



# CULTURALLY RELEVANT COACHING: EMPOWERING NEW TEACHERS

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**Abstract:** An achievement gap exists in the United States between children of color and their white peers. This gap is most prevalent in literacy. Achievement in literacy is pertinent to student success in other content areas. To address this problem, educational researchers have identified a conceptual framework, culturally relevant pedagogy, that provides educators with strategies to integrate students' cultural experiences, understandings, and beliefs to encourage student success as well as foster cultural competence. The tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy were designed to address the impact of racism in the educational system. This article examines the use of culturally relevant pedagogy by novice teachers to address the needs of students of color. Using a narrative inquiry structure, the investigator collected data from seven beginning teachers. Data collection consisted of interviews using semi-structured, open-ended questions as well as constructed response journal entries. The findings of this study have implications regarding teacher preservice education and teacher professional development in terms of preparing and equipping novice teachers with the tools to address the needs of culturally diverse student populations. The investigator considered the findings and developed a coaching framework to address educational disparities and support educators to implement culturally relevant teaching practices.

**Key Words:** culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, antiracism, equity, instructional coaching

To address educational disparities, it is important that teachers implement pedagogy that honors the culture of students of color. Over 25 years ago, Gloria Ladson-Billings introduced the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy is an instructional ideology originating from Dr. Ladson-Billings' seminal study chronicled in *The Dream Keepers* and presented in her piece titled *But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (1995) and asserts that pedagogy that is culturally relevant perpetuates collective empowerment through the constructs of academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical/critical consciousness.

Practitioners of culturally relevant pedagogy implement effective teaching practices that address the achievement gap associated with students of color (Pitre, 2014; Schmeichel, 2012). Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) provides teachers with strategies to integrate students' cultural experiences, understandings, and beliefs to promote student achievement as well as cultivate a cultural competence (Durden et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Furthermore, effective use of CRP helps students develop a critical consciousness from which they learn to challenge societal oppression (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2014). To perpetuate success in students identifying as BIPOC, it is essential that educators adopt pedagogical practices that encompass strategies that are effective in addressing the unique educational issues associated with the cultural constructs of students of color.

Therefore, providing a coaching model/framework to develop/prepare novice teachers to address the challenges of fostering an equitable classroom environment and infuse culturally relevant instructional practices into an existing curriculum is essential to disrupting racism in education. The culturally relevant coaching

framework I developed encompasses the essential elements of effective coaching through the lens of equity and antiracism. That is, effective coaching is built on the foundation of trusting and transparent relationships where coach and teacher collaborate and investigate who they are individually as educators, i.e., core beliefs and ideals. Furthermore, a coach and teacher must begin a journey to explore the research around racism in education including critical race theory to understand the need for culturally relevant coaching and teaching. To be a culturally relevant coach, it is essential to be knowledgeable in pedagogy, instructional strategies, content, and the social constructs of race, intersectionality, equity, white supremacy, antiracism, and the social-emotional aspects of being an educator. Finally, the coach prompts the teacher to change their practices by providing the impetus for self-reflection. Aguilar (2020) describes this in her transformational coaching framework as creating new beliefs and thus new behaviors.

### Foundations of Culturally Relevant Coaching

According to this description by Gay (2002), culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly” (p. 106). With Ladson-Billings’ work as a foundation, Geneva Gay developed a framework focusing on teachers’ strategies and practices (Muniz, 2019). The term *culturally responsive teaching*, developed by Gay uses, “the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p. 106). Both Geneva Gay and Ladson-Billings place emphasis on students’ critical thinking about societal inequities. They also come from a place of asset versus deficit thinking regarding the instruction of children of color (Muniz, 2019). Gay’s ideology of culturally relevant teaching is the action that pedagogical practitioners take when they are invested in culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally Relevant Teaching is theory in practice!

To understand the need for a framework to support teachers as they implement culturally relevant teaching practices, it is critical to examine educational disparities as they relate to children of color. A pervasive problem exists in education regarding the gap of literacy achievement between white students and students of color (Barnes & Slate, 2014; Craft & Slate, 2012; Ford & Moore, 2013; Pitre, 2014). According to NAEP (2020) data from 2019, students of color scored an average of 23.5 points below their white peers in reading proficiency. According to the Cooperative Children’s Book Center, in 2018, 77% of characters in children’s books were animals/other or white. There are fewer students of color in advanced courses than their white peers (Patrick et al., 2020). African American and Latino students are more likely to drop out of high school, demonstrate academic failure, and demonstrate an unreadiness for college and career than their white peers (Barnes & Slate, 2014; Craft & Slate, 2012; Ford & Moore, 2013; Mansfield & Thachik, 2016; Patel et al., 2016; Pitre, 2014). Regardless of whether schools reside in rural, urban, or suburban communities, students of color are also less likely to have experienced, highly qualified, certified teachers than their white peers, and the teachers are not culturally competent (Cardichon et al., 2020; Ford & Moore, 2013; Pitre, 2014). Moreover, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, 80% of public-school teachers are white and 2% of the 7% of black teachers are males. Preservice teachers who enter the profession providing instruction in schools with large populations of BIPOC leave teacher preparation programs ill-equipped to address the pedagogical needs of diverse student populations (Edwards & Kuhlman, 2007). Furthermore, it is apparent that preservice teachers have the desire and the need to learn how to navigate classrooms with diverse student populations. However, preservice teacher programs are not providing preservice teachers with the knowledge to implement CRP (Taylor et al., 2016). School systems provide little professional development pertaining to culturally relevant pedagogy (Johnson & Bolshakova, 2015).

To educate teachers, educational leaders and educators associated with teacher education must focus on implementing coaching strategies that facilitate antiracist and equitable education practices in the ELAR classroom. It is essential that teacher practices in the classroom support culturally relevant pedagogy. Therefore, teachers



must implement instruction and use a curriculum that honors and values students of color which in turn will support the academic success and growth of ALL students. The culturally relevant coaching framework was founded on the practices and beliefs of Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay: To facilitate academic success, put students on the road to academic excellence by fostering high expectations and providing classroom environments that cultivate excellence. To develop cultural competence, students must know and experience their culture and the cultures of their peers through windows, mirrors, and sliding doors in the curriculum and in instruction. To foster critical thinking that will disrupt racism and inequity, teach students not content; in other words, teaching students to read and to write using a gradual release process that incorporates higher order questioning.

To further my knowledge about what novice teachers know about culturally relevant teaching, I engaged in a study using a sample of teachers to examine novice educators' use of culturally relevant teaching practices with low SES students of color. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single case study was to examine the teaching practices of seven beginning content area teachers regarding their use of culturally relevant pedagogy when working with low SES students of color. I studied the teachers' use of culturally relevant pedagogy in terms of literacy and content instruction with low SES students of color in elementary grades to explore how culturally relevant teaching strategies are implemented and what culturally relevant teaching adds to the curriculum (Jafee, 2016; Milner, 2014).

Gay (2013) asserts that culturally responsive practitioners use cultural knowledge as a framework for curriculum development, the implementation of instructional practices, and the establishment of a classroom environment characterized by relationships. Furthermore, educators who practice culturally relevant pedagogy focus on academic achievement, sociopolitical consciousness, and cultural competence to respond to the needs of students oppressed by the mainstream system (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014; Santamaria, 2009).

To investigate teachers' use of culturally relevant instructional practices, I embarked upon a qualitative study. Qualitative case study research helps to provide an explanation to human behavior using multiple points of data to investigate a phenomenon and draw conclusions (Yin, 2015). The qualitative researcher collects data through observation and narrative to examine a phenomenon in real time (Cresswell, 2014). Qualitative researchers are the primary source of data collection regarding phenomenological studies and characteristically use the fieldwork model to gather information about the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

To gather information regarding the culturally relevant teaching practices associated with beginning teachers, I collected data using interviews and reflective journal entries. These forms of data collection provided the researcher with real-time bits of information relevant to the environmental context (Merriam, 1998). Multiple sources of data provide the researchers with evidence to verify findings, in-depth details, and triangulation (Pearson et al., 2015).

To analyze the data collected for this study, I conducted an in-depth review of interview transcripts and used qualitative software to code data as it relates to strategies pertaining to culturally relevant teaching regarding students of color. The codes were developed to ascertain trends related to the research questions of *How do novice teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy?* and *What strategies*

*do novice teachers use to implement culturally relevant pedagogy?* Some of the codes included the following: culturally connected, culturally relevant, collaboration, building relationships, classroom environment, engagement, culturally relevant lesson planning, incorporating cultural differences, success and challenges, and cultural awareness associated with culturally relevant teaching. My research revealed the following themes:

- A lack of familiarity with the phrase *culturally relevant pedagogy*
- A lack of preparedness to meet the challenges of classroom teaching with diverse students
- Feeling ineffective as CRP practitioners
- Feeling challenged by curriculum constraints
- Students' cultural bias toward other students
- A lack of knowledge for how to implement CRP

Interviewing these teachers and studying their narratives was the impetus for developing the culturally relevant coaching framework. It became evident that the teachers wanted to implement culturally relevant teaching but did not know how. Therefore, I developed the Culturally Relevant Coaching framework to implement the essential elements of effective coaching through the lens of equity and anti-racism.

### **Culturally Relevant Coaching Framework**

The first part of the framework, Building Community, is a focus on fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. An effective coaching community is built on the foundation of a trusting and transparent relationship where coach and teacher collaborate and investigate who they are individually as educators in terms of core beliefs and ideals. The second aspect of the framework, Building Knowledge, is essential because to be a culturally relevant coach, it is critical to be knowledgeable in pedagogy, instructional strategies, content, and the social constructs of race, intersectionality, equity, white supremacy, antiracism, and the social-emotional aspects of being an educator. The final part of the framework is Building Change, the coach supports and prompts the teacher to change their practices by providing the impetus for self-reflection in the area of race and equity as well as instructional strategies that amplify the voices of BIPOC.

#### **Building Community—Commonalities and Connections**

As coaches and as campus leaders, when we work with teachers or educators in leadership, it is essential that we establish relationships that go beyond the surface level. Examining the research aligned to educational disparities allows us to build and activate our schema and helps us to focus on our WHY! Building Community allows us to unify around common beliefs to defeat and dismantle racist practices on a systemwide level...one teacher at a time.

Build Community by starting with educator self-awareness and educators discovering commonalities in terms of experiences, attitudes, interests, cultural beliefs, and goals. Modeling this process in the coach-teacher relationship will perpetuate the same in the teacher-student relationship. Community fosters trust. Trust allows you to build deep connections. Making connections and finding commonalities with peers fosters a positive classroom environment that demonstrates respect and care. Making connections with

a teacher fosters high expectations and academic success. Rita Pierson (2013) said, “Kids don’t learn from people they don’t like!”

Sara (all participant names are pseudonyms) found getting to know her students was helpful for building relationships with them. She stated, “Getting to know their culture, and not just assuming you know their culture by looking at their race. Asking the students things about themselves. Letting them know things about yourself and your culture so that you can connect and see similarities and things like that. And once you really understand what kind of cultural makeup you have in your class, then you can go from there.”

Kameron believed that learning about students’ backgrounds was important for building rapport and earning their respect. “If you don’t have their respect, it doesn’t matter what you teach, because they don’t have any buy-in.” To do this, Kameron spends time at the beginning of the year getting to know his students. This includes not only their culture, but what they like to do, what their favorite colors are, and their favorite sports teams, for example. Then, Kameron uses this information to tailor lessons to fit his students, “because I think it kind of plays a double role of getting them comfortable with me and the people around them, and me accessing them culturally.” Erika also spends time at the beginning of each school year getting to know her students. This includes having lunch with two to three students at a time to really meet and learn about them, and through this, her students “knew I was invested in them.” Sadie has enhanced her relationships with students by learning about their cultural backgrounds. She shared how, when she had several Nepali students, she learned how to greet them and say key phrases in their native language to foster connections with those students. Identifying commonalities and making connections is a foundational component of culturally relevant coaching as it prompts relationship-building by teacher and coach and teacher with student.

### **Build Knowledge—Constructs and Competencies**

To understand culturally relevant pedagogy and address educational disparities, it is critical to have knowledge around the constructs that are associated with equity and antiracism. These constructs are important in terms of deepening our understanding of equity and the necessity for culturally relevant coaching. To engage in culturally relevant coaching, educators who support teachers should build their knowledge regarding these constructs. Furthermore, these constructs provide a common language and understanding of ideas around equity and antiracism and are important in terms of deepening our understanding of educational equity, disrupting racism in education, and creating the necessity for culturally relevant educational practices. Moreover, gaining understanding of cultural constructs supports an educator’s cultural competence by making that educator cognizant of cultural nuances. I will briefly explore three pertinent constructs.

*White supremacy* is the ideology that white people are superior. The categorization of people by skin color is a concept that originated less than 500 years ago and appeared for the first time in colonial records in the 1680s. It was a way to describe superiority of Europeans over Africans (Aguilar, 2020). In education, this is exemplified in what is taught in the curriculum and what is not taught. African American culture is often not present, and curriculum subjects are often taught through a white lens where whiteness is centered. One example is the idea that slavery is often taught as a benevolent institution. In 2018, in San Antonio, Texas, parents criticized a history homework assignment in which eighth

grade students had to list positive and negative aspects of slavery. The activity was aligned to a textbook used by the school for around ten years, titled *Prentice Hall Classics: A History of the United States*, that claimed all slave owners were not cruel (Greenlee, 2019).

According to the 2017 Kirwan Institute Implicit Bias Review, *implicit bias* can be characterized as those attitudes or stereotypes affecting our actions, understanding of events, and decisions in an unconscious manner that may advantage some people while disadvantaging others. A study conducted by Dr. Walter Gilliam from Yale about the disparities regarding Pre-K expulsion and suspension rates between black and white students, particularly boys, described the role implicit bias plays in Pre-K teachers’ assumptions of what constitutes misbehavior and who misbehaves more often. Teacher perception impacts expulsion and suspensions. Gilliam says the three Bs of expulsion risk are being big, black, and a boy (as cited in Otto, 2021).

The term *microaggression* was coined by African American Harvard psychiatrist Chester Pierce. According to Dr. Derald Wing Sue, who amplified the term, “Microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership” (Kendi, 2019, p.46). Educators may perpetrate microaggressions in the classroom by having low expectations for a specific group of students based on ethnicity or expecting a student to represent their entire race or ethnicity,

Teacher-participants in the study shared various perspectives and schema regarding the meaning of culturally relevant teaching and demonstrated varying degrees of cultural competence. Many participants reported possessing little knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy prior to their classroom experience. Sara described a course she took on social education in her teacher preparation course. She shared that the professor was particularly good, and “she was really big on just urging us to learn about other cultures so that you can teach from more than one perspective.” Despite this training, Sara said that in her first year of teaching, “you just try to survive,” and thus was less focused on culturally relevant teaching. “When you posed that question [How do you believe culturally relevant teaching affects your instruction?] to me, it kind of makes me wince because I’m like wow, I should have been paying more attention to whether or not my teaching was culturally relevant.”

Erika described gaining cultural knowledge through observation. She said that she did not believe culturally relevant teaching was taught to her but was something that she started to notice in the classroom. She became aware of the need for culturally relevant teaching during the previous academic year when teaching a lesson that involved an example of skiing. Erika stated, “We live in Houston of all places, and it doesn’t snow, so [students] don’t have any experience with skiing, so I’m like, ‘How is this even relevant to a whole group of kids who’ve probably never seen snow, and probably have never been skiing before?’ That’s when I started realizing I have to start teaching them things that are relevant to them, for them to understand what I’m talking about.”

Josiah and Sadie learned about culturally relevant pedagogy after becoming teachers. Josiah described learning the hard way because he was “thrust into this industry.” He quickly learned that he was unaware of many cultures and his students might be from those different cultural backgrounds and stated, “I had to develop an understanding of what it was and what it means to be from another country and not understand American cultures and to open my mind up to understand what all of their cultural beliefs and

guidelines and some of the things that may be going on in their homes that I didn't understand, that either I learned from the children or from researching, again, in order to better connect with the students." Sadie stated, "[I learned about culturally relevant pedagogy] just through having those different students, almost being thrown into it and learning how to swim." Brittany had not heard of culturally relevant pedagogy before, at least not by that name. Of culturally relevant pedagogy, Brittany said, "I understood that it was making sure that students weren't kind of stuck in their own small world view, but they were able to understand and be sensitive to the other cultures around them." She acknowledged that any other understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy was "minimal." Domenica understood culturally relevant teaching to be aligning to student interests. "Culturally relevant teaching is when you as an educator take the time to adjust your lessons and activities to kind of align with what your student's culture is. So, what their likes, dislikes, and interests are." Participants shared that they had a lack of training in terms of culturally relevant teaching theory and practice as well as a lack of resources and materials. Consequently, teachers identified these factors that contribute to their ineffectiveness as cultural relevant pedagogical practitioners.

Kameron said that the biggest success was the awareness that students gain of other cultures an understanding that "there are people just like you who look nothing like you, who have the same thoughts and ideas which you do." Participants noted that students felt safe and more confident in their abilities. Consequently, students would be inclined to take more instructional risks. The participants indicated that students made academic gains that the teachers attributed to culturally relevant teaching strategies. Erika said, "The kids grasping the concepts and being excited to learn and practice—it is really good." Josiah noticed that class participation increased as a result of incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy, and that students' confidence is higher: "I'm talking about me, too, because I'm growing with the children, so my participation is higher, and my confidence level grows as theirs grows." Josiah also noticed students' excitement and that their outlook was more positive, and parental involvement has increased because Josiah involves everyone in the family in culturally relevant teaching. Brittany said that she has noticed that the students who receive culturally relevant teaching at the elementary school are "more well-rounded than necessarily just providing this one small, this is what we learned, this is your history, this is what you're used to hearing. And they go up in the years and there's never any other kind of information that they're being shared with." Brittany continued, "So I think in fourth grade it's hard to see that, but I could see how planting those seeds early on really provides more well-rounded, understanding students as they get older." Culturally competency begins with gaining deep knowledge of constructs aligned to culturally relevant pedagogy. Novice teachers understand



the importance of being culturally competent and fostering cultural competence in the classroom.

### Building Change—Consciousness and Critical Thinking

To build change, we must focus on implementing coaching practices that address the facilitation of equitable instruction and instructional practices/strategies. Participants encountered challenges to implementing culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom. Sara believed these challenges to be curriculum-based, and stated, "Some of the challenges that I encounter are the lack of culturally relevant training and the lack of culturally relevant strategies and activities in the curriculum." Kameron felt similarly about the curriculum. Kameron said, "One thing that may come as a challenge is having the time and materials to implement the type of strategies that would promote cultural relevance. Veering off the beaten path (the curriculum) takes lot of time, confidence, and experience. As a new teacher, I think it will be challenging for me to step outside the box and do more than what is asked of me."

It is essential that instructional leaders and teacher educators provide teachers with a strong foundation in the theoretical constructs of culturally relevant teaching including cultural competence, academic success, and sociopolitical consciousness that will foster the implementation of lessons and strategies that address the needs of children of color. This should be done by offering preservice

classes in teacher education programs that seek to deepen teacher' understanding regarding the constructs of CRP so that culturally relevant pedagogy will translate into practice (Lopez, 2011). It is important that teachers of literacy value student achievement in the area of language arts but are also cognizant of the importance of cultural competence and political consciousness (Payne & Laughter, 2013). For novice teachers, providing purposeful and targeted coaching that fosters self-reflection is critical to ensuring the

implementation of culturally relevant teaching practices.

School systems do not provide adequate professional development pertaining to cultural relevance. Therefore, many teachers, particularly some white middle-class teachers in school systems who work with children of color may be ill-equipped to address the unique needs of diverse learners. These teachers are viewing students through a cultural lens that reflects their beliefs and backgrounds (Johnson & Bolshakova, 2015). It is critical for *all* teachers to examine their biases and use culturally relevant teaching practices to ensure that all learners benefit from instruction that is focused on high expectations, critical thinking, and critical consciousness.

Many of the novice teachers in the study reported that they had not been cognizant of the constructs of culturally relevant teaching prior to entering the classroom. Some reported taking preservice



classes that generally addressed the notions of diversity and culture. Many participants reported possessing little knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy prior to their classroom experience.

Sara drew from her own childhood experiences in school when describing culturally relevant teaching. As a child, she was “always the only little black [kid] in the class.” This participant uses her own experience as a reminder to teach to every student in her classroom and not just the majority. Sara is also learning as she gains more teaching experience how to teach in more culturally relevant ways. She said that while she feels that she able to relate to her students on a cultural level, she seeks opportunities to learn more about their different cultural backgrounds, as she did when a student was celebrating Ramadan, a holiday about which she knew little.

Many participants discussed curriculum constraints as a major challenge. The teachers shared that curriculum, in many instances, did not support culturally relevant teaching because lessons focused on “average or mainstream” students. Erika felt that state curriculum should be more inclusive. “What I wish that independent school districts across Texas would do is when they make this curriculum that they do a little bit more research. . . . I like to personalize it for my students’ experiences, I would like to see that they include more cultural things inside of the curriculum itself. That way our kids are being able to be exposed to other types of things.” Furthermore, Erika felt that the writers of curriculum were disconnected from the classroom and were thus unaware of the diverse cultural backgrounds from which students came. Erika stated: “I’m not a curriculum writer. I don’t know who’s up there, but I’m just going to assume that it’s a possibility that there’s not very many diverse people that are there. Maybe if we had more Indian curriculum writers, more African curriculum writers, maybe Eastern European people that are all writing together, we would get something a little bit different. Then maybe also we’re afraid to explore that because that’s too far-fetched.”

Participants indicated that having students from many different backgrounds posed a challenge as the teachers were unsure as to how to engage and offer effective instruction to students. Participants also mentioned cultural bias as a challenge regarding the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy. Teachers reported that students demonstrate bias against their own culture or the cultures of others as well as that they feel a teacher may favor one culture over another. Kameron stated: “I think at times students can feel like maybe you’re showing one culture more than another or you’re not talking about their culture or you’re not showing the best parts of what they know about where they’re from. And so I think that sometimes students will feel like maybe you’re leaving them out, especially if you’re trying to teach about different cultures and you don’t teach theirs for five weeks, then they’re going to start wondering. Sometimes I think that students also bring with them certain misconceptions and it can be a challenge to break those.” The narratives shared by the participants align to the research in terms of the challenges regarding ensuring that all students’ cultural backgrounds are addressed in a culturally responsive and relevant classroom.

The purpose of culturally relevant teaching is to provide educators with a pedagogical philosophy and set of strategies that encourages teachers to be cognizant of the cultural background of students and use that to foster student success, cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Participants reported that their students felt culturally empowered by learning about their own cultures and made cultural connections. Kameron believed that incorporating culturally relevant teaching lessons could be “as simple as finding texts or activities or games that are from other cultures,” or could be studying other cultures. Kameron continued, “I think it’s important for teachers to recognize that not everyone is going to have the same culture you have, and so if you are able to bring another culture, do it.” He clarified that even

if there are not any students with the cultural background under discussion, discussing other cultures is important for increasing students' cultural awareness overall.

Kameron also incorporated different cultural perspectives into curriculum. He teaches history and believes it was important to incorporate different perspectives "when we're going over different parts of American history." Kameron did this by talking "about the cultures of the Native Americans who were already here, and the South Americans who were already here, and things like that."

The students believed that their cultures were significant and that all cultures should be respected. Many participants noted that students became more culturally aware. Brittany felt that "the biggest success would just be having my students understand that not every world is the same as theirs." Brittany believed that the environment in which her students live is bubble-like, where students see the same perspectives and backgrounds regularly, and that students rarely have the opportunity to expand outside of these bubbles except in school. Brittany stated: "Being intentional about using materials like Malala's autobiography really allowed me to see that these kids crave that. And then requesting other stories similar to that was kind of eye-opening to me, because I wasn't even sure how they would respond to that story. And then having students say like, 'Well I didn't even know you could get shot for wanting to be educated. And maybe I should appreciate what I get here more.'"

To address this gap in teacher education, a recommendation for practice is that school systems must offer novice teachers ongoing professional development in the strategies and implementation of culturally relevant instruction. This professional development should be in the form of classes as well as instructional coaching by pedagogical professionals well-versed in the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy.

### Conclusion

The findings of my study emphasized the ways in which novice teachers implement culturally relevant teaching in their classrooms and the challenges that accompany this process. Furthermore, the narrative data support the need for a culturally relevant coaching framework. It is evident that instructional coaches and other educational leaders must implement strategies to support teachers as they seek to practice culturally relevant pedagogy in the ELAR classroom. To address educational disparities and the importance of diversity in the curriculum and instruction, educators must consider windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors in terms of literacy and other learning areas. These terms coined by Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) about books remind us that books and other educational resources should be windows that allow us to look through and see other cultures, sliding doors that allow us to enter the world of another culture, and mirrors, where children see reflections of themselves.

The culturally relevant coaching framework provides educators with guidelines to support teachers as they implement instruction that honors the voices of children of color by fostering academic growth, developing cultural competence, and fostering critical thinking to disrupt racism and inequity. Culturally relevant educators must consider the 6 Cs of culturally relevant coaching:

### Commonalities and Connections—Building Community

- self-interrogate and examine their own identity and core beliefs
- build relationships with your students
- choose your read-aloud texts intentionally with the culture of the students in mind
- keep instruction student-centered
- employ restorative justice practices

### Constructs and Competencies—Building Knowledge

- acknowledge, address, and dismantle white supremacy in the curriculum
- disrupt racist practices and speech including microaggressions
- address implicit bias
- recognize that equity and antiracist work is not employing a set of activities or having a Diversity/Equity/Inclusion PD day; it is a commitment to changing the mindset of educators through education and accountability
- develop students' cultural awareness through literature

### Consciousness and Critical Thinking—Building Change

- engage in real and courageous and deep, not surface-level conversations about race
- use books and other text resources that depict children of color in everyday life; it is important that children do not see children of color in a one-dimensional way
- adapt the curriculum to reflect the students you serve
- co-construct lessons with teacher peers to ensure that equity and antiracism are both explicit and embedded into instruction
- go beyond just having a diverse classroom library; pull out those books and read them!
- disrupt damaging discourse
- reframe thinking and challenge speech that is racist and biased
- collect data around equity and racist practices
- tally the number of times a teacher excludes a group of students
- develop a checklist or accountability document that targets specific behaviors aligned to a campus or district wide equity goal

It is essential that novice teachers be educated in the theoretical aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy as well as the practical applications of implementation. Educators must take the opportunity to view the gap between the perceived theoretical notion of culturally relevant pedagogy and the application of the

constructs. Educational policymakers must be cognizant of the importance of culturally relevant teaching as our classrooms are becoming more diverse. It is imperative that novice teachers are provided with the tools to be successful regarding instruction as it is applied through the lens of cultural diversity.

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