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Increasing Engagement of Male Minority Students: An Exploratory Study



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I teach 5th Grade at Walnut Grove Elementary School in Aurora, CO. We are located in the Silver Lake School District and feed into Mankato Middle School and Plum Creek High School. Walnut Grove is a year-round school with 736 students. 12% Asian American, 8.3% African American, 6.9% Hispanic American, and 72.8% are Caucasian. Seven percent of our student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch.

I have accepted a few different roles at Walnut Grove besides a classroom teacher. I am one of the CARE (Collaborative Action Research for Equity) cadres. The Silver Lake School District has worked closely with Pacific Educational Group to address systemic issues of racial inequity in education through action research.

A project I have started at Walnut Grove centers around writing and the achievement gap. Four years ago, I started an after school boys writing club, providing writing instruction for focus groups of boys Grades 3-5, mainly African-American and Latino, who are underachieving in the classroom. My main focus is to create a workshop atmosphere where boys feel safe to take risks in their writing, so that they can begin to visualize themselves as writers. I have used current research to guide my planning for each club session. In order for all my male writers to become successful, I have created certain conditions for real, authentic writing: (1) Personal choice; (2) Interpersonal interactions; (3) Time and space to complete quality work; and (4) Purpose and constant feedback (Fletcher, 2001).

I have gained some insight into motivation and specifically, what motivates boys to write from these weekly club interactions. I now intend to take what I have learned from my after-school writing club, and broaden my questioning so that I can make a larger impact in the academic lives of Black and Hispanic boys at Walnut Grove Elementary.

The Problem

There is much research focusing on the racial achievement gap in public education. Nationwide, Black and Hispanic students are underperforming their White counterparts in all content areas. This national epidemic has forced educators to look at how systemic racism in public schools not only contributes, but causes minority students' lower achievement. It is absolutely devastating that one can pinpoint underachieving students based solely on skin color.

Working as a CARE cadre, I have again gained insight in how to improve teacher-student-community relationships, to incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy, expand the current curriculum to make it culturally relevant to minority students, and how to authenticate assessment practices so that they accurately assess student learning.

Research Question

I took my reflective knowledge on educational inequality, combined it with the successes met in my boys writing club, and conducted action research that looks at this main question: *How can I increase the engagement of my male minority students, specifically Black and Hispanic?*

1. *How can I increase the engagement of my male minority students, specifically Black and Hispanic?*
 - a. *Why is engagement lacking among these particular students?*
 - b. *How do these particular students become disengaged in their learning?*
 - c. *Why is gender so prominent in the racial achievement gap?*
 - d. *Is it possible to increase the engagement of these particular students so there is no achievement gap when compared to their White, grade-level counterparts?*

Method

In order to understand our national achievement gap, one must first come to understand how students learn, which in turn, will determine how teachers teach. Volumes of research have been conducted and a myriad of theories have been proposed as to how to solve this national epidemic in education. If learning and teaching were straightforward, I feel that we would have found a solution decades ago. I could not study my research questions using abstract or quantifiable methods. I interpreted how my particular focus group of students learned in order to improve my own developing pedagogy. I hoped to expand myself as a teacher and possibly inspire other teachers in my building to take an active interest in remedying this problem in their own classrooms.

Action Research

If I am going to be serious in changing a gap in my classroom and school (one that exists nationwide) that stems from systemic, institutionalized racism, I believe that collaborative action research is the best framework. I used Pacific Educational Group's goals for action research:

- Engage in courageous conversations with my students and colleagues about race theory and how the presence of whiteness affects teaching practices
- Collaborate with my school's professional learning community and CARE cadre on culturally responsive pedagogy
- Build awareness, develop, and apply culturally proficient curriculum, instruction and assessment in order to close racial achievement disparities within my classroom and our school (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

My own action research was reflective and cyclical as I answered my research questions. Courageous conversations, team collaboration, and professional development helped me understand how race influences learning. More importantly, this framework creates a community of teachers and students whose primary goal is to raise the achievement of our minority students, specifically boys. If we could increase the engagement of our Black and Hispanic boys, thereby increasing their overall achievement, I would have data to reflect on in order to determine factors causing this disparity. I will have answered my questions.

Survey

I gave my focus group of students a series of surveys and reflective activities throughout this project. There was a pre and post survey to determine engagement growth over the period of action research. I provided some formative assessments in order to “dipstick” the students and determine whether my action plan was working effectively to increase student motivation.

Students could also record their own growth using a self-survey/assessment chart and a reflection journal and/or audio log. The chart included periodical assignments, grade point values, and a reflective piece so that students could assess whether their increased engagement affected their academic progress. The students’ reflections were probably the most important data I collected. I wanted both teachers and students to examine their own data in order to determine if there was a relationship between engagement and academic success.

I kept a professional journal to record my own ongoing observations and interactions with students. I participated in all reflective activities so that students could see (1) how to write a reflective narrative; and (2) how to use these narratives to improve academically.

Case Study

I used my focus group of students as a single case study. My purpose here was to gain new insights and possible explanations for an academic gap based solely on skin color. I wanted to be able to explain why certain learning behaviors and/or expectations existed at our school and how I, as a White, male teacher, could increase engagement in the classroom.

Longitudinal Study for the Future

Although this action research project was short-term in its data collection and analysis, I had the potential to follow a small group of Black and Hispanic male students from third grade through fifth grade. As I mentioned earlier, my after-school boys writing club caters to underachieving minority male students. Once I had the necessary data to answer my action research questions, I could use this information to actively change the methods of instruction for a cohort of third grade boys. I could continue to collect data on and intervene as necessary with this cohort’s levels of engagement for three years. At the end of this time, I felt that I would not only have a deeper understanding of how to motivate Black and Hispanic boys, but I would be able to generalize my results to a larger audience both within my school and the district.

Participants

I used many resources at my school to conduct this action research. It was important that I received administrative support so that my research and eventual outcomes would have meaning for me and my colleagues. My principal, Amanda Whipple, and assistant principal, Eva Beadle, monitored the entire project. I met with them when needed, but they also expected that I give periodical updates on my progress.

Since my last research sub-question: *Is it possible to increase the engagement of these particular students so there is no achievement gap when compared to their White, grade-level counterparts?* required staff discussion and an analysis of our discourse, I invited colleagues from my building to participate. For example, Alice Garvey, a third-grade teacher, is one of my CARE cadres. She and I conferred throughout this project, as she was an excellent resource for culturally responsive curriculum and teaching. Due to the sensitive nature of these questions, I

anticipated that I would not have much other staff support; however, I extended an invitation to all third through fifth grade teachers, as these were the grade levels which my student participants came from.

I intended to first obtain a list of all Black and Hispanic boys in grades three through five. In speaking with my principals, they indicated that I focus on our school’s African American population and that there were only 56 African American students identified total (boys and girls). Due to this small overall number of possible participants, we decided to focus solely on fourth and fifth grade. Although a smaller sample size, this allowed me to more easily collect and analyze data.

I looked at current Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP) and Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) test scores to determine which students most exhibited underachievement, therefore leading to a diminished level of engagement. I interviewed these students’ classroom teachers (those of whom were willing to participate in this study) and any learning specialists to confirm their level of engagement.

Since I could not access students in other classrooms and grade levels readily, I required the assistance of my focus group’s classroom teachers. I had them distribute my data sources (surveys, reflective journals, etc...) before chosen lessons, and then collected them for my review. I conducted interviews of small groups of my focus students during their lunch time in order not to interfere with regular instruction.

With this pared down list, I invited these students to participate in this action research in order to study what motivates and engages them in the classroom. I anticipated approximately 10-15 students participating.

Data Collection

I collected data from five main data sources: surveys, a review of current literature, staff and student interviews, classroom observations, and staff discussions. Below is a chart indicating which data source was used to analyze and answer each research question.

Research Question	Data Source #1	Data Source #2	Data Source #3	Data Source #4
How can I increase the engagement of my male minority students, specifically Black and Hispanic?	Survey/Interview	Professional Reflection Journal	Literature Review	Student Interview Teacher Interview
Why is engagement lacking among these particular students?	Survey/Interview	Professional Reflection Journal	Literature Review	Student Reflections
How do these particular students become disengaged in their learning?	Survey/Interview Student Reflections	Professional Reflection Journal	Literature Review	Teacher Interview Classroom Observations

Why is gender so prominent in the racial achievement gap?	Literature Review	Professional Reflection Journal	Classroom Observations	
Is it possible to increase the engagement of these particular students so there is no achievement gap when compared to their White, grade-level counterparts?	Literature Review	Professional Reflection Journal	Staff Discussion Discourse Analysis	

Data Analysis

Surveys and student reflections were both written and possible focus group interviews with five to six students at a time. Data from these narratives were examined to determine if there was a relationship to the accompanying research question. Likewise, I compiled all my professional reflections in a journal organized by date of entry and relationship to research question.

My review of the current literature was systematic and meticulous. I created index card entries of each reference showing the author/source, title, date, description/key issue(s), possible quote, and any follow-up to this resource (Koshy, 2010). These cards were kept using a word processor for efficient data retrieval.

Classroom and/or student observations were collected and organized in a journal similarly organized to my professional reflections. I noted the date of observation and its relationship to the research question. I also included narrative reflective notes that I could expand upon in my professional reflection journal. Using resources from Pacific Educational Group’s work with the Motivational Framework, catered to our school’s equity professional learning community, I used a classroom observation checklist for culturally relevant teacher observations (see Appendix A). These observations were not evaluative in any way. Instead, I noted how certain culturally responsive techniques were being used to engage and motivate the male minority students.

Staff discussions and teacher interviews were collected together. I had a third party take notes during our discussions so that I could participate fully in the dialogue. These notes were then examined as well.

Schedule

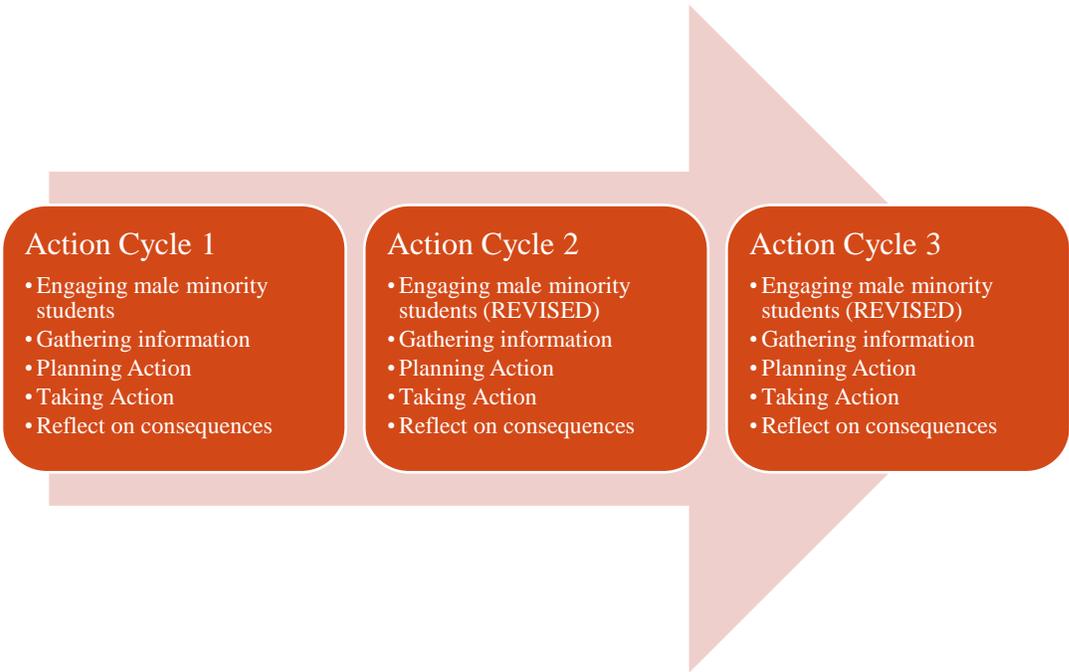


Figure 1: Based on Action Research (Thomas, 2009)

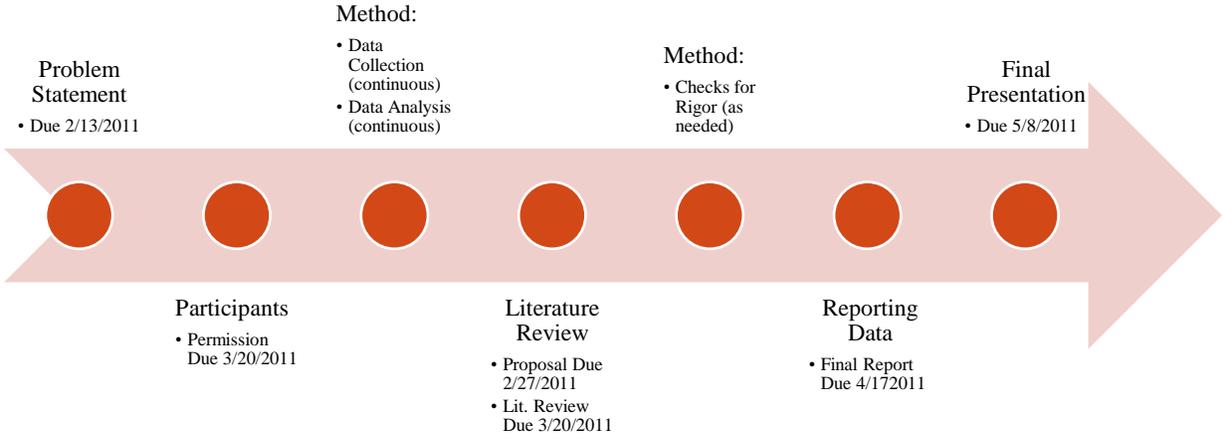


Figure 2: Timeline of Key Milestones and Deadlines

Ethical Impacts

Race and schooling are very sensitive subjects. When examining and discussing systemic racism and how it impacts minority students, it is very easy to offend everyone involved, especially the teachers. My own work with equity in schools has led me on a very difficult and personal journey examining my own racial beliefs and values. I have learned what it means to be an anti-racist leader in our school, while grappling with the difficulties of narrowing the racial academic achievement gap. In the past, being part of an “equity team” meant reading articles about race and prejudice, and sharing these with the staff. Now, I am part of a team that recognizes the urgency with which change must happen in our school and district. I am being held to the highest standards with which I deliver my culturally responsive teaching strategies, both to students and staff. This has, in turn, led me to hold others in the building to high expectations.

These high expectations often have detrimental effects. For example, school policy, no matter where it is coming from, is many times questioned by “veteran” teachers: those who have been teaching a number of years. These teachers often feel that there is no reason to change *how* they are teaching. The problem is compounded when the *why* can be interpreted as racism in the classroom, manifesting itself into lowered expectations for minority students. Therefore, it is with the utmost caution that I proceed to research my inquiry into increasing the engagement (and ultimately the achievement) of male minority students.

Checks for Rigor

It was essential that I had meaningful participation throughout this study. One way of ensuring this was by spending a lot of time at the beginning of the study modeling and teaching my participants how to write an appropriate reflection. These reflections were so important because I triangulated them with the results of the student surveys and individual student’s academic letter grades. Ideally, these three methods of data collection allowed me to form appropriate conclusions regarding the progress of this action research.

I continued to receive ongoing critique of the various aspects of my project. I made changes throughout this project in order to ensure the validity of my data collection instruments. More importantly, however, I received vital feedback on my findings, which helped me explain how to interpret alternative results. These multiple perspectives gave me new insight into how to best answer my research inquiry.

Findings

The most striking aspect about education today is that no matter what political beliefs you hold, no matter where you feel state and federal funding should be allocated best, despite where you live and send your children to school, a gap continues to exist in the achievement of students of different races and cultures. My purpose here in studying this achievement gap was not to survey the history of education, examining its successes and missteps. I did not intend to comment or theorize on race and school in America (there is plenty of this already). My sole job was to understand a phenomenon that I have observed in my classroom since I began teaching seven years ago. I hoped to provide teachers with practical pedagogical advice that they could use to raise the achievement of their own minority students. In order to understand what I saw as

a problem (and quite possibly ameliorate it on a small scale) I needed to review what has been understood in the recent past.

Searching for information about the achievement gap in the United States was not a difficult task. In fact, I spent more time culling my collected pool of articles and resources, making judgments on what supported or refuted my current inquiry, and on what was missing or inconclusive to my knowledge base. I used Google Scholar as my primary searching method, although I did not begin my search this way. I began with the professional development I have received through my school district on race, schooling, and trying to close the achievement gap.

Pacific Educational Group

For the last eight years, my school district has worked closely with Pacific Educational Group (PEG), a consulting firm founded by Glen Singleton, which uses a “framework for systemic equity/anti-racism transformation.” They work with districts to “address racial educational disparities intentionally, explicitly, and comprehensively” (Singleton, 2006). I have participated in professional development that has “heightened [my] awareness of institutional racism and develop effective strategies for closing the achievement gap in [my] school” (Singleton, 2006).

Pacific Educational Group introduced me to two major frameworks for designing culturally relevant curricula. The *Motivational Framework* was adapted from Margery B. Ginsberg’s book *Creating Highly Motivational Classrooms for All Students: A School-Wide Approach to Powerful Teaching with Diverse Learners* (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000). In it, she states “theories of intrinsic motivation respect the influence of race and culture on learning. According to this set of motivational theories, it is part of human nature to be curious, to be active, to initiate thought and behavior, to make meaning from experiences, and to be effective at what one values. These primary sources of motivation reside in all of us, across all ethnic and cultural groups. When people can see that what they are learning makes sense and is important according to their values and perspectives, their motivation to learn emerges. Like a cork rising through water, intrinsic motivation surfaces because the environment elicits it. What is culturally and emotionally significant to a person evokes intrinsic motivation” (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000).

This framework for culturally responsive teaching outlines four quadrants: *Establishing Inclusion, Developing a Positive Attitude, Enhancing Meaning, and Engendering Competence*, which teachers can use to focus their lesson planning, instruction, and reflection (Singleton, 2006). Each quadrant is designed to increase the engagement of African-American and Hispanic students (see Appendix B).

Elise Trumbull, Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, and Patricia M. Greenfield (1999) have created another framework for understanding how different cultures can impact communication between teachers, students, and parents. The *Bridging Cultures Framework* explains how a teacher’s “own teaching methods and most routine classroom expectations can come into perplexing conflict with children’s cultural ways of knowing and behaving” (Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Trumbull, 1999). They outline the differences between individualism versus collectivism and how this can influence the way minority students learn and interact with the teacher. Pacific Educational Group has taken this basic structure and used it to explain the differences in learning styles between White and African-American students (see Appendix C).

Building a Knowledge Base

Once I reviewed and analyzed these resources, I needed to search for what other educational theorists and researchers were saying about the achievement gap and how it relates to race.

Using Google Scholar, I searched using keyword terms such as *achievement gap*, *racial achievement gap*, and *motivating minority students*. This yielded several relevant articles specific to the task of theoretically and practically closing the achievement gap in American public schools. I particularly appreciated Kati Haycock's (2001) approach to this problem: focus on what is working well in public schools, especially those who have shown some success in closing the achievement gap. From high standards to curriculum rigor, these all made sense as best pedagogical practices. She states "it's not that issues of poverty and parental education don't matter. Clearly they do. But we take the students who have less to begin with and then systematically give them less in school" (Haycock, 2001). This sentiment echoes PEG's work with school districts: "The achievement gap exists on all economic levels" (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Basically, it appeared to be an issue of lowered expectations in high-poverty schools, which gave the appearance of a socio-economic cause. Haycock's particular research included this insight about minority students: "teachers were [giving] [minority students] A's for work that would earn a C or D anywhere else" (Haycock, 2001).

I also read articles that described the history of the achievement gap in the United States. As I read, I wondered why, with all this data on achievement and motivation, the gap hasn't improved. In fact, the achievement gap did narrow in the 1970's and 1980's, but has slowly widened in recent decades (Lee, 2002). In reading how our nation's students' achievement is measured and is currently trending, I realized the complicated nature of this issue.

Given the complexity of studying racial and ethnic achievement gaps, it is necessary to investigate simultaneous changes across a broad range of factors from multiple data sources and to examine their interactive, joint influences on the achievement gap. Past studies of racial and ethnic achievement gap trends tended to assume implicitly that the effects of certain factors on student achievement are constant across time periods and racial and ethnic groups. The data examined challenge that assumption and call for further investigation (Lee, 2002).

It looked as though I needed to search further.

The Search Continues

I wanted to understand where student motivation came from, and specifically, when and why African-American students' engagement faltered.

Further searching using *motivation and the achievement gap* brought me a couple of interesting studies, one action research and one experiment. In their inquiry-based action research study Antonio G. Estudillo and Hyunchang Kang (2010) examined racial differences in eighth-grade students' identification with school, "specifically the study looked at the ways in which African American and White students described abstract and concrete components of identification" (Smith, Estudillo, & Kang, 2010). They looked at the stereotype of what some

perceive as a student who values learning. From their literature review for example, “there is a perception that students and families of color do not value education, but there is little evidence in the literature to support the claim. In fact, African American parents are as or more supportive of education as White families” (Steinberg, Dornbush, & Brown, 1994). Esudillo and Kang’s study called for more minority students in college-preparatory classes and breaking racial myths on learning.

So, why aren’t more African-American students motivated to take these classes? Geoffrey L. Cohen, Julio Garcia, Nancy Apfel, and Allison Master (2006) studied the psychological impact of the achievement gap on African American students. Their findings suggested “that alleviating [a] psychological threat [as caused by the achievement gap] can improve intellectual achievement in a real-world environment” (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel & Master, 2006). They called for psychological interventions for minority students in order to raise their academic self-esteem.

This brought me again to PEG’s training in culturally responsive teaching. Does using the *Motivational* and *Bridging Cultures* frameworks influence the psychological state of my minority students? Geneva Gay (2002) seems to believe so. Her work (also used by PEG) defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly” (Gay, 2000). Teaching through a multicultural lens would, I believe, not only improve the achievement gap, but do so by improving minority students’ view on school and themselves as learners. Basically, students who felt good about themselves tended to feel good about their academic abilities.

Critical Race Theory

Finally, my search brought me to the most controversial and sensitive aspect of achievement and race: critical race theory (CRT). I was able to find a few articles that defined CRT and tied it to African-American students’ self esteem and intrinsic motivation in school.

Critical race theory is a way of understanding race relations in the United States. This intellectual movement began in the 1970’s when civil rights lawmakers felt that the 1960’s movement was beginning to slow. CRT scholars analyzed how the legal system influenced this slow pace of racial reform. Primarily, “CRT scholars redefined racism as not the acts of individuals, but the larger, systemic, structural conventions and customs that uphold and sustain oppressive group relationships, status, income, and educational attainment” (Taylor, 2006).

Although this intellectual and political paradigm is multifaceted and complex, it has four basic tenets.

1. Racism has a historical context so deeply ingrained, that it is a normal part of American society. The history of the achievement gap in the United States is often viewed concurrently with the history of the United States. Racial inequalities have been present since the founding of our nation; however, depending on one’s perspective, these divisions may be difficult to see. Conversations about race and achievement often leave out a historical context in favor of discussing other explanations (poverty, community

support, educational values). Race is an uncomfortable topic to discuss for many. It is not surprising, then, that an alarmingly high number of students do not know basic African-American history beyond that of slavery.

2. Narratives are used as a form of racial storytelling to deepen one's understanding of race. Being exposed to multiple and varying perspectives is a powerful experience. "Critical Race Theory scholarship uses narrative—what it calls racial reality—to make visible the distinctive experiences of people of color" (Taylor, 2006). These racial autobiographies are essential if one is to understand how skin color is related to how one is treated in our society.
3. Interest convergence: the majority racial group will only encourage racial equality for the minority group when it is in the best interest of the majority social group. Although we have officially desegregated schools with *Brown v. Board of Education*, there are still a high percentage of schools segregated (although for different reasons). Unfortunately, the "best" education is not always one offered from a racially diverse school. This holds true for traditionally African-American schools as well.
4. Racism is a permanent aspect of society. Although there have been amazing gains since the civil rights movement, racism has moved from being a public event to a systemic (sometimes even subversive) act. Many feel that racism ended with *Brown v. Board of Education*, but the unseen is oftentimes the most damaging.

Most relevant to me is how discussing race among colleagues can have detrimental effects on a staff's cohesiveness. PEG refers to these conversations as "Courageous Conversations" (see Appendix D) and encourages discussion about race and achievement (using a specified protocol) to come before any culturally responsive pedagogy (Singleton & Linton, 2006). However, many times these conversations lead to unintended implications of racism on the part of individual teachers. Litowitz (1997) mentions "critics also worry that CRT's emphasis on racism promotes 'balkanization' and racial divisiveness." I have been witness to this in my own school. I feel that the major reason this gap has persisted for so many years is because of the lack of open and frank communication between administrators, teachers, parents, and students about how different students learn. We seem to recognize the need to differentiate instruction for our individual students' needs; however, once the topic of race is added, people tend to shy away from recognizing that students of different colors may learn differently (Cokley, 2003). I believe that this is overlooked in the current literature: pinpointing exactly how African-American students learn in order to raise their achievement.

Research Questions Revisited

I set out to answer my research questions using an engagement student survey (see Appendix E) as my primary data source. I categorized the 19 statements into five different categories based on their intention: (1) Teacher expectations; (2) Engagement; (3) Learning objective/domain; (4) Respect; and (5) Personal reflection. I then searched for African-American students that I could administer this survey to throughout of a variety of lessons across different content areas. In my classroom, I have three African-American boys. Based on this high proportion, I assumed that I would be able to locate approximately 10-15 focus students to analyze their levels of engagement. I wanted to hone in on their personal reflections in order to determine any engagement growth. I planned to use assessment charts, student reflection journals/interviews to determine how I could increase my minority boys' engagement.

Unfortunately, out of the 56 total African-American students at our elementary school, less than ten are male in the upper elementary grades. This presented a serious problem because calculating percentages of engagement using less than ten total students did not accurately represent student engagement. If, for example, a particular survey category had eight total responses, and two African-American boys answered the same level of engagement, this would show at least fifty percent in this category. As much as I wanted to use this data source, it became clear that I did not have enough students to make it meaningful.

There were a few items that I found interesting. When looking at how well minority versus White students understood the learning objective set by the teacher, African-American boys more frequently responded either *not true at all* or *not applicable*, whereas the White boys surveyed more frequently indicated at least some level of understanding. This held true across learning domains.

The majority of data I received from teachers observing minority student engagement came from observing the African-American girls at our elementary school. Although not useful to my current study, every teacher who supplied me with observational data marked their African-American female students as fully engaged on the “Observable Behaviors” rubric (See Appendix F). These five highly motivated girls gave me hope to a narrowing of the gap for girls. All were able to demonstrate understanding of the concept(s) taught, and many were even able to synthesize their learning in a new area. Specifically, two particular African-American girls were in my CARE colleague’s class. As a personal favor to me, I asked her to fill out which Motivational Framework objectives she used either before or during her lesson. Her checkmarks in *Engendering Competence* and *Inclusion* are very apparent in the corresponding “Observable Behaviors” rubric for her highly engaged African American female students (Appendix H).

I could only contrast this with my own three African-American boys whom I would score as either “Compliant” or “Not Engaged.” Only when I refocused my own efforts to being both culturally and gender sensitive (specifically using the Motivational and Bridging Cultures frameworks), did I again see full engagement.

Therefore, I would rely on my professional reflection journal (based on classroom observations), individual teacher interviews, and an anonymous racial climate survey whereby I could analyze our school’s climate around race and equity.

1. How can I increase the engagement of my male minority students, specifically Black and Hispanic?

Even though I have strong feelings toward this question (based on my background and review of current literature), I felt it important to interview teachers throughout the building. I wanted to have some “Courageous Conversations” (Singleton & Linton, 2006) so that I could understand the social constructs and multiple perspectives of my colleagues. I used Pacific Educational Group’s protocol for “Courageous Conversations” (See Appendix D) because it is familiar with the staff based on prior professional development. I did not receive many volunteers, but those who did take some time to speak with me, gave me incredible insights.

One colleague, a White female, felt that differentiation was still best practice for increasing the engagement of any low performing student.

It's not a race thing, but best practices for students, period. I provide time outside of school hours for tutoring any student. I provide differentiation for ALL students, no matter their skin color. I think it is important to honor a student's heritage because it helps us understand each other (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 19, 2011).

My professional reflection journal entries spoke differently. In my experience, there were key factors raising the achievement of students, but *specifically* my Black and Hispanic students. First, when I developed a relationship with my minority students. I agree that this is also a characteristic of good teaching, but the difference for the culturally responsive teacher is that he/she must really know their Black and Hispanic students. The teacher should spend more time interviewing these focus students so that they can use their knowledge of the students' culture in lessons and materials. This does not mean ignoring the other White students. For example, here is an excerpt from my reflection journal after a particularly difficult lesson with fractions.

I knew Michael was getting frustrated because I see all the warning signs: furrowed brow, elevated noise level, extra fidgeting. I remember the conversation I had with his previous teacher at the beginning of the year. "Michael is a discipline problem. Once he gets angry, there is nothing you can do, but just send him to the principal's office. I feel sorry for you out in the mobile because it will be more difficult to kick him out of class." Now, here, I could see what his other teachers saw. They saw all the signs, but interpreted it differently. He wasn't a discipline case, just confused and angry about it (personal journal entry, March 11, 2011).

My relationship with Michael, the one I had strived so long and hard to create, gave me the perspective I needed. I needed to sit with Michael, figure out where he was confused, and fix the problem.

When I interviewed another teacher, this time one of the few minority women in our building, I heard a similar chord.

You can't force engagement. Students know if a teacher cares genuinely (eye contact, tone of voice). Many White teachers don't make an effort because it all comes down to who you're comfortable with. You tend to gravitate to kids that look like you; not intentionally, of course. There's a lot of denial in our building. (Hispanic female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011).

Not only can you not force engagement, but you can't force a relationship with any child, but especially with minority boys. They know when you are "on their side" or not.

Another teacher used movement to increase the engagement of her minority boys. "[Minority boys] must interact with others. It creates engagement" (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011).

This same teacher also utilized her students' personal interests. "It's my job to create background knowledge for these kids. Once I have that, then I use what they're interested in. It gives them a huge amount of accountability" (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011). Another colleague was even more intentional with utilizing her minority boy's interest, especially in writing. "In my past experience, especially African-American boys, enjoy writing about *Black* sports. I know this sounds prejudicial, but it taps into their interests" (White female, teacher, personal communication, April 1, 2011). Creating a relevance to the subject

matter, all the while developing a positive attitude about school, is another facet of culturally relevant teaching.

2. *Why is engagement lacking among these particular students?*

When I pressed a colleague for an answer about the seeming coincidence that engagement and achievement are lower for minority groups, she again echoed her earlier sentiment.

It is not a Black/White thing. Some students are engaged, and some are not. I have had high performing Black students and low performing White students I just don't see things that way. I can see language issues with Hispanic ELA (English Learning Acquisition) students, especially if they previously lived in Mexico, but that is more about language than race (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 19, 2011).

I asked, "What if you saw a gap, though. For example, if you had a group of Black students who were lower performing. What would you say?"

I don't talk about it. I would talk about the problems the students were having in school, but I would not mention race. Sometimes I feel we are moving backward with all this talk of race. All kids should be recognized, good or bad (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 19, 2011).

To talk about the problems a student is having in school, *without* talking about his race, is to not fully understand the problems facing minority students.

When I asked another teacher the same question, I received quite a different response.

In my personal opinion, I think that generations upon generation of African-American boys are trapped in the same negative cycle. Black men in America are becoming less and less responsible and I think this is from years of lowered expectations. It's ingrained into their ethnic group (White female, teacher, personal communication, April 1, 2011).

One interviewee used minority boys' interests in subjects, and saw a lack of interest as a cause of disengagement. "A lot of stuff is not applicable to my minority students. I wonder if it is a lack of background knowledge" (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011). This same teacher also considered her teaching style as a factor. "African-American boys have a difficult time with lectures. They're not engaged. It's not their learning style" (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011).

3. *How do these particular students become disengaged in their learning?*

There were many reasons, some other than race, to explain disengagement.

Role models. African Americans buy into this self-fulfilling prophecy that they are not successful and never will be. It is a perpetual cycle. Since slavery, African-Americans have had disadvantages from the beginning. They've internalized them. Now, the role

model for young Black boys is to drop out of school and leave your family and children (White female, teacher, personal communication, April 1, 2011).

Frustration—no understanding. Sometimes it is too difficult to keep up. Apathy—both kids and adults. It is hard to motivate a kid to work hard if their parents don't see value in school (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 19, 2011).

They don't feel a connection to the teacher. They tune out. Grades and turning in homework become not important if they feel the teacher doesn't really care. (Hispanic female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011).

Our school tends to be more teacher-centered with lectures. African-American boys need more responsibility. They embrace 100% responsibility. As long as you are clear about your expectations, making them personal instead of just the class' expectations. It's like money in the bank. They need to know I care about them; it gives a big payoff later (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011).

Boys are just on the back burner. They don't fit. There is less of a tolerance for minority boys. (Hispanic female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011).

It's easy to see how teachers could forget (or purposely ignore) that race is a factor. There were a lot of commonsense solutions/causes for disengagement; however, including race adds a needed layer to understanding the problem. Quoting my journal:

It is harder for me to see my Black students making poor choices because I know the stereotype and where people think they will end up, especially the boys. I want my Black students to rise above the lowered expectations and succeed (personal journal entry, February 28, 2011).

4. Why is gender so prominent in the racial achievement gap?

Interestingly, my colleague did see a gender gap in her classroom. She attributed this to boys being less mature than the girls. Due to time constraints and interruptions, I could not pursue this further.

When I interviewed teachers in lower grade levels, gender became more of an issue with engagement. "Many times, teachers don't give boys stuff they want to write about, such as sports and television" (White female, teacher, personal communication, April 1, 2011). Why gender, though? Many had the same answer, just phrased differently. "Boys are just intrinsically different than girls. They're wired differently" (White female, teacher, personal communication, April 1, 2011).

5. Is it possible to increase the engagement of these particular students so there is no achievement gap when compared to their White, grade-level counterparts?

Again, my colleague repeated her earlier philosophy. "Do not bring up issues of race. It is OK to talk about it [lower achievement], but don't open up that can of worms" (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 19, 2011).

Others I interviewed were more optimistic.

Yes, 100%. I have the same, if not higher expectations for my minority students as I do for the rest of the class. There may be other cognitive processing difficulties, but the expectations are the same (White female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011).

This sentiment points to another factor in culturally relevant teaching: rigor. It is important to enhance meaning for your minority students, while holding high expectations about the quality, not quantity, of work completed.

Ideally, yes. We [our school] tend to give it [equity trainings] lip service. There are a few willing to tackle the issue, but until we have a majority of teachers involved with culturally responsive practices, it won't happen (Hispanic female, teacher, personal communication, March 20, 2011).

However, probably the most popular feeling toward closing the achievement gap was hopelessness and/or helplessness. Teachers are characteristically overworked and underpaid. Too often, looking at such a large problem is just too much when the daily grind is problem enough. "I can't do everything in this classroom. We need to hold parents, the community, everyone accountable. I can't be the only one who changes everything" (White female, teacher, personal communication, April 1, 2011).

During my study, I administered an anonymous survey (see Appendix G) to better understand my colleagues' attitudes about race and previous equity trainings we have had thus far. The survey was mandated school-wide about three years ago. I would have liked to compare those results (about 80 staff members, including teacher assistants) with the selected responses I received during this action research project, but they have since disappeared. Therefore, I was only able to look at data from my current survey.

The survey I gave was completely voluntary, and only ten adults in the building picked up a survey (including myself). Out of these ten adults, 100% of them were classroom teachers, and 60% were White. That left about 40% who were either non-White or chose not to answer that question. The results, although telling, must be viewed with caution.

Geraldine Van de Kleut, in her own action research exploration, explains how "the right answer is the one that matches the teacher's. Like a test, these answers demonstrate that students know what the right answers are; they have successfully participated in a unit of study and can formulate what they feel are [the correct] answers" (Van de Kleut, 2003). Students often give answers because they feel it is what the teacher wants to hear. Can teachers be expected to be any more objective, especially when the questions asked are controversial and uncomfortable? What do they think I want to hear? What are the "correct" answers?

Many statements specifically targeted my research question about the possibility to close the achievement gap between our school's African-American/Hispanic students and White students. For example, item number three stated, *Students of color have a lower ability to learn*. Number 10: *Students of color are as smart as white students*. One hundred percent of my

participants answered that they agree. Number 17: *I have higher expectations of White students than students of color.* One hundred percent of my participants marked *Strongly Disagree*. These statements reflect an attitude held regarding the education of minority students. If one believes that African-American students are inherently less intelligent than their White counterparts, they will not make any efforts to increase their engagement in the classroom, thereby closing any learning gap. I believe I received honest answers, but I am more concerned about the teachers who **did/would not** complete the survey due to their feelings about race and intelligence.

Item number five stated, *It is important to include teaching strategies geared toward different races.* Fifty percent of those surveyed marked somewhat Disagree, while the other half marked strongly Agree. Number 16: *I am aware of the general learning styles of the racial groups I teach or interact with.* 80% of my participants answered that they agree. Item number eight: *A student's race is an important factor in the current achievement gap.* One hundred percent of my participants answered that they either somewhat or strongly agree. Number 19: *I can help close the achievement gap.* Ten percent of those surveyed marked Neither Agree nor Disagree and 60% marked Strongly/Somewhat Agree. It appears that we have a staff willing and ready to tackle closing the achievement gap. Again, I worry about those who did not respond to the survey. There were obviously more of those teachers in the building than the ones who volunteered to take the survey.

Finally, the last three statements indicate a level of action in either having conversations about race, or using culturally responsive pedagogy. Over half of those surveyed have not had *any* conversations in the last month about racial differences with other staff members. Although there is a spattering of those who have had two, three, or even four, it is clear that this is still a very sensitive issue within our building. More telling, however, is that 90% of those surveyed have not had any conversations in the last month about racial differences with *students*. If teachers cannot have analytical discourse with their students about race, it is no surprise that 40% of those surveyed have not incorporated any strategies targeted at differences in race in the classroom or with daily interactions with students.

Discussion and Recommendations

In exploring how to increase the achievement of male minority students, specifically African-Americans, I encountered various barriers, which affected not only my data collection, but interpreting my results. First, although I anticipated some participant resistance from my colleagues, I did not expect to have such limited student data. Out of the 56 total African-American students at our elementary school, roughly 15% are male in the upper elementary grades. The majority of our school's African American population lies in Kindergarten through second grades. Although I wanted to include these students as well, I determined it would be too difficult to interview and assess primary student's reflective data. I do think that young students (especially Black students) should be aware of what motivates and engages them in the classroom, and how they become disengaged during lessons. However, this should be saved for another research study.

When I realized that I would not be able to sufficiently use my student engagement surveys, I turned instead to the teacher reflections, surveys, and interviews. Again, I found very

little participation. Ten adults in the building picked up a survey (including myself). Out of these ten adults, all were classroom teachers, and 60% were White. That left about 40% who were either non-White or chose not to answer that question. I analyzed these results cautiously; mainly, there was no way for me to determine if those surveyed answered honestly. A few teachers stopped me in the hallways and informed me that they had picked up a survey. One teacher discussed her answers with me, so I trusted the integrity of her responses. In the other cases, there was no way to verify the survey's validity.

That left me with the teacher interviews, where here, I received the most candid and thought-provoking responses to my research questions. It was refreshing to sit face-to-face with other teacher colleagues and talk about race. Oftentimes, we are called to attend staff development meetings centering around race, but, generally, no one speaks. There is an atmosphere of distrust and disinterest, so no one speaks up. In my interviews, I only spoke with teacher colleagues who volunteered to be interviewed. They knew my research questions ahead of time, which gave them time to reflect and possibly prepare their answers. If not for time constraints throughout the day and before/after school, I believe these courageous conversations would have developed into longer discussions.

Interpretation

I have interpreted these results as thus:

1. Many staff members feel that our school is racially sensitive; however, I feel that there is an underlying current of racial insensitivity toward certain pedagogical practices and decisions.
2. These negative attitudes discourage conversations of race and achievement of minority students among the staff.
3. Many staff members feel that culturally relevant teaching strategies are important; however, only a small percentage of teachers actually use them in planning, instruction, and reflection.
4. Culturally relevant pedagogy is not more actively used because of the few numbers of African-American students within the school's population.
5. There are a handful of teachers committed to *quietly* closing the racial achievement gap within their classroom, and sharing their experiences among trusted colleagues.

I wish I had more substantial data to support my interpretations. I can only base these interpretations on observations I have made in my five years at Walnut Grove Elementary School. I sincerely hope that if I pressed further into this subject within our school, I would see data to refute my claims.

Recommendations for Action

Every year, teachers receive a staff preference form for the following school year. This form is designed to give our principals an idea of how satisfied teachers are with their current teaching assignment (grade level, calendar track, etc...). It also allows teachers to voice any requests or recommendations for the next school year. Each year, I recommend the following:

- More staff development focused on culturally responsive pedagogy
- Staff development/training for African-American history/culture
- Time and protocols for talking with colleagues about race and achievement within our school

- To volunteer to head/participate in any equity leadership committees
- Organizing some sort of African-American achievement celebration to honor places where minority students succeed

Since I do not have any control over whether these recommendations are acted upon, it is frustrating when I see water-downed attempts or versions of these. Nonetheless, I will continue to recommend that our school and its teachers move toward a more diverse, racially sensitive, and culturally responsive place for all children to learn.

Plans for Action

Every year, I plan to close the achievement gap in my classroom through new rounds of inquiry. My cycle of inquiry will be four steps:

Plan. Each year I identify my focus students and plan lessons with culturally relevant pedagogy. I identify the data sources and develop collection tools in order to help me analyze my results.

Act. I will continue teaching lessons and collecting data on my effectiveness at raising my minority focus students' motivation and engagement. My data will be in the form of classroom observations, student data and work samples, self-assessments, and conversations with parents.

Reflect. I will analyze my data. Ideally, I can do this in collaboration with colleagues (or a mentor) in order to reflect on what worked and what needs modification.

Revise. I will reassess my teaching strategies and revise my lesson plans and data collection tools.

In order to facilitate my plan of action I will seek out a mentor: someone who is well-versed in race and equity and may even be successful at closing the achievement gap. I need to begin to examine the teachers and classrooms that are effective at raising the engagement and motivation of minority students, so that I can replicate it in my own classroom through my own action inquiry.

Unfortunately, due to budget cuts, our district has stopped district-wide equity trainings for teachers. Without these mandated gatherings, teachers have a difficult time leaving their classroom to see what other teachers are doing in their classrooms. Specifically, teachers need organized and deliberate time to talk to each other about race and equity. I think a mentor would help me to stop and reflect on my teaching practices, and give me someone to talk with about my successes and failures with raising my African American students' achievement.

In the meantime, I will continue to read professional books/journals about race in American schools. Currently, I am reading *Can We Talk About Race? And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation* by Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D., the current president of Spelman College in Atlanta, a historically Black college for women. I must continue to review the current literature so that I am in touch with schooling and the racial barriers that prevent equitable learning for all students.

Simultaneously, I will speak to my principal about my interest in being on the parent committee for race and equity in our school. Glen Singleton (2006) outlines the various roles

educators and the surrounding community plays in PASS (Partnerships for Academically Successful Students). These teams are designed to bring a school's community into the courageous conversations and into the classroom so that *everyone* is involved in not only raising the engagement of minority students, but in transforming systemic racism in schools. It calls for anti-racist leaders in administrators, teachers, and parents. I want to be one of those anti-racist school leaders.

Reflection

I believe that the purpose of an education is to further minds, both young and old, so that one can reach his/her full potential in life. Every person who sets out to achieve an education wants to succeed; however, the current educational system in the United States tells students (both overtly and covertly) that skin color determines one's individual success or failure in schools.

In my classroom, I expect my Black and Hispanic students, especially the boys, to either out-perform or perform equal to their White peers. The deeper I delve into this issue, however, the more inadequate I feel. I struggle when my minority students refuse to learn or have absolutely no desire to achieve academic success. I want to push my African American students to a higher level academically while supporting their need to be themselves and function in a White society. I need constant reminders that education is not equitable for every child. Luckily for me, those reminders are my students every day. Each year, I receive more and more African-American students, and their stories (and test scores/grades) remind me that I need to keep using culturally responsive pedagogy in my classroom and that I need to keep speaking to our staff about the effectiveness of racial conversations among peers.

Finally, despite all of my research, reflection, and teaching, I often feel I am falling short of where I need to be personally in this work. My racial autobiography is White and has only brief episodes with African-Americans and Latinos. I have only once felt what it is like to be the minority. I continue to live in a White world and benefit from being a White male. I have no African-American or Latino friends outside of a professional relationship. I am afraid that my professional equity work will plateau unless I engross myself in African-American and Latino culture in my personal life. How do I successfully do this while making my interactions authentic? How can I push parents and students in this work when I am not fully trusted as a White, male teacher? These questions linger after the students have left, the board is erased, and the lights have been turned off. Perhaps it is in the constant awareness of my own race, understanding White privileges in education and society, where I can answer these questions. I need to redefine what it means to be a White, male teacher. In the end, I hope I can successfully be an anti-racist leader in my school and community, despite these challenges.

Conclusion

Equity is raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest performing students and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories. **Anti-racism** is our conscious and deliberate individual and collective action that challenges the impact and perpetuation of institutional White racial power, position and privilege (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

There is much debate about public education in the United States. From John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1997) to Paolo Freire's *Education for Critical Consciousness* (2005) to Geoffrey Canada and *Waiting for Superman* (2010), educators and critics have tried to understand how a system, although not originally designed for everyone, is currently unable to adequately service *all* students. A racial gap is created when one looks at the achievement of White students as compared to the achievement (or rather underachievement) of Black and Hispanic students. What has become known and to a degree accepted, as the Achievement Gap, can unfortunately predict one's success in public education based solely on skin color.

There is extreme value in understanding motivation and engagement in minority students. The urgency with which systemic changes need to be made is always present. There will always be constraints and/or limitations to any inquiry into the racial achievement gap. It is vitally important that we, as educators, mentors, and role models ask this one question: *Do we have the will to educate all children?* Dr. Asa G. Hilliard believes,

The knowledge and skills to educate all children already exist. Because we have lived in a historically oppressive society, educational issues tend to be framed as technical issues, which deny their political origin and meaning. There are *no* pedagogical barriers to teaching and learning when willing people are prepared and made available to children. If we embrace a will to excellence, we can deeply restructure education in ways that will engage teachers to release the full potential of all our children (Hilliard, 1995).

I'm willing. Are you?

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Appendices

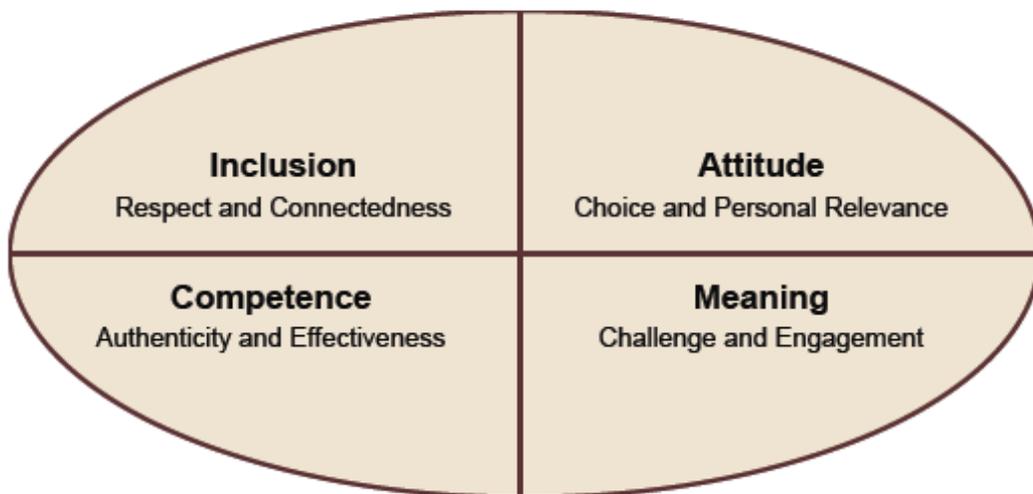
Appendix A: Motivational Framework for Culturally Relevant Teaching (Singleton & Linton, 2006)

Pacific Educational Group
CARE
Motivational Framework

A MOTIVATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING

Theories of intrinsic motivation respect the influence of race and culture on learning. According to this set of motivational theories, it is part of human nature to be curious, to be active, to initiate thought and behavior, to make meaning from experiences, and to be effective at what one values. These primary sources of motivation reside in all of us, across all ethnic and cultural groups. When people can see that what they are learning makes sense and is important according to their values and perspectives, their motivation to learn emerges. Like a cork rising through water, intrinsic motivation surfaces because the environment elicits it. What is culturally and emotionally significant to a person evokes intrinsic motivation.

Ginsberg, M.G. and Wlodkowski, R.J., *Creating Highly Motivating Classrooms for All Students*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2000, page 3-4



Appendix B: Motivational Framework Teacher Observation Checklist (Singleton & Linton, 2006)

An “Adapted” Motivational Framework for Culturally Relevant Teaching

A Primer for Describing Pedagogy

A. Establishing Inclusion: How does the learning experience contribute to developing as a community of learners who feel respected and connected to one another?

Routines and rituals are visible and understood by all:

_____ 1. Rituals are in place that helps African American and Latino students feel that they belong in the class

_____ 2. African American and Latino students and teacher(s) have opportunities to learn about each other

_____ 3. African American and Latino students and teacher(s) have opportunities to learn about each other’s unique backgrounds

_____ 4. Classroom agreements and rules and consequences for violating agreements are negotiated

_____ 5. The system of discipline is understood by all students and applied with fairness

All students are equitably and actively participating and interaction:

_____ 6. Teacher directs attention equitably for African American and Latino students

_____ 7. Teacher interacts respectfully with and according to African American and Latino students

_____ 8. Teacher demonstrates that s/he cares about African American and Latino students

_____ 9. African American and Latino students talk to and with partners in small group work

_____ 10. African American and Latino students have opportunities to respond to the lessons by writing or speaking

_____ 11. The lesson activities are made explicit for all students (African American and Latino students know what to do, especially when making choices)

_____ 12. African American and Latino students help each other

B. Developing a Positive Attitude: How does the learning experience offer meaningful choices and promote personal relevance to contribute to a positive attitude?

Teacher works with African American and Latino students to personalize the relevance of course content:

_____ 1. African American and Latino students' experiences, concerns, and interests are used to develop course content

_____ 2. African American and Latino students' experiences, concerns, and interests are addressed in response to questions

_____ 3. African American and Latino students' prior knowledge and learning experiences are explicitly linked to course content

_____ 4. Teacher encourages African American and Latino students to understand, develop, and express different points of view

_____ 5. Teacher encourages African American and Latino students to clarify their interests and set goals

_____ 6. Teacher maintains flexibility in pursuit of "teachable moments" and emerging interests

Teacher encourages African American and Latino students to make real choices such as:

_____ 7. how to learn

_____ 8. what to learn

_____ 9. when a learning experience will be considered to be complete

_____ 10. how learning will be addressed

_____ 11. with whom to learn

_____ 12. how to solve emerging problems

C. Enhancing Meaning: How does the learning experience engage participants in challenging learning?

The teacher encourages all students to learn, apply, create, and communicate knowledge:

_____ 1. Teacher helps African American and Latino students to activate prior knowledge and to use it as a guide to learning

_____ 2. Teacher, in concert with African American and Latino students, creates opportunities for inquiry, investigation, and projects

_____ 3. Teacher provides opportunities for African American and Latino students to actively participate in challenging ways

_____ 4. Teacher asks higher order questions of African American and Latino students throughout a lesson

_____ 5. Teacher elicits high quality responses from African American and Latino students

_____ 6. Teacher uses multiple "safety nets" to ensure African American and Latino student success

D. Engendering Competence: How does the learning experience create an understanding that participants are becoming more effective in learning they value and perceive as authentic to real world experiences?

There is information, consequence, or product that supports African American and Latino students in valuing and identifying learning:

- _____1. Teacher clearly communicates the purpose of the lesson
- _____2. Teacher clearly communicates criteria for excellent final products
- _____3. Teacher provides opportunities for a diversity of competencies to be demonstrated in a variety of ways
- _____4. Teacher helps African American and Latino students to concretely identify accomplishments
- _____6. Teacher uses multiple forms of assessment
- _____7. Teacher assesses progress continually in order to provide feedback on individual growth and progress
- _____8. Teacher creates opportunities for African American and Latino students to make explicit connections between new and prior learning
- _____9. Teacher creates opportunities for African American and Latino students to make explicit connections between their learning and the “real world”
- _____10. Teacher provides opportunities for African American and Latino students to self-assess learning in order to reflect on their growth as learners
- _____11. Teacher provides opportunities for African American and Latino students to self-assess their personal responsibility for contributing to the classroom as a learning community

Appendix C: Bridging Cultures Framework (Singleton & Linton, 2006)

Bridging Cultures Framework <small>Elise Trumbull, Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, Patricia M. Greenfield, & Blanca Quiroz</small>	
White Individualism	Color Group Collectivism
<p>1. Fostering independence and individual achievement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is on the child as an individual. • There is an emphasis on taking care of yourself and your needs. 	<p>1. Fostering interdependence and group success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is on the child as part of the family. • The emphasis is on helping others, considering their needs (or how your needs affect others)
<p>2. Promoting cognitive development through exposure to physical objects independent of social context (later on ideas out of context).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are encouraged to play with toys and investigate the world by themselves. • Children learn to think about the physical world separately from the social or interpersonal world. 	<p>2. Promoting cognitive development in social contexts; physical world/objects meaningful as they enhance human relations. Toys are important in the context of social relationships - playing with a parent or sibling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children remain with parents more, often not just in proximity but touching. • The physical world has meaning largely as it relates to human relationships.
<p>3. Promotes self-expression, individual thinking, personal choice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are expected to form and express opinions, even questions elders. • Young people make choices (life, career) based on their own interests and needs. 	<p>3. Promotes adherence to norms, respect for Authority, group consensus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are expected show respect by quiet listening, not advance their own ideas to the exclusion of others. • Life choices are often colored by what will be best for the family (and in the classroom, what will be best for the group.)
<p>4. Is associated with private property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things belong to one person, and if someone else wants to use it, permission needs to be obtained. 	<p>4. Is associated with shared property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many things are owned by the family, rather than the individual. • If someone needs to use something, s/he can help her/himself, if no one else is using it.
<p>5. Associated with egalitarian relationships and flexible roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and parents are equals; parents can teach academics at home. "Parents are children's first teachers." 	<p>5. Associated with stable, hierarchical roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have a special role to teach academics (and to inculcate morals). "The teacher is the second mother." Parents' role is to socialize children (and respect teachers' authority).

Appendix D: Courageous Conversation Protocol (Singleton & Linton, 2006)

Courageous Conversation is using the *Four Agreements*, *Six Conditions* in order to **Engage, Sustain, and Deepen** interracial dialogue about race!

FOUR AGREEMENTS

1. Stay **Engaged**
2. Experience **Discomfort**
3. Speak Your **Truth**
4. Expect/Accept **Non-Closure**

SIX CONDITIONS

1. Focus on Personal, Local and Immediate
2. Isolate Race
3. Normalize Social Construction & Multiple Perspectives
4. Monitor Agreements, Conditions and Establish Parameters
5. Use a "Working Definition" for Race
6. Examine the Presence and Role of "Whiteness"

Appendix E: Student Engagement Survey/Interview (Singleton & Linton, 2006)



PACIFIC EDUCATIONAL GROUP

CARE LESSON DOCUMENTATION: STUDENT SURVEY SAMPLE

Directions: Please circle how you felt about the class today. (4 is high and means "very true," 1 is low and means "not true at all," NA means "not applicable")

1. What I learned is useful.

4 3 2 1 NA

2. What we did was interesting.

4 3 2 1 NA

3. I had some choices.

4 3 2 1 NA

4. What we did kept me involved.

4 3 2 1 NA

5. What we did was challenging.

4 3 2 1 NA

6. I learned things that are important to me and/or my family.

4 3 2 1 NA

7. It was too hard.

4 3 2 1 NA

8. It was too easy.

4 3 2 1 NA

9. I felt successful.

4 3 2 1 NA

10. The work is related to my life outside of the classroom.

4 3 2 1 NA

11. I felt respected and listened to by my teacher.

4 3 2 1 NA

12. I could learn from my mistakes.

4 3 2 1 NA

13. As a class we tried to support each other.

4 3 2 1 NA

14. I was expected to work alone.

4 3 2 1 NA

15. I felt respected by my classmates.

4 3 2 1 NA

16. I needed more time to do well.

4 3 2 1 NA

17. The way we were graded was fair.

4 3 2 1 NA

18. I had a chance to show what I learned.

4 3 2 1 NA

19. I know how to get better at the work I did today.

4 3 2 1 NA

Appendix F: Student Engagement Rubric (Singleton & Linton, 2006)

Observing Student Engagement

Use the following checklist to observe the level of engagement for your focus students. Mark which level they are at during the lesson by circling behaviors you observe. Use the squares underneath the levels to document other observations that you have about your focus students during your lesson. Feel free to add your own observable behaviors to the lists.

Levels of Student Engagement Observable Behaviors:			
Focus Student's First Name:	<u>Not Engaged</u> *Off Task *Talking that is not lesson related *Disrupts others *Daydreaming or withdrawn *Feels that they cannot do what is being asked *Does not participate or complete the task *	<u>Compliant</u> *Will complete the task for extrinsic rewards (grade, treat, etc.) *Will only do enough to just get by *Will give up on the task when it becomes too difficult *Want to know what is the minimum they need to do *	<u>Engaged</u> *Can demonstrate or explain what they have learned *Can make connections to other learning *Can transfer knowledge to other tasks *Will press on even when the task is difficult *Will continue to learn more about the topic on their own *Does not want to stop and move onto another activity / task *
What evidence do you have that this student was engaged at this level?	*	*	*

Appendix G: Anonymous Teacher Survey (Neibauer, 2011)

This anonymous survey is to better understand school staff attitudes about race and the current equity trainings. By completing and returning this survey you consent to be a part of this study. The information you provide will in no way affect your job status or be used against you.

Please answer honestly.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. We have a racially sensitive school.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
2. Race affects personal interactions between students and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
3. Students of color have a lower ability to learn.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
4. Racism does exist in our school with regards to staff towards our students.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
5. It is important to include teaching strategies geared towards different races.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6. I do not see racial differences when interacting with students.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
7. Students of color are over represented in discipline referrals.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
8. A student's race is an important factor in the current achievement gap.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
9. Equity trainings are a good use of my time at school.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
10. Students of color are as smart as white students.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11. We have reached student equality in our school.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12. I cannot personally help close the current achievement gap.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
13. White students have an academic advantage within our school.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14. I have gained knowledge from equity trainings.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
15. I am uncomfortable talking about race with people different from my racial background.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
16. I am aware of the general learning styles of the racial groups I teach or interact with.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
17. I have higher expectations of white students than students of color.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
18. It is important to talk with other employees about racial differences.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
19. I can help close the achievement gap.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
20. A low score on a test means the student has not learned the material being assessed.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
21. Parent involvement is the <i>biggest</i> predictor of academic success.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
22. Students of color feel challenged to high performance by me.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
23. Family income level is the <i>biggest</i> predictor of academic success.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
24. Within the <i>last month</i> I have participated in this number of conversations about racial differences with other staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4+
25. Within the <i>last month</i> I have participated in this number of conversations about racial differences with students.	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4+
26. I incorporate strategies targeted at different races in my classroom or in my daily interactions with students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Yearly	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily

Please check the categories that personally apply

Teacher

Other Staff

White

Non-White

Parent of Rolling Hills Student

I have no children at this school

0-10 years teaching experience

11+ years teaching experience

N/A

Appendix H: Motivational Framework Example with Corresponding Student Engagement Rubric Examples (Singleton & Linton, 2006)

Observing Student Engagement

Use the following checklist to observe the level of engagement for your focus students. Mark which level they are at during the lesson by circling behaviors you observe. Use the squares underneath the levels to document other observations that you have about your focus students during your lesson. Feel free to add your own observable behaviors to the lists.

Levels of Student Engagement			
Observable Behaviors:			
Focus Student's First Name:	Not Engaged	Compliant	Engaged
Laura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Off Task *Talking that is not lesson related *Interrupts others *Daydreaming or withdrawn *Feels that they cannot do what is being asked *Does not participate or complete the task * 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Will complete the task for extrinsic rewards (grade, treat, etc.) *Will only do enough to just get by *Will give up on the task when it becomes too difficult *Want to know what is the minimum they need to do * 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Can demonstrate or explain what they have learned *Can make connections to other learning *Can transfer knowledge to other tasks *Will press on even when the task is difficult *Will continue to learn more about the topic on their own *Does not want to stop and move onto another activity / task *
What evidence do you have that this student was engaged at this level?	*	*	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Laura added to her group's Double Bubble Map.</p> <p>Laura asked questions to have her teammates clarify their answers.</p> </div>

Observing Student Engagement

Use the following checklist to observe the level of engagement for your focus students. Mark which level they are at during the lesson by circling behaviors you observe. Use the squares underneath the levels to document other observations that you have about your focus students during your lesson. Feel free to add your own observable behaviors to the lists.

Levels of Student Engagement		
Observable Behaviors:		
Focus Student's First Name: <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Mary</div>	Not Engaged *Off Task *Talking that is not lesson related Disrupts others Daydreaming or withdrawn Feels that they cannot do what is being asked *Does not participate or complete the task *	Compliant *Will complete the task for extrinsic rewards (grade, treat, etc.) *Will only do enough to just get by *Will give up on the task when it becomes too difficult *Want to know what is the minimum they need to do *
What evidence do you have that this student was engaged at this level?	*	*

Listened to teacher and teammates.

Participated with group

Mary added to the group's discussion and to the Double Bubble Map.

Mary "argued" why characters were both hopeful, but also listened to why teammates thought characters were not hopeful.

A. Establishing Inclusion: How does the learning experience contribute to developing as a community of learners who feel respected and connected to one another?

Routines and rituals are visible and understood by all:

___ 1. Rituals are in place that helps African American and Latino students feel that they belong in the class

X 2. African American and Latino students and teacher(s) have opportunities to learn about each other

___ 3. African American and Latino students and teacher(s) have opportunities to learn about each other's unique backgrounds

___ 4. Classroom agreements and rules and consequences for violating agreements are negotiated

___ 5. The system of discipline is understood by all students and applied with fairness

All students are equitably and actively participating and interaction:

X 6. Teacher directs attention equitably for African American and Latino students

7. Teacher interacts respectfully with and according to African American and Latino students

8. Teacher demonstrates that s/he cares about African American and Latino students

9. African American and Latino students talk to and with partners in small group work

10. African American and Latino students have opportunities to respond to the lessons by writing or speaking

11. The lesson activities are made explicit for all students (African American and Latino students know what to do, especially when making choices)

12. African American and Latino students help each other

B. Developing a Positive Attitude: How does the learning experience offer meaningful choices and promote personal relevance to contribute to a positive attitude?

Teacher works with African American and Latino students to personalize the relevance of course content:

1. African American and Latino students' experiences, concerns, and interests are used to develop course content

2. African American and Latino students' experiences, concerns, and interests are addressed in response to questions

3. African American and Latino students' prior knowledge and learning experiences are explicitly linked to course content

4. Teacher encourages African American and Latino students to understand, develop, and express different points of view

5. Teacher encourages African American and Latino students to clarify their interests and set goals

6. Teacher maintains flexibility in pursuit of "teachable moments" and emerging interests

Teacher encourages African American and Latino students to make real choices such as:

7. how to learn

8. what to learn

9. when a learning experience will be considered to be complete

10. how learning will be addressed

11. with whom to learn

12. how to solve emerging problems

C. Enhancing Meaning: How does the learning experience engage participants in challenging learning?

The teacher encourages all students to learn, apply, create, and communicate knowledge:

- 1. Teacher helps African American and Latino students to activate prior knowledge and to use it as a guide to learning
- 2. Teacher, in concert with African American and Latino students, creates opportunities for inquiry, investigation, and projects
- 3. Teacher provides opportunities for African American and Latino students to actively participate in challenging ways
- 4. Teacher asks higher order questions of African American and Latino students throughout a lesson
- 5. Teacher elicits high quality responses from African American and Latino students
- 6. Teacher uses multiple “safety nets” to ensure African American and Latino student success

D. Engendering Competence: How does the learning experience create an understanding that participants are becoming more effective in learning they value and perceive as authentic to real world experiences?

There is information, consequence, or product that supports African American and Latino students in valuing and identifying learning:

- 1. Teacher clearly communicates the purpose of the lesson
- 2. Teacher clearly communicates criteria for excellent final products
- 3. Teacher provides opportunities for a diversity of competencies to be demonstrated in a variety of ways
- 4. Teacher helps African American and Latino students to concretely identify accomplishments
- 6. Teacher uses multiple forms of assessment
- 7. Teacher assesses progress continually in order to provide feedback on individual growth and progress
- 8. Teacher creates opportunities for African American and Latino students to make explicit connections between new and prior learning
- 9. Teacher creates opportunities for African American and Latino students to make explicit connections between their learning and the “real world”

_____10. Teacher provides opportunities for African American and Latino students to self-assess learning in order to reflect on their growth as learners

_____11. Teacher provides opportunities for African American and Latino students to self-assess their personal responsibility for contributing to the classroom as a learning community