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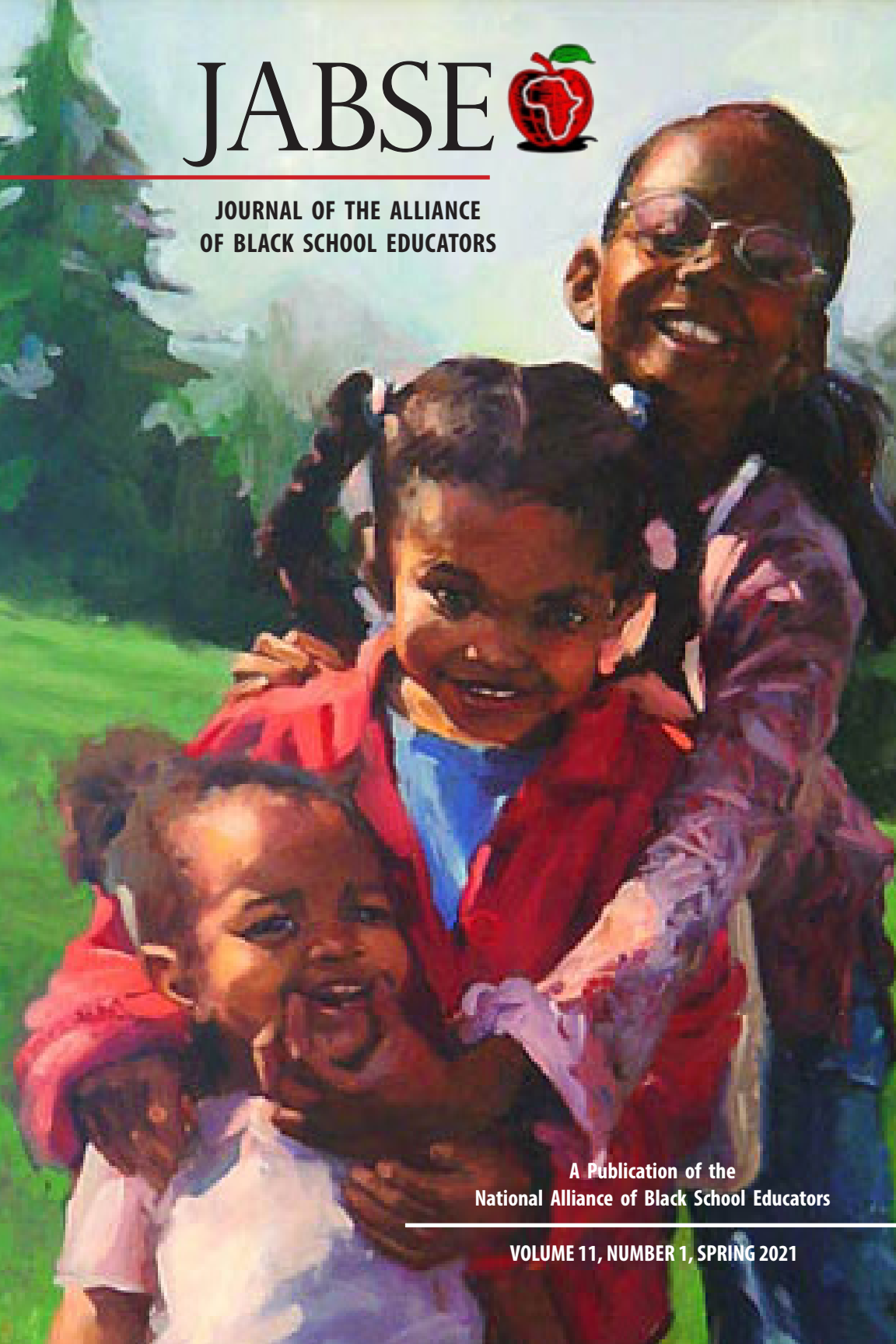

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EDITORS

EDITORIAL REVIEW PANEL

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EDITORS' NOTES

Educational Equity! We are hearing about *Educational Equity* and plans to embed educational equity throughout curricula, instructional programs, professional learning. Additionally, this includes parent/family engagement and leadership development. State Policies are being established to focus on students' equitable access to educational rigor, resources designed to enrich students' academic excellence and social emotional well-being.

Local school systems are asked to prioritize practices for educational equity. These practices include eliminating barriers, accessing learning opportunities for each student, improving achievement and eliminating achievement gaps. *Educational Equity* means that every student has access to opportunities, resources, and educational rigor. These components are needed throughout their educational career to maximize their academic success and social emotional well-being.

What is happening across the country to ensure educational equity? Our authors explore various practices. They establish a sense of urgency for the development of early childhood education practices and professional learning. They include a focus on cultural responsive teaching, evidence based interventions and structures that promote school improvement.

Authors Essien and Wood ask the question, *Do Black Minds Matter?* Of course we know the answer. These authors explore three primary ways that the ascription of intelligence are evident in early learning. One of the evidences include how some educators are surprised when Black children demonstrate high levels of intelligence. The study found that a sense of surprise was evident across the experiences of Black boys and girls but was more dominant in one gender. This microaggression involves messages to Black boys that they are academically inferior: The study informs readers of the urgency to provide professional learning and development to teachers with a focus on cultural responsive teaching.

Authors Ashby-Bey, Gamble-Lomax, and Hooper from Coppin State University, highlight teacher education programs. The programs support academic, social, political, and economic freedom of disenfranchised students. The authors advocate for decolonizing curricula to support the history, culture, and economic growth of all students-particularly urban students. This article focuses on an intervention model supporting full integration of concepts grounded in Critical Race Theory.

The authors cite decolonized curricula are essential. They conclude that preservice teachers recognize most PreK-12 schools claim to implement a mission of equity diversity, and multiculturalism. The authors argue that preservice teachers blatantly disregard students' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and familial knowledge inherent in Black students.

Author Massey proposes developing African American preservice teachers' conceptual understanding of fractions through reasoning strategies. The author insists that preservice teachers need to conceptualize fractions using reasoning strategies to thoroughly teach fractions to elementary students. This study examines reasoning skills to order fractions, estimate the operation of fractions, and actual computation of fractions using various models introduced to African American preservice teachers. The author cites teachers were able to use reasoning skills to conceptualize fractions. However, preservice teachers gravitated to their chosen model.

Some schools across the country have established a framework for school improvement. In this comparative study, two schools with similar backgrounds are examined. They are characterized by free and reduced lunch and in a rural setting. Authors Burt and Shen investigate associations between content and process of school improvement including varying levels of student achievement. As you read the study determine if a data driven focus was a component in the school improvement process that effects student achievement.

Authors Barber and Welch invite us to consider the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the school to prison pipeline. Due to the Pandemic, the country endured an unprecedented health crisis. Youth involved in juvenile facilities and those in schools confronted with zero-tolerance policies faced challenges during the pandemic. Rigorous discipline policies and procedures designed to deter students from exhibiting undesirable behaviors left an indelible mark on African American students. Students were incarcerated for minor infractions, instead of accessing equal opportunities to learn. The authors provide background on the school-to prison pipeline. They also discuss the state of education as related to the COVID-19 Pandemic, including educational outcomes for youth in juvenile facilities.

These articles provide opportunities to explore *Educational Equity* in State agencies and local school systems. Such explorations confront the multiple issues in our schools, including the greater society. Using an equity lens, it is a beginning. An equity lens provides opportunities to critically examine established policies and procedures. We must support *Educational Equity*. Supporting *Educational Equity* ensures the vision of establishing systems, structures and supports for schools, students, teachers, families and community stakeholders.

The Editors,
Gail Clark Dickson, Ed.D. and Wesley L. Boykin, Ph.D.

DECOLONIZATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULA: INTERRUPTING THE PATTERNS OF WHITENESS WHEN PREPARING PRESERVICE TEACHERS FOR URBAN CLASSROOMS

Juanita Ashby-Bey, Ph.D.
Wyletta Gamble-Lomax, Ph.D.
Leta Hooper, Ed.D.
Coppin State University

This article shares the approach that one Historically Black Colleges and Universities' (HBCUs) teacher education program used to challenge the colonizing structure of American education. The intent is to support teacher education programs with facilitating the academic, social, political, and economic freedom of disenfranchised students using curricula. The authors advocate for decolonizing curricula to support the history, culture, and economic growth of all students, including urban students. Additionally, this article articulates discoveries gleaned from implementing an intervention model to support full integration of the education curricula. The concepts are grounded in Critical Race Theory as the theoretical framework. Finally, the authors reflect on two components that emerged during implementation – preservice teachers' responses during Intervention Sessions and preservice teachers' responses to critical dialogue spaces.

Keywords: colonized curriculum, teacher preparation, scholars of color, urban education, decolonized curriculum, culturally responsive teaching, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, reality pedagogy

The current racial climate in the United States of America is uncomfortable yet becoming frighteningly familiar. We hear stories about racist encounters, and even though the initial shock diminishes, the rage and desire for change still exists. Daily headlines include problematic perspectives and marginalized lived racial experiences throughout the country. From immigration to police brutality, national protests to discrimination, and sexual harassment to inequitable learning environments, race is often an essential component that leads to a dismantling of basic human rights.

Moreover, contrary to a popular misconception, we do not live in a post-racial society. This is blatantly apparent when the Twitterverse is continually in an uproar about the proclamation and demand that Black lives matter and the need for the inclusion of multicultural voices in politics. The falsehood of a post-racial society permeates the school environment, as well, particularly when educators assert themselves as "colorblind." Not only is this stance dishonest, but it is also problematic to dismiss the societal and historical stigmas that are attached to race, particularly for people of color. Systemically, people of color encounter barriers at numerous junctures, including but not limited to healthcare, employment, housing, and, arguably, the most important barrier, equitable education.

Since the landmark decisions of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 and 1955, the curriculum for teacher education programs and PreK-12 schools has prioritized Eurocentric and White male, heteronormative, affluent, and able-bodied ideologies (Milner, 2013; Siddle-Walker, 2009; Sleeter, 2016). These ideologies have traditionally fueled accreditation programs and requirements for teacher certification. They also assert what constitutes as essential knowledge to practice "good teaching" (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The core of

this knowledge is Whiteness, which has a colonized and oppressive rippling effect that influences teacher education curriculum, course content, recruitment and retention of faculty, and teacher preparation experiences for preservice teachers of color. (Haddix, 2017; Sleeter, 2016).

Another example of racial inequity and racial barriers is reflected in the lawsuit brought forth by Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) against the state of Maryland. There was a push towards resolution of inequitable funding stemming from a 13-year-old lawsuit, which addresses the lack of funding provided by the state for HBCUs. With a final offer of $200 million, advocates of HBCUs were dissatisfied as the original request was closer to $600 million to be allocated over the next 10 years (Douglas-Gabriel & Wiggins, 2019). This situation with HBCUs is a national crisis and one that cannot be ignored when considering, again, how race plays a critical role in basic access and opportunity. This crisis also speaks to Ladson-Billings' (2006) work on educational debt. According to Ladson-Billings (2006), political, educational, and economic leaders' failure to equitably fund education institutions is a way of backpedaling on the promises of the landmark decisions of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 and 1955.

Fortunately, the United States of America is changing. By the year 2050, what was once considered normal will look drastically different. This change includes racial and socioeconomic demographic shifts that will have a lasting impact both nationally and internationally. According to Kotkin (2010), the diversity that once was unique to major cities will become normalized across the country because "the vast majority of America's net population growth will be in its racial minorities" (p. 1). With this racial shift, we as teacher educators call for a paradigm shift in teacher preparation, including the curricula, nationwide. Both the racial and paradigm shifts will highlight diversity, but it starts with examining the current student and teacher demographics in our nation's PreK-12 classrooms and teacher education curricula used to prepare preservice teachers to effectively respond to diversity and the foundation of Whiteness reflected in curricula.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a post-modern and post-structural research paradigm that repositions the narratives and stories of people of color to question and counter Westernized ideologies, policies, and practices that continuously advocate for the privilege of White, Christian, able-bodied, heterosexual, and affluent people. These ideologies, policies, and practices are dominant and rooted in meritocracy, objectivity, capitalism, and race neutrality to influence institutional, structural, and systemic systems that exist in society. CRT consists of five tenets. In this article, we have applied two tenets of CRT to make meaning of our experiences with modifying the curricula for the teacher education programs.

First, CRT posits that race and racism is entrenched in society and has historically engineered our societies global perspectives, including perspectives on education. This theory suggests that racism commonly intersects with other forms of oppression based on any of the following identities--sexuality, gender, class, language, skin complexion, ability, religion, and citizenship status (Crenshaw, 1991). Next, CRT rejects race-neutral, objective, meritocracy, and equal opportunity narratives, policies, and practices because these claims have traditionally served the interest of the private, corporate, and White popu-

lations. Additionally, "naming one's own reality" is embodied in the practices of CRT (Crenshaw, 1991). According to Ladson-Billings (1995), truth can only be objective when identified through moral and political analysis. Further truth is situational based on how information is interpreted and conveyed publicly. Therefore, creating platforms that allow people to narrate and interpret their experiences or "naming [their] own reality" relative to a policy or event promotes liberation and establishes truth.

EXPLORATION OF LITERATURE

Teaching Force

As of 2017-18, 79% of public school teachers were White, 9% were Hispanic, and 7% were Black. There is a clear disparity between teachers of color and students of color when you note that currently more than half of the current student population is non-White (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a). Approximately 27% of public-school students are Hispanic, 15% are Black, 5% are Asian, 4% are two or more races, and about 1% are American Indian/Alaska Native and Pacific Islander (U.S. Department of Education, 2020b). Milner (2007) confirms this as a challenge by stating, "Never before have public school teachers in the United States been faced with the challenge of meeting the needs of so many diverse learners, yet the teaching force is White, monolingual, and middle class" (p. 394).

Preparing preservice teachers at this HBCU affords them with a unique opportunity. Within an urban context, preservice teachers are trained to be highly effective, culturally responsive change agents in their future classrooms, schools, and communities. As one of the top 25 states with the largest demographic of non-native English-speaking students (Ávilia, 2017), Maryland institutions have a responsibility to prepare teachers to effectively teach all students with diverse backgrounds and experiences, including urban students. With a student population that continues to grow in racial diversity, it is imperative that preservice teachers have the tools and knowledge to implement a decolonized curriculum that is inclusive of the various learning styles and culturally based knowledge that their classrooms reflect.

The Impact of White Teachers on Black Students

It would be difficult to find a teacher of any race, in any classroom in this nation whose intent is not to make a positive impact on the academic growth of their students, yet many students continue to be left behind, especially those who are disenfranchised. Moreover, it appears that the disproportionate ratio of White teachers to Black students has not advanced the academic prowess of Black students.

Researchers (Douglas et al., 2008; Logan et al., 2018) provide some indications of the challenges in this respect. Like the financial, political, and social systems in the United States, the educational system – curriculum, schools, classrooms, and instructional strategies – is framed within the context of the values and beliefs of the dominant culture. Lewis (2006) indicates that "as the United States of America progresses further into the 21st century, student populations are increasingly made up of greater proportions of Black students" (as cited in Douglas et al., 2008, p. 47) that predominantly disenfranchised and in urban settings (Douglas et al., 2008).

Another challenge related to the disproportionate ratio of White teachers to Black students is the social construction of negative attitudes and automatic assumptions of negative behaviors associated when interacting with Blacks, in general. Within the historical and current structures of the United States hegemonically framed education system, it is designed to facilitate the Whiteness of Black students leading to a disregard for the cultural norms, beliefs, and dispositions of Black students and families (Douglas et al., 2008; Stinson et al., 2012; Love, 2019).

Racism is perhaps the underlying problem associated with the impact of White teachers on Black students. Carter (1992) suggests that the quality of the relationships between White teachers and Black students is compromised by racism, which is a founding characteristic of American society. A natural and disempowering disposition that has evolved from racism in education is deficit thinking or the assumption that Black students lack cognitive structures to experience academic success, as well as the use of content and instructional strategies that intend to position Black students into existing hegemonic academic teaching and learning practices (Stinson et al., 2012; Logan et al., 2018). The impacts of White teachers on the academic success of Black students are layered with challenges but ultimately result in low academic performance.

Decolonizing Curricula to Self-Actualize Urban Learners

Formal education is supposed to result in a socially conscious citizen who is poised to navigate economic and political systems for upward mobility, stability, positive community engagement, and continued self-actualization. Unfortunately, most Black students walk away from the PreK-12 formal learning experience lacking the knowledge and skills to realize these dispositions, which makes sense within the context of what we understand to be a colonized curriculum. Implementing a colonized curriculum helps to maintain the founding power structures (Jatuporn, 2016) of the United States. Noguera (2008), who shares the perspectives of Loic Wacquant (2000), provides a more direct depiction of the intent of such a curriculum. Noguera's explication of Wacquant's work makes strong comparisons between urban schools and prisons situated within the context of the United States' original intent for Blacks captured from Africa or slaves:

> *He [Wacquant] argues that since colonial times, the United States has been trapped in a quandary over what to do about the Black people captured in Africa and enslaved. Slavery was motivated and rationalized by the desire to exploit Black labor, but there was also a competing desire to exclude Black people – except for those in servile roles – from all facets of public life. He argues that the current period, the melding of ghetto and prison…is the latest method devised for achieving those lon standing objectives. (Noguero, 2008, p. 127)*

The content embedded in our nation's curriculum is reflective of its original intent, which was to promote the content, values, and beliefs that advocate for the social, political, and economic systems for the upward mobility, stability, and self-actualization of the dominant culture. Hence, our school system is based on a colonized curriculum and a function that closely resembles that of slave labor to ensure a steady work force with personnel

who perform with little cognitive functioning and follows directions well. Unfortunately, the current practices and attitudes of teachers, more often White teachers, mirror these perspectives.

Advocating for decolonizing curricula, Munroe et al. (2013) explores approaches to aligning the indigenous learning styles and patterns of Canada's Aboriginal population with the goals of 21st century education. Comeau and Santin (1995) assert that, "institutionalized polices of colonization, assimilation, integration, racism, and systematic discrimination have eroded the nature, scope, and effective functioning of the cultural systems of Aboriginal people leaving a legacy of on-going oppression, suffering, and torment of Canada's Aboriginal population" (as cited in Munroe et al., 2013, p. 319).

Subedi (2013) examines the decolonizing curriculum from a global perspective to counter the global understandings of beliefs associated with Third World countries as inferior and problematic for the Western world, as well as generating concerns of spreading diseases due to immigration. A colonized curriculum creates a cognitive ceiling for all learners, globally; however, students in urban schools and communities suffer the most, particularly post *Brown v. Board of Education,* that resulted in the intentional implementation of colonized curricula in urban learning environments.

Like Munroe et al. (2013), Emdin's (2016) research centers on the learning experiences of urban students who he refers to as neo-indigenous. He argues for making connections between urban youth, or the neo-indigenous, and the indigenous (Emdin, 2016, p. 26). Approaching teaching from a neo-indigenous perspective positions teachers with an alternative view of urban students with the intent that instruction will become specifically prescribed and applied. Emdin (2016) introduces reality pedagogy as a concept that neutralizes the power dynamic in the classroom and allows for urban or disenfranchised learners to have ownership in their own learning process based on their identity. "It focuses on making the local experiences of the student visible and creating contexts where there is a role reversal … that positions the student as the expert in his or her learning, and the teacher as the learner" (p. 27). Reality pedagogy heals and provides space to explicitly address nontraditional dispositions in the classroom, for example emotional and psychological influences of students.

Decolonizing curriculum requires teachers and educators, in general, to extend their pedagogical skill sets, as well as to expand their knowledge bases. Implementing curricula structures that serve all students by challenging the racial and discriminatory patterns that reflect the foundation of the social, political, economic, and educational structures takes courage. Emdin insists that self-actualization should be the goal, especially for urban learners. He said

> T*his may mean different things for different students. Some will leave the clas room feeling like their culture is worthy of being considered academic or intelligent. For others, this may mean that the classroom provides some affirmation of their beliefs about themselves and their intelligence. For others still, it may be that the class facilitates their starting to make associations between a particular subject that is being taught in a class and what they want to do with the rest of their lives. Self-actualization can never be assessed in the moment. (Emdin, 2016, p. 176)*

If formal education is going to produce for urban students what it is intended, an honest examination and modification of curricula is critical.

Research Context and Inquiry

The HBCU teacher education program is situated in an inner-city community with a legacy of preparing educators who are often recruited from the community and return to the community to teach. Over 90% of preservice teachers enrolled in the certified teacher education program identify as Black or African American. HBCUs have played a significant role in diversifying and narrowing the gap of Black and White teachers in the U.S. teaching force (Mawhinney et al., 2012). The teacher education faculty realized that, although the teacher preparation curricula provided a solid set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, was nationally accredited and did well with preparing preservice teachers for the profession, the standards, processes, and content reflected what educational researchers describe as "white streamed" with (Urrieta, 2010) whitestream measures of quality teaching (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). According to Burciaga and Kohli (2018), "the whitestream perspective is a colonized approach to teaching that includes English, authoritarian structures, and apolitical, individualized approaches to pedagogy…" (p. 10).

While matriculating, preservice teachers engaged most frequently with students of color in PreK-12 public school systems within the community with which the HBCU is situated. Yet, the achievement gap persisted, as did the content gap as it relates to the history and contributions of the African Diaspora. The instructional approaches taught and evaluated within the programs were based on the teacher candidate's ability to plan and implement lessons that regurgitated Whiteness as the standard in content and pedagogy. Essentially, preservice teachers completed the programs lacking the skills or dispositions needed to make real and sustainable impacts in the lives of the urban students they hoped to serve.

CRT frames the authors' approach to decolonizing the teacher preparation curricula using a systematic approach designed to meet the demands of 21st Century teaching and learning with the specific goal of preparing teaching professionals to meet the academic needs of all students, which includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to meet the needs of urban learners. Logan et al.'s (2018) research highlights a connection between CRT and education, which positions "school curriculum as a tool that upholds White supremacy, utilizes instructional strategies that assumes Black students are deficient, and relies on assessment tools to justify a deficit perspective" (p. 11). Hence, a colonized curriculum that supports and advocates for content, learning styles, norms, and beliefs of a dominant culture with the intent to disempower disenfranchised learnings.

As authors, as well as instructors and co-developers of the courses for the modified and decolonized teacher education programs, we piloted the content. The goal was to develop a plan to make race and inequitable schooling salient. Further, this project was designed to help ensure the ability of preservice teachers to plan lessons and assess using content and strategies that would interrupt hegemonic ideology of oppressive Whiteness in order to break the cycles of low academic performance, as well as other patterning that maintains oppressive dynamics. And equally important, this project sought to transmute experiences

of racism into progressive action (Kohli, 2008).

With those understandings, curricula modifications focused on three (3) undergraduate, initial preparation programs – Special Education, Early Childhood Education, and Elementary Education. However, to ensure that preservice teachers who were currently enrolled in programs but would graduate prior to the implementation of the modified decolonized curricula, Intervention Sessions were planned. We will begin our conversation with details specific to the Intervention Sessions and then share more details related to modifying or decolonizing the curriculum.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Curriculum Intervention Sessions Structure and Content

Again, the Curriculum Intervention Sessions were designed for preservice teachers who were in their senior year and enrolled in the methods courses. The goal was to ensure that preservice teachers who completed the program prior to the approval and implementation of program curricula changes, were exposed to the major tenets of culturally responsive teaching. These sessions included establishing a healthy knowledge base of theoretical content, discussions driven by new learning, and modeling how the application of this content might look in the classroom. As professors of education, our passions rest within our ability to engage preservice teachers in this type of discourse to help prepare a cadre of well-qualified, highly knowledgeable, PreK-12 educational professionals who are committed to creating responsive learning communities that empowers all learners, including urban learners.

A broad selection of research on the theory of culture and cognition was selected for the Intervention Sessions beginning with the classical theory of John Dewey (1938) and his discussions on traditional vs progressive education. bell hooks (1994) *Teaching to Transgress* introduced preservice teachers to the idea of engaged pedagogy to challenge ideas or content that reinforces the disempowerment of minority students. Varelas et al.'s (2012) research was used to help preservice teachers gain a more in-depth understanding of the connection between teaching and how curriculum can catalyze disempowering identities for urban students. Of course, Ladson-Billings' (2009), *The Dreamkeepers*, offered the perspectives of Black teachers on how to effectively meet the needs of the Black students with creating a culture of learning that is consistent with the cultural values, language patterns, and community norms of their students. There were several other researchers and theories shared and discussed during the Intervention Sessions; however, we concluded our sessions with the contemporary ideas of Emdin (2016) in *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood and the Rest of Y'all Too* to present preservice teachers with a process for implementing theory. As authors and teacher educators, our intention for assigning theorists and scholars of color is to expose preservice teachers to the historical and contemporary contributions these theorists and scholars made in teacher education.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Intervention Sessions were structured in alignment with teaching methods courses, and they were held once a week for five weeks. Preservice teachers engaged in 10 hours of academic intervention that focused on research-based culturally responsive teaching theory, strategy, and the impacts of these on teaching practices

over that five-week period. Further, preservice teachers shared reflections through weekly, structured journals and engaged in both individual and group interviews to gain their perspectives.

Program Curricula Modifications

Curricula modifications were implemented to establish teacher education programs that reflected the considerations of equity and education. Again, these modifications were made to begin the process of decolonizing curricula and prepare professional educators with competencies to effectively teach urban students in ways that foster self-actualization. A component of this type of teaching and learning requires teacher education programs to allow its students the time and space "…to reflect and heal from the racism they have endured" (Kohli, 2008, p. 185). The approach on how to modify curricula focused on processes that we understand as critical when teachers teach students who are patterned not to succeed. This included processes for addressing the negative perceptions of Black and other minorities that is reflected in the content and material used in the classroom. Further, how to break the cycles of low academic performance and other patterning that maintains oppressive dynamics and how to transmute experiences of racism into progressive action (Kohli, 2008). The authors applied this thinking and process to all the initial teacher certification programs at the undergraduate level.

Initial Program Analysis and the Absence of Race

Based on the authors' thorough examination of the teacher education curriculum, the first author, an alumna, noticed that the courses in the elementary and early childhood teacher education curriculum were the same when she completed the program in 2000. Additionally, we noted that there was no representation or acknowledgment of race or racial pluralism in courses for the teacher education programs. While faculty in the teacher education program informally discussed the importance of being informed about the disparities of students of color and preservice teachers' role on advocating equitable education for students of color in courses, this knowledge was not deemed as official knowledge for preservice teachers to obtain to successfully complete the program. In addition, the invisibility of race in the teacher education courses led to underlying assumptions about the faculty and preservice teachers enrolled in the program. Gorksi (2009) cautions teacher education programs offering courses that encourage preservice teachers to unpack race, racism, and oppressive experiences as isolated or non-existent opportunities. Because our program serves 90% of students who identify as Black, the assumption presumed that our students were equipped with knowledge on race and racism. In addition, it was assumed that faculty addressed such issues in the courses.

The curriculum in Table 1 displays the program descriptions of each of the focused programs with which preservice teachers enroll. Table 2 displays a sampling of courses from each program, and you will notice that content related to race and inequities in education are not present. The absence of race, racial plurality, and critical analysis on racial disparities in education in the curriculum normalizes the notion of race neutrality and colorblindness. The limited to non-existent conversations about race leads preservice teachers

to operate in dysconscious racism (King, 1991). King (1991) asserts that dysconscious racism leads students to have a limited and distorted understanding about inequity and cultural diversity. Not prioritizing race and racism in schooling also leads preservice teachers to either be unaware or dismiss the complicity of actions of wrongdoing in school that reinforce White hegemony. Gotanda (1995) argues that people of color who adopt colorblindness as an ideology and practice participate in engaging in cultural genocide. Considering this information, we understood that preservice teachers lacked the awareness on the nuances of learning styles of racially diverse students, as well as, understanding their histories and perspectives.

TABLE 1
Course Descriptions by Program

Special Education Program	The Bachelor of Science Degree (BS) in special education is a professional standard-based categorical undergraduate degree program, strongly oriented towards developing the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach learners with mild or moderate disabilities in the elementary or through middle grades while enriching their overall instructional, management, and diagnostic competencies. The special education program is a carefully designed program of integrated and specifically sequenced courses were established to develop a firm liberal arts foundation through the CSU general education program requirements.
Early Childhood Education Program	The primary objective of the program in early childhood education is to prepare well qualified teachers who will be effective in guiding the learning experiences of children in head start programs daycare centers preschool programs kindergarten and grades one through three. The focal point of the program is the recognition of the child's individuality and the development of one's self-worth and security. Within the scope of the program perspective teachers have opportunities to acquire those skills and understandings which will enable them to stimulate the sensory and cognitive abilities of the children through exploration, experimentation, discovery, and successful experiences.
Elementary Education Program	The undergraduate program in elementary education in the School of Education is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and is approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The primary objective of the program in elementary education is to prepare highly qualified teachers to teach in grades one through six, providing perspective teachers with the experiences needed to acquaint them with the curriculum, organization, objectives, procedures, and instructional resources in the elementary school. Perspective teachers are also provided with classroom experiences dealing with direct analysis of teaching and learning, use, organization, and presentation of subject matter, techniques for the evaluation of results of teaching and learning, and the practical application of theories and principles of learning. Classroom experiences are primarily conducted in one of our Professional Development School (PDS) sites.

SOURCE: *Course Catalog*

TABLE 2
Sampling of Program Courses with Descriptions by Program

Special Education Programs	*SPED 301 Classroom Organization & Management in the Education of Learners with Mild and Moderate Disabilities in the Elementary/Middle Grades* Extensive discussion and practicum experiences in classroom organization and behavioral management of the mildly and moderately disabled students in the elementary/middle grades. Also studied are methods and techniques for arranging, scheduling, and adapting equipment and materials. Behavioral management techniques and technology for the mildly and moderately handicapped learner are emphasized. A practicum is required. This course is offered once a year during the Fall Semester. Prerequisite: PRAXIS I and SPED 203 and SPED 302 and SPED 303 and SPED 401 and SPED 402 and SPED 403 *SPED 304 Curriculum Objectives, Methods, and Materials for Teaching Learners with Mild and Moderate Disabilities in the Elementary/Middle Grades* A study of the means by which mildly and moderately disabled individuals in the elementary/middle grades may accurately perceive and interpret the language of others and express themselves intelligently with as much clarity of meaning and consistency of syntax as possible through instruction in oral language, reading, and written expression, emphasizing special techniques of adaptation and modification. A practicum is required. This course is offered once a year during the Spring Semester. Prerequisite: PRAXIS I and SPED 203 and SPED 302 and SPED 303 and SPED 401 and SPED 402 and SPED 403 *SPED 305 Curriculum Objectives, Methods, and Materials for Teaching Learners with Mild and Moderate Disabilities in the Elementary/Middle Grades* In order to interact with others predictably and adequately, the elementary/middle grade level mildly and moderately disabled learners must 1) be able to perform mathematics skills and handle associated tools accordingly, 2) be able to understand historical events, and 3) be able to demonstrate an understanding of the physical world in their daily activities, and 4) understand the nature of people and their institutions. Special techniques and modifications are also emphasized along with curriculum components and material development. A practicum is required. This course is offered once a year during the Spring Semester. Prerequisite: PRAXIS I and SPED 203 and SPED 302 and SPED 303 and SPED 401 and SPED 402 and SPED 403 *SPED 306 Curriculum Objectives, Methods, and Materials for Teaching Learners with Mild and Moderate Disabilities in the Elementary/Middle Grades: Affective, Psychomotor, & Prevocational Skills* A study of methods, materials, and techniques for developing affective and psychomotor skills in mildly and moderately disabled learners in the elementary/middle grades. Prevocational skills, including cognitive, psychomotor, and social/interpersonal elements are also emphasized. This course is offered once a year during the Spring Semester. Prerequisite: PRAXIS I and SPED 203 and SPED 302 and SPED 303 and SPED 401 and SPED 402 and SPED 403.
Early Childhood Education Programs	*ECED 329: Principles and Practicum in Early Childhood* This course investigates of principles, curricula, and techniques for planning and implementing effective early childhood programs. Major emphasis is placed on major research and theoretical approaches to understanding child development. A 24-hour practicum experience is required. *ECED 334: Creative Expression* A study of the place of creative expression in Early Childhood Education, emphasizing principles, materials, and methods for developing skills and creativity in these areas. A 24 hour practicum experience is required. Prerequisite: EDUC 201

	ECED 301: Child Growth and Physiological Development This course is a study of the relationship of organic, neurological, and muscular action to maturation and behavior in children, with some emphasis on the role of the endocrine, hormonal, and metabolic processes in child development. A 24-hour practicum experience is required. Prerequisite: EDUC 201 *ENGL 321: Children's Literature** A study of both classic and modern literature designed for children from per-school through the elementary grades, concentrating on its history as a literary genre; on the critical approaches required to analyze and evaluate children's literature; and on techniques for presenting, it in the classroom. This course is offered once a year during the Spring Semester. Satisfies English GER option only for ECED, ELED, and SPED majors. Prerequisite: ENGL 101 or ENGL 103 and ENGL 102 or ENGL 104 and WLIT 207 or WLIT 208
Elementary Education Program	*ELED 301: Curriculum Planning and Management* This course is designed to provide the teacher candidate with the theory and rationale that support the purposes, objectives, and principles of elementary and middle school curriculum and organization. Comprehensive attention is given to planning instruction in each of the content areas. Specific attention will be focused on teaching behaviors that influence student achievement and other important outcomes. A 24-hour practicum experience is required. Prerequisite: EDUC 202 *EDUC 200: History of Education** Emphasis is placed on the lives and works of renowned educators who have helped to formulate educational ideas and principles, covering the span of educational history from per-Christian times to the present, with particular attention given to humanitarian, scientific, psychological, and sociological influences upon educational thought and the rise of national school systems. *EDUC 300: Foundations of Reading Instruction** This course provides students with the knowledge and skills needed to understand the processes and acquisition of reading. Students explore the history and foundations of reading instruction; the theoretical bases for approaches, techniques, and processes utilized in teaching reading. Phonics, as one of the interrelated cueing systems, is explored. The role of language and cognitive development in the acquisition of reading is examined. A 24 – hour practicum experience is required. *EDUC 408: Measurement and Evaluation** The study of objective measurements and evaluation in education, preparing the student for the selection, administration, interpretation, and effective classroom use of standardized and informal tests and test results. Emphasis is placed upon adequate diagnosis as the necessary basis for skillful educational guidance.

SOURCE: *Course Catalog*

A Deeper Dive into the Curricula Modifications

To interrupt patterns of Whiteness in this urban teacher education program, three courses were developed to strategically infuse culturally responsive teaching throughout the programs. These courses are EDUC 201: Introduction of Race and Inequity in America's Schools, EDUC 330: Theoretical Considerations of Culture and Cognition in Urban Education Context, and EDUC 331: Practice What You Teach: CRT Practices in Urban Education, which all majors are required to take.

Table 3 presents a comparison of the course descriptions of EDUC 200: The History of Education, which was removed during curricula modifications, and EDUC 201: Intro to Race and Inequality in America's Schools, which replaced EDUC 200: History of Education. EDUC 200 as a course requirement in the freshman or sophomore year of the program. This new course dives deeply into the historical and intentional disparities reflected in the educational experiences of Black students. This course introduced preservice teachers to the works of renowned educators who coined educational theories and defined principles for the education landscape from pre-Christianity to the present. It also addressed how political, psychological, and sociological dynamics influence the functionality of education thought and schooling.

EDUC 201 was designed to engage students in a comparison of education before and after Brown v. Board of Education for Black students and teachers. It focuses on the history of race and inequity as the foundation of the learning systems of this country and helps to bring context to trending and historical achievement gap for urban students. Further, students examine the historical and recursive nature of race, oppression, inequity and cultural incongruence between school and familial patterns.

TABLE 3
Comparison of Course Content from Foundational Course

EDUC 200: History of Education	**EDUC 201:** Introduction of Race and Inequity in Americas Schools
Emphasis is placed on the lives and works of renowned educators who have helped to formulate educational ideas and principles, covering the span of educational history from per-Christian times to the present, with particular attention given to humanitarian, scientific, psychological, and sociological influences upon educational thought and the rise of national school systems.	This course explores the history of race, class, and inequity in America's education system and the impacts on all students. More specifically, this course will examine the impact of Brown v. Board on the curriculum and learning experiences of all students, the historical significance and intention and examine its success. Students will examine current curricula and teacher practices as they relate to rac and inequity, as well. This course will explore social, economic, and political issues, with a specific focus on race and inequity and the subsequent challenges with social progress. Students will examine current Additionally, this course will examine how schools are representative of oppression and produces inequities across race and class lines. Further, this course will address cultural incongruence between home and school, as well as teacher and student. Finally, this course will examine how teachers, schools, and systems can overcome inequities with strategies such as school and curricula reform, culturally responsive teaching, and relevant curricula modifications.

TABLE 4
Course Description of Decolonized Course Inclusions

EDUC 330: Theoretical Perspectives in Culture and Cognition in Urban Education	**EDUC 331:** Practice What You Teach: CRT Practices in Urban Education
This course is designed to involve preservice teachers in the critical analysis of the historical, sociological, and economical foundations of modern education and how to use these understandings to effectively teach urban students. Special emphasis will be placed on the understanding and implementation of culturally responsive teaching as a means for bridging culture and cognition development. Students will examine the effectiveness of education in our democratic society. the prevalence of mainstream content in pedagogy, and the political and economic consequences for urban students. Further, this course will require pre-service teachers to examine content curriculum, instructional goals, as well as planning and implementation of content rich lessons across content areas to determine effective modifications consistent with cultural cognitive processes of students. The primary goal of this course is to prepare teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to create equitable learning opportunities for urban students.	This course provides an overview of culturally relevant instructional practices and approaches, particularly in the urban classroom environment. Students will examine, critique, and engage in these instructional practices, while assessing their own areas of strength and growth as preservice teachers. Incorporating the perspectives of various scholars, students will explore multiple approaches and determine the effectiveness of instructional practices in their future classroom environments.

The absence of race in the curriculum led to the avoidance to talking about race and racism in teacher education, which leads to the lack of acknowledgement of the contributions made by scholars to PreK-12 and teacher education discourses. Therefore, as scholars of color and leaders in education, the authors understand the significance of providing intervention by creating courses that incorporate scholars of color, books, articles, and assignments to critically examine how schools have historically used White hegemony to influence the dynamics of schooling for students.

As a result, two additional courses were developed - *EDUC 330: Theoretical Perspectives on Culture and Cognition in Urban Education and EDUC 331: Practice What You Teach: Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices in the Urban Education.* These new courses position critical theories in the forefront and acknowledge the works of scholars of color who have theorized race, intersectionality of identities, and its impact on schooling and teaching, as outlined in Table 4. Although preservice teachers were limited in the awareness of their own identities, these identities influence their roles as teachers, perspectives, teaching practices, and understanding on learning. Most often they struggled with the discomfort of digging deep to discover their identities and resorted to the safe with describing personality traits rather than engaging in rich discussions on identity.

During the junior year of their program, preservice teachers are required to take *EDUC 330: Theoretical Considerations of Culture and Cognition in Urban Education Context* to begin to explore theory that connects culture and cognition, specifically for urban learners. This course was designed to engage preservice teachers in the analysis of the historical, sociological, and economical aspects of progressive education theory and its relevance to diverse learners. In this course, preservice teachers also explore and use the works of critical theories and asset-based pedagogies to analyze and identify systemic and institutional barriers that occurred in their personal schooling experiences and to develop cultural competency. This process encourages preservice teachers to reconceptualize the purpose of schools, teaching, and the importance of developing cultural competency. Preservice teachers are to examine content curricula to determine appropriate content that supports the cognitive and social development of urban students.

In the *EDUC 330* course, several assignments are used as an interpretive framework that encourages preservice teachers to explore their identities, in turn, their positionalities in schools and influences on developing learning plans to activate PreK-12 students' prior knowledge and honor their lived experiences, as well as, their social and cultural capitals. Preservice teachers are required to complete an educational autobiography as a course requirement. Prior to completing this assignment, preservice teachers read and analyze literature that shows scholars using testimonies, personal narratives, or stories on their education experiences. Preservice teachers must then complete an educational autobiography and learning profile plan. For the educational autobiography assignment, they are encouraged to recall their PreK-12 and post-secondary schooling experiences, student and teacher demographics, structure of the school curriculum, and policies. Using this information, preservice teachers are expected to explain how these experiences shaped their beliefs and perspectives on teaching and learning. They must also create a learning profile plan. For this assignment, preservice teachers are given a description of an ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diverse classroom landscape and must develop a plan that identifies each student's cultural background, needs, and interests to explain how this information can be used to maximize learning for students. In preparation for this assignment, preservice teachers engage in readings and discussions on "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms" by Moll et al. (1992); "Whose Culture Has Capital" by Yosso (2005); as well as, excerpts from the books The Dreamkeepers (Ladson-Billings, 2009) and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2000).

Finally, during the senior year, preservice teachers will take *EDUC 331: Practice What You Teach: Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices in the Urban Education* along with education methods courses to focus on the application of the CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING strategies. In this course preservice teachers examine and critique culturally relevant instructional practices in urban classrooms.

In the *EDUC 331* course, preservice teachers are encouraged to conceptualize how the tenets of critical theories can be applied to instructional planning and practice. Preservice teachers are required to participate in surveys that assess their biases on race and gender, as well as their conceptions of equity and justice, class and poverty. Preservice teachers are also required to provide videos and responses to reflection prompts to make meaning of

literature by Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Tyrone Howard, Django Paris, Richard Milner, and Paul Gorski. They are required to post responses on a discussion board using scenarios that articulate understanding of how to identify and counter hegemonic policies, ideologies, and practices in PreK-12 school curriculum. Responses are also expected to synthesis their understanding of cultural competence and strategies to engage PreK-12 students in activities to develop sociopolitical consciousness, and culturally responsive caring within a community of learners. Preservice teachers are also required to develop lesson plans and identify the culturally responsive teaching strategies used in the lesson. Providing these opportunities in the teacher education curriculum reflect additive experiences for preservice teachers of color as it normalizes diversity, multicultural curriculum, and diverse teaching practices while ensuring that they get the most effective pedagogies to respond to the diverse needs of PreK-12 students (Gist, 2017).

Preliminary Analysis and Discovery

The initial analysis of teacher education curricula identified the presence of colonizing content reflected in program descriptions, as well as course titles and descriptions. Further, there had been very little change curricula for at least 20 years. The authors, as course instructors and program leaders, recognized that preservice teachers' understanding of race and diversity for teaching and learning, was limited. And it was clear that Whiteness was pervasive in the curricula of these urban, situated teacher education programs, which rippled in the PreK-12 learning environment, reinforced functions of racism, and contributed to the development of colonized, cognitive structures. The opportunities for preservice teachers to implement culturally responsive pedagogical strategies were excluded, not presented, and not assessed.

Teacher Candidate Response to Intervention Sessions

Initially, six Black, non-traditional preservice teacher, unanimously expressed their interest and provided their consent to meet as a group once a week for eight weeks with the first author, with whom preservice teachers had not worked with prior. The other authors were methods instructors and continued to work with preservice teachers during the time of the Intervention Sessions. Preservice teacher participants agreed to engage in intergroup dialogue to explore culturally responsive teaching using literature by scholars of color to unpack racial, gender, and class disparities in PreK-12 schools and critique how these disparities impacted their schooling experiences. They were also asked to offer perspectives about the application of culturally responsive teaching in urban learning environments; as well as the teaching and learning process, in general.

Education methods instructors introduced and shared expectations of the sessions with preservice teachers because some components of the sessions would be evaluated in the methods course. Participants understood that the content of the sessions would focus on what it means to be a culturally responsive educator, the connections to curriculum, and infusing these in the PreK-12 classroom, all which linked to course expectations. The initial dispositions of preservice teachers appeared to show a genuine interest in being a part of the learning process.

Even though all preservice teachers agreed and communicated enthusiasm for the experience, by the second week several preservice teachers did not attend the session. It is the perspective of the authors that, perhaps, the shift in the instructor's disposition might have contributed to this. Preservice teacher feedback during discussions suggested that the professor's style of communicating was inconsistent with culturally responsive teaching models of instruction. In her discussion about professor or teacher disposition, Bell Hooks (1994) expresses the need to neutralize White hegemonic patterns and practices of power and authority typically displayed by professors, or those occupying positions of power in education (Burciaga, 2018). bell hooks' (1994) position on engaged pedagogy asserts that both teacher and students should experience growth and empowerment through vulnerability in the classroom. She further suggests that the teacher or professor should lead with dispositions of vulnerability while sharing his or her professional narratives.

The correspondence below is an excerpt from the professor's email correspondence with students on the day of mass absenteeism, which asserts the power and authority that hooks (1994) warns against:

> *"Good afternoon all,*
>
> *Needless to say, I am extremely disappointed [with class attendance for] the CRT [culturally responsive teaching] session today. It is expected that our seniors demonstrate the professional dispositions necessary to enter the field of education and not attending class does not demonstrate readiness.*
>
> *It is expected that every student attends these sessions. To make up for the time missed today, …our next session will be extended…[and]…be on time!"*

After receiving this correspondence, two preservice teachers withdrew consent.

While each of us felt a level of disappointment with preservice teachers' responses to the Intervention Sessions, as critical pedagogues in practice, their decisions were respected. Several researchers (Milner, 2007; Staton, 2014) have identified trust and respect as essential to the decolonizing process because they disrupt the mainstream and Westernized approaches that are historically included with research on marginalized communities while others experience personal or institutional gain. Teacher candidate responses provided an opportunity for mutual vulnerability and affirms the practices of decolonization not only for the teacher education curriculum but for pedagogical and research practices. In doing so, the traditional hierarchal power relationships that exist between the faculty and preservice teacher are rejected (Kubota, 2020). Simultaneously, preservice teachers' responses opened space to co-construct a new framework of the Intervention Sessions, which resulted in five weeks of sessions, rather than eight.

Teacher Candidate Responses to Critical Dialogue Space

As previously stated, Intervention Sessions included robust discussions around ideas on applying the culturally responsive teaching theory; as well as the value theorist offer to teaching and learning in the urban environment. In this space, preservice teachers had the opportunity to engage in discussions about racial identity, perceptions of racial di-

versity, class, and gender, and as well as schools in different residential areas. The series of dialogues was an intimate space for preservice teachers to be informed about implicit and explicit colonized practices in schools and society. The outcome of this dialogue led preservice teachers to consistently voice, examine, and problematize their own beliefs and experiences with schooling reflected in Freire's (2000) theory on critical consciousness. Further, the richness of research and content produced by scholars of color sought to address the attitudes and dispositions of, "deficit thinking, decreased academic expectations, and the lack of knowledge pertaining to the implementation of culturally relevant curriculum" (Logan et al., 2018, p. 9), which is needed by teachers regardless of race because each engaged in learning communities that promoted colonization. One preservice teacher indicated that:

> *... [She was] really enjoying the article readings. They are enlightening and very interesting. I am learning so much useful information. The assignments are allowing me to really reflect on effective research-based teaching strategies and practices that I plan to incorporate in the classroom, to best service and support my students. (S. Hall, personal communication, April 22, 2019)*

This statement exemplifies the dire need to expose all preservice teachers to scholarly work, as well as educational theory and practices that will interrupt patterns of Whiteness. The impact is vast, including preservice teachers, university faculty, P-12 students, and ultimately society and its social structures with preventing the regurgitation of inculcating White cultural dominance.

Discussions were framed with the context of how these new learnings might be relevant to urban students. Preservice teachers were probed for individual and group thinking to define the urban student socially, economically, and politically. Upon an established and agreed upon global identity of an urban student, this was used to contemplate connections between theory and application. Preservice teachers were also encouraged to place some of the new learnings within their own context of being a student and discuss its relevancy as a former student and further educator.

Implications and Conclusion

Decolonizing curricula and implementing Intervention Sessions presented valuable insight to support the full implementation and refining of teacher education programs. The authors discovered that relationship building is a critical component to becoming a critical pedagogue and for establishing critical safe spaces even among faculty and students who have race in common. A practical next step is to establish assessment measures to determine the effectiveness of the decolonized curricula within the framework of CRT, as well.

The push for decolonized curricula is a necessary, uphill battle that we as teacher educators will continue to engage in, starting with our preservice teacher population. "The vision is to shift the narrative by normalizing success, celebrating community assets, and reclaiming the legacy of African American power…" (Chatmon & Watson, 2018, p. 10) wherever it resides. And as we prepare teachers for PreK-12 setting, it is imperative that they have both the knowledge and wherewithal to employ a curriculum that resists the dis-

honest and negligent dominant narrative that excludes those who have contributed most to this country, sown in, both, labor and tears. By arming preservice teachers with the understanding that this is critical work that will enhance both their own and their students' learning experiences, our hope is that they courageously and boldly pursue engaging students in a brand new curriculum that highlights unspoken truths and connects their personal lives to the daily learning journey. Also, with the awareness that a decolonized curriculum is necessary, our preservice teachers will immediately recognize that while most PreK-12 schools are claiming to implement a mission of equity, diversity, and multiculturalism, they simultaneously have a blatant disregard for students' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and familial knowledge they bring to the classroom. The omission of honest and accurate representation is not only wrong, but detrimental to the learning process of all students. As we continue to prepare preservice teachers, we hope they are empowered to pursue instruction that mirrors the truth and reality that they know exists for both themselves and their students.

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DO BLACK MINDS MATTER? ASCRIPTIONS OF INTELLIGENCE AND THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK BOYS AND GIRLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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This study microaggressions experienced by Black children in early childhood education, as documented by their parents/guardians This study explicated three primary ways that ascriptions of intelligence are evident in early learning, including: a) displaying a sense of surprise when Black children display intelligence; b) being slower to acknowledge and praise Black children when they are academically successful; and c) forcing Black children to prove their intelligence in ways that other children are not expected to do. While this study found that a sense of surprise was evident across the experiences of Black boys and girls, the narratives demonstrate that being slower to acknowledge and praise was discussed with greater density for Black boys.

Extant research has shown that Black children are less likely to be viewed by educators as intelligent in comparison to their peers (Aronson, 2004; Smith, 1990; Rosenthal, 2002; Wood & Harris III, 2016). Historically, this perspective emanated from slavery where Blacks were restricted access to learning. Those that "illegally" learned to read, write, or speak articulately were subject to severe punishments (e.g., amputating hands, death) under the slave codes (Gundaker, 2007). Stereotypical assumptions about Black academic inferiority have been reinforced throughout America's history. During the 1800s, minstrel shows portrayed Black slaves as comedic buffoons, with little intelligence. Critical analyses of contemporary media demonstrate similar challenges, noting that Black people are more likely to be cast as characters that lack intelligence, have menial jobs that do not require higher order thinking, and as lovably-funny jokesters who lack serious mental fortitude (Gordon, 2015).

The scholarly community responded in a similar fashion, seeking to reinforce these perspectives. Early research by Sir Francis Galton (1869) sought to make connections between excellence and race, noting that excellence was passed on to one's kin. His research concluded that Black people were intellectually inferior due to hereditary conditions inherent to their biology. This perspective, made popular in his infamous treatise Hereditary Genius continues to permeate common discourse about Black students in school, even in contemporary times (Dennis, 1995; Fairchild, 1991). Research associated with Black inferiority is erroneously reinforced by interpreting differences on standardized intelligence test results as being a function of biology. Differential scores however are more appropriately explainable by biases in testing, significant errors in measuring intelligence, scores normalized on White populations, restricted access to high quality education, stereotype threat in testing environments, and systemic inequities endemic to American society (Ford & Helms, 2012; Hilliard, 1996; Jencks, & Phillips, 1998).

Over the past several decades, popular discourse has supplanted biological-only argu-

ments regarding Black academic inferiority with cultural conclusions about barriers facing Black underachievement. As noted by Toldson and Johns (2016), politicians and the media have attempted to explain point differences in achievement outcomes (e.g., test scores, graduation rates, gifted education participation) as a function of cultural inadequacies specific to Black communities. Such perspectives denigrate students (e.g., "they don't care", "they're lazy"), their families (e.g., "their parents aren't involved, they come from fatherless homes), and their communities (e.g., "you live in the ghetto?", "I've never been to the hood"). Despite these pervasive perspectives, critical scholars have rigorously advanced anti-deficit perspectives that avoid blaming students, their families, and their communities for academic challenges (Harper, 2011, 2015; Wood & Palmer, 2014). Rather, scholars have argued that Black children (and other children of color) are academically gifted and resilient, and that the most prevalent challenges facing their success are not biological or cultural, but racial (Ford, Harris III, Tyson, & Trotman, 2001). Specifically, Ford and colleagues contends that systemic and personal racism has perpetuated erroneous narratives about Black learners. One of these narratives assumes that Black children are inferior based on disparate outcome measures; these measures, are widely known to be culturally biased. Thus, differences in outcomes are rationalized as a function of systemic racism.

Unfortunately, due to stereotypes about Black intelligence, many Black boys experience school climates as being isolating and hostile (Howard, 2008, 2014; Wright, 2018). This may help to explain why Black boys are significantly more likely to have conflictual relationships with teachers (Wood, Essien, & Blevins, 2018), who may not be as invested in their learning as they are for other children in their classrooms. Bearing this in mind, the purpose of this study was to examine the nature of microaggressions (subtle forms of racism) in early childhood education, as documented by the parents of Black children. Specifically, the researchers sought to understand how ascriptions of intelligence manifest in early childhood settings (from preschool through third grade) for Black boys. The experiential insights of the parents of Black children were elicited through narratives contributed by the parents themselves, where they discussed the racialized experiences that they and their children had in school. In this study, Black refers to all individuals of African descent.

This study provides two unique contributions to the scholarly research. First, while Black males have been rigorously investigated in the scholarly research, few studies have been attentive to their experiences in early childhood education (Wood et al., 2018; Wright, 2018). This gap in the scholarly literature is particularly concerning given that early childhood education provides students with the foundational building blocks necessary for learning in subsequent levels of education. Moreover, early learning provides opportunities for students to build healthy social attachments with adults and their peers. These attachments are perceived as being necessary for children's academic growth (Howes et al., 2008; Pianta et al., 2005). Second, this study provides a unique contribution to the literature by highlighting the perspectives of parents. Parents represent a key source for conveying experiences on topics (such as race and racism). As adults, parents may be better able to ascertain and describe racial dynamics that may be more difficult for young children to process and convey. In fact, recent studies on racial microaggressions experienced by Black children similarly employ the narratives of parents (Allen, 2016; Reynolds, 2010).

While their viewpoints may not provide a direct lens into the experiences of their children, they can articulate their impressions of those experiences from an intimate perspective.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Extensive research has shown that Black boys often receive communication from teachers and peers alike which decenters them as scholars and assumes their intellectual inferiority (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Griffin & Allen, 2006; Howard, 2008; Nasir & Shah, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Reynolds, 2010). The perceptions that lead to this communication begin during the most formative developmental periods, in early learning (Wright, 2018). For instance, data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (2011) found that Black males were the group that was most likely to be in classrooms where the teacher believed that the children were "incapable of learning." Moreover, Black males were 62% more likely than their White male peers to be exposed to educators with these perceptions in kindergarten (see Wood, 2019).

Reynold's (2010) connected these perceptions of academic inferiority to pervasive views of Black males as lacking motivation. She found that there was a belief among educators that Black boys were lazy and not committed to their own learning and development. These differential perspectives on ability influence the messages that Black boys receive while in school. For many, these messages suggest that they do not possess the capacity to perform well academically. Reynolds extends that, for the few who have begun to see themselves as 'scholars,' this academic identity is stripped from them. This pattern is intensified by within-school and between-school desegregation practices that either track Black students into less academically rigorous courses or into schools with an insufficient infrastructure to support students' learning and development (Wright & Ford, 2016). Given these patterns, it is not surprising that by fourth to sixth grade, many Black males begin to disassociate with school as a protective factor against institutionalized racism (Wood, Harris & White, 2015).

There are a litany of patterns that serve to demonstrate how Black males are subjugated in educational settings. In fact, Howard (2008, 2014) documented a number of ways that Black males are disregarded in academic environments. His research demonstrated that they are: a) treated by educators with a lack of positive regard; b) repeatedly exposed to low expectations for performance; c) the recipients of harsher punishments; d) engaged with comments that are "derogatory and demoralizing"; e) underexposed to leadership opportunities in the classroom; f) overexposed to special education for learning disabilities; and g) restricted from opportunities to participate in advance coursework (p. 153). These patterns begin in the earliest levels of education and follow Black males throughout the educational pipeline (Harper & Wood, 2015).

Beyond this, research has consistently demonstrated that Black boys and young men are over-represented in special education (Ford, 2012; Henfield, 2013; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry Sr., 2012; Milner IV, 2007; Patton, 1998; Whiting, 2006). In particular, Black males are more likely to be over-represented among those classified as having a learning disability, emotional and behavior disorder, intellectual disability, developmental delay, and other health impairments. Moreover, their representation occurs in areas where

testing is less precise, and more open to subjective bias. Conversely, these same children are underexposed to advanced learning opportunities due to stereotypical perceptions that often render them invisible to educators who make recommendations for gifted education (Wright & Ford, 2016). Stambaugh and Ford (2015) suggest that giftedness can be misidentified as misbehavior, or even as a learning disability. This occurs because children who are not provided with enough challenge to stimulate them intellectually will have challenges engaging environments that are not conducive for their success. This of course may be more likely to occur when teachers do not believe in students' capacity to benefit from intellectual stimulation.

As noted, racialized experiences produce disparities in viewpoints about intellectual abilities and perceptions of behavior. Extant research has rigorously documented two critical facts about Black boys: First, that they are perceived as innately, and incorrectly, unintelligent (Cooper, 2012; Johnson & Cuyjet, 2009; Smith, Clark, & Harrison Jr., 2014). The subsequent result is that Black minds are often over-represented in special education, tracked into lower quality schools, and under-placed in gifted education (Harper & Wood, 2015). Chief among these are over-placement in special education as having a cognitive disability or emotional disorder (Wright & Ford, 2016). Second, that they are assumed to have a hereditary disposition towards deviance (Brown Jr., 2013; Ferber, 2007; Kennedy, 1997; Welch, 2007). As a result, this erroneous perception has resulted in Black minds being subject to continuous surveillance, singled-out for discipline, subject to quicker and harsher punishments, mis-identified when no wrongdoing has occurred, and the recipients of public disrespect (Wood, 2019).

Sadly, the two pillars of the school-to-prison pipeline are over-placement in special education and overexposure to exclusionary discipline. Both of these pillars are not mutually exclusive, but often intertwined. It is therefore not surprising that upwards of 40% of those in the juvenile justice system are designated as having "disabilities" (Gagnon, Barber, Van Loan, & Leone, 2009; Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher, & Poirer, 2005. Interestingly, the classifications most represented within these youth are learning disabilities and emotional disorders (Houchins & Shippen, 2012). Research has also shown that students who have been suspended or expelled for discretionary actions were three times more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system the subsequent year (Fabelo et al., 2011). These data demonstrate the urgency of understanding the ways that messages regarding academic inferiority are communicated. This information can help to support training and development that better prepares teachers to engage diverse student populations.

Racial Microaggressions and Schooling Black Minds

This study employed racial microaggressions as a lens for understanding the experiences of Black children and their families in early childhood education. As noted by Sue et al. (2007) racial micro-aggressions are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (p. 271). While the concept was coined by Chester Pierce in the 1970's, there has been expansive work since then to investigate the prevalence of microaggressions in healthcare, educa-

tion, counseling, and other social sectors (Harwood, Huntt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012; Torres-Harding, Andrade, Diaz & Crist, 2012; Sue, 2010). As noted by Sue, there are three primary types of microaggressions. They include microassaults (similar to old-fashioned racism); microinsults (messages that insult and degrade people of color), and microinvalidations (messages that delegitimize the experiences, perceptions, and realities of people of color).

Among the most prevalent forms of microaggressions experienced by Black males are microinsults. Like other forms of microaggressions, microinsults are often communicated unknowingly by the perpetrator to the recipient (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007; Sue & Constantine, 2007). While the perpetrator may not intend to cause harm, the messages themselves can negatively influence students' ability to learn in academic environments. This is because microaggressions can lead to feelings of worthlessness, lowered confidence, elevated anxiety, and even depression (Sue, 2010). Wood (2019) noted that Black males are often viewed through three microinsults that convey that they cannot be trusted, come from communities and cultures that are lesser than, and are academically inferior. Respectively, Sue et al., (2007) refers to these as an assumption of criminality, pathologizing culture, and ascriptions of intelligence. With respect to the latter, this study investigated the ways that ascriptions of intelligence are manifested for Black boys in early childhood education. As noted, this microaggression subtype involves messages that are render to Black boys and men that assume that they are academically inferior (Wood & Harris III, 2016).

Several prior studies have examined microaggressions faced by Black males in education, though the researchers are unaware of such studies focused on this population in early childhood education. Prior research from Allen (2016) found that Black father's perceived that their sons were stereotyped by educators as being academically inferior. He suggested that this perspective was rooted in cultural incongruence, where teachers with a lack of cultural understanding experienced challenges in engaging Black children. These teachers rationalized these challenges as being part of a disability (e.g., ADD) and would therefore send them to other classes that were perceived as better "suited" for the students' aptitudes. In another study, Reynolds (2010 explored the perceptions of the parents of Black males as they reflected on the experiences of their sons in school (through the lens of racial microaggressions). Reynolds found that parents received negative messages from educators about their sons' ability to succeed in school. Specifically, parents reported that teachers demonstrated surprise when making sense of high test scores for Black males. Parents described teachers as being ready to accept underachievement and discontent when performance rose above these limited horizons.

Interestingly, prior research has found that Black male teachers are often assumed to be less knowledgeable and capable than their peers (Bryan & Browder, 2013). As such, ascriptions of intelligence continue to manifest, even for those with advanced levels of education who are in formal positions of intellectual authority. Notwithstanding, research has also shown similar experiences among Black parents, who report feeling pressured to dress properly, speak softly, appear "non-threatening", and to present themselves with an image of credibility to school officials. These intentional efforts were a response to educators who automatically perceived them as being less capable to support their children academically

(Reynolds, 2010). Given this, ascriptions of intelligence have been found to influence the experiences of Black students, as well as Black parents and teachers as well.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed in this study was Wood's (2019) five patterns of disregard. Using racial microaggressions as a framework for investigating the experiences of Black children throughout the educational pipeline, Wood offered five patterns of disregard that 'ascribe' a lesser intelligence to Black boys and young men. First, he contends that educators respond to Black intelligence with a sense of surprise. There are a litany of messages that can communicate perceptions of academic inferiority through surprise. For example, an educator who engages a student with statements, such as "wow, you're actually smart!", "you speak so well," and "great, I didn't expect you to know that!" These messages connote that Black males' intelligence, abilities, and spoken language is assumed to lesser than that of their peers. Second, he suggests that a disregard for Black male intelligence is also evidenced when non-Black students avoid collaborative group-work with Black male peers. He notes that this occurs due to stereotypical perceptions of Black males that suggest they are unable to contribute to scholarly work.

Third, Wood noted that some educators perceive breakdowns in student performance (based on outcome gaps) as a function of a cognitive disorder. He notes that Black males are viewed through a disorder-based lens where it is assumed that their academic horizons are stunted. Fourth, he suggests that Black boys are accused of cutting corners, cheating, or engaging in untoward behavior when their academic success rises above the limited expectations of their abilities. Fifth, he argues that educators are slower to acknowledge the excellence of Black males and to praise their pursuits when deserving of honors and recognition. While Wood's research acknowledged the influence of early childhood education, his five patterns span experiences across the educational pipeline. As a result, there is a need to understand the nuances and dynamics of microaggressive messages in early learning to determine the unique ways that they manifest in this setting.

METHODS

In this study, racial microaggressions were examined through a Critical Race counter-storytelling lens. Harper (2009) contends that counter storytelling illuminates the stories of minoritized populations, providing them with an avenue to share their "untold" experiences. Traditionally, research on communities of color by dominant groups has portrayed them from a deficit perspective. In contrast, counter-storytelling presents more authentic counter-narratives about people of color that emanate directly from those within the community. This method allows for voices that are often unheard to be elevated, thereby presenting perspectives from within the community that are more balanced, insightful, and genuine. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) provided thorough insight on the importance of counter-storytelling as a tool for understanding the role of race and racism in society, and in schooling contexts. Given this, Delgado (1989) noted that counter-storytelling can serve as a tool for liberation for communities of color. By providing a narrative that is "counter" to the dominant narratives about people of color, counter-stories serve as tools for resistance,

are essential for sharing cultural knowledge, and can uplift disaffected communities.

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) noted that there are three primary types of counter-narratives: a) personal narratives; b) other people's narratives; and c) composite narratives. Personal narratives represent the personal stories of researchers who are from minoritized groups. Other people's narratives convey the lived socio-cultural experiences of participants from minoritized groups. Composite narratives involve the amalgamation of other people's narratives based on underlying themes. Among these approaches, this study employed other people's narratives. Specifically, these narratives provided the parents of Black children with an avenue to offer counter-stories about their experiences, and that of their children, in early learning contexts (preschool through third grade). Thematic elements from their stories are offered in this study as a venue for empowering disaffected communities (see Valencia & Solórzano, 1997), and to promote enhanced relational dynamics between educators and the children and families that they serve.

Data Collection

In this study, racial microaggressions were examined through a Critical Race counter-storytelling lens. Harper (2009) contends that counter storytelling illuminates the stories of minoritized populations, providing them with an avenue to share their "untold" experiences. Traditionally, research on communities of color by dominant groups has portrayed them from a deficit perspective. In contrast, counter-storytelling presents more authentic counter-narratives about people of color that emanate directly from those within the community. This method allows for voices that are often unheard to be elevated, thereby presenting perspectives from within the community that are more balanced, insightful, and genuine. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) provided thorough insight on the importance of counter-storytelling as a tool for understanding the role of race and racism in society, and in schooling contexts. Given this, Delgado (1989) noted that counter-storytelling can serve as a tool for liberation for communities of color. By providing a narrative that is "counter" to the dominant narratives about people of color, counter-stories serve as tools for resistance, are essential for sharing cultural knowledge, and can uplift disaffected communities.

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TABLE 1
Overview of Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Sub-Group	Percentage
Respondent Age	18 to 24 25 to 29 30 to 34 35 to 39 40 to 45 46 and older	15% 22% 25% 27% 7% 4%
Race	Black All Other	93% 7%
Gender	Male Female	17% 83%
Total Number of Children	1 child 2 children 3 children or more	44% 31% 25%
Region	Mid-West North-East West South	20% 33% 33% 15%

N=55

DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed grounded theory as an analytical framework. Specifically, this study was informed by Charmaz (2014) and Strauss and Corbin (2014) who offer that grounded theory should be used to generate new theories and models. Specifically, this study sought to employ this framework to identify common patterns of ascriptions of intelligence. In line with their articulation of grounded theory, this study employed open, axial, and selecting coding. The purpose of using this coding procedure was to deconstruct the narratives in a manner that would enable the researchers to make meaning of the experiences expressed. Open coding involved reading all the narratives to identify initial concepts and ideas that were recurrent and salient throughout the narratives. Axial coding involved grouping the concepts and ideas that were generated from open coding into logical constructs. We made linkages between large and smaller constructs to help understand the intricacies of reported experiences with microaggressions. For selective coding, we continued to refine, recode, and reanalyze the data to identify the most salient themes. Themes and representative quotes that were most closely aligned are presented.

Given the researchers' emic perspective on this topic, efforts were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of findings. First, intercoder reliability was employed to strengthen the consistency of codes between the researchers. The researchers both coded sections of the data separately and then compared codes. The goal was to enhance congruency (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process was repeated throughout the data collection process to enhance reliability across codes but also to help make sense of how certain codes would be employed and interpreted. The researchers also employed efforts to bracket their experi-

ences and perceptions. According to Ahern (1999), bracketing occurs when researchers engage in intentional efforts to set aside their perceptions. To do this, the researchers engaged in several discussions on their experiences (and that of their children) with ascriptions of intelligence. These experiences were recognized, and intentional bracketed. However, given the use of critical race counter-storytelling, these experiences were acknowledged as relevant experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), while also striving to reduce their influence on the ways in which initial codes were developed. Finally, the researchers also employed member checks, by presenting the preliminary codes to study participants and eliciting their feedback on the degree to which the findings were representative of their experiences.

Positionality

The researchers are both professors in the California State University system. One identifies as a Black female of mixed ethnic heritage, being of African American and Nigerian-American descent. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate students in the field of early childhood education. Her focus is on building relationships between educators and children and the families that they serve. She has three children in early childhood education, including a daughter in preschool, a son in second grade, and a daughter in fourth grade. The researcher is married to the second author of the paper. The second author identifies himself as an African American male. He has written extensively about issues facing Black boys and men in education. In particular, his works have highlighted topics such as implicit bias, microaggressions, and teaching strategies for underserved boys and men of color. His background involves being born into the foster care system, being adopted at an early age, and raised in a rural area in northern California. Both researchers became interested in this topic due to their personal experiences and that of their children with racial microaggressions in education.

RESULTS

As noted, this study was part of larger study that focused on the myriad of ways that microaggressions are communicated to Black children and their families as they traverse early childhood education. In terms of an ascription of intelligence, there were five primary themes evident in the main study, they include: a) displaying a sense of surprise when Black children display intelligence; b) being slower to acknowledge and praise Black children when they are academically successful; c) forcing Black children to prove their intelligence in ways that other children are not expected to do; d) providing Black children with less attention and time during class; and e) second-guessing excellence displayed by Black children as cheating or cutting corners. This particular manuscript is focused on the first three themes. All of these themes fall under the larger domain of an ascription of intelligence, where Black children were assumed to have lesser intelligence than their teachers, simply for being Black.

A Sense of Surprise

In this study, Black children were found to be engaged by educators in a manner that demonstrated lowered expectations. Lowered expectations occur when teachers assumed that Black children were not as intelligent as their peers. Sue et al., (2007) described provided a number of descriptions of wording and phrases that communicate this notion. However, one phrase discussed in their work that is emblematic of how Black children were engaged in this study included "you are so articulate." This statement is associated with the underlying and unspoken message from the person rendering the remark conveying that "it is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent." (p. 276). This connotation is connected the theme of a sense of surprise, where educators demonstrated astonishment and disbelief when Black children displayed intelligence. A sense of surprise occurred in both subtle and more direct ways. For example, one parent of a young child in preschool (which she referred to as daycare) stated the following:

> *My youngest daughter was in daycare and she is advanced for her age. A teacher said to me that she is pretty advanced for a Black child. I looked at her and asked what color had to do with intelligence. She was speechless. Nonetheless I pulled my child out of that daycare.*

As demonstrated by this statement, the teacher communicated their surprise to the parent regarding the child's intelligence by making a direct connection to their race (i.e., "for a Black child"). While such statements are often communicated unintentionally given tacit racial associations, the statement led the parent to perceive the environment as unsafe and to remove their child from the learning environment. However, such statements are not restricted to preschool. One parent of a second-grade child described as similarly concerning interaction:

> *My daughter is now in 2nd grade. We thought by talking with the teacher we would minimize the damage [of how she had been previously treated]. We spoke with her [teacher] and gave her information about Sarah's [our daughter's] shy demeanor and that she is such a smart individual. With that being said, I'm not sure she read our email. She placed our daughter on a reading level of 15 when she was a 20 (the highest in her class) last school year. I asked her to retest her there was no way my daughter was performing that low especially with our very productive summer. She tested her and said "wow, she is actually smart"... those "actually smart" words have stuck with me as a parent. It has been one of the most hurtful responses about my daughter. I'm sure it was unconscious, but it was painful because there was doubt. Doubt that my daughter could perform well.*

In a previous narrative, the parent had described other challenges that their child faced prior to entering second grade. Specifically, her child had been assumed to have a cognitive impairment and was recommended for testing by a teacher in Kindergarten. The parent perceived that being proactive in talking with their teacher about the child's shy demeanor would be helpful. In first grade, the parent had done so, and the strategy had worked out well as the child had excelled and become one of the top children in the class. However, as

demonstrated by this quote, the sense of surprise displayed by the teacher – assuming that the child had been placed too high and then being surprise at her academic abilities – was hurtful.

Interesting, most of the narratives that articulated a sense of surprise dealt with issues of language and diction. Of course, this aligns directly with the aforementioned example from Sue's et a., (2007) research. For instance, one parent noted that their son's teacher was surprised at diction, "in second grade his teacher stated that he spoke proper English and asked if his dad was White." This parent noted that the teacher was so surprised at the child's lack of an African American vernacular that she assumed that he must have a White influence at home. Similarly, another parent noted "my son's pre-K teacher called to say he was a great student, and she was surprised he was so well spoken." Clearly, in this case as well, the teachers may have been attempting to compliment the parent and their child, not recognizing that the statements made served to sow distrust and were received in a painful manner. In like manner, another parent offered the following narrative:

> *When my daughter was in 2nd grade, one of her teachers at a parochial school indicated surprise at the diction in her speech. My daughter's diction is the same as mine, so I was confused. I was also a teacher at the school. The teacher, who was of East Indian descent, said she wasn't used to Black people speaking so properly and asked us if we were very American or if we were second generation. I let her know that all Black people don't speak with the same speech patterns just like all Indians don't and it didn't matter what generation it was*

As demonstrated in this quote, statements that display a sense of intelligence can come from individuals who may also be from communities that experience stereotypes and racism. Even more, in this particular case, the parent was also a teacher at the school, and despite this fact their child's success was viewed with dismay. Overall, the above examples of a sense of surprise were found to be evident among both Black boys and girls.

Slower to Praise

In this study, we found that educators were slower to affirm academic abilities in two primary ways, providing them with awards and rewards as well as nominating them to be tested or placed in gifted and talented education. With regard to the prior, our data were replete with examples of how Black children were slower to be acknowledged for demonstrating their academic capabilities. For instance, one parent described how a teacher waited to laud their child for earning strong academic marks, stating: *"his third-grade teacher didn't give him recognition for being good 'til the end of the year. She didn't recognize the good he did 'til after much time had passed."* However, the most harmful examples discussed by parents were when educators were slower to do so are part of normal school recognition processes – most notably award ceremonies. The act of being slower to praise occurs when educators have a hard time recognizing Black students' excellence and brilliance and therefore are reluctant to praise or refuse to praise excellence. For instance, one parent stated:

My son had the highest academic report score in second grade. At award ceremony, the other classes teacher gave awards to the white students who had the highest. Yet my son was skipped in getting an [a]ward.

While in this example, the child was overlooked in receiving an award, some children received awards with lackluster enthusiasm to the point that the experience was perceived as hurtful. For instance, a parent of a second-grade boy offered the following:

My son's 2nd grade teacher did not want to acknowledge the fact my son was the smartest in her class. Each quarter, students were rewarded based on their achievements on what grades students made. She made sure to give out the White children awards with pride and smiles on her face even gave each one a little speech on how great there were. Only my Black child name was just called with no excitement and just handed his award with no words.

In like manner, another parent described a nearly identical experience:

In second grade, her teacher gave out awards to the children. She was among the top students in her class, neck and neck one with a little boy. However, her name was called with only passing interest and while everyone was given a nice speech about their accomplishments, she received nothing but a piece of paper. Afterwards, I could tell she was upset. I lied and told her that the teacher had pulled me aside to tell me how great she was, because I wanted to protect her.

In both the prior two comments, the child had performed well in the class and was not acknowledged at the award ceremony in a manner befitting of their achievements. Moreover, the presentation of the awards was done in a manner that perceived by the parents, as being dismissive. As described in the literature, "microaggressions are often unconsciously delivered in the form of subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). In these instances, the snubs were conveyed in a manner that conveyed no interest in the child. In the latter case, the dismissiveness was so palpable, that the parent felt compelled to lie to their child to prevent them from feeling hurt by the incident. Thus, being slower to acknowledge as praise not only encompasses the actual verbal or physical deliverance of a commendation or award, but also being slower to do so in a manner that appropriately lauds the child.

While award ceremonies were one domain where this theme was evident, Black children were also less likely to be acknowledged for displaying uncharacteristically high levels of aptitude. For example, parents described instances where children were not considered as legitimate candidates for being moved up to higher grades. One parent stated: *My son could read second grade books by the time he was 3 and do math up to multiplication. The school refused to test him and have moved to the appropriate grade".* Instead, the parent noted that the teachers suggested that his intelligence would be used to help other three-year-old's, serving as a model for *"what they could accomplish."* However, the most common example of this dealt with testing. One parent stated:

> *My son has been making straight A's since 1st grade. In grade 3, he was passed up for the beta club for White students. (The beta club only had two Blacks in it, I know cause my nephew was in it and his Black teacher had to fight to put him in cause his scores were higher than a White child that they still wanted to be in over my nephew.) My son's teacher nominated only White children. Yet, during classwork time, my son always was helping these "smarter" kids with their work and made better grades then them.*

In this quote, we see that a Black child was not given the opportunity to be advance into a gifted opportunity. Even more so, other children were, and the child ended up supporting them. Both examples presented for this sub-theme demonstrated, that like the historical use of Black male bodies, that Black boy's intelligence was relegated to servile roles. Unfortunately, this theme is evident throughout the data we collected.

Overall, the narratives from the parents discussed this theme with greater density for Black boys. This aligns with research from Wood and Harris III (2018) and Wood (2019) that notes that Black males are often the recipients of microaggressions which assume that they are academically inferior. This is connected to historical depictions of Black males in the media in roles that are ubiquitously imbecilic, or at best, lacking any intellectual prowess. That being said, as demonstrated by the last example, Black girls are also not immune to being slower to acknowledge and praise.

Forced to Prove Intelligence

As demonstrated in the previous themes, when Black children are assumed to have lower intelligence, their capabilities are met with a sense of surprise. Moreover, educators are slower to acknowledge them for their aptitudes. In this theme, it was also evident that their knowledge was tested more rigidly and met with doubt. In such cases, Black children were forced to prove their intelligence in ways that other children were not expected to. Often, the additional challenge to their knowledge was portrayed through the guise of high expectations and rigor, however, the actions themselves were perceived by parents as being purposefully antagonistic and disparaging. For some children, they were forced to prove their intelligence in the face of weaponized questioning. In this study, weaponized question refers to questions posed by educators in learning environments that were not meant to be constructive tools of learning and development but destructive inquiries. These inquiries were designed to reinforce notions of inadequacy, delegitimize knowledge, and in some cases, publicly humiliate Black children. For example, one parented stated that *"in every stage my child had to prove himself for any competition, the teacher used to ask him tough question just to disqualify my child."*

A more descriptive illumination of this pattern came from a parent of a third grader. The parent noted that his son experienced a teacher who blatantly targeted all of the Black boys in the class. At first, the parent was excited about the teacher, because he was perceived to be a nice person. But, the parent grew to believe that the teacher gained satisfaction out of tearing down certain children. He became aware of this during a parent teacher conference when the teacher began to identify each Black male child and talk negatively about them, the ways in which they were struggling in the classroom, and how his son was

also experiencing challenges. The parent stated the following:

> *He [the teacher] had it out for him. Would ask him questions all the time. He had it in for my son, it was very obvious why. He would put him on the spot to try to humiliate him with questions in the front of the class, especially if he thought it was a weak area for him. He would put him on the spot, say negative things about him when he got it wrong. Trying to prove he didn't know, and if he got it right, it was like well everyone should know that. If he got it wrong, he tried to humiliate him. It was like an inferiority thing he was trying to reinforce. We are still struggling with his confidence. He was a year ahead going into the class, he left a year behind.*

The parent noted that when he tried to raise the issue with the teacher, he was very dismissive. The teacher would retort that he should be able to ask all students in his class questions to probe their learning. But, the parent noted, that the way he asked the Black boys questions was categorically different than he did with other children. Ultimately, the effect of this for the child was his confidence was inhibited and he fell behind academically. Reading seemed to be another domain that Black children were forced to prove their intelligence. For example, one parent stated that her son's teacher engaged him in a manner that forced him to prove himself, in an environment that is noticeably dismissive of his contributions. For instance, the parent stated the following:

> *He had been doing very well but she consistently treated him like he did not. He constantly had to prove himself in ways that others didn't, even when they didn't. My teacher asked if anyone would like to read aloud, my son volunteered to do so. However, her tone showed that she didn't think he could. As soon as he stumbled, only a little bit, she immediately cut him off and asked if anyone else would like to read.*

As made evident in this quote, the child was provided with few chances to succeed in the classroom. In particular, the teacher created a hostile learning environment by forcing the child to prove himself to a teacher in spite of a tone that conveyed inferiority and quick restriction of opportunities when minor mistakes were made. While the parent did not offer how this circumstance affected the child, these actions could certainly make the child feel unwelcome in the learning environment.

Beyond forcing children to prove themselves in the face of weaponized questions and public reading, one parent described how this occurred to their child during kindergarten admission. The parent brought their five-year-old to enroll in admission for kindergarten at a dual immersion school. During the admission process, the following incident occurred:

> *A school staff member pulled out books in Spanish to measure my 5-year-olds reading fluency in Spanish. The staff turns to me and says, "Whoever trained him trained him well. He just needs to speak in more complete sentences." I said what? The staff members replied, "His Spanish is good. He reads well but needs to speak in complete sentences." I responded, "No one trained my child. He learned English and Spanish simultaneously at home." Later when [name of school counselor] returned from sick leave and I told her of this experience, she apologized about the staff and said that reading a book isn't even part of kindergarten admission.*

One of the most interesting aspects of this incident is that that child was tested for admission, even when testing was not a typical component of the admission process. Moreover, the parent went on to convey that the testing was portrayed by the educator as a determining factor in their child's admission to the school. Interestingly, when the counselor returned, the parent learned that the test was inappropriate and not part of the normal admission practice. It is certainly possible that the teacher was innocently trying to gauge the ability of a future student, however, given that this practice applied to this child and was not described as occurring to other children – it seems to be an example of being forced to prove oneself. This theme, unlike previous themes, was restricted to Black boys in early learning. While the pattern of being forced to prove oneself may certainly apply to the experiences of some Black girls, no data in this study illuminated this pattern for them.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to employ the narratives of the parents of Black children to elicit their perspectives on the experiences of their children with microaggressions in early childhood education. In particular, this research focused on ascriptions of intelligence, a commonly discussed microaggression facing Black students in education. Moreover, a secondary goal of this study was to unveil how gender differences may manifest within themes of ascriptions of intelligence. While extensive prior research has shown that Black children are often decentered in learning environments and assumed to be academically inferior (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Griffin & Allen, 2006; Howard, 2008; 2014; Nasir & Shah, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Reynolds, 2010), this study provided insight as to how this can manifest in early learning settings. Overall, this study explicated three primary ways that ascriptions of intelligence are evident in early learning, including: a) displaying a sense of surprise when Black children display intelligence; b) being slower to acknowledge and praise Black children when they are academically successful; and c) forcing Black children to prove their intelligence in ways that other children are not expected to do. In line with previous research from Howard (2008), narratives from parents demonstrated that Black children may experience early learning settings as hostile, particularly as it relates to views of their academic capabilities.

One important takeaway from this study was that the themes did demonstrate differences across gender. For instance, there was balance in how parents discussed students' intelligence being received with a sense of surprise. Specifically, this theme was evident across both Black boys and girls. The sense of surprise communicated to Black children when they display intelligence has been previously identified in the research literature (Wood, 2019; Reynolds, 2010), though largely contextualized around the experiences of Black boys. In particular, Reynolds (2010) discussed this pattern when Black boys scored higher on tests, exceeding the low expectations of their teachers. She contends that this perspective is an outgrowth of common misperceptions of Black children that assume that they are unmotivated and not committed to their own learning and development.

While this study found that a sense of surprise was evident across the experiences of Black boys as well as girls, the narratives demonstrate that being slower to acknowledge and praise was discussed with greater density for Black boys. This aligns with research from

Wood and Harris III (2018) and Wood (2019) that notes that Black males are often the recipients of microaggressions which assume that they are academically inferior. This is connected to historical depictions of Black males in the media in role that are ubiquitously imbecilic, or at best, lacking any intellectual prowess. That being said, there was one example specific to a young Black girl, thus, they are certainly not immune to being slower to acknowledge and praise by educators. Overall, this theme has also been discussed in prior research. Specifically, Wood (2019) noted that Black boys were slower to be praised for their academic successes than their peers. In scholarship by Howard (2008), he noted that Black boys were restricted from opportunities to participate in advanced coursework, the sheer disbelief of some educators regarding their aptitudes may provide a partial explanation.

The final theme of being forced to prove oneself was solely restricted, in our data, to Black boys. In this light, educators forced Black boys to prove their intelligence in ways that their peers did not have to. Moreover, this occurred in a manner that was perceived to be purposefully antagonistic and disparaging. While Howard (2008) noted that Black boys are often engaged with comments that are "derogating and demoralizing", this theme provides insight as to how this is evidenced in the classroom (p. 153). This pattern may help to illuminate why previous research has found that Black boys' relationships with their teachers are more likely to be conflictual (Wood et al., 2018). This may also serve to explain why Reynolds (2010) contends that Black boys are stripped of a scholarly identity in educational environments. Wood (2019) offers that Black boys' success in the classroom was often met with a sense of suspicion, where they were assumed to have cut corners or even cheated. This may provide insight into the barrage of weaponized questions identified in this research. Further, this theme is concerning given that Black children are often over-placed in special education (Ford, 2012; Milner IV, 2007) for both intellectual and emotional disorders (Houchins & Shippen, 2012). Constantly being forced to prove oneself, as demonstrated in the narratives from parents, can strip children of their motivation to learn and foster a repressive environment that may partially explain why some children are assumed to have emotional disorders.

Overall, it is important to note that not all teachers engage in the aforementioned patterns. This study specifically focused on how microaggressions occur in early learning settings, so this provides insight into how these challenges manifest. There are a number of explanations as to why Black children are assumed to have a lowered intelligence. Critical scholars have suggested that this can be a function of cultural incongruence (Allen, 2016), implicit biases and systemic racism (Wood, 2019), common depictions in the media (Gordon, 2015), as well as an outgrowth of social stereotypes emanating from slavery. Ultimately, educators must work arduously to create alternative learning environments that foster healthy academic and social development, particularly for minoritized children. While healthy development and attachments with educators is essential in all levels of education (Howes et al., 2008), it is even more so in an early learning context where students' academic identities and associations with school are forming. As such, we conclude this article with recommendations for future research and practice that can serve to foster an enhanced understanding of these challenges and reduce the prevalence of Black mistreatment in education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study produced insightful findings that reveal recommendations for practice and future research. In terms of practice, the findings from this study demonstrated that some Black children are engaged by educators through stereotypical perceptions of their aptitudes and capabilities. Given this, we recommend that educators receive training on topics that will better prepare them to engage Black boys in the classroom. These topics include implicit bias and racial microaggressions. Moreover, we recommend that the findings from this study, as well as similar works (e.g., Allen, 2016; Reynolds, 2010) be employed to provide insights into how microaggressions are manifested and communicated to Black children in education. The narratives from Black parents can serve to better inform educators about patterns of communication that can inhibit the aims of learning environments. Further, Sue et al., (2007) provides recommendations on how such trainings should be focused. They contend that trainings should enable educators to identify racial microaggressions, understand how they influence people of color, and accept responsibility to engage in actions that reduce the prevalence of microaggressions.

In addition to training, school officials may also consider the implementation of tracking systems to better identify and monitor patterns of disproportionality. Disproportionality should be regularly examined within schools based on performance levels, representation in gifted education, and negative academic markers (e.g., over-placement in special education). Regular documentation of these patterns should signal a need to elicit data, such as reported in this study, that helps to inform teachers about practices that result in disparities. In addition to tracking systems, school leaders must be attentive to issues of bias when conducting classroom observations and in their general reviews of collective performance. In particular, being attentive to differential levels of in-class validation and the presentation of awards at school ceremonies should be two (among many) areas of concern.

It is also essential that educators and school leaders devise strategies to elicit ongoing feedback from all parents, particularly parents whose children are from historically minoritized communities. This feedback should be focused on school climate issues and can include a survey of parents about their perceptions of school climate, as disaggregated by the race(s) of their children. While numerical data will provide some insight into disparities, we also recommend that in-person dialogues with parents also be employed. Specifically, school officials can conduct focus groups with parents, engage in intentional conversations with the parents of Black children, and even elicit narratives from these parents (as done in this study).

FUTURE RESEARCH

As noted previously, there are few studies that have intentionally investigated the experiences and perceptions of the parents of Black children. Their perspectives can be employed to identify racialized patterns that their children may have difficulties articulating. This particular study focused on ascriptions of intelligence as articulated by Sue et al., (2007), however, there are numerous types of microaggressions that can also be examined. According to Wood (2019), the most prevailing microaggressions facing Black children, particularly Black boys, are assumptions of criminality, ascriptions of intelligence, and

pathologizing culture. Given this, future studies should explicate the intricacies of these experiences in early learning. Researchers should also be attentive to the interrelationships that may exist between different types of microaggressions, and how specific combinations of experiences can influence school climate, perceptions of belonging, and student performance.

Lastly, this study examined microaggressions through the lens of race and gender, providing some insight into how differences in ascriptions of intelligence occur differently with Black boys and girls. Further studies should be increasingly attentive to the intersections of different background factors and identities that influence success. For example, educators should examine experiences with microaggressions with comparison across grade level, income status, religion, degree of urbanicity, and parental education. It may be that certain combinations of identities results in unique experiences that require more targeted intervention and support.

In all, this study has sought to provide preliminary insight into the experiences of Black children in early childhood education, through the narratives of their parents. As demonstrated in this study, some Black children have experiences in early learning that convey surprise for their intelligence, delay and demur validation of their achievements and abilities, and even question (with hostility) their abilities and force them to prove themselves. These patterns certainly do not provide a healthy foundation for cognitive and social growth. Thereby, the results from this study should serve as a clarion call to educators in early childhood education to become more attentive to bias and to engage in proactive strategies to reduce the prevalence of microaggressions in early learning.

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DEVELOPING AFRICAN AMERICAN PRESERVICE TEACHERS' CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF FRACTIONS THROUGH REASONING STRATEGIES

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Thirty-six elementary education preservice teachers (PSTs) from an HBCU received formal fraction instruction in a mathematics methods course during the last four weeks of the course. The instruction included sessions on comparing the relative size of fractions through three types--(1) benchmark fractions, (2) comparing denominators, and (3) comparing numerations using estimation to determine the reasonability of answers by using models to perform operations. Participants were given an assessment at the end of the course to determine their learning based upon the instruction they received. Participants could use reasoning to compare the relative size of fraction between a set of fractions using one type but could not apply all three types to the same set of fractions. Participants successfully used reasoning to estimate the operations of fractions and can use models to perform operations of fractions. Although PST could use models to perform operations successfully, they relied heavily on the area model which can limit development of conceptual understanding.

Fractions are a complicated concept for elementary school teachers to teach and for elementary students to understand. In lieu of new standards, teachers' understanding of fractions is essential now more than ever. Competence with fractions is now considered fundamental for learning algebra and higher-level mathematics (Fuchs, et al., 2013; The National Mathematics Advisory Panel (NMAP), 2008). Students need this foundational concept to be successful in higher education and the workforce. A deeper understanding of fractions is essential, which includes conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and problem solving (NMAP, 2008).

It is noted that elementary in-service and preservice teachers have a limited understanding of fractions. Consequently, they lack the necessary in-depth fraction knowledge to change the trajectory of future elementary students. This research study focuses on developing African American preservice teachers' conceptual understanding of fractions using reasoning skills. Most research on preservice teachers is based in predominately white colleges and universities. Therefore, the researcher aims to focus on African American preservice elementary teachers, especially at Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs). Moreover, many research studies on preservice teachers' fraction understanding focus on their weaknesses (Azim, 1995; Ball, 1990, Tirosh, 2000;). However, few research studies focus on using sense making through reasoning strategies, especially with African American preservice teachers. In the conceptual framework, the support for this research study will be explained.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, the framework was developed based on the previous methodologies that included the assessment instrument and four-week fraction unit for assessing African American preservice teachers' knowledge in mathematics and pedagogy for teaching fractions. The framework is built upon existing studies on mathematics teaching, mathematics

reasoning, fractions knowledge and teaching, preservice teacher knowledge and understanding of fractions, and the limited body of research on African American preservice teachers from HBCUs. Hence, this research study is more than warranted.

Mathematics Teaching

According to Shulman (1987), there are several categories of knowledge that teachers use to tailor instruction: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational context, and knowledge of the educational end, purpose, and values. General pedagogical knowledge is the methods and strategies used to understand any topic, problems, or issues organized, modeled, and adapted to the diverse interest and abilities of learners and presented for instruction (Shulman, 1987). Ball and Bass (2000) further elaborate on pedagogical knowledge. They posit that pedagogical knowledge is based on three elements that include teacher knowledge, how they must use the knowledge, and how to help students learn to use the knowledge. Teachers not only have to provide content knowledge; they should also provide opportunities to show how students should use the knowledge. This definitively holds true to elementary mathematics, which provides the foundation for mathematics.

Elementary teachers need mathematics content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge to teach mathematics with understanding (Ball & Bass, 2000). Mathematic pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) blends mathematics content and pedagogy. Pedagogical content knowledge consists of representations of analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations so that the content is clarified for understanding (Piccolo, 2008). Knowing and applying mathematics PCK supports building students' reasoning and sense makings strategies and skills.

Mathematics Reasoning

Mathematics reasoning is at the heart of mathematics competence and proficiency. Without the ability to reason, mathematics will not seem relative to students. Therefore, making mathematics relative to students is paramount for understanding mathematics. Students' use of reasoning strategies to makes sense of mathematics concepts allows them to make connections from mathematics to the real world. Battista (2017) defines reasoning as the process of flexibly employing and analyzing physical objects, diagrams, symbols, visual models, or statements to draw conclusions based on evidence or assumptions. Connecting the different representations mentioned above engages students in a more profound understanding of mathematics concepts and procedures (NCTM, 2014) .

Reasoning strategies are essential to understanding fractions because of the complex nature of fractions. Students use various representations to reason with fractions. This includes objects, models, pictures, problems in context, and discourse. According to Cramer (2017), there are four key elements of reasoning with fractions: judging the relative size of fractions, considering the reasonableness of solutions when operating fractions, making sense of procedures using different representations, and making sense of new models for fractions by building connections to familiar ones.

Preservice Teacher (PST) Fraction Understanding

It is documented that preservice teachers have difficulties with fraction concepts. Some of the challenges lie with understanding the concept of fractions, the meaning behind operating with fractions, and explaining the meaning of fractions to children and why the algorithms work (Selden & Selden, 1995). In fact, preservice teachers with low mathematics skills lack the habits of mind needed to gain deep mathematics understandings of the concept (Newton, 2008). In other words, preservice teachers lack the reasoning skills needed to deeply understand and teach fractions with the key elements previously mentioned.

Ball (1990) and Ma (1999) acknowledge that fraction knowledge deficiencies exist in preservice and in-service teachers. For example, in a study, Ma (1999) compared United States (U.S.) to Chinese preservice teachers' fraction knowledge. According to Ma, a general difference between Chinese and U.S. preservice teachers was "the knowledge of Chinese preservice teachers seemed clearly coherent while that of the U.S. preservice teachers' knowledge was clearly fragmented" (p. 107). Preservice teachers were asked to divide fractions and create a problem in context to match the division problem. The Chinese preservice teachers provided the quotient and representations supporting the mathematics, which included the contextual problems. Additionally, the Chinese preservice teachers made connections to the multiple representations to reason with the mathematics.

In another example, Lin et al. (2013) completed a comparative study of preservice teachers in the U.S. and Taiwan. They compared the two sets of preservice teachers' conceptual and procedural understanding with the four operations—addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Lin's findings were similar to Ma's. Preservice teachers in Taiwan scored significantly greater than preservice teachers in the U.S. in both conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. According to NCTM (2014), procedural fluency is built on the foundations of conceptual understanding. Without conceptual understanding, procedural fluency will not have meaning. NCTM has recognized building procedural fluency from conceptual understanding is one of the eight successful mathematics teaching practices.

The demographics of the preservice teachers mentioned in the previous studies compared only Asian to the U.S. preservice teachers. In those studies, there were no mention of other ethnicities for the U. S. preservice teachers. Therefore, this study is essential at looking at how African American preservice teachers are taught and engage in fractional reasoning.

African American PST

Literature on African American preservice teachers' (PST) mathematics ability is underrepresented in the research field, especially from the HBCU context. Most research on African American teachers investigate self-efficacy and cultural diversity (McGee, 2014). Furthermore, research on African American teachers is mainly studied in a predominately white context. That is, research on African American preservice teachers is mixed with other demographics and not in a stand-alone context. Moreover, investigations into African American elementary preservice teachers' content knowledge and mathematics PCK are underrepresented.

As mentioned previously, investigations into African American teachers are mostly limited to efficacy and cultural diversity. Although both elements are essential in mathematics teaching at all grade levels, especially elementary education, knowing mathematics content and PCK is as important as being efficacious and culturally diverse. Berry (2005) argues that African American preservice teachers will face hardships in the classroom based on their cultural and teacher education experiences without intertwining the mathematics. This will lead to feelings of inferiority as PSTs will question the legitimacy of their HBCU experience. This, in turn, leads to a continued underrepresentation of African American teachers as they eventually will leave the profession.

Looking to sharpen African American elementary preservice teachers' mathematics ability in an HBCU context is essential for several reasons. First, although HBCUs make up 2% of the preservice teachers enrolled in teacher candidate programs, HBCUs prepare 16% of the African American preservice teacher(www.ed.gov). Second, HBCUs located in urban and rural settings supply teachers to local school districts (Irvin & Fenwick, 2011). Investigating African American elementary preservice teachers' mathematics ability in an HBCU context will examine how their mathematics ability changes to better teach their students with pedagogical strategies that will, along with cultural relevancy and building efficacy, equip their future students with the knowledge to compete with their peers. For these reasons, investigating African American preservice teachers reasoning skills to teach fractions is needed.

METHOD

Setting

The research study was located at an HBCU in the southeastern region of the United States. An HBCU is a college or university designated by the U.S. Department of Education as any historically black college or university established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of African Americans (U.S. Department of Education). The majority of HBCUs were established in the mid-to-late-1800s as institutions of higher learning for former slaves and normal schools for training teachers (Irvine & Fenwick, 2011). The same holds true for this HBCU with its historical legacy of educating African American teachers as early as its founding in the late 1800s. The university offers initial and advanced certifications in 16 education programs, including early childhood and elementary education programs, which involve instruction in methods courses such as mathematics. The typical enrollment of elementary and early childhood education enrolling in the pedagogy or methods courses is 20. The mathematics methods course was used to recruit participants for this study.

Participants

There were 38 African American preservice teachers (PSTs) in the mathematics methods classes at the time of the study, which spanned for two years. PSTs were from the elementary or early childhood education programs at the university. PSTs were recruited and asked to participate at the conclusion of the course. There were 16 PSTs in Term 1. Ten consented to participate in the study. There were 22 PSTs in Term 2. Twenty gave con-

sent to participate. Therefore, thirty participants agreed to participate in the study. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants of the study. Participants were undergraduate and graduate students seeking initial certification in elementary or early childhood education. Initial certification means students attaining initial licensure to teach, whether undergraduate (one who does not have a bachelor's degree) and graduates (one who has a bachelor's degree). A graduate student seeking an advanced degree but does not have a bachelor's degree in that teaching field is seeking an alternate path to initial licensure.

TABLE 1
Demographics of Preservice Teachers in Both Terms

	Term 1 (n =10)				**Term 2** (n = 20)			
	Male	**Female**	**ELE**	**ECH**	**Male**	**Female**	**ELE**	**ECH**
UG PST	1	7	6	2	0	13	9	4
G PST	0	2	1	1	0	7	3	4

NOTE: *UG PST is an abbreviation for undergraduate preservice teacher. G PST is an abbreviation for graduate preservice teacher.*

Research Design

To study the influence of the unit on PSTs' understanding of fraction concepts, the researcher chose a one group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design. This design is suitable since the researcher is attempting to change a characteristic like fraction understanding and the teaching of fractions (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

The study investigates how exposure to the fraction unit can influence PST fraction understanding by providing an intervention using alternative methods to teach fractions. The methods served as the intervention. The fraction unit involved various topics, including using reasoning skills to order, estimate, and operationalize fractions. There were no control groups used because there was one section of this course being taught.

Pretest/Posttest Instrument

The pre- and post-tests consisted of items related to the topics covered in the unit. PSTs were expected to respond to each part of the assessment item using their prior knowledge. PSTs were given time before the first lesson to complete the pretest. PSTs were given the post-test at the end of the semester. PSTs were asked to provide consent to use both assessments for this research study prior to the posttest. The goal is to determine the effectiveness of the fraction unit in PSTs' ability to use reasoning strategies to order, estimate, and perform operations with fractions. The research pre- and post-test and treatments were based on the research questions.

The pre- and post-test instruments measured PSTs' ability to reason with fractions and included four parts. The instruments were designed and adopted from an assessment previously administered at another university (Bay-Williams & Livers, 2011). Three parts

were given using paper and pencil. Part four was a performance-based task. Fractions understanding is based on the three elements (Cramer, 2017), namely (1) judging the relative size of fractions, (2) considering the reasonableness of solutions when operating with fractions, and (3) making sense of procedure using different representation. Each participants' response was coded based on research on fractions understanding for each part. Part one of the assessment measured PSTs' ability to judge the relative size of fractions. PSTs were tasked to place fractions in order from least to greatest without finding the common denominator method for all five fractions. Part two measured participants' ability to reason with operations of fractions without the actual computations. Parts three and four measured student's ability to use models to represent fraction operations. Part four involved an in-person, performance-based task with the researcher.

To ensure validity, the researcher looked at five main types of evidence for demonstrating validity of test-score interpretation (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007): (1) test content, (2) response processes, (3) internal structure, (4) relationship to other variables, and (5) consequences of testing. Test content validity was established because this assessment was developed by other mathematics education researchers (Bay-Williams & Livers, 2011). To determine the response process, the researcher was previously trained by one of the education researchers who developed the assessment.

Intervention

Table 2 shows the timeline of the fraction topics covered for each week. Each week PSTs were taught using reasoning skills instead of the traditional algorithm. Week one included administering the pre-test and providing instruction in ordering fractions using benchmark fractions, comparing like numerators or denominators, and visualization. Week two included instructions on estimating the total, difference, product, and quotient of fractions using above mentioned reasoning skills. The goal was to estimate fractions without fully performing the operation. Weeks three and four lessons included using models to perform operations of fractions and providing context problems. Week five included a question and answer session to strengthen PSTs' experience with the intervention further.

TABLE 2
Timeline of Fraction: Topics and Alignment with Research Questions

Week	Research Question	Topic
1	Q.1 What reasoning strategies are used by PST to order fractions?	Ordering fractions
2	Q 2. What reasoning strategies are used by PST to estimate answers when operationalizing fractions?	Estimating operations of fractions
3	Q 3. What reasoning strategies are used by PST to perform operations with fractions?	Adding and subtracting with models
4	Q 3. What reasoning strategies are used by PST to perform operations with fractions?	Multiplying and dividing fractions models
5	Q.1. What reasoning strategies are used by PST to order fractions? Q 2. What reasoning strategies are used by PST to estimate answers when operationalizing fractions? Q 3. What reasoning strategies are used by PST to perform operations with fractions?	Study Session

Data Analysis

The researcher developed codes for the post-test based on the literature on fraction understanding (Cramer, 2017) and by former researchers from a similar study (Bay-Williams & Livers, 2011). Each code was applied to the PSTs' assessment to determine the reasoning strategies for ordering fractions, estimating fractions, and operationalizing fractions. Table 3 displays the codes for the assessments. The literature explains what proficient students' ability includes for the fraction areas, including ordering, estimating operations, and operationalizing fractions.

TABLE 3
Coding for Fraction Posttest

	Post-test	**Codes**
Part I	Ordering fractions	1a-comparing fractions to benchmark fractions. 1b-comparing fractions by numerator 1c-comparing fractions by denominator
Part II	Estimating fractions	2 a-reasoning using reasoning skills 2 b-reasoning using common denominator
Parts III, IV	Operationalizing fractions	3a- using set model 3b- using area model 3c- using linear model

The literature posits that proficient students use multiple strategies for ordering fractions, including comparing fractions with benchmark fractions, using alike numerator and denominators, and using models. For estimating operations of fractions, the literature posits that proficient students can use reasoning strategies such as comparing the size without finding the common denominator. Lastly, students are proficient at performing operations using various strategies such as the area model, linear model, and using benchmark fractions.

RESULTS

Part 1 Reasoning strategies for ordering fractions

The participants' assessments were coded to determine the presence of using models and three types of fractions strategies to order fractions: (1) comparing fractions to benchmark fractions, (2) comparing fractions with the same numerator, and (3) comparing fractions with the same denominator. PSTs could use as many reasoning skills as possible to respond to the questions. Figure 1 shows examples of a coded assessment for a given item. PSTs were directed to order the fractions from least to greatest using reasoning strategies. The researcher transcribed PSTs' responses for legibility.

FIGURE 1
Example of Coded Response to Ordering Problems

Preservice Teachers Response to 3/15; 9/8; 12/21; 1/3; 7/8

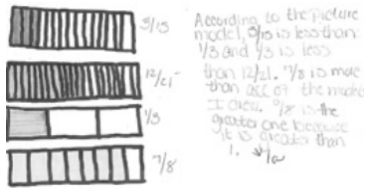
PST	PST Response	Transcription
1		3/15 Less area shaded in 1/3 12/21 Closer to one half 7/8 is one unit from 1 9/8 is greatest because it's over 1
2		According to the picture model, 3/15 is less than 1/3 and 1/3 is less than 12/21. 7/8 is more than all the models I drew. 9/8 is the greatest because it is greater than 1

Table 4
Ordering Fractions

Term	PSTs	Models Only	Benchmark Fractions	Same Denominator	Same Numerator
1	10	2	8	2	2
2	20	4	16	2	4

Table 4 displays the results for question one. In both terms, 24 PSTs compared fractions by using benchmark fractions. Of the 24 PSTs, four students used more than one fraction type to compare fractions. They either compared fractions with the same denominator and same numerator or used benchmark fractions. Six PSTs used pictorial models only to compare fractions without using any of the elements for comparing fractions.

Part 2 Reasoning strategies to estimate operationalizing fractions

To address the second research question, participants were asked to estimate the answers to fraction problems without providing an exact sum or difference. The assessment was coded based on the literature on the estimation of fractions using reasoning skills. Participants' assessments were coded whether PSTs could use reasoning skills or use finding the common denominator. Figure 2 is an example of the coding of assessment.

FIGURE 2
Example Responses for Estimating Problems

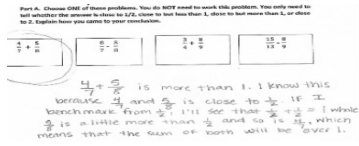
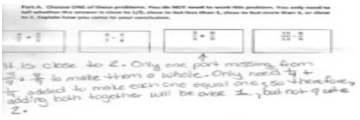
	PST Response	Transcription
1		4/7 +5/8 is more than 1. I know this because 4/7 and 5/8 is close to 1/2. If I benchmark from 1/2, I'll see that 1/2 + /2 =1whole. 5/8 is a little more than 1/2 and so is 4/7 which means that the sum of both will be over 1.
2		It is close to 2. Only one part missing from 3/4 + 8/9 to make them a whole. Only need 1/4 and 1/9 added to make each one equal one; so therefore, adding both together will be over 1, but not quite 2.

Table 5

	Problem 1		Problem 2	
	Using benchmark fractions to estimate	Use finding the denominator to compute fraction	Using benchmark fractions to estimate	Use finding the denominator to compute fraction
Term 1	7	3	7	3
Term 2	14	3	13	5

Estimating Fractions

Table 5 shows the results of PSTs' ability to estimate the sum, difference, product, or quotient of fractions using reasoning skills. For both terms, more PSTs used benchmark fractions as a reasoning strategy for estimation. For problems one and two, 21 and 20 PSTs used benchmark fractions as the reasoning strategy, respectively.

Parts 3 and 4 Reasoning strategies to perform operations with fractions

Parts three and four of the assessment were used to measure PSTs' ability to use models to perform fraction computation. The first problem involved addition/subtraction problems, and the second involved multiplication/division problems. PSTs were asked to use any model to accurately solve the operations without reverting to the algorithm. Traditionally, finding a common denominator method is used to add and subtract fractions, and multiplying numerators and denominators were used to multiply fractions. Dividing fractions, traditionally, includes taking the reciprocal of the divisor and then multiplying numerators and denominators. Data were coded to determine which model PSTs used to solve the problem. Figure 3 shows an example of coding for part three. Part four problems involved PSTs teaching the concept to the researcher.

TABLE 6
PSTs using models to perform operations

	PST	Problem 1			Problem 2		
		Set	Area	Linear	Set	Area	Linear
Term 1	9	0	7	2	0	8	1
Term 2	20	1	12	7	0	16	4

Table 6 shows the results of this portion of the assessments. In both terms, PSTs used linear and area models for adding fraction problems and used area models for multiplying fraction problems. No students attempted division problems. All four problems included adding, subtracting, and multiplying two fractions.

DISCUSSION

Preservice teacher's knowledge of fractions is limited (Ball, 1990; Ma, 1999). This study sought to determine PSTs' ability to conceptualize fractions after a four-week fraction unit in the 16-week mathematics methods course for elementary and early childhood preservice teachers. This study is different because it involved providing instruction on three elements of fraction understanding (1) judging the relative size of fractions, (2) considering the reasonableness of solutions when operating with fractions, and (3) making sense of procedure using different representation—and examining PSTs' ability to apply these elements.

Q.1 Reasoning strategies for ordering fractions

PSTs were asked to order fractions, reason with operations by estimation, and use models to make sense of procedures using reasoning. Assessments were coded to determine the extent to which PSTs can use reasonability to make fractions (Cramer, 2017; CCSSO, 2010). In judging the relative size of fractions, PSTs converted fractions to decimals to arrange them from greatest to least on the pretest. During the post-test, PSTs relied on using benchmark fractions and models to order fractions. When asked why PSTs gravitated to using benchmark fractions, they replied they were familiar with these fractions because they are used in their daily lives. Also, the PSTs were familiar with numerators and denominators that make up benchmark fractions such as 4/8 is ½ because 4 is half of 8. Moreover, when asked why they used models, PSTs replied they used models because of the visual aspect of using models, making sure the models were of an equal area or equal length. This helps with comparing how fractions that are very close in size and position on the number line.

Q 2. Reasoning strategies to estimate operationalizing fractions

To consider the reasonableness of the solutions when operating with fractions, PSTs were expected to estimate the answer of the operation of two fractions. On the pre-test,

PSTs left this item blank. This meant they could not perform this task. On the post-test, PSTs relied on benchmark fractions to estimate the answer without reverting to the traditional algorithm. The traditional algorithm for adding and subtraction fractions involved finding the common denominator. The traditional algorithm for multiplying fractions involves multiplying numerators and denominators for each fraction, and division involves taking the reciprocal of the divisor (second fraction) and multiplying both numerators and denominators. The reason PSTs use benchmark fractions is because of their familiarity with them. They were able to tell whether a fraction is close to a benchmark fraction. For instance, when estimating the sum of 11/20 and 3/16, PSTs used 10/20 as ½ to relate to 11/20 has more than ½. They used 3/15 as 1/5 as less than ½. Additionally, PSTs also know that 1/5 is 1 away from 0.

Q 3. Reasoning strategies to perform operations with fractions

To make sense of procedures using fraction models, PSTs could choose the model of their choice. To determine PSTs' ability to model the operation of fractions, the assessment was both paper-pencil and performance-based. The performance part, Part IV of the assessment, was conducted in front of the researcher. When solving this type of problem, PSTs used the area model as the go-to model. This holds true for both semesters. Furthermore, PSTs were more focused on making sure the procedures for using the area model were correct. This task became more procedural than conceptual, often stopping through the assessment for reassurance. Olanoff, Lo, and Tobias (2014) and Huang, Liu, and Lin (2009) reported the same conclusions with their studies of PSTs' fraction understanding. Eleven students used the linear model in Term 2; however, the linear model was used for addition problems. Area models were used for adding, subtracting, and multiplying fractions. Zang (2012) discusses the overreliance on the area model to understand fractions. Only allowing students to experience the area model limits their conceptual development of fractions. Although PSTs were exposed to the different models, most chose the area model to display their understanding. Further research is necessary to determine effective methods to broaden PSTs' conceptual understanding of fractions to become more open to multiple representations of fractions. To successfully teach fractions conceptually, PSTs must receive more experience with reasoning and sense-making to develop a deeper understanding: the emphasis of AMTE (2017).

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Readers should note three limitations in this research study. First, the experimental design utilized in this study was quasi-experimental. Therefore, the study included only a treatment group and no control group. Each year there is only one section offered for methods courses at this HBCU because of low enrollment in the educator preparation programs. Furthermore, Common Core State Standards call for a conceptual understanding of fractions, including using various reasoning skills. These skills were taught during the fraction unit. The researcher believed that the quasi-experimental design was the best fit for this study because of these two reasons. Second, PSTs may feel compelled to participate in the research study due to the researcher's relationship as an instructor. To avoid this,

the researcher asked participants to give consent to use their assessments for this research study prior to the posttest. In future studies, the researcher will provide an inventory before and after the intervention when soliciting participants. Third, PSTs were not provided intervention for involving problem-solving using fractions. This failure may have led to the overreliance on one type of model over the other. PSTs in this study relied heavily on the area model. To address this concern, a future research study will be developed to focus on the importance of solving contextual problems with fractions and utilizing the appropriate model for each problem.

Preservice teachers need to conceptualize fractions using reasoning strategies to thoroughly teach fractions to their elementary students. This research study attempted to provide an experience with reasoning skills to order fractions, estimate the operation of fractions, and actual computation of fractions using various models to African American PSTs. For the most part, they were able to use reasoning skills to conceptualize fractions. However, PSTs gravitated to their chosen model. This could be problematic and can jeopardize their ability to provide instruction to their future students.

This research study has limitation, as mentioned previously, which can lead to future investigations. First, further research can be done to investigate how African American PSTs use various models within a contextual manner. That is, can African American PSTs use the correct reasoning strategy for the right context. This can lead to better insight on how PSTs understand the purpose for using a specific model. Additionally, more research is needed to investigate if African American PSTs can teach emphasizing reasoning strategies with their future students without regressing to traditional means of teaching fractions. This, in turn, will allow their students access to highly quality meaningful mathematics.

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BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Johanna L. Massey has been an assistant professor of Elementary Education at Alabama A&M University for five years. During her tenure, Dr. Massey has written topics related to mathematics education. Furthermore, she has also formed partnerships with NASA through Texas State University and Alabama Mathematics, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). Dr. Massey has worked as an adjunct professor at the University of Alabama for one academic year. Before entering higher education, Dr. Massey served as a mathematics coach and an elementary teacher at Abrams Elementary School for 14 years.

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LEARNING-CENTERED LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES IN TWO MID-SIZE MIDWESTERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS DISTRICTS*

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There has been a tremendous amount of pressure placed on principals and teachers to improve student achievement. With financial support from the United States Department of Education (USDOE), 12 high-needs public school districts participated in Western Michigan University's Learning-Centered Leadership Development Program for Practicing and Aspiring Principals. We studied two small high-needs Midwestern public school districts, with similar demographic characteristics, to determine whether their school improvement model would result in improved student achievement. Manley Elementary used Data-Informed Decision-Making (DIDM) while Long Creek Elementary School incorporated each of the seven leadership dimensions as separate programs, respectively. Findings in this study revealed that Manley students exhibited significantly higher academic achievement than Long Creek students. Manley incorporated "homegrown" strategies for addressing their school's particular instructional needs rather than relying upon commercially developed programs.
Keywords: school leadership, data-informed decision making, school renewal, school improvement, learning-centered leadership.

INTRODUCTION: A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS

The research is replete with studies that document the claim that effective educational leadership makes a difference in improving student learning (Leithwood, 2003; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Louis, Witzers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003; Louis, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013). To meet the increased demand for improvements on state accountability systems, new empirically based strategies have emerged to assist building principals about how to utilize certain leadership practices proven to increase student performance (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Shen, et al., 2003; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

This Learning-Centered Leadership Development Program (LCLDP) was inspired by the work of John Goodlad (1987, 1994). Shen and Cooley (2015), working in concert with selected members of WMU's EDLD faculty, developed this program that shifted the focus of principal leadership development from a school reform model to one of school renewal. This approach provides a framework that combines five levels of learning activities with seven principal leadership dimensions that are closely aligned to improved student achievement (Burt, W., Shen, J., Leneway, R., & Rainey, J. M. 2014; Reeves, Bierlein-Palmer, McCrumb, & Shen, 2014).

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This comparative study involved two schools that have similar background characteristics in school level, free and reduced-price lunch rate, and being in a rural setting.

However, both schools performed above the state average, with one school performing better than the other. This study investigates the two schools with similar background characteristics to determine whether there might be an association between the content and process of school improvement and the varying levels of student achievement. Hopefully, findings from this study will provide insights for guiding the school improvement process in other elementary schools.

The information below will provide a descriptive overview of the two buildings that participated in LCLDP. In this section below, the writers provide an overview of each community, along with demographic information, about the community and students within each building. It is important to remind the readers, however, that particular care was taken to ensure the anonymity of each community, school, principal, and teachers, as well as the collective responses of each of these individuals that participated in this study.

Manley Elementary School

This school building is located within a small city in the Southwest region of a Midwestern state. This community had a population of approximately 12,000 residents with a density of 2,000 individuals per square mile. The school in this community is in a rural area. Nearly half of the children qualified for free or reduced-price meals. The school enrolled a significant number of students from adjacent districts because of its perceived quality and relative standing on the state's assessment program. Nearly two-thirds of students attending this building received and/or were eligible for the free or reduced-price meals program.

Long Creek Elementary School

This school is in a city that is situated in the Southwest portion of a Midwestern state. Over four years, student enrollment in this building increased from about 160 students in 2010 to about 470 students in 2013. This growth occurred primarily due to the closing of smaller elementary schools and later consolidation of smaller buildings into one larger school building. During the 2011-13 school years, nearly two-thirds of students attending this building received and/or were eligible for the free or reduced-price meals program.

Student Achievement Comparisons

According to the 2014-15 statewide accountability assessment, Manley's proficiency rate in mathematics was about 40% as compared to about 30% for Long Creek. In reading, about 65% of Manley's students scored at or above the proficiency level as compared to about 25% for students attending Long Creek, respectively. In addition to the raw proficiency rate, we also calculated a standardized residual score (zre) score using all schools in the state to determine which of the two schools had a higher "value-added" score when comparing student performance on the state assessment program, after controlling for student background. It can be argued, however, that the school with a larger positive standard-

ized residual score could be called a "more value-added" school than the other. The reader is referred to Table 1.

TABLE 1
A Comparison of Manley and Long Creek Elementary Schools' Standardized Residual Scores on a Midwestern State Assessment Program

School	Reading zre Scores	Math zre Scores	Both zre Scores
Manley	1.3431	0.42	0.88
Long Creek	0.3328	0.10	0.22

Manley's reading zre score was 1.3 standard deviations above the mean as compared to Long Creek's zre score of 0.3 above the mean. In Mathematics, Manley's zre score was 0.42 above the mean while Long Creek's zre score was 0.10. When considering both zre scores, Manley was approximately 0.9 standard deviation above the mean as compared to Long Creek's zre score of 0.22. Arguably, with Manley having higher zre residual scores across all areas than Long Creek, it can be inferred that Manley is a school that added more "value" to a student's education than Long Creek.

In summary, we had two schools with similar student backgrounds with about two-thirds participating in or eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, both schools performed above the state average, with Manley performing even better. The purpose of this study was to inquire into whether the content and process of the school improvement efforts in these two schools were associated with the level of student achievement. In other words, what were the similarities and differences in school improvement efforts in these two schools that might explain the level of student achievement? We collected interview data from the principal, data from teacher focus groups, and teacher survey data.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL RENEWAL: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND TEACHERS IN TWO SCHOOLS

This qualitative analysis will begin by comparing the similarities and differences between the two schools regarding the development and implementation of their school dimensions of school renewal efforts. Most importantly, this section is designed to determine if the seven dimensions of school leadership were evident in these two schools' continuous improvement efforts. To begin this analysis, the conversation will start by reviewing the comments of principals and a focus group of teachers from each of the two schools. The section will conclude by providing a comparison of the two groups on each of the seven leadership dimensions.

Manley Elementary School's Efforts on School Improvement from the Principal's Perspective

Manley Elementary School utilized the Data-Informed Decision-Making (DIDM) dimension as the foundation to support their school renewal activities. (The reader is referred to the Appendix.) Upon her initial participation in LCLDP, the principal selected this leadership dimension as a result of a district-wide initiative that was established by the sitting superintendent. The superintendent identified a District-Level Team, comprised of four instructional specialists, and had them undergo extensive training on the use of data to improve instructional practices. Data Specialists trained principals and teachers within the district's elementary and secondary schools and then conducted monthly training sessions to both District and building-level Data Teams throughout the year. Also, District Data Team Specialists conducted monthly site visits to monitor the progress of staff about the use of data in PLCs/Data Team Meetings and, occasionally, through impromptu classroom visitations.

During the first year of implementation, the District provided three days of release time so that building teams could meet. At the building level, five district-offered professional development days were provided so the Data Teams could meet and plan instructional strategies. Building team leaders met monthly to develop data-use modules. Over the past three years, the building leadership team focused on leadership and implementing Marzano's learning map. By focusing on the building leadership team and placing considerable interest in this group, the principal was able to utilize her building's Data Team to bring the remaining staff on board. Templates were developed to help guide Data Team meetings. These templates were placed in an electronic platform and have been institutionalized throughout the district.

The principal reported that the data team process has improved the building's culture about how it addressed students' instructional needs. The most notable improvement has been in the area of increased collaboration between the teaching staff. She also noted that there has been a greater degree of interaction between teachers regarding the development, implementation, and evaluation of instructional strategies. Students are now grouped differently, based upon students' needs, and grade-level teams meet three times per week in pods called "Team Time." After a year of implementation, teachers started to feel more comfortable about the process and saw the benefits of having their students go to other teachers for supplemental instruction. To this day, all grade levels are running a "Team Time."

The principal noted that the major success of this school renewal activity has been in its level of sustainability. She credits this success to systematic planning and taking a slow and methodical process to program implementation. "Teachers are now getting ready for the next step with our data team –i. e., learning more about instructional strategies that are research-based and proven to increase student achievement" (Personal Interview with Manley School Principal, December 2015).

The major challenge this building faced occurred when there was a change in the superintendent. The new superintendent did not have a background, or interest, in the Data Team initiative, as well as curriculum and instruction, as the previous superintendent. This

void, as reported by the principal, created a major gap in the district's focus on improving student achievement. After a short tenure in the District, the principal recalls his departure in the following manner, "We, as a district, are still suffering in this area and trying to make up for those lost years" (Personal Interview with Manley School Principal, December 2015).

Recently, a new superintendent was hired. The person selected was an individual that helped to develop and implement the Data Team concept. The new superintendent is cheerleading this initiative, and it is creating a lot of interest and vigor back into the school improvement initiative.

The principal was asked to comment about the role leadership played in the implementation and sustainability of this school renewal activity. She noted that leadership at the building level, including the support of the principal and teachers, was paramount to their success. She quipped, "Teachers said that one of the most important steps in this process was the brainstorming piece and giving teachers time to meet and plan with other teachers. We could never have done it without it" (Personal Interview with Manley Elementary School Principal, December 2015).

In conclusion, the principal was asked about her leadership role, and that of the Central Office, in the school renewal process. The principal made the following observation:

> *My teachers are the experts so I can bring something to them, but they must wrestle with that and make it their own. I trust them when they say this won't work, but I want them to find out what will, and many of them do that. They rarely come to me with a barrier. The role of the Central Office is going to be better now with the changes that have occurred (Personal Interview with Manley School Principal, December 2015).*

Long Creek Elementary School's Efforts on School Improvement from the Principal's Perspective

Before engaging in LCLDP's training process, Long Creek Elementary School focused its school improvement efforts on student success and community relationships. Originally, Long Creek was a K-2 school, and then it became a 3-6 school. Approximately two years later, the school was consolidated into a K-6 school. This school was able to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) despite having lost its North Central Accreditation and increased monitoring by this Midwestern state's education department. However, Long Creek felt compelled to develop a new framework for increasing student achievement. This need served as the impetus for participating in LCLDP.

After consulting with staff from other LCLDP buildings, the principal and aspiring teacher leader met with staff in other districts that had similar challenges. The upshot of these meetings led Long Creek to focus on school renewal activities that were aligned to LCLDP's seven dimensions of school leadership. Long Creek took interest in the Data-Informed Decision-Making leadership dimension. The principal wanted to use student data to monitor students receiving RTI services. She mentioned that they also wanted to use data to describe the change in performance of students transitioning out of instructional support programs to regular and advanced instructional programs.

With the use of commercially purchased assessment instruments, teachers utilized data from these measures to determine which students would be placed in the building's instructional support programs (e.g., Title I, 31A, and PBIS' Tier Services) at weekly-scheduled PLC meetings. Student outcome data from NWEA, as well as other formative assessment instruments, were used to monitor the progress students were making in these programs. The principal indicated that staff conducted surveys of students, staff, and parents to obtain feedback from stakeholders about how the school could improve its delivery system.

The principal was queried about how the school renewal activities served as a fulcrum to support change in teaching and learning at Long Creek. She suggested that staff was in a quandary about how it was going to address the daunting challenges this school faced. However, the principal questioned whether the school had a clearly defined process to improve student performance. Long Creek's principal concluded that the LCLDP's school renewal matrix could serve as the harbinger for creating needed change in the building.

The principal reminisced about how the school had transitioned from a K-2 to a 3-5 building to eventually a K-6 school building within five years. This tumultuous change led to a climate where staff felt fragmented with a specious impression about collaboration and team building. It became apparent that while attempting to maneuver in this environment, a negative pall had been created between staff concerning their sharing of information and working collaboratively together.

To address this perplexing condition, the principal and teacher leader decided to meet with teachers in their classrooms, rather than holding contentious group staff meetings. The principal felt this approach helped to allay the concerns of many teachers and motivated them to participate in the school improvement planning process.

The principal was queried about whether their school renewal activities had provided the impetus to group students differently. She mentioned that teachers wanted assessment measures to help them determine whether to place students in classes for remediation or to reassign students back to regular classes. The school purchased Planbook software so that teachers and parents could see what skills their children were working on, as well as to allow teachers to see the lesson plans of other teachers. This process was used to ensure that teacher modules were aligned regardless of whether students were in regular or remedial classes.

The principal was queried about the major successes and challenges faced by Long Creek Elementary School. She reported that their school improvement process had improved because LCLDP's School Renewal Matrix served as the foundation for them to develop school renewal initiatives. The principal cited teacher "buy-in" as her most challenging situation.

The principal was asked about the leadership role she, her teacher leader, and teachers took to implement school renewal activities. She first acknowledged having the opportunity to participate in LCLDP training efforts. This training opportunity gave her increased confidence about how to enhance her leadership skills. When queried about her teacher leader, the principal noted that she has a close professional relationship with this person. The principal reported that she found the teacher leader to be quite capable, but it may

be somewhat difficult for her to perform her responsibilities because she appears to be a threat to many teachers in the building; thusly, inhibiting her ability to help them with their instructional needs (Personal Interview with Long Creek Principal, December 2015).

The principal felt her strong past professional experiences in the district, along with her ties with the community, have served her well. She felt It helped her to navigate through the shoals of central office and a community rife with contentious politics. The principal felt the major challenges she faced with District Administration is whether it understood the daily nuances principals faced on a day-to-day basis.

Manley Elementary School's Efforts on School Improvement: Teachers' Perspective

A focus group meeting was held with a group of teachers from Manley Elementary School. Teachers were asked the same questions as principals. Manley teachers identified the data team process as the major school renewal activity they had been working on over the past three to four years. Teachers talked about the training process they went through before the inception of this program. Teachers recounted how they had been collecting so much data but did not have a process in place for analyzing and using the data collected.

Teachers talked at length about how the use of data had changed their way of thinking and teaching. They mentioned that they collaborated and shared instructional practices and are now more focused on data, student growth, and getting students involved in setting goals for their learning. Several teachers noted that as a result of the training received from the Data Teams, their instructional strategies and teaching methods had improved. Another teacher opined that the collaboration made them feel like they weren't alone anymore. She observed, "If something didn't work, you are now collaborating and consistently being monitored by the Data Team so that you can see if something didn't work for you" (Personal Interview with a Manley Teacher, December 2015).

Several teachers reported that this initiative forced them to change how they grouped students. One teacher mentioned that when they started the data cycles, they were able to identify particular students that had not mastered certain skills, and with this information, they were able to provide mini-lessons to students that needed additional help to overcome deficiencies.

This new initiative was mired with skepticism and challenges. Several teachers felt that "it's one more thing that has been added to their plate". One teacher observed, "I think a lot of time teachers are not opposed to doing it, it's more about how am I going to fit it into everything else I do" (Personal Interview with a Manley Teacher, December 2015). Another teacher said the overall training process was a challenge. She cited learning the different steps of the data team process and what each step meant, as well as the amount of redundancy in the forms they had to use. This teacher felt the need to tweak the forms so that they would fit with the needs of teachers.

Long Creek Elementary School's Efforts on School Improvement: Teachers' Perspective

Long Creek teachers were queried about major initiatives they implemented over the past three to five years. One teacher identified the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as the major school renewal activity. This teacher recalled the turmoil the school went through when having to undergo three different grade orientations within five years. Out of this chaos, she exclaimed, came the perceived need to establish a strong student behavioral program. This behavioral program implemented was adopted from this Midwestern state's PBIS called "Ranger Pride." Another teacher identified the Eureka Math program that was implemented to address the school's "extremely low math scores. This initiative, according to this teacher, along with the PLC, produced improvements in the overall achievement of students. Another teacher mentioned that there were changes made to the building's Title I program. This major change was the hiring of an additional math teacher. She stated:

> *"Previously we had a Title I reading teacher. Currently, we have both of those subjects being addressed for our struggling readers and math students. And then we also use At-Risk funds to address those issues as well" (Personal Interview with a Long Creek Teacher, December 2015).*

Teachers were asked if they had noticed any changes over the past three to five years in terms of whether students were now being taught differently. One teacher opined that she had seen a greater degree of consistency in what was being taught in mathematics, as well as in using similar vocabulary words across the different grade levels. Several teachers felt they had made significant improvements in aligning the building's curriculum both horizontally and vertically. These steps, according to teachers, helped reduce the need for relying on commercial products. Another teacher observed, "I think people were using so many different resources that we kind of lost that continuity. I think that's been a big shift" (Personal Interview with a Long Creek Teacher, December 2015).

Long Creek teachers were asked to identify the "successes" they had experienced over the past three to five years due to their school renewal activities. One teacher commented that their scores are showing that math is working as they are seeing very positive results in test scores. Another teacher noted that with the use of a data spreadsheet, they can identify and place students that need instructional support. Previously, students were selected based on a teacher's recommendation, rather than using data to guide their decision-making.

Long Creek teachers were asked to identify major challenges they faced as they attempted to implement their school improvement activities. One teacher quipped: "That curriculum was rough for teachers. It was hard to hold on at the beginning because it was such a shift in ideology" (Personal Interview with a Long Creek Teacher, December 2015). Several teachers noted that implementing Common Core and the Eureka Math were also major challenges. Several teachers felt that it has been hard keeping parents on board and positive about the change.

The role of the principal in the development and implementation of school renewal activities was also examined. One teacher reported that the principal had done her research

and gone out and found programs to help teachers with struggling students. She felt the principal was supportive, onboard, and was constantly asking teachers about their need for materials, additional resources, PD, etc. Another teacher felt that in the past the school was administratively driven. This teacher continued by saying, "the school had evidenced improvements in reading and writing. This was done by the principal's leadership, in conjunction with teacher input."

Focus group teachers were also queried about teacher leaders in the building and the roles they play. Interestingly enough, these teachers indicated that initially the building had grade-level chairs and these people received compensation for the position. Due to budgetary constraints, the pay for building chairs was eliminated. So went many of the chairs. Presently, all teachers are on the building's school's improvement team. Assignment on the team was done by the core content areas. These teachers were then responsible for getting input from their respective colleagues.

While teachers seemed somewhat optimistic about the progress that had been made in getting teachers involved in the school improvement process, this optimism was also met with skepticism. One teacher made this observation:

> *"I think what spurred it is they were not happy with the way things were going. They didn't like the PLCs. They didn't like it and, in fact, in their words it was wrong, but I think that now that they're on the other side and given a full year, they'll see the benefits of it and they will start seeing it wasn't necessarily so wrong, just different" (Personal Interview with a Long Creek Teacher, December 2015).*

The conversation shifted to the leadership role of the Central Office in promoting the school improvement process. The response from the teacher focus group was overt and surprising. One teacher said the role was "nonexistent." Another teacher categorized it as "non-involved." Several other attending teachers affirmed these expressions. Two teachers noted that at one time the district had an instructional council. Now the council is nonexistent. The other teacher noted that even when there was an instructional council, it was "all" administration led, and wasn't helpful. The lack of support from the district office, as reported by Long Creek teachers, was harming the building's PBIS program. This teacher observed:

> *"We follow our data even on students not being serviced very closely. Using it to compare and see what programs are working and how do we need to address Tier 1 issues. I think that we have some issues with our Tier 1 instruction, lack of, and we see that. Well, we did see that when we met regularly last year with PLCs, and then that has kind of gone by the wayside. It's hard to address those issues there but they're still there" (Personal Interview with a Long Creek Teacher, December 2015).*

Table 2 below provides a succinct overview of the responses received from the two principals and focus group teachers, disaggregated by the school, concerning the degree to which they implemented LCLDP's seven leadership dimensions.

TABLE 2

A Comparison of Responses made by Principals and Teachers from Manley and Long Creek Elementary Schools regarding the Implementation of School Improvement (Renewal) Practices across LCLDP Seven Leadership Dimensions

Dimensions	Manley Elementary	Long Creek Elementary
Data-Informed DRA,Decision-Making	Data teams were established to train principals and teachers in the building and throughout the district on the use of data to enhance instructional practices.	Data derived from NWEA, STAR, Parent.com, as well as other formative assessments, were used to group students based upon instructional needs.
Safe and Orderly School Operations	The school developed a Formula4Success Model (Attendance + Attitude + Appropriate Behavior = Achievement.) The entire school staff, including teachers, aides, secretaries, bus drivers, custodians, etc. were trained in the model and how to implement it based upon their area of responsibilities.	The school utilized the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model (CHAMPand Ranger Pride programs) to ensure students are safe and free from danger. Also, the district installed a system that allowed staff to monitor students in classrooms, hallways, cafeteria playgrounds, driveways, bus loading zones, etc.
High, Cohesive, and Culturally Relevant Expectations for all Students	Staff examined its established values and belief statements to assess where they were in relationship to their vision, mission, and belief statements.	All students are expected to do their best. Accommodations are made for students based upon needs.
Distributive and Empowering Leadership	Data Team Leaders were utilized at each grade level and they provided leadership on setting instructional goals and areas of concentration.	The School Renewal Matrix was used to determine when and in what areas staff would work on certain instructional areas, identified people who were responsible for monitoring and implementing program activities, and collecting and reporting data around instructional priorities.
Coherent Curricular Programs	This is an area under review and development. The principal reported that this dimension has not been a district priority.	Building staff examined every content area concerning the school improvement planning process. Instructional decisions were made upon available data.
Real-Time and Embedded Instructional Assessment	Every data team used pre-and post-assessment data to determine where every student was performing instructionally.	Building staff uses the School Renewal Matrix as a tool to keep them focused on what should be assessed and how data would be used to improve instructional practices.
Commitment and Passion for School Renewal	Staff at every level were responsible for producing the highest performing students in all content areas	Building staff had varying conversations about students and their needs. The building staff appeared polarized on on several different fronts. This polarization stemmed from issues related to school consolidation, budget cuts, and leadership style.

QUANTITATIVE TEACHER SURVEY DATA REGARDING TWO SCHOOLS' LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION ALONG THE SEVEN LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS

A survey was administered to teachers at Manley and Long Creek elementary schools about their school renewal activities and the degree to which they implemented 42 practices that were closely aligned to LCLDP's seven leadership dimensions. The response of teachers on this Likert Scale ranged from Strongly Disagree (1), Moderately Disagree (2), Slightly Agree (3), Moderately Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). In each school, the returned response rate was over 60 percent.

Table 3 below compares the aggregate mean scores, by each of the LCLDP leadership domains, of Manley and Long Creek teachers. These data help to determine whether statistically significant differences existed in the perception of teachers about the degree to which they were able to implement initiatives found in each of the seven leadership dimensions.

TABLE 3

A Comparison of the Aggregate Population Means between Manley and Long Creek Elementary School Teachers on Each of the Seven Leadership Dimensions

Dimension	Manley Mean Score	Long Creek Mean Score	F	p	Effect Size (ŋ2)
1. Data-Informed Decision Making	4.6	4.2	3.000	0.089	0.057
2. Safe & Orderly School Operations	4.7	4.9	0.726	0.398	0.014
3. High Cohesive & Culturally Relevant Expectations	4.7	4.2	9.564	0.003*	0.161
4. Distributive & Empowering Leadership	4.7	3.7	13.724	0.001*	0.215
5. Coherent Curricular Programs	4.4	3.8	3.536	0.066	0.066
6. Real-Time & Embedded Instructional Assessment	4.8	4.1	6.494	0.014*	0.115
7. Passion & Commitment	5.3	4.4	11.844	0.001*	0.192
Overall Scale	4.7	4.2	7.786	0.007*	0.135

*$p < 0.05$.

From an overall perspective, as illustrated in the above table, there was a statistically significant difference in the perception of teachers from Manley Elementary School, as compared to teachers from Long Creek Elementary School, regarding their ability to implement school renewal practices associated with LCLDP leadership dimensions ($p \leq 0.007$). More specifically, there was a statistically significant difference in the response of teachers from Manley and Long Creek elementary schools when it involved their ability

to implement initiatives concerning high cohesive & culturally relevant expectations for all students ($p \leq 0.003$), real-time and embedded instructional assessment measures ($p \leq 0.014$), distributive and empowering leadership ($p \leq 0.001$), and passion and commitment for continuous school renewal ($p \leq 0.001$). There was no statistically significant difference in the perception of teachers from the two schools concerning their ability to implement school renewal initiatives (i.e., data-informed decision making, safe and orderly school operations, and having coherent curricular offerings).

In the next section, the writers compared and contrasted the two elementary schools and then reported pertinent information that may shed light on why differences existed between the two school buildings concerning the implementation of their school renewal activities.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN MANLEY AND LONG CREEK: THE "WHAT" OF IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL RENEWAL ACTIVITIES

This section is designed to compare the differences between Manley and Long Creek elementary schools' ability to implement school renewal activities that were aligned with LCLDP's seven leadership dimensions. If differences were found, steps will be taken to determine whether these differences may have contributed to the building's overall impact on improving student achievement. A description of the findings from this process will be described below.

Staff from each school indicated they had implemented some aspect of the seven leadership dimensions as part of their school improvement efforts, but with varying degrees of specificity and coverage. Manley utilized Data-Informed Decision-Making as the overarching umbrella to launch their school renewal activities while Long Creek used data from various assessment tests to place students in various instructional support programs (e.g., Title I, 31-A, PBIS Tier II services, etc.). Manley utilized the LCLDP Data-Informed Decision-Making dimension as the focal point for their school improvement efforts while Long Creek utilized each leadership dimension as an independent program and sought to align their school improvement activities around each of LCLDP's seven leadership disciplines.

Manley developed "homegrown" initiatives that were collaboratively developed by staff; whereas, Long Creek opted to utilize commercially developed programs to support their school improvement efforts. For example, Manley developed its own "4S" (Attendance + Attitude + Appropriate Behavior = Achievement) Program to ensure Safe and Orderly School Operations. Long Creek adopted PBIS, a program supported by the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), and was later adopted by this Midwestern state as an exemplary program for addressing school climate and student behavioral needs.

Each school reported having implemented school improvement initiatives to address the discipline of High, Cohesive, and Culturally Relevant Expectations for all Students. Manley's principal and teachers reported they reviewed and examined their school's values and belief statement about the expectations they held for all students. The staff looked for opportunities to assess where they were with these belief systems. The staff received train-

ing in Ruby Payne's approach to helping guide their thinking. Long Creek, on the other hand, reported that they expected all students to do their best. To support this contention, the building adopted the CHAMP and Ranger Pride programs to support positive student behavior.

Both Manley and Long Creek schools reported they had identified school improvement initiatives that were aligned with the Distributive and Empowering Leadership dimension. At Manley, Data Team Leaders were identified and received extensive training on how to use various data typologies to develop and implement instructional strategies designed to improve student achievement. Long Creek, on the other hand, assigned members from the school improvement team to champion an initiative. Members were responsible for collecting data and making recommendations for program improvements

Manley and Long Creek elementary schools indicated they had identified school improvement activities associated with LCLDP's Coherent Curricular Programs dimension. The principal and teachers from Manley acknowledged that this was an area that received little attention from the District level and that improvements in this area would come from the District Office. Long Creek's principals felt that improvements in the school curriculum would come from building staff and that they were viewing test results to determine where improvements in the curriculum where needed.

Teachers from both schools reported they implemented school renewal activities that were associated with Real-Time & Embedded Instructional Assessment. Manley staff reported the use of pre-and post-assessment tests to gauge student learning before and after instruction. Conversely, Long Creek staff reported the use of the School Renewal Matrix as a tool to keep them focused on what behavior should be assessed. Also, STAR and Title I assessment measures was used to identifying and monitoring the success of students that received Tier II services.

Finally, staff was queried about their level of Commitment and Passion for School Renewal. Both principals acknowledged that they have staff that goes over and beyond their regular duties and volunteer to serve on many different committees or assist with numerous school activities because they want to provide the best educational opportunities possible for students.

Data collected from staff in these two schools show that there was some variance between the two schools concerning the implementation of Commitment and Passion for School Renewal. Based upon personal interviews with principals and teacher focus groups, as well as survey results from teachers in the two elementary schools, it appears that Manley's staff is a more cohesive and collaboratively working staff than teachers at Long Creek. Long Creek staff appear disjointed and somewhat polarized around several different fronts.

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING: THE "HOW" TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

School renewal is based on the premise that change in school is non-linear and vaguely goal-oriented so that staff has the possibility of exploring many different alternatives to bring about substantive change that will lead to improved student achievement (Shen

& Cooley, 2015). This section will provide a layered comparison between Manley and Long Creek elementary schools in terms of how dialogue, decision, action, and evaluation (DDAE) were used to develop and implement their school improvement initiatives. Table 4 provides a brief overview of how each school was able to carry out their school improvements work through the DDAE approach.

TABLE 4
A Display of How Manley and Long Creek Elementary Schools were able to carry out their School Improvement Activities

Dimensions	**Manley**	**Long Creek**
2.1 Dialogue		
Are there discussions among the principal, teachers, and other stakeholders to decide on school improvement activities?	School improvement discussions were held primarily between District Office Personnel, school principal, and Building Data Teams and teachers. Principal and school improvement team members were involved in discussions concerning 4S Formula for Success Program.	School improvement activities were developed around LCLDP's School Renewal Matrix.Staff members were assigned to one of the seven dimensions.
Are the activities based on data such as student achievement, teaching quality, school process, community, etc.?	Professional development activities were provided by District and Building data team-based Midwestern state assessment results and various formative assessment measures.	Students with various instructional needs were placed in selected programs (e.g., Title I, 31-A, Tier II services) based upon data obtained from NWEA, STAR, and Title I formative assessments.
2.2 Decision		
Are the activities generated by external pressure, internal initiative, or a combination of both?	The district office served as the primary impetus for the development of Data Teams District-wide.	School improvement activities were developed at the building level.
Are the activities mainly homegrown, mainly bought off the shelf, or truly a combination of both?	School renewal activities were homegrown. The initial development of this training program received assistance from external sources.	The preponderance of school renewal activities was supported and/or adopted through commercially-purchased products.
2.3. Action		
Are the activities related to, or are integrated, with other activities?	Information obtained from student assessment results was triangulated with other school improvement activities to determine whether factors such as attendance, student behavior, SES, impacted a student's success in school. This information was used to	Each school improvement-related activity served as an independent standalone program.

	evaluate the efficacy of their school improvement efforts for future adjustment and improvement.	
Are the activities based on previous efforts (not starting from scratch)?	The Data Team concept was initiated by a former superintendent. A new superintendent came on board and then abandoned the initiative. This initiative was re-invigorated with the appointment of a new superintendent that helped to develop this initiative.	School improvement activities were based upon an attempt to align activities based upon LCLDP's School Renewal Matrix.
2.4. Evaluation		
Are activities monitored in terms of their progress?	Data Team Specialists met monthly with district personnel, principals, and teachers concerning student progress. District and Building Level Data Team Specialists conducted training sessions for principals and teachers, made classroom visitations and provided feedback to teachers, and attended principals' meetings to review student performance data.	Monthly school improvement meetings were held. The Chairperson of each initiative was responsible for reporting the progress of the initiative, along with recommendations for improvements.
Are activities adjusted/evolved based on evaluation data so that improvement is continuous?	Summative, formative, and behavioral data were used to adjust and/or modify professional development training.	School improvement activities were not adjusted. Data were used to determine whether the placement of students was appropriate and met the instructional needs of students.

A cursory review of the above information illustrates that while there were similarities between the two schools, there were also pronounced differences in how each school implemented their school improvement programs when considering LCLDP's Dialogue, Decision, Action, and Evaluation (DDAE) approach.

Dialogue. It was quite apparent that active dialogue was occurring between the principal, teachers, and other support staff within the respective buildings. Principals in each of the two schools had a clear vision about what they wanted for their school, staff, and students, but certainly differed in their approach. Both principals recognized the importance of data and using it as a tool for making changes within their respective buildings. Manley's staff used student achievement data to help teachers adapt their instructional strategies to improve their instructional practices, while Long Creek staff used data to assign students with varied learning needs to various instructional support programs provided by the building (e.g., Title I, 31-A, etc.). The major difference between these two schools was

in the level of support received from the District Office. Manley had a very active and engaged relationship with the District Office. The District Office created the design for Data Teams and implemented the concept to all elementary and secondary schools throughout the district. District Office provided the financial support for this program, was responsible for identifying and training personnel, monitored the progress of program implementation, and reported student performance progress throughout the District. On the other hand, Manley's principal utilized LCLDP's Data-Informed Decision-Making dimension to get support for the Data Team process and the use of data to support school renewal activities in the remaining six dimensions.

There was an apparent and distant relationship between Long Creek school and the District Office. According to Focus Group teachers, the dialogue between the building staff and the District Office was "non-existent." They cited examples of the elimination of instructional councils they perceived as being "administratively-controlled," and was not helpful. This lack of coordination and collaboration was evident when curriculum decisions were made at the building level.

Decision. The District Office's vision to use the Data Team process had a tremendous impact on the Manley school principal's participation in the LCLD program. She concluded that this program would help to support her leadership efforts to implement the District's initiative. On the other hand, the principal at Long Creek felt LCLDP's training program, with attenuating School Renewal Matrix, would serve as a framework for this building to develop their school improvement initiatives.

Action. The principal at Manley utilized the Data-Informed Decision-Making dimension as the overarching umbrella to support school renewal activities in each of the six remaining dimensions. Data from each discipline were used to assess student success in each of the remaining disciplines. Long Creek, however, utilized each school renewal activity as a separate standalone program that had little, if any, connection to the remaining six LCLDP dimensions.

Evaluation. Both schools held monthly school improvement team meetings to monitor the progress of their school renewal activities. At Manley, District and Building Data Team Specialists conducted classroom visitations to monitor teacher's implementation of instructional strategies identified by the District as priority areas. Long Creek utilized monthly meetings to assess the progress of students assigned to instructional support programs. Both schools adjusted their school renewal activities based upon data and progress monitoring of student achievement.

SUMMARY

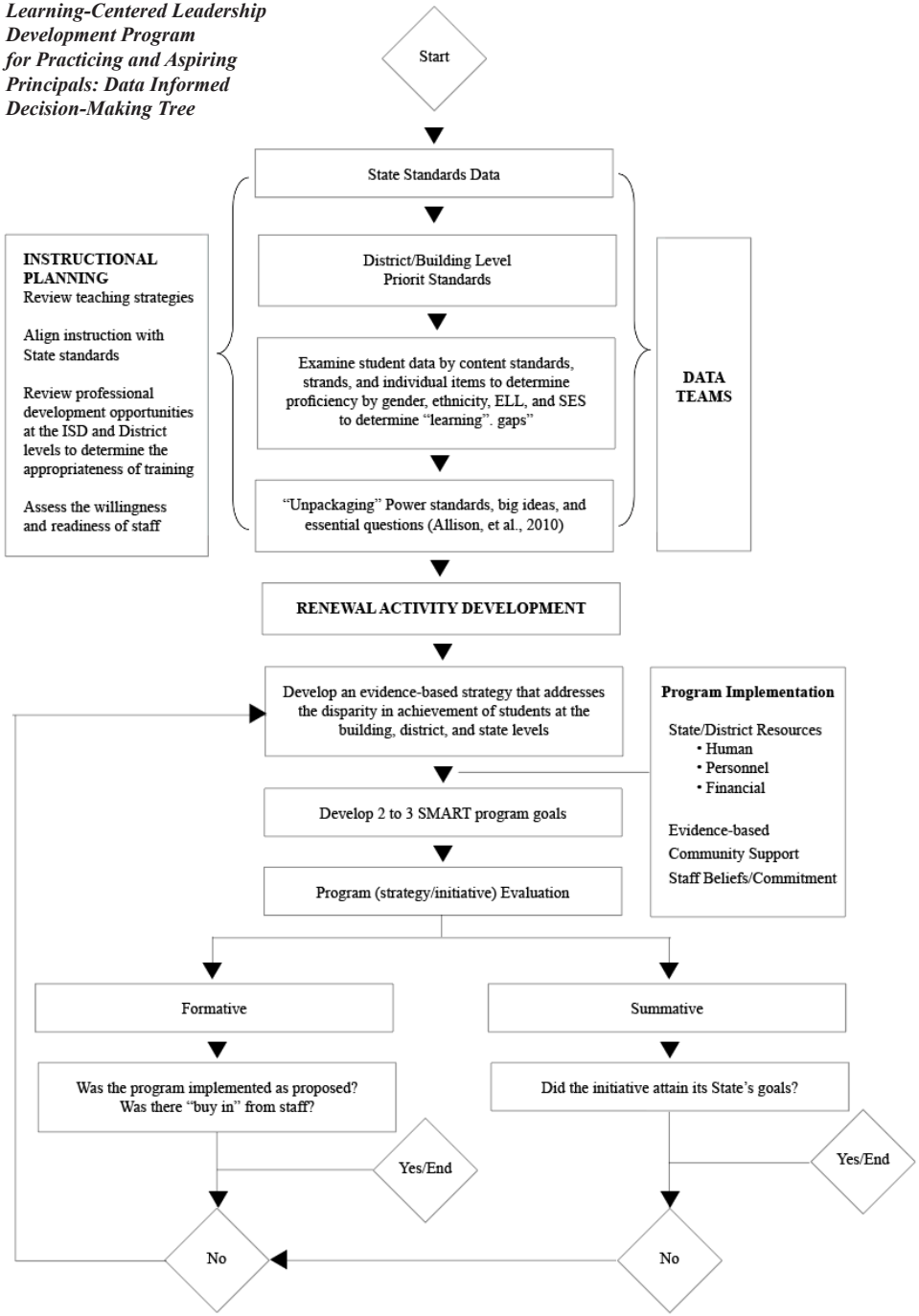
The overall intent of the school improvement process is to improve the academic achievement of all students. The findings from the study of two Midwestern elementary schools found that there were similarities and differences between these two schools in implementing school renewal activities. As to similarities between the two schools, firstly, both schools' improvement plans incorporated components, with varying degrees, of the seven dimensions associated with DIDM. There were differences in school renewal planning between the two schools. First, along with the three dimensions (distributive and empowering leadership, passion and commitment for school renewal, and high, cohesive, and culturally relevant expectations for all students) as well as the overall scale, Manley had statistically significantly higher means than Long Creek. Secondly, Manley had a comprehensive theme for school renewal to include all seven dimensions, rather than discretely treating the seven dimensions which Long Creek did. Thirdly, Manley tended to develop homegrown programs for school renewal while Long Creek was inclined to purchase commercial programs.

DISCUSSIONS

Improving schools to the extent that all students achieve at high-performance levels is a lofty and voluminous task that few, if any, districts ever attain. Notwithstanding the effort displayed by many school staff, there are still a lot of schools that have not raised students' academic performance to expected levels. This Midwestern state, like other states in the Nation, required all school districts to develop a continuous improvement plan to help students perform at high proficiency levels. In viewing these two buildings' school renewal efforts, there was ample evidence to suggest that developing and implementing school renewal activities were not an easy task. There are many different variables that school officials must contend with as they develop their plans.

Based on the similarities between these two schools, we could develop heuristics associated with school renewal activities, and the employment of the DDAE process might be related to these two schools' overall performance above the state average. Furthermore, comparing the varying degree of student achievement and differences in school renewal between the two schools, we could also develop heuristics that the following factors might be related to an even higher level of student achievement in Manley in the following ways: (a) more depth in implementing along the seven dimensions, (b) having a comprehensive theme to include all seven dimensions (rather than discretely treating the seven dimensions separately), (c) developing homegrown programs rather than purchasing commercially available programs, and (d) having a supportive district context. These heuristics have implications for school renewal efforts as well as directions for future research.

Learning-Centered Leadership Development Program for Practicing and Aspiring Principals: Data Informed Decision-Making Tree



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COVID-19 PANDEMIC: DISCIPLINARY POLICIES AND FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BLACK STUDENTS' EMERGENCE IN THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country endured an unprecedented health crisis, forcing rapid decisions to educate millions of students. Justice-involved youth and those in schools confronted with zero-tolerance policies also faced challenges during the pandemic. Overreliance on rigorous discipline policies and procedures designed to deter students from exhibiting undesirable behaviors left an indelible mark on African American students. Instead of keeping America's promise of providing equal access to education, students have been introduced to the criminal justice system for minor infractions. The authors provide background on the school-to-prison pipeline and discuss the state of education due to COVID-19, including education outcomes for youth in juvenile facilities and those in classrooms confronted with zero-tolerance policies, along with recommendations for improvement.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the country encountered an unprecedented health crisis, forcing educators and policymakers to make rapid decisions to educate millions of students (Buchanan, Castro, Kushner, & Krohn, 2020, Einhorn, 2020; Mitchell, 2020; Rothstein, 2020). The pandemic created mass disruption in schools during the Spring 2019-20 semester. "The magnitude and speed of the closures was unprecedented." (Education Week, 2020, para. 2). Forty-eight states, four US territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) ordered closures affecting at least 50.8 million public school students (Education Week, 2020). From the onset, systems (e.g., school, juvenile justice) were functioning in chaos (Dorn, Hancock, Sarakatsannis, & Viruleg, 2020) as the pandemic raged on, wreaking havoc on families, youth in juvenile justice facilities, and students in public schools.

Among the learners requiring safety precautions during the pandemic were those functioning within the school-to-prison pipeline from two related groups: students in traditional classrooms operating with ridiculous zero-tolerance policies and disproportionately suspended and expelled, and those already pushed into juvenile justice facilities in part, due to consequence of those same policies. Both groups faced challenges in staying safe, healthy, and engaged in their education while educational leaders were making decisions on the fly.

During the COVID-19 pandemic students were functioning in an unfamiliar environment that could easily be described as volatile. Concerns about family health against the backdrop of widespread police brutality, George Floyd's death, and the Black Lives Matter movement placed emotional stress on Black youth in schools and those in the justice system.

THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) defined the school-to-prison pipeline as the process of moving students from public schools into the criminal justice system. Le (2016) defined the school-to-prison pipeline as "the relationship between poorer schools and prisons" (p.66). The school-to-prison pipeline has deterred students from achieving the "American dream" of becoming productive members of society. This process undermines the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution, which urged schools to avoid discriminatory practices of segregating students of color. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund (2018) emphasized the fact that students who could benefit from intensive instructional support often end up in the school-to-prison pipeline. Let us be clear, some criminal offenses warrant harsh disciplinary measures. However, it is incumbent upon mental health facilities, school districts, and juvenile justice advocates to work collaboratively to provide intensive programs and services for at-risk students and students with disabilities as early as possible to break the cycle.

According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report (2019), 70% of students who populate juvenile justice facilities have learning disabilities, which include gaps in their reading abilities. The most recent research about the school-to-prison pipeline is reflective of the fact that students of color are impacted three times more than other ethnic groups (Gonzalez, 2011; Nance, 2016; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019).

Experts who worked to protect the rights of students with disabilities have identified failure to consider the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as factors that are fueling the school-to-prison pipeline (NCD, 2015). According to the National Council on Disabilities (NCD 2015), 85% of students who populate juvenile justice facilities have various disabilities. Even more disturbing is that 37% of those students did not receive the support they needed in school prior to entering criminal justice facilities. The NCD stated that the absence of full-time family support advocates who can provide continuous training about the rights and responsibilities of caregivers is a major hindrance to the academic success of K-12 students with disabilities (NCD, 2015). Another vital factor that has fueled the school-to-prison pipeline is the absence of genuine connections between teachers and students (Gonsoulin, Zablocki, & Leone, 2012).

Zero-Tolerance Policies

Zero-tolerance policies were adopted nationwide due to the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) that was implemented by President Clinton in 1994, and mandated a full year expulsion for bringing a firearm to school. The policies were modified in 1999 to include various behavioral issues such as the possession of alcohol, cell phones, drugs, and tobacco (Hess, 2019). The implementation of zero-tolerance policies has caused stakeholders to question why schools operate in the same manner as correctional facilities (Flannery, 2015; Sawyer, 2019).

The mismanagement of zero-tolerance policies has fueled the pipeline because students of color receive harsh punishments for minor infractions such as chewing gum, talking back, using cell phones, etc. While some students have received the proper assistance

to escape the criminal justice system, others who are products of impoverished environments continue to experience high recidivism rates (Castillo, 2015).

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights ([OCR] 2017) explained that during the 2017-18 academic term, 101,990 students of the 50.9 million students in K-12 institutions encountered physical restraint, mechanical restraint, or seclusion. More specifically, 70, 000 students experienced physical restraint, 3,619 students experienced mechanical restraint, and 27, 538 students were subjected to seclusion. The OCR further noted 80 % of students with disabilities experienced physical restraint during the reported timeframe, while 20 % of other students experienced similar treatment (OCR, 2017). If school systems fail to revitalize their discipline policies, more African American students and students with disabilities will join the 2.1 million students who are arrested each year (Sawyer, 2019).

Over the past decade, the percentage of suspensions and expulsions have spiraled out of control. The U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection revealed 260,000 students were sent to law enforcement facilities during the 2011-12 academic term.

In 2012, forty-eight percent of African American male students had been suspended, which was double the rates of suspensions for Hispanic (22. 6 %), White (21.4%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (11.2%). The percentage of suspensions for African American females was 29.0%, which was twice the percentage of Hispanic (11.8%), White (9.4%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (7.9 %) (NCES, 2016). Even more troubling is the fact that 92,000 students were arrested on and around school premises (Sawyer, 2019) by installing security cameras and metal detectors.

Out of School Suspension

During the 2013-14 academic term, 2.6 million school students received one or more out-of-school suspensions. The data further revealed 13.7% of African American students were suspended, which was higher than any other race. The data also showed that 6.7% of American Indians/Alaska Native, 5.3% of students with two or more races, and 4.5% of Hispanic and Pacific Islander students, 3.4% of White students, and 1.1% of Asian students received out-of-school suspensions during the same timeframe. The percentage of male students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions was 7.3%, while the percentage of female students who received out-of-school suspensions was 3.2%. Seventeen-point six percent of African American males received one or more out-of-school suspensions, compared to 9.6% of African American females. In terms of expulsions during the 2013-14 academic term, 111,000 students were expelled. African Americans and Indian/Alaska Native students were expelled more than any other ethnic group (Sawyer, 2019).

President Barack Obama expressed concerns about the racial disparities prevalent in U.S. school discipline policies; thus, he implemented the School Discipline Guidance in 2014. The policy outlined the urgency of reducing the excessive use of suspensions and expulsions for students of color and students with disabilities. In 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) rescinded the School Discipline Guidance policy due to stakeholders' concerns about its legal ramifications. The

demise of this legislation simply exacerbated the situation.

In 2019, the Maryland Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that during the 2017-18 academic term, minority students represented 33% of the population and 59% of exclusionary discipline cases, while students with disabilities represented 12% of the population and 27% of suspensions and expulsions. Flannery (2015) asserted that suspensions have long-term consequences on primary and secondary school students because it is a good predictor of employment and school completion rates. The American Psychological Association Taskforce ([APA] 2008) and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2019) found rigid discipline policies designed to increase suspension rates had unfavorable outcomes on the overall academic community. The APA Taskforce (2008) further explained that suspensions did not deter students from becoming repeat offenders. In fact, some students would ultimately get caught up in a relentless cycle of getting suspended for a variety of infractions.

Research suggests that school administrators are concerned about resolving discriminatory discipline practices in K-12 schools (Kirk & Sampson, 2013; Le, 2016; Sawyer, 2019). An examination of a survey administered to 500 superintendents by the School Superintendents Association (AASA) revealed that 84% of the participants updated or were in the process of modifying their code of conduct (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2016).

Philadelphia eliminated suspensions for minor issues, while New York City and Texas made the suspension process more difficult for teachers and other support staff members (Curran, 2019). The 2018 Federal Commission on School Safety Prevention report suggested that law enforcement agencies must work with schools, courts, government agencies, mental health facilities, and juvenile justice agencies to develop diversion programs. The Federal Commission on School Safety (2018) also advised behavioral management facilities to join forces with school districts to expand therapeutic services that may deter at-risk K-12 students from populating the school-to-prison pipeline. Instead of referring Black students who misbehave to external agencies for minor infractions, stakeholders should provide high-quality instructional supports for at-risk students. Teachers should also examine the curriculum to ensure that the content is relevant and interesting for diverse learners.

The Role of School Resource Officers

School Resource Officers (SRO) have been responsible for maintaining the general operations of the nation's public schools. The Justice Policy Institute (2020) reported that there are approximately 14, 000 to 20,000 SROs in schools across the nation. It is important to note that most of the SROs have been assigned to schools populated primarily with students of color (Justice Policy Institute, 2020). SROs were initiated under the guidelines of the 1994 United States Title IV-21st Century Schools, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, which was designed to assist programs in their quest to eliminate violence, eliminate the use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco in federally funded learning communities (ED, 2018). SROs' roles and responsibilities include mentoring, monitoring, reducing racial tension, and upholding law and order (Ryan et al., 2018).

In a 2019 report entitled Two Billion Dollars Later written by Strategies for Youth,

it was estimated that nearly $1 billion had been allocated from the federal government to maintain SROs in public school systems. While this may not appear to be an alarming amount of funds to allocate for the safety and well-being of administrators, students, teachers, and support staff members, consider the number of academic programs and services that could have been implemented in public schools to engage students in STEM and other innovative programs.

The influx of SROs in U.S. schools has drawn much attention to the state of racial injustices and the vast numbers of K-12 Black students and students with disabilities being referred from the safe haven of the learning institutions into the predatory halls of the criminal justice system. There are 1.6 million students who attend schools that have employed sworn law enforcement officers (Justice Policy Institute, 2020). The Justice Policy Institute (2020) reported that in 2010 "over a quarter million students received misdemeanor citations from SROs for behaviors that previously would only have merited a meeting with school administrative personnel" (p.3). The Justice Policy Institute (2020) further noted that juvenile caseloads skyrocketed by 118% between 1960 and 2015. During the 2013-14 school term, there were 44, 370 school-based arrests, which increased to 51,780 during the 2015-16 academic term (Justice Policy Institute, 2020, p.4). Sadly, most of the arrests were classified as minor infractions. These incidents could have been avoided by providing more diversity and de-escalation training sessions for SROs.

In 2020, Dana Goldstein wrote a New York Times editorial examining the current state of affairs in U.S. public schools regarding the feasibility of using SROs to maintain law and order. Goldstein offered examples of SROs who were terminated for inflicting harm on young students. In one case, an officer in Vance County, North Carolina was terminated for repeatedly slamming an 11-year-old boy to the ground. This is just one example of the thousands of SRO abuse cases across the nation within the past decade, that continues to fuel the school-to-prison pipeline (Goldstein, 2020; NA, Devlin & Gottfredson, 2016). When students are abused and victimized continuously by traumatic situations, they may begin to exhibit negative behaviors towards others including authority figures, which may ultimately cause students to become products of the criminal justice system. Ryan et al. (2018) warned stakeholders to think carefully before assigning SROs to public schools because officers who knowingly disregard rules and regulations are harmful to the students they are hired to protect and serve.

Some school systems, including Minneapolis, Minnesota, Oakland, California, Seattle, Denver, and Portland, abandoned contracts with law enforcement agencies to facilitate "safe" academic environments (Goldstein, 2020). In some instances, this action is a direct result of George Floyd's death. Students and other stakeholders reported feeling threatened by the mere presence of SROs in the hallways (Goldstein, 2020). Is there a need for public schools to be concerned about School Resource Officers (SROs)? The answer to this question is debatable, but there is evidence to support the need for the National Association of School Resource Officers to consider modifying some of its general operations (2017-2018 NCES Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety Report; NA, Devlin & Gottfredson, 2016; and Ryan et, al.). The Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice 2019 report indicated a few reasons why there is a need to enhance policies and procedures that govern school-based

SROs. Some of the reasons are as follows:

(a) Only seven states require SROs to attend adolescent mental health training sessions.
(b) Only nine states require SROs to understand the needs of special education students.
(c) Only eight states have mandated SROs to receive de-escalation training.
(d) There are seven states and the District of Columbia that require SROs to learn about school laws. and
(e) Only two states NE and VA require SROs to be trained in understanding implicit bias, students' rights, and parental notification laws (p.11).

The aforementioned statistics were offered to enlighten stakeholders of issues that have been reported about the state of SROs in public schools. How do we expect SROs to work harmoniously with students in public schools without a set of national standards? How can administrators expect SROs who do not understand how to manage adolescents, students with mental challenges, or students with disabilities not to engage in inappropriate behaviors? Now is the time for the National Association of School Resource Officers to collaborate with stakeholders to determine the future role of the SRO in public schools.

Outcomes of School-to-prison pipeline

Nance (2016) urged stakeholders to be mindful that students who are pushed in the criminal justice system suffer long-term effects, including "reinforcement of violent attitudes and behaviors, limited educational employment, military, and housing opportunities, an increased likelihood of not graduating from high school, mental concerns, and increased involvement in the criminal justice system" (p. 319). He further noted the long-term impact of the trauma that students experience when they are arrested in school. Moreover, students who are repeat offenders contribute to disproportionate percentages of youth recidivism rates. The long-term effects of the criminal justice system may negatively impact students who want to redeem themselves by continuing their education at the formative and college levels (Nance, 2016).

Kirk and Sampson (2013) explained how students who are arrested are often stigmatized by school personnel, which may result in the "weakening of social bonds." The relationship that students form with administrators, teachers, peers, and other staff members can either encourage or discourage them from excelling to higher heights. In some cases, negative dispositions exhibited by core stakeholders may be responsible for students leaving the safety of the halls of academia and retreating to the streets. Another factor that is contributing to the dropout rate is the inability of students who have been expelled for long periods of time to get back on track after returning to public schools (Evans, 2019; Kirk & Sampson Hess, 2013, 2019; Nance, 2016). This factor may ultimately cause students to be retained. Curiosity exists about the fate of students who managed to complete their formative education who were products of the school-to-prison pipeline. How successful are they in navigating the pathway to college? Well, according to the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Higher Education Act of 1998, adults who have been convicted of felonies or drug charges are not eligible for student loans, Pell Grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and Federal work-study (Kirk and Sampson, 2013). Although

the Higher Education Act has been updated as recently as 2019, no changes have been made to the mandate above. This mandate is another roadblock that hinders the upward mobility of students who have dreams that are often shattered by discriminatory regulations.

COVID-19 IMPACT

Youth Residential Facilities

The administration of educational programs for the 37,000 youth in the residential facilities varies by state. And may include ED or the juvenile justice system (Developmental Services Group, 2019, No Kids in Prison, 2020). Too often, youth confined in the justice system are placed at-risk for poor outcomes due to the impact of confined spaces, poor sanitation, poor ventilation, often inadequate medical care, and the quality of educational and rehabilitative programs (Barnett, 2020, No Kids in Prison, 2020, Rovner, 2020). As could have been predicted, residential facilities became epicenters for COVID-19, increasing the risk of infection for youth in such facilities (Barnett, 2020). Educational opportunities were halted and later provided by essential staff during the pandemic because teachers were not able to enter the facility. Despite these grim truths, students held in secure settings are generally entitled to and deserve equitable opportunities, an entitlement not being realized, especially during the pandemic.

Myriad news sources and emerging research reported the disparate effects that reverberated from the pandemic (Margoulis, Doyle Lynch, Pufall Jones, & Hymes 2020). Justice-involved youth are more likely to suffer from asthma, causing the population to be more susceptible to the virus (Buchanan et al., 2020). The Sentencing Project keeps track of COVID-19 cases in juvenile facilities to promote system accountability and advocacy for youth pushed into the system (Rovner, 2020). Data from December 4, 2020, showed that COVID-19 cases were reported among detained youth in 41 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam. (Rovner, 2020). Health and safety precautions were taken, but the harsh reality is that by November 2020, more than 2000 youth housed in juvenile facilities were infected with the virus (No Kids in Prison, 2020, Rovner, 2020). Given the proximity and lack of sanitation that defines life in congregate environments, such as detention centers and residential treatment centers, the spread was inevitable (Rovner, 2020) for youth, most of whom are Black.

In response, states and local agencies took action to limit the spread of the virus in juvenile facilities. Visits with family members, a critical social interaction that often supports youth needs and mental health, were eliminated (Children's Law and Policy, 2020). Social distancing, a preventive measure to flatten the curve, was challenging to implement for students housed in juvenile facilities, but necessary (Buchanan et al., 2020). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2020), media reports called attention to youth being housed in confinement up to 23 hours per day for compliance with social distancing requirements. Supply chain slowdowns caused shortages in soap and protective equipment (Hager, 2020) leaving youth more susceptible to COVID-19.

Bearing in mind adolescents' social nature, the lack of interaction, a critical factor in anti-social behavior, could easily trigger a crisis. Youth, with little to do, began fighting and

turning on each other (Children's Law and Policy, 2020; Hager, 2020). Youth advocates questioned if any rehabilitation was taking place at all under the conditions in which the facilities operated. While measures taken may have been the best option to lessen the virus spread, it will be necessary to determine the potential negative impact of such a negative environment on these youth long term. Considering that most youths are in facilities due to non-violent offenses, youth justice advocates took a bold step in over 30 states (Saxon, 2020). The advocates pushed governors and court officials to release incarcerated youth to bend the curve of infections within the juvenile justice system (No Kids in Prison, 2020; Saxon, 2020).

Mental Health and Special Education

When schools transitioned to remote learning, educators in public schools and those in residential facilities were faced with the enormous challenge of providing students' services and implementing interventions (Heasley, 2020). In the beginning, educators were uncertain about the implementation of remote instruction (Jameson, Stegenga, & Ryan, 2020). In many cases, instruction halted while states and localities waited for federal guidance, which came in April, a month after the shutdown began. Early during the crisis, the lack of guidance created an additional barrier to learning for students, especially those already struggling and those receiving special education services. Instructional time lost due to the federal offices' lack of communication could negatively impact students and cause them to regress.

Children and youth in the justice system are more likely to experience complex medical, mental health, developmental situations (Owen & Wallace, 2020), and other life circumstances, deeming them more vulnerable than non-justice involved youth. Estimates vary, but the prevalence of mental health problems among justice-involved youth ranges from 50% to 80% (Owen & Wallace, 2020). In 2015, 20% of all youth lived with one or more mental disorders, with the proportion increasing to 70% for the juvenile justice population (Herrington, 2015). The most common mental health concerns include depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, and substance use disorder (Owen & Wallace, 2020). Thus, the added trauma and cognitive dissonance associated with COVID-19 may pose additional challenges that impede students' ability to improve academically and emotionally.

A large percentage of justice-involved youth are receiving special education services. As recipients, students are entitled to individualized education plans (IEP) under IDEA provisions (Jameson, et. al., 2020) that guarantee specialized interventions in academics and social-emotional development. Services under IDEA have presented longstanding concerns before the pandemic for Black students due to low expectations and over-representation (Lawson, Humphrey, Wood-Garnett, Fearn, Welch, Green-Bryant, & Avoke, 2002; Townsend, 2000). Numerous organizations, including NABSE, joined national discourse to ameliorate outcomes for Black students with disabilities. NABSE showed national leadership and partnered with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) to develop a guide with recommendations to foster more equitable outcomes for Black students receiving special education services (Lawson et al., 2002). Although history has shown the past and cur-

rent problems with special education identification, many Black students genuinely benefit from the consistency of their individualized interventions.

Efforts to continue services in classrooms during the pandemic included "modifying instruction, holding virtual meetings with parents, and encouraging collaboration between general and special education teachers" (GAO, 2020, p.2). Still, these efforts fell short in providing the types of supports and interventions students need and are entitled to under IDEA. Consequently, students were disadvantaged because supports and interventions were not provided or implemented consistently during the pandemic. Mental illness, combined with the stress and trauma of COVID-19 and the absence of specialized interventions under IDEA, created a more severe problem for youth already demonstrating anti-social issues.

PK-12 School Closures

The pandemic posed a devastating threat to health and safety and sparked the immediate closure of school buildings (Cipriano &Rappolt-Schlittman, 2020; Rothstein, 2020). When school doors closed, opportunities for innovation were opened as teachers were presented a blank slate due to the lack of research to guide their teaching practice for extended periods of remote learning (Cipriano &Rappolt-Schlittman, 2020). Educators concerned about the negative ramifications of reduced instructional time worked to create 100% remote instruction provisions. Remote instruction caused numerous changes as teachers struggled with instruction and communication with students, activities to help them practice, and in some cases, assessment of student learning at home. "Online learning-filled a need during the pandemic, but it doesn't produce the outcomes of in-person instruction. Studies of online learning suggest that students learn less in online environments than in person but that disadvantaged students learn the least. And that's true even when online teachers have experience and training with online teaching. Under the current emergency, most teachers will not have any experience at all with this approach" (Chu, 2020). Teachers' good intentions to minimize the pandemic's impact were often thwarted due to the lack of technology and internet service in the home, causing students to lose precious instructional hours (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2020).

Moreover, in early April, teachers in districts across the country reported that fewer than half of their students were routinely participating in virtual learning (Arnold, 2020). Parents whose children needed it most were perplexed due to the absence of required instructional resources at home. Even when technology was available, parents were often left feeling overwhelmed due to their new expanded role in providing instruction for their children.

Financial Considerations During the Pandemic

Amid the pandemic, a financial crisis emerged in public schools due to budget shortfalls, when schools were required to do more with fewer resources. The financial burden of expanding technology supports for Title 1, social and emotional supports for students, professional development for educators, and parents' resources posed unique challenges for under-resourced districts (Romanov & Thatcher, 2020). Public schools struggled to gain

financial footing sparked by the need for additional resources. Concerned about educational outcomes, the NAACP filed a lawsuit (NAACP v. Devos) accusing the federal government of robbing public schools that educate underserved students of funds and diverting their funds to private schools (Southern Poverty Law Center, [SULC] 2020a). Thankfully for public schools, the US District Court for the District of Columbia rendered its verdict in favor of the plaintiffs, "striking down a rule that imposed unlawful conditions on federal emergency aid for public schools" (SULC, 2020b, para.1)

Academic Achievement

A calamitous outcome of the pandemic and remote instruction was data showing that students overall began school in the fall behind academically in reading and math (Brody & Koh, 2020), possibly due to remote instruction in the spring. Decades of under-investment in Black and low-income communities had resulted in certain students (Black, Latinx, low-income) facing a higher likelihood of attending schools with fewer economic resources pre-pandemic and less technology for remote instruction (Gaylord Harden et al., 2020) during the pandemic. In addition to resources, these same students faced stressors that created barriers to their learning and may impact mental health. For example, seventy-one percent of Black youth reported worrying that they or a family member would be exposed to the virus (Gaylord Harden et al., 2020).

Given the recent emergence of the pandemic and paucity of research, numerous education scholars offered predictions to explain the impact of COVID-19 on student learning (Einhorn, 2020; Kuhfeld, Tarasawa, Johnson, Ruzek & Lewis, 2020). Although the potential fallout from the pandemic continues to evolve and unravel, Dorn et al. (2020) predicted long-term disproportionate learning losses between White students and their Black and Hispanic peers, a wider gap, and increased dropout rates. Gaylord-Harden et al. (2020) project that students would "lose one-third of pre-pandemic reading gains and half of the mathematics gains during the pandemic" (p.2). Garcia and Wise (2020) of the Economic Policy Institute analyzed pre-pandemic data to inform their prediction based on instructional time lost. The findings revealed that the 2019–2020 school year was reduced by at least one-third relative to its normal length. Assuming linear increments in growth over the year and no additional obstacles, expect a loss of at least 0.1 SD across the board and larger in earlier grades. Gaylord-Harden and colleagues (2020) focused their projection on academic gains. These researchers projected that students would "lose one-third of pre-pandemic reading gains and half of the mathematics gains during the pandemic" (p.2). Given the recent emergence of the pandemic, it could take years to recover learning losses that are not yet well understood. Predictions among scholars are consistent in forecasting a decline in all students' academic performance, with negative performance exacerbated for vulnerable students.

Scholars at NWEA (Kuhfeld et. al., 2020) went further and conducted a comparative analysis to explain how the pandemic has impacted student learning. The sample consisted of 4.4 million students in grades 3-8 who took the MAP Growth assessment in fall 2020. The results were encouraging and showed that most students demonstrated learning gains in reading since the pandemic impacted schools in March, 2020. Data disaggregated by

ethnicity showed a slight decrease in reading for Black and Hispanic students. However, fall 2020 math achievement was 5 to 10 percentile points lower than the pre-COVID-19 performance by same-grade students (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). The authors expressed a caveat explaining that the impacts of COVID-19 could be underestimated for vulnerable students, perhaps due to lower participation in the fall 2020 assessment. In other words, their learning losses could be more significant than reported.

Renaissance Learning (2020) also conducted a study to shed light on student performance and showed more optimism about the future. The authors commented, "While there is some cause for initial concern with math, we would note that, so far, our data does not indicate a "lost generation" or dynamics from which students could "never recover," as the dire predictions claim" (para. 16).

The early data and forecasts are helpful, but questions are looming about learning loss and widening gaps when the future of in-person instruction is still unknown and students are losing instructional time. This situation is a problem because instructional time is linked to academic achievement gaps, delinquency, suspension, expulsion, and dropping out of school altogether (Losen & Martinez, 2020). Moreover, these same factors are closely associated with students pushed out of the system into the school-to-prison pipeline and can be used to predict their life trajectory. For this discussion, we acknowledge that school discipline, low achievement, and contact with the juvenile justice system are interconnected factors that can predict students' life chances. In a longitudinal study, a "cohort of Florida youth were followed beginning in ninth grade. Researchers found that each suspension a student experienced decreased the odds of graduating from high school by 20 percent and enrolling in college by 12 percent (Gregory & Fergus, 2017).

Listening to Students' Voices

Student voices are salient for learning how the pandemic has impacted their lives, with studies ongoing for that purpose. To learn directly from students, The Youth Mental Health Project (2020) conducted survey research during the week of October 2, 2020, for Well Beings and PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs. The sample (N=1000) consisted of teenagers between the ages of 16-19, with gender evenly divided. Ethnicity data were presented in seven ethnic groups, including multiracial, and showed 20.7% of the sample indicated ethnicity as Black, and 41.7% identified themselves as White. Student responses revealed that over 70% of the teens in high school and college, across ethnic groups, believed the pandemic had disadvantaged their generation, and 50% reported that the pandemic worsened their mental health. In this study, teens reported widespread dissatisfaction with mental health, with 67% reporting depression during the last year, and 22% saying they experienced severe depression. Mental health was the top-ranked concern among the teenage respondents, followed by obtaining their desired education, physical health, and financial health.

Similarly, Margoulis, et. al, (2020) conducted a study to learn more about youths' perceptions of the pandemic on learning and their lives. A representative sample (N=3300) of youth aged 16-19 in high school completed a survey to share their perceptions. Sampling parameters ensured that the sample matched the population of high school students

in the United States with respect to grade, race/ethnicity, gender, and region. Findings are concerning for all students, but even more so for those on the system's margins. For example, 30% of respondents are more frequently unhappy or depressed, and nearly as many say they are much more concerned than usual about having their basic needs met. In terms of their education, 92% reported their participation in remote learning, but more than three quarters (78%) reported spending four or fewer hours each day in class or working on assignments. The findings also showed that more than one-quarter of students (29%) expressed feeling disconnected from school adults, with a similar percentage of students feeling disconnected from classmates or their school community.

Impact of Zero Tolerance Policies and Remote Learning

One might surmise that when schools closed, zero-tolerance policies were no longer imposed. On the contrary, school closings did not end the unjust practices of punishing certain students and pushing them out of the system due to zero-tolerance policies. Consider the female student from Michigan incarcerated for violating probation because she did not complete her online coursework. Notably, completing homework was not a condition of her probation. Why take such an egregious action against one student when school systems had documented tens of thousands of students who had not logged in or completed coursework (Cohen, 2020)? When teachers were handed a window into students' homes through remote learning, several students faced suspension due to items visible in the home. A black 12-year-old male student was suspended for playing with a toy gun during a virtual class. In a similar incident, a 9-year-old black male in Louisiana was suspended for having a BB gun visible in the home during remote instruction (Hoyt, 2020). This student will be continuously punished because the board denied calls to remove the suspension from the 9-year old student's record. The pandemic has created an additional reason to suspend Black students by deeming them responsible for items visible in the home. How are students expected to concentrate when they fear being suspended for infractions beyond their control? A young child playing with a toy in his home is not a reason for suspension. Consequently, the ACLU stepped in to investigate high profile cases where students were accused of having items insight during Zoom sessions (Hoyt, 2020). Parents are fighting back and supporting their children because items visible in the home are their responsibility, and they feel the punishment is unjust (Hoyt, 2020). The first step in these situations should have been contact with parents, instead of suspending their children.

Technology Concerns

The pandemic highlighted the existing digital divide when schools took on the massive undertaking to implement remote instruction with students whose families did not have computers and high-speed internet. Participation in remote instruction presupposes a position of privilege and has placed a burden on families (The Crime Report, 2020). Education equity concerns have been brought into sharper focus as schools and districts contend with the pandemic. In its 2019 Broadband Deployment Report, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reported that at the end of 2017, 21.3 million Americans lacked access to broadband service. Only 4.3 million of those were in rural areas, which are

often cited as areas lacking broadband service to infrastructure concerns.

When the pandemic occurred, the FCC had already collected data showing the prevalence of broadband service. It was well known and expected that school systems would encounter problems educating millions of students remotely. With few options and an ongoing pandemic, schools were forced to proceed with remote instruction knowing in advance that large percentages of students would lose their access to education. The same concerns are true for youth in the justice system expected to participate in remote hearings when internet service may not be available to them at home (The Crime Report, 2020).

In what has become known as the homework gap, before the pandemic, an estimated 17 percent of U.S. students did not have access to computers at home, and 18 percent did not have home access to broadband internet (Associated Press, 2020). The homework gap is synonymous with barriers students face when working on homework assignments without a reliable Internet source at home (McLaughlin, 2016). An analysis conducted by the Associated Press (2020) pointed to Mississippi, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Alabama, and the District of Columbia as states with the highest percentages of homes without broadband access.

Amid the dark cloud of COVID-19, there is a reason for optimism, and that is innovation. Remote instruction forced teachers to use technology in new and different ways that may benefit students long beyond the pandemic. For example, some districts will continue to schedule virtual meetings for students with disabilities (GAO,2020). Remote meetings will be a major step in the right direction for parents who have been unable to attend meetings due to employment and other obligations. During the pandemic, some districts began using specialized attendance monitoring processes to increase students' instructional time while online. This process can also be continued after the pandemic to monitor students' time on task and allow the teacher more time to individualize instruction.

Discussion and Recommendations

In charting the path forward, as a nation, we must, first and foremost, acknowledge the work put forth by educators who worked swiftly to facilitate learning for students in March when schools closed. Remote instruction required adjusted schedules, flexibility, and longer hours. The NEA estimated 90% more work for teachers than in past years (Long, 2020). Society must be conscious of the burden placed upon teachers' shoulders when some students lacked ample access to technology for instruction while they are required to teach all students. Teachers are the most important person in students' education before, during, and after the pandemic. Therefore, decisions regarding education must include their voices and their health and safety to ensure students' safety and well-being.

An immediate and necessary step forward is to develop a national school-to-prison pipeline taskforce to investigate policies and procedures that govern disciplinary actions that have disproportionately impacted African American students. Stakeholders should collaborate with the National Association of School Resource Officers to develop uniform guidelines for SROs assigned to work in K-12 school systems. This action is necessary to eliminate the mass numbers of incidents occurring with the most vulnerable population. The collaboration with this entity will help develop training initiatives on human relations,

diversity issues, developmental and behavioral issues, and an overview of laws that govern K-12 schools.

During the pandemic, the school-to-prison pipeline continued to disrupt public school systems across the nation In many instances, it seemed like the system was fighting an uphill battle, but this is an issue that can be resolved with appropriate training and the will to improve students' lives. Immediate action must also be taken to define the parameters of zero tolerance policies during remote instruction and a process to follow when concerns arise about students' homes. While some cities have made great strides by developing and implementing restorative justice initiatives to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline, other cities have failed to examine their role in the process (Goldstein, 2020). Evidence-based practices including positive behavior supports must be implemented in schools to avoid unnecessary removal from instructional settings.

COVID-19 transformed students' everyday lives into something unimaginable and, in some instances, injurious. The pandemic highlighted the need for more attention on coordinated services to address social-emotional and academic challenges. Clark County, Nevada, reported recent spike in suicides of school-aged youth prompting calls for a return to in-person instruction as a remedy to reverse this trend. Although administrators can't say with certainty that suicide is related to the pandemic, superintendents across the nation must heed this warning and pay closer attention to mental health concerns in their districts. In recognition of the relationship between mental health and achievement, a whole-child approach is warranted to develop students academically and emotionally. Emphasizing the whole child will highlight systemic opportunity gaps and promote partnerships with parents and other stakeholders, whose input is so desperately needed.

Reducing suspensions and expulsions will require a comprehensive focus on policies, practices, social-emotional development, and cognitive development. Teachers in public schools and those in juvenile facilities will require ongoing professional development in behavior management and SEL to curtail students' unnecessary time out of class due to zero-tolerance policies. Past efforts in SEL have focused solely on students. Moving forward, SEL has to expand from focusing exclusively on students to examine individual beliefs and structural biases of all staff involved with students (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Funds are needed to hire more nurses, counselors, and other support staff to assist students who may be struggling with the emotional after-effects of the pandemic. The country has faced high death rates and loss of family income in some cases due to the pandemic. Priority must concentrate on helping students cope with these tragedies to focus on learning.

Notwithstanding the alarming situation, school systems will benefit from contingency planning to continue high-quality instruction if schools are forced to close. As administrators and educators chart the path forward, there is an urgent need to learn how students are actually performing, where gaps exist, and the most effective instructional strategies to accelerate instruction and close gaps. Central to these decisions will be the recognition that learning loss has occurred at varying rates. Early indication points to concerns in both reading and math, depending on the grade. Reversing skill regression will require high-quality, well-structured summer and extended day programs to strengthen skills.

Inequities in technology access is a well-known problem that has been allowed to

proliferate in schools and homes for too long. The pandemic underscored the urgency in implementing a national effort to deliver affordable broadband to all Americans. Past initiatives to address access have been, in some cases, perfunctory at best, negatively impacting outcomes for students of color and those from low-income families. An important initial next step will be in guaranteeing technology access for every student, including those in the juvenile justice system, to prevent the missteps that occurred during the pandemic. However, increasing technology access is too simplistic for avoiding poor performance. Attention must be extended to the best use of technology for improving outcomes. Recent research has shown dismal results in both reading and math for students attending virtual schools. There is more to learn about digital platforms' functionality for learning by conducting longitudinal studies for that purpose.

Now is the time to develop a plan for how systems can emerge stronger based upon new learning during the pandemic. Charting the course will be met with obstacles because of unanswered questions about COVID-19, including its long term health impact. New strains of the virus have been discovered across the globe, the vaccine rollout has been slower than expected, and steps to slow the spread have been ignored, mostly due to politics. Amid these uncertainties, school systems have a duty to develop contingency plans that will allow education to continue in a meaningful way whenever schools are unable to operate as normal. The pandemic pushed schools and the justice system to the limits. The nation was given clarity of systemic inequities of who the current system worked for and against during the pandemic. Youth in juvenile systems are entitled to equal educational rights under the U.S. Constitution, yet during the pandemic, essential personnel became their teachers, and safety provisions included isolation. The good news is that fewer youth are being placed in juvenile facilities. However, the justice system could benefit from a total transformation to refocus its efforts on youth rehabilitation and away from punishment. In doing so, education, health and safety, and employment should be integral components for improving youths' life chances.

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BIOGRAPHIES

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WE WANT TO DO MORE THAN SURVIVE: ABOLITIONIST TEACHING AND THE PURSUIT OF EDUCATION FREEDOM

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In her book, We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom, well-known scholar Dr. Bettina Love issues an incisive and compelling argument supporting the notion that educational policies and practices have never sufficed in the quest to truly educate all students. Dr. Love further contends that if American society is to truly reach its ideal of "freedom for all" then teaching, and the educational system as a whole, must be fundamentally reshaped. Dr. Love acknowledges that a shift in teaching practices and educational policies of such magnitude will draw the sharpest criticism from those detractors who continue to benefit from an educational system that is inherently flawed. To buttress these viewpoints and validate the assessment made regarding the uneven nature of education in American schools, Dr. Love tethers historical barriers borne of social compacts and unjust legal authority to today's school practices. These practices fail miserably in meeting the needs of Black, Brown, and disadvantaged students.

In each of the book's seven chapters, Dr. Love carefully prosecutes the mindset that has erected what she oft refers to as the "educational survival complex." The educational survival complex is underwritten by beliefs, policies, and practices that subject Black, Brown, and other disadvantaged students to a system manufactured to trap them in a perpetual state of surviving rather than thriving and advancing. Dr. Love revisits historical events that have aided and abetted in the construction of this system. As the book progresses, a more nuanced discussion about why and how educators must fervently pushback on the current state of education emerges. Dr. Love is unapologetically committed to challenging the educational status quo in favor of educational approaches that seek to acknowledge and celebrate the strengths of Black and Brown students, their communities, and their histories. Dr. Love makes clear that the work of abolitionist teaching hinges on our ability to concede that education, as an institution, is unjust and that Whiteness and White privilege do exist. When left unchecked, Whiteness and White privilege can damage students of color and their communities. Dr. Love further states that education must be culturally relevant, and that creating an educational system where all students can thrive requires a total commitment by society as a whole.

CHAPTER REVIEWS

In CHAPTER 1, "We Who Are Dark", Dr. Love illuminates the contradictory nature of a country that champions the ideals of "freedom and liberty for all" while steadfastly protecting institutions that explicitly oppress minority groups. Before taking aim at the misguided beliefs, policies, and practices endemic in our educational system, Dr. Love starts first by introducing "intersectionality." Intersectionality, as defined by Dr. Love, is the overlapping of two or more characteristics that make one more apt to experience multiple layers of discrimination. A recount of the Anita Hill case where both racism and sexism were at play is discussed as an example of how intersectionality exacerbates the already horrible sting of discrimination. Dr. Love also notes, on a personal level, that being a non-heterosexual, Black female is an example of intersectionality whereby her sexual preference, gender, and race all intersect in a synergistic manner to create discrimination that goes beyond the color of one's skin. This concept of intersectionality and her decision to advance this idea is pivotal to this book in that it speaks to the changing "complexion" of American society and how discrimination cannot solely be relegated to race.

After broadening the reader's understanding of intersectionality, Dr. Love brings the flaws of the American educational system into focus. Dr. Love discusses how the American educational system has become a system of survival for underprivileged student groups, and none more so than America's Black and Brown students. Dr. Love remarks that the current system of education serves mainly to fuel the school to prison pipeline. She connects this notion by highlighting various statistics and drawing a clear link between the disproportionate rates at which Black and Brown students are suspended in K12 schools and rates at which they are later incarcerated. Dr. Love maintains that so long as Black and Brown students are in schools that teach them to survive rather than to dream big and thrive, the American dream will remain in a constant state of deferment.

In CHAPTER 2, "Educational Survival", Dr. Love delves deeper into her interpretation of the educational survival complex and the reasons why our system of schooling remains riddled with defects and continues to exacerbate America's history of discriminatory practices. Dr. Loves sheds light on the vast inequities in school funding formulas.The author notes that schools are often funded by local tax revenue. This approach to funding ensures that communities with the most wealth fund schools at levels that ensure they have the very best resources, programs, and human capital in the form of stabile teaching staffs and active Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs). Armed with these advantages, these school communities also have the political capital needed to advance their interests. Meanwhile, schools that serve low-income students lack these and the other resources needed to "beat back" educational inequities. Dr. Love opines that these inequities are designed to maintain a system of racial, cultural, and social hierarchy that stifle too many Black and Brown students.

Dr. Love goes on to note that the devaluing of these students and their inherent "darkness" makes supporting systems of oppression like the educational survival complex and the biased justice system tenable. Also discussed is a more insidious notion of the White rage that is derived from more than the mere presence of Black and Brown people; this rage, Dr. Love contends, is a response to the advancement of by Black and Brown people despite their darkness. This White rage has led to obscene violence up to and including the of murders of innocent Black people. Dr. Love reinforces this point by citing the heinous murder of Emmett Till and the church bombing that killed Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Denise McNair who were the four Black girls killed in the hellacious 1963 church bombing perpetrated by members of the Klu Klux Klan. The juxtaposition offered in this chapter is that there is a dual system of oppression that works first to limit the success of Black and Brown people while then supporting rage against those who are able to advance even in the face of oppression.

Moving into CHAPTER 3, "Mattering", Dr. Love provides personal anecdotes of growing up as a non-heterosexual Black female from a working-class community. Dr. Love recollects about the transition from a parochial school to a public school where she met Mrs. Johnson. This was Dr. Love's first experience with Black female teacher. Mrs. Johnson cared deeply for Dr. Love and all her classmates and instilled a sense in every student that they "mattered." As such, the students thrived because Mrs. Johnson sought to provide them an education that went beyond typical schooling; she helped them

dream big and realize their fullest potential. Mrs. Johnson was successful in striking the balance between the no-nonsense, yet nurturing educator. Thus, the students worked hard for Mrs. Johnson and as a result they thrived in school. Dr. Love was later introduced to a community program entitled Fighting Ignorance and Spending Truth (FIST) which gave Dr. Love a sense of purpose and broader understanding of social and political issues. Running this program was Mr. Boone who, like Mrs. Johnson, cared deeply for students and pushed them to be their very best. These experiences were pivotal in establishing what Dr. Love denotes as a "homeplace." This concept is based on the works on Bell Hooks and conveys a place where Black and Brown students matter. Dr. Love's key point in this chapter seems to be that students need adults who care and wholly believe in their potential to succeed. This level of altruism combined with community supports serve as the foundation for abolitionist teaching and student success.

As the chapter progresses, the focus shifts to the decline in the number of teachers who truly understand the educational needs of Black and Brown students. Coinciding with this teacher decline, is the decline in the number of community-based programs. A case is made that these are the consequences of an economy that was shifting away from industrialization. Consequently, once proud, stabile communities inhabited by Black and Brown people were subject to increases in unemployment which, in turn, gave way to increases in crime and substance abuse. To further compound matters, the increases in substance abuse and crime cleared the way for "the war on drugs" which codified policies that further ravaged Black and Brown communities and their schools. These laws and policies bore close resemblance to the long list of legal authorities used to blunt Black advancement. Jim Crow and Black Code Laws are offered as a couple of the many examples of America's vicious misuse of its laws against Black people. These and other laws worsen conditions for Black and Brown people and thus help enshrine the belief that "they" do not matter which makes it easier to disregard their needs.

The content of CHAPTER 4, "Grit, Zest, and Racism", focuses primarily on what has come to be recognized as the "achievement gap." Absent of teachers who care and understand Black and Brown students, policies that support culturally relevant teaching, and community programs designed to support student well-being there has been a burgeoning number of schools that simply do not meet the needs of minority students. Dr. Love maintains that rather than directing attention and efforts toward addressing those noted factors, the education system has, instead, adopted policies that seek to sort students into a "winners and losers" hierarchy with minority students almost always on the losing end. The main mechanism driving this sorting process is a behemoth testing industry. Using test scores as the principal proxy for student learning, the education system has created and exacerbated an achievement gap that consistently labels Black and Brown students as "less than" or outright failures. The achievement gap is a carefully constructed problem that has opened the door for private industry profit in the form of testing, charter schools, and, most recently, an acute focus on character education.

Dr. Love goes on to further these points by laying out a case that the shift to character education is a misguided effort that goes counter to the inherent nature of Black and Brown students. These character education theories purport that if students learn to exemplify

traits like "zest and grit" then they will be better positioned to succeed in school. This line of thinking places students at the center of blame while exonerating a system guided by practices that are inherently defective with regard to helping all students to succeed. Dr. Love cites the widely-known work of educators like Angela Duckworth and Dave Levin as having advanced the notion that if Black and Brown students demonstrated grit and a failure is not an option type mentality then that, alone, would be enough for them to thrive in schools. Dr. Love then points to the fact that many of Black and Brown students who supposedly need training in character traits like grit and zest come from communities where these traits are required as a means of everyday survival. Black and Brown students do not need grit they need abolitionist teaching and homeplaces.

Having put forth arguments detailing the barriers inhibiting the success of Black and Brown students, in CHAPTER 5, "Abolitionist Teaching, Freedom Dreaming, and Black Joy", Dr. Love aggregates a clearer understanding of what constitutes abolitionist teaching. The author notes that abolitionist teaching, at its core, is standing up against those racist ideals, policies, and practices that have served to underwrite the struggles of generations of minority students. Fundamentally, people must acknowledge the existence of these inequitable policies and their ramifications, possess the wherewithal to understand the harmful aims and intents of these policies, and, most importantly, show the courage to stand in opposition to these policies. Only then can abolitionist teaching be fully actualized.

Later in this chapter, Dr. Love writes about the role that "Freedom Dreaming" plays in a move toward abolitionist teaching. Freedom Dreaming is a mindset grounded in the critiquing of injustices and the educational policies that continue to inhibit the educational success of Black and Brown students. Dr. Love argues that educators must be willing to dream about and move toward an education system that does more than sort and rank students based on test scores, devalues teacher autonomy, and blames students and their communities for system sanctioned inequities. Freedom Dreaming pushes for loving Black and Brown students, protecting them, and believing in their potential. The author adds that the work of Freedom Dreaming and, ultimately, abolitionist teaching requires growing the number of co-conspirators as opposed to creating more allies. Dr. Love makes a deliberate distinction between these two terms. Allies support achieving ends that are beneficial to themselves as well as others. In light of these mutual benefits, allies need not love Black and Brown people, acknowledge their own privilege, or take any semblance of major risks. To the contrary, co-conspirators fully acknowledge and understand their privilege and, thus, are able to leverage their privilege to the exclusive benefit of others. Risk taking and loving others who do not possess their privilege is the essence of who co-conspirators are and what they do. Dr. Love provides a riveting example of a co-conspirator at work when she discusses James Tyson, a White man, who provided life-saving protection for Bree Newsome as she scaled the flag-pole of the South Carolina State House to remove the confederate flag.

In CHAPTER 6, "Theory Over Gimmicks: Finding Your North Star", Dr. Love first examines what is described as the "teaching gap." This gap refers to the growing number of Black and Brown students taught by White teachers who have neither the training nor life experiences needed to connect with minority students. Dr. Love suggests that teacher

preparation programs fall short in helping bridge the gap between White teachers and their Black and Brown students as few programs require courses in cultural studies. These would bolster teacher candidates' understanding of the history, culture, and communities that have shaped their students' lives. This cultural understanding is essential to abolitionist teaching, and without this understanding teachers will struggle to fully meet the learning needs of Black and Brown students. The shortcomings of the current state of teacher education programs is further critiqued because when the few experiences of Black and Brown are discussed they too often focus on hardships and suffering. Teachers of Black and Brown students need to know the successes associated with their students' communities and heritage.

Dr. Love then moves into a discussion that equates theory with the north star. Theory serves as a guide for one's world view, and it provides a lens that frames policies and practices. Specific to the contents of this book, Dr. Love details the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT), and its importance in understanding the structural discrimination that is endemic in American culture. Thus, CRT provides a vantage point from which one can assess how America's major institutions that oversee education, housing, employment, and health care are rooted in bias that advances some while severely underserving others; in most cases, those who are underserved are Black and Brown. Consequently, Dr. Love reinforces the CRT notion that equality for Black and Brown people can only be achieved when it is also beneficial to White people. This concept is referred to as interest convergence, and affirmative action and school desegregation are offered as examples.

In the brief, FINAL CHAPTER, "We Gon' Be Alright, but That Ain't Alright" Dr. Love attributes the disparate and negative health consequences faced by Black women to racism and sexism. It is argued that these disparities in access to proper medical treatment are steeped in the desire to control Black bodies; the same control that has given sanction to the perpetration of atrocious murders of innocent Black and Brown people dating back to the origin of this country. Consequently, the end result is high infant mortality rates and other serious health concerns for Black babies. The key idea is to demonstrate that Black and Brown children and their mothers face challenges from the onset of life and forever thereafter. Thus, there is a need to address the physiological and mental health needs of Black and Brown people if America's endeavors to fulfill its promises of freedom and equality. The abolitionist understands this and fights doggedly for the well-being and equal treatment of Black and Brown people.

SUMMARY AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Love successfully prosecutes the case that now is the time for major reform in our educational beliefs, policies, and practices. Dr. Love weaves together pertinent contemporary and historical social issues that have continued to plague generations of Black and Brown communities and their schools. Consequently, Black and Brown students have been and continue to live in a space of perpetual disadvantage in just about every aspect of life. Dr. Love argues that Black and Brown students deserve the opportunities to thrive in schools rather than merely survive. To move from surviving to thriving, Dr. Love notes that Black and Brown students must be afforded educational experiences, both

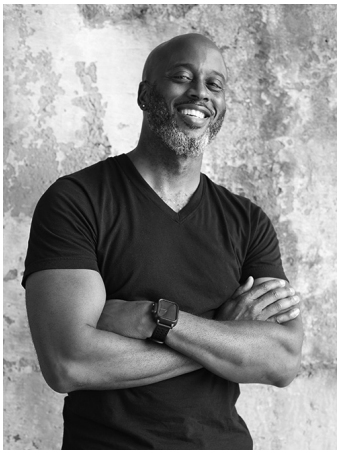
inside and outside of the classroom, that are grounded in an abolitionist teaching. That is, teaching that calls into question the racist and prejudice nature of America's institutions, seeks to give all students a voice, and an education that taps into and celebrates, rather than demeans, the culture of Black and Brown students. Overall, this book makes for a timely and compelling read for anyone interested in better understanding the "how and why" guiding our society's failure in meeting the moment with regard to educating all students and truly advancing freedom for all. From a critical perspective, the ambitious stance from which Dr. Love approached this work sometimes causes portions of the book to read as incoherent. Nonetheless, this book advances the equity discussion in an impactful way. It is a worthwhile read for anyone engaged in equity work.

REFERENCE

Love, B. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of education freedom.* Beacon Press.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Marquis S. Dwarte is an experienced educator with a proven track record of success as a school principal and district level leader. As an adjunct professor, Dr. Dwarte teaches classes in the areas of statistical methods,assessment and evaluation, action research, and quantitative research design. Dr. Dwarte holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Buffalo (SUNY at Buffalo), Master's degree in Counselor Education from McDaniel College, and Doctorate degree in Education Leadership and Social Policy from Morgan State University. Dr. Dwarte has presented on and is published in the areas of college and career readiness, school reform, and minority student achievement.



We Salute Mr. Gordon C. James

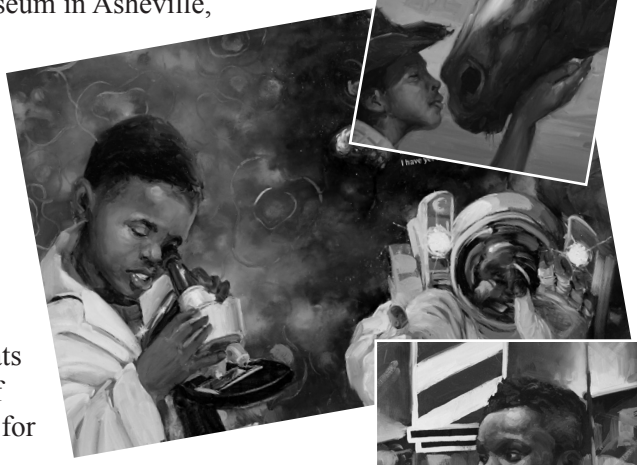
Cover Art: *"The Bass Sisters"*

Gordon's work can be seen at:
https://www.gordoncjames.com/
https://www.instagram.com/gordoncjamesfineart/?hl=en

Born in Washington, DC and raised in Fort Washington, MD Gordon C. James has been pursuing an art career ever since attending high school at Suitland Center for the Visual and Performing Arts in Forestville, MD. From there he went on to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts egree in illustration from School of Visual Arts in New York City.

After a national search in 1997 Gordon was one of only two full time illustrators hired to work for Hallmark Cards Inc.
As an award winning fine artist Gordon works to achieve the highest level of craftsmanship and beauty. These qualities have led to his paintings being featured in International Artist Magazine and his work being part of the Paul R. Jones Collection at the University of Alabama.

He brings these same sensibilities to the table when creating his illustrative work. Gordon's illustrations, are soulful, emotive and technically sound. He works hard so that we know how the characters look and most importantly exactly how they feel. As a testament to these qualities his illustrations were part of an exhibition at the Asheville Art Museum in Asheville, NC.



He is the illustrator for Patricia McKissack's *"Scraps of Time"* series and David A. Adler's "Campy". Gordon has earned Caldecott, Coretta Scott King and Ezra Jack Keats Honors and a Society of Illustrators Gold Medal for his illustrations in *"Crown an Ode to the Fresh Cut"* by Derrick Barnes and their creative team is the only two winner of the Kirkus Prize as *"I Am Every Good Thing"* is the winner for 2020.

Gordon C. James lives in Charlotte, NC with his wife Ingrid, their two children Astrid and Gabriel and their dog Rascal. He is proud to create beautiful works of art that help to tell stories and bring books to life.

THE HISTORY OF NABSE

The Beginning

On November 20, 1970, Dr. Charles D. Moody, Sr. invited several African American superintendents to a meeting at the O'Hare Marriott Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, as part of his dissertation research. The purpose of the meeting was to share concerns, develop a resource pool, and to form an organization to support African American school superintendents. The Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC) funded this meeting. Two MARC staff members, Hylan Lewis, Director of the Fellowship Program, and Dixie Moon, Executive Administrator, attended along with 15 African American superintendents.

Dr. Moody stated, "When one is in a struggle or battle, he looks around to see if he is alone. This human characteristic was one of the underlying factors in the formation of the National Alliance of Black School Superintendents." Before that meeting was over on November 22, the participants scheduled the next meeting for August 1971, in Miami Beach, Florida. During that meeting, the superintendents formally organized the National Alliance of Black School Superintendents (NABSS) and they elected Dr. Russell Jackson as the first President.

In 1972, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Special Concern's Office of African-American Affairs awarded NABSS a grant to conduct an in-depth research study of 40 school districts headed by African American superintendents. Dr. Meharry Lewis was the principal investigator for the study, which resulted in the development of a set of educational objectives for school districts enrolling predominantly African-American students.

On April 19, 1973, during the presidency of Ulysses Byas, NABSS voted to include administrators and other educational personnel in the organization and changed the organization's name to the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE). Commissions that linked members with common and related job functions were formed. On November 23, 1973, in Detroit, Michigan, NABSE was formally launched with 284 charter members.

NABSE officially opened its first national office in Washington, D.C. on January 20, 1979. Dorothy Moore served as the first executive director. William Saunders was both office manager and executive director from 1983-1993.

Today

Today, 100 NABSE affiliates throughout the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean carry on the legacy of the founder fathers. Their activities include local, state, and regional conferences; tutoring and coaching sessions; training programs; scholarships; recognition programs; educational travel; and policy analysis. NABSE continues to be the premier organization advocating on behalf of African American education. Many of our members hold prestigious positions of authority and responsibility in public and private school districts and higher education.

NABSE officers, members, and affiliates have pledged themselves to continue serving as advocates for African American children who have been poorly served in the past. They further pledge themselves to ensure that African American students are effectively educated in the present and are accorded priority for the future, and to lead the way through the creation of a concrete model that demonstrates the goals of academic and cultural excellence set forth so clearly in *Saving the African American Child*.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND: NABSE members, supporters, superintendents, principals, school board members, education human resource professionals, deans, professors, education department heads, administrative/educational support staff, teachers, parents, curriculum specialists, students, clergy, employers, job seekers and any individual or organization concerned about the education of our nation's children.

NABSE REGISTRATION RATES

Membership Status*	Full	
Individual Non-Member	$450	
Individual Member	$350	
Retiree Non-Member	$350	
Retiree Member	$300	
Student Non-Member**	$250	(*Verification required)
Student Member**	$200	(*Verification required)

* Members with outstanding membership dues must complete and submit a membership renewal application. Persons whose membership dues are delinquent will be charged the Non-Member registration rate.

** Student membership/registration category applicable only to full-time students who are NOT employed. Valid student identification card must be presented on-site or higher registration rates will apply.

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