achievement in his school. He stated that he felt a little over his head. He elaborated:

> I can be very playful and get their attention. I can make jokes. I know enough about popular culture you know that I can bring. I purposely mispronounce names and make myself look antiquated to get their attention. But I do not know if that is always effective. There are so many connections kids can make or you can help them consider.

Teacher D shared that students improve when the school implements ESL for students. She stated that fish fries and parent cookouts involve parents and students do well when families are involved. Teacher E stated that she was still trying to figure that out in planning strategies for the type of music to introduce to students.

**Principal Interview**

In two scheduled meetings Principal A shared with the researcher that he believed the findings of study would be beneficial. He also said that St. Andrew was a school with a diverse student population of Hispanic, White, and African Americans. He acknowledged that many of the Hispanic parents do not speak English fluently. He believed there was somewhat a disconnect between some of the parents due to a language barrier, lack of parent education, and lack of staff ability to communicate with Spanish

speaking families. He seemed confident that parents were able to communicate with him, the office manager, and a school translator because they speak Spanish. He said 'We must take on a servant's attitude just like Jesus did.' Principal A stated that he supported a culturally responsive school environment and worked towards getting his teachers on board to help all students achieve academically. He acknowledged that some of the professional development and staff meetings held at St. Andrew targeted key learning activities for training teachers and staff in culturally responsive pedagogy.

Principal A reported the highest level of education obtained was a MA in Education Administration. Principal A reported that he had three years employed in his current position and seven years of experience in the education profession.

**Question 1**. How often does your school acknowledge and celebrate diversity?

The principal concurred with teachers by acknowledging that the school focused on several activities throughout the school year that centered on the Hispanic customs and culture.

> As far as listed events particularly the seasons. Fish Fry dinners are offered for students and their families. Special events like Las Posadas leading up to Christmas is also during the season. Special event on Mother's Day which is always May 10th not the second Sunday of May, we celebrate Guadalupe. Then also in general part of regular school celebrate Cinco de Mayo periodically throughout the year.

**Question 2.** What measures does your school have in place to implement a positive behavior support system for all students?

Principal A acknowledged that the school's system that supports positive student behavior is a collaborate effort of staff, students, and parents. He said that the school implemented awards for academics and student of the month recognition for perfect attendance. He also stated that the school awards a 'class cup' to selected classrooms. He elaborated that classrooms also participated in different activities and award programs for academic achievement.

> Most classes have some of scale that they use where kids can move from average to outstanding or average down to below average. Getting a home call home which is kind of self-monitoring procedure ups and downs throughout the day so there's lot of effort on our part to help kids be aware of kind of day to help kids that are having self-control issues. Offer free dress passes to allow students to dress out and not wear uniforms. It we ever have [a behavioral issue] with an individual student, we might write up a behavior plan and part of that plan would be to include a positive reward of 6 charts. Example work on an individual basis you get 3 stickers get to go to lunch with the principal or different things like that. We will work that on an individual basis.

**Question 3**. What are the greatest challenges in implementing culturally responsive instruction in your school? How do you plan to overcome those challenges?

Principal A shared that the greatest challenge was lack of understanding of the teaching staff. He added the younger teachers' time on the job was an issue. He stated they did not have the years of experience working with students and therefore were not expert in their field. He also felt it was difficult to get teachers to look at every student as an individual. But he argued that the school was effective in celebrating cultural liberty

and culturally responsive pedagogy. Principal A stated that the school offer professional development but he strongly encouraged teachers to seek out training and certificate programs through workshops on their own.

Principal A stated:

> I try to teach that by being consistent with the message of how important it is to learn, the way we learn, seek out on their own ways to improve their practice. As a principal I do what I can to provide by way of direct instructions, coaching them.

**Question 4**. Describe ongoing professional development, classroom instructions, or training that your teachers and staff receive to help develop a culturally diverse knowledge base.

Principal A gave a point of reference to the various methods of training and development mandated by the Catholic diocese and the school. Professional development/staff meetings off campus training archdiocese how boys learn how girls learn, behavior management provide speakers how they learn. The Archdiocese brings in speakers off campus.

**Question 5**. How do you demonstrate caring as a culturally responsive leader?

Principal A stated that he was conscious in how he came across and focused on being 'as pastoral and supportive as I can for families, students, and teachers.'

**Question 6**. What are the greatest challenges in collaborating with parents of (RCELD) racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic diversity? How do you overcome those challenges?

Principal A stated that there was a big cultural gap and getting the family to understand the educational system at St. Andrew Academy. He also shared that parents do not understand the school's grading system, how promotions work, and rules of tardiness and attendance.

> A lot of our parents don't have a high level of education, never had the experience themselves and to compound that if they went to school they went to school in another country in Mexico. We are also trying to help them to be teachers at home to assist their children with studying or homework. It gets complicated because home their work is in English and they do not speak English. Language is a challenge communicating the information. Our office manager, our business manager, myself, another administrative assistant, and several other teachers and we are able to overcome that challenge, the challenge, the biggest one is that our parents as teachers at home. We overcome those by providing the language, providing help with translations and education piece. How to help them be better advocates for their children. Teachers just operate in their own bubble because the parents are not going to ask questions.

**Question 7**. How do you consult and engage parents in school decisions that impact their children's academic achievement?

Principal A shared,

> Parent conferences talking about academic success or challenge we have a parent organization that needs to be reformed into a very standard parochial school. Our parents would prefer to have a Saturday event and social to bring family and friends as opposed to the fill out forms.

**Question 8**. Describe on-going assessments, benchmarks, and evaluations your school uses to ensure students are meeting academic standards.

Principal A stated:

> We give the Iowa Assessment for the 1st through 8th grade and 4th, 6th, and 8th grade the Cognitive Ability Test yearly. We have an accelerated reading and math program. Star reader and Star Assessment that we give them each month then two to three months we gauge the level of each student. We also have a learning consultant who helps the teachers with formative assessments to test kids to see where they are. Regular homework, students have class work, tests, curriculum mapping/management. Subject Area Line up a literature unit and a History Unit that you are reading something from the Civil War period while teaching the Civil War take a field trip to go with that and really try to build those concrete connections for the students so we have been going through that process to try to make teaching more effectively. To improve our curriculum textbooks are replaced in 2 subject areas. The school plans to upgrade the technology which was upgraded in the last 12 months.

**Question 9**. How does the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy affect student achievement in your school?

> Student success is more subjective we don't really have measures to say we are trying to do this thing that is more culturally responsive. I think it's more student attitudes, student work ethics particularly language learners. So we have a full time language tutor and we see that has a way for students to gain confidence in that setting.

Table 15

*Findings from Parent Surveys*

| Item # | % of responses | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 29% | 24% | 29% | 6% | 12% |
| 2 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 50% | 44% | 0% | 6% | 0% |
| 3 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 53% | 41% | 6% | 0% | 0% |
| 4 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 23% | 59% | 6% | 12% | 0% |
| 5 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 35% | 47% | 12% | 0% | 6% |
| 6 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 47% | 35% | 18% | 0% | 0% |
| 7 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 47% | 18% | 29% | 6% | 0% |
| 8 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 41% | 47% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| 9 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 88% | 12% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| 10 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 59% | 29% | 12% | 0% | 0% |
| 11 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 41% | 41% | 12% | 6% | 0% |
| 12 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 41% | 35% | 18% | 6% | 0% |
| 13 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 35% | 53% | 6% | 0% | 6% |
| 14 | SA | A | N | D | SD |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 23% | 59% | 12% | 6% | 0% |
| 15 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 63% | 31% | 6% | 0% | 0% |
| 16 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 41% | 12% | 17% | 18% | 12% |
| 17 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 25% | 50% | 12% | 0% | 13% |
| 18 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 53% | 41% | 6% | 0% | 0% |
| 19 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 41% | 30% | 29% | 0% | 0% |
| 20 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 59% | 17% | 12% | 6% | 6% |
| 21 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 18% | 29% | 29% | 0% | 24% |
| 22 | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| | 53% | 29% | 18% | 0% | 0% |

Note: Comprised from the Positive School Climate Parent Survey. SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N= Neutral, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree.

**Parent Survey Results**

A total of 54 parent surveys with self-addressed envelopes were sent home by St. Andrew middle school students in September. Seventeen parents responded by returning completed surveys between October and November 2013. Table 15 illustrates the findings from the parent surveys.

Survey item 1 stated, 'My child's school hosts social events like potlucks, family nights, and parent groups. Results on this item indicated that three Hispanic respondents and one White respondent strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, two White respondents and two Hispanic respondents agreed with this

statement. Four White respondents and one Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement. One Hispanic disagreed with this statement, one Hispanic respondent strongly disagreed, and two White respondents strongly disagreed.

Survey item 2 stated, 'The principal and teachers at my child's school are warm and friendly.' Results on this item indicated that four Hispanic respondents and three White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, three White respondents and five Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One Hispanic respondent disagreed with this statement and one White respondent disagreed.

Survey item 3 stated, 'Teachers and staff at my child's school show that they care about my child. Results on this item indicated that five Hispanic respondents and three White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, six White respondents and two respondents agreed with this statement. One Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement.

Survey Item 4 stated, 'Teacher's at my child's school are fair in how they discipline students.' Results from this item indicated that two Hispanic respondents and two White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, five white respondents and five Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One White respondent was neutral with this statement. One Hispanic respondent disagreed with this statement and one White respondent disagree.

Survey item 5 stated, 'Teachers at my child's school challenge students to keep them actively engaged in learning.' Results on this item indicated that three Hispanic respondents and two White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, five White respondents and three Hispanic

respondents agreed with this statement. One Hispanic respondent and one White respondent was neutral in this statement. One Hispanic respondent disagreed with this statement and one White respondent disagreed. One White respondent strongly disagreed with this statement.

Survey item 6 stated, 'My child's school offer many opportunities for parent participation.' Results on this item indicated that five Hispanic respondents and two White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, five White respondents and two Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One Hispanic respondent and two White respondents were neutral with this statement.

Survey item 7 stated. 'My child's school displays pictures, books posters, artwork, and decorations that represent my child's race or culture.' Results on this item indicated that four Hispanic respondents and three White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, three White respondents and five Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One Hispanic respondent disagreed with this statement and one White respondent disagreed.

Survey item 8 stated, 'My child's school keeps me informed by sending home letters, newsletters or notices about classroom and school activities.' Results on this item indicated that five Hispanic respondents and six White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, three White respondents and three Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement.

Survey item 9 stated, 'When my child's school sends letters home they consider different languages and reading level of families serviced by the school.' Results on this item indicated that seven Hispanic respondents and eight White respondents strongly

agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, one White respondents and one Hispanic respondent agreed with this statement.

Survey item 10 stated, 'The principal and staff at my child's school have high expectations for my child.' Results on this item indicated that six Hispanic respondents and four White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, three White respondents and two Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. Two White respondents were neutral with this statement. One Hispanic respondent disagreed with this statement and one White respondent disagreed.

Survey item 11 stated, 'School staff responds quickly and appropriately to issues of racism, prejudice, and discrimination reported by my child.' Results on this item indicated that five Hispanic respondents and two White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, five White respondents and two Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One White respondent and one Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement. One White respondent strongly disagreed with this statement.

Survey item 12 stated, 'Teachers use different teaching methods (e.g., role playing, class discussions, videos, culturally diverse instructional strategies) to make sure my child understands in the classroom.' Results on this item indicated that five Hispanic respondents and three White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item four, White respondents and two Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One White respondent and one Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement. One White respondent disagreed with this statement.

Survey item 13 stated, 'My child's school offers additional support for my child like, small group instruction, home support, tutors, and after school programs.' Results on this item indicated that three Hispanic respondents and three White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, five White respondents and four Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement. One White respondent strongly disagreed with this statement.

Survey item 14 stated, 'My child's school assists my family in finding assistance when family crisis arises.' Results on this item indicated that two Hispanic respondents and three White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, six White respondents and four Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One White respondent was neutral with this statement. One White respondent disagreed with this statement.

Survey item 15 stated, 'I receive feedback on the school's on-going assessment of my child's academic performance.' Results on this item indicated that five Hispanic respondents and four White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, four White respondents and two Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One White respondent was neutral with this statement. One White respondent disagreed with this statement.

One Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement.

Survey item 16 stated, 'I am invited to participate in school meeting for curriculum planning at my child's school.' Results on this item indicated that six Hispanic respondents and one White respondents strongly agreed with this statement.

When responding to the item, one White respondent and three Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One White respondent and one Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement. One White respondent disagreed with this statement. One White respondent strongly disagreed with this statement.

Survey item 17 stated, 'My child's school has an intervention to effectively deal with bullying, fighting, and truancy.' Results on this item indicated that two Hispanic respondents and three White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, six White respondents and four Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One White respondent was neutral with this statement. One White respondent disagreed with this statement.

Survey item 18 stated, 'When I have concerns about my child's progress, the principal and teachers respond to my request promptly.' Results on this item indicated that five Hispanic respondents and three White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, five White respondents and two Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One White and one Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement.

Survey item 19 stated, 'Community members are invited to participate in school programs and activities.' Results on this item indicated that six Hispanic respondents and one White respondent strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, three White respondents and one Hispanic respondent agreed with this statement. Five White and one Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement.

Survey item 20 stated, 'My child's school is preparing him/her to succeed in high school, college, and later in life.' Results on this item indicated that six Hispanic and

four White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, three White respondents and one Hispanic respondent agreed with this statement. One White respondent was neutral with this statement. One Hispanic respondent disagreed with this statement. One White respondent strongly disagreed with this statement.

Survey item 21 stated, 'Teachers in my child's school have the willingness to do home visits to build relationships with families and students.' Results on this item indicated that two Hispanic respondents and two White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, three White respondents and two Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One White and three Hispanic respondents were neutral with this statement. Three White and three Hispanic respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

Survey item 22 stated, 'My child's school is a good place for culturally diverse learners.' Results on this item indicated that five Hispanic respondents and four White respondents strongly agreed with this statement. When responding to the item, five White respondents and two Hispanic respondents agreed with this statement. One Hispanic respondent was neutral with this statement.

Survey item 23 stated, 'Overall, how do you rate the performance of your child's school?' Results on this item indicated that approximately 44% (4) White respondents rated the performance of their child's school an A. Based on the survey results, about 38% (3) Hispanic respondents rated their child's school A. Five (62%) Hispanic respondents rated their child's school a B in performance. Three White respondents

(33%) rated their child's school a B. One White respondent rated their child's school a C. Based on the results, one White respondent rated their child's school (F) failing.

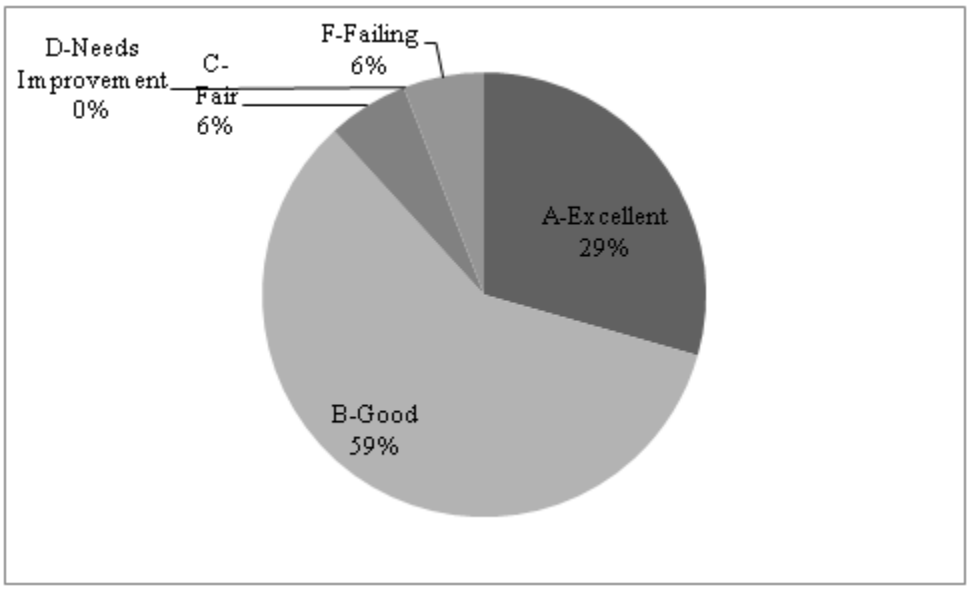


*Figure 1*. St Andrew Academy performance based on parent survey. Adapted from Positive School Climate Parent Survey results.

Survey item 24 stated, 'Please list what changes or improvements would make your child's school a better place to learn?' Parents at St. Andrew Academy were less responsive to recommending changes or improvements that the school should make in order to improve their child's learning environment at school. A total of five parents 29% responded to the question (see Figure 1.). Four parents expressed concerns that were directly related to academics and learning. One parent believed, 'there should be better communication with teachers and parents regarding academics and student progress.' Another parent felt the school needed a larger library. A third parent believed the school should be more consistent in enforcing the rules of wearing uniforms.

A fourth parent stated that students should be assigned more classroom work and fewer enrichment programs. The same parent suggested that the school should focus more on math.

A fifth parent expressed discontent in a letter attached to the survey stating she was not 'impressed' with the NativityMiguel Program. She also believed the school should assign more classroom work and focus less on 'enrichment programs. Another concern was that the school concentrate more on teaching students math. She felt that St. Andrew Academy did not prepare students to succeed in high school. I am not at all impressed with the Nativity Model Program at our school. I think there should be more classroom work and less enrichment programs with more concentration on math. She also expressed that she resented attending meetings where everything had to be translated for parent who did not speak English.

Survey item 25 stated, 'What is your child's gender?

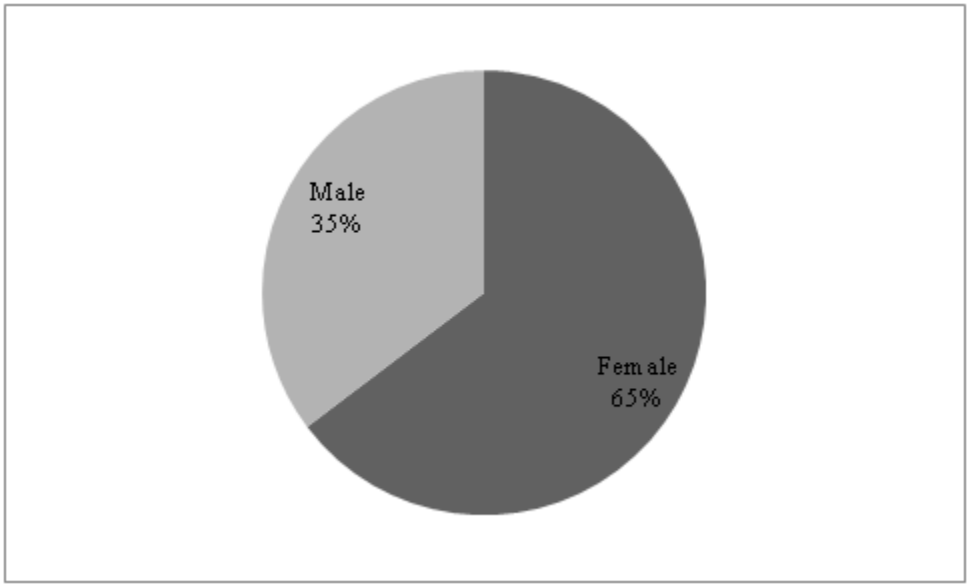


*Figure 2.* Gender of students reported by participating parents. Adapted from the Positive School Climate Parent Survey results.

White respondents reported seven female and two male students. Hispanic respondents reported four male and four female students.

Survey item 26 stated, 'What grade is your child in?'

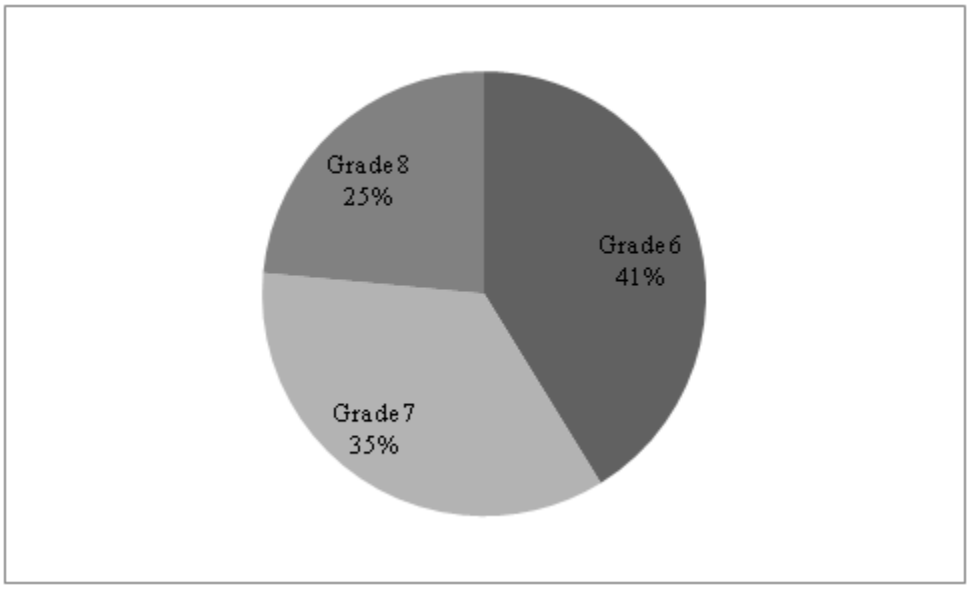


*Figure 3.* Student grade level. Adapted from Positive School Climate Parent Survey results.

Survey item 27 stated, 'What is your child's race/ethnicity?'

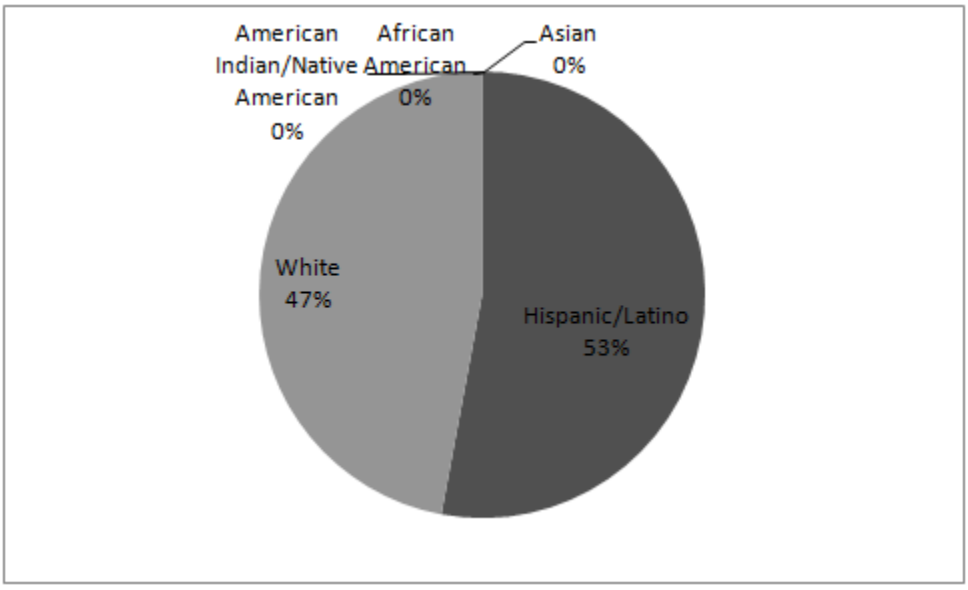


*Figure 4.* Students' race/ethnicity. Adapted from Positive School Climate Parent Survey results.

Results on this item indicated that nine respondents identified as White and eight respondents identified as Hispanic. It is noted that all parents were invited to participate and was provided a survey to complete. There were no African American participants in this study although African American students are enrolled in the school.

**Findings from the Observations**

The staff meetings were all held at the school in the computer room on the second floor located next door to the main office. The meetings at St. Andrew Academy began promptly at 12:30 pm. after the students were dismissed for a half day. The principal and approximately 20 staff attended the meetings including K-8 teachers, the office manager, and graduate support specialist. The seating was arranged in a U shape where every teacher sat at a computer station. Most of the professional development meetings were held in the same room except two meetings held off-site. The researcher observed only one professional development meeting off campus because the November 4, 2013 meeting was limited to teachers and staff employed by the Catholic diocese. The meetings held at the school lasted approximately 2 hours and begin promptly at 12:30 p.m. after the students were dismissed for a half day. Similarly, staff and professional development at the school started with prayer and scripture reading from the Bible led by the principal. The principal gave a short discussion on the Bible scriptures and how they applied to life situations at most of the meetings prior to focusing on the agenda. The professional development held off campus generally followed the same procedure with prayer and scripture reading led by a staff member at the high school before the meeting started.

**Staff Meeting September 18, 2013**

Principal A opened the meeting with a short prayer. The main purpose of the staff meeting was to train the staff on new educational technology that the school. An outline of the agenda for the meeting was passed around, and each teacher received a copy. The principal talked about 'hope, charity, and giving ourselves to God' during his opening statement. He expressed to the teachers that 'love frees us to give ourselves to others. 'He asked the teachers, 'How would the school be different if the school lived by faith, hope, and charity?'

Principal A explained the new log procedures for each grade and discussed the procedures for creating and saving documents. He instructed teachers in grades K-5 on how to log into their computers as a classroom, but informed teachers in middle school that every student would have their own personal login account. Teachers were also instructed on how to forward email, set up calendars, print reports, and manage student information online.

The school's learning consultant handed out a guideline titled Formative Assessment Strategies for all the classrooms on instructing teachers in understanding various assessment methods. The training specifically focused on five indicators of sound classroom assessment practice; assessment processes and results serve clear and appropriated purposes, assessment reflect clear and valued student learning targets, learning targets are translated into assessments that yield accurate results, assessment results are managed well and communicated effectively, and students should be involved in their own assessments.

About half the teachers (6) spent 20 minutes discussing and giving feedback on the benefits of implementing the strategies in their classroom. Included in the discussion was one middle school teacher. Other teachers did not participate in discussion but quietly looked on. Most of the participating teachers agreed that using the tools of the lesson would improve student outcomes in the school. Teacher A and a few grade school teachers acknowledged the language barrier with many students speaking limited English. The teachers strongly agreed that the use of translators would help improve learning for most of the students. Principal A briefly discussed a plan for a school improvement project called Renaissance Learning as a goal for the next year to improve school culture, academics, and parent involvement.

Principal A and the teachers talked and collaborated about tutoring and coaching for students that needed extra help especially in math and reading. The main discussion focused on communicating students' progress with parents who did not speak English. They also discussed the possibility of getting classroom volunteers to help with students that needed extra help in the classroom. Principal A said he believed that translators would be effective in helping to communicate with families. One elementary teacher mentioned her concern for students missing lunch. The principal stated that the school prepares cold lunches for students who do not have a lunch to make sure all students eat every day. He said that he did not want any student to go without eating lunch. Teacher A stressed that she believed some students come to school without breakfast so she keeps snacks in her room to give students in class. Some of the teachers from the grade school nodded their heads in agreement. They shared the same story about kids coming to school without breakfast. Several of the students in the elementary school were younger

brothers and sisters of middle school students so teachers seemed aware that they may experience the same hardships.

Prior to dismissing the meeting, Principal A briefly discussed the plans for the upcoming Fall Festival and detailed the agenda for the day that would involve a parade with all the students from K-8 and family activities. Prior to concluding the meeting, Principal A informed the staff that his goal for the school was to see the students raise $3,000 in fundraising. He did not elaborate in detail or share plans for fundraising before ending the meeting. Several teachers from the grade school talked for a few minutes after the meeting ended. However, there was no collaboration between the middle school teachers. The researcher observed that approximately 80% of the teachers appeared to be disengaged and did not talk during the meeting. Teachers collectively demonstrated some level of care and for students' basic needs by expressing concerns about how the school may be able to identify those students and help them. They discussed among themselves and meeting was dismissed with no further comments. One component of culturally responsive pedagogy was observed (See Table 16) at least once during this meeting, 'The demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community.'

**Fall Festival September 21, 2013**

The purpose of the Fall Festival was to connect the students of St. Andrew Academy, families, and the community. The festival started at 10 a.m. with a parade. Students from K-8 marched within 1 mile of the surrounding neighborhood and returned at 11 a.m. on the school grounds where all the festival activities were held. The researcher observed activities at the festival from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Approximately 100 participants were present and about 99% were Hispanic.

The researcher observed two White families in attendance at the beginning of the festival and saw both families leave the event after about 15 minutes. The researcher observed at least two teachers at the event in the beginning and after a few minutes they also left the event. The parish priest and Principal A were on the school grounds greeting students and families as they arrived. After about 5 minutes the parish priest left. The researcher saw the principal talking to several families in Spanish throughout the event. The researcher observed 13 various booths set up with vendors selling clothes, costume jewelry, used clothing, Hispanic food (tamales, enchiladas, tacos, burritos) and drinks. All the signs were written in two versions, Spanish and English. One booth sold beer and liquor items for adults. For smaller children an oversized mechanical bull and bouncy house was provided. Older students participated in Hispanic dance activities. A stage was set-up and a band sang in Spanish while families listened.

The public library participated with a booth set-up to sign families up for a library card. The researcher interviewed the employee who worked for the library. She was fluent in Spanish and English and communicated with families who did not speak English. She stated that 'Many of the families do not read and are not aware of the program that the library has in place to help the community of people who do not read.' Most of the families seemed to facilitate conversations only with people they came with. The researcher observed most of the families were also communicating in their native language Spanish. The researcher did not observe teachers and staff collaborating or socializing with students and their families. Consequently, based on the researcher's observation it appeared that most of the teachers were not present at the event.

The researcher was unable to verify the type of conversations between the participants due to her inability to understand Spanish. One component of culturally responsive pedagogy was observed (See Table 16) at least once during this meeting, 'The demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community.' The school seemed to make an attempt to build community and school connections by opening up the festival to the local neighborhood. This demonstrated some level of culturally responsiveness.

**Professional Development Training September 27, 2013**

The training started promptly at 12:00 p.m. A group of approximately 500 educators attended the meeting at a suburban Catholic High School. The training started with a prayer in Latin led by the high school principal. He used the opportunity to briefly describe the facilitator's professional experience in education prior to introducing him. About 30 minutes prior to the meeting the participants were invited to socialize and eat lunch. Tables were set up with each school's name to accommodate about 20 people. Some teachers however teamed up with other groups from different schools and chose not to sit with their school. The researcher observed that Teacher A and Teacher B were the only middle school teachers who sat with their school along with Principal A.

The facilitator began with an introduction of how male and females learn based on the differences in their brains. He added, 'Brain chemistry affects the way boys and girl learn.' He stated that his purpose was to help educators understand learning based on gender so they can alter teaching strategies and respond to the learning needs of their students. His main focus was on the development and education of boys. He shared that, 'schools are in a crisis in the area of teaching boys.'

After about 15 minutes he asked everyone in the room to stand up and step back from their chair. As music to play he directed everyone into a 'Line Dance' for 5 minutes. Teachers and principals were laughing and talking as they took their seats. The facilitator explained that teachers need to help their students engage brain breaks throughout the day. The time was then allowed for questions or remarks from teachers. One teacher asked, 'What do you do when kids are verbally aggressive.' He said teachers need to understand the difference when girls are aggressive versus boys are aggressive. The examples he presented were, girls will say 'I do not like and do not want to be your friend.' As opposed to boys being aggressive in nonverbal ways like doing 'Karate Kicks.' to reflect how they feel. He stated: 'It is the teacher's job to help each one of them process and control their feelings when this behavior is displayed.'

He also talked about the effectiveness of coed vs. single gender schools. The point emphasized about girls and boys learning in a single gender environment had to do with them not being intimidated or distracted by the opposite sex. For girls he advised teaching higher level math in earlier years of school to reinforce learning. He argued that coed learning could be very effective if the environment is stimulating and culturally sensitive.

Most teachers and principals exchanged positive feedback during the last brain break. It appeared that many of the conversations were centered at school related issues or what had just been discussed during the last 2 hours in the meeting. Principal A subsequently talked about the training as a model to take back to St. Andrew for discussion in the next staff meeting. Teachers A and C seemed concerned and related the opportunity to demonstrate brain breaks with their students. There was an overall

consensus between Principal A and his teachers that most of the lecture about the learning difference in boys and girls were ideas that would be helpful for classroom teachers.

After the last brain break the facilitator summarized the training and passed around a sheet at each table for the participants to provide a name and email contact to receive his future training and seminar information. He also provided his professional contact information and website for schools to refer to for additional resources for teaching student K-12th grade. The meeting ended in approximately three hours and participants were dismissed with no further comments. Three components of culturally responsive pedagogy was observed (See Table 16) at least once during this meeting, 'The design of culturally relevant curricula', 'The demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community,' and 'Delivering culturally responsive instructions.' Although the training promoted learning differences in gender, some key recommendations were discussed to help educators understand how imperative it is to also focus on individual students, their culture, and family background.

**Parent/Teacher Conference October 4, 2013**

Parent Teacher Conference started at 12:30 p.m. after students were dismissed from school. At the time of this study, the school also planned to schedule a parent-teacher conference at night for parents who worked. A total of 16 parents were in attendance of the meeting and some students attended the conference with their parents. The researcher observed 11 parents in the parent-teacher conference. The researcher observed several middle school students in the hallways outside of the classrooms talking and playing. Three middle school teachers were in attendance. Teacher A was the novice

with least experience in years of teaching. She explained that her background was in civil engineering and after her experience spending time volunteering with an orphanage in Mexico she gained a passion to teach. At the time of this study she had about five years of teaching experience. She seemed to have a rapport with the students. Some students spoke in Spanish, and she seemed just as comfortable talking with them. Teacher A was the only middle school teacher who spoke Spanish. She also communicated with parents who did not speak English. The researcher observed that Teacher A demonstrated that she was more interpersonal with parents and students who spoke English. She acknowledged that she really knew her students on a personal basis. Several students stopped by the conference room just to greet and hug her. She responded to every student with the same concern and appeared happy to see them.

Teacher B a 30- year veteran teacher appeared distant and unresponsive throughout the entire conference. She also offered less feedback than the other teachers when the researcher attempted to communicate with her in conversation. The researcher was unable to verify or observe Teacher B communicating with any parents or students.

Teacher C was the only male teacher in the middle school. He did participate in small talk with the researcher during a break between talking to parents. He was not able to communicate with parents and students who did not speak English. He also appeared unprepared and did not show much effort communicating with parents or students who spoke English. The researcher did not observe any meaningful communication or feedback from Teacher C although he showed some respect and was polite with parents and students. Teacher C stated that the teachers also made arrangements to meet with parents during a time which was convenient for them to discuss their child's progress.

The meeting was held one of the middle school classrooms. The room was filled with acknowledgement of the Catholic religion. On the wall behind the teacher's desk was a crucifix and various written prayers. In the room there was also a picture of the Pope and several mottos for good character. Principal A showed up at the conference and stayed for about 5 minutes in the beginning. The researcher observed him returning at least 2 times before the conference ended. The room was somewhat small however instead of desks the room was furnished with five long tables with chairs. It was difficult to hear after parents started arriving due to all the conversations taking place.

**Parent # 1, father, African American 6th grade girl**. Teacher A greeted the parent with a smile and a handshake and offered him a seat. He was one of the few parents who did not bring his daughter to the conference. The father expressed his concern about his daughter drawn to the computer at home. He told the teacher that she spends a lot of time online, often until 2a.m. Teacher A asked if he was aware of what she was doing or monitoring her activity on the computer. The teacher discussed areas of the student's progress report that needed improvement. She pointed out that math was challenging for the student and that after school tutoring would be beneficial. She also said 'She takes a lot of nudging in the class for falling asleep and not paying attention.'

Teacher A demonstrated concern by telling the father that she wanted to see the student improve but also indicated he needed to be more actively involved in checking her homework. She also offered recommendations on how he could motivate his daughter and support learning at home with making her accountable. The father expressed 'whatever it takes to get her attention.' Teacher A advised the father to monitor and restrict his daughter's use of the computer at home. She also said it was

important for his daughter to get sufficient sleep at night in order to stay alert and do well in school. Teacher A expressed that she had high expectations for the student and said she was available for phone calls and visits from the parent if necessary. The father signed his daughter's progress report and shook hands with Teacher A prior to leaving. She smiled and stood up as she thanked the parent for coming.

**Parent # 2, mother, White 6th grade girl**. The parent met with all three middle school teachers (Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher, C). Teacher C started off with presenting the student's work folder and progress report to the parent. He asked the parent if she had any questions. Teacher A explained to the parent that her students improved in reading during the quarter from 3.8 (third grade eight months) to 5.8 (fifth grade eight months). She recommended the student continue reading books she liked, especially two or three smaller books like *Wicked*. Teacher A outlined a strategy for the parent on how to reinforce the student's reading comprehension, 'Have her tell you a story before she takes a test.' She also suggested to the mother to challenge her daughter by asking her to explain, 'What happened during the beginning of the book.'

Teacher A told the parent that the student needs help coming to class prepared and organized. Teacher C had no comments or recommendations. Teacher A said the student 'knows the work, she self-motivated, and her goal is to do better.' The parent signed the progress report and directed her final comments toward Teacher A. Teacher A appeared to be sincere by telling the parent to make phone calls and visits to stay informed about her daughter's progress. Teacher B and Teacher C did not offer any feedback or recommendations to the parent and offered little or no feedback during the meeting. They

did not shake hands or express any final remarks to the parent as she was leaving. Teacher A smiled and stood up as she thanked the parent for coming.

**Parent # 3, mother, White 6th grade girl**. Teacher B greeted the parent smiling and displayed a friendly and warm tone in his voice. She stated, 'I have to go to work and just want to pick up my daughter's progress report.' Teacher B reassured the parent that her daughter was doing great in math. 'We just received a new textbook.' He told the parent 'She is an excellent student, very helpful and very respectful.' He also said 'She likes to talk a lot but no more than the other girls.' He advised the mother that the school did not have a progress report on her daughter from gym class. Teacher B also told the parent that her daughter had an altercation with another sixth grade girl, but they resolved it. He did say, 'Sixth grade girls have a tendency to get dramatic.' The parent seemed satisfied after reviewing her daughter's progress report and homework folder. She signed the progress report and proceeded to leave without communicating any feedback.

**Parent # 4, mother, Hispanic 8th grade boy**. Teacher B greeted the teacher with a handshake. The teacher realized that she spoke limited English so he addressed all of his statements and asked the student to clarify if his mother understood what was communicated. As the teacher talked the parent nodded as if she understood what he was saying. The teacher said 'He likes to joke. He's very funny and sometimes it is not appreciated.' The student communicated to the parent in his native language Spanish. It was not verified if the student related the same information that the teacher shared because the researcher was not able to translate the conversation in Spanish. The teacher asked the student to explain his progress report to his mother. The parent seemed restless

and somewhat agitated as the son communicated with her in Spanish. Teacher B advised the student to ask his mother if she had any questions about his reading or science. The students spoke to his mother in Spanish. He related to the teacher that his mother did not have any questions. He then directed the student to tell his mother if she did not have any questions to sign his progress report. The son spoke to his mother again in Spanish. The mother signed the progress report and as she stood up to leave Teacher B stood up, nodded and thanked her for coming.

**Parent # 5, mother, White 7th grade boy**. The parent came in with questions about her son's progress and academic performance. Teacher A discussed the student's performance during the beginning of the school year and shared progress and performance in terms of goal setting. She acknowledged areas that the student could improve in and how she could work with the school to help develop an action plan for her son to succeed. Teacher A asked the parent several open ended questions; 'Are you working with him at home?' She admitted that sometimes he wants to play too much. She asked the student, 'Do you look at your list to see what books you need to take home? Do you take them home with you? Do you have a place at home away from the television to study?' She advised the student, 'The more you read the more words you are going to learn.'

Teacher A clarified some of the questions she asked by repeating what she said making sure the parent understood. This approach appeared to put them on the same page in developing a plan to work together on helping the student improve. She also emphasized to the student again that his study habits and time spent on school work were an important factor in his improvement. Teacher A allowed the student to explain his

work from his completed folder to his mother. The mother stopped him several times to address questions to Teacher A about the grades. Teacher A offered direct feedback and acknowledged each question from the parent. She allowed the parent the opportunity to express her expectations for her son. She also went over the progress report with the parent and mentioned some of the grades were lower maybe because homework had not been turned in. The mother signed the progress report and Teacher A offered to do phone calls, notes sent home, and visits to keep the student on track. They both shook hands and the teacher smiled and thanked the parent for coming.

**Parent # 6, mother-father, Hispanic 6th grade boy**. The student had to translate for her parents because they did not speak Spanish. Teacher B and Teacher C were seated in front of the students and her parents. The student asked the teacher about quizzes in science. Teacher C responded 'You have two open book tests in science, one on Tuesday and the other one on Thursday.' The student communicated to his parents in Spanish. Teacher C then directed a statement towards the parents, 'If he does his homework that will help.' The student then communicated with his parents once again. Teacher C tells the student 'You are doing well.' He tells the students to explain the work in his folder and his progress report to his parents. The students spoke in his native language and exchanged conversation with his parents again. He asked the student to find out if his parents had any questions. After the student spoke to his parents for the last time in Spanish the father made no comments and signed the progress report. Both parents stood up and as the father shook hands with Teacher C. Teacher B did not interact with the parents or student at any time during the meeting.

**Parent # 7, mother, Hispanic 6th grade girl**. Teacher A greeted the student and mother in Spanish. The meeting lasted about 10 minutes. The student went through her folder of completed assignments and spoke in Spanish while the mother listened. Teacher A provided feedback and listened as the student communicated with her mother. The researcher was unable to verify the conversation therefore the only assessment made in this observation was listening to the tone of voice, and looking at the body language of both the teacher and parent. Teacher A spent a few minutes directing her conversation toward the mother after the student finished showing his folder. The mother nodded her head a lot and gestured with an occasional smile as Teacher A went over the student's progress report. The parent signed the progress report and the teacher shook hands with her before they left. The student said goodbye to the teacher in English and the teacher responded in English reaching out and hugging her before she left.

After the parent and student left teacher A explained that the parent did not speak English and had limited ability to read. She also said 'It is important for parents to know how to communicate in English in order to help the student academically.' She explained that many of the parents are not educated in addition to speaking little or no English. Teacher A said that is the real struggle with many of the students because the parents are unable to help them with their work.

**Parent # 8, mother, Hispanic 7th grade boy**. Teacher C met with the student and his mother. The student had to translate the conversation because his mother did not speak English. The teacher greeted the mother with a 'hello' and handshake. He advised the student to show his mother his work folder. The student allowed his mother to go through the folder while he sat there and observed her. The parent did not communicate

with her son and quietly waited until the teacher responded, 'You have any questions?' The student related to his mother in Spanish. The mother communicated with the son with a response. The student said, 'My mom wants to know if she can help me do better?' The teacher responded, 'Help study work at home. Help you to do your work. She should have a list of all your assignments.' The student spoke in Spanish to his mother. The teacher responded again. She advised the student that his mother should have the list. 'She needs to go through all your papers. Also writing help with social studies is good.' The student communicated with his mother again. The mother listened to the son and gave no answer. The teacher looked at the mother and said, 'He can ask for help in writing.' The mother stared at Teacher C with a look of confusion.

Teacher A approached the table and began to communicate with the parent in Spanish. The parent appeared more relaxed and responsive to teacher A and opened up in conversation. Teacher C asked the student, 'Are you forgetting to do your homework?' Teacher A translated to the parent the conversation between Teacher C and the student. Teacher C asked the student, 'Are you doing your homework as much for math? Any quiz you want to retake for a better grade. You want to raise your grade. You can definitely do it but it's your decision. I think you can get these grades up.' Teacher C asked the student several question without allowing the student to answer all of the questions. 'What is your plan? Do you have a plan for the future? You should be journaling. You should have four to five journals by October 11.' Teacher A focused on communicating with the parent and allowed the parent to respond in her native language Spanish. The parent signed the student's progress report, kept eye direct contact with Teacher A, shook hands smiling and left.

**Parent # 9, mother, White 6th grade girl**. The parent came in and greeted Teacher C. The parent stated that she was preparing to go to work and was pressed for time. She expressed a desire to talk to staff briefly about her daughter's progress report. Teacher C invited her to sit down however the parent remained standing. He told her 'She is doing great in math.' He did not elaborate or go over the student's work assignments to verify the statement he made about the student's performance in math. 'We just received an updated new textbook.'

Teacher C also mentioned that the student is 'an excellent writer, very respectful, and very helpful.' This seemed like a good opportunity to show examples of the student's' work from his folder. The researcher did not observe the teacher making an effort to engage the parent in further conversation. Although the parent remained standing ready to sign her daughter's progress report, she indicated that there had been a problem in the past with her daughter talking too much in class. Teacher C stated that 'She does like to talk but no more than the other girls. Every now and then I may get on her about her uniform. She did have one incident with another student the beginning of the school year but they resolved it and after that she was fine.' The parent mentioned that her daughter needed help with her math, and she was unable to assist her. This statement conflicted with what the teacher stated earlier that the student was doing well in math. Teacher C acknowledged that the best time for the student to receive tutoring for math was during the after school tutoring program. The teacher did not attempt to clarify the parent's statement about her needing help in math. The parent signed her daughter's progress report and thanked Teacher C. He smiled, shook hands, and thanked her for attending the conference.

**Parent # 10, mother, Hispanic 7th grade girl**. Teacher A smiled and greeted the parent and student in Spanish. The parented greeted the teacher with 'hello' in English. She then explained to the parent speaking in English that some of her students are more verbal about explaining their progress. She encouraged the student to explain to her mother in detail the work in her folder. The student sat with her mother and spoke in her native language Spanish for approximately 5 minutes. Teacher A contributed input each time the student showed her mother a completed work assignment. She communicated in Spanish and the parent communicated back to her in Spanish. It appeared that the mother was more comfortable speaking in her native language and Teacher A did not appear to struggle with taking to the parent in Spanish.

The researcher was unable to translate the conversation between the student, her parent, and Teacher A, but it appeared that Teacher A interacted with both the parent and the student in both languages well. The meeting lasted about 10 minutes. Several important details were observed; there was constant feedback between the teacher and the parent and they both smiled and appeared to have relaxed body language. The researcher also observed that Teacher A sat up close and next to the parent during the entire meeting. The meeting seemed more personable and after it ended she seemed at ease shaking hands with the parent. The student also said goodbye to the teacher when they were leaving reached out and hugged her.

**Parent # 11, father, Hispanic 7th grade boy**. Teacher C greeted the father with a handshake and nod. The father did not speak English. Teacher C pulled two chairs up and gestured to the father and son to sit down. He directed the student to open his folder of completed work and explain his progress to the father. The researcher observed the

student talking to his father for about 5 minutes. Teacher C sat across from them not responding. Teacher C advised the student to ask his father if he had any questions and if not he told him he could sign his progress report and was ready to go. The son turned to his father and spoke to him in his native language Spanish. Teacher A approached the table and greeted the father and son with a smile and a handshake. The father immediately responded and spoke to Teacher A in Spanish. Teacher A pulled up a chair and opened up the student's work folder and appeared to explain the grades. The father also offered feedback as teacher A went through the folder. She then picked up the student's progress report and appeared to explain to the father in detail. She allowed for the father to speak and both were sharing a dialogue of conversation with eye to eye contact. Teacher A also communicated with the student speaking in Spanish. After about 10 minutes of communicating the father signed the progress report, shook hands with the teacher A without acknowledging teacher B and left with his son. Two components of culturally responsive pedagogy were observed (See Table 16) at least once during the parent/teacher conference, 'The demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community', and 'Building effective cross-cultural communications.' Although these two components were observed, the researcher questioned the level of culturally responsive teaching because of the challenge presented with only one teacher speaking Spanish.

**Staff /Professional Development Meeting October 16, 2013**

Principal A opened the meeting with a short prayer. Principal A told staff to take a deep breath and consider:

We are always in God's presence.' He then asked questions, 'When and how can we use the power God has given us? Who in your life has shared words in your life to help build you up? We have the power to build our students up on a regular basis.'

He then said, 'I appreciate everything you do to make this place available for the students.' The topic discussed next was calendar updates for the end of October and November. He stated that the school would be at the end of the first quarter October 25. He briefly discussed an upcoming program for the middle school which would include a DJ with music, food purchased from the store, and a haunted house. As teachers listened, a few hands went up with the issue concerning families who do not celebrate Halloween.

He advised staff for those students who do not wish to participate will be assigned school work in another room. He went on to advise the staff the report cards will be sent out after the fall break. He went on to outline upcoming plans for the middle school camping trip during the fall break. A teacher from the grade school inquired about plans for students in the lower grades (K-5). He advised the staff that the lower grades will play various games every 30 minutes supervised by teachers. He next discussed goal setting and advised teachers that he had plans to meet with every staff and collaborate that he had goals and benchmarks for their classrooms. He reminded them that these were individual goals that they set during the beginning of the school year.

The professional trainer then took over the meeting. She reviewed training notes from a previous professional development session. She posed the question (from a show of hands) how many teachers use brain breaks in their classrooms? Approximately 50% of the teachers from grade school raised their hands. The researcher observed that there was no show of hands from the middle school teachers. She encouraged the teachers to

employ the concept of brain breaks arguing that it was a very effective strategy. She also shared an activity for teachers to use in the classroom for building their students vocabulary. She explained that students are required to stand up when a word is shared and they will not be able to move until someone else in the classroom uses the word in a sentence.

The next activity shared was 'mother may I' games. This game involved an activity where students arranged themselves in the correct location of a state and allowed to review what they know while standing in that position. She then allowed for teachers to share a strategy or activity that works in their classroom. Teacher B stated that he used the concept of heads or tails and popular songs to teach students important facts. Principal A interjected in order to give final remarks and close the meeting. He passed out the results of the Iowa Assessment Test for St Andrew students. He stated that the school has more work to get students' scores up in language arts. He added, students at St. Andrew averaged in the 50% percentile according to their grade level. He said students need more work on how to simply use a period in a sentence. Principal A also stated that on an average, boys scored lower in nonverbal kinetics (he said we should be working with them on that). He talked about improving the reading strategies for students for students, and plans higher learning strategies such as headphones, read out loud and online tutorials. Meeting was dismissed with no further comments. One component of culturally responsive pedagogy was observed (See Table 16) at least once during this meeting, 'The demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community.'

**Staff Meeting November 20, 2013**

Principal A opened the meeting with a short prayer. Principal A briefly talked about the importance of being sensitive to the dangers faced by the young. He also acknowledged that 'This is the time of the year that is challenging seeing kids for better or worse.' He further stated that 'One day children are going to take care of us. While teachers listened he added, 'We need to take care of housekeeping. He advised the staff that they need to enforce hand washing and tooth brushing due to the flu season.' Principal A emphasized that teachers need to pray every morning and encourage students to pray and say the Pledge of Allegiance every day. He added, 'Tell our students about responsibility.' He stressed that teaching students about accountability is very important. Principal A reminded the teachers to make sure they keep a happy birthday calendar of student's birthday. Before turning the meeting over to the Director of Climate Control he reminded teachers free breakfast for the staff would be provided during the next meeting.

The Director of Climate Control (an employer of the Catholic Diocese in a mid-western state) posed an opening question, 'How many of you have parents/kids talking about bullying?' Show of hands came from most teachers in the room. She proceeded, 'three key elements of bullying: aggressive behavior, a pattern of behavior repeated over time, and intent to harm.' Teachers were allowed 10 minute breaks about every 15 minutes. Most teachers used that time to check messages on their cell phones or check email messages on a computer in the classroom. The Director of Climate Control advised teachers to allow students to come up with solutions to eliminate bullying. She explained that students may think of more authentic ways to stop kids from bullying. Teachers were also told to watch out for students who are especially quiet when normally

teachers expect students to complain about being bullied. An illustration was using a three legged stool. The explanation was, 'There are three legs to the stool of peace and safety.' The first leg is parents and home environment. The second leg is staff in the building, and the third leg is students. The Director of Climate Control stated that each leg has specific qualities and characteristics, each bring factors that may or may not be within our control.

The gym teacher brought up the problem of overweight students being the target of bullying. She gave an example of students ridiculing overweight students by calling them 'beasty.' She added, 'you see the hurt in their eyes.' The Director of Climate Control recommended to staff to teach students to write about their feelings and help them learn how to self-reflect. She added, 'Kids with the most social capital can help other students who are less popular. Get the students who are popular to team with the less social students.' She also stated teachers should talk with the more popular students and use them as peer mentors to promote 'no name calling.' As teachers listened at took notes she lectured for five more minutes before calling a break. After the break a teacher from the grade school asked 'how do you handle students who demonstrate bad manners just to get attention in the classroom.' The Director of Climate opened up the opportunity for other teachers to talk about strategies they use in the classroom when students are rude or acting out. There seemed to be a consensus on teachers admitting that they just ignore students who openly act out to get attention. The Director of Climate Control advised teachers that, 'the least helpful strategy was telling students to stop a negative behavior.' She further stated, 'When you call out a behavior, take time with the student.' She then listed the most common helpful strategies included; listening to the student,

capturing their attention, capturing their hearts, teaching them manners, and pointing out the great qualities that they possess.

Her advice for all teachers was to model the following guidelines in their classroom for students; do not speak unkindly to anyone, speak kindly of someone at least once a day, and act kindly toward someone at least once a day. Teachers in K-5 were given a strategy on how to teach younger students conflict resolution through sharing. The Director of Climate Control suggested using the '5 second rule' when elementary students use crayons in the classroom and it becomes a problem sharing. She said let students time themselves and asked them after 5 seconds, 'Is there another color you can use?' She elaborated, 'Kids do not need us to solve the problem all the time. Put it back on them and let them become their own problem solver.'

Teachers were allowed time to process the information from the previous staff meeting. Principal A handed out a questionnaire and asked the teachers to take the time to write down the strategies/ideas/activities they had tried from the training on November 4th. A list of strategies included: common core, differentiated instruction, using essential questions in lesson plans, and visual thesaurus online. The handout asked a final question, 'If the school purchased academic vocabulary books, flip charts, crayon activities, and time comprehension books that were mentioned at the workshop November 4th would you use them with your students?' Principal A collected the handouts as teachers left and thanked them for participating. Meeting was dismissed with no further comments. Two components of culturally responsive pedagogy were observed (see Table 16) at least once during this meeting, 'The demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community' and 'Building effective cross-cultural

communications.' During this meeting the professional development streamlined some of the focus on connecting family, students, and the school. The topic also discussed was the teachers' role in showing that they care about their students.

**Staff Meeting December 18, 2013**

This was the observation of the last staff/professional development meeting held at St. Andrew for the year 2013. Principal A led the teachers in prayer. The prayer during this meeting focused on a specific topic. Prayer was longer than in previous meetings with an emphasis on 'Advent' Christmas the birth of Christ. Following the lengthy ceremony of prayer Principal A briefly went over the agenda for the meeting and discussed the calendar of event for January 2014. He discussed that he would be meeting with all teachers and reviewing the goal they previously set with him in the beginning of the school year. He also stated that he would observe teachers in the classroom in a natural setting. 'I want to see you in your normal setting. I want to get a real sense of what is going on.' He informed teachers about the celebration of open house during 'Catholic Schools Week' to be held the last week in January. He stressed the importance of making sure students show up with their parents. Principal A advised the teachers that this was a way to show parents the work they put into the school. He also said this would be an opportunity for the kids to show pride in their school and show off their work. Principal A stated that a majority of the students were members of the church and attend Sunday mass, therefore for convenience open house would be scheduled immediately afterwards. He said, 'We should be encouraging students to attend mass with their families.'

The next topic Principal A focused on was to plan social events for students to participate in. One teachers from the grade school suggested doing a bowling event throughout the school. Another elementary teacher stated, 'The student council wants to go skating.' She added, 'little guys skate.' Principal A agreed that bowling was a good event for K-5 students. He asked the teachers to talk with the student council about what they want to do. Principal A showed excitement in outlining plans to have the students dress down the last day of school before Christmas break. He talked also about having a pizza party in the classrooms. He demonstrated gratitude by thanking the teachers for taking extra responsibilities and for picking up things that may not be their job. Principal A turned the meeting over to Teacher E to inform the staff about the upcoming music program. She briefly went over the plans for rehearsal with the entire school K-8 and format of the event.

Principal A told the teachers the program is a way of collaborating with parents. The last 45 minutes was facilitated by Teacher A. She advised the teachers, 'Go back in time when you were in the 8th grade.' One handout was passed to teachers titled, 'Types of Accelerated Math Assignments.' Teacher A demonstrated logging in and out of the system. Teachers sat at the computer and practiced exercises, diagnostics, and tests as K-8 students. Teachers learned how to assist students individually with math problems or in group activities online. One grade school teacher stated that some students were ashamed and would not raise their hand and say 'I do not understand.' Several other teachers agreed that some students will not ask for help. Another teacher from the grade school said, 'I ask my students to close their eyes and tell them to raise their hands if they need help.' She added, 'That seems to be more effective than asking students if they do not

understand to raise their hands.' Teachers happened to agree that was an effective strategy.

Teacher A discussed having students share computers when doing math activities that require higher order thinking. Teacher A summarized the training by emphasizing the importance of using the program to help students review K-fifth grade math so when they get to middle school they will be on grade level. For the remaining of the meeting the teachers completed a 'Self-Reflection of the Goal Created in August Worksheet' to evaluate if they were achieving previously planned goals. The meeting was dismissed with no further comments. Three of the five components of culturally responsive pedagogy were observed during this meeting. Design of culturally relevant curricula, Demonstration of culturally caring and building learning community, and Delivering culturally responsive instructions. The researcher observed the teachers as students in the learning process. Teacher A demonstrated differentiated math strategies and discussed ideas for helping students with various learning styles. The teachers worked in groups at a computer and addressed problems that could arise in the classroom while instructing students. Teacher A allowed the teachers to brainstorm, share ideas, and ask questions.

**Advent Christmas Program December 19, 2013**

The last day of school before Christmas Break the school held its annual program in the gym led by teacher E, the school's music teacher. Students start arriving at 5:30 with their parents, by 5:45 there was no room available. Approximately 80% of the attendees were Hispanic and were holding conversations in Spanish. Two middle school students were standing at the front of the gym passing out programs. However, the observer realized that they had only a few programs and ran out. The room was packed

with some people standing against the walls. There may have been people attending the program other than immediate family members of students. Since the school is connected with the church members of the church community may have also been in attendance. The program started promptly at 6:00 p.m. with Principal A welcoming the families in English and then in Spanish. He said that the students worked hard and that he hoped they enjoy the program that was planned for them. He then introduced teacher E, the music teacher. After greeting the families, she briefly told the story of Jesus' birth and gave a short narrative of (Los Posadas) while the first group of students waited to come onstage to sing. She explained that she had researched the Spanish culture and how families celebrated Christmas in Mexico while keeping within the Catholic faith.

The program she designed for the students at St. Andrew depicted how there was no place in the inn for Joseph and Mary. Every classroom represented a house where Joseph and Mary knocked on the door looking for a place to stay. The students remained in the classroom until someone came and knocked on the door. They were then escorted to the gym to perform a song or dance related to the birth of Christ. The K-first grade students were the first to perform. The students were escorted by their teacher onto the stage. Most of the students were fidgety and appeared afraid. Their teacher coached and encouraged them to pay attention as Teacher E prepared to lead them in a short Christmas Carol.

The students looked happy while they were singing and jumping on stage. As parents looked on most of them smiled and watched as their children performed. As the K-first grade students left the stage escorted by their teacher, the second and third grade entered the stage from the adjacent side. Teacher E faced the students and directed them

repeating the words of a Christmas Carol to help them sing loud and clear. The audience watched quietly and waited until the students finished singing before clapping and making remarks (speaking in Spanish).

The students seemed to be getting anxious and making a great deal of noise before they came on stage so Teacher E clapped her hands two times to get the students attention. She asked them if they heard her clap to also clap their hands. That seemed to quiet the noise and get them in order before they came on stage. As the second and third grade students left the stage the fourth and fifth grade entered the stage from the other side and performed a song 'Prepare for the Coming of the Lord. Teacher E directed the students without singing the words to the song. After performing, students were escorted back to their rooms. Teacher E introduced the next group which was a dance performance with boys and girls from the third grade. During the last performance all the students K-8 were escorted back onto the stage to perform the final song,' Emanuel'. From observing most of the families they seemed excited and engaged with seeing their children perform. Most of the parents spoke in Spanish, from their body language and smiles on their faces, apparently, they enjoyed the event. After the students sang, Teacher E had them take a vow and thank the families for coming. Principal A came back on stage and spoke in Spanish, first, he then spoke in English, thanking the parents for coming, advised them to pick up their children and to have a safe and Merry Christmas. One component of culturally responsive pedagogy was observed (see Table 16) at least once during this meeting, 'The Demonstration of culturally caring and building learning community.'

Table 16

*Observation Results*

| Synthesis Rating 1-2-3-4 | Culturally Responsive Knowledge Base | Culturally Relevant Curricula | Culturally Caring and Building Learning Community | Cross Cultural Community | Culturally Responsive Instructions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff Meeting 09/18/2013 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Fall Festival 09/21/2013 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| PD Training 09/27/2013 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Parent Teacher Conference 10/04/2013 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Staff Meeting 10/16/2013 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Staff Meeting 11/20/2013 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Staff Meeting 12/18/2013 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Advent Christmas Program 12/19/2013 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

*Note*: Comprised from the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy School Observation. 1=Not Observed, 2= Observed Once, 3=Observed Multiple Times, 4=Observed Constantly.

Overall findings and data analysis of the interviews revealed that the biggest challenge in implementing culturally responsive instruction at St. Andrew Academy is the teachers' and principal's limited knowledge of culturally responsive pedagogy. One out of five teachers reported that they received diversity training in their teacher education program. The principal agreed that teachers were inexperienced but supported teachers in seeking training from an external source independently. Both the teachers and

the principal agreed that the school lacked in providing opportunities for parent involvement at St. Andrew Academy.

Principal A perceived that involving parents was a problem because parents were under educated and did not understand the educational system at St. Andrew Academy. The principal and all the teachers agreed that language was a huge barrier in communicating with parents because over 50% of the families were Hispanic and spoke Spanish. The principal perceived that he developed a clear vision in his role as a school leader. Principal A framed his own understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy by emphasizing the school's acknowledgement of Hispanic culture and holidays.

The researcher assumed that the teachers and principal involvement in professional development and staff meetings would show applicable strategies in teaching diverse students. However, most of the meetings were similar lacking significant training or discussions to support culturally responsive teaching. Over 90% of the meetings were led by Principal A. The principal started each meeting with prayer and short sermonettes about discipleship and Christian values. The teachers received a handout at each meeting on the agenda. Instead it appeared that Principal A kept a large portion of the meetings informative. Although similar themes emerged in most of the professional development and staff meetings, in meetings and school activities demonstration of culturally caring and building learning community was observed only one time.

Results from the parent surveys indicated that over 90% of the parents 'Strongly Agreed', or 'Agreed' that their child's school is a caring and positive school environment. The parent survey results however indicate a need for the school to offer

opportunities for parent participation, planning, family crisis, student discipline, challenging students, preparation for high school, and home visits, dealing with racism or prejudice, and acknowledging their children's race or culture.

**Summary**

Chapter Four focused on the data analysis from teacher and principal interviews, observations of professional development, staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences, school events, and parent surveys. The findings from this qualitative study revealed insight into stakeholders' perceptions and practice of culturally responsive pedagogy. The results of this study may be important for educators implementing culturally responsive teaching in classrooms, professional development, and improving learning outcomes for all students. Chapter Five will discuss the findings, implications based on the research, recommendations for future research, and presented a detailed summary and concluding viewpoints.

# Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

The purpose of this single case study was to evaluate stakeholders' perceptions and practice of culturally responsive pedagogy in one NativityMiguel Catholic school, located in an urban area in a mid-western state. In this study, triangulation was accomplished through comparison of data gathered by (a) principal and teacher interviews, (b) parent surveys, and (c) non-participant observations of school staff meetings, professional development training, parent-teacher conferences, and school social events. Gay (2002a, 2002b) reaffirmed the significance for culturally responsive pedagogy in education by inferring that RCELD students must connect in-school learning to out-of-school learning. In addition, culturally responsive teaching strategies focused on what was relevant for diverse students, based on their individual needs, as well as culture. The key to developing a culturally responsive school included promoting education and equity, creating excellence in the classroom and community, and empowering students.

## Summary of the Research Questions

**Research Question 1**. How, and to what extent, is Saint Andrew Academy implementing culturally responsive pedagogy based on the perceptions of parents, teachers, and the school principal?

## Teacher Interviews

A 14-question interview protocol was developed by the researcher to allow teacher participants to describe their personal perceptions and teaching methods, as related to culturally responsive pedagogy. The first 10 questions were open ended and allowed participants to elaborate and describe their personal perceptions in detail. In the

four remaining questions, teachers were also asked about their years of teaching and educational backgrounds, in order for the researcher to gain a better understanding of their experiences working with students in the classroom.

All five teachers expressed that the school acknowledged culturally diversity to some degree, specifically focusing on the Hispanic culture in celebrating the Day of the Dead, monthly fish fry, or in the songs they sing. One teacher, however, did not appear to have a definite meaning or understanding of what cultural diversity should look like in the school. He believed that the school was not, perhaps, as culturally diverse as some may have perceived, because the students attending the school were 80% to 90% Hispanic. He thought that, in order to be a diverse school, the student population must include a percentage of various other races. During the interview he stated that he felt uncomfortable with African American male students, because of their aggressive behaviors and high level of energy in the classroom. Based on his perception, St. Andrew Academy was not successful in teaching African American students.

Teachers were in agreement that the school had a successful positive behavior management system in place that was effective throughout the school. All the teachers agreed that the system the school had in place included an award system for positive behavior, student accountability measures, and a process of communicating student behavior to parents. All five teachers expressed that the biggest challenge in implementing culturally responsive instruction at St. Andrew Academy was the language barrier of parents and students who spoke Spanish. The only teacher who spoke Spanish stated that it was hard to build a relationship with parents, because of their limited education. She also said, 'Most of the kids are behind academically,' because of their

inability to read. She believed the school had problems reaching African American students and stated she was not quite sure why, but felt there was something lacking in the ability to instruct that population of students. She felt that reaching out more to parents socially and involving them in school activities would help bridge the cultural gap. The only African American teacher elaborated that it was a challenge for her because of her lack of knowledge of other cultures. Four teachers stated they overcame those challenges by using the school's language interpreter to communicate with parents and students who spoke little or no English.

All of the teachers felt their school provided very limited professional development to help them develop a culturally diverse knowledge base. Most of the teachers stated that the diversity training they received was held once a year by the Catholic Diocese, in the beginning of the school year. One teacher stated she received training in cultural diversity while enrolled in college. All five teachers responded by stating the importance of connecting students' home lives, culture, interests, hobbies, or showing care and concern. All but one of the teachers demonstrated how they connected classroom teaching strategies with teaching materials (ex. books, pictures, stories, literature, songs) that focused on Hispanic culture. The only male teacher felt he did not practice culturally responsive teaching in his then-present job.

All the teachers believed the greatest challenge was language and felt that the solution was using a translator to help the school communicate with Spanish-speaking students and their parents. Most of the teachers agreed that the school did minimum to involve parents in decision making (ex. parent meetings only to give information parents have no input, weekly progress folders sent home for parents to respond, fundraising for

eighth grade field trip once a year). Based on the data, two teachers believed that understanding the basic needs (food, shelter, ESL instructions) would help students improve academically. Three teachers appeared unclear about their responses when asked the question.

The data revealed that 80% of the teachers (four) had at least a four-year degree. One teacher reported that her highest level of education was master's degree. All the teachers held the responsibility of teaching two subjects, except for the music teacher. Based on the findings, the teachers averaged between five and 30 years of teaching experience. Three teachers (75%) reported having over 10 years of experience. Four teachers (80%) reported having at least five years at their current school, while one teacher reported her first year of teaching was at St. Andrew Academy. One teacher stated she had over 15 years of teaching experience in the Catholic school system, but did not have a degree.

**Principal Interview**

The principal interview questions were parallel to the teacher interview protocol, with the exception that the questions were focused on the perspective from an administrator versus a classroom teacher's perception of culturally responsive pedagogy. The data results of the principal interviewed revealed findings similar to those of the teacher interviews. The principal believed that the school celebrated and acknowledged diversity by scheduling activities throughout the entire year. Principal A was more specific than the teachers, by stating that the school celebrated the diversity of students with regular 'fish fry' and 'special events.' The data also suggested that Principal A felt the school's positive behavior system was effective and included an award system for

regular student attendance. He also believed a key success of the system was notifying parents of their child's behavior with regular telephone calls. Principal A felt the greatest challenges in implementing culturally responsive instruction in his school was the lack of experience of teachers, specifically in teaching ESL students. He believed the solution was professional development and certification in ESL for his teachers. He stated that the school and the Catholic Diocese provided ongoing professional development for teachers at least once a month. Regarding professional training for teachers, he admitted that he also encouraged his staff to seek professional development on their own. In an unscheduled meeting, Principal A reported that he was knowledgeable in culturally responsive pedagogy. He further stated that his final project as a graduate student in college was modeled after the principals of culturally responsive pedagogy. Furthermore, he shared that his goal was to get his staff on board with culturally responsive teaching strategies. However, there was some reservation in his statement, and he did not give an answer when the researcher asked, 'What steps he would take to get his staff to buy into culturally responsive teaching.'

Principal A also felt that he demonstrated some level of caring by understanding how to communicate with students and their families in their native language. He believed that knowing how to speak Spanish was a great advantage and considered himself a servant leader. Principal A felt that the school faced a challenge with involving parents in school decisions that impacted their children's academic achievement. The biggest problem was that the parent organization needed to be reformed under the leadership of the parochial school. He suggested that parents may prefer to participate in social events on Saturdays, as opposed to participating in their children's academics.

The interview data revealed that Principal A perceived that the school supported several measures for ongoing assessments, benchmarks, and evaluations for academic standards of students. Principal A revealed that the school administered the Iowa Assessment, a program called Accelerated Reading and Accelerated Math, and Star Reader and Star Assessment Program. He also stated that the school hired a learning consultant to assist teachers with formative assessments to test students. Principal A felt satisfied with the school's present system in place and added that the school also used regular homework, class work, curriculum mapping and tests for checkpoints. Principal A felt that the student success was somewhat subjective, as it related to culturally responsive pedagogy and student achievement. He believed that student attitude, work ethics, and self-confidence played a role in student success. He acknowledged that the school hired a full-time language tutor to assist students learn English.

**Emerging Themes from Interviews**

There were several themes that emerged during the interviews with teachers and the principal.

**Acknowledgement and celebration of diversity.** Some of the interviewees acknowledged that the school focused on the Hispanic culture when celebrating school functions and observing holidays. None of the five teacher participants expressed concerns about the school's apparent focus solely on the Hispanic culture, when the student population at St. Andrew Academy included White and African American students. These findings contradicted with the research that the NativityMiguel Model supported and identified with culturally diverse students in response to academic achievement.

**Lack of communication with parents.** This theme emerged during the interviews with the teachers and the principal. The teachers and the principal believed a major challenge in communicating with many of the parents was due to a language barrier. Most of the teachers felt that a Spanish interpreter would help them communicate better with parents and students who did not speak fluent English. One teacher felt, even with an interpreter something 'will get lost in the conversation' and the conversation could get misinterpreted. The principal seemed to perceive it as a problem, but expressed that several other staff in the building spoke fluent Spanish, so he did not see it as a major issue. The principal was adamant in expressing that he established a rapport with most of the parents, because he knew how to speak either English or Spanish, whichever was their preference. Principal A expressed that his goal was to establish a rapport with the parents who spoke very limited or no English.

**Culturally responsive teaching strategies.** The data revealed that three teachers believed they used culturally responsive materials, content, and teaching strategies in the classroom. One teacher stated he did not practice culturally responsive teaching in his school. The researcher perceived that most teachers did not have a complete understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy, based on the examples they used to describe their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching strategies. The teachers made a direct connection of using culturally responsive materials and teaching strategies with the Hispanic students. The principal acknowledged that the school did not have measures to assess the level of culturally responsive pedagogy in the school. He believed that culturally responsive pedagogy related to student attitudes and perceptions.

**Professional Development and Training**

The data revealed that teachers were mixed on their beliefs about the level of professional development and training to prepare them to teach culturally diverse students. Three teachers stated that they attended a few workshops and training that focused on culturally diverse students, specifically Hispanic. One teacher felt that most of her training was informal from spending time at an orphanage in Mexico, where she learned to communicate in Spanish. She also attributed her learning experience to an ESL class taken several years prior to her teaching profession. One teacher believed that a mini workshop he attended, sponsored by the Catholic Diocese during a previous year, focused on teaching Hispanic students. He stated that the school did not offer professional training for teaching culturally diverse students, but had done so several years ago. One suggestion would be for the school to either provide professional development on culturally responsive pedagogy or provide funding for teachers to attend such workshops.

**Parent Surveys**

The data revealed from the survey that most of the parents felt that the school hosted social events like potlucks, family nights, and parent groups. The data also suggested that four parents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. The survey results showed that most parents either strongly agreed or agreed that the principals and teachers at the school were warm and friendly. Two parents disagreed that the teachers were warm and friendly. Over 90% of the parents, based on the survey results, maintained they believed the teachers and staff demonstrated that they cared about students. The data indicated that one parent was neutral in answering the

question. All but three parents agreed that the school challenged students to keep them actively engaged in learning. The researcher found it surprising that over 60% of the parents felt that the school displayed pictures, books, posters, artwork, and decorations that represented their children's race or culture. Two parents did not support this statement and disagreed.

Over 90% of the parents strongly agreed or agreed that the school kept parents informed of news and activities by sending written notices that families could comprehend. The data revealed that most parents did feel that the principal and staff held high expectations for their children to succeed. Most parents felt that the school responded promptly when issues of racism, prejudice, and discrimination were reported by their children. Two parents, however, felt neutral about the statement and one parent strongly disagreed. Parents believed that the teachers used different teaching methods to make sure their children understood information discussed in the classroom. Also, most of the parents felt that the school offered support for their children in the form of small group instructions, home support, tutors, and after school programs. This statement seemed to be supported by the extended hours of the NativityMiguel Program. Parents also felt that the school offered assistance in finding help for students and families when a crisis arose. Over 90% of the parents felt they received feedback on the school's on-going assessment of their children's academic performance.

The data revealed about 50% of the parents felt they were invited to participate in school meetings for curriculum planning at their children's school. Parents felt that the school effectively dealt with bullying, fighting, and truancy at St. Andrew. Most of the parents felt that the school involved community members to participate in school

programs and activities. The researcher perceived that the school partnered in many activities with the community, because of their affiliation with the Catholic Church.

The data revealed that parents felt St. Andrew Academy was preparing their children to succeed in high school, college, and later in life. One parent disagreed and one strongly disagreed with the question. The survey results showed that less than 40% of the parents believed that parents would be willing to participate in home visits. Six parents strongly disagreed with this statement. Parents felt that St. Andrew Academy was a good place for culturally diverse learners. Overall, parents felt good about the performance of their children's school. Three parents felt their children' school performed excellent (A), and five parents rated their children's school as a B. Six parents responded to an open-ended question, What changes or improvement would make your child's school a better place to learn? Four parents felt that the school could improve regarding instructional practices; better communication on academic and progress concerns, a larger library, enrichment programs with more concentration on math, more classroom work and less enrichment programs. One parent felt that the school would benefit with a larger library. Another parent felt that a healthy change would be for the school to replace the school water fountain.

**Emerging Themes from Surveys**

**Lack of parent participation.** The data revealed that some parents felt they were not invited to participate in school meetings for curriculum planning at their children's school. The parent survey data and interviews with teachers and the school principal revealed similar findings. Three parents answered neutral to the survey item, 'My child's

school offers many opportunities for parent participation.' The researcher perceived that respondents who answered 'neutral' may or may not agree with the statement.

**Home visits.** After analyzing the research data on the NativityMiguel School Model the researcher perceived that parents would respond to the survey item, 'Teachers in my child's school have the willingness to do home visits to build relationships with families and students.' Six parents strongly disagreed that teachers supported participating in home visits to strengthen relationships with students and families. The data from the teacher and principal interviews also revealed that connecting with a student's home life was imperative to student academic success.

**Research Questions 2**. How, and to what extent, is Saint Andrew Academy implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in professional development training, staff meetings, parent/teacher conferences, and school social events?

**Observations**

The observations provided a snapshot of data regarding integrations of culturally responsive pedagogy in staff meetings, professional development training, parent teacher conferences, and school social events at St. Andrew Academy. The researcher used five themes identified by Gay (2000) to assess the level of culturally responsiveness demonstrated in the events; development of culturally diverse knowledge base, design of culturally relevant curricula, demonstration of cultural caring and building learning community, building effective cross cultural communications, and delivering culturally responsive instructions. Staff meetings and professional development confirmed that St. Andrew Academy did not provide training for teachers in culturally responsive teaching or discussions that led to a deeper understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy. The

meetings for staff and professional development focused strongly on integrating the doctrine of the Catholic religion into the school. Also, in most of the meetings Principal A spent a majority of the time to elaborate on previous meetings or the agenda for future meetings. He utilized the last section of each meeting to briefly discuss plans for school improvement or for just casual conversation. However, he did not seem to present a systematic plan for how the school would implement and evaluate changes for improvement. The researcher did not observe teachers collaborating, sharing information, or questioning the principal when issues were brought to light.

The meetings all seemed routine, and even though Principal A followed an agenda, he rarely engaged teachers in the practical application of assessing student learning, curriculum instructions, or parent involvement. In one staff meeting, Principal A presented the findings of the middle school students' results of the Iowa Basic Skills Test for that current year. He emphasized the importance of the results and recommended that teachers view the test results and prepare for discussion in the next meeting. The researcher expected to observe Principal A and the teachers engaging in relevant discussion about assessment and evaluation of student test results; however, in subsequent meetings the tests were not mentioned by Principal A nor teachers.

Two St. Andrew Academy teachers, one middle school and the other grade school, co-taught a professional development and included measurable goals and benchmarks for student achievement in math. This was the only observed training where teachers interacted in learning activities. Teachers were allowed to practice math problems using differentiated instructions as students and later evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

**Meetings.** The research findings revealed that most of the teachers and the principal demonstrated some care and concern about whether students' basic needs were met. During the first staff meeting, they briefly discussed ways to eliminate the problem of students coming to school without eating breakfast. Principal A also guided teachers in a discussion about interventions for students struggling in math and reading. Data from the observation demonstrated that the principal and teachers were in agreement with recognizing that many students were performing below academic standards, but did not delve deeper into a plan to improve the program. The researcher observed on more than one occasion; the demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community, however the results suggested that the school lacked demonstrating the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy on a larger scale. Subsequent staff meetings and professional development were quite similar. In an unscheduled meeting, Principal A stated that the off-site meeting sponsored by the Catholic diocese would emphasize teaching strategies that involved culturally responsive education. The researcher observed the demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community, design of culturally relevant curricula, development of culturally responsive knowledge base, and building effective cross cultural communications a number of times throughout the training. Teachers practiced several brainstorming exercises and strategies on incorporating culturally responsive curriculum, with a focus on gender. In a comparison of other meetings, the researcher observed teachers interacting with each other, engaging, in inquiry-based activities, with an emphasis on brain development, learning processes, and empowering students in the classroom with the awareness of gender differences. The researcher could only verify the involvement of Teacher A and Principal A during this

professional development. Teachers B, C, and E attended the training, but chose to sit in other areas away from St. Andrew Academy staff.

**Fall Festival.** The research findings revealed that the school made an effort to: build effective cross-cultural communications by hosting an event to connect with students and parents. The event seemed like an opportunity to improve communications and build relationships with students and their families. Principal A conveyed during the interview that the Fall Festival was one way that the school promoted a positive school culture, by bringing the parents, students, and the community together. The data revealed that the school celebrated and concentrated most heavily on the Hispanic cultural. The research findings revealed a larger picture of the challenges and lack of communication between parents and St. Andrew Academy staff. The researcher observed that a major barrier to support this challenge was a language barrier. Because the researcher was not proficient in Spanish, during the entire event she had limited understanding of conversations, singing performances, and festival activities among participants. The findings supported the need for the school to develop new strategies for celebrating the cultural of all students and families in the school community. Only one theme, 'building effective cross-cultural communication,' was observed by the researcher. Two components associated with the theme, 'Hosted social event to make connections with students, parents, and families' and 'Ceremony dedicated to celebrating the culture of students and families' were observed at least once. The event, however, placed a great emphasis on the Hispanic culture and lacked the presence of American food, music, or entertainment. The researcher observed a disconnect between the American students and families. While only three White families were observed at the festival, two of them

arrived about 30 minutes after the festival started and left after a short period, about 30 minutes. The third family observed at the festival was African American. From the researcher's perspective the family did not seem to connect with the other families or the festivities of Hispanic language, music, and entertainment, so they left 20 minutes after arriving. The researcher was overwhelmed at the number of families who communicated in Spanish. Most importantly, none of the musical performances, food booths, and events were representative of the different cultures.

**Advent Christmas Program**. The research findings revealed that the school had not embraced cultural diversity by welcoming traditions and customs of different cultures. The researcher observed the school recognizing the Hispanic celebration of Christmas with music and dance. It appeared to be a conflict, based on the statement made by Principal A in an unscheduled meeting that St. Andrew Academy was a multicultural school environment for students to learn. It was somewhat confusing that Principal A emphasized cultural diversity as an effective approach to reaching all students, yet similar to the Fall Festival, the Advent Christmas Program failed to respect and recognize all learners of St. Andrew Academy, or were incapable of taking the role as culturally responsive educators.

**Emerging Themes from Observations**

**Collaboration.** The main intent of observations was to evaluate the level of collaboration among the participants in the study. The research findings revealed that the principal and teachers were seldom involved in discussions that led to exchanging of ideas or dialogue about strategies for student achievement. Principal A stated in an unscheduled interview that the purpose of professional development training and staff

meetings was to focus on team building and school-wide strategies for student learning. There were many similarities in the format of how the meetings were conducted. The meetings involved minimum teacher participation or interaction. Principal A perceived that St. Andrew faced a major challenge, because most of his students and parents were Hispanic and only a few staff members were bilingual. However, he did feel that the school overcame most of the challenges of not communicating with the Hispanic families, due to his ability to build a strong relationship with most of the families. Based on the findings from the parent-teacher conference, Fall Festival, and the Advent Christmas program, Teacher A and Principal A were the only staff members in the school who communicated with all the parents and students. The researcher observed minimal opportunities for parents to be involved in the school decision-making processes.

**Religious Culture.** An integral part of St. Andrew Academy's program was the strong faith-based culture of the school. In the hallway, classrooms, and administrative office were examples of character guidelines and life principles, based on teachings of the Catholic Church. In every staff meeting and professional development training, prayer and Bible reading was the first priority. All the teachers and the principal were observed engaging in religious ceremony before discussing meeting objectives.

## Personal Reflections

At the onset, this study centered on stakeholders' perceptions and practice of culturally responsive pedagogy. The researcher believed that the NativityMiguel school program was a model that was exceptional in meeting the academic needs of culturally diverse student populations. The researcher strongly considered that the school leadership and teaching staff had some effect on bridging the learning gap with RCELD

students; however, its role in implementing a culturally responsive professional development and classroom instructions was overestimated. As the researcher became more involved in the study, it was disclosed that the Catholic Church had a strong influence on the school's instructional practices, professional development, and learning curriculum. Also, from analysis of the interviews, observations, and surveys, the researcher concluded that the existence of the NativityMiguel Model, was not as evident as presumed at the beginning of the study.

The decision to interview teachers and the school principal seemed like an effective method to obtain information that would paint a picture of the procedures and processes educators followed in order to address culturally diverse students. It would have been clear if teachers would have described what culturally responsive teaching looked like in their classrooms versus, 'how does the school implement culturally responsive pedagogy?' It seemed like, when teachers were asked the question, their assumption was to explain a set of strategies, rather than walk the researcher through their teachable moments of helping all their students learn.

As one teacher expressed, St. Andrew Academy did not know how to reach some African American students specifically boys; the researcher struggled with the idea that this may not be limited only to that race of students, but in fact could be a major obstacle in the school's ability to effectively teach RCELD students. The researcher felt that teachers and the principal may have been more open to share information in the interview if she was an internal partner of the Catholic diocese or the school. Several times during the interviews the body language of the teachers and principal indicated that they were uncomfortable and were prompted more than once to answer questions. The researcher's

insight of what teachers were expressing in the interview was that teaching at St. Andrew Academy presented many challenges, because over 50% of the students were Hispanic and spoke Spanish. However, most of the teachers demonstrated that they cared about their students and held high expectations for them to succeed academically.

The researcher perceived that observing staff meetings and professional development training would reveal important details of how teachers collaborated, shared, and learned from each other. Principal A shared in an unscheduled meeting, prior to the study, that professional development training and staff meetings were scheduled with all the teachers at one time. He emphasized that the K-5 program was entirely different from the sixth to eighth grade curriculum, NativityMiguel. He also believed that meeting with the grade school and middle school teachers as a group was more beneficial than scheduling separate meetings. The researcher expected to observe teachers engaging in vertical teaming during the professional development and staff meetings. Very little information was shared about students or experiences they encountered while teaching in their classrooms. From watching the teachers, the researcher was surprised that during most of the meetings, teachers did not actively interact with each other. While directly, most attention was given to the middle school teachers, there was very little sharing of ideas or collaboration. The highest level of engagement was observed when teachers attended an off-campus professional development. The researcher quickly noticed that the middle school teachers sought out teachers from other schools to sit with and effectively carry on conversations. A disconnect seemed prevalent between teachers and their inability to communicate with each other during staff meetings and professional development.

In general, the researcher thought it was quite uncommon that a small staff of five middle school teachers did not seem to demonstrate that they had a mutual bond. The researcher expected to see teachers and the principal engaged in more structured conversations. In the researcher's observation of meetings, the same teacher seemed to ask questions, offer suggestions, and share her knowledge of classroom instructions, while others did not participate. In only one meeting, teachers were asked to evaluate the professional development meeting and share how it would benefit them in their classroom teaching. Administrators must involve teachers with constant feedback on professional development and training. Teachers should also feel a certain level of comfort to express and engage in problem-solving during staff meetings and professional development training. The researcher perceived that teachers were somewhat hesitant in expressing their feelings to avoid conflict during the meetings. Many education scholars agreed that it is essential for teachers to have an influence in their own professional development training and decide what they want to learn (Drago-Severson, 2007; Leech & Fulton, 2008; Lucillo, 2009).

The researcher observed similar patterns in the school's presentation of teaching techniques. Most of the training did not differentiate or focus on learning styles or cultural diversity of students. The researcher felt some disappointment that the school did not seem to focus on preparing teachers to teach all students and not just Hispanic students in the school. The two school social events, the Fall Festival and the Christmas Program, focused on the Hispanic students and their families.

The research findings revealed that about 30% (17) parent surveys were returned after the researcher completed three attempts to collect data. It seemed that parents held

similar perceptions about the level of care that St. Andrew Academy demonstrated toward students. Since only four parents responded to the open-ended question, which asked them to 'list what changes or improvements would make the school a better place for their child to learn,' which led the researcher to also believe there was a likelihood that several parents were satisfied with the school.

Over 50% (12) parents believed that the school involved them in 'curriculum planning.' The researcher perceived that to be unlikely based on the interview data that overwhelmingly revealed parents were not involved in the planning of curriculum at St. Andrew Academy. Furthermore, the researcher perceived from the teacher interviews that part of the reason the school did not actively involve parents in decisions about instructional strategies was due to their lack of education, inability to understand the American educational system. From the perspective of an African American, the researcher also felt that the principal and teachers at St. Andrew Academy overlooked the main ingredient for building a culturally responsive school.

**Recommendations for Educators**

The following are several recommendations that should be considered. The teachers at St. Andrew Academy conveyed during interviews that they were not adequately trained in culturally responsive teaching instructions. The school principal should work closely with culturally responsive administrators and specialists to develop and clarify his role in training his staff members in culturally responsive teaching. A vital step toward becoming a culturally responsive school is for the administrator at St. Andrew Academy to develop partnerships with parents and the teachers to have a voice

in curriculum planning, academic assessment procedures, and school improvement programs.

A massive infusion of the celebration of different cultures is needed in order for the school represent diversity, therefore they need to address embrace other cultures as well. Certified staff at St. Andrew Academy need training on instructional applications of teaching diverse students. St. Andrew Academy certified staff need staff development in differential instructions to implement culturally responsive teaching. Teachers at St. Andrew Academy instruct RCELD students, therefore they need to have an understanding of second language acquisitions to effectively teach in classrooms and communicate with families. To address the language barrier, the school should hire more Spanish speaking teachers to address learning outcomes of Hispanic students and communicate with their parents.

A school-wide staff development program is needed in order to prepare certified staff to implement culturally responsive instructions (janitors, administrative staff, librarian, teacher assistants, etc.). Several factors point to the need for St. Andrew to develop a strong parent participation program to create a space for parents be involved in the planning and decisions about their child's education. The principal should be charged with providing a culturally responsive school environment for all students. While the principal of St. Andrew Academy stated that he supported diversity and understood the importance of developing a culturally responsive school, his beliefs were not manifested in the context of staff meetings, professional development training for teachers, parent-teacher conference, or planning of school social events.

## Recommendations for Future Studies

It would be valuable for future studies to research private or public schools that have strong based program successful in teaching RCELD students. It would also be beneficial to research schools and educational programs that use quality culturally responsive professional development with their teachers. Future research should investigate students' perceptions of how they evaluate the program at such schools as St. Andrew Academy. Further, it would be important to analyze their perceptions regarding the culturally responsive practices at their school. A major limitation of this study was the small sample size. This study should be replicated with a multi-case study with teachers, administrators, parents, and students from NativityMiguel schools to investigate their perceptions and practice of culturally responsive teaching. For a follow-up study, it would be significant to observe the teachers in their classrooms prior to discussing culturally responsive pedagogy and practice with them. It would also be helpful to interview the teachers after they received a series of culturally responsive professional development training.

## Conclusion

This study was designed to evaluate the perceptions and practice of stakeholders in a NativityMiguel school program as it relates to culturally responsive pedagogy. The findings highlighted the important role of schools in meeting the learning needs of RCELD students. For several decades, at the time of this writing, research reflected on the effects of culturally responsive pedagogy and how it promoted academic achievement in all students. Yet, in the U.S. many private and public schools failed to facilitate and

support culturally responsive pedagogy to create an effective learning environment for their students.

The findings of this study suggested that the teachers and school principal demonstrated a level of care and concern toward the basic needs of some students; however, they lacked the understanding of how to acknowledge the cultural differences in all their students. It is important for schools to embrace and build a strong relationship with students and their families in order to develop a culturally responsive school environment. While the results were not what the researcher hoped for, the findings contributed to the body of knowledge by addressing the need for future studies that address implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in K-12 schools.

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## Appendix A: Principal Interview Questionnaire

### Culturally Responsive Principal Interview

School: _____

Principal Name: (A-Z) _____

Date Interviewed: _____

1. How often does your school acknowledge and celebrate diversity?
2. What measures does your school have in place to implement a positive behavior support system for all students?
3. What are the greatest challenges in implementing culturally responsive instruction in your school? How do you plan to overcome those challenges?
4. Describe ongoing professional development, classroom instructions, or training that your teachers and staff receive to help develop a culturally diverse knowledge base.
5. How do you demonstrate caring as a culturally responsive leader?
6. What are the greatest challenges in collaborating with parents of (RCELD) racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic diversity? How do you overcome those challenges?
7. How do you consult and engage parents in school decisions that impact their children's academic achievement?
8. Describe on-going assessments, benchmarks, and evaluations your school uses to ensure students are meeting academic standards.
9. How does the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy affect student achievement in your school?
10. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    Certified_ Non-Certified_

    Area of Study_____
11. How many years have you worked in your current position?
12. How many years have you been in the education profession?

**Principal Name (Letter Codes A-Z will be used to identify principals (e.g. Mr. A or Ms. A)**

## Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questionnaire

### Culturally Responsive Teacher Interview

School: _____

Teacher Name: (A-Z) _____

Date Interviewed: _____

1. How often does your school acknowledge and celebrate diversity?
2. What measures does your school have in place to implement a positive behavior support system for all students?
3. What are the greatest challenges in implementing culturally responsive instruction in your school? How do you plan to overcome those challenges?
4. Describe ongoing professional development, classroom instructions, or training that you received to help develop a culturally diverse knowledge base.
5. How do you demonstrate caring as a culturally responsive educator?
6. How do you use culturally responsive materials, content, and teaching strategies in the classroom?
7. What are the greatest challenges in collaborating with parents of (RCELD) racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic diversity? How do you overcome those challenges?
8. How does your school seek involvement and decision making input from parents?
9. How does the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy affect student achievement in your school?
10. What is the highest level of education completed?
    Certified_ Non-Certified_ Area of Study_____
11. What grade level do you teach?
12. How many years have you taught in your current grade level?
13. How many years have you taught in your current school?
14. How many years have you been in the education profession?

**Teacher Name(Letter Codes A-Z will be used to identify teachers)**

## Appendix C: Parent Survey English Version

### POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE PARENT SURVEY

Thank you very much for your assistance in completing this survey. This questionnaire will seek to gather information from parents of students enrolled in NativityMiguel schools. This information is used to evaluate how parents feel about their child's school. All identifying information on this questionnaire will be held confidential and destroyed once entered into a statistical analysis program.

1. My child's school hosts social events like potlucks, family nights, and parent groups.
   ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
2. The principal and teachers at my child's school are warm and friendly.
   ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
3. Teachers and staff at my child's school show that they care about my child.
   ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
4. Teachers at my child's school are fair in how they discipline students.
   ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
5. Teachers at my child's school challenge students to keep them actively engaged in learning.
   ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
6. My child's school offer many opportunities for parent participation.
   ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
7. My child's school displays pictures, books, posters, artwork, and decorations that represent my child's race or culture.
   ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
8. My child's school keeps me informed by sending home letters, newsletters or notices about classroom and school activities.
   ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
9. When my child's school sends letters home they consider different languages and reading levels of families served by the school.
   ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
10. The principal and staff at my child's school have high expectations for my child.
    ___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree
11. School staff responds quickly and appropriately to issues of racism, prejudice, and discrimination reported by my child.

___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

12. Teachers use different teaching methods (e.g., role playing, class discussions, videos, culturally diverse instructional strategies) to make sure my child understands in the classroom.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

13. My child's school offers additional support for my child like, small group instruction, home support, tutors, and after school programs.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

14. My child's school assists my family in finding assistance when family crises arise.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

15. I receive feedback on the school's on-going assessment of my child's academic performance.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

16. I am invited to participate in school meetings for curriculum planning at my child's school.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

17. My child's school has an intervention to effectively deal with bullying, fighting, and truancy.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

18. When I have concerns about my child's progress, the principal and teachers respond to my request promptly.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

19. Community members are invited to participate in school programs and activities.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

20. My child's school is preparing him/her to succeed in high school, college, and later in life.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

21. Teachers in my child's school have the willingness to do home visits to build relationships with families and students.
___strongly agree ___agree ___neutral ___disagree ___strongly disagree

22. My child' school is a good place for culturally diverse learners.
__ strongly agree ___ agree ___ neutral ___ disagree ___strongly disagree

23. Overall, how do you rate the performance of your child's school?

**A-Excellent___ B-Good___ C-Fair ____ D-Needs Improvement____ F – Failing ____**

24. Please list what changes or improvements would make your child's school a better place to learn?
25. What is your child's gender? ___Female ___Male
26. What grade is your child in? ___6th ___7th ___8th
27. What is your child's race/ethnicity?
    ___African American/Black ___American Indian/Native American __Asian ___Hispanic/Latino

    ___White/European American ___Other Please Specify_____

## Appendix D: Parent Survey Spanish Version

### ENCUESTA PARA PADRES SOBRE EL CLIMA POSITIVO EN LAS ESCUELAS

Muchas gracias por su colaboración en la realización de esta encuesta. Este cuestionario tiene el objetivo de recoger información de los padres de los estudiantes matriculados en las escuelas de Miguel Natividad. Esta información se utilizará para hacer una evaluación sobre la opinión de los padres acerca de la escuela de sus hijos/as. Toda la información recogida en este cuestionario será mantenida confidencial durante el análisis del mismo y destruida una vez haya sido analizada por el programa de análisis estadístico.

1. La escuela de mi hijo/a organiza eventos tales como comidas informales, noches familiares y comidas de padres.

   ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

2. El director/a y los maestros/as de la escuela de mi hijo/a son cálidos y amables.

   ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

3. Los maestros/as y el personal de la escuela demuestran que se preocupan por mi hijo/a.

   ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

4. Los maestros/as de la escuela de mi hijo/a son justos cuando disciplinan a los estudiantes.

   ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

5. Los maestros/as de la escuela de mi hijo/a estimulan a los estudiantes para mantenerlos activamente involucrados en el aprendizaje.

   ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

6. La escuela de mi hijo/a ofrece muchas oportunidades para la participación de los padres.

   ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

7. La escuela de mi hijo/a muestra imágenes, libros, carteles, obras de arte y decoraciones que representan la raza o la cultura de mi hijo/a.

___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo
___totalmente en desacuerdo

8. La escuela de mi hijo/a me mantiene informado de las actividades de la clase y de la escuela mediante el envío de cartas, periódicos o noticias.

___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo
___totalmente en desacuerdo

9. Cuando la escuela de mi hijo/a envía cartas a casa tiene en cuenta los diferentes niveles de conocimiento de idiomas y de lectura de las familias cuyos hijos/as asisten a la escuela.

___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo
___totalmente en desacuerdo

10. El director/a y el personal de la escuela de mi hijo/a tienen altas expectativas sobre mi hijo/a.

___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo
___totalmente en desacuerdo

11. El personal escolar responde rápidamente y de manera adecuada a las cuestiones de racismo, prejuicios y discriminación denunciadas por mi hijo/a.

___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo
___totalmente en desacuerdo

12. Los maestros/as utilizan diferentes métodos de enseñanza (por ejemplo: juegos de rol, debates en clase, vídeos, estrategias de enseñanza culturales diversas) para asegurarse de que mi hijo/a entiende los contenidos en el aula.

___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo
___totalmente en desacuerdo

13. La escuela de mi hijo/a ofrece soporte adicional para mi hijo/a como instrucción en grupos pequeños, ayuda a domicilio, profesores particulares y programas para después de las clases.

___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo
___totalmente en desacuerdo

14. La escuela de mi hijo/a asiste a mi familia en la búsqueda de ayuda cuando surgen crisis familiares.

___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo
___totalmente en desacuerdo

15. Recibo información de la evaluación en curso de la escuela sobre el rendimiento académico de mi hijo.

___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

16. Me invitan a participar a reuniones de la escuela para la planificación curricular de mi hijo/a en la escuela.

    ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

17. La escuela de mi hijo/a interviene eficazmente para hacer frente a la intimidación, peleas y absentismo escolar.

    ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

18. Cuando tengo preocupaciones sobre el progreso de mi hijo/a, el director/a y los maestros/as responden a mi solicitud de inmediato.

    ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

19. Los miembros de la comunidad son invitados a participar en programas y actividades de la escuela.

    ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

20. La escuela de mi hijo/a le está preparando para tener éxito en el instituto, universidad y en su futuro en la vida.

    ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

21. Los maestros/as de la escuela de mi hijo/a tienen la voluntad de hacer visitas a casa para cimentar buenas relaciones con las familias y los estudiantes.

    ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

22. La escuela de mi hijo/a es un buen lugar para los estudiantes de diversas culturas.

    ___totalmente de acuerdo ___de acuerdo ___neutral ___en desacuerdo ___totalmente en desacuerdo

23. Por lo general, ¿cómo calificaría usted el desempeño de la escuela de su hijo/a?

    A-Excelente___ B-Bueno___ C-Justo ____ D-Necesita Mejorar____ E –Malo ____

24. Por favor indique que cambios o mejoras harían a la escuela de su hijo/a un mejor lugar para aprender.

25. ¿Cuál es el sexo de su hijo/a? ___Femenino ___ Masculino

26. ¿En qué grado esta su hijo/a? ___6th ___7th ___8th

27. ¿Cuál es la razia / etnia de su hijo/a?

    ___Afroamericano / Negro ___Indio Americano /Americano Nativo __Asiático ___Hispano / Latino

    ___Blanco / Americano Europeo ___Otros Por Favor especifica

## Appendix E: Observation Protocol

**CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY/SCHOOL OBSERVATION TOOL**

**BENCHMARK DESCRIPTION: Culture** is a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavior standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** Uses the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. Five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching based on research findings, theoretical claims, practical experiences, and personal stories of educators working with diverse students are; the development of a culturally diverse knowledge base, the design of culturally relevant curricula, the demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community, building effective cross-cultural communications, and delivering culturally responsive instructions (Gay, 2002)

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**INSTITUTION: _____**

**DATE OF OBSERVATION: _____**

**PARTICIPANTS:** Administrator(s) __ Parent(s) __ Teacher(s) __Other (specify) _____

**NO OF PARTICIPANTS:** less than 5__ 6-15__ 16-25__ more than 25__

**SESSION:** Parent Teacher Conference__ Parent Teacher Organization__ Professional Development __ School Event__ Staff Meeting__

| ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS/KEY INDICATORS<br>EVIDENCE/DOCUMENTATION | RATING |
|---|---|
| **Synthesis Rating:** 1=Not Observed 2= Observed Once 3= Observed Multiple Times 4= Observed Constantly | |
| 1) **The development of a culturally diverse knowledge base.** | 1 2 3 4 |
| a. School administration and staff shared their knowledge of diverse cultures. | |

b. Teachers discussed and examined their own values, beliefs, biases, and attitudes concerning culturally responsive pedagogy.
c. Session focused on learning about the history of various cultures' traditions, beliefs, and rituals.
d. Invited students and families to share their culture and traditions.

2) **The design of culturally relevant curricula.** 1 2 3 4

a. Identified the multicultural strengths and weaknesses of curriculum designs and instructional materials
b. Implemented changes as necessary to improve the overall quality of the curricula (emphasizing multi-cultural content)
c. Demonstrated awareness of curricula (formal, symbolic, media/societal, artifacts, bulletin board decorations, images of heroes and heroines, trade books) as an instrument of teaching about ethnic and cultural diversity
d. Identified the language needs of ESL students
e. Teachers and staff collaborated to design culturally responsive curriculum, instructions, formative and authentic student assessments.

3 **The demonstration of cultural caring and building a learning community.** 1 2 3 4

a. The school Mission Statement or Vision Statement includes a stated commitment to diversity.

b. Teachers and staff expressed caring attitude and commitment to help all students academically and personally.
c. Teachers and staff expressed high expectations for all students to achieve academically.
d. Teachers and staff engaged in discussions about their expectations and interactions with cultural diversity in the classroom.
e. The school hallways, walls, and classrooms showed decorated artifacts, pictures, and posters that represent multicultural populations.

4) **Building effective cross-cultural communications**. 1 2 3 4

a. Parent/teacher meeting

_Used language the parent(s) could understand

-Parent(s) concerns and questions about their child's education were answered

_Relevant issues were discussed

_Parent(s) were treated with courtesy and respect

_Established a plan for following up on parent conference regarding ongoing assessment of child's academic progress.

b. Language interpreter provided to help non-English speaking parents effectively communicate with school faculty.
c. Hosted social event to make connections with students, parents, and families.
d. Ceremony dedicated to celebrating the culture of students and families.

e. Trained teachers in cross-cultural communications to teach diverse students
f. Involved parents in the decision making of educational services their children receive, school policies, and other school activities.

5) **Delivering culturally responsive instructions.** 1 2 3 4

a. Reflected on prior experiences and performance styles of diverse students to develop; learning objectives, instructions, assessments, and curriculum.
a. Training/session focused on the practice of culturally responsive teaching.
b. Coached teachers to incorporate aspects of students' daily lives into classroom instructions.
c. Reflected on prior experiences and performance styles of diverse students to develop culturally relevant; learning objectives, instructions, assessments, and curriculum.