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Beyond Standardized Test Scores: The Use of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy to Improve Access to Gifted Programming for Hispanic Students

Virginia G. Pratt

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BEYOND STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES: THE USE OF CULTURALLY AND
LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO GIFTED
PROGRAMMING FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation and all the work that went into it is dedicated to my students—past and present. I have learned so much from you, and you have brought joy and purpose into my work and my life. It is my hope that what has been learned throughout the process of this study and research will benefit the students of the future. Regardless, this work would not have been possible without you, and I thank you for your part in making it possible.

This is also dedicated to the memory of my dad, John Patton Gibson. Daddy, you were always one of my greatest cheerleaders, and you encouraged me to go after this dream of a doctoral degree. I wish you were here to see the work completed, but I have a feeling you know anyway. I love you!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed-methods action research study was to explore how expanding curriculum in a gifted and talented English/ Language Arts (ELA) class to include a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy might broaden access to gifted programming for high-achieving children of Hispanic descent. The identified problem of practice is that the population of students from Hispanic families at Little Tree Elementary School (a pseudonym) continues to rise, yet Hispanic students are largely underrepresented in the school's gifted program. This action research was carried out with a fourth-grade gifted ELA class in a Title I South Carolina elementary school. The class was comprised of both identified gifted students and high-achieving students participating in the class via trial placement. The teacher-researcher planned a specific unit introducing student-led "book clubs" based on the structure of reciprocal teaching, a recognized culturally and linguistically responsive strategy. Adding reciprocal teaching book clubs to the class curriculum provided students the opportunity to work collaboratively to construct meaning from texts, and provided scaffolding and support for close reading, literary analysis, and critical thinking for the trial placement students from diverse backgrounds—broadening their experience with such tasks. Qualitative data were collected through classroom observations and through semi-structured interviews, the study of student work, reflection journals and self-assessments, and through pre- and post-study student attitude surveys. Quantitative data from this study included measures of student success in reading comprehension and literary analysis through pre- and post-

study standardized and classroom assessments. The goal of the study was to see how making an overt place in the curriculum for a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy might impact the students as a whole and the achievement and confidence of the Hispanic students more specifically. Analysis of the data indicated that all students responded positively to the inclusion of the reciprocal teaching strategy, as the class continued to make academic growth as they used the strategy. Data also indicated that the Hispanic students in particular felt a stronger sense of belonging and inclusion in the class, and also felt empowered in terms of clarifying the meaning of words and figurative language in texts, having a “voice” in group and class discussions, and growing academically. Based upon these results, the teacher-researcher worked with members of the school’s leadership team and the district gifted coordinator to explore creation of an Action Plan to encourage other teachers to plan and implement similar interventions for the purpose of extending the effects of this study with other students from marginalized populations.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLD.....	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CLED	Culturally, Linguistically, and Ethnically Diverse
CLER	Culturally, Linguistically, and Ethnically Responsive
CLR.....	Culturally and Linguistically Responsive
ELA.....	English/Language Arts
ELL	English Language Learner
GT	Gifted and Talented
LTES	Little Tree Elementary School (a pseudonym)
NAGC	National Association on Gifted Children
OTL.....	Opportunity to Learn
RT	Reciprocal Teaching
SES.....	Socioeconomic status
SIOP	Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

We are increasingly being stripped of the comfortable notion that a bright mind will make its own way. On the contrary, intellectual and creative talent cannot survive educational neglect and apathy.

S. P. Marland Jr., 1971, p. 6

Since 1971, when the first national plan for gifted education was outlined for the United States congress in S. P. Marland, Jr.'s report, *Education of the Gifted and Talented*, gifted education has been charged with the important functions of 1) identifying students exhibiting exceptional performance and/or potential; and 2) ensuring, through quality instruction and guidance, that these students develop their talents and abilities so their personal goals and contributions to the greater society are realized (Marland Jr., 1971). Though Marland's report provided a common definition of "gifted and talented" and a national vision of what gifted education should look like, the majority of decisions related to gifted education for the past forty years – including identification, programming, services, and teacher requirements – have been left to the purview of state governments, with many states even deferring these decisions to the individual local school districts (National Association for Gifted Children & The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 2015; Stephens & Karnes, 2000).

In the state of South Carolina, the state legislature has provided for gifted identification and programming through state constitutional and statutory provisions since 1984, and these form the basis for the SC Department of Education's Regulation

on Gifted and Talented (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013; Swanson, 2007). The state regulation lays out specifications for gifted identification criteria, gifted programming, teacher endorsement, and curriculum and instruction for gifted students. In comparison with other states, South Carolina receives positive marks for its commitment to gifted education through state mandate and consistent statewide definitions and policies (Davidson Institute for Talent Development, n.d.; Monrad et al., 2005). In other regards, however, South Carolina struggles with the same issues related to gifted education as many other states throughout our nation. Of the concerns facing gifted education in South Carolina and throughout the United States today, many experts in the field would agree that the most egregious is the vast underidentification and underrepresentation of students of color and students from low income backgrounds for gifted programs. When one considers that children of color (including Hispanic, African American, Asian, and Native American groups) constitute the fastest growing population in American schools (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017) it is a concern that such a large population sees a relatively small representation in gifted programs. Unfortunately, although we know that different educational programming is necessary to ensure academically GT students reach their potential, we are also aware that we are failing to identify *or* serve a large population of potentially GT students

Framing the Problem

Gifted Identification in South Carolina

In South Carolina, the definition of giftedness closely mirrors that found in the Marland Report, citing high performance and/ or potential, and it also addresses the issue of giftedness being represented across all populations:

Gifted and talented students are those who are identified in grades one through twelve as demonstrating high performance ability or potential in academic and/or artistic areas and therefore require educational programming beyond that normally provided by the general school programming in order to achieve their potential.... Gifted and talented students may be found within any racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group; within any nationality; within both genders; and within populations of students with disabilities (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013, sec. IA1 and IB2).

The state also uses what it defines as a “multistep, multimodal, and multidimensional identification system” (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013, sec. IB1). Students qualify for SC academically gifted programs by attaining determined criteria in two of three dimensions. The first two dimensions are directly related to standardized test scores: Dimension A—Aptitude, is measured by a standardized aptitude test; and Dimension B—Achievement, is also measured by standardized test scores. To its credit, South Carolina did recognize the vast discrepancy between students qualifying for gifted programs from white, middle class backgrounds and those qualifying from racially diverse and low socioeconomic backgrounds via standardized test scores. This led to the creation of a third dimension of identification criteria: Dimension C—Intellectual and Academic Performance (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013; Swanson, 2007). This dimension is assessed in grades 2-5 with a battery of verbal and nonverbal performance tasks created to emphasize critical thinking and problem solving, require above grade-level or advanced performance, utilize manipulatives, be open-ended, and require articulation of thinking processes. In grades

6-8, Dimension C is assessed through a student's G.P.A. (see Appendix A). It should be noted that Dimension C can only be utilized for identification *if a student has already obtained a qualifying score in Dimension A or Dimension B*. Thus, any student who qualifies for gifted programming necessarily will have attained high scores on standardized tests.

Trial Placement as a Form of Talent Development

Underrepresentation of students from diverse backgrounds in gifted programs has been a concern since the Marland report was published in the early 1970s. In recent years, researchers in gifted education have suggested that students from culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse backgrounds may more effectively be identified for gifted programs using alternative identification methods or a combination of methods. One recommendation that has shown promise is the use of "talent spotting" (Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan, 2008; Tomlinson, Ford, Reis, Briggs, & Strickland, 2004). While this can take several forms, it usually involves giving capable students the opportunity to participate in stimulating programs likely to address their interests and talents, and then identifying them by virtue of their performance in these settings (Briggs & Reis, 2004, p. 6). While our state's gifted identification procedures still rely heavily on standardized test scores (South Carolina General Assembly, 2013), there is a provision for students to participate in gifted programs on a trial basis: "Placement may involve a trial period for at least one semester but not more than one year. Criteria for trial placement shall be established in guidelines established by the SCDE" (South Carolina General Assembly, 2013, p. 7). Trial placement has been used as a form of "talent spotting" in some places in the United States for a number of years. Additionally, in some locations, students who

excel in the gifted/talented environment and consistently perform at high levels in class can sometimes be admitted into gifted programs based on their performance without meeting a standardized testing requirement (Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan, 2008; Horn, 2012; Zhanova, Rule, & Stichter, 2013). At this time, SC students' performance in gifted classes during trial placements cannot be used as a form of identification.

Little Tree Elementary School (LTES) and Gifted and Talented Programming

Little Tree Elementary School (a pseudonym) (LTES) is a Title I PK-5 school of 663 students. According to school enrollment data, the 2018-2019 academic year's demographic breakdown was as follows: 48% Hispanic; 34% White; 12 % Black; 6% who self-reported as "other" ("Powerschool," n.d.). Of the total population, 58% of students in 2018 – 2019 academic year were identified as low socioeconomic status (SES) based on qualification for federally subsidized meals.

In the 2018-19 academic year at LTES, where this research took place, 62% of identified gifted students were White – almost double the White representation in the total school population; 8% of identified gifted students were Black, 24% were Hispanic, and the remaining 6% were listed as "two or more races/other" (Carolinian Consultancy, 2018). Similarly, only 34% of identified gifted students qualified for federally subsidized lunches, an indicator often used to determine levels of poverty within a school population, yet 58% of the total school population receives free or reduced-priced meals (PowerSchool; South Carolina Department of Education, 2018). This evidence of the underrepresentation of marginalized students in our school's gifted program is a serious concern. The school's leadership and gifted/talented educators have long been aware of

the discrepancy between students who are qualified for gifted services and students who, for lack of test scores, are capable but not qualified.

Since its founding in 2010, LTES has utilized the trial placement provision included in the SC gifted regulations to include a number of students in each of the gifted classes as “high achievers.” The students who participate in these trial placements are typically children of color (Hispanic or African American), English Language Learners (ELLs), or students who come from low SES backgrounds. Often, they are students who have been able to acquire one of the two criteria (test scores) required for gifted identification, but not both.

Including these students as “high achievers” in the gifted classes has proven beneficial for many; since 2014, between 65% and 75% of students who have participated in the gifted classes as high achievers beginning in third grade have eventually attained high enough scores on various standardized tests to be “officially” identified as gifted based on the state requirements (Carolinian Consultancy, 2018). Researchers have indicated that when students like these – students who are often culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) – are exposed to high end learning, they will often rise to the challenge (Horn, 2012; Hunt & Yoshida-Ehrmann, 2016; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Wright & Ford, 2017; Zhbanova, Rule, & Stichter, 2013). Another point that researchers consistently make is that these students need a gifted program that will not only address their particular academic needs, but their social and emotional needs as well. For this to occur, the teacher must be cognizant of and responsive to the students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Allen, Robbins, Payne, & Brown, 2016; Ford, 2010b; Tomlinson, Ford, Reis, Briggs, & Strickland, 2004).

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) Teaching in the Gifted Classroom

The administration and staff of LTES pride themselves on doing “whatever it takes” (a school motto) to meet students where they are and take them as far as they can go academically, socially, and emotionally. All decisions are made based on the answer to the question, “What is best for our children?” Due to the large number of ELLs in the building, every teacher has been trained in the “Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol” or SIOP model – a research-based instructional model designed to address academic needs of ELLs.

Culturally responsive teaching theory. As the teacher-researcher of this project, I became acutely aware of how important cultural responsiveness is to working with the population of students in my school as I began reviewing the professional literature and saw the preponderance of this concept across the literature. Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that focuses on the strengths and accomplishments students bring from their various cultural backgrounds. It requires that the teacher filter instruction and content through students’ cultural frames of reference in order to make learning more relevant and content easier to understand (Gay, 2018; Hollie, 2013). Becoming more culturally and linguistically responsive requires changes to the curriculum, the learning environment, and often educators’ attitudes and beliefs as well (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Brown, 2007). Educators wishing to become more culturally responsive must first examine their own cultural experiences and how they have been shaped by these experiences to truly understand the power of culture. They must also strive to get to know their students, as well as the students’ cultures, families, and communities (Howard, 2010). Working to assure a culturally responsive classroom

environment and to teach in more culturally and linguistically responsive ways requires some careful thought about curriculum choices and teaching strategies as well. One literacy activity that has been recommended for building critical thinking and comprehension but that is also considered to be a CLR activity is reciprocal teaching (Hollie, 2013; Kitano & Pedersen, 2002; McAllum, 2014).

Reciprocal teaching for a gifted and CLR classroom. Curriculum for gifted students needs to challenge them with appropriate content, provide opportunities for inquiry and critical thinking, and allow for acceleration and enrichment (South Carolina General Assembly, 2013). Reciprocal teaching is a strategy that actively involves students in collaboratively constructing meaning of a text through text analysis, critical thinking, and meaningful dialogue (Palincsar, Ransom, & Derber, 1989; Soto, Besocke, & Magana, 2016). By its nature, the reciprocal teaching strategy is considered an inclusive and culturally responsive strategy as it emphasizes learning *with and from* others and understanding that each participant's unique experiences and backgrounds lend something significant to the development of group understanding (Larson & Marsh, 2015).

Problem of Practice

The identified problem of practice (PoP) for the present study involved the intersection of the state definition and criteria for gifted identification, a school population that is largely filled with culturally and linguistically diverse students, and significant underrepresentation of these diverse students in the school's gifted and talented program. In an effort to provide this diverse population with opportunities to access gifted classes, this study introduced a new pedagogical practice centered around

reciprocal teaching into a GT ELA class in the Title I SC elementary school. This pedagogical practice was planned to improve cultural and linguistic responsiveness within the GT classroom so that all students, including those underrepresented students of color, would have greater access to the GT program and increased opportunities for success within the program.

Student-participants

At LTES, we have regularly identified students who exhibit the need for academic challenge, but who have not met the state criteria for gifted, and offered them a place in our gifted program as “high achievers” under the auspices of the state trial placement provision. Frequently, students who participate in gifted classes on a trial basis end up earning high enough scores on later tests to officially qualify for the gifted program. There are still students, however, who never attain qualifying scores, despite their strong class performance and excellent effort. These students, most often Hispanic, and/or low SES, and/or ELL, have shown evidence of giftedness, but they are held back by their standardized test scores.

Teacher-participant Positionality

As the lead gifted and talented teacher at LTES, and the teacher-researcher of the present study, I have considered what else might be done to increase these students’ chances of success in the gifted class, and ultimately their chances of being identified for gifted services. After research and study, I decided to expand the curriculum I use in my GT classes to better accommodate my diverse learners by incorporating more culturally and linguistically responsive practices into my class environment and my instruction.

Reciprocal Teaching Curriculum

I developed a reciprocal teaching unit to use with my 4th grade GT ELA class with the specific goal of better meeting the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of my diverse learners. It was my belief that if students felt more connected and validated, it would be more likely they would display increased self-efficacy, confidence, and success. This unit, developed to incorporate CLR strategies alongside advanced curriculum, has been studied at LTES, and a description of its impact has the potential to encourage other GT teachers to develop similar curricula consistent with supporting this historically minimized population of students.

Research Question

What is the impact of introducing culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy, represented in this study by the reciprocal teaching strategy, in a gifted and talented (GT) fourth-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) class on Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students?

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to explore how expanding curriculum in a gifted ELA class through the infusion of CLR strategies – represented in this study by the reciprocal teaching unit—may broaden opportunities for high achieving Hispanic children to showcase gifted qualities. Planning for and implementing the reciprocal teaching unit required the teacher-researcher consider aspects of the classroom environment that would necessarily change as well. Ultimately, the incorporation of a CLR strategy – reciprocal teaching – into the classroom helps to bridge students’ background experiences and school experiences.

Infusing CLR pedagogical elements into the curriculum is a way to confront culturally hegemonic practices that can be found in traditional gifted curriculum which has predominantly served White middle-class students (Gay, 2018). In this way, "space" - physical, ideological, emotional, and intellectual- is made for students whose experiences have been different from what the majority of students in a typical gifted class have experienced. By incorporating more responsive practices, the goal was to ensure that all students would feel they are seen, heard, and valued *as they are*. If this occurred, it was anticipated that students would gain confidence and meet with success. With greater accomplishment, students' self-efficacy should blossom, and, in turn, lead to continued success in gifted classes and possibly result in official state gifted identification.

Scholarly Literature

The study of scholarly literature focuses on four main concepts that inform the planning and implementation ("acting") stages of the proposed action research study. These include 1) conceptions of giftedness, 2) barriers to gifted identification and service, 3) recommended action to reduce underrepresentation of specific populations in gifted programs, and 4) use of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning practices to effectively address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. This information from the literature ensured that decisions made in this action research were well-informed and more likely to be of benefit to students. While these are briefly introduced here, a more thorough study of the literature is included in Chapter 2.

Conceptions of Giftedness

The way in which a school, district, or state conceptualizes giftedness has a direct impact on every other decision made in this regard—from the definition to the identification, and from programming to curriculum. While there are abundant personal beliefs or “implicit” theories about what constitutes giftedness, it has only been in the last century that explicit conceptions, based on formal research seeking to discover the cognitive, ability, and personality profiles of the gifted, have been presented (Frasier & Passow, 1994; Missett & McCormick, 2013; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011). Most of these explicit conceptions of giftedness have at their base the idea of a superior level of intelligence or ability; more recent conceptions also include other aspects including creativity, motivation or task commitment, and domain-specific talents (Missett & McCormick, 2013). The difficulty comes in trying to operationalize the concepts of these various theories in order to test for them (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Olszewski-Kubilius, Subotnik, & Worrell, 2015).

In the past, general intelligence tests were the primary tool used to identify giftedness. Today, standardized aptitude and achievement tests are still in use, but developments in brain research and the evolving understanding of knowledge and cognition that have come as a result of modern scientific and technological advances are beginning to impact ideas about giftedness (Sousa, 2009). In recent years, work has focused on broadening the definition of giftedness and creating and using other types of instruments and methods for identification. Much of the literature calls for using multiple measures of identification (McBee, Peters, & Waterman, 2014). Ultimately, however, because of the difficulty of arriving at consensus regarding the conceptualization and

operational definition of giftedness, current practice in most states – including South Carolina, is to continue the use of traditional definitions of giftedness and traditional standardized tests as the main component in the identification process (Stephens & Karnes, 2000).

Barriers to Gifted Identification and Service. Study of the literature regarding the topic of underrepresentation of various populations of students from gifted programs indicates that the problem is a complex one.

Standardized testing. Gifted and talented children can be identified by a variety of methods and tools; as previously noted, however, most students are identified, at least partially, through the use of standardized test scores. In the most recent “State of the States” summary (National Association for Gifted Children, 2015), states reported their identification criteria. Most states indicate that they use multiple criteria, but of these, “the most frequently required criteria include IQ scores, achievement data, nominations, a range of state-approved assessments, and portfolios (p. 15). White, et al (2016) conducted a quasi-experimental study to determine the impact that SES and race have on standardized testing: “SES and race exercise a primary influence on test-based academic performance indicators” (p. 18), primarily because of language issues, difficulty with reading, and lack of rich background experiences and vocabulary. A result of this phenomenon is that fewer students from these groups “test into” gifted and talented programs. Given that studies such as the one conducted by White, et al (2016) have indicated that students from diverse ethnic groups and low SES backgrounds continue to struggle on such standardized measures, states should consider ways to incorporate identification criteria that rely less upon these tests.

Other barriers. There are other factors that impact underidentification of diverse students to gifted programs that may not be as obvious. Often the fact that students have varying performance on standardized measures can impact their opportunities for gifted identification. Each test is a “snapshot of a student” at a given time, but if that time aligns with a student illness, or if the student suffers from test anxiety, it can be difficult to attain the scores required by the identification criteria (S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Siegle et al., 2016).

Another barrier can occur when, for reasons related to budgets, politics, or personnel, gifted policies and regulations become outdated. In changing political climates, or at times when the economy is in flux, state departments of education and other government agencies related to education can see swings in priorities and emphasis. When this happens, gifted and talented education is often an area that is set aside or overlooked (Arndt, 2015).

One additional type of barrier that should be mentioned is the family of the potentially gifted student. Particularly in some African-American or Hispanic families, there is a concern that if a child is identified gifted this will cause social and/or emotional problems for the child (Ford, 2010a; Siegle et al., 2016). Because gifted programs have been predominantly white and middle-class for so long, students of color face peer pressure and even pressure from family who see participation in gifted classes as a denial of their cultural heritage.

In the case of this action research study, the barriers listed must all be considered as possible causes of the underrepresentation of students from diverse populations in our school’s gifted program. Certainly, the heavy reliance on standardized testing is a factor.

Concerns regarding students' varying performance on standardized tests and the input of families and peers must also be examined.

Recommendations for Reducing Underrepresentation

The literature identifies several courses of action to be taken to improve identification and placement of both students of color and students from poverty in gifted programs. Researchers in one qualitative study located and analyzed examples of gifted programming within the United States that were effectively identifying and serving underrepresented students (Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan, 2008). In this study, the researchers were able to identify five different broad categories of practices that made the necessary difference for such students to meet with success. Two particularly relevant to this action research study include modified identification procedures and “front-loading.”

Modified identification procedures discussed included, “(a) use of alternative pathways for program identification, (b) early identification usually at the primary grade level, and (c) inclusion of information about broader perspectives of student performance” (Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan, 2008, p. 136). One example of alternate pathways involved providing gifted services for students who did not meet the standard criteria for placement in the program, but who showed evidence of potential for advanced curriculum and work. “Front-loading” was another category of practice some successful schools were using. Front-loading essentially involves working with students to help identify and develop their talents, introduce them to advanced content, and build their critical and creative thinking skills prior to the time when formal identification for gifted programs occurs (Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan, 2008). A similar type of plan was suggested in work recently published by Siegle et al (2016), related to the importance of talent

development: “It is imperative that a model for talent development for underserved students include experiences for students that prepare them for the formal identification process” (p. 115). These examples lend credibility to the effort we are making at LTES, and in the class where this action research study was conducted.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy essentially promotes teaching and learning through a mindset that sees all students as bringing value to the classroom from their varied backgrounds. It teaches “*to and through*” the cultural frames of reference of the diverse children in the classroom so that they see the relevance in what they are learning and can build upon what they already know (Gay, 2018).

CLR pedagogy has social constructivism at its theoretical core. Social constructivism, also referred to as the sociocultural theory of learning by Lev Vygotsky, defines knowledge as constructed mutually within the context of social relationships (Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2001). It has a strong focus on sharing of ideas in an interactive process through which individuals find and refine meaning. A CLR classroom will be built on learning communities and have a strong focus on literacy (Hollie, 2013; Larson & Marsh, 2015); “Language is the symbolic representation of culture” (Harmon, 2012, p. 15), and, as such serves as a basis for many culturally responsive practices. In working to build students’ agency and confidence about their own abilities, it is important to ensure room is made for their voices. Those voices will reflect a variety of heritages and bring additional perspective and knowledge to the collaborative construction of knowledge for the learning community (Hollie, 2013). Vygotsky’s influence on cultural and linguistic responsiveness is not only evident in the

structure of learning communities, but also in the idea that it is within this community of learners that children are able to function in the zone of proximal development, surrounded by peers and teachers who help them negotiate learning that is just beyond their developmental level (Applefield et al., 2001; Larson & Marsh, 2015). The learning community recognizes the various cultural backgrounds represented within the group as well as the funds of knowledge each member brings (Harmon, 2012), and there is a sense of responsibility that the learners have for one another – the community is not considered successful until **everyone** in the community has met with success (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The decision to incorporate a unit on reciprocal teaching into my 4th grade GT ELA class was a direct result of my study of CLR pedagogy. Like cultural and linguistic responsiveness, reciprocal teaching is also grounded theoretically in social constructivism. Reciprocal teaching is seen as a good fit for addressing the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds because it is a strategy that affords all students the opportunity to take on the role of “teacher,” and it revolves around discussion that considers all perspectives in collaboratively constructing the meaning of a text (Hollie, 2013). Reciprocal teaching was used in the ELA class with all of my students – those identified gifted, and those participating on a trial basis – to study literary texts, informational texts, and as a structure for student “book clubs.” Because of the collaborative aspect of the strategy, students had the opportunity to learn with and from one another.

Research Methodology

This research study was planned as action research. Action research is characterized by studies carried out by practitioners such as school teachers or school administrators for the purpose of examining a specific aspect in an effort to improve practice. Mertler (2016) described action research as part of the process of being a reflective practitioner and developing one's skill and craft:

This process of systematically collecting information followed by active reflection – all with the anticipation of improving the teaching process – is at the core of action research. Accordingly, action research is also largely about developing the professional disposition of teachers and the teaching profession.

(p. 13)

The process of conducting action research is described in a variety of ways depending on the author or researcher, but all iterations of the process have the same essential components or “stages.” The specific model used in this action research project is the four-stage procedure defined by Mertler & Charles (2011). This method includes planning, during which the research topic and question are developed, and then acting, when the researcher implements the intervention, collects the bulk of the data, and works on analyzing the data. At the end of the acting stage, the researcher moves into the developing stage. This is the point in the research where the researcher considers all the data analysis and makes a decision about what “next steps” to take as a result of the data analysis findings. Finally, the researcher moves into the reflecting stage, shares the results of the research, and reflects on the process to determine what has been learned. It is often at this time that the researcher may begin to develop an action plan that will

either lead to new research or address a need identified through the research process (Mertler, 2016).

This action research study utilized a mixed-methods research design. Much of the primary data came from observation of students' participation and performance in the reciprocal teaching settings. In addition to observations, qualitative data was also collected during informal conferences and discussions with students, through semi-structured interviews, student reflection journals, student surveys related to reading attitudes and self-efficacy, and through reflection on the teacher-researcher's own anecdotal and personal records. Further semi-structured interviews and observations were conducted specifically with the core group of five Hispanic students for the purpose of determining how the reciprocal teaching strategy might be providing these students an avenue toward greater access to the gifted program. This data was collected for the ten weeks between October 1 and December 10, 2018, and examined using inductive analysis including a coding scheme (Mertler, 2016).

Additional data was collected at the beginning and end of the study period via reading comprehension pre- and post- assessments. The reading comprehension assessments were designed using the *Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program*. This data served to provide further insight, and to triangulate and support the data obtained via the various qualitative measures.

Based on the analysis of the data collected, an action plan was developed for "next steps" in both the use of CLR in my classroom, and guidance for other teachers of gifted/talented classes within my school. This action plan provides for continued action research identifying and using strategies that are both culturally and linguistically

responsive and address gifted students' needs for complexity and depth. This work, in turn, will continue our efforts to increase and improve opportunities for our students from diverse backgrounds to access gifted programming. The action plan also presents ways for the results of this research to be shared with other educators who work with gifted and high-achieving Hispanic students.

Potential Weaknesses

Throughout the research process every effort was made to ensure that research methods were effective, that data collection and analysis were valid and reliable, that ethical considerations were held to the highest standards, and that the teacher-researcher maintained a level of professional objectivity. Before the actual research process began there were two particular areas of concern related primarily to my role as the teacher-researcher that I identified as potential weaknesses for this study.

The first is my confidence as a culturally and linguistically responsive teacher. Growing up in a rural community in the southwest part of Virginia, I was not exposed to much social diversity until I left home for college. I recognize within myself those areas where I have lacked knowledge about different cultures and backgrounds, and the assumptions and biases that arise out of this lack of knowledge. Because of the 30 years of experience I have with teaching students from backgrounds different from my own, I have become more knowledgeable and more respectful of diverse backgrounds. My work in the EdD program has opened my eyes and heart to understanding cultural, racial, economic, and gender diversity to a much greater extent. Still, I am admonished by Howard's response to the question about how to "do" culturally responsive teaching:

Culturally responsive pedagogy embodies a professional political, cultural, ethical, and ideological disposition that supersedes mundane teaching acts; it is centered in fundamental beliefs about teaching, learning, students, their families, and their communities, and an unyielding commitment to see student success become less rhetoric and more of a reality. Culturally responsive pedagogy is situated in a framework that recognizes the rich and varied cultural wealth, knowledge, and skills that students from diverse groups bring to schools, and seeks to develop dynamic teaching practices, multicultural content, multiple means of assessment, and a philosophical view of teaching that is dedicated to nurturing student academic, social, emotional, cultural, psychological, and physiological well being [*sic*]. (Howard, 2010, pp. 67–68)

Becoming a more culturally responsive practitioner is a commitment to learning more and doing more for students from all backgrounds, and it is a large task. I recognize that I am starting small, but trust that a start will lead to my growth in this area.

The other potential weakness I refer to relates to my own abilities and capacity for objectivity in the research process. I imagine most teacher-researchers are plagued by the concern of doing a good job collecting and analyzing data without interjecting too much of their own subjectivity and biases. Throughout my work as a teacher-researcher in this study, I continually reminded myself to record that which I actually observed and that actually happened. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) addressed this issue in a couple of different ways that helped me to feel that this was a weakness I could maybe prevent. They remind the teacher-researcher of the importance of using “multiple data sources” for the purposes of triangulation and discovering discrepancies (p. 134); however, they

also remind us that, “Meaningful teacher inquiry should not depart from the daily work of classroom teachers but become a part of their daily work” (p. 85). During the data collection and analysis of this study I worked to triangulate data, discover discrepancies, and – most importantly – to do my best job of educating my students. This has resulted, I believe, in my reporting findings that are accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.

Significance of the Study

Regardless of the definition used, one consistency of the definitions of gifted and talented students is that they require a different educational program than their average-ability peers in order to meet their cognitive potential. Gifted and talented individuals exist in all the myriad groups and subgroups of our global population, including people from every ethnic group, gender, nationality, and class (Marland Jr., 1971). It is indeed disconcerting that the representation of Hispanic students is low in our school’s gifted program.

Given my knowledge of the issues and my position as a school leader, I have long advocated for including as many students in gifted trial placements as is feasible within our school’s gifted classes. In this way, students from different backgrounds have more opportunities to participate in programs of talent development that will evoke their potential and nurture their talent. This can eventually improve these students’ chances of meeting the criteria for gifted identification (Tomlinson et al., 2004). I have begun to share the belief of educator/researcher Scott J. Peters (2016) who queried:

...what is educationally helpful about the distinction of “bright versus gifted” if the students are otherwise the same in what they need from their school or teacher? And, perhaps most importantly, what gifted education interventions can

we say with confidence that only “truly gifted” students will benefit from, whereas “just bright” students will not? (p. 126)

With this in mind, I am working to remind my school colleagues that we should be helping students find ways into our gifted program when they need to be there. If the incorporation of more culturally responsive practice helps more students from diverse populations to gain access to gifted classes, then this is something we need to ensure will happen.

The significance of this study is that it seeks to incorporate a CLR literacy strategy into a gifted classroom where students from populations typically unrepresented in such programs have been included on a trial basis. In an effort to increase opportunities for their recognition as academically gifted, we have provided these CLD students an opportunity to participate in a setting where their talents will be developed and encouraged.

Conclusion

There is a great variety of students who walk through the doors of our schools every day. Some of these students have exceptional academic and/or intellectual potential, and they will “require educational programming beyond that normally provided by the general school programming in order to achieve their potential” (South Carolina General Assembly, 2013, p. 1). Unfortunately, not all of those students with such potential will be identified for service in this special educational programming. The ones most likely to be unidentified will be those students who come from backgrounds of poverty, who are learning English as their second language, and who are people of color (Borland, 2008). Students from these populations have historically been

underrepresented in gifted/ talented programs for a number of reasons—none of which have to do with their level of talent or ability to succeed in the program. While it is difficult to make large-scale changes to improve the representation of these populations in our gifted programs, it is the responsibility of those working with such students to help them develop their talent and potential to as great an extent as possible. “Teaching is an ethical activity, and teachers have an ethical obligation to help all students learn” (Villegas & Lucas, 2007, p. 6).

In this chapter, an overview has been provided of the problem of practice, the research question, and the purpose for this action research project. Literature related to the study was highlighted, and the basic concept and process of action research was described. In Chapter 2, there is a more comprehensive review of the literature surrounding gifted education, identification, and the issues related to underrepresentation; a further examination of the concept of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy; as well as a full discussion of the theory, development, and implementation of reciprocal teaching in the gifted classroom as a CLR strategy.

Chapter 3 describes action research methodology and the rationale behind using this method for this particular research study. The research process is outlined along with the setting, participants, research plan, and data-collection methods. A description of the process used to organize and analyze the data is also described. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth look at the data collection methods and the ways that data were analyzed throughout the data collection period along with any early insights. It continues with a discussion of the formal data analysis including descriptions of the coding system used for analyzing observations and student comments, the themes and patterns that emerged

through analysis, and the implications of these for the study and for answering the research question.

Chapter 5 summarizes the process and findings of this action research study and identifies key questions raised by the findings. It also explains how the results of this study and the experiences of carrying out action research will be used by the teacher-researcher in her role as a teacher in her own classroom, but also as a teacher-leader within her school and district. This chapter shares what actions are planned as a result of the research and also any suggestions for further research that may have been identified in the process.

Key Words/ Glossary

Following are some key terms that are used throughout this manuscript. While other meanings and interpretations may be in use, the definitions here represent what was intended within the context of this research and its manuscript.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse – Abbreviated in this work as CLD, this term indicates students and student populations that have typically been underserved by schools, and certainly by gifted programs, because of a mismatch between their cultural identify (and thus their background knowledge, values, and skills), and the “expected cultural behaviors of the school and mainstream culture” (Hollie, 2013, p. 36).

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive – Often abbreviated in this work as CLR, culturally and linguistically responsive is a term attached to practices that are intended to meet students “where they are” culturally and linguistically “for the aim of bringing them where they need to be academically” (Hollie, 2013, p. 23). This goes beyond utilization of certain curricular materials or strategies. It includes the teacher learning about the

students' cultures, validating the students' home cultures and languages, and taking measures to reverse negative stereotypes while assisting students in becoming successful at navigating the "world of school". Variations on this term often found in the literature include culturally "compatible", "relevant", "connected, "matched", or "appropriate".

English Language Learners (ELLs) – A term used to identify students who are learning English as a second language.

Gifted and talented students – In the state of South Carolina, the location of this action research, gifted and talented students are defined as "those who are identified in grades one through twelve as demonstrating high performance ability or potential in academic and/or artistic areas and therefore require educational programming beyond that normally provided by the general school programming in order to achieve their potential" (South Carolina General Assembly, 2013, p. 1). Although SC recognizes both academically and artistically gifted students, the focus of this action research is on academically gifted students. Within this dissertation, "gifted students" refers to academically gifted students unless specified otherwise.

High achiever – In our particular school, high achievers are those students who perform at significantly above average levels in the classroom, but who have not yet met the state requirements for gifted identification. These are the students most likely to be offered a trial placement in the gifted classroom.

Identification – "The process of determining students qualified for gifted or advanced programming, identification most commonly occurs through the use of intelligence or other testing. Many researchers place emphasis on the importance of using multiple

pathways for identification, adding teacher, parent, or peer nominations or authentic assessments such as portfolios of student work to the process” (Glossary of terms, n.d.).

Intelligence – “The ability to learn, reason, and problem solve. Debate revolves around the nature of intelligence as to whether it is an innate quality or something that is developed as a result of interacting with the environment. Many researchers believe that it is a combination of the two” (Glossary of terms, n.d.).

Reciprocal teaching – an instructional strategy developed in the 1980s primarily to improve students’ reading comprehension and comprehension strategies. The “reciprocal” in reciprocal teaching refers to students gradually taking on the role of the teacher within these scaffolded small group lessons that focus on constructing the meaning of a text through summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting (Palincsar & Brown, 1984)

Referral – The “consideration of one or more students based upon the screening and identification process established” (South Carolina General Assembly, 2013, p. 2) occurs when students are brought to the attention of a school or district Gifted/ Talented Evaluation and Placement Team as needing further assessment by another student, a parent, a teacher, other school personnel, or the students themselves (known as “self-nomination”).

Screening – In South Carolina, this is the process by which “consideration of all students on consistent measures as established by [state] regulations” (South Carolina General Assembly, 2013, p. 2) occurs.

Underrepresented populations – Sometimes referred to as “underserved” populations, these are populations of high-ability students whose percentages of participation in gifted

and talented classes are persistently lower than their percentages in the general population. These have historically included “those who are limited English proficient, disabled, or from minority or low-income backgrounds” (Identifying gifted children from diverse populations, n.d.).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

If gifted education is to advance, a[n]... issue that cannot be avoided is diversity. Many in the field talk about the need to address issues of inequity as the country becomes more diverse, but this tenet needs to be directly challenged: The country is already diverse, and has been for some time. In order for gifted education to survive and thrive, the field needs to take several bold steps to shrink excellence gaps—and to do so by raising the achievement levels of underachieving groups, not by allowing already high-performing groups to slip.

J. Plucker and C. Callahan, 2014, p. 400

It has been more than forty years since the United States Office of Education published its report “Education of the Gifted and Talented,” more commonly known as “The Marland Report.” This document provided the nation with a definition of “gifted and talented” and counseled educators that gifted and talented students “require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society” (Marland, Jr., 1971, p. ix). Despite the years that have passed, coming to consensus regarding a definition or conception of what constitutes giftedness continues to be one of the most prevalent problems in the field. Such definitions are important because they determine who will be served.

Most state boards of education referred to the definition in the Marland report to write their procedures and policies for identifying gifted students (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). Since the Marland definition placed emphasis on “outstanding abilities” and capability for “high performance” (Marland, Jr., 1971, p. ix) these state policies all relied

heavily on results from standardized aptitude and achievement tests (Borland, 2008). Extensive research and data collection point to the problem with this decision: students from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds and children of color have traditionally not fared well on these types of psychometric tests. As a result, these populations have been chronically underrepresented in gifted and talented programs (Ford, 2004).

Situating the Current Research Study in the Professional Literature

The same issues affecting gifted education across the nation are also evident at Little Tree Elementary School, or LTES (a pseudonym). LTES is located in South Carolina, one of the states that rely heavily on standardized test results for gifted identification. Additionally, LTES has a diverse ethnic population: only 34% of the population are White, while 48% are Hispanic, 12% are Black, and the remaining 6% identify as “other.” Of the total population, 58% would be considered low SES, as they qualify for subsidized meals (“Powerschool,” n.d.). Approximately 30% of the population are considered ELLs, and require some level of ESOL services, as they are not yet fully proficient in English (A. B. Williams, personal communication, February 11, 2019).

The Problem of Practice and Research Question

The problem of practice in this action research study revolves around these key issues of conceptions and definitions of giftedness, identification of gifted students, and the under-identification and underrepresentation of students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups. Despite LTES’s diversity, the population of students meeting state requirements for gifted/talented services is 62% White; in regard

to SES, 53% of the gifted population is from middle or higher income families (Carolinian Consultancy, 2018). The diversity found in the school is simply not represented in the gifted program.

I serve as the lead gifted and talented teacher at Little Tree. Since my arrival in 2011, our school has made it a priority to make use of provisions set in the state gifted education regulations (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013) to include CLD students exhibiting strong academic potential in our gifted classes on a trial basis. While this practice has helped to increase the number of students from diverse populations who eventually qualify for gifted services, there is still a disproportionate number of students from these populations officially identified as gifted and talented.

Because the state definition of giftedness is still largely traditional, the methods and criteria for identification remain traditional as well. Thus, two of the three criteria used in identification are determined solely by standardized test scores, measures in which CLD students have historically scored lower than their White peers (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013). The research and professional literature suggest several factors that may contribute to this discrepancy in standardized test scores, including issues such as test bias, lack of opportunities, language issues, and differences in cultural backgrounds and experiences (Ford, 2004; S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Regardless of the reasons, until state identification procedures are changed, the main way to address underrepresentation of these diverse populations at the local level is through the classroom experiences these children are afforded.

Teachers can proactively address the issue of cultural and linguistic diversity in their own classrooms and in their own teaching by becoming informed regarding their

students and their students' backgrounds, and by becoming educated regarding ways to employ culturally and linguistically responsive practices in their classroom. This conclusion prompted me to question if the use of culturally and linguistically responsive strategies within gifted classes might improve trial placement students' skills and confidence, and in so doing, could make it more likely they would meet the state's criteria for gifted identification. Thus, the research question for this action research study was developed to test how the incorporation of such a strategy might work with high achieving CLD students participating in my gifted English/Language Arts (ELA) class via trial placement:

What is the impact of introducing culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy in a gifted and talented (GT) fourth-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) class for Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students?

The purpose of this action research study was to implement a unit of study, created to incorporate a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy, into the teacher-researcher's 4th grade GT ELA class. The goal of this action was to observe how identified gifted students and trial placement students responded to this new strategy and if it would increase student self-efficacy, confidence, and/or achievement. More specifically, the primary goal was to determine if infusing culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy would impact the five Hispanic students' self-efficacy, attitudes, and achievement, and ultimately increase their chances of qualifying for the gifted program via the state criteria.

Purpose of the Literature Review

In carrying out research, the review of literature is an integral step that serves, in a general way, to connect the work being done to all previous work completed in the field. This is helpful for the researcher who gains historical perspective on the research topic, and may also gain insights into aspects of the research, such as methodology or data collection (Mertler, 2016, pp. 60–61).

For a teacher-researcher, identifying an action research topic involves a combination of considering passions and the “felt difficulties” occurring in the real world of the classroom (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 32). Given my years of work in gifted education, and in my school of diverse students, I knew the issue of underrepresentation in gifted programs would be my topic. Narrowing the topic was where my study of literature really began. I started with personal copies of textbooks and copies of the professional journals to which I subscribe, and began to list authors and noted experts who have written extensively in the field of gifted education. This led to a search for related resources using Google Scholar and databases of scholarly literature including ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) and others such as JSTOR, electronic copies of books, and specific academic journals accessible through the University of South Carolina Thomas Cooper Library Electronic Database. I utilized the Mendeley desktop reference manager software to collect and maintain resource information. Through extensive reading and study, I narrowed my topic to the specific area that I felt would help my students – implementing cultural and linguistic responsiveness in my classroom; I was then able to use many of the same resources to compile a list of additional resources specific to this research plan.

The literature review for this research comes primarily from the fields of gifted education and multicultural education. These two areas have been tied together by the ongoing issue of culturally and linguistically diverse students being under-identified for gifted programs (Ford, 2004). The books, articles, and other resources referenced in this literature review include seminal and historic works related to gifted education and education for CLD students. They are important to the work of this research because they provide a rationale for determining why students from the underrepresented populations are chronically underrepresented and how they might become successful in exhibiting their abilities on standardized assessments that are used for gifted identification.

The rest of this chapter contains a review of literature that addresses the main content associated with the current research study. It begins by relating how traditional and explicit theories of giftedness have informed the definitions of giftedness used in the United States and how these, in turn, have influenced state and local definitions, identification criteria, and identification processes and procedures. It also briefly identifies some new ideas regarding giftedness that are beginning to impact decision-making and practices in gifted education. The second section of the literature review describes the various theories experts in the field have used to explain “barriers to gifted identification and service,” particularly as those barriers pertain to underrepresented populations. The third section outlines varied strategies that have been implemented in an effort to reverse underrepresentation and to make gifted programs more equitable for all populations of people. The fourth section describes the theory and history of multiculturalism and multicultural education, and then explains how culturally and

linguistically responsive (CLR) education grew out of these movements. The critical role that teachers play in CLR teaching and learning is also identified and described. The final section of the literature review addresses reciprocal teaching, an example of a culturally and linguistically responsive ELA strategy, and prior research studies involving reciprocal teaching to improve achievement. This specific literature has informed the methodology used in the present action research study.

Conceptions and Definitions of Giftedness

To understand the reasons for the underrepresentation of children of color and economically disadvantaged students in gifted education, one must understand the purpose for gifted education and the ways students are identified for programs. The following section provides a brief recent history of gifted education and some of the conceptual frameworks that have been used in defining the construct of giftedness.

Historical Definitions

It was not until 1970, after the country was shaken by the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik and the ensuing "Space Race" that there was national interest in "gifted and talented education" (National Association for Gifted Children, n.d.-c). At that time, Congress mandated an update regarding gifted and talented education in the United States, resulting in the publishing of the Marland report—named for then U. S. Commissioner of Education Sidney P. Marland—or "Education of the Gifted & Talented: Report to the Congress of the United States" (Marland, Jr., 1971). This document was the first federal effort to formally address the topic of gifted and talented education in America, and is a seminal work in the field.

Most state departments of education used information from the federal report either in full or in part to plan their own "gifted" definitions and programming (Stephens

& Karnes, 2000). In South Carolina, gifted & talented education was mandated in 1984 as part of the Education Improvement Act, legislation that was enacted to address school reform (Swanson, 2007). The State Board of Education Gifted & Talented Regulation 43 -220 was written and has been revised twice since, in 2004 and again in 2013. The regulation sets processes and procedures for identification, program models, teacher requirements, and curricular expectations for both academically and artistically gifted and talented students (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013). The South Carolina regulation currently includes the definition:

Gifted and talented students are those who are identified in grades one through twelve as demonstrating high performance ability or potential in academic and/or artistic areas and therefore require educational programming beyond that normally provided by the general school programming in order to achieve their potential. (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013, p. 1)

Even more than 40 years after it was published, one can see the Marland (Marland, Jr., 1971) definition's impact on the 2013 South Carolina definition.

Explicit Theories of Giftedness

Governmental laws and regulations are often responsible for the ways that gifted students are identified and served in gifted programs (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Marland, Jr., 1971; Ross & United States Office of Educational Research and Improvement., 1993; South Carolina General Assembly, 2013; Stephens & Karnes, 2000; Swanson, 2007).

Legislation, however, draws its basis in the theoretical conceptions of giftedness.

Examination of these conceptual theories is made difficult by the fact that there are so many of them—most everyone has a personal idea of what giftedness is and how it is

manifested in individuals (Miller, 2008). Over the years, however, there have been a number of theorists who have developed conceptions of giftedness that are “a combination of the theorist’s personal conceptions and research” (Miller, 2008, p. 108). These “formal/explicit” theories are the ones that practitioners have most often used to define giftedness for the purpose of identification and service of gifted individuals (Miller, 2008).

The earliest theorists defined giftedness in terms of high levels of intelligence—as eventually measured by intelligence tests. Intelligence was viewed as a heritable characteristic, and was not believed to be changeable by environment or outside influences (Grasso, 2002). The best known of these theorists is Lewis Terman, a psychologist at Stanford University in the early 1900s who was responsible for the creation of the Stanford Binet Measures of Intelligence (Terman, 1930), and best-known for his thirty-plus year longitudinal study of gifted individuals (Marland, Jr., 1971; Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2015). Now known as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales, Terman’s revision of Alfred Binet’s earlier work eventually became one of the most used and best known intelligence scales in America. Terman identified students as “gifted” if they scored two standard deviations or more above the norm on the Stanford-Binet intelligence test (Minton, n.d.).

With the developments in science and technology throughout the 20th century and into this one, there is still evidence that much of intelligence is inherited (Benyamin et al., 2013); however, researchers also have come to recognize the impact that environment can play. For example, individuals who grow up receiving good healthcare, eating nutritious meals, and having enriching educational opportunities are more likely to see

general growth in intelligence over time (Bouchard & McGue, 2013). In the ten years spanning 1978-1988 there was a great deal of new research that combined the information about intelligence with emerging ideas related to other factors that appeared to play into “giftedness”. Four of these studies have had significant influence on the field of gifted education, and have had varying impacts on how giftedness has been defined.

Three-ring conception of giftedness. In 1978, Joseph S. Renzulli developed the three-ring conception of giftedness at the University of Connecticut. Renzulli’s (1978) review of many research studies indicated to him that giftedness must be based on more than one single criterion. High intelligence scores and academic success appeared to have only a “modest” bearing on an individual’s post-college success in the adult world (Hoyt, 1965). Above-average school ability did show some correlation with adult success, but it extended far beyond those individuals who had scores above the 90th or 95th percentile to include individuals whose school ability scores extended through the top quartile. (Renzulli, 1978, p. 84). This finding stimulated Renzulli to consider what other factors led to success in the adult world. Further study of research and literature led him to the two other components of his three-ring conception of giftedness: task commitment and creativity. The result of this work culminated in Renzulli’s definition of giftedness:

Giftedness consists of an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits — these clusters being above-average general abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. Gifted and talented children are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance. Children who manifest or

are capable of developing an interaction among the three clusters require a wide variety of educational opportunities and services that are not ordinarily provided through regular instructional programs. (Renzulli, 1978, p. 87)

Multiple intelligences. In 1983, Harvard professor Howard Gardner first published his ground-breaking theory of multiple intelligences in the book, *Frames of Mind* (Gardner, 1983). Like Renzulli, Gardner agreed there was more to intelligence than what was identified through psychometric tests. In his book, Gardner indicated that there certainly could not be only one kind of intelligence, and then defined the term, but with caveats regarding the source of intelligence or how it should be assessed:

An intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings— a definition that says nothing about either the sources of these abilities or the proper means of “testing” them.

(Gardner, 2011)

In identifying these intelligences, Gardner determined that, though it would not be exhaustive, a list should represent a majority of the types of abilities valued by human cultures (Gardner, 2011). This list originally included linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. Later, Gardner added an eighth intelligence, the naturalistic intelligence (Davis, Christodoulou, Seider, & Gardner, 2011). Gardner’s theory situates the eight intelligences as a mixture of biological and experiential influences that all individuals possess at some level (Davis et al., 2011, p. 3). Giftedness in a specific intelligence is defined by high levels of ability and performance in that area.

Differentiating model of giftedness and talent. François Gagné, a researcher and professor of psychology at l'Université du Québec à Montréal (Gagné, n.d.), published his Differentiating Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) in 1985, and has since updated the model twice (Gagné, 2013). This model looks at giftedness and talents separately: giftedness is defined as an early emerging untrained aptitude stemming from mostly biological causes; and talent, which is described as an adult form of focused giftedness in which gifts have been developed and mastered in a systematic way (Gagné, 2013, p. 5). Gagné's model identifies six categories of "natural abilities" (four cognitive and two physical) that individuals may exhibit from an early age (Gagné, 2013, pp. 7–8). Several factors can impact if and how these abilities may transfer to specific talents as the individual develops into adulthood. Intrapersonal factors including motivation, mental and physical health, and volition are considered to be high in priority for success of development. Environmental factors such as culture, encouraging influences, and school curriculum opportunities are also important to an individual's ability to develop a gift into a talent. Finally, Gagné recognizes the role that chance (2013, p. 8) plays in the likelihood that one will develop an ability to the point where it might be considered a talent—defined as performance that situates one in the top ten percent of individuals who exhibit the same ability (Gagné, 2013). This definition, with a strong emphasis on the varying role of interpersonal factors and the role of environmental factors, is a significant departure from early definitions based on a fixed intelligence present from birth.

Triarchic theory of intelligence. The Triarchic Theory of intelligence was different from prior theories in that it did not focus on a score from one single

intelligence test. Psychologist Robert J. Sternberg saw that intelligence was really made up of different components that took on responsibility for certain tasks, and he argued that no existing IQ test could adequately assess for all the components (Sternberg, 1984, p. 8). As a result, he actually created his own assessment by broadening the conceptions of giftedness from prior intelligence tests. (Sternberg, 1984). In transferring these ideas to a theory of giftedness, Sternberg focused on three dimensions of intelligence: creative intelligence, analytical intelligence, and practical intelligence. Individuals who exhibit these areas of giftedness at a level of excellence and rarity relative to peers, who are productive in some measure valuable to society, and who can demonstrate gifts through valid assessments may be considered to be gifted (Missett & McCormick, 2013).

These four more modern theories of intelligence and giftedness are the ones that continue to be most recognized at the current time in the field of gifted education. Each has continued to identify aptitude as a contributor to giftedness, but has also included greater emphasis on other factors. Despite the diminished emphasis on aptitude as a sole indicator of giftedness in these theories, many schools, districts, and states still place heavy emphasis on standardized aptitude and achievement test scores in identifying giftedness in students. Such practices are among the barriers that keep many students from being identified as gifted.

Barriers to Gifted Identification and Service

Underrepresentation has been attributed to several factors that all serve as barriers to students' identification and service in gifted and talented programs. These barriers, addressed in the following pages, include narrow definitions of giftedness, inadequate

identification methods, and issues with the nomination and referral processes for gifted identification (Ford, 2010b; Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010).

Narrow Definitions and Methods for Identifying Gifted Students: Emphasis on Psychometric Testing

Identification of gifted students is problematic. One reason is the lack of consensus amongst those in the field as to how to define giftedness. On those occasions when a group can come to consensus, they have the further issue of determining criteria—what will be accepted as proof that an individual meets the definition? The definitions and criteria are two critical thorns in the side of gifted identification (Borland, 2008).

The current version of the federal definition of gifted students was included as part of the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act, which was most recently reauthorized as part of the “Every Student Succeeds Act” in December 2015 (S. 1177 - 114th Congress: Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). It defines gifted students as:

Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. (National Association for Gifted Children, n.d.-b)

While there is no requirement for states to adopt the federal definition, many states use it as a basis for their own definition and work (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). Such is the case in South Carolina where the definition also refers to “high performance ability or potential in academic or artistic areas” (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013, p. 1). Both the federal and South Carolina definitions for academically gifted students

focus on high achievement and performance. As a result, when choosing a criterion, South Carolina—like many states—chooses high performance on standardized aptitude and/or achievement tests as indicated by state identified cut scores, (Swanson, 2007). In one regard, this choice makes sense, as one of the primary goals in choosing a measurement tool is to ensure construct validity (indicating the tool measures that which it is intended to measure: academic achievement), and predictive validity (how well the tool predicts what it should predict; in this case, a student's ability to perform well in gifted classes) (Trochim, 2006). However, as Frasier and Passow strongly admonish:

While this psychometric approach to identification of giftedness may have succeeded in identifying children who are good test takers, high academic achievers, and members of the dominant or majority population, it is widely acknowledged that the approach has not worked effectively in identifying talent potential among students from economically disadvantaged families and communities, those from racial or ethnic minority groups, and those with limited English proficiency. (Frasier & Passow, 1994, p. x)

This trend of lower test performance from minorities, students from poverty, and English Language Learners has persisted over time, and those working in the field of gifted education have struggled to determine the cause (Card & Giuliano, 2016b; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Kaya, Stough, & Juntune, 2016; McBee, 2006; S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Scott J. Peters & Gentry, 2012; Plucker et al., 2010). There are three main theories supported by research and literature. The first posits that test bias causes the discrepancy between the scores of White, middle and upper SES students and students from minorities and low SES backgrounds (Ford, 2004). The second theory is related to the

lack of “opportunity to learn” that many culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students suffer. (S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016). The final theory discussed proposes that poor performance on standardized tests by culturally and linguistically diverse students—whether for gifted identification or not—is an extension of the greater achievement gap issue (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; White et al., 2016). Each of these theories is discussed more thoroughly in the following paragraphs.

Test bias. Scores from standardized aptitude and achievement tests can be helpful in identifying students who would benefit from gifted programming, but problematic when these scores are used as gatekeepers that shut students out of gifted classes. In a comprehensive study completed for the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, Ford (2004) identifies the arguments against the use of standardized ability testing as falling into two broad categories: cultural bias and norming bias.

Cultural bias in testing indicates that tests measure “what diverse groups have not been exposed to and their differential experience” (Ford, 2004). Fagan and Holland (2002) indicated that there has long been a 15-point average documented difference in scores on IQ tests between the dominant White, middle-class population, and the Black population. Some look at this data and deduce that there is something innately different about Black people that make them unable to score as highly as their White counterparts—they see this as evidence of a deficit in the population (Ford, 2004). Yet research has proven that when groups of White and Black students were exposed to identical content and tested on it, their results were very similar. When tested on untaught information, the difference in performance between groups was once again

present (Fagan & Holland, 2002), corroborating the beliefs of those who contend such tests are culturally biased because of the content included in them.

Norming bias is a threat when test creators use a small sample size for norming a test, and/or when cultural and ethnic groups are disproportionately represented within the norming sample (Ford, 2004). This is particularly problematic for populations that are relatively small to begin with. In such cases, representing that population proportionately only really means a handful of individuals out of thousands within the sample population. The question becomes, how well does this relatively small collection of students compare to the many other individuals from the same ethnic or cultural groups who may eventually take this test? Are they truly representative of their cultures as a whole? If not, then there is an increased risk of norming bias that may prevent significant numbers of students from qualifying for gifted programs (Frasier & Passow, 1994).

In the 1990s, in an effort to address the cultural bias often ascribed to traditional standardized tests, many schools and districts turned to nonverbal reasoning tests such as the Raven's Progressive Matrices or Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) for gifted identification (Ford, 2004). Such tests claim to be more culturally fair than typical aptitude tests which rely heavily upon vocabulary understanding and comprehension (Naglieri & Ford, 2003). Unfortunately, not all studies of such nonverbal aptitude tests corroborate this claim. Lohman, Korb, and Lakin (2008) found that the various nonverbal reasoning tests generated very different results, even when administered to the same sample of students, and that the Ravens and NNAT in particular resulted in large score differences between ELL and non-ELL students. In a later study, Carman and Taylor (2010) found similar results for students from low SES backgrounds. Claims that

the test creators make regarding culture-fairness can give schools a false sense of confidence that the tests are appropriate to use as a first cut for gifted programming.

Lack of opportunity. Low standardized ability test scores are interpreted differently by different people. While some view the discrepancy of mean test scores between diverse populations and the dominant population (White, non-Hispanic, middle class) as a result of test bias, others ask if the lower scores are actually an indication of true differences in the groups (S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016; White et al., 2016). Some posit that the lower ability test scores of those from diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic groups are, as Ford (2004) suggested, a result of “cultural bias” and “inadequate opportunity to learn” (S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 161). “Opportunity to learn” (OTL)—a concept originally used to compare how countries’ or states’ educational programs were teaching specific content in preparation for international tests (McDonnell, 1995)—refers in this instance to those influences that impact student achievement long before students enter the school building as kindergarteners. OTL is a construct often measured by such things as informal “pre”-school experiences, access to high-quality early childhood education, exposure to rich language and vocabulary, and type and quality of primary grade instruction (Payne, 2011; S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Low OTL and low SES often go hand in hand. In low SES families, parents are typically not able to spend money on higher quality, enriching preschool experiences, and they may have to forego other opportunities money can buy—classes that develop their children’s special interests and talents (dance, sports, art, and music), travel, and/or special events such as museum visits or theatre performances. The OTL issue can be further exacerbated if parents do not have the time, knowledge, and/or interest to spend

quality time reading, talking, and playing with their children (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). The implications of “Opportunity to Learn” are significant, especially when considering that the federal definition of gifted learners from the United States’ 1993 “National Excellence” report indicates that gifted students are those that “exhibit high levels of accomplishment *when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment* [emphasis added]” (Ross & United States. Office of Educational Research and Improvement., 1993, p. 3). When using tests for gifted identification that are based on age norms, “age” ends up serving as a proxy for all the other ways students are supposed to be similar, such as experience and environment—two aspects of OTL—and underrepresentation of populations that have had lower OTL has been the result (S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 164).

The issue of “opportunity to learn” also comes into play in regard to the bigger issue of the achievement gap. In continued research related to standardized testing and ongoing issues with underrepresentation, some researchers have theorized that there is no proven test bias, and instead, that the variance in results reflect the truly lower performance of children of color, ELLs, and economically disadvantaged students that results from their lack of opportunity to learn (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Payne, 2011; S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016). These researchers do not claim this is a deficit or “fault” of these students or their culture, but rather an indication of the pervasive problem of low OTL that has been perpetuated by both a cycle of poverty and structural racialization (Hammond, 2015).

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on shifting the language used to discuss this problem. For many, the term “achievement gap” implies that blame should

be laid at the feet of the children of color and low SES students who are, for whatever reason, not achieving at the level as their same-age peers. Many believe that a more accurate term would be “opportunity gap”—as these culturally and linguistically diverse students have experienced a gap in the opportunity to achieve (Flores, 2018). According to Boykin and Noguera (2011) opportunity gaps arise from two forms of inequities: “inequities that are directly related to children’s backgrounds, and school practices that reinforce and often exacerbate inequity” (p. 186). Because these students do not have the same opportunities as their age-peers from higher SES and White backgrounds, culturally and linguistically diverse students often come to school depending on the teacher to help them navigate the system and become independent learners (Hammond, 2015). The problem with this thinking is that the largely White teaching force present in our nation’s schools is rarely aware of their own White privilege or the ways that schools are products and perpetuators of a dominant white culture.

By ‘white culture,’ we mean the dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. Because it is so normalized it can be hard to see, which only adds to its powerful hold. (Gulati-Partee & Potapchuk, 2014, p. 27)

If we are to bring an end to the achievement gap, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as those who come from low SES backgrounds, must be offered the chance to develop the thinking skills and the habits of mind that will prepare them for advanced academic work (Hammond, 2015). Ford (2010b) posits, “...we cannot close the achievement gap without decreasing

underrepresentation. We cannot completely reconcile underrepresentation if we do not address the achievement gap in gifted education” (Ford, 2010b, p. 34).

Nomination and Referral Processes

The first step in the gifted identification process for many schools, districts, and states is nomination or referral for assessment. Depending on location, the nomination or referral might come from any number of resources—a classroom teacher, other school staff member, or a parent. In some locations, students can refer themselves or another student for gifted screening.

Teacher, parent, and student referrals. The nomination and referral process has historically added a good bit of complication to the entire gifted identification issue. Much of this is due to numerous studies that have revealed that underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted programs is often furthered by inequitable nominations of students from these groups. In many states and districts, classroom teacher referrals act as the gatekeeper which determines which students are, and which students are not, evaluated for the gifted program (Gentry, Hu, & Thomas, 2008; McBee, 2006; Szymanski & Shaff, 2013; Tomlinson, Ford, Reis, Briggs, & Strickland, 2004). Analysis of teacher referrals shows the proportion of referrals teachers make for Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students is quite low compared to the proportion of White and Asian-American referrals (McBee, 2006, pp. 106–109). Most often this discrepancy in nominations or referrals is related to a lack of training or awareness on the part of teachers. Most college and university teacher preparation programs include only one course on exceptional students (Szymanski & Shaff, 2013), and without solid knowledge and training about the needs and characteristics of gifted students—

particularly gifted students from diverse backgrounds—teachers tend to fill the holes in their knowledge with what they know from prior experience or long-held perceptions (Szymanski & Shaff, 2013). Unfortunately, these experiences and perceptions can be misguided, biased, or simply wrong, and the end result can have a significant impact on the number of CLD students who are referred for gifted assessment (Tomlinson et al., 2004).

In addition to school personnel, others can make referrals for gifted assessment in most locales—particularly parents and students. (McBee, 2006; South Carolina Department of Education, 2013). Though such referrals are a part of the identification procedures communicated by schools to all families, the number of referrals coming from parents and students is relatively small. While it is impossible to know all of the reasons for low parent referrals, some cues can be inferred from what is known of some diverse cultures. Parents of ELLs and Hispanic families often see the role of the teacher as the “expert” and would not nominate their children because they feel it is the teacher’s place to do so. Furthermore, insecurities about their levels of English proficiency may make some parents hesitant to try and communicate their beliefs to the school (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Parents of Black students may have developed a sense of distrust of school culture or feel alienated from schools because of their own school experiences (Ford et al., 2008; McBee, 2006).

Universal screening. One solution to the referral problem is universal screening. In some schools and districts the first step in gifted identification is not referral, but universal assessment. Sometimes referred to as census testing, this first step in gifted identification involves administering one or more formal assessments to students in an

identified grade level (Lakin, 2016). In the state of South Carolina all second graders are tested with an aptitude and an achievement test as part of state-mandated census testing prior to the start of gifted classes in third grade (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013). The advantage to universal screening is that all students have an opportunity to qualify for further evaluation for gifted identification (Lakin, 2016). Concerns regarding teachers' lack of understanding about gifted or diverse students, miscommunication between schools and parents, and other previously mentioned issues related to nomination or referral can be diminished with the use of universal screening. The greatest drawbacks to universal screening are the time and cost associated with carrying out such testing across a district or state (Lakin, 2016). The use of formal tests is expensive, and educators and parents have become increasingly concerned about the amount of time being taken from instruction for test administration. While these are valid concerns, most experts in the field argue that the time and money are worth it, as more students from underrepresented populations are identified for gifted assessment by universal screening than by teacher and parent referral (Card & Giuliano, 2016b).

Reversing the Underrepresentation of Special Populations of Giftedness

To reverse the current trend of underrepresentation of CLD populations in gifted programs it is necessary to address the factors that have historically served as barriers. This will require broadening definitions of giftedness and determining alternative identification processes that utilize multiple indicators and nontraditional measures of giftedness (Briggs et al., 2008; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Ford, 2004; Gentry et al., 2008; Lakin, 2016; Lohman, 2005b; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2004; VanTassel-Baska, Feng, & de Brux, 2007; Zhbanova et al.,

2013). Talent development programs that help to mediate students' low opportunity to learn (OTL) need to be created and implemented to provide students opportunities to experience advanced curriculum and build thinking skills (Briggs et al., 2008; Payne, 2011; Siegle et al., 2016; South Carolina Department of Education, 2013; Subotnik et al., 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2004). Finally, improved teacher education and training regarding the nature and needs of the gifted as well as information about special populations of gifted students needs to be planned and implemented. This is a high priority, due to the influence teachers have regarding students' learning experiences and future opportunities (Ford, 2010b; Gentry et al., 2008; Harris, Plucker, Rapp, & Martínez, 2009; Hunt & Yoshida-Ehrmann, 2016; Siegle et al., 2016; Tomlinson et al., 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). In the following pages, literature addressing these strategies for reversing underrepresentation is reviewed.

Improving Identification Methods

Several aspects of various identification processes have been questioned and even criticized because they focus on criteria that tend to exclude many from receiving gifted service (Briggs et al., 2008; Card & Giuliano, 2016a). In order to increase representation and participation of students from all backgrounds in gifted programs, research suggests practices and changes that would make identification processes more inclusive, while still maintaining their rigor. While these are important and to be lauded, until they are incorporated into definitions and identification practices at the state level, they have little impact on what can be addressed at the local school level. In the following paragraphs some of the bolder and more widely-touted recommendations are briefly outlined.

Broadened conceptions of giftedness. In response to concerns regarding the narrow definitions of giftedness, individuals working in the field have completed research studies and voluminous literature reviews resulting in varied definitions of giftedness meant to be more inclusive, while remaining true to the central concept of above average accomplishment or ability (Callahan, Tomlinson, Moon, Tomchin, & Plucker, 1995; Gentry et al., 2008; Plucker & Callahan, 2014; Ross & United States. Office of Educational Research and Improvement., 1993; Subotnik et al., 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2004).

Any new definition of giftedness, according to experts in the field should: (a) be based on the latest research and literature; (b) reflect values of society that are manifested in some outcome—usually in one’s adulthood; (c) be specific to domains of endeavor and seen as the result of several contributing factors including biological, pedagogical, psychological, and psychosocial factors; (d) reinforce the importance of both “natural” abilities or potential, and the malleability of those abilities or potential into true talent; (e) recognize the significance that psychosocial variabilities—especially motivation and opportunity—play in developing potential into talent; and (f) be based on the “extraordinary”—indicating that, compared with others with similar categories of ability, a gifted individual will still stand out in comparison (Subotnik et al., 2011, pp. 3–4).

While there has been no new official definition coming out of the United States Department of Education or the various states, much of the work related to gifted curriculum development, continued research in the field of gifted education, and work with educators of the gifted is being influenced by these new definition ideas (Erwin &

Worrell, 2012; S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Plucker & Callahan, 2014; Siegle et al., 2016; Szymanski & Shaff, 2013).

Modified and alternative identification methods and procedures. With broadening conceptions of intelligence and giftedness, the possibilities open up regarding ways to identify students who might meet these new definitions, as well as those who show potential for meeting them. Some suggestions for improving identification procedures to better accommodate these new ideas include using multiple identification sources and methods, using traditional assessments in new and innovative ways, and incorporating new nontraditional assessments that match some of the criteria alluded to in the new definitions.

Multiple indicators. Any time data is used—in educational decision-making or in research—one is reminded that it is never best practice to rely on a single piece of data. Researchers are encouraged to have numerous trials, collect samples over a period of time, and consult numerous sources. Triangulation of data provides greater confidence about whatever phenomena is being observed (Trochim, 2006). Similarly, when determining if a student is a good fit for a gifted program, one should never rely solely on one test score or one piece of data (Ford, 2004; Harris et al., 2009; Siegle et al., 2016). Ford (2004) includes guidelines for the use of test scores in her monograph on intelligence testing, and one of the strongest points is that a single score should never be the bottom line for making a decision, especially one to exclude a student from educational programming.

New ways of using traditional tests and data. With a need for multiple indicators, some traditional assessments are being used in new and different ways. One

option that addresses opportunity to learn and the way that tests are normed by age—as if age could account for all the ways groups of students are alike or different—is to look at a child’s performance on aptitude tests in comparison with that of others from a similar background (Lohman, 2005a). Because the definitions of giftedness require looking at current achievement *and potential*, it makes sense to compare students who have had similar backgrounds and opportunities to learn, and determine which among these students are scoring the highest on these predictive measures. This practice is sometimes known as group norming. Using group-specific norms, all students participate in taking the same assessment or test, but the results are grouped and viewed in comparison to those of students who are similar in age or grade *and* who have had similar educational experiences or opportunities (S. J. Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 167). This type of norming can be especially helpful for groups of ELLs or students who come from particularly low-opportunity backgrounds. One caveat to remember when using norms in group-specific ways is that students who qualify for gifted programs based on the national norms will have different academic needs than students identified with group or local norms; these students will already be prepared for a level of rigor that the students identified with group or local norms have the potential to work toward (Lohman, 2005a). Some type of alternative instructional plan will be necessary in this situation.

Alternative assessment. Educators and researchers have developed a good number of alternative assessment ideas for identifying gifted students, many of which have proven successful in increasing the numbers of identified students from typically underrepresented populations. Multidimensional and portfolio assessments represent ways that a variety of samples—all of which should be indicative of gifted performance

and align with program demands—can be collected as evidence of a students’ relevant academic needs and abilities (Borland, 2013; Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1992; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2007).

Utilizing authentic assessments has also helped to successfully identify students from underrepresented populations. One example of this is identification through learning opportunities. This method places students who are not currently identified as gifted in enriching classes or lessons—sometimes outside of school hours in an enrichment program or “camp” environment. In these classes, students are able to engage in enriching learning activities and environments which frequently evoke their potential in such a way that teachers can observe their gifted abilities and recommend appropriate gifted placement (Borland, 2013; Briggs et al., 2008; Frasier & Passow, 1994; Tomlinson et al., 2004; Zhanova et al., 2013).

Another example, performance tasks, are primarily used as an enrichment task or lesson in which a student’s performance may prompt a teacher to notice a student’s giftedness. In some locations, more formal performance tasks are developed specifically for the purpose of gifted identification. In the state of South Carolina, one of the criteria that can be used to aid in gifted identification is the South Carolina Performance Task Assessments (formerly STAR) (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013). These specially-designed and piloted performance tasks were created specifically for the purpose of trying to identify more students from underrepresented populations in the state of South Carolina (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2007). The use of the South Carolina Performance Task Assessments has successfully increased the percentage of CLD

students qualifying for gifted service in South Carolina since their implementation in 1999 (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2007).

In addition to the alternative assessments already described, some other alternative or modified identification procedures have been instituted in an effort to increase identification and participation of formerly underrepresented populations in gifted programs. For example, some localities have utilized assessment of students new to the country, or for whom English is not their first language, using aptitude and/or achievement tests in the students' native languages (Harris et al., 2009; Siegle et al., 2016). In some locations teacher and/or parent rating scales are used to provide additional information that can provide insight regarding a student's abilities and talents (Scott J. Peters & Gentry, 2012; Siegle et al., 2016). Using a variety of assessment options gives more students opportunities to showcase their different strengths and abilities, and ultimately gives them a greater chance for inclusion in gifted programs.

Talent Development Programs

For some students from CLD backgrounds, participation in talent development programs designed for exposure to advanced content and higher levels of thinking within a nurturing environment can increase confidence levels and address gaps in learning (Allen et al., 2016; Briggs et al., 2008; Payne, 2011; Siegle et al., 2016; Tomlinson et al., 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2007; Zhbanova et al., 2013). Typical gifted programs are intended to serve a specific purpose. As defined in many federal and state definitions, gifted students require "different programming" in order that their potential be met (Marland, Jr., 1971; O'Connell Ross, 1993; South Carolina Department of Education, 2013; Stephens & Karnes, 2000). While the need to correct the problem of

underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted programs is a top goal in the field, the solution cannot come at the expense of “watering down” current gifted programming to the point that it no longer serves the purpose for which it was created. As Frasier and Passow (1994) noted in their historic National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented monograph, “...the problems of identifying and nurturing talent potential are not resolved by formulating constructs of giftedness solely for minority and economically disadvantaged students that differ from those for the majority populations” (p. 77). With all the research and study that has taken place in the 20-plus years since the monograph was published, we realize that there are many factors impacting high-potential CLD students’ ability or inability to qualify for gifted programs; likewise, educators can utilize various strategies to address these students’ needs without compromising the high levels of instruction and thinking in gifted programs (Harris et al., 2009; Tomlinson et al., 2004).

Characteristics of successful talent development programs. Talent development is a topic that has received great attention and emphasis in the field of gifted education in recent years. This concentration appears to be tied to greater awareness of the impact that lack of opportunity has played in the underidentification of students of color and low-income for gifted services. As some have said, there must be a “change in focus from discovering ‘signs’ of giftedness or talent to *nurturing* [emphasis added] students' talents” (Tomlinson et al., 2004, p. 5).

Talent development can take a variety of forms, but there are some characteristics that should be present in all talent development programs to maximize success for learners. First, the programs must be strengths-based and eliminate any deficit thinking.

It is critical that students are never made to feel that—because of their background—they are “lacking” in some way (Briggs et al., 2008; Ford, 2010b; Payne, 2011; Szymanski & Shaff, 2013). Secondly, talent development programs need to provide students opportunities for advanced, enriched learning that incorporates higher order thinking skills and a rigorous, high-level curriculum (Payne, 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2004). These opportunities must be paired with sufficient support and scaffolding so that teachers can identify (and fill) any gaps students may have in their learning. Third, such programs must address the affective needs of students. Often students may feel inferior or insecure about undertaking higher level tasks simply because they have never been exposed to these before. Attending to students’ self-esteem, levels of motivation, and security are paramount (Siegle et al., 2016; Subotnik et al., 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2004). Finally, for any talent development program to be successful, it must incorporate culturally responsive curriculum (Ford, Howard, Harris, & Tyson, 2000; Tomlinson et al., 2004). This is a topic that will be discussed more thoroughly later in the review of literature.

Examples of talent development program design. There are a number of different models being used to enhance talent development in an effort to meet the need for advanced content exposure. Each model is designed to fit the particular needs of the school, district, students, and community involved. Three different models are described here to give an indication of the variety of programs used to address various locations’ unique challenges.

Extracurricular enrichment programs. One of the most common types of talent development program is an enrichment or challenge class. This model is similar to, or may be used in conjunction with an “identification through learning opportunities”

identification model. In these classes, students have the chance to work on enrichment types of curriculum in a relatively non-threatening environment. They often have opportunities to work with partners or in teams, which can be reassuring, particularly for students who come from cultures that value a more collectivist mindset (Hammond, 2015). In these classes, students get to tackle gifted curriculum, but with the support and guidance of a teacher as needed (Briggs et al., 2008; Siegle et al., 2016; Tomlinson et al., 2004).

Trial placement and probationary periods. The practice of allowing trial placements or probationary periods within a gifted program involves giving students who show academic potential an opportunity to work in a gifted class with accelerated and enriched curriculum and identified gifted children (Briggs et al., 2008; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012; South Carolina Department of Education, 2013; Tomlinson et al., 2004). Often, exposure to high-level curriculum and extended time with intellectual peers will be enough to encourage a student to exhibit gifted behaviors and performance. In South Carolina, the state regulation on gifted education specifically provides for students who exhibit potential in either general ability or in a specific domain the opportunity to be granted a trial period (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013). This provision is utilized in the current research study to improve instruction for high-achieving students from underrepresented populations, and to potentially increase the number of these students who eventually qualify for gifted service.

Early intervention. While providing any additional time in enriching and challenging settings will increase high-ability students' exposure to quality instruction

and their subsequent opportunities to exhibit ability and talent, research overwhelmingly endorses early identification or intervention as the talent development option that has the greatest impact on a student's eventual placement and success in a gifted program (Briggs et al., 2008; Ford, 2010b; Frasier & Passow, 1994; Horn, 2012; Kaya et al., 2016; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012; Tomlinson et al., 2004; Zhanova et al., 2013). Fagan and Holland (2002) indicate that various studies report early intervention can cause an increase in IQ of anywhere between three and fifteen points, and Briggs et al. (2008) report that early intervention is one of the top four strategies used by the top 25 "promising programs" for CLD gifted and talented students across the United States (p. 143). Because many states do not provide for gifted services prior to third grade, this is an area that should be a priority so that students with potential do not lose opportunities waiting for advanced curriculum to be provided for them.

Talent development programs show great promise as a key strategy in eliminating the underrepresentation of CLED students in gifted programs. Recent work by experts in the field has focused on creating suggested talent development frameworks that may be adopted and adapted by schools and districts in the near future to address the issue of underrepresentation (Payne, 2011; Siegle et al., 2016).

Improved Teacher Education and Awareness Related to Special Populations and Giftedness

Despite all that has been written about the importance of appropriate identification procedures, tools, and methods, and all the advice regarding talent development plans and programs, the best guarantee that students will receive fair and accurate placement for gifted programming is for these students to be well-known by the teachers and other adults working with them (Harris et al., 2009). The role of teachers is

key to reversing the underrepresentation of diverse populations in gifted programs (Ford, 2010b; Tomlinson et al., 2004). For teachers to be effective student advocates, talent-discoverers, and gift-enhancers, they must commit to: (a) become knowledgeable about giftedness, the nature and needs of gifted students from a variety of backgrounds, and the ways culture impacts learning and behavior; (b) become aware of and address their personal and unconscious biases regarding differences in students; and (c) establish learning environments where high expectations are set and communicated for all learners.

As a rule, undergraduate teacher preparation programs typically do not do an adequate job of preparing future teachers to deal effectively with exceptional students or students of diversity. Most programs only require a single course on all educational exceptionalities plus one course on multiculturalism (Brown, 2007; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012; Szymanski & Shaff, 2013; Tomlinson et al., 2004). It has been established that United States census data show that diversity in America is increasing (Payne, 2011, pp. 5–8), and that the percentage of children of color and economically disadvantaged students underrepresented in gifted programs is also increasing. “Because teachers serve as gatekeepers for gifted programs, teacher development is a key to finding ethnically diverse gifted learners” (Gentry et al., 2008, p. 207).

Beyond education about the issues, teachers need to take inventory of their biases related to cultures, classes, religions, genders, and abilities and be “committed to working toward social equity” (Powell, Cantrell, & Rightmyer, 2013, p. 25). At the same time that the percentage of school-aged children from diverse backgrounds is growing, approximately 85% of U.S. teachers are White. Ford (2010) puts forth the question, “How prepared are current and future teachers to work effectively, responsively, and

proactively with students who come from backgrounds that differ from their own relative to race, culture, and language?” (p. 33). Much of the bias exhibited by teachers tends to be a result of lack of knowledge or training (Szymanski & Shaff, 2013). Once teachers are aware of the possibility or presence of biases, they can work to educate themselves and not let the biases hinder their work with students from diverse backgrounds.

Finally, teachers can help combat underrepresentation of special populations in gifted classes by ensuring that within their own classrooms they hold high academic expectations for all students (Briggs et al., 2008; Santamaria, 2009; Siegle et al., 2016; Tomlinson et al., 2004). Teachers who offer authentic tasks to make instruction meaningful and engaging, who give students opportunities to collaborate and communicate with others, who involve students in critical and creative thinking..., these teachers show students that they believe in the students’ abilities and see them as capable (Szymanski & Shaff, 2013; Tomlinson et al., 2004). This type of learning environment encourages students to work to high expectations and reach for higher goals. All students can benefit from a focus on challenge rather than remediation (Tomlinson et al., 2004). Additionally, teachers who look for and seek to nurture talents in their students, rather than focusing so much on “nominations of giftedness”, are more likely to help identify students for gifted programming (Siegle et al., 2016, p. 113).

Application of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy

In addressing the issue of underrepresented populations in gifted programs, the cultural and ethnic populations generally referred to include “African Americans, Chicanos and Latinos, and Native Americans, and they are often referred to using several other adjectives, including *culturally diverse*, *underserved*, and *marginalized minorities*”

(Worrell, 2013, p. 237). Additionally, because these races and ethnic groups are also overrepresented in low socioeconomic (SES) populations, low income students are also often referred to with underrepresented populations (Worrell, 2013). Also included, though not specifically named, are any groups of English Language Learners (ELLs).

As has already been mentioned in the description of the problem of practice, combatting underrepresentation of these groups requires not only a change in how giftedness is defined and identified, but also a change in the way that many schools, classrooms, and teachers respond to diverse students. In the following pages, multicultural education and culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum are defined. The history of these two educational frameworks are described along with the conceptual backgrounds from which each framework is derived. The summary regarding CLR pedagogy will conclude with a section discussing the importance of the role of the teacher in providing for multicultural education and ensuring a culturally and linguistically responsive learning environment for students.

History, Definitions, and Theoretical Bases of Multicultural Education and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Multicultural education as the precursor to CLR pedagogy. Multicultural education, an approach to education rising out of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, emphasizes the need for educational equity for people of all cultures (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). It was developed out of the greater multiculturalism movement as a way to eliminate discrimination and help develop an educational system that responded to the needs of CLD students (Tomlinson et al., 2004, p. 10). For a long period of time there have been those in the field of education who have considered children of African-American and Hispanic descent as “culturally deprived”, and viewed

them through a “deficit mindset” (Nieto, 2017). They have tried to make the argument that those from cultures different from the dominant White culture are somehow lacking, and that these “deficiencies” explain the achievement gap between White middle-class students and students from other races and low SES backgrounds (Banks, J. in Gay, 2018). As a response to this “deficit model”, scholars including Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay have spent the last two decades developing and promoting “culturally responsive” teaching and pedagogy (Hollie, 2013). This paradigm explains that the reason for the achievement gap is not related to a deficit in people, but rather to an American education system that has been predicated on the values, beliefs, and perspective of the dominant culture, making it less accessible for those from other cultural and economic situations (Howard, 2010). As schools became desegregated in the 1960s and 70s, any cultural ideas about traditions, language, or histories that conflicted with the traditional Eurocentric curriculum were rejected (Nieto, 2017). Today, multicultural education serves a broader purpose than it did initially. Multicultural education now “strives to build student awareness of different perspectives such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and social class, and to support students in the development of social change” (Tomlinson et al., 2004, p. 10).

Culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. Cultural responsiveness is an effort by teachers to “develop a closer fit between students’ home cultures and the culture of the school” (Brown, 2007, p. 57). Culturally responsive teaching is rooted in multicultural education and can be defined as the development of a teaching and learning environment that intertwines cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles to make learning experiences relevant to all students (Gay, 2010,

p. 31). In this framework, culture is defined not as race or ethnicity, but rather as “behavior learned from the home or the community that is passed down from generation to generation and represents...heritage” (Hollie, 2013, p. 33). All of us have a culture; cultural responsiveness simply recognizes and considers *all* cultures, not just the traditionally dominant one.

Most scholars in the field point to the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings as the origin of culturally relevant or responsive pedagogy. In her book, *The Dreamkeepers* (1994), Ladson-Billings highlighted six teachers whom she deemed culturally relevant, and emphasized the importance of using students’ cultural backgrounds and personal experiences as the starting points for teaching new skills, changing attitudes, or building knowledge. Geneva Gay (2010) continued the work of culturally responsive pedagogy with her 2000 text, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. This text went further to outline pedagogical theories and practices key to successfully implementing theory from Ladson-Billings’ work (Hollie, 2013). Gay encourages teaching “to and through” students’ cultural strengths, as doing so is both culturally validating and affirming. Such teaching provides legitimacy for the varied cultural heritages represented in the classroom and helps to bridge the “meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). In more recent years the term has been extended to include culturally *and linguistically* responsive pedagogy in response to the growing ELL populations in the United States. As Hollie (2013) asserts:

There is nothing more cultural about us as humans than the use of our home language. Linguistic identity is a crucial aspect of who we are.... In short, we are

what we speak and, to a large extent, our language is a representation of our heritage, including family, community, and history (Hollie, 2013, p. 20).

Theoretical backgrounds. Multicultural education is grounded primarily in the curriculum theory of social reconstructionism. Those who ascribe to such an ideology view curriculum as a means to reconstruct a society they see as flawed or threatened (Schiro, 2013). In the case of multicultural education, those responsible for developing this movement were responding to the deficit thinking regarding any cultures different from the White, Eurocentric majority, as well as to the lack of appropriate education and instruction to meet the needs of children of color (Nieto, 2017). Social reconstructionists look at the society that exists and envision the society that should be. They see schools and education as the vehicle that will drive the necessary overhaul to bring about what they see as the “future good society” (Schiro, 2013, pp. 163–164). It would seem to social reconstructionists that the time is ripe for educating students to be cognizant of the diversity around them and the inequalities faced by different groups, but also to become social actors who can aid in society’s reconstruction (Schiro, 2013).

Culturally responsive pedagogy, which is the focus in the current research study, is rooted in Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning (also known as social constructivism) which sees knowledge as socially constructed. This theory has a heavy emphasis on literacy and learning communities. “Language is the symbolic representation of culture” (Harmon, 2012, p. 15), and, as such serves as a basis for many culturally responsive practices. Similarly, one of sociocultural theory’s foremost tenets is that knowledge is socially constructed through dialogue and collaboration—both forms of

literacy (Hollie, 2013; Larson & Marsh, 2015). The learning community—identifying both an organizational structure **and** the group of people who work together sharing their various perspectives to collaboratively construct meaning—is central to the idea of culturally responsive pedagogy and sociocultural theory. Vygotsky’s belief was that it is within this community of learners that children are able to function in the zone of proximal development, surrounded by peers and teachers who help them negotiate learning that is just beyond their developmental levels (Applefield et al., 2001; Larson & Marsh, 2015). In the same way, a learning community is the center of a truly culturally responsive classroom. The learning community recognizes the various cultural backgrounds represented within the group as well as the funds of knowledge each member brings (Harmon, 2012). There is a sense in learning communities that each person has something to share that will influence all members’ learning in a meaningful way (Applefield et al., 2001). Learning communities have one another’s “back”—the community is not considered successful until everyone in the community has met with success (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy’s first concern is the student. CLR teaching and learning is primarily concerned with ensuring that educators view students and their cultural and linguistic attributes as assets that can be built upon (Hollie, 2013). Teachers meet students where they are and move them forward. Because of the focus on the learner, the learner’s background, and the learner’s needs, cultural and linguistic responsiveness is also strongly aligned with learner centered curriculum ideology (Schiro, 2013).

Role of the teacher in a culturally and linguistically responsive classroom. A teacher’s attitude, actions, words, and behavior can all work to inspire or to demoralize a child. Because so many teachers in today’s schools are working with students from cultures different than their own, it is critical that teachers become responsible for learning about other cultures—particularly those of their students—and using that knowledge in their planning and work with their students (Santamaria, 2009). Culturally responsive teachers “proactively and assertively work to understand, respect, and meet the needs of students who come from cultural backgrounds different from their own” (Ford, 2010, p. 50). Additionally, these teachers recognize the impact culture plays in a student’s education and do not discount it. At the same time, culturally responsive teachers do not back away from rigorous content—they use the best of what they know of good teaching practices and hold all students to high expectations, believing that all children can be successful, even if some require additional scaffolding or support to reach their goals (Brown, 2007; Ford, 2010a; Santamaria, 2009; Tomlinson et al., 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

Tomlinson et al. (2004) note that, “Exemplary multicultural teachers seek opportunities to increase their own cultural awareness, infuse multicultural education into the traditional curriculum, and scaffold student learning” (p. 11). To do their best in supporting diverse learners, CLR teachers need to address four areas: (a) personal awareness regarding diverse cultures; (b) appropriately challenging curriculum made relevant through connections to students’ communities and everyday lives; (c) cultivated, caring partnerships with all learners; and (d) intellectually and socially safe learning

environments embodied in a community of learners that respect and learn with one another (Hammond, 2015).

Teachers can become more secure in their own knowledge about other cultures by acquiring details and facts about the cultural particularities of different groups—starting with their own cultural heritage (Tomlinson et al., 2004). Learning about diverse cultures may be accomplished through multicultural coursework and reading, but can also be effectively achieved by spending more time with culturally different people or in culturally different places. Having conversations with students, visiting with parents or community members, attending cultural events, and making home visits are all suggestions for better understanding diverse cultures (Brown, 2007; Callahan et al., 1995; Ford et al., 2000; Hollie, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

In working with students in the classroom, teachers who already utilize best practices of curriculum and instruction will be best equipped to meet the needs of diverse learners. Teachers should strive to provide all students with appropriately high levels of instruction and communicate high expectations for all students' success (Brown, 2007; Tomlinson et al., 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). They should include a range of instructional strategies that will address students' interests and strengths and incorporate activities that allow students the opportunity to construct meaning by building bridges of relevance between their background knowledge and new content (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Ideally these strategies should provide opportunities for choice, allow for movement, and incorporate hands-on activity, collaboration, and interaction with others. Experiential learning—including learning and growing from mistakes—is especially important in helping students to grow in confidence and develop a growth mindset.

Whenever possible, teachers should use examples, analogies, and anecdotes that come from the lives and experiences of the students in the class (Brown, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). In cases where teachers detect that students have gaps in their learning that might be a result of lack of opportunity to learn, the gaps should be filled with as little fanfare as possible—working from the students’ areas of strength rather than starting areas of weakness and focusing on that which the students “don’t know” (Brown, 2007; Tomlinson et al., 2004). Incorporating multicultural materials within the classroom is critical, as students need to be able to “see themselves” in book, videos, and other materials (We Need Diverse Books, n.d.).

Equally important to the school success of CLD students is the learning environment as set by the teacher in the classroom (Brown, 2007; Ford, 2010a; Tomlinson et al., 2004). First and foremost, children should sense that the teacher accepts them as they are, values their culture and heritage, and knows and values **them** as they are. From here, the teacher sets the tone for the learning environment. The learning environment must provide students with a sense that they are respected and safe. This requires work on the part of the teacher to build a family-like learning community where students are encouraged to be supportive of one another and mediate conflicts in respectful ways. This inclusive environment should be a place where students are able to learn through their strengths and interests, and where they can learn about their own cultural background as well as the backgrounds of others (Gay, 2018; Larson & Marsh, 2015).

Implementation of a Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Literacy Strategy

In considering the population of students with whom I work and my teaching

responsibilities, I researched CLR strategies with the knowledge that whatever strategy I chose for this study, it would need to fit several criteria. Obviously, it would need to be something based in or compatible with language arts standards and content, as this is my assigned content. It also would need to provide the rigor that gifted students require, while providing sufficient scaffolding and support for students participating on a trial basis. Finally, the strategy would need to have some way of placing emphasis on key elements of multicultural education, such as interaction and communication between people with diverse perspectives or opinions. Researcher and author Donna Ford states, “—in meeting the needs of culturally diverse gifted students, it is essential that we do so by considering their different needs as students who are gifted and as students who are culturally diverse” (2004, p. 34). A visual of what this might look like can be found in Appendix B (Figure 1).

The strategy I selected was reciprocal teaching. The following pages define and describe reciprocal teaching and explain why it is an appropriate strategy not only for culturally and linguistically diverse students, but also for gifted and high ability learners. This section concludes with a review of previously completed research studies employing reciprocal teaching used as models in the planning of my own action research project.

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching is an approach that grew out of a need for more structured reading comprehension instruction in the early 1980s. At the time, reading instruction for students in grades K-3 was typically very phonics-heavy, with the result that students arrived in 3rd or 4th grade able to “word call,” but often with little to no understanding of what they had read (McAllum, 2014; Palincsar et al., 1989; Pilonieta & Medina, 2009).

The model was originally developed for use with seventh grade students by Palincsar and Brown (1984). These researchers considered strategies good readers tend to use when meaning breaks down. Based on this information, the researchers chose four key comprehension strategies that would help readers analyze texts and monitor their own understanding: summarizing, generating questions, clarifying, and predicting (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). These components made up the “what” of the method. Equally important to the method’s success was the “how”—the process for using these components.

The process of reciprocal teaching is fairly simple to describe. A group of students works with the teacher to read a text. After each section of text, the group engages in dialogue around the text, with the teacher and students alternating taking the role of “teacher”. In each discussion, the text is summarized, the “teacher” asks a question or questions related to the text which drive discussion; clarification regarding the text is addressed as needed, and predictions are made about what may come next (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Over time, as students become more proficient in the carrying out the roles and collaboratively managing the discussion, the teacher gradually releases control of the procedure to the students.

Two specific attributes of this process serve to make this strategy uniquely successful. The first is the deliberate scaffolding the teacher does in introducing the method. The teacher takes the “teaching” role for the majority of the early lessons in order to model how the process should work. Through the teacher’s modeling, students learn how to ask probing questions, respond to one another respectfully, and make certain the text is understood (Oczkus, 2018). Over time, the teacher has the students take on the

role of “teacher” more frequently, until they can run the group on their own (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The other unique attribute of the method is the collaborative nature through which the students and teacher build their understanding of the text. As dialogue ensues, questions are posed and discussed, confusion is clarified, predictions are made and noted, and the group comes to a consensus about what the text means (Armbrister, 2010; McAllum, 2014).

Theoretical roots of reciprocal teaching. Just as culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is grounded in the theory of social constructivism or sociocultural learning, reciprocal teaching is also located under the theoretical umbrella of sociocultural learning. Specifically, as students work within their learning communities to read and understand the texts they are sharing, they are collaboratively constructing the meaning of the text (Larson & Marsh, 2015). This is essentially the definition of social constructivism as defined by Vygotsky, which emphasizes personal knowledge as constructed within social interactions and collaborations (Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2001). Vygotsky’s influence can also be seen in the way the teacher scaffolds the dialogue—first taking on the role of the leader, and then gradually giving more of the responsibility over to the students as they grow in proficiency. This is an example of Vygotsky’s notion that a child can, with the assistance of a “more knowledgeable other”, negotiate content at a level slightly higher than he or she could alone (McLeod, 2014). It is in this margin of difference, or the “zone of proximal development”, that the child can extend his or her learning with the aid of scaffolding and modeling, until proficient enough to proceed independently (Armbrister, 2010; Larson & Marsh, 2015; McAllum, 2014; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Reciprocal teaching is a process “for the social

construction of knowledge where students collaborate with the teacher and each other to construct meaning from text” (McAllum, 2014, p. 32). As a result of participating in reciprocal teaching, students improve reading comprehension skills, become stronger monitors of their own understanding, and contribute to the knowledge of the group.

Appropriateness of the strategy for gifted and CLD students. Reciprocal teaching has been used with a variety of student populations from primary school through college, and with groups as small as pairs or as large as whole classes. The strategy has been frequently used with students from diverse backgrounds—particularly ELLs and students from minorities (Armbrister, 2010; McAllum, 2014; Oczkus, 2018). Because of their common theoretical roots in sociocultural learning, reciprocal teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy are quite compatible (see Figure B.2 in Appendix B). Reciprocal teaching’s emphasis on dialogue to collaboratively construct meaning compels group members to seek out and value the ideas all students bring to the text from their varied backgrounds. Students from varied linguistic backgrounds have opportunities to express themselves, and also learn ways of doing so that will ensure they effectively communicate with their “audience” (Hollie, 2013; Larson & Marsh, 2015). Reciprocal teaching gives every student support for learning how to think and speak about a variety of texts, and all students learn together to take on more of the responsibility for the dialogue over time.

Reciprocal teaching has been used extensively in recent years to enhance close reading instruction and to provide support for the increased load of informational texts students need to be able to read and understand (Oczkus, 2018). These rigorous tasks require the use of higher order thinking and analysis, key elements in strong gifted

curriculum. Furthermore, research has indicated that using reciprocal teaching helps students with retention of what they read (Oczkus, 2018), and aids in the development of strong metacognitive skills that eventually help gifted students become independent learners (Oczkus, 2018; Shraw & Graham, 1997).

Prior research on the use of reciprocal teaching to improve achievement.

Numerous studies have been completed over the last three decades that used the strategy of reciprocal teaching to increase student achievement (Armbrister, 2010; McAllum, 2014; Oczkus, 2018; Palincsar et al., 1989; Pilonieta & Medina, 2009; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; Shraw & Graham, 1997). In fact, when John Hattie (2009) first published *Visible Learning*—a synthesis of over 800 meta-studies coded to determine the top influences on student achievement, reciprocal teaching ranked ninth of 138, with an effect size of 0.74. This indicates that in classes where the strategy is implemented, students make an average of just under 1.5 years of growth in one year (Hattie, 2009; Oczkus, 2018).

New Zealand: “The Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012” and the “Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 17”. In preparation for the introduction of this strategy into my curriculum, I considered information from two particular studies from the literature that had elements in common with my situation, or that impacted my design decisions for this study. The first was conducted in New Zealand in the period of the past decade, as the Ministry of Education was working to incorporate more of the Māori (indigenous) and Pasifika (immigrants from the Pacific islands) cultures into New Zealand’s schools and instruction. It was important to the two cultural groups as well as to the Ministry of Education that attention be given “to cultural components within Māori [and Pasifika]

communities by personalizing (sic) education so that...students enjoy education success as Māori [and Pasifikan]” (Goren, 2009, p. v). Thus, there was a need to ensure academic success through a curriculum that was culturally responsive to these groups’ cultural values and traditions. One part of the plan endorsed by the New Zealand educators was implementation of reciprocal teaching. It was believed this strategy would be helpful for ensuring students’ literacy success, and also to address the cultural values of reciprocal, respectful, and compassionate interactions (McAllum, 2014).

Prior to the implementation of reciprocal teaching, there was a strong professional development piece put into place to educate teachers who would be using the strategy. In addition to thorough training, the professional development would also provide ongoing support for teachers as they implemented the strategy (McAllum, 2014). Teachers needed to understand the “why” of the strategy—the theory and thinking behind it, as well as the “how”—the process of implementation, of scaffolding, and the gradual reduction and release of control to the students as they became able to manage the process on their own.

This study reminded me of my own in that I am working to better incorporate important aspects and respect for the varied cultures represented in my classroom into my instruction and educational environment. Seeing that reciprocal teaching was effective in the New Zealand study was encouraging. The primary influence the New Zealand study has had on the current study, however, was in the planning and design decisions I made as the teacher-researcher to effectively prepare for the introduction and implementation of the strategy for my students. Strong professional development was key to the success of the New Zealand study, and since I would be implementing this independently, I

undertook intense study of the reciprocal teaching strategy to ensure that I would be able to effectively scaffold the process and then provide gradual release of responsibility to my students.

Reciprocal teaching with intermediate grade ESOL students in Florida. My second focus study was situated at an intermediate school in a rural part of Florida that had seen a significant increase in recent years of English Language Learners of Hispanic descent (Armbrister, 2010). In the study, the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher set up a six-week after-school program designed to increase ESOL students' reading comprehension, comprehension skills, and English language acquisition through the implementation of reciprocal teaching. Of the 19 ESOL students in third, fourth, and fifth grade, 9 agreed to participate in the program. No native speakers participated, as the teacher wished for the students to have opportunities to interact with their ESOL peers. The classes met for one hour twice a week (Armbrister, 2010).

Armbrister's (2010) results were positive, indicating student comprehension did improve as a result of working with the reciprocal teaching strategy and that the students were also able to transfer the comprehension strategies they were using to some of their independent reading tasks. Armbrister (2010) found that, in general, the students became better at monitoring their own comprehension and taking ownership of their own learning through their participation in reciprocal teaching. Finally, there was a noticeable gain in confidence seen across the participants.

The Florida study was of specific interest since the population in the present research study also included Hispanic and ELL students. It is encouraging to note that student confidence and participation increased over the time of the Florida study, and that

all students experienced growth as readers. On the other hand, it seemed that there were some missed opportunities in this study because of the exclusion of the native English speakers. Having the native speakers present would have provided a linguistic model for the ESOL students, and would have helped the native speakers to become more culturally aware and respectful of their classmates. Including native speakers would have also helped to broaden the zone of proximal development for the ESOL students' language acquisition, and may have possibly broadened some of the native speakers' zone of proximal development for cultural understanding or even critical thinking, depending on the levels of questioning coming from the ESOL students. These realizations have impacted decisions about grouping for the current research study. When students have worked in small groups or book clubs, they have been matched up in such a way that all groups reflect diversity, with group members from varied cultures in each group.

Conclusion

Academically gifted students, regardless of the definition used to describe and identify them, require special programming beyond what is provided in the typical classroom to realize their potential and maximize their talents. Giftedness does not discriminate: gifted individuals may be found “within any racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group; within any nationality; within both genders; and within populations of students with disabilities” (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013, p. 5). Even knowing this, students from culturally and linguistically diverse populations have been underrepresented in gifted programs in the United States since their inception.

The identified and stated Problem of Practice (PoP) in this action research study involves the underrepresentation of CLD students identified for the gifted and talented program in my school and determining ways to address this issue given the factors that are within my control. These factors include the use of trial placement in addition to the curriculum, instruction, classroom environment, and personal philosophy I choose to implement in my classroom with these students.

The issue of underrepresentation is well-documented in the literature. The problem has roots in the changing nature of our understanding of intelligence and the lack of consensus in defining giftedness. Despite research that has suggested expanded definitions and conceptions of giftedness, as well as arguments for multiple and varied measures for the identification of giftedness, the widespread continued use of traditional definitions and measures is well-documented. Other roots of the problem are deeply entrenched in the persistent achievement gap between White middle-to upper-class students who are predominantly of European descent, and all other culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and economically different groups. Furthermore, the impact of test bias, lack of opportunity to learn, and lack of teacher awareness and training related to both gifted and CLD students have also been noted.

The literature does provide hope and guidance for those who wish to improve the issues of underrepresentation and underserved students in gifted programs. Opportunities can be provided through talent development programs that will help ameliorate the lack of opportunity to learn that CLD children may have encountered early in their childhood. Teachers can become better informed and better prepared to meet the needs of talented students from diverse backgrounds through gifted education and multicultural education

training. An equally important step for teachers is to become culturally and linguistically responsive while bringing CLR teaching and learning strategies into the classroom to support all students of diverse backgrounds.

This review of the literature provides valuable insight into the Problem of Practice and the history of what has been done to address similar problems over time. It also serves as evidence to support this action research project. The literature provides a clear picture of the problem of underrepresentation of special populations in gifted programs and also establishes the need for resolution. My plan for implementing a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy—reciprocal teaching—with high-ability students from diverse backgrounds is a relatively small pebble to drop into the pool of ideas regarding the underrepresentation issue at large. For my school, however, it is a step further than we have ever gone before. The literature provides support for this decision as one that is logical and feasible for my situation and problem of practice. The answers to my research question, “What is the impact of introducing culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy in a gifted and talented (GT) fourth-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) class for Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students?”, will lead to more ideas and more questions that will help me better meet the needs of the high ability CLD students in my class, and ultimately allow me to help teachers in my school study additional options for use in their classrooms.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Inquiry is a core tool teachers evoke when making informed and systematic decisions. Through the inquiry process, teachers can support with evidence the decisions they make as educators and, subsequently, advocate for particular children, changes in curriculum, and/or changes in pedagogy. Inquiry ultimately emerges as action and results in change.

N. Dana & D. Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 26 -27

Not every child is academically gifted. The term “gifted” implies strength in one or more areas of human endeavor beyond that exhibited by others of a similar age and/or background, which requires special programming beyond what is offered in a typical school program (Ross & United States Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993). Giftedness can be found in individuals from all racial, ethnic, linguistic, and social classes across our nation and state, and these students deserve and need to be appropriately served. The problem of practice in the current research study explores the significant discrepancy between the percentage of students of Hispanic descent at Little Tree Elementary School, and the percentage of students from this same population qualifying for the school’s gifted and talented program. Qualification requires particular cut scores on standardized aptitude and achievement tests that some of these students struggle to attain. Trial placement is the one option provided for in the South Carolina Gifted Regulation (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013) that gives our school an opportunity to meet these students’ needs for advanced content. Each year, high achieving students, often from underrepresented populations, are served in our gifted

gifted classes using the trial placement option. The purpose of this study was to explore how expanding curriculum in a gifted ELA class to include culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) practices—represented in this study by the reciprocal teaching unit—may broaden opportunities for high-achieving Hispanic students to recognize their potential and ultimately gain the confidence and skills to qualify for the gifted program via the narrow state requirements. Given the population of students I serve in my mixed gifted/ high achievers’ class; this study will attempt to answer the question:

What is the impact of introducing culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy in a gifted and talented (GT) fourth-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) class for Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students?

Research Design

The design of the present research study was an action research methodology utilizing mixed methods data collection and analysis. Action research is a research methodology that is carried out by practitioners—in this case, a classroom teacher—for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. The research is conducted within the teacher-researcher’s own classroom or school with the intent of solving a specific problem or bringing about a desired change (Mertler, 2016). The research often comes as a reaction to a “felt difficulty” or direct concern that surfaces from the practitioner’s own teaching experiences (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 30). In this case, there was a sincere concern about students who exhibited characteristics of giftedness and who performed well in the classroom setting, but could not qualify for gifted programming due to the state’s narrow definition and stringent qualification criteria. While the state

regulations are out of the range of the teacher's control, what occurs in the classroom with students is very much up to the individual teacher.

The process of action research is a recursive one that includes four main stages that do not necessarily progress in a linear fashion. These stages include planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. It is not uncommon for a researcher to move back and forth between stages—possibly numerous times within a study—in order to accomplish the objectives of the study. Each of these stages and the specific actions taken within each stage through the course of the research will be discussed in further detail in the next section of this chapter.

The current action research study was conducted using a triangulation mixed-methods research design. Both quantitative and qualitative data provided valuable information about the impact the introduction of the treatment had on students. The qualitative data consisted of the organized collection of records from classroom observations, student surveys, semi-structured student interviews, and samples of student work, and was focused on student attitudes. In this study, quantitative data included the students' scores on pre- and post-assessments of reading comprehension given at the beginning and end of the reciprocal teaching unit.

Rationale for Selected Methodology

Action research is a research methodology that is particularly well-situated for practitioners such as teachers, academic coaches, and school-based administrators who are closest to the students likely to be impacted by the research (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). It is a practical type of research primarily intended for use by those looking to answer specific questions or to foster change within their own settings—the researcher is

an “insider” in the setting where the research is taking place, rather than someone from the outside coming to do research “to” or “on” them (Herr & Anderson, 2016, pp. 3–4). Action research encourages reflection and even professional growth within the practitioner-researcher through deliberate and systematic planning, action, and study.

In the present study, action research methodology was chosen because of the opportunities it afforded me to participate as the teacher-researcher, and to seek out solutions and produce change in my classroom. In other research methodologies, the idea of the researcher being ensconced in the research setting would lead to concerns about study validity (Trochim, 2006). Since I was looking for a solution to fit a specific population of students—talented culturally and linguistically diverse students unable to meet state qualifications for gifted placement—I was able to focus on those students and the solution I was seeking for them without worrying if the results would somehow be generalizable to other schools, students, or situations. Additionally, action research was preferable in this setting because of its responsiveness (Dick, n.d.) and the relatively short turn-around time between data collection and findings. While traditional research can take years to complete and publish, action research can be completed in a shorter period and still allow time in a school year for a teacher to act on the findings to improve instruction for students. Finally, action research is predicated on the idea that one of the key components in the process is reflection. Reflection throughout my study not only provided insight into my questions about infusing CLR pedagogy into work with my high achieving learners, but also allowed me the opportunity to grow as a professional through “intentional, planned reflection” and a heightened “focus on problem posing” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 23).

The decision to use a triangulation mixed-methods design stemmed from the fact that there was valuable information to be gained from both qualitative and quantitative data resulting from the study. One of the features of qualitative research is that it can represent the views and perspectives of the people—the participants—in the study (Yin, 2016). Since a primary interest of the study was the CLR pedagogy's impact on students, the collection of data regarding the students' responses, feelings, and beliefs about the use of the strategy was paramount. Furthermore, much can be determined about the students' levels of success and academic growth through observations of their interactions with one another, their comments and questions, and through observation of artifacts such as their student reflection journals (Mertler, 2016; Yin, 2016). Quantitative research is useful for looking at numerical data. In this study, the quantitative data came from the pre- and post-study reading comprehension assessments. Quantitative data is useful for comparing the pre-study assessment scores with those from the end of the study. It also aids in examining changes across the entire class, or for comparing a group of students to the class as a whole. The design of this study involved collecting both qualitative and quantitative data throughout the study and giving each similar emphasis. The result was that the data could be compared, assisting with triangulation of data, as what was observed in qualitative data was often reinforced by findings in the quantitative data and vice versa (Mertler, 2016, p. 107). Through the use of mixed methods,

The combination of both types of data tend[ed] to provide a better understanding of a research problem than one type of data in isolation. In other words, these types of studies capitalize[d] on the relative strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data (Mertler, 2016, p. 12).

Researcher's Role

As identified previously, I am the current lead teacher for gifted education at my school. As such, I perform administrative tasks related to gifted education in our building. Some examples include: (a) administering, screening, and evaluating various tests to check for students meeting gifted identification requirements; (b) training teachers and staff, and informing parents about gifted education and our gifted program; and (c) ensuring our school is compliant with all state regulations pertaining to gifted education.

I am a thirty-year educator and have worked in gifted education for 18 of those years. I obtained my MEd in gifted education in 2007. I served as the gifted coordinator in my district from 2008 – 2010, and have instructed the state gifted endorsement classes as an adjunct for two state colleges. Of all the roles I have had in gifted education, the role I feel the most responsibility for and joy in is that of teacher of gifted students. I actively teach classes of students for five hours in a typical school day. Gifted education is a passion of mine partly because of my own personal history—I was identified gifted as a child, and my son was also a gifted/talented student in our school system, —but my passion has been primarily inspired by the many students I have had the opportunity to work with over the last two decades, some of whom were identified as gifted, and others who appeared very gifted, but were not identified as such according to state regulations.

My concern over gifted students from underrepresented populations became most pronounced when I moved to my current school, where many students from diverse backgrounds show characteristics of giftedness, but have difficulty qualifying for the gifted program due to the identification criteria set by our state. It is clear to me in

working with these students that children can certainly be gifted without the tests identifying them as such. When schools allow students who need academic challenge to participate in advanced classes through trial placement, the identification issue is not as critical. Unfortunately, there are many schools that do not have the capacity to allow for this, with the result being that many talented students do not receive the education they need and deserve. Students who leave our elementary school to go to middle school often face this problem; they have been in advanced classes with us, but—because of test scores—they are not placed in advanced classes at the middle school level.

Because of my roles and responsibilities in my school, I was a full participant and the teacher-researcher throughout this research project. I selected and then planned the implementation of the CLR strategy—reciprocal teaching—in my class. I obtained the permission for completing research through the university, my principal, my district, and the study participants and their parents. I administered pre-study reading assessments and student surveys and then implemented the CLR strategy in my classroom, providing the instruction to my students regarding reciprocal teaching. I observed my students as they learned and used the reciprocal teaching protocol, and assessed their progress and growth through formative and summative assessments. I was responsible for collecting data throughout the study and at its conclusion, and then I was the one who sorted through it to analyze it.

Participants

Because my research is related to the inclusion of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy in my class of gifted and high achieving students, the participants were my ELA students. At the time of the research, some were identified as gifted, but

others were considered “high achievers” participating in the class on a trial placement basis. The gifted students were those who had met the South Carolina gifted and talented criteria, while students identified as “high achievers” either had met one of the two required dimensions for gifted placement, or had scores approaching the criteria in addition to a record of excellent classroom achievement. High achievers come from varied cultures and SES groups, and are selected for trial placement in gifted classes by virtue of their achievement in class, scores on past assessments, and observed characteristics. In this particular class (n = 17), nine of the students were identified gifted and talented. Of these nine students, three are male and the remaining six are female. Seven of the students are White, one is Hispanic, and one identifies as “two or more races”. One of the nine qualifies for subsidized meals – an indication of low SES. The eight students participating via trial placement included five males and three females. Two of the students are White, two are Black, and the remaining four are Hispanic. Five of the eight students qualified for free/ reduced price meals.

As a whole, the 4th grade gifted/talented ELA class involved in this action research study included nine (53%) identified gifted students, and eight (47%) trial placement “high achievers”. The class was 47% male and 53% female. Nine of the seventeen students (53%) were White, five (29%) of the students were of Hispanic descent, two (12%) were Black, and one (6%) student was considered “two or more races”. Eight (47%) of the students qualified for subsidized meals, indicating lower socioeconomic status (“Powerschool,” n.d.).

Because the focus group of the study was the group of Hispanic students, it is particularly important to understand how these students are coded by the school

according to their levels of English acquisition. When registering in South Carolina public schools, students with a reported home language other than English are screened for potential English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program placement (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018). Students who qualify for ESOL support are assigned levels from 1/pre-functional to 6/initially proficient based on the screener composite and subtest scores. Students at levels 1 – 3 receive daily support from an ESOL teacher. Level 4 – 6 students receive needed accommodations and are considered on “monitor status”. Students continue to receive ESOL services until they pass all levels of the state ESOL test, ACCESS, with a minimum of “4” on each subtest. On some occasions, a student entering a United States school for the first time and indicating a language other than English on the Home Language Survey will score a “4” on all subtests of the ESOL screener. Such students are coded as “8- English Speaker I” indicating they are fully bilingual and do not require ESOL services (BCSD, 2018).

Demographic data for the five Hispanic students at the center of the present research study is indicated in Table 3.1. While these students were the primary focus of the research, the other students in the ELA class were impacted both by their interactions with the Hispanic students and by their instruction in and use of reciprocal teaching. Table 3.2 shares the demographic data for the remaining, non-Hispanic students.

Ethical Considerations

In action research, it is critical to keep in mind that the primary focus must be on the safety, education, and best interests of the students. It is always crucial that I keep my students first and foremost in mind, and that my role as teacher will come before any other ancillary roles I may fill in school. Such priorities, however, do not preclude a

Table 3.1. Demographic Data of Hispanic/ELL Students in Gifted ELA Class

Student (pseudonyms)	Gender	Gifted/ High Achiever	ESOL status	Free/ Reduced Meals	Primary Home Language
Ana	F	HA	Level 4	Y	Spanish
Bianca	F	HA	Level 4	Y	Spanish
Carlos	M	HA	Level 3	Y	Spanish
Jose	M	G	Code 8 – “bilingual”	Y	Spanish
Diego	M	HA	Code 8 – “bilingual”	Y	Spanish

Table 3.2 Demographic Data of Non-Hispanic Students in Gifted ELA Class

Student (pseudonyms)	Gender	Gifted/ High Achiever	Race	Free/ Reduced Meals	Other Notable Information
Sophia	F	G	W	N	
Fatima	F	HA	B	N	
Jacob	M	HA	W	N	
Adam	M	G	W	N	
Dana	F	G	W	N	
Elisa	F	G	W	N	
Keith	M	HA	B	Y	
Annie	F	G	W	Y	
Kennedy	F	G	W	N	
Josh	M	G	W	N	
Jack	M	HA	W	N	IEP for documented learning disability
Lexie	F	G	2+ races	Y	

teacher from being an ethical teacher-researcher. In order that I may always treat the individuals with whom I work (students, parents, and colleagues) with caring, respect, and integrity, I must ensure that my research plans have safeguards in place (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). In the school district, where I work, there is a regulation in the district administrative handbook that addresses the district’s stance on teacher research.

Essentially, the district requires that any classroom based action research conducted as part of the requirements of a course or degree program be reviewed by the college or university Institutional Review Board. Once this has been completed, application can be made to the district to conduct the research. The district reminds researchers of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and requires that research not disrupt educational programs in the school, that informed consent be obtained from parents/guardians of minors, and that the research be shared with the district upon completion. Approval must be given by the district Chief Instructional Services Officer before research may commence (Beaufort County Schools, 2017).

In order to ensure that my plan communicated my intent to follow all ethical and legal codes considering the rights of my students, their parents, and my coworkers, several steps were taken. In order to ensure ethical treatment of all participants and their respective data, adults (parents and other teachers) were asked to sign an informed consent agreement, and students cleared to participate in research by their parents were asked for their assent to participate (both can be seen in Appendix C). When participants are mentioned in the research manuscript, it is either through the use of fictitious names or numbers; data is discussed in aggregate, or using the corresponding participants' fictitious names or numbers. Furthermore, explanations of the research design plan and the general purposes of the research were shared with participants. Upon completion, the full research report was supplied to the school district, in compliance with the district regulation.

Research Site

This research was conducted in a fourth grade ELA class for gifted and high achieving students at Little Tree Elementary School (LTES) in a town in the Lowcountry of South Carolina. This town is located approximately two hours away from Charleston, SC, and thirty minutes away from Beaufort, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia. It is the eighth fastest growing municipality in South Carolina (Thompson, 2015), and this is evident in the influx of new residents, and in the building of more neighborhoods, businesses, commercial centers, and community resources—including schools. In the two decades from 1996 – 2016, the town has added two public early childhood centers, four public elementary schools, one public K-8 school, two public middle schools, and two public high schools. Many of the families living in this community work to support the tourism industry that thrives in the resort destinations close by. Racially, the community is diverse, with the majority of the population represented by Whites, Hispanics/Latinos, and African-Americans. The average household income according to data collected from 2012 – 2016 was just over \$67,000 (United States Census Bureau, 2017).

Little Tree Elementary is a part of the local public school district. It opened in 2009, and currently serves just over 650 students from grades PK – 5 (S.C. Department of Education, 2017). It is a school in which over 65% of students identified as Black, Hispanic / Latino, or “two or more races”. The school is also a Title I school, as approximately 58% of students qualify for subsidized meals (“Powerschool,” n.d.).

Action Research Process – Planning for Research

Action research is often used by school practitioners as a means of studying their own practice and bringing about needed change. It is a process of cyclical inquiry and reflection that involves four major stages (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). The planning stage is the beginning of a research cycle, though one may move back to this stage during research if there are changes, revisions, or if things do not move according to plan or expectations. There are three key overarching goals of the planning stage: selecting the topic of the research, gathering information related to the topic—including related professional literature from the field, and developing a research plan (Mertler, 2016).

Selecting a Topic and Gathering Related Information.

In the early work of this research study, determining the focus—underrepresented students in our school’s gifted program—was an easy decision. Narrowing the topic and finding a way to address it took considerably more time. It was through extensive study of the literature and discussion with other professionals that the problem of practice was determined: underrepresentation is an issue plaguing gifted programs worldwide, but in my school—where Hispanic students make up a majority of our population and their number is growing—approaching the underrepresentation of Hispanic students in the gifted program was a sensible decision. In determining how to address the identified problem, it was essential that the study’s focus be related to some aspect that could be feasibly impacted within the classroom. Methods described in studies found throughout the literature all revolved around ways to highlight, enhance, and/or develop the talent that diverse students already possessed in order to prove that their inclusion in gifted classes was valid (Bianco & Harris, 2014; Horn, 2012; C. C. Miller, 2015; Tomlinson et

al., 2004; Zhanova, Rule, & Stichter, 2013), or to increase the chances that the students would meet the existing necessary requirements to be included in gifted programming (Briggs et al., 2008; Harris, Plucker, Rapp, & Martínez, 2009; Horn, 2012; Tomlinson et al., 2004). In the context of this school and the regulations that are in place for gifted identification (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013), we were already including diverse students with academic potential in our gifted classes through trial placement. More would be required to ensure that the program these students encountered during their trial placement could make a positive difference in not only their exposure to higher academic expectations and curriculum, but also in their confidence, self-efficacy, and actual belief that they could and should work alongside identified gifted students.

Further digging through the literature combined with experiences in several of my courses related to diversity made me realize that the bigger piece that had been missing from my work with these students was an effort to capitalize on their strengths and teach *through* them by creating a classroom and curriculum that would be culturally and linguistically responsive. While this was the crux of the “big picture,” I needed to select a more focused and manageable chunk from this large concept to be at the heart of this short and highly-intensive study. It was serendipitous that, at the time, two things occurred that helped to solidify my decision on an intervention to try. First, I had read Hollie’s (2013) book on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. It included a number of proven CLR strategies for use in ELA classes, but as several seemed promising, I was undecided about which to use. Second, I was taking two courses—one on foundations of literacy and the other on applications of learning principles, that

addressed sociocultural theory (Larson & Marsh, 2015) and reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). As I worked with these ideas, I decided to address the situation with my students using reciprocal teaching as a representative culturally and linguistically responsive strategy.

Developing a Research Plan.

Once a strategy had been identified, it was time to delve into the work required to create the research plan. The most important and time-consuming activity of developing the research plan was planning the reciprocal teaching unit to be utilized as the research intervention with students. In preparation for being an effective teacher and facilitator of reciprocal teaching, I engaged in significant reading and study on the topic. I had already learned much of the theoretical background as well as the strategy's structure through reading the literature (McAllum, 2014; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Palincsar, Ransom, & Derber, 1989; Pilonieta & Medina, 2009). Repeatedly, the literature pointed to literacy coach, author, and consultant Lori Oczkus as the current expert on reciprocal teaching. Oczkus' book, *Reciprocal Teaching at Work* (2018b) had just been published in its third edition by ASCD; I bought the book and studied it in detail as I began planning my intervention. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in a live webinar with Lori Oczkus through ASCD (Oczkus, 2018a) that allowed me to ask questions and gain further insight into the strategy. Using my new knowledge, I created a unit that would introduce and scaffold the reciprocal teaching protocol. Then, through gradual release of responsibility, students would be enabled to use the strategy to lead book club discussions.

Table 3.3 Schedule of Instruction: Reciprocal Teaching Strategies and Protocol

Week	Focus of Instruction	Activities and Assessments
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of RT and the Fab 4 • Review of student understanding of predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing • Teacher modeling “think-alouds” and the Fab 4 with short text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit ticket – what did you learn? • Student discussion/ question and answer • Student examples on sticky notes to post on strategy posters.
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read aloud identifying Fab 4 with partners • Introduction of Fab 4 bookmarks and “4-Door Charts” for recording thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student participation with sticky notes • Student copies of 4-Door Charts completed w/ guided practice
Weeks 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on strategies needing more support • Preparation for small group discussions using Fab 4 • Start student RT reflection journals for goal-setting/reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annotation of texts with focus on focus strategy of Fab 4 • Discussion sheets; roles • Reflection journals/ goals
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying goals/ expectations of small group discussions • Introduction- discussion roles • Discussion in small groups with teacher support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-influenced anchor charts on group discussion protocol • Student guide sheets for roles • Student copies of recording sheets and self-evaluations • Reflection journals/ goals
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer selections for book clubs • Book Club meetings to set reading schedule; expectations • First meeting with discussion • Self-evaluations/ reflections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student surveys – identify book clubs • Student book club folders with schedule sheets, expectations, etc. • Student copies of recording sheets and self-evaluations • Reflection journals/ goals
Weeks 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent reading of book while recording Fab 4 • Book club meetings • Guided practice, using Fab 4 to discuss a class reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student recording forms/ post-it notes • Audio recordings of meetings; self and group assessment • Reflection journals/ goals
Weeks 9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final book club meetings • Complete reflection journals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final self- & group-evaluations • Reflection journals • Reading comprehension post-test

Data Collection Instrumentation and Methods

As indicated before, a triangulation mixed-methods design was selected for this research study. The data were collected from 17 fourth-grade student-participants in the gifted ELA classroom of the teacher-researcher, though only eight of the students were formally identified as gifted by state regulations. Data collected incorporated quantitative measures including pre- and post-treatment scores from assessments as well as qualitative data collected through observations, interviews, surveys, and study of student work. Data collection spanned a period from October 1 – December 7, 2018. Data was collected based on the research question:

What is the impact of introducing culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy in a gifted and talented (GT) fourth-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) class for Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students?

Quantitative Data Instruments and Methods

Quantitative data collected in this study was comprised of student scores from a reading comprehension assessment drawn from the *Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program*© and from the Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) reading assessment. The data collected from these instruments helped to gauge student growth in reading comprehension over the course of the study, as these instruments were implemented both prior to the introduction of the intervention, and at the conclusion of the research period.

The *Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program Level 2*© is a research-based supplemental reading program intended for gifted learners that was developed

through the Center for Gifted Education at The College of William and Mary (French, Ginsburgh, Stambaugh, & VanTassel-Baska, 2009). The program

... implements targeted readings from short stories, poetry, and nonfiction sources.

With this program, students engage in an inquiry process that moves from lower order to higher order thinking skills. Starting with basic literary understanding, students learn to critically analyze texts by determining implications and consequences, generalizations, main ideas, and/or creative synthesis (French et al., 2009, p. 1).

This program is utilized in the gifted program in which the current research study was conducted, and includes pre- and post-assessments with accompanying rubrics and sample exemplars at each rubric category and level to guide scoring. Both assessments were piloted as a part of the original research conducted on the program to ensure they were equivalent in difficulty and that interrater reliability of scoring would be appropriate (French et al., 2009, pp. 10–11). As this program is typically used in gifted programming, using the pre-assessment prior to the introduction of the planned intervention and the post-assessment at the conclusion of the research period coincided with the school's planned assessments and served as a way to examine student progress in reading.

The reading subtest of Measures of Academic Progress®, or MAP®, was a secondary instrument used to compare student reading comprehension. MAP® Growth™ is a computer-based, adaptive formative assessment that measures what students know in a given subject, and what they are ready to learn next (NWEA, 2017).

In the school district in which this research study was conducted, MAP® assessments are

given three times each year—in the fall, winter, and spring. The fall MAP assessment was conducted prior to the beginning of the research intervention, and the winter MAP administration coincided directly with the end of the research data collection period, providing a second source of quantitative data to use in assessing student growth in reading comprehension.

Qualitative Data Instruments and Methods

A great deal of the data collected in this study was qualitative data. Qualitative data was collected in the form of organized notes recorded from daily classroom observations, audio recordings of student group discussions, student work, student surveys, student reflection journals, and student responses in semi-structured interviews. These data were collected during the implementation of the planned intervention as students were interacting with the content and strategies, as well as with the teacher-researcher and one another.

Teacher observation and field notes. During the research process, the teacher-researcher kept both electronic and physical field notes about observations made in the classroom related to the implementation of the reciprocal teaching intervention. Often lessons were audio-recorded while the teacher was engaged with the class on the use of the reciprocal teaching strategy, and then later transcribed and annotated regarding specific incidents that stood out from the lesson or comments that students made. This method of audio-recording was also used when student groups were meeting to discuss passages they had read or as they worked in book clubs with the reciprocal teaching protocol as the book club structure. Other times when students were working in small groups, the teacher-researcher had the opportunity to sit with a notepad and make notes

related to observations while students worked and talked. There were some days only few notes were made, and these were typically recorded after class in one of the two journals. Any written student work collected was generally studied for thematic relevance that should be added to the notes being kept, and then the work was held in case it needed to be further referenced in later data analysis.

Student response journals. From a point early in the process of introducing the research intervention, students were asked to respond with their thoughts and reactions to what they were learning and doing with the reciprocal teaching strategies. At the beginning, these responses were made individually on separate pieces of paper and turned in approximately once a week (see example in Appendix D). As the students became more familiar with the reciprocal teaching strategies and began to use the protocol in their group discussions, more formal ongoing reflection journals were introduced that the students used for setting weekly goals and reflecting upon their work (example also in Appendix D). The weekly prompts remained the same; however, the final reflection was extended to elicit responses that captured more of the students' overall experiences throughout the course of the intervention. These response journals were intended to collect students' reactions and reflections as we worked through the research process.

Semi-structured student interviews. Near the conclusion of the research study time window, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the teacher-researcher with ten students. Five were the Hispanic students at the center of the study's focus, and the other five students were selected randomly from the remaining students in the class. An interview protocol (see Appendix D) had been created and was used with all ten students. Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed for further analysis. These

interviews allowed for further clarification of students' impressions of their own growth and involvement with reciprocal teaching and with the larger research experience as a whole.

Student surveys. Because of the desire to determine not only academic change in the student-participants, but also changes in their attitudes toward reading and regarding their own sense of self-efficacy, two Likert-like surveys—the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) and The Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)—were incorporated into the data collection. Both surveys were administered prior to implementation of the research intervention as well as at the conclusion of the intervention.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) was created by two researchers who wished to create a public-domain survey teachers could use to estimate students' attitude levels toward recreational and academic reading (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The result is a 20-items survey, with four response options per question labeled 1 – 4, with 1 indicating a positive feeling and 4 indicating a negative feeling. In working to make the survey relatable and more comprehensible for elementary students, the designers used a pictorial scale—each of the four numbers shows a Garfield character displaying emotions from very happy for a 1 to very grumpy with arms crossed and a scowl for a 4 (a sample is included in Appendix F). Measures of reliability and validity have been calculated for the ERAS indicating that it “can be used with relative confidence to estimate the attitude levels of ... students” (McKenna & Kear, 1990, p. 629). Because the intervention in this research study focuses on reading, knowing about students' attitude toward reading—and

particularly if those attitudes changed over the course of the intervention—was important information.

The Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C) was developed by Peter Muris (2001) in order to provide a tool to measure self-efficacy in children and youth. Up until the creation of this scale, all self-efficacy scales were intended for adults, and generally focused on very specific areas of functioning. Muris developed the SEQ-C including questions that would target general levels of social, emotional, and academic self-efficacy (Muris, 2001, p. 145). Self-efficacy is, in a sense, a person’s belief in his or her ability to carry out a desired behavior. For students who are participating in an advanced level class—particularly on a trial basis—belief in their own ability to be successful and “fit in” with other members of the class can be an important key to their success (See Appendix F). Additional quantitative data was collected from two Likert-like student surveys, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) and the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)

Data Analysis

A mixed-method research design highlights both quantitative and qualitative data collected over the course of research in order to provide information about students’ feelings and attitudes as expressed through written and spoken word, students’ performance as is evident in observation of their daily classroom interactions and work samples, and student growth and achievement as is evidenced in assessment data and survey and test scores. In analyzing both the quantitative and qualitative data collected, there is an opportunity to informally compare results to see how the two types of data

may yield similar results or even provide insights between one and the other (Mertler, 2016).

In this study, quantitative data was collected in the form of two different reading assessments. Results from the pre- and post-administration of MAP® and the *Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program Level 2*© were organized in data spreadsheets and shared through data tables and graphs that indicate group and individual scores and changes. Descriptive statistics derived from both tests help to delineate growth of the group over time. Because this study focused specifically on the results of the five Hispanic students, their data related to test scores are highlighted. This is provided in random order by an assigned number to protect the privacy and anonymity of these students.

Qualitative data were collected through organized notes and records taken from teacher-researcher observations and from transcriptions of audio-recordings of class lessons and group discussions. Qualitative data were also collected through student reflection journals and interviews. Analysis of this qualitative data is an inductive process that challenges the researcher to work with the data in ways that help to minimize its overall volume without dismissing or oversimplifying parts of it (Mertler, 2016). In the beginning of this process one must lay out or disassemble the many parts of the data that have been collected, read and study them, and then begin to reassemble them according to categories that begin to emerge. Categories may combine with other categories, or be shifted or renamed throughout this process. Eventually the categories begin to become clearer and provide a coding scheme that helps to identify the major themes that emerge from the data. I completed this process using a system of colored

post-it notes and colored folders that I used to collect and organize pieces that seemed to go together. The end result was a collection of main themes that were used for reporting and analyzing this data.

Finally, additional qualitative data was taken from the two surveys administered prior to and following the research intervention. This data was collected and organized in data spreadsheets and then visually displayed through graphs and charts, enabling the researcher to easily note changes in student responses and overall class trends related to reading attitudes and self-efficacy. Findings from the survey data could then be used for comparison with the other qualitative data findings.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the methodology used in the current action research study to determine the impacts that the inclusion of a culturally and linguistically responsive intervention might have on both the Hispanic and non-Hispanic members of a 4th-grade gifted ELA class. This class currently serves 8 identified gifted students, only one of whom is identified as gifted, and 9 high-achieving students participating in the class on a trial basis. The chapter outlined the intervention that was planned—a unit in reciprocal teaching—to address the study’s problem of practice: the underrepresentation of Hispanic students in the gifted/talented program of a school where Hispanic students represent the majority population. Further information was reported to describe the population of student-participants, the role of the teacher-researcher, the setting of the study, and other information related to considerations important to the research methodology.

The study utilized a mixed-method design for data collection and analysis. This suited the research study as it allowed for triangulation and descriptive comparison of qualitative data collected from student interviews, reflection journals, surveys, and organized records from teacher-researcher observations as well as quantitative data collected from performance assessments.

As a result of the findings of this study, an action plan was designed for the purpose of extending and enhancing practices from the reciprocal teaching unit. Some of the findings led to new questions and ideas that I would like to introduce to my instruction. Additionally, the action plan includes a proposal for sharing the results of the study and information related to reciprocal teaching with both the professional learning communities (PLCs) within my school and teachers of gifted students from other schools serving a large population of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Because the issue of underrepresentation is a concern in all of our district schools, I shared some preliminary findings from this study with my district gifted coordinator. She has expressed interest in learning more, as the results may have valuable suggestions for addressing the issue of underrepresentation of students of color in gifted programs through a combination of the use of trial placement and implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purposes of [gifted] identification are (1) to find students who display characteristics of the gifted and talented; (2) to assess the aptitudes, attributes, and behaviors of each student; and (3) to evaluate each student for the purposes of placement.... Gifted and talented students may be found within any racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group; within any nationality; within both genders; and within populations of students with disabilities.

South Carolina Department of Education, 2013, p. 5

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to share the results and provide analysis of the data that was collected through this action research study, and then to consider the implications that stem from the results. After a brief review of the study's problem of practice and resulting research question and purpose, the data collection methods and instruments described in Chapter 3 will be revisited. Next, the findings and results of the research and data collection will be shared, while analysis and implications of these results will follow.

This action research study aimed to identify how gifted and high achieving students would respond to the inclusion of a strong culturally and linguistically responsive strategy—reciprocal teaching—in their ELA instruction. More specifically, the research identifies how the inclusion of this strategy impacted aspects of the student-participants' reading comprehension, their attitudes toward reading and participation in a gifted/ high-achiever's classroom, and their sense of self-efficacy and confidence—as readers and participants in the gifted classroom.

Problem of Practice and Resulting Research Question

Varied definitions of gifted and talented individuals, including the one adopted by South Carolina, emphasize the universality of giftedness; yet, many populations continue to be consistently underrepresented in gifted programs. Underrepresentation of Hispanic students at Little Tree Elementary is at the heart of the problem of practice (PoP) in this research study. Though the school has worked to address this problem through the use of the trial placement option provided in the state regulation, a significant discrepancy has remained between the percentage of Hispanic students in the school population and the percentage of students from this population qualifying for gifted placement. In a continued search for possible solutions, I discovered the literature on culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) teaching and CLR strategies. For the present study, I chose a documented CLR strategy—reciprocal teaching (Hollie, 2013)—to implement in my ELA classroom in an effort to improve my instruction of these students, and also improve their reading performance, confidence, and self-efficacy. It is possible that such positive gains would thereby improve these students' scores on standardized tests used for gifted identification. The overarching question guiding this research asks:

What is the impact of introducing culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy, represented in this study by the reciprocal teaching strategy, in a gifted and talented (GT) fourth-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) class on Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students?

The purpose of the present action research study was to determine how implementing reciprocal teaching may impact gifted and high achieving language arts students from

diverse backgrounds. This purpose is in accordance with the identified Problem of Practice (PoP) for this Dissertation in Practice (DiP).

During the years I have taught at LTE, it has become a common practice to include high achieving, motivated students who have not yet officially qualified for gifted services in our gifted ELA and math classes. Often these students have not met the official state criteria to qualify for services because of the state's reliance on standardized test scores for identification, and because of the students' limited English and/or lack of exposure to enriching opportunities (Briggs et al., 2008). When these high-ability students' needs for advanced content and exposure to higher-order thinking and learning are met, they often gain the skills, experience, and confidence they need to attain the state's criteria for gifted identification. Despite meeting with moderate success by using trial placement in gifted classes for students from underrepresented populations, a significant discrepancy remains between the percentage of our school population that is Hispanic, and the percentage of Hispanic students qualified as academically gifted.

In reviewing the literature surrounding this prominent problem, culturally and linguistically responsive practices are repeatedly mentioned as a way to overcome the challenges that often accompany the deficit thinking associated with students from diverse populations. The goal of this research was to implement reciprocal teaching—a suggested CLR strategy—to see if it might make a positive difference in my students' reading achievement, sense of self-efficacy and confidence, and ultimately in their reading test scores. Reciprocal teaching was selected because it is identified in the research literature as meeting identified needs of the gifted learner—including differentiation, flexible grouping, and enrichment, as well as identified needs of CLD

learners such as opportunities for social and cooperative learning and relevant real-world experiences (Tomlinson et al., 2004). Through the use of reciprocal teaching in student book clubs, the students would both build their independent comprehension strategies, and engage in discussion that would lead to a collaboratively created understanding of the text (Hollie, 2013; McAllum, 2014; Oczkus, 2018b)

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The present action research study implemented a mixed-method research approach. A mixed-method design draws from the best of both qualitative and quantitative data that are available, and these data help to triangulate findings, increasing the credibility of the overall research (Mertler, 2016).

Demographic data was collected for the data sample prior to the beginning of the planned intervention. This sample was a purposive sample (Yin, 2016) in that the intention was to collect data from a class of students—some identified gifted and some included in the class as “high achievers”—that would include students from diverse backgrounds. The class was comprised of 17 fourth-grade students: 8 males, and 9 females. Nine of the students are White, 5 are Hispanic, 2 are Black, and 1 is identified as “two or more races”. Of the students in the group, 9 are formally identified as gifted based on South Carolina regulations, while the other 8 have not qualified for gifted services, but are included in the class on a trial basis. Eight of the 17 students qualify for free or reduced meals, indicating that this number, or approximately 47% live in low SES conditions. It is interesting to compare the demographic data of the “identified gifted” students with that of the students who have not yet qualified for gifted programming, but

are considered “high achievers”. This data, depicted in Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 below, help to highlight the issue of underrepresentation of students of color and students from poverty, as described in the literature.

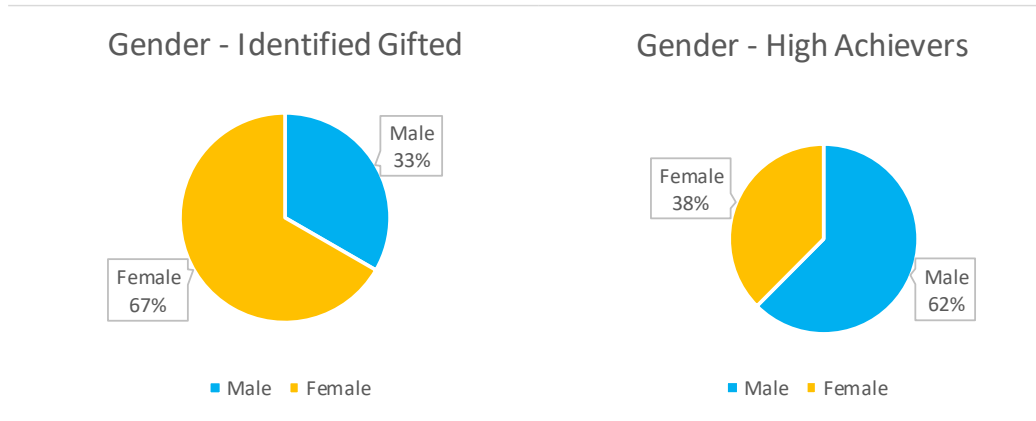


Figure 4.1 Gender Break-down in Gifted and High Achiever Groups

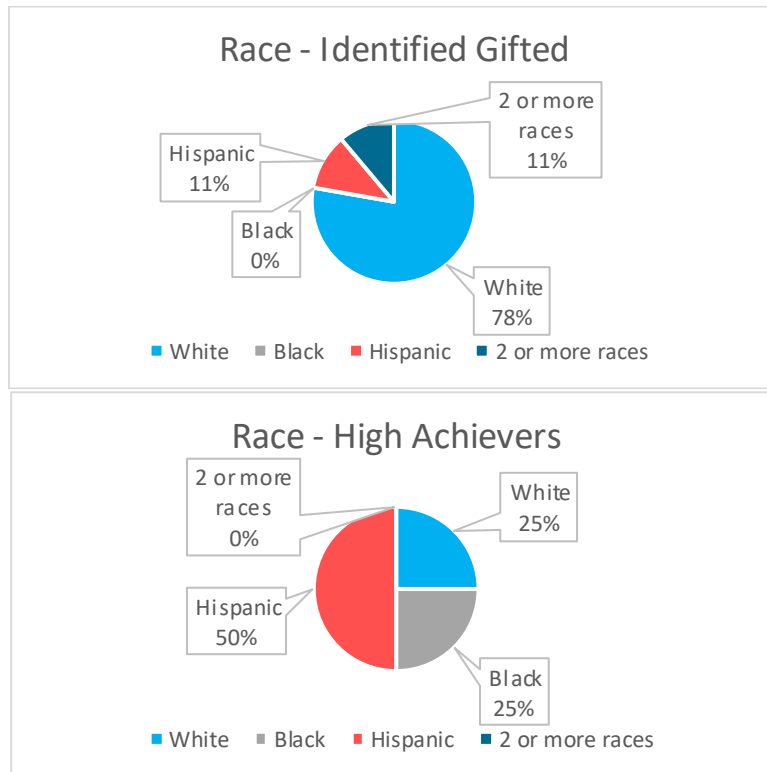


Figure 4.2 Race Break-down in Gifted and High Achiever Groups

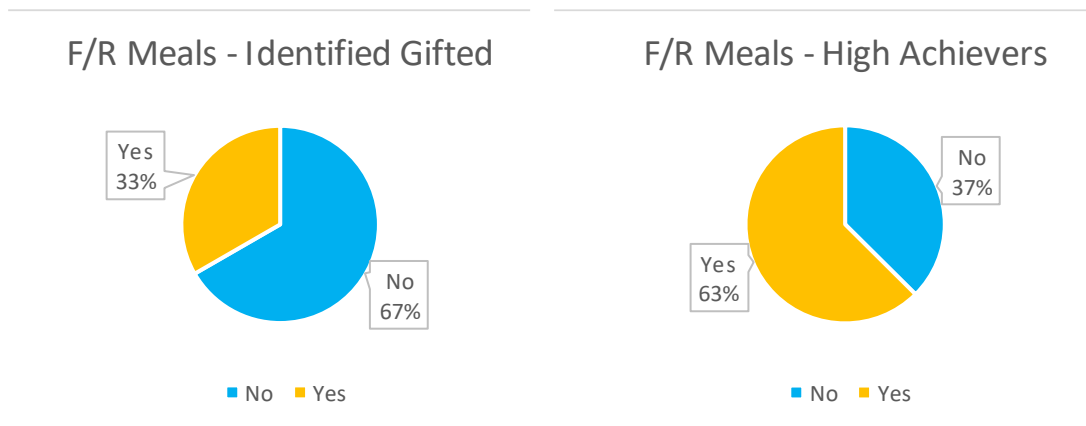


Figure 4.3 Free/Reduced Meals Break-down in Gifted and High Achiever Groups

In this research, qualitative data was collected that related to the student-participants' day-to-day work in the classroom, and that also considered their views and perspectives (Yin, 2016). Qualitative data was particularly important to the present study's focus on students from diverse backgrounds and ways to make them feel more connected, successful, and valued in an environment that has typically marginalized them (Chowdhury, 2017; Ford, Howard, Harris, & Tyson, 2000; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). Learning how these students felt about the intervention strategy, about their efficacy and confidence with the strategy, and their general feelings while in the gifted ELA class were all integral to the study. Qualitative data collection spanned the length of the research intervention and incorporated observations of student-participants and student-to-student interactions, observations of student and class artifacts, and personal teacher observations as recorded in the teacher-researcher's reflective electronic and hard-copy journals. Most observations were collected either directly through the teacher-researcher's scripting of field notes, or through transcriptions of audio recordings of class lessons and small-group discussions. Student and class artifacts included collaboratively-created class charts, informal student written responses

such as “check-ins” or “exit tickets,” and more formal written responses, such as book club self- and group-assessments, and weekly student reflection journals (see Appendix D).

Qualitative data were also collected through planned semi-structured interviews of the 5 Hispanic students and of 5 other randomly-selected students to gain greater insights into specific impressions, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes the students experienced over the course of the study (the semiformal interview protocol can be found in Appendix D). Additionally, qualitative data was collected through pre- and post-study surveys utilizing Likert-like scales to assess students’ attitudes and perceptions. Both the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (Muris, 2001) and the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey (Kear, 1990) were administered at the beginning and end of the study (see Appendix F). While these surveys were not primary data sources, they were used to triangulate data collected via the observations and interviews related to reading and academic and social self-efficacy.

Quantitative data played an important part in understanding the impact of this study. Quantitative data helped provide an overview of class demographics and performance and also provided insight regarding growth in the group’s and individuals’ performance from the beginning of the research intervention to the completion of the intervention. Some of the quantitative data collected over the course of the study was a regular part of students’ ongoing school-based diagnostic and formative assessments. Students were assessed with the *Jacob’s Ladder Reading Comprehension Program*© assessment and through the reading portion of Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) both prior to and at the conclusion of the study. The quantitative data obtained

from these assessments provided information about individual and group growth related to reading comprehension.

Ongoing Analysis and Reflection

In an action research study such as this one, general analysis and reflection are present even from the very beginning. It was through ongoing analysis and reflection of the teaching and learning in my classroom, along with my concern about the low representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in our gifted program, that this research study was born. Naturally I had some early thoughts and interpretations of the data as I started to collect it. Much of this was colored by my previous experience and knowledge of my content and my population of students, but it was also influenced by my study of the literature. As is often common in action research, there were some unforeseen circumstances that required adjustments to the original research plan, as well as some early assumptions and interpretations I made as the teacher-researcher that I had to address.

To begin with, it should be noted that this research was originally planned to begin in September, 2018. As can happen in the South Carolina Lowcountry, our district schools closed for essentially the entire 4th week of school due to threats from an impending hurricane. My particular gifted ELA class had only been meeting on a regular schedule for two weeks when this occurred, and we were still working on routines, procedures, and the other things that accompany the start of a new school year with elementary students. As a result of the missed weather days, research didn't begin in earnest until the beginning of October, moving the end of the data collection period until the beginning of December.

In regard to the planned intervention, there were a few minor details that had to be addressed that were not anticipated in the original research plan. Reciprocal teaching centers around the planned, consistent use of four strategies selected for their ability to both foster and monitor comprehension (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Because I worked with many of the students in this class when they were in third grade, I had some ideas about both their individual levels of reading ability and their personalities. I had assumed that teaching the students the reciprocal teaching intervention would not be a long or complicated process. However, when I began to introduce the “Fab 4” strategies integral to the process—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—it quickly became apparent that two of these strategies were not as clear to my students as I had assumed they would be. I had believed that fourth grade high achieving and gifted ELA students would have experience with all of these strategies, but was surprised to learn that most of them had very little understanding of what was involved in clarification, and many had very little structured instruction related to writing summaries. A significant part of the reciprocal teaching process is the scaffolding provided by the teacher (Oczkus, 2018b; Palincsar & Brown, 1984), but additional time was required to address these two skill areas before I could move on to the greater part of the intervention.

Once these hitches in the original plan were addressed, the remainder of the work with the intervention and the research process progressed fairly well along the lines that were originally anticipated and planned. The intervention was taught through explanation and modeling, and students were then supported through structured and guided practice as they used the procedure to analyze texts as a class, in small groups, in pairs, and individually. After it was determined they were ready, students began the

process of using the reciprocal teaching strategy to structure and run their book club meetings. Students took on various roles in their groups, and maintained a reflection journal associated with their progress with the reciprocal teaching strategy and their feelings about the process. Ongoing formal and informal assessment of student participation and work indicated that the students were meeting with a good deal of success in using the reciprocal teaching strategy in their book clubs. They were making strides with the two main goals of the intervention: using strategies to comprehend as they read, and using collaboration and shared discussion to construct a collective and shared understanding of text.

Data Analysis and Findings

Results of all data were collected and analyzed to search for potential answers to the research question,

What is the impact of introducing culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy, represented in this study by the reciprocal teaching strategy, in a gifted and talented (GT) fourth-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) class on Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students?

Throughout the research process, qualitative data was collected through field notes from student and class observations, student work samples, student reflection journals, student responses to survey questions using Likert-like scales, and semi-structured student interviews. Quantitative data were collected through two measures of reading achievement—the *Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program* and MAP (Measures of Academic Progress). This data was collected both prior to the beginning of the intervention and at the conclusion of the intervention.

Qualitative Data Analysis and Interpretation

Despite the fact that I had some prior thoughts about what the data might show, I took an inductive stance toward the data analysis. Yin (2016) cautions,

The preconceptions to be minimized come not only from your personal beliefs but from the initial theoretical propositions that might have led to your study.... Do your best to let the field reveal its reality first, in its own way (pp. 131–32).

Over the course of the weeks of the study, a significant collection of qualitative data was assembled and analyzed. This was accomplished through a process of reading through the data numerous times to identify each unit of data's main topic or idea—the essence—of each bit of data in an effort to begin a process of grouping or categorizing these many discrete pieces. Carrying out such a process with qualitative data is known as coding (Mertler, 2016; Saldana, 2013).

All qualitative data from this research study were originally collected from observation field notes, reviews of student work, transcriptions of audio-recorded lessons and student book club meetings, and student responses to semi-structured interview questions and surveys. As each sample of data was collected and studied, memos were written to notate possible topics, themes, and/or ideas that surfaced. Notations were made on color-coded post-it notes and attached to handwritten notes, but most field notes were transcribed into Microsoft Word, and then memos were connected to appropriate areas in the text using the “commenting” and “reviewing” functions of the software in colors coordinated to the post-it notes. The first pass through all the data was intended to provide clarity and context for each of the bits of evidence, and to determine the main topic for each identified section of evidence. This type of coding is often identified as

“open” or “initial” coding (Saldana, 2013, p. 51). In subsequent reviews of the data, further coding was conducted and an effort was made to identify relationships between emerging categories, “high-frequency” categories that appeared often throughout the data, as well as any underlying meanings that ran throughout categories (Adu, 2016). Additionally, the categories of data were considered in light of the research question to determine if and/or how they could lend insight to the current research study and help to answer the research question. Over time, three major themes emerged from the data:

- understanding and improving reading;
- “becoming” readers—cultivating the habits of lifelong readers;
- building a culturally and linguistically responsive community;

Some data collected may support more than one of the themes, but the three themes collectively appear to effectively serve as an umbrella for the major qualitative data findings from the study.

Theme 1: Understanding and Improving Reading

Reciprocal teaching was originally selected as the intervention strategy in this research study because it emphasizes the inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds in the collaborative construction of the meaning of text. (McAllum, 2014). Despite this fact, reciprocal teaching was originally developed for the primary purpose of promoting and monitoring comprehension (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Over the course of the eight-week intervention, there was significant evidence that students’ comprehension improved.

In analysis of students’ reflection journals and the semi-structured interviews, there were numerous student comments related to the “Fab Four” strategies—*predicting*,

questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—and to *reciprocal teaching* as a whole. The comments reflected students’ appreciation for the ways these strategies improved their reading experience, as well as highlighted some areas in which they found they needed improvement as readers.

Prediction. Thirteen of the seventeen students identified prediction as a strategy they felt was helpful to them in reading, and/or that they felt confident in using. Five students commented about how predicting was part of what made reading fun. Dana said, “Predict is my favorite strategy cause [*sic*] I love to guess and see if I’m right.” When students made inaccurate predictions, they appeared to take this in stride, recognizing this as an opportunity to revise predictions based on new information. Only one of the seventeen students indicated that making predictions was a negative experience. After reading a selection that showed a photograph of a giraffe in the text, but ended up describing a girl who turned into a fairy and danced on a giraffe’s neck, Carlos said, “Sometimes I get the predicting kind of confused; sometimes when it is a fiction story it sometimes looks like a nonfiction book.” In this instance, it is easy to see why Carlos might be confused.

Questioning. In the context of the class featured in this study, questioning a text has been defined in two ways. Readers can identify questions that arise based on confusion over the text, that lead to questioning to understand. Questioning can also be more of an interactive type of “wondering” regarding the text that occurs when the reader encounters events or actions that surprise them or make them curious, as these events are often in “contrast or contradiction” (Beers & Probst, 2013) to what would be expected in the situation or from the character. This skill or strategy is one that students had a good

deal of experience with even prior to the beginning of the research intervention. Eleven of seventeen students indicated that questioning was a strategy they viewed as helpful to them as they worked to comprehend texts. None of the students indicated difficulty or dislike of using the strategy, though some did indicate they became better questioners or better at seeing the importance of questioning over the course of the intervention. Adam explained, “When I ask good questions it helps me to understand the text better.” In general, questioning was a strength for the students, and they became stronger as the eight weeks progressed.

Clarifying. Clarifying was the strategy with which there was the greatest change from the beginning of the intervention to the end. At the beginning, some students did not know what “clarification” meant. Even though all of the students in this higher level ELA class are reading above grade level, many admitted that when they came to a word or phrase they did not know or understand in a text the only strategy they used was to skip it and move on. In early reflection journal entries, 8 of 17 students identified clarification being a strategy that they found to be difficult. It became apparent in lessons and in observations of student book club groups that there were always a few words that gave students difficulty. One of the greatest surprises was how many times students struggled with figurative language and idioms in texts. Some of these phrases that stumped students included, “beggars can’t be choosers”, “the heat was getting to her”, and “I’m the best skipper in the whole U.S.A.!”. In many cases the students were taking figurative sayings literally, causing some of the confusion.

One might think it natural for the ELLs and other Hispanic students to struggle with certain words or language, but the native English speakers had many of the same

questions that their Hispanic classmates did. Clarifying words in text was an area that 15 of the 17 students identified as “one of the most helpful skills” they learned during the unit on reciprocal teaching when they completed their final reflection journal. By the end of the unit, students reported using clarifying strategies including go back and reread, read forward to look for other clues, look for a part of the word—a word stem or affix—they already knew to help them figure it out, use a dictionary/ dictionary app, or ask a friend. Perhaps one of the most telling outcomes related to clarification was the students’ description of their attitude toward coming across an unknown word in their writing. When asked how they felt when they came to a word they did not know as they were reading, all but two indicated positive attitudes toward such a scenario: “I’m okay with it,” replied Bianca, who then described the varied strategies she had learned to use. Jacob said, “I feel interested...; I want to see if I can figure it out!” The increase in strategies being used and the positive attitude toward encountering unknown words in text were both indicators of a major improvement from what students were doing eight weeks prior.

One of the Hispanic students, Diego, became particularly enthusiastic about being able to use clarifying in his reading. In fact, he reiterated the fact in both his reflection journal and in his interview. When asked his favorite strategy, he replied, “I really like clarifying because I learn new words, and I really like it.” In response to a question about what he did when he came to a word in a text that he did not know or understand, he answered, “I try to think of it or ask a friend. Sometimes I search it up.” In fact, when in discussion groups, if the group had a word they could not figure out together, Diego was at the ready with his laptop to look up the word using the online dictionary. When asked about something he had learned about himself during the unit, Diego responded

confidently, “I think the best thing I’ve learned is that I like learning new things about words; I really like learning new words!”

Summarizing. Summarization was another strategy that was not strongly developed in this group of learners when they began the research intervention. This was evident the first time the students were asked to write a summary for a bit of text. Responses ranged from multi-sentence descriptions that essentially paraphrased every detail from the text, to single sentence summaries that might have been about any number of texts. Nine of the seventeen students indicated that summarization was a strategy that was giving them a good deal of difficulty. During the course of the intervention, students were explicitly taught three different ways of constructing a summary including: (a) a sentence frame that prompts for the significant items needed in a summary; (b) the “5 W” question method (answering who, when, where, what, and why related to the text’s focus); and (c) a “big idea” summary that has students list the three key details and the big idea that goes with those details. Many students indicated that these ideas regarding writing a summary were helpful to them. Kennedy stated, “I think summarizing has been the most helpful because I pay more attention to the story or the article.” Keith indicated, “I want to be able to summarize because that can help me be good at comprehending the whole book.” By the time the eight-week intervention was over the students seemed to understand the importance of summary and how it impacted their reading, but it was also the strategy many students (7 of 17) indicated they would still like to work on in later lessons.

Reciprocal teaching. Students responded to the reciprocal teaching strategies and protocols quite positively. Beyond what was already shared about the specific

strategies, an additional aspect of reading and comprehension that came to light in students' reflections was focus and attention. When asked their opinions about reciprocal teaching and if it helped their reading, nine different students mentioned how it had helped them to focus better as they read and/or to pay better attention while reading. Elisa explained, "When I'm looking for things I have questions about, I pay better attention and look closer at the text." Kennedy also admitted, "I've learned that I don't really pay attention that much and I need to think about it. Sometimes I get to the end of a sentence and I don't know what just happened. [I like that reciprocal teaching] helps me pay more attention to the book I'm reading."

Beyond attention to text, some of the students began to really see and articulate how reciprocal teaching and the "Fab 4" strategies work together when students are reading. In response to a question about how all the parts of reciprocal teaching work together, Elisa wrote, "They work together to help me get a better idea of the text and what the text is really trying to say." Adam said, "Today they helped me understand the text and what it was about (especially words I don't know). They work together to help other [people] to learn about the text an [sic] help them understand what [they] need in the text. Interestingly, though her answer was not exactly eloquent, Annie's response to this question seemed to echo what Palincsar and Brown (1984) were looking for when they described reciprocal teaching as a way to promote and monitor comprehension. Annie wrote, "How all 4 strategies work together is they help me check stuff I thought, [and] give me things to think about."

One way the use of reciprocal teaching impacted students in this fourth grade class of gifted and high-achieving learners was through improving their reading through a

variety of strategies, at the same time as helping them to understand not only the process of reading, but how they, personally, were progressing as readers. The five Hispanic students indicated they had grown in all the skill areas, but they were particularly proud of their ability to use clarifying to help them grow in their understanding of texts and of the English language. The non-Hispanic members of the class also saw clarifying as an important skill that helped them better understand texts, but they also emphasized the importance of knowing how to summarize what they had read. All students saw predicting and questioning as important and even “fun”, but focused on these strategies less in this particular unit of study because they were already feeling more confident in using these strategies. This first theme that emerged from the data was more about the “nuts and bolts” of reading comprehension, but the second theme got to the “heart and soul” of reading.

Theme 2: Becoming Readers—Cultivating the Habits of a Lifelong Reader

In the Leadership Committee meetings and PLCs in our school, a frequently-asked question is, “How do we engage students as readers?” Sometimes it is worded more like, “How do we motivate students to read?” This is a question that is not unique to the school where I teach, but something I hear and read that teachers in schools everywhere are asking. In an age when we all have more options for filling our time than actual time to fill, choosing a book will not be a child’s first “go to” unless we help to make books and reading extremely compelling. A second reason reciprocal teaching was chosen as an intervention for this research was because of the emphasis on community, discussion, and collaboration related to books and texts.

Over the course of the eight-week intervention, students had the opportunity to not only read but discuss. Despite the fact that some of the students in this class are painfully shy, they are all strong verbally—and given the right group of people, they enjoy talking. Reciprocal teaching is a strategy that incorporates discussion as an integral part of learning (Oczkus, 2018b), and at its best, reading instruction through a workshop model like that used in the current study, invites students to become part of “a society that reveres reading and readers” (D. Miller, 2013, p. 91). During these eight weeks, students continued the journey toward belonging to part of such a society, and grew in terms of their identity as readers. This was documented through student interviews, observations of students’ reading independently and in groups, and through the students’ reflection journals. Further evidence about the students and their attitudes toward reading were collected from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey that was given both prior to and following the reciprocal teaching intervention. The main topics students addressed related to their identity as readers were *attitudes* towards books and reading and developing the *habits of a reader*.

Attitudes towards books and reading. Prior to the introduction of the research intervention, students responded to the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS). The survey was administered again at the end of the intervention. This survey is intended for students through sixth grade and measures student attitudes toward both recreational and academic reading using a 4-choice pictorial scale (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The four points are represented by four different images of the cartoon character, Garfield, each showing varying degrees of happiness. These four images begin with the first image depicting Garfield as very happy, and progress until the last image shows Garfield

very upset. Students were to respond to statements related to reading by selecting the image of Garfield that best represents their own feeling or attitude toward the statement (a sample of this survey is available for review in Appendix F).

Analysis of the survey results included a comparison of the mean scores for recreational and academic reading attitude both pre- and post-intervention. Mean composite scores—a combination of the recreational and academic reading attitude scores—from the pre- and post-administration of the survey are also included. Further analysis includes reactions to select survey statements that indicate notable change in attitude between the pre- and post-administrations of the survey.

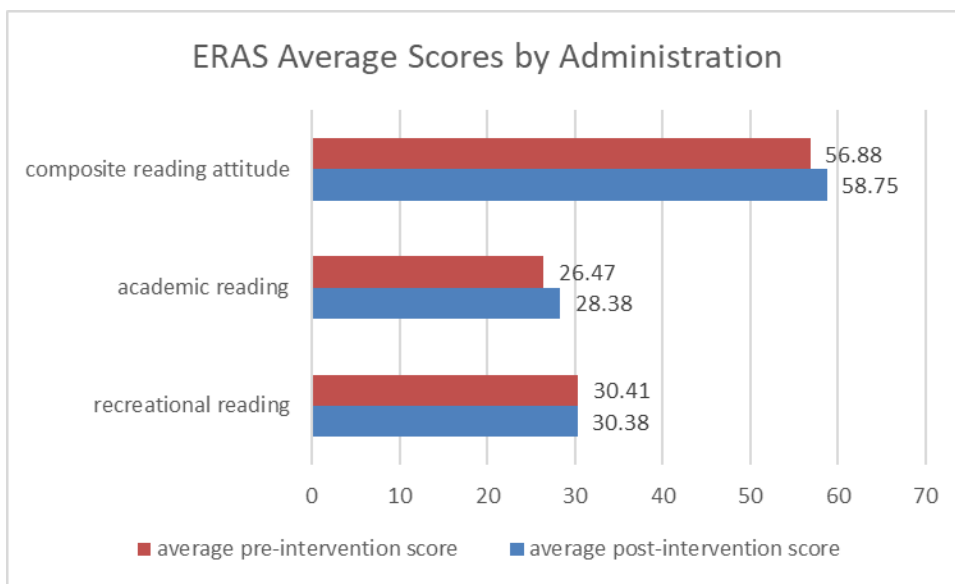


Figure 4.4 ERAS Average Scores by Administration

For each of the two sections (recreational reading and academic reading) of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, the highest possible score, indicating very positive attitudes toward reading, is 40 points. It follows that the highest possible composite score is 80 points.

Student scores on the first administration of the recreational reading scale ranged from 22.5 to 37.5, with a mean score of 30.41. In comparison, the post-intervention administration of the survey yielded a range of scores from 24 to 38, with a mean score of 30.38. With a difference of only 0.03 points between the two mean scores, there was virtually no change in attitude detected between the two administrations of the survey related to recreational reading.

For the academic reading attitude portion of the survey, the scores from the pre-intervention administration ranged from 18.5 to 35, with a mean score of 26.47. Scores on the post-intervention survey ranged from 19 to 37, with the mean score calculated at 28.38, indicating an overall average increase in attitude toward academic reading at just under two points. This increase in the academic attitude level had a positive effect on the composite attitude score, which showed a 1.87-point growth between the administrations of the survey.

All of the class average scores indicate an overall positive attitude toward reading; any score above 20 points on either the recreational or academic reading section of the survey would be indicative of a “more positive” attitude, while a composite score over 40 would indicate positive attitude. It is promising to note that students have a generally positive attitude toward reading; even the lowest scores (18.5 and 19) in the range of academic reading data were very close to the midpoint mark of 20. Growth in the average composite score and in the score for academic reading attitude are also promising findings.

To understand these findings a bit more, it is helpful to look at students’ average responses to some of the survey prompts from the two different administrations of the

survey. Students were to rate each prompt on a scale where the most positive attitude (“very happy”) was scored 4 points, and the most negative attitude scored 1 point. Negative changes, indicated by a drop in the score between the beginning and end of the intervention, indicate a somewhat poorer attitude toward reading in the given situation or scenario, while positive changes are indicated in a rise in the score between the two survey administrations. Figure 4.5 shows the change in student attitude over the course of the research period for select items in the recreational reading portion of the survey. While there were ten different items in this portion of the survey, only three, those that showed a change of greater than one-tenth (0.1) of a point—either positively or negatively—, are highlighted. For each prompt, the text begins, “How do you feel about...?” followed by the text indicated in the figure.

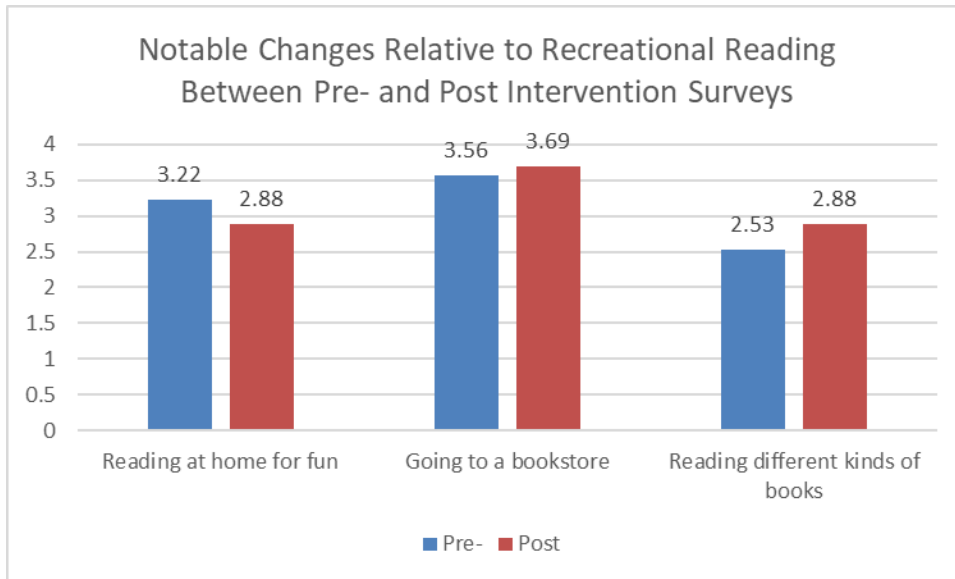


Figure 4.5 Notable Changes Relative to Recreational Reading

It is fairly reasonable to expect little change in recreational reading attitudes over the course of the research intervention. While the activities and instruction of the

reciprocal reading intervention might impact recreational reading, they were intended to have a greater impact on academic reading.

Figure 4.6 indicates average student change in attitude toward scenarios related to academic reading. Again, only those items with a change of greater than one-tenth of a point were included, but there were considerably more of these items for the academic portion of the survey; of the ten academic reading prompts, all but one showed notable change. Again, each of these prompts began with, “How do you feel about...?”, and concluded with the text found in the items included in Figure 4.6.

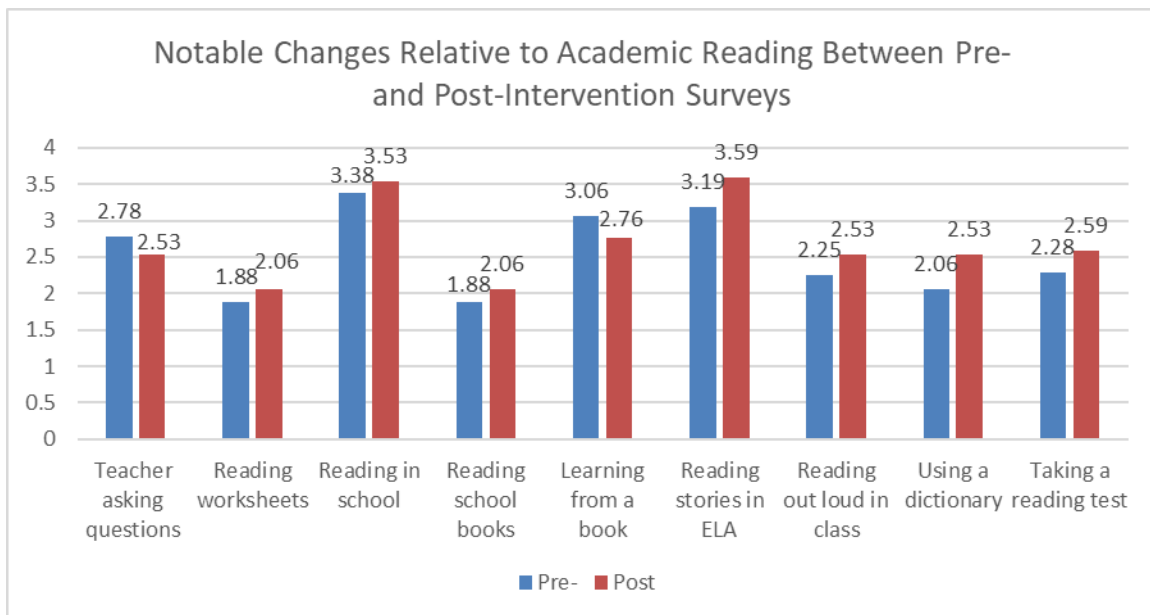


Figure 4.6 Notable Changes Relative to Academic Reading

Of the nine prompts shown in Figure 4.6, average student scores showed an increase, indicating a positive change in attitude over the course of the intervention, for all but two: “How do you feel about the teacher asking you questions about what you’ve read?” (-.25 points); and “How do you feel about learning from a book?” (-0.3 points). The other seven prompts in the academic reading portion of the survey showed an increase over the course of the eight-week intervention. Of particular note, the final four questions

indicated growth of more than a quarter-point (>0.25) from the introduction of the intervention to the end. Though there is no way to say that these increases were caused by the introduction of the reciprocal teaching strategy, it is promising to note that these items, reading stories (varied texts) in ELA, reading out loud in class, using a dictionary, and taking reading tests, were among some of the major areas of focus as students worked with the “Fab 4” strategies and met with peers to collaborate around texts in book clubs.

Finally, since one of the key reasons for conducting this research was to see what kind of impact the introduction of reciprocal teaching as a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy might have on my five Hispanic students, it is important to look at their data from the Reading Attitude Survey (see Figure 4.7).

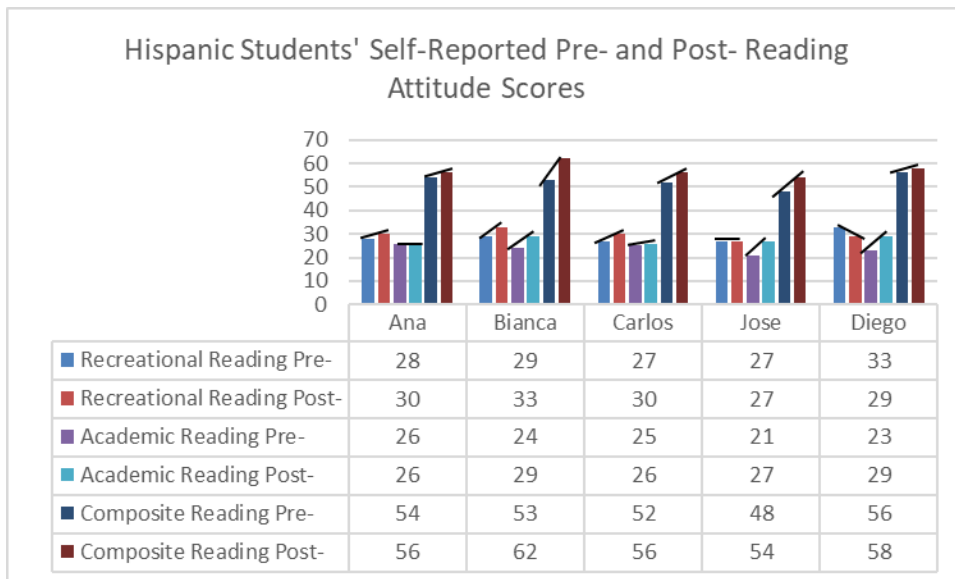


Figure 4.7 Hispanic Students' Pre- and Post-Study Reading Attitude Scores

Each of the Hispanic students showed improved attitude related to reading in at least two of the three areas included on this survey. Ana indicated increases in attitude related to recreational and overall reading, while Jose’s and Diego’s responses indicated

positive growth in attitude toward academic and overall reading. Bianca and Carlos both showed positive increases in all three areas of reading included on the survey.

The results of the ERAS helped to corroborate what was observed in classroom observations and recorded in student interviews related to student attitudes about books and reading. In student reflection journals and student interviews, 14 of the 17 students indicated that they had a true love of reading and of books. When asked how she felt about books and reading, Kennedy elaborated, “I like them! If I’m bored, and I get out a book to read; I’ll stay an hour—I like books. When I read with other people, I can share ideas with them. Books are really entertaining.” Diego also showed enthusiasm when asked about his opinions related to reading: “I feel good about it; I like reading a lot; I’m really into books!”

Additionally, eight students spoke about their growing confidence as readers and explained how the work done in class had helped them to feel more confident about their reading. This came through most clearly in the student reflection journals as students selected goals to work on for the coming week and reflected upon their progress. For example, Bianca started her reflection journal with the goal of wanting to predict before she began reading so she could check herself as she continued reading. After the first week, she wrote, “I am doing very good on predicting before I read.... I always remember to predict and also...when I sometimes predict I mostly get it right.” A couple of weeks later, Bianca was reviewing her past goals and wrote, “The strategy [*sic*] I like most is predicting because it is getting more easy now and helps me read more carefully.”

For students, and especially Hispanic students to become strong, strategic readers, they must first have a reason and a desire to read. Making reading fun and books a

special kind of treasure is one way to help foster the love of reading that can become the basis for strong reading. Another way to accomplish this is to help students “lead a readerly life” and build the habits of being a reader.

Developing the habits of a “reader.” Part of the work around the implementation of reciprocal teaching is building a community of readers who share common knowledge of skills and strategies to use in investigating texts. It is a protocol that is most successful when students approach their reading with focus and a sense of purpose and responsibility, both to the text and to the peers that make up their discussion groups or book clubs. Students who see themselves as readers are much more likely to take the responsibility for their roles and continue to improve as readers. They know something about books and authors, have favorite genres, authors or series, and enjoy talking about and sharing books with others. In the classroom where the present study was conducted, an effort is made every day to encourage students to become readers. In her book, *Passionate Readers* (2018), teacher/author Pernille Ripp emphatically states,

...unless we make it our personal mission to inspire students to reengage with reading, to fall in love with text and discovery, to be open to the possibility that they may be a reader after all, then we may as well not be teaching reading. (p. xxi).

It is with these words in mind that the classroom environment is planned, instructional time is scheduled, and almost every decision is made through the lens of how to help students “become” readers. Evidence of students taking on the habits of readers through this study is present in students’ expressions of their interests and preferences related to reading, and their awareness regarding what they read as well as their commitment to

building on their own strengths and improving their weak areas as readers.

Discussions with students around the topic of reading lead them to share information about their reading lives, and this was true in their reflection journals and interviews. Many students exhibited a strong sense of themselves as readers with definite preferences related to genres and authors, as well as where and when they like to read and with whom. Some of the following quotes are good examples of this:

- Dana: “There are books I don’t like because they make me feel uncomfortable. For example, in *Island of the Blue Dolphin*, I kind of liked the story—I wanted to keep on reading, but sometimes it’s hard to keep reading. I can’t do the blood and the death in that book. I have never felt so emotional about a book as I did with that one. I really love fantasy and science fiction....”
- Bianca: “I like realistic fiction. I am really enjoying *Smart Cookie*. I don’t like to read books in a series. I also like reading books about real people—biographies.”
- Jacob: “I like graphic novels. I’ve read a bunch of them and I’m used to reading them. I just read *On My Honor*—it’s realistic fiction. I liked it a lot. That is a new kind of book for me.”
- Ana: “I enjoy books with a lot of feeling and emotion. I like books that are happy..., or sad..., or scary. I know what it is like to feel those things, so I can relate to [books about] them.”
- Carlos: “I like comics, scary stories, and humor. Sometimes I like to challenge myself and see if I can scare myself! I like to read and learn alone some. I

enjoy working in groups, but not in this [reading]. I just want to be able to think about ideas on my own.”

- Lexie: “I love the Wings of Fire books—I’ve read every book in the series, but the next one doesn’t come out until this summer, but that’s okay, because I have other books I want to read. I ordered *Front Desk* from the book order.”
- Sophia: “I’m almost finished with *The Last Present*, but then Elisa and I are going to read *The Candymakers* together next. Can we get the Wendy Mass fractured fairy tales for our class library?”

The students in this class are at varying degrees of becoming readers, but they are all on their way. This personal investment in books and reading was a strong theme in the data collected.

Theme 3: Building a Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Community of Learners

In an effort to create a classroom that is culturally and linguistically responsive, there are classroom and student attributes that must be cultivated. The class must, first and foremost, be one in which every student’s emotional well-being is tended to and protected (Hammond, 2015). It must be run with a democratic and/or collaborative approach that has the teacher present as a facilitator and ultimate voice of authority, but must seek to hear and incorporate the voices of all its members (Hollie, 2013). It must be a place of respect and trust—of partnership. All students must feel respected by their teacher and by one another, and must provide the same respect. They must accept that the classroom is a learning community—and that it is critical that **all** learn; while the ultimate responsibility for learning lies with the learner, every learner has a responsibility to support and promote the learning of others as well. (Hammond, 2015; Larson &

Marsh, 2015). If this seems to be a tall order, it is—but it is absolutely necessary for the classroom to be the successful place we wish for it to be.

Throughout the analysis of the qualitative data, there were two types of behaviors that were displayed regularly by students that suggested that the reciprocal teaching intervention had a positive effect within the classroom. The first type of behavior is a *collaborative attitude toward the construction and pursuit of learning*. Students in the classroom could be observed asking others when they ran up against a roadblock—whether it was an unknown word or a technical glitch with their computer, sharing resources with one another, or coaching students who missed instruction because of an absence. The second type of behavior was the exhibition of *mutual respect and inclusion* between all types of learners. In a class where some students are qualified outright for gifted services and others are participating as high achievers, students worked side by side and rarely seemed to even consider if the person they were working with is gifted or not.

The data collected regarding these two major types of behaviors came from the field notes and transcriptions of observations of students and their interactions with one another, from comments and responses students made in their classwork and reflection journals, and from the student interviews. One additional data source that was used to try and gain ideas about students' own perception of their academic and social self-efficacy and confidence was a pre- and post-intervention administration of the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C).

Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C). The SEQ-C is an instrument that was created for two primary reasons—first, to provide an appropriate

self-efficacy measurement tool for those who were not yet adults, and second, to be used in helping to identify children at risk for depression (Muris, 2001). The full questionnaire measures self-efficacy in academic, social, and emotional domains; however, only the academic and social measures were relevant for this study, and they were the only two sections considered. The main reason for utilizing the SEQ-C in this study was to try to get a sense of students' academic and social self-efficacy prior to the start of the reciprocal teaching intervention and at the end of the intervention. The reciprocal teaching unit had the potential to address students' feelings of confidence and self-efficacy related to their academic work in class, as well as their sense of belonging and "fitting in" in the gifted class and in the student book clubs. The SEQ-C was utilized to see if it might detect any difference in these areas measured over the period of the intervention.

An examination of the average academic and social self-efficacy scores prior to and after the research intervention indicate a slight decline for academic self-efficacy, and a slight increase for social self-efficacy (see Figure 4.8). Neither of these data samples are particularly useful because of the very small difference found between the pre- and post- scores. Additionally, this average is indicative of only fifteen students' individual scores, as there were two students who either missed one of the administrations or whose scores were missing from the data.

Closer examination of the individual students' scores (see Figure 4.9) does provide some limited information that may help in analyzing the results of particular students. For example, Fatima had noticeable growth in both her academic and her social self-efficacy over the course of the study. This can be seen by looking at the second and

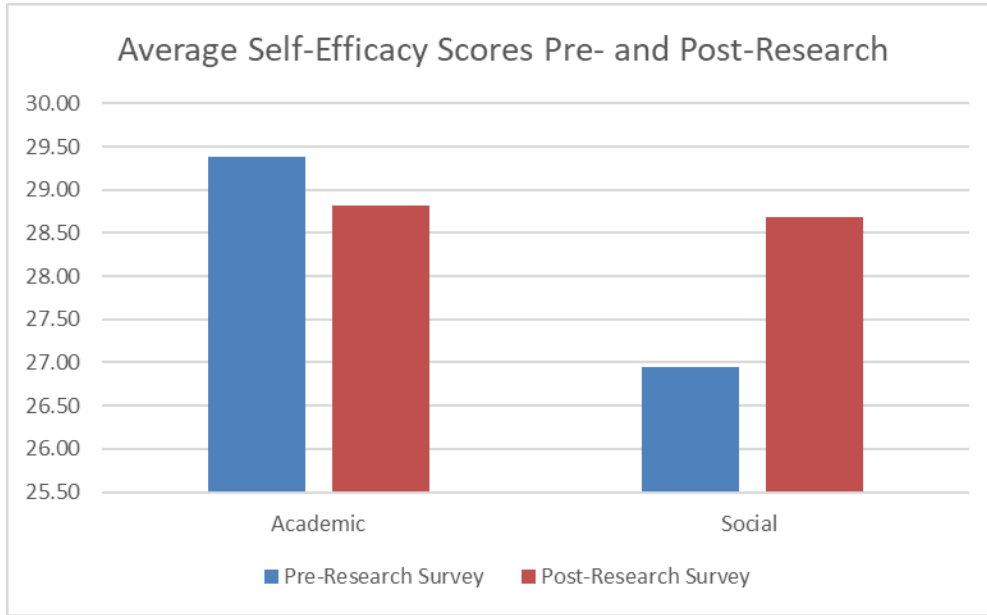


Figure 4.8 Average Academic and Social Self-Efficacy Scores

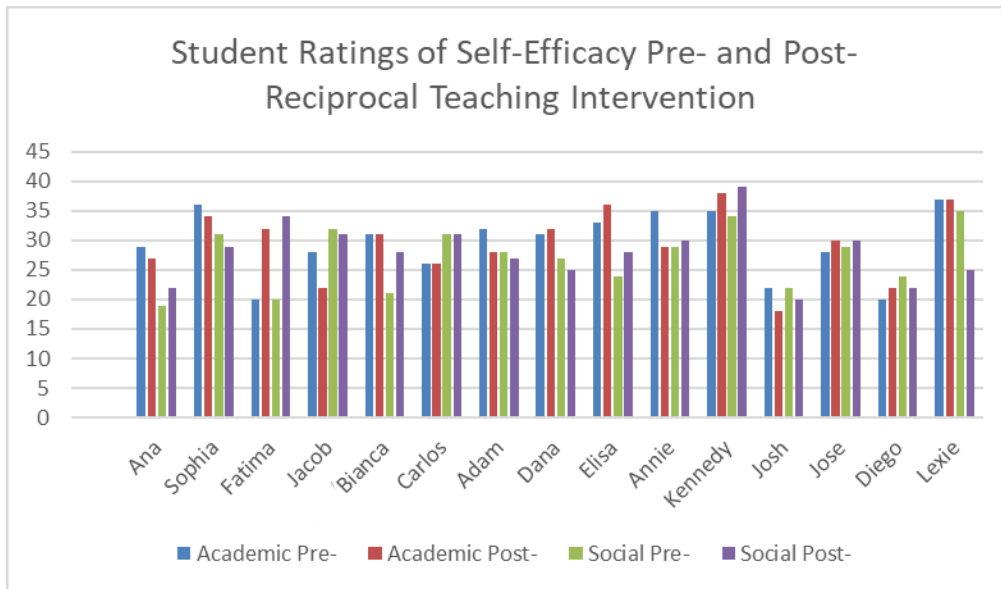


Figure 4.9 Student Ratings of Academic and Social Self-Efficacy Pre- and Post-Study

fourth bars (the post-research survey results) in comparison with the first and third bars (the pre-research survey results) aligned with Fatima's name. Other students with notable growth include Bianca, Elisa, Kennedy, and Jose. On the other hand, some students showed a decrease in self-efficacy scores for both the academic and social domains. These students included Sophia, Jacob, Adam, and Josh. It is not possible to ascertain what the causes of the growth or the decline might be. It can, however, be verified that all five of the students who showed growth had documented experiences during the research study that would corroborate a possible increase in self-efficacy: Fatima, Bianca, and Jose all reported having positive experiences in their book clubs, and Elisa and Kennedy are students who tend to be more tentative going into a new situation, but reported feeling more confident and secure in their abilities at the end of the intervention. It is more difficult to explain the results for students where both scores declined, as there was no real pattern from these students' other data to indicate a negative turn.

Collaborative attitude toward the construction and pursuit of learning. The students involved in this study exhibited curiosity, an enthusiasm for learning—when the content was of interest to them, and an interest in reading—particularly if the text was suited to their interests. These are all characteristics that are commonly found in verbally gifted learners (National Society for the Gifted and Talented, n.d.). Additionally, these fourth-grade students were nine or ten years-old, and still at an age when—if things are going relatively well—they typically like their teachers, enjoy school, and see learning as fun. In addition to these qualities, these learners also exhibited other qualities that are indicative of an attitude toward learning that includes collaboration with peers to

construct and obtain knowledge (Watkins, 2005). The data includes numerous examples of ways in which the students were *metacognitive* about their own learning; exhibited a *sense of personal agency and responsibility* for their learning that often extended to the community of learners; and *worked collaboratively* with others to improve understanding, solve problems, and ensure the learning of others.

Metacognition. Throughout the eight-week intervention, students were involved in self-assessment and goal-setting. The student reflection journals serve as indicators of how much students considered their own learning: their goals, their progress toward goals, their success with various strategies, and their perceived areas for improvement. Josh's reflections (see Table 4.1) over a three-week period serve to highlight the areas related to reciprocal teaching that he was working on, those he felt confident about, and those he saw as needing more work. It is interesting to note that, as Josh identified areas where he believed he needed to grow or improve, he made those the focus of his next goals. This type of reflection—in which students identified their own areas of need and goals for meeting those needs—was evident in 13 of the 17 students' reflection journals. These students consistently thought about their work from the week and set their next week's goal for the area they identified as needing more work. The remaining four students in the class tended to either select one area of focus, and work on it throughout the study, or to alternate throughout the four reciprocal teaching strategies, working on a different one each week.

Table 4.1 Sample from Josh’s Reciprocal Teaching Reflection Journal

Entry	Josh’s Response
Week 1: Goal	“After my reading time, I am going to predict what is going to happen next and why it is going to happen.”
Week 1: Reflection/Progress	“I am doing great. I love that almost everything I predict is right and I am having fun predicting!”
Week 1: Most helpful strategy so far	“Definitely predicting because I can make a prediction and predict what’s going to happen next in the story.”
Week 1: Most difficult strategy so far	“The strategy that is giving me difficulties is summarize because sometimes it is hard to keep up with your thoughts.”
Week 2: Goal	“My goal is to work on summarizing.”
Week 2: Reflection/Progress	“My goal is going better than I thought. I want to keep working on this strategy & get better.”
Week 2: Most difficult strategy	“Questioning is giving me a rough time because I don’t do it much & it’s not my strongest strategy.”
Week 3: Goal	“My goal is to get better at questioning.”
Week 3: Reflection/Progress	“This week’s goal is going well but not great. I think that I am getting better at questioning & I am getting better at it.”
Week 3: Most helpful strategy so far	“This week predicting is still my best strategy even though I have been working on the others.”

Personal agency and responsibility for learning. There were a number of different ways that students exhibited a sense of agency and took responsibility for their own learning. Diego’s new-found love of clarifying as he read was a good example of this. Once Diego realized that he could find information about the words he encountered but did not know through the dictionary, he became “the boy with the dictionary”. As he worked with groups, when a student needed clarification about a term, if no one else in the group could explain what the word meant, Diego was there with his dictionary to “save the day”. He saw a need in the classroom, had learned how to solve it, and he filled

the hole/gap whenever anyone indicated they needed to have a word defined. In this way, Diego took something that had been one of his own needs and turned it into a way he could be of value to our entire community of learners.

Another example of students demonstrating personal agency and responsibility for their own learning was through their willingness to ask questions—of me, and more and more frequently, of one another. This occurred on a regular basis—in book club discussion groups, in whole class discussions, and in one-on-one interactions during student work times. There are many reasons why students might be hesitant to ask questions—a fear of being scolded for not “paying attention”, or the embarrassment of not “already knowing”. In a class of high-ability students it can become an even bigger problem if students are concerned with how “intelligent” they appear compared with their classmates. It was made clear in the classroom expectations from the first day that there would be no shaming or making fun of anyone who was expressing a question or a thought in an effort to learn. Having experienced such an unpleasant event for themselves at one time or another, most students were quick to adopt and/or adhere to this policy. Furthermore, questioning and clarifying were embedded in the reciprocal teaching protocol, so students found themselves doing these things on a regular basis in their book club discussions and the practice became more natural. As a result, students reported feeling more comfortable and supported in the classroom, and were quicker to ask for the help or support they needed. A sampling of comments and anecdotes from the data indicate evidence for this personal agency and responsibility for the students’ own learning and for that of other community members:

- 16 of the 17 students indicated they enjoyed working in book clubs and felt the work with peers helped them understand what they were reading better. The seventeenth student admitted to enjoying working with others, but preferred to “read and think on his own”;
- 4 of the 10 students interviewed indicated they felt more confident as readers and speakers than they had at the beginning of the intervention and attributed this to their work in the small book club groups.
- Elisa noticed, “When I’m looking for things I have questions about I pay better attention and look closer at the text.”

The students demonstrated personal growth in their reading and reading comprehension, their ability to set and monitor goals, and participate in group discussions through the course of the research study.

Working collaboratively to construct meaning and support others. In the literature, sociocultural theory is identified as a basis for much of the work in culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy and in reciprocal teaching. Both are built on the notion of collaborative social interaction being critical to the mutual building of knowledge and a classroom environment in which “learners both refine their own meanings and help others find meaning” (Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2001, p. 7). One of the most attractive reasons for selecting reciprocal teaching to represent cultural and linguistic responsiveness in this research was its emphasis on the mutual construction of meaning by members of a given group. It is in the book club meetings that all students have the opportunity to learn *with and from* others, and to understand that each

participant's unique experiences and backgrounds lend something significant to the development of group understanding (Larson & Marsh, 2015).

Looking for evidence of this in the data collected throughout the research study was paramount. Among the students' reflection logs, interview responses, and in the transcriptions of the book club meetings, evidence of the collaboration and support among peers was evident:

- 14 of 17 students indicated that an idea or understanding they came to in book club discussions was the result of the group's collaboration to decide the best answer to a question or meaning of a word or phrase;
- The teacher-researcher observed 8 different instances within the book club discussions when members of a group worked to build on the ideas of other members to make for a richer dialogue and deeper understanding;
- Jose noted: "Even people with good reading can find trouble; most of the time I can read very good—and sometimes I can't. People in [book club] groups can sometimes help."

Perhaps some of the most important examples of the way the students developed a sense of responsibility for working collaboratively and supporting one another's learning were the little things I noticed them doing in class that were not related to a specific reading passage or strategy. By the end of the eight-week period, students showed more care and concern for the other members of their learning community. I began noticing that when students were asked to informally group themselves in pairs or threes, it was apparent that the students were looking to see if someone was left over or left out so they could

draw them into their group. Inclusion was much more visible in the students' day-to-day work.

Mutual respect and inclusion. It would be rare to find nine and ten year-old students talking and writing about mutual respect and inclusion within the classroom, and most of the data related to the exhibition of these qualities came more from observing what students did and hearing what they said than finding examples where they wrote or talked about acting in such a way. A good number of statements made (written and spoken) by the students were indicative of the environment of respect and inclusion that existed in the classroom. Examples of some of these are included in the vignettes that follow.

Annie. Annie is a bright student with lots of ideas about what the class is learning as well as how she thinks things should be done. She is a qualified gifted student in the class. She has a great deal of difficulty with calling out answers, commenting after statements others make in the classroom, and involving herself in situations that do not include her. Most of her classmates are well-aware of Annie's habits, and there have been numerous times when Annie has "tried too hard" to befriend a student, and managed to simply irritate them instead. In our ELA classroom, both the students and I have learned to ignore some of Annie's behaviors and comments, but when she is on task and trying to contribute to a discussion or lesson, her contributions deserve to be heard and validated. At the conclusion of our last rotation of book club meetings before the end of the intervention, Annie was responding to the book club evaluation form. One of the questions was, "What was your favorite part of working in this book club?" Annie's

response was, “What I liked most about book clubs was the people I was with and that they did not shoot down my ideas.”

Bianca. Bianca is one of the two Hispanic girls in the class. She is included as a high achiever as she has not been able to attain high enough test scores to officially qualify for the gifted class. Bianca is petite and very quiet. She rarely volunteers to answer a question in class, but if she does, or if she is questioned directly, she almost always has a relevant or insightful comment to make. When using the reciprocal teaching strategy in small groups, Bianca was always an active participant—prepared with questions and predictions to share, or willing to help explain something she understood that someone else might not. In an interview with her near the end of the research she shared the following about the reciprocal teaching strategies and work in discussion groups: “When we are working in groups I get to hear my classmates talk about words we don’t know, and hear what they think about things. I see that we are kind of the same..., I sometimes have the same questions other people have.” Then, in inquiry regarding taking the role of group leader, “I feel pretty confident. I know I can do it. I want for our group to be a good group. I have gotten better at speaking up and saying what I think in our small group.”

Jacob. Jacob participates in the gifted class via a waiver as a high achiever. He is a bit scattered, but he is enthusiastic about learning and has a quick wit. Jacob’s comments at the end of the reciprocal teaching unit/intervention were in regard to his feelings about the strategies and his participation. They are included here as a compilation of several different responses throughout our interview: “Prediction was my goal and it went pretty good. I predicted almost every book I read, and some of them I

didn't know [if my prediction was right] until I was finished with the book. Predicting is the strategy I like to use the most because I love to see if I am right. Predicting is easy for me, but clarifying was hard. When I'm doing all the other [strategies] I forget how to clarify. I like reciprocal teaching; it made [reading] easier. I knew what summarizing was, but I never used to do it and now I do; I didn't use to predict or clarify, but now I do. I'm proud that I've really improved in summarizing a lot; last quarter I didn't get it."

Ana. Ana is the second of the two Hispanic girls in this class. Like Bianca, she is participating as a high achiever and she is very quiet. Unlike Bianca, Ana rarely smiles and she really only speaks in class when she is spoken to. Though I have known her for over a year, she does not say much to me. Ana has conveyed that she has had a lot of sadness in her life—loved ones moving away or dying, lost pets, and a fairly quiet childhood. In the last year she has become a big sister. I was concerned about how Ana would do in book clubs, but when I listened to the recordings of the groups she was in I was completely surprised by how much she was speaking up, asking questions, and even answering questions for others in her group. When I had the chance to speak with her during our final interview, I asked Ana about her feelings regarding working with reciprocal teaching, and more specifically, about her feelings related to working in a book club. Ana responded, “[Reciprocal teaching] helps me to understand words and parts that confused me. I like that there is a chance for everyone to say what they think and to ask questions they have. I like [working] in a small group because I get to hear what other people think, but there is a time when I can be heard and I get to share what I thought, what I need help with, and what questions I have.”

Each of the scenarios described above stand out because they address specific examples of students who have not always felt that they belonged in the gifted/high achiever class, or who have not always felt heard. In reciprocal teaching, all opinions and ideas must be heard and considered, because they are all necessary if the group is to create a collaborative understanding of the text. Using reciprocal teaching set up a way for these students to feel included and heard.

The other side of these stories is equally powerful: students who are identified gifted, and in many cases who are White and/or middle-class, expressed ways in which they learned from Annie, Bianca, Jacob, Ana, and others. For example, in her interview, Dana remarked, “I’ve learned that sometimes my predictions aren’t right, and other peoples’ are. I’ve always kind of wanted to listen to my own thoughts, but now I know it’s kind of nice to hear other people’s thoughts, too. Sometimes I take over and go first, but it’s nice to stop and let others go first.”

Jose, who is the only Hispanic student in my ELA class who is qualified as gifted, shared some interesting insights related to comments and ideas from other students he worked with in book clubs. One in particular was related to a conversation with his book club, and a comment that Keith—a Black student who has not been identified gifted—made: “There was a question, when we were reading *Ranger in Time*. We wondered if the med kit started glowing, and Ranger didn’t get there in time, would he be stuck in Oregon in the 1800s? We talked about that, and then Keith asked a question: '[After he returns to his own time] does Ranger ever want to go back to visit Sam?' We all thought about it and decided [he] probably [would], but we didn’t think he could because the med kit decides where Ranger goes; he doesn’t get to decide.”

While we were working on the reciprocal teaching unit, our class read-aloud was the book *Amal Unbound*, by Aisha Saeed. The book centers on a Muslim girl and her family who live in Pakistan. Another of the students participating in the class as a high achiever, Fatima, is the only Muslim student in our class. She was sought out quite a bit as we read this book and the students wished to ask her the meanings of different terms or to describe various garments or dishes. It was an excellent opportunity for the entire class to see that, depending on circumstances, different members of the class would have different levels of expertise.

After the work of the reciprocal teaching unit was done, and the “loose ends” of the research data were being collected, there was an experience in the classroom that encapsulated much of the learning that had occurred—about reading, about respect, about appreciation for others. In a classroom discussion, Lexie was talking about a gift she had been given for her birthday—an easel for her art. After she finished talking, Diego raised his hand and asked, “What is an easel?” I cannot be sure how that might have been answered in another time or place, but after all our work with questioning and clarifying and building knowledge with others and showing respect, Diego—who is a Hispanic student participating in the class on a trial basis—was not afraid to ask the question. Lexie, who is a mixed-race (Asian-American/Caucasian) student and typically one of the highest scoring readers in the class, responded with matter-of-factness and respect. “Oh,” she said, “you know those things that are shaped kind of like a rectangle and are about this big (she gestured with her hands)? They have clips at the top so you can hang paper on them? I use mine so I can paint...” “Oooh,” Diego immediately replied, “do you mean like those things we had in kindergarten that we used to paint on?! Now I know

what you are talking about!” Lexie smiled and nodded and said, “Yep, that’s an easel!” This exchange encapsulated much of what I was hoping my students would learn to do academically and socially. One student needed clarification and felt secure enough to ask for it; the student responding—an identified gifted student—gave a thoughtful and respectful explanation, helping the student not yet identified as gifted to gain understanding.

Quantitative Data Analysis and Interpretation

The quantitative data that were collected related to this research study came from two assessments of student reading that were already a part of the regular school assessment plan, but they do inform students’ progress in reading—a subject of this research—from the beginning to the end of the research study. The first assessment was Reading MAP®, or Measures of Academic Progress®. The second reading assessment came from the *Jacob’s Ladder Reading Comprehension Program*®, a reading program developed particularly for gifted and high-performing reading students.

Student MAP Test Results

The MAP Reading assessment was given near the beginning of the school year, and again in December. MAP is a computer-based, adaptive, formative assessment that provides scores based on students’ progress along a continuum of skills and abilities. Scores are reported by Rasch unit (RIT), an approximation of student instructional level along this continuum, and also by percentile scores that compare students with others at their same grade level. The RIT scores are used for this purpose, as they show individual student growth, regardless of how the student scores in comparison to other students. In addition to looking at the change in scores themselves, NWEA, the creator of MAP,

provides data about the mean expected growth in RIT points for students at a given grade. Each of the student scores in the class was compared to this mean expected growth, as was the class average. This is not a perfect measure to use, as a large majority of students in this class (88%) began with scores above the grade level mean. It is understood that students who begin with a score above the grade level mean will have a somewhat lower expected growth, while students who start below the grade level mean will have a higher expected growth in order to make adequate progress. Because there is no individual indicator for expected growth based on where a student begins, all students are compared to the mean expected growth, which for 4th grade reading is 5.4 RIT points.

In the Fall MAP administration, the mean RIT score for 4th grade reading is 198.2. 88% of the class involved in this study scored above the grade mean, while 12% scored below the grade mean. In the Winter MAP administration, the mean RIT score for 4th grade reading is 206.4. 94% of the class was above the mean in the Winter, while 6% was at the mean mark (see Figure 4.10).

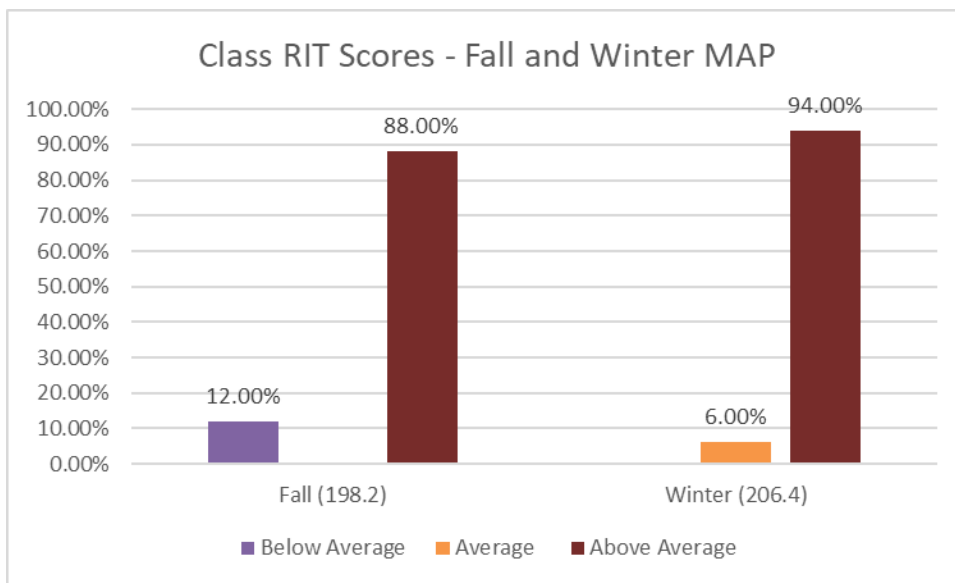


Figure 4.10 Class RIT Scores – Fall and Winter MAP Reading

Based on individual students' Fall and Winter MAP RIT scores, 9 of 17 students had an increase in score, 5 of 17 students' scores decreased, and 3 students' scores remained the same (see Figure 4.8). 41.2% of the students had above normal growth, and the mean growth for the class was 4.29 RIT points. The class average is below the mean growth for all 4th grader (5.4). Again, this is not necessarily a cause for concern since the majority of students did begin above the grade average and remained above the grade average.

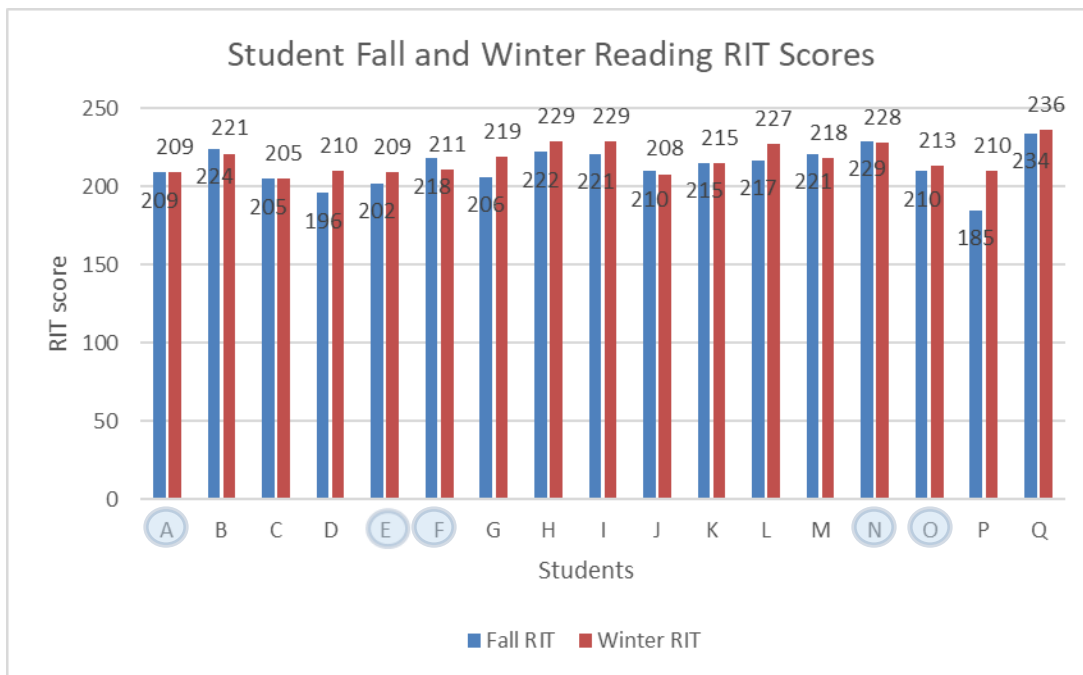


Figure 4.11 Student Fall and Winter Reading RIT Scores

In considering the class growth from Fall to Winter, the actual growth was less than the Norm growth, so it was not necessary or appropriate to run a paired t-test for significant growth. A 2-sample t-test for post-test / pre-test resulted in a p-value of 0.13, which is not statistically significant.

Despite these facts, the results of the fall and winter MAP tests do indicate that there was student growth in the class. Additionally, of the seven students in the class

who are participating on a trial placement basis, all held steady or grew between Fall and Winter MAP except for one student. Student F on the chart dropped from a RIT score of 218 to a 211. In this case, I have reason to suspect that the results are not an accurate portrayal of what this student is capable of doing. In the fall, this student took 145 minutes to complete the MAP assessment, but in the winter, the student was finished after 81 minutes. This difference in time spent likely impacted the score in the Winter. The largest point drop was Student F's 7-point drop, but there were several students who had notable gains from Fall to Spring, including a couple of 7-point gains, an 8-point, a 10-point, a 13-point, a 14-point, and a 25-point gain. These gains are all examples of positive things happening. While the intervention cannot be assumed to be a cause of any of these results, the fact remains that the class as a whole made positive MAP gains while the reciprocal teaching intervention was in place.

Student Data from the *Jacob's Ladder* Administrations

The *Jacob's Ladder* assessment was given in September and again in late November. This assessment consists of a passage of text that students must read and four constructed-response questions related to higher level literary analysis including determining implications and consequences, inference, identifying themes and making generalizations, and creative synthesis (French et al., 2009). Each question is scored using a four-point rubric, and there are example answers provided for each point level for all four questions to help with interrater reliability. Scoring is based on the students' cumulative scores for the 4 questions, and the ranges are intended as ranges for *advanced learners*, not ranges indicative of "on grade-level" work. Scores from 0-4 are considered "Below Expectations", scores from 5 - 8 are "Approaching Expectations", scores

between 9 – 12 are considered “Meeting Expectations”, and any score 13 or greater is considered “Exceeding Expectations”. It is a goal of the gifted program in our school for gifted students to rank in the “Meeting” or “Exceeding Expectations” category by the end of the school year. In late November, it is expected that students would be making gains from their September score, so that they could attain a score at the top of the “Meeting Expectations” range (12 points) by the end of the year.

As can be seen in Figure 4.12, students began the year with scores placing them at the low range of “Approaching Expectations” to the upper range of “Meeting Expectations”. By the time of the November administration, there was a shift, and more students had moved into the “Meeting” and “Exceeding” ranges, while only three students still remained in the “Approaching Expectations” range.

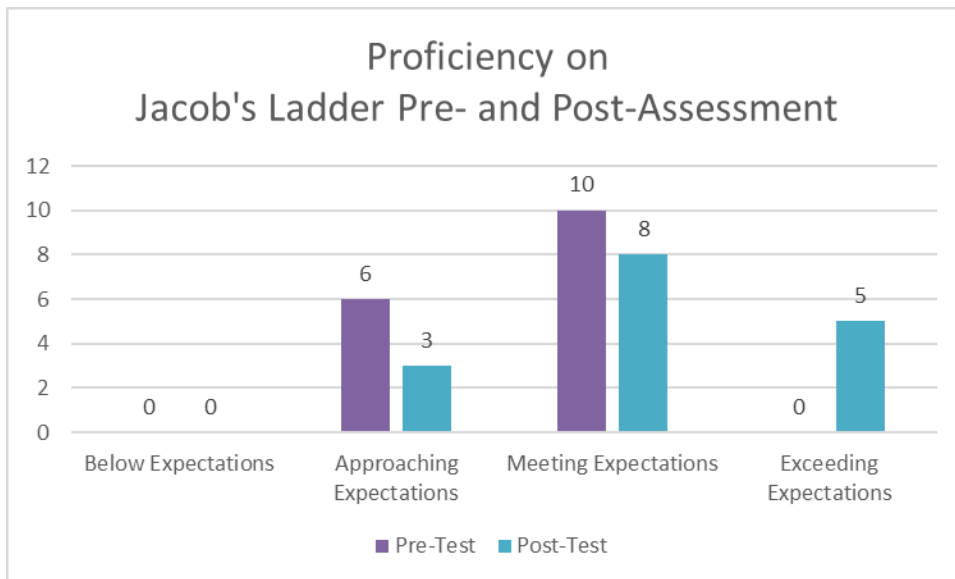


Figure 4.12 Proficiency on *Jacob’s Ladder* Pre- and Post-Assessment

These statistics bode well for the class and, again, indicate that instruction during the fall—including the reciprocal teaching strategy, may have, in fact have had a positive

effect. Again, this growth is not something that can be ascertained or proven to be related to the research intervention, but it is a positive sign that might be worth further study.

Individual student data, depicted in Figure 4.13 shows how many students grew from the first to the second administration. The student letters with the light colored ovals indicate the five Hispanic students. Only three students' scores dropped, and two of those only dropped one point. It seems feasible to believe that the reciprocal teaching strategy may have had some impact on the positive gains, through there is no way to prove this.

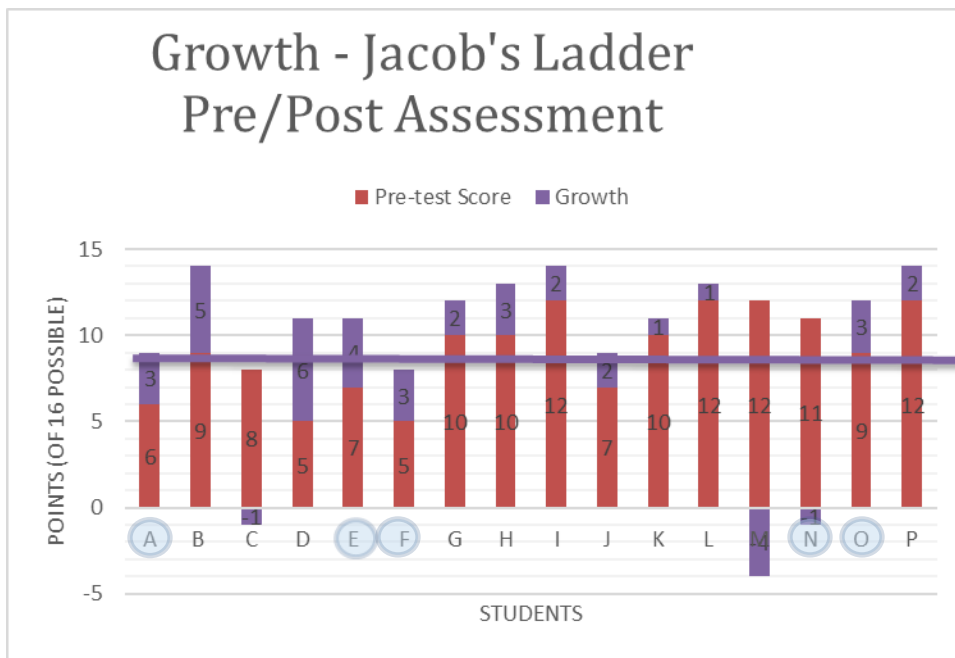


Figure 4.13 Growth – *Jacob's Ladder* Pre- and Post-Assessment

Answering the Research Question

The current research study was guided by the research question:

What is the impact of introducing culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy in a gifted and talented (GT) fourth-grade

English/Language Arts (ELA) class for Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students?

In planning for this research, the teacher-researcher was looking to address an ongoing problem in the school where the study took place: The school has a population of students that is largely Hispanic and low SES, yet the school gifted and talented program's population consistently has a majority of White, middle-class students. Underrepresentation of students of color has been a criticism of gifted programs since the federal government began to address gifted education in 1971 (Marland, Jr., 1971). In the particular school where this study was conducted, an ongoing attempt to improve the inclusion of students from typically underrepresented populations has been made through the use of the trial placement policy provided in the state gifted regulation. While this has improved opportunities, the percentage of students in the gifted program from our schools' largest population—Hispanic students, still lags far behind the actual percentage of these students in our school.

The introduction of a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy in the teacher-researcher's fourth grade ELA class had several effects on the students in the class. The research question addresses how the Hispanic students and the non-Hispanic students were impacted—and there were some specific notable impacts on the two populations that were, for the most part, particular to the individual groups.

Five Hispanic students were included in the gifted ELA class of 17 students. While this is still not equivalent to the 50% that Hispanics represent in our total school population, all but one of these five students was not identified gifted. All five of the Hispanic students, either in their reflection journals or in their interviews, identified four outcomes from the research intervention that they felt had made a significant impact on them.

The first was the opportunity to learn strategies for clarifying unknown words and phrases when reading a text. Each indicated that this was an area for struggle for them, though the one gifted Hispanic student, Jose, mentioned, “I don’t think there are any hard or easy parts [to clarifying]; I can read fluently, except in hard [books] or really big ones or something—maybe [in those] I’ll have trouble”. These students indicated that learning ways to use strategies for figuring out unknown words was helpful; and there was Diego, who gained a new love for learning new words and using the dictionary.

The second outcome of importance to the Hispanic students was the opportunity to work in small groups (book clubs) to share their reading and thinking about reading. They noted that when they worked in the small groups they felt more confident because they were only having to share their ideas with a small number of people at a time. It also appeared that these opportunities to work with others was much more comfortable for them than working alone to tackle a text. They did, in fact, mention that the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups made them feel more sure of themselves. The only exception to this was Carlos. He was quick to point out that he liked to work in groups, but when it was time to read or think, he liked to have space and time to himself.

The third important outcome for the Hispanic students was their opportunity to let their voices be heard—in both a literal and figurative way. The two girls, and to a certain extent one of the boys, were very quiet and never quick to volunteer or share answers in class. After a few weeks had passed since the beginning of the reciprocal teaching unit, I was surprised to hear how much these students were contributing to their book club discussions. Early on, they were asking a lot of questions, but as time passed by, they began volunteering more ideas and even explaining things to other members in the group.

This has positive impacts on the students in whole-class situations as well. By the end of the intervention, these students had all begun to share ideas and speak up more frequently in class discussions. One has even started to advocate for another student in the class who tends to be shy, and to encourage him to speak up. I still get tears in my eyes when I remember Ana saying to me, "I like that there is a time when I can be heard, and I get to share what I thought, what I need help with, and what questions I have."

Finally, the fourth area of impact noted was academic growth. All of the students felt successful academically, and this was borne out in their report card grades and day-to-day work in class. The four Hispanic students who participated on a "trial basis" all made positive academic gains based on at least one, if not both, of their reading test scores, and two of the four attained a score that allows them to meet one of the two required dimensions for gifted identification and placement. As a result, those two students will be taking the South Carolina Performance Task Assessment in February 2019, which gives them a different opportunity to showcase their abilities and possibly qualify outright for the gifted program. This was one of the goals that I hoped might be realized if students had an experience in the gifted classroom that more effectively addressed their needs.

The major impact on the non-Hispanic students as a group was that this research experience gave them greater opportunities to work with and learn from some people who were different from themselves. This may seem like an unnecessary designation, but the truth is that I, as the teacher-researcher noticed a difference in how students began to "invite" input and ideas from the Hispanic students more often, and how they listened and considered their contributions during book club discussions in a more focused way.

The students in my classroom are among the most considerate and caring that I've ever taught, but there is a difference that comes with things that are done with intention. I am certain that the fact that I, as their teacher, was more deliberate and focused likely impacted my students. I know that preparing for the inclusion of a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy impacted my classroom in more ways than those that were directly a part of the intervention. The inclusion of more books and art and stories by diverse authors and artists is one example. Just as with Fatima, who brought insight into our understanding of the story of an Islamic girl living in Pakistan, the Hispanic students in our classroom explained Spanish words and phrases that came up in our books about Spanish-speaking characters. The specific impact this study had on these students was a broadening of their understanding and appreciation of others.

Possibly the best thing that came out of this research was that there were a number of ways that the Hispanic and non-Hispanic students were impacted equally and simultaneously. The reciprocal teaching strategy was one that every student mentioned as being helpful to them. Different students selected different parts as being their "favorite" or "the most helpful," but all were able to identify specific ways that the protocol had helped them as readers. One of the most important aspects of reciprocal teaching is the work in small groups. This was another positive for nearly all students in the class. It was evident through observation of the small group/ book club work that students were more engaged, felt a greater sense of responsibility, and sensed greater agency as they worked in these groups. The reciprocal teaching strategy put the students in charge of working together to make learning happen.

The opportunity to strengthen their identities as readers was another positive impact of this intervention. The students showed overall growth in their attitudes toward academic reading and they were able to verbalize their preferences, interests, strengths, and challenges as readers. Because of the book clubs, some students discovered new genres and authors that quickly became new favorites. This may not have happened without this intervention.

The introduction of this culturally and linguistically responsive strategy had the impact of drawing the students in the class into closer community with one another. The observations and student comments showed time and again how each individual student looked at him or herself a bit differently because of the work we were involved with doing. Students who normally did not speak up are doing so more often now. Some students who had a tendency to take charge and see themselves as right most of the time are a bit more likely to take a step back (or at least take a breath) and consider the ideas and thoughts of other members of the community once in a while. Students turn to one another more often now—to ask for help, and to offer it, and to work collaboratively to solve problems or brainstorm ideas. All of us have seen a side of each other that we maybe did not know about before, and that helps us to be a bit more respectful, a bit more understanding, and a bit more tolerant as we work together.

Conclusion

Chapter IV provided a discussion of the actual “doing” phase of this action research study. The chapter explained how the intervention chosen to address the identified problem of practice and research question was implemented; as well as what qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The data collected over the course of the

study was shared and analyzed. Qualitative data was analyzed through the use of a manual coding scheme that began with open coding, and then—through a process of repeated reviews—was eventually categorized and recoded to identify themes that arose from the data. These themes included understanding and improving reading; “becoming” readers—cultivating the habits of lifelong readers; and building a culturally and linguistically responsive community. Each of these themes was explained in detail, and examples from the data were used to illustrate and serve as evidence of these themes. The quantitative data was analyzed through the use of charts, Excel spreadsheets, and aspects of descriptive statistics to show evidence of student academic growth over the course of the intervention

The data in this study showed that using a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy such as reciprocal teaching has the potential to improve classroom learning for students from diverse populations. Specifically, it can be used within a gifted classroom to help make the classroom experience—the curriculum and the environment—more inclusive, so that students of color will meet with success alongside other gifted students as they work together to create a community of learners. The data also indicated that students working in such a classroom environment can be academically successful as they grow in their ability to be more socially aware and competent, and that the concept of a community of learners helps to ensure that all students see a need and take responsibility for their own learning, but also the learning of others in the community.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND ACTION PLAN

You understand that engaging in inquiry is not about solving every educational problem; it's about finding new and better problems to study and in so doing, leading a continuous cycle of self and school improvement...truly, becoming the best that you can be.

(Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 214)

Chapter 5 provides a review of this action research, highlighting the key evidence drawn from the research data that led to important conclusions taken from the study.

This chapter also details the implications of these conclusions, and how these influenced the creation of an action plan that includes both short- and long-term goals for further action and study, both within the classroom and on a larger scale. The role of the action researcher as an instructional leader in the school setting, as well as the overall role of research in identifying and leading the way for positive school change are both discussed in this chapter. Insight related to the study, the research process, and suggestions for future research are also included.

Overview of the Study

This study addressed a problem of practice identified at Little Tree Elementary – a Title I school in the South Carolina Lowcountry comprised of a diverse student population, the majority of which is Hispanic. Since the school was founded in 2009, students of color and those from lower SES backgrounds have been underrepresented in the school's gifted and talented program. The majority of students who qualify for gifted

programming at the school are from White, middle-class backgrounds. Even though the school has made it a priority to provide opportunities for high-achieving and high-potential students to participate in gifted classes on a trial basis (as allowed in the state regulation), the percentage of students from diverse backgrounds who actually qualify as gifted and talented based on state criteria continues to be significantly lower than their percentage within the general school population.

The Study of Related Literature

Underrepresentation of students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, as well as of those from low SES backgrounds has been a problem in gifted education since the time of school integration in the 1960s (Marland, Jr., 1971). Before determining how to proceed with research related to the identified problem of practice, I conducted an extensive review of the literature related to the issue of underrepresentation of special populations in gifted education. This issue is complex, as it encompasses both the definition and identification of “gifted” students—two topics that have caused considerable controversy in the field, and have been the subject of scrutiny and revision for over forty years (Frasier & Passow, 1994; Ross & United States. Office of Educational Research and Improvement., 1993; Tomlinson et al., 2004). Adding to the complexity is the issue of inequity in education, particularly for students who are from diverse racial or ethnic groups, low-SES backgrounds, or for whom English is a second language. This inequity is not only evident in the underrepresentation of students from these groups in gifted education, but also in their overrepresentation in special education programs, and in the long-standing achievement gap (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Payne, 2011). In an effort to understand these differences, scholars have proposed theories,

carried out research studies, collected and analyzed data, and tried dozens of interventions and strategies to identify the base cause of the variation between racial and ethnic groups (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2009; Taylor, 2006). No matter how it is explained or phrased, the bottom line is always, to one degree or another, an issue of racism. This is not the type of person-to-person racism people tend to think of—though that still exists, but rather an institutional racism that is embedded in our schools’ “vastly unequal resources, Eurocentric curriculum, and teachers who [a]re poorly prepared to teach students of diverse backgrounds” (Nieto, 2017, p. 2). It is this type of racism that separates and segregates children based on outdated and unfounded beliefs and ultimately “denies many children of color access to the opportunities they need to succeed” (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 35)

Planning for Research and Data Collection to Address the Problem of Practice and Answer the Research Question

The insights gained through study of and reflection upon the literature made it quite clear that the intervention incorporated into this study must address students’ diverse experiences, strengths, and needs in a way that had not been done in my gifted classroom in the past. As a result, an intervention was planned that would incorporate culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum into my fourth grade gifted and talented ELA class. The resulting study involved introducing reciprocal teaching, a strategy proven in the literature to be culturally and linguistically responsive, into the curriculum of my ELA class. The research study was conducted in the fall semester of 2018 with my group of 17 ELA students, which included nine identified gifted students and eight students participating in the class via trial placement. Of the 17 students, five were Hispanic students whose primary home language was Spanish. The purpose of the

study was to see if infusing the ELA curriculum with a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy might make a positive difference in the trial placement experience for students, and ultimately give them the confidence and necessary skills to be able to attain the standardized test scores required for official placement in the gifted program. This mixed-methods action research study was used to answer the research question,

What is the impact of introducing culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy in a gifted and talented (GT) fourth-grade English/Language Arts (ELA) class for Hispanic and Non-Hispanic students?

Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretations

During the eight-week study, students were taught the “Fab 4”—the four reading comprehension strategies (predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing) that make up reciprocal teaching, as well as the small group discussion protocol at the heart of this strategy (Oczkus, 2018b; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). This instruction was scaffolded to ensure student success in learning to use the strategy well, and as students became proficient, they were gradually released to direct their own “book club” discussions in which they collaboratively worked to construct meaning from the texts they read. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected over the course of the study. Qualitative data included the teacher-researcher’s field notes from observations of students during lessons and book club discussions, the students’ written work and weekly reflection journals, notes from semi-structured student interviews, and responses to pre- and post-intervention surveys. Quantitative data included scores from two different reading comprehension assessments administered prior to and following the intervention to measure growth.

Analysis of the quantitative data indicated that, as a class, students showed growth in their reading comprehension over the course of the study, and some students had some very pronounced growth. More importantly, qualitative data collected from the students indicated that they felt they were more successful as readers when they used the reciprocal teaching strategy. They also expressed greater confidence and self-efficacy related to their reading ability, their ability to understand varied texts, and their ability to work with their book clubs to construct meaning of the texts they read. Survey data indicated that during the eight-week study, students' attitudes toward academic reading improved. Some of the most telling data came from the student surveys, which indicated that the use of reciprocal teaching as a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy had helped students to feel successful. Not only did they feel empowered by what they were learning, and included among their peers as they participated in discussions, but they also felt "equal" to the other students in the group. These sentiments are best summed up using the words of one of the Hispanic students, Diego, during his interview:

I think [one of] the best things I've learned is I like learning new things about words; I really like learning new words. Using clarifying when I read helps me learn new words. Before, I [would] feel kind of lost; If I asked and [my classmates] knew it, I [was] like 'Wow, how did you know that?' Now, I hear what words they need help with, and I see if I know something they don't know. I have helped them with some things.

Role of the Action Researcher

Before discussing the creation of the action plan, it is important to frame my role as the action researcher. Like many teachers, I take on a variety of roles in my school,

and my work in those roles impacted my decision-making and my work throughout this research process. At the beginning it was my “outsider” role as the long-time lead teacher for gifted and talented instruction that set me on a path to look for ways to address the underrepresentation of students from diverse populations in our school’s gifted classes. Because I see my role as a steward leader of these students—whether they are actually students within my own classroom or not—I felt a responsibility for the problem and looked for a way in which I might work toward reversing it (Ford, 2010). I made it my goal to carry out an action research study that would help me improve classroom instruction so that all students—regardless of their cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or economic backgrounds—would feel confident and secure as members of the classroom learning community, and able to meet their potential as readers and thinkers.

My primary role as the action researcher was as the classroom ELA teacher to the 17 fourth-grade student-participants; I was the instructional leader in the classroom. My philosophy of leadership—whether I am working with colleagues or students—is centered around the belief that a leader’s trustworthiness and moral code are critical to her work in building relationships and inspiring others, two critical components in building a community of learners—my preferred type of classroom community. Based on Peter Senge’s (2012) idea of the “Fifth Discipline”, learning communities are intended to work and learn together as they address an organization’s goals or agenda. This is a powerful model, as research indicates that teachers who work in learning communities feel a stronger sense of support, and students in these schools make more academic and social progress (Robinson, 2013). My leadership role in the classroom is one of servitude, and the students are the “objects of [my] stewardship” (Sergiovanni, 1994, p.

102). My responsibilities to my students involve building relationships with them that inform me about their needs and interests, and using what I learn to plan an environment that will facilitate their learning and the realization of their goals. Throughout the process I work to facilitate my students' growth by assisting them and intervening as needed (Schiro, 2013).

In light of the literature describing varied measures taken to address underrepresentation of diverse learners in gifted classes in the past, I determined that my strategy for this study would be to incorporate more culturally and linguistically responsive strategies in my teaching. My students—our community of learners—were key participants. In keeping with my philosophy of leadership, I involved them as much as possible throughout the research process. In my insider role, working as their teacher, I informed my students about my purposes and procedures to help maintain trust. Seeking their insights during the research process through surveys and interviews was not only critical to my understanding of the success of the intervention, but showed respect for the students' thoughts and viewpoints as members of our community (Brubaker, 2004; Senge, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2013). As the research wrapped up, the students continued to show great interest in the results and what had been learned; their part in the action plan will be discussed in the coming pages.

Working as a teacher or as a researcher could never be described as an “easy” job; taking on the role of teacher-researcher is valuable, but it certainly has difficulties all its own. In the present research, the greatest difficulties I faced as a teacher-researcher were time, and the challenge of finding like-minded grade-level colleagues with whom I could share my work and thinking.

Time was an issue because of a number of factors—some expected and some unexpected—impacted the amount of time I had in the classroom to introduce the reciprocal teaching strategy and carry out the research. Because of the imminent landfall of a looming hurricane and the sudden onset of an illness in a family member, research did not begin on schedule, but was pushed back until late September. Given the periodic changes to the daily school schedule for assemblies, testing, and other events, I needed until early December to obtain six solid weeks of data collection. Fortunately, adjustments were made and the time issues were able to be addressed.

The larger issue has been the philosophical clash that I have encountered with some of my same-grade colleagues due to my work on this research and in my degree program. In a nutshell, the work of this research has opened my eyes to issues such as White privilege and institutional racism that I was never so aware of prior to doing this work. I have been deeply affected by all I have learned, yet my colleagues have not had the benefit of these epiphanies. As a result, when issues like student behavior, grading, or other topics become an issue, I often have a different perspective than others. An example of this occurred in the middle of the research timeline. The teachers on my team instituted a strict “infraction policy” with our fourth graders in which students earned infractions for any breach of the grade rules. Leaving a book at home, forgetting to have a paper signed by a parent, or acting disrespectfully to classmates all earned the same penalty—and as infractions added up, students lost privileges, and eventually had to stay for after-school detention or come for Saturday school. In my eyes this was extreme, and seemed to be an example of how the dominant value system was being used to oppress those who did not hold the same values, or who did not have the benefit of resources or

support at home to meet the expectations. I do not truly believe my colleagues meant harm or “oppression,” but they did want compliance, and they could not see the way they were going about getting it in the same way I did. I have since learned who I share similar professional philosophies with, and go to those people for a sounding board or ideas.

Key Questions

As a result of this research and its findings, several questions arose that deserve further investigation. The implementation of a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy as part of the curriculum in the gifted ELA class had a positive impact on student attitudes and affect, and may have also contributed to student performance in reading comprehension. This was true not only for the students in the class from CLD backgrounds, but for all students. As a result, it is only natural to ask two important questions:

- 1) What effect might there be if additional CLR strategies and practices were incorporated into the gifted/talented classroom?
- 2) How can the reciprocal teaching strategy and culturally and linguistically responsive practices be shared and encouraged with other teachers who work with similar populations of students?

A third question that arose was related to the practice of including students who were high achieving in the gifted class with students who were already identified as gifted using the state regulation and criteria. There were four students who, at various times during the study, indicated that they struggled with one of the four key strategies of reciprocal teaching—usually with either questioning or clarifying. Upon further

discussion with these students, it became apparent that these students were not having difficulty because they did not understand what it meant to question or clarify; rather, in all four cases the students indicated that they could not find anything in the text that they genuinely questioned or needed clarified. This brings up the third major question that resulted from the research:

- 3) How can we encourage and nurture talent in students who have not had that opportunity without holding back students who are ready to move on?

These three questions formed the basis for creating an action plan—the next important step in the action research cycle (Mertler, 2016).

Action Plan

Learning something new is not very useful or rewarding if nothing is ever done with the learning. As Mertler (2016) is quick to point out, once the data has been collected and analyzed in an action research study, there should be some insight or finding that suggests the need to do something different. That “something different” is what is delineated in an action plan.

Research Findings and the Development of an Action Plan

In the current research study, reciprocal teaching was found to be an effective culturally and linguistically responsive strategy to use with the gifted students and the high achieving students in the sample 4th grade gifted ELA class. As a whole, the class showed growth in their reading comprehension over the course of the intervention, with 10 of 17 students exhibiting a growth in RIT score on the MAP test, and 13 of 16 students having an increase in reading comprehension score on the Jacob’s Ladder Assessment. While the quantitative data did not show overwhelming growth in scores,

the results were positive and promising. The more significant results were found through the analysis of the qualitative data. The pre- and post- intervention surveys indicated that the students experienced increased confidence and self-efficacy related to their academic ability and social standing within the ELA class, and that they had an overall improved attitude toward reading in the academic setting. The most rewarding results came out of the comments students made in interviews, the students' work and growth as observed in the book club meetings, and in the things students shared in their reflection journals. In these three areas of data collection and analysis, it became clear that the students valued the reciprocal teaching strategy because of the ways that it made them feel more empowered as readers and thinkers, and because of the opportunity it allowed them to work collaboratively with peers to hear ideas and have their own ideas heard as they constructed meaning from texts together. In many ways, the reciprocal teaching strategy put the students on a level playing field; it allowed every student to contribute from their own funds of knowledge, and to ask the questions that would help them to gain answers and understanding. At some time or another, almost every student commented on a situation when their particular book club had a question that no one person could really answer, but that they ended up answering together.

As I considered the results of the study in preparation to consider my next steps, I consulted with three groups of people. I first shared my results with the professional colleagues who were aware of my study and supported me in numerous ways throughout the process. I also shared my results and findings with the school district's gifted education coordinator, and I shared what I had found with my fourth grade students. All had recommendations for me going forward, though the nature of the recommendations

were different depending on the source. My professional colleagues encouraged me to share my findings related to reciprocal teaching with the staff of our school through our professional learning communities (PLCs). Because our school does have such a high percentage of Hispanic students and a relatively large number of students who qualify for subsidized meals, reciprocal teaching and its use as a culturally and linguistically responsive strategy holds a good deal of promise for our general populations. The gifted coordinator was encouraged to learn that the students who have not yet qualified for gifted services had responded so positively to the intervention. She has requested that we continue conversations regarding ways to encourage other schools in the district to utilize the trial placement option with high achieving, non-gifted-qualified students more often. She also expressed interest in ways to include reciprocal teaching and other strategies as part of a talent development training for district teachers who work with high-ability and high-potential students. Finally, the students encouraged me to include book clubs more often, to find happier books to use in book clubs (people died in all three books used in the study), and to continue to work with them to improve their clarifying skills so they could better understand and learn new words.

The Proposed Action Plan

Based on the research findings and the resulting key questions, an action plan has been created that will (a) continue to build on the positive results experienced by the students who participated in the research, (b) introduce the study, intervention, and results to faculty and staff members of our school and district who would like to implement it in their own classes with their own students, and (c) make the results available and known to other South Carolina gifted educators.

Building on classroom success through increased CLR teaching. Because this research was originally undertaken as a way to address the needs of high-ability culturally and linguistically diverse students within my own class who had not been able to qualify for the gifted program, my first desire is to continue to work to improve myself as a teacher and advocate. I am more convinced than ever before that many students in our school are academically gifted, but are unable to prove it given the barriers (institutional racism, language, lack of opportunity, emphasis on standardized psychometric testing, and so on) present. CLR pedagogy and curriculum provide a way to address these students' needs while they are engaged in trial placements within the gifted classroom. For this reason, I am continuing my study of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and looking for more ways to infuse my gifted classroom with these practices. I have collected a variety of books and found several online resources that are promising, and will help me in my endeavor (see Appendix G). As alluded to in other areas of my writing, I have identified a number of like-minded professionals within my building and district who I believe may be supportive and even collaborative in my ongoing work to be a more culturally and linguistically responsive teacher.

I also intend to continue the use of reciprocal teaching in my classroom, and look at ways to make this practice even more effective and engaging for my students. One of the issues that I must address for all my students is more specific differentiation based on student needs. Differentiation is already an important part of the everyday workings in my ELA class, but the literature specifically addresses the ways that using different ways of including students in classes (as we do when we include identified students meeting

state criteria, and high-achieving students participating on a trial basis) can create a greater span of abilities to be addressed:

Just as in any identified population, students will have a range of needs, but this range will become broader as the identification criteria are broadened.... A good rule of thumb is that with any differentiated identification system—one in which the identification procedures have been in any way modified to further the goal of equity—comes a need for differentiated services. (Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 168)

My four students who indicated they “found nothing in their reading they needed to clarify” were what made me very aware of my need to plan specific differentiation for the students on either end of the range of abilities in my classroom. Because I was focused more on the Hispanic students in this study, I feel I addressed their needs and differentiated instruction well for them. In the case of these four strong students, I knew immediately what I should have done to guarantee they were appropriately challenged by the texts they read. In each of their cases, the concern was raised as they were reading from their book club selection. The choices for the book club selections ranged in difficulty from Lexile® levels of 690 to 1000, or Fountas and Pinell Guided Reading Levels™ from “S” to “V”. Because the students were allowed to choose the book they wished to read based on interest, some students—including these four—chose books that were at a slightly lower level of difficulty. In the future, it can be a fairly simple fix to guide them toward more challenging texts, or to let them know that when they are reading a book that interests them but is not as demanding, they may *not* find as much that they question or need to clarify. It will also be important to remind them, however,

that to build their reading “muscles” (Burkins & Yaris, 2014), they will want to sometimes choose the more difficult books.

Sharing study intervention, results, and implications with other educators.

As the school’s lead teacher for gifted and talented education, and as a member of the school leadership team, I feel it is important to share the results of this study with the other gifted and talented teachers at my school. All of the GT teachers have a similar goal of helping capable, talented students from diverse backgrounds to qualify for gifted services. As mentioned, this has been a practice of the school from its inception. Equipped with knowledge about at least one possible way to address this issue, I feel it is my responsibility to share what I know so that others can try the strategy within their own gifted classrooms. I do not intend to stop with the teachers of the gifted and talented teachers, however.

The results observed and all the literature I have read oblige me to share with our teaching staff. In a school where 66% of the population is comprised of children of color, 58% are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, and 30% are English Language Learners, utilizing CLR teaching and curriculum just makes sense. Unfortunately, as the literature highlights, many teachers either are not aware of the need for culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning, or if they do know, are at a loss for how to start (Gay, 2013; Wright & Ford, 2017). Sharing this information with colleagues would need to be planned through a meeting with my school’s leadership—the principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach. It would likely be best received if some other key personnel were included in presenting. The school’s ESOL teachers would be good to team with, as they have greater experience in the use of CLR teaching and curriculum

and could address that angle. If the school’s faculty felt the information was useful, our district has two opportunities each year for professionals to present on topics that are timely and relevant to our schools’ needs. One of these, either Summer Institute or Best Practices Day, might be a good place to consider sharing my findings with a broader audience.

Finally, because our state does have a strong reliance on standardized test scores for gifted identification, but also gives schools and districts the option to allow for trial placement (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013), this research study might be of significant interest to other gifted educators from across the state. Our state gifted conference is held annually in December, and I plan to submit a proposal to present. This would be an appropriate forum for sharing my learning with gifted educators in the state.

Action Plan Timeline

Table 5.1 outlines a tentative timeline for implementing the various elements of the proposed action plan.

Table 5.1 Action Plan Timeline

Time Frame	Action
Ongoing	Reading and research on CLR teaching, curriculum; implementation of additional practices
Late Spring – Early Summer 2019	Meeting with school leadership, instructional coach, ESOL team to plan sharing sessions for school PLCs
Summer 2019	Revision of Reciprocal Teaching Unit to incorporate student recommendations and other minor improvements to use in 2019-2020.
Fall 2019	Sharing of strategy and results with school PLCs
Fall 2019	Proposal to state gifted consortium for state conference
December 2019	State Gifted Conference
2019-2020	Share findings at district professional development day

Summary of Research Findings and Suggestions for Further Research

In the current research study, implementing a culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum intervention with a fourth grade gifted ELA class had benefits and positive effects on gifted students enrolled in the class, but also on culturally and linguistically diverse students participating in the class on a trial basis. Data collected in the study indicated that the students exhibited growth on at least one if not both the reading comprehension assessments given pre- and post-study. Even more satisfying for the students and the teacher-researcher was that students reported feeling more positively about academic reading, and stronger in terms of their reading abilities and confidence following the study.

The study results indicate that there is promise in providing high achieving CLD students an opportunity to participate in gifted classes on a trial basis when the classes are structured to be culturally and linguistically responsive. Using the CLR strategy of reciprocal teaching emphasized all students' abilities and knowledge, rather than focusing on their areas of weakness or deficiency. Working with reciprocal teaching also enabled students from varied backgrounds and abilities to work collaboratively to construct meaning from complex texts. Students gained new respect for one another as they were able to see the varied talents, experiences, and abilities that each class member brought to a given problem or task. All students mentioned feeling included and empowered when working with classmates using this structure.

It should be noted that, even though this study focused on incorporating one specific culturally and linguistically responsive teaching strategy into the classroom, it is virtually impossible to do this without infusing CLR elements into the rest of the

classroom and the rest of the school day. In preparing for the implementation of the strategy in my classroom, I found myself thinking about how I might approach communication with my students and their families differently. I realized that I was more aware of purchasing classroom materials, and especially books and literature, that would be inclusive of not only the diverse cultures and situations represented in my classroom, but inclusive of many types of diversity. I decided to use more visual tools in my teaching and in student lessons. I feel strongly that all of my students and I benefitted from an overall increased focus on one another's diversity, but also on our similarities.

Additional research along the lines of infusing CLR pedagogy into an ELA classroom—whether that class includes gifted and high-achieving students, or a general population of students—may find helpful implementation ideas within this study. In future research it would be interesting to see what effect other types of CLR strategies might produce in students. While this study was conducted with potentially gifted CLD students, another research possibility might be to determine the effects of infusing the general grade level classroom with culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy—particularly in schools with diverse populations and in the future, as growth in diversity among all public schools becomes more prevalent.

Over the past 30 years I have changed greatly from the naïve, idealistic, and sheltered girl who entered her first classroom as a fresh-faced teacher. Looking back over my coursework from this degree program, I am amazed at the change and growth I have experienced just in the past three years. I have always believed that learning is one of our primary purposes for living this life; we grow, and experience, and learn. I still believe learning is one of the main reasons we live life on this planet. Similarly, I have

believed that a free public education is one of the greatest rights and privileges of being a United States citizen in the current era. I still believe in the power and value of education, but also recognize just how complex the issue of public education is because of the social and political influences that impact it. I can no longer hold onto a rose-colored vision of education because I now know the ways that education sometimes fails children. Unfortunately, the children who are failed most often are the ones most in need of the support schools and education can provide. Students of color and those from low socio-economic backgrounds often begin school lagging behind their White, middle-class peers, and there are too many times when the gap only widens once the students enter the educational system. It has become apparent to me through my study of the literature and my own observations that the reasons for these gaps are primarily due to the institutional racism present in American schools. This racism is insidious; it is masked as “business-as-usual,” or “the way things are done.” In reality it is the product of systemic, structural conventions and customs long held by a dominant culture that have created institutional oppression and perpetuated White privilege through the illusion that such practices are “natural” or the norm.

As much as it can be disheartening to have idealistic views banished by reality, I recognize that my coming face-to-face with the truth of the continued oppression some populations of students face in schools is the only way I can begin to make a difference. In my daily work with students of color and students from diverse backgrounds, I regularly see glimpses of student work or individual characteristics strongly indicative of academic giftedness, yet the students displaying the characteristics or doing the work may not even be identified as gifted. My recognition of this gives me power to advocate

for such students to be included in talent development opportunities within the school or admitted into our school's gifted program on a trial basis. For those students who I have the privilege to teach, I can work to make their experience in the gifted classroom as positive, nurturing, and supportive as possible by providing a culturally and linguistically responsive classroom environment and learning experience. In time, students working within such an environment may grow more secure and confident in their own abilities and qualify for gifted programming "outright."

In my future work as an educator, I look forward to the opportunity to work as an ally to students from populations that have historically been oppressed. This can extend beyond my own classroom as I see areas in my school, my district, and beyond where equity is not being practiced. I can ensure that students I teach receive the support and also the recognition and opportunities they deserve, simply by virtue of being a student. In the past I have worked as an adjunct to teach the state mandated gifted endorsement graduate classes. I would like to begin doing this again, and may even decide to pursue a more full-time position in higher education working with aspiring and current educators. If so, I know that addressing the issues of diversity, educational equity, access, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy will be a part of any teaching I do. More importantly, being a champion of change for greater equity and access will be someone I **am** from this point forward, whether in my classroom or in my everyday life as a citizen in this nation.

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APPENDIX A

PROCESS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF ACADEMICALLY GIFTED STUDENTS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

CRITERIA USED IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

DIMENSIONS	DESCRIPTIONS
Dimension A Reasoning Abilities	<p>Nationally normed individual or group aptitude test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a score at the 93rd national <i>age</i> percentile or higher on verbal/linguistic, quantitative/mathematical, nonverbal, and/or a composite of the three. <p>Students may be eligible for placement on the basis of their <i>aptitude scores alone</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a composite score at the 98th national age percentile or higher for students entering grades one and two a composite score at the 96th national age percentile or higher for students entering grades three through twelve.
Dimension B High Achievement	<p>Nationally normed and achievement test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a score at the 94th national percentile or higher on approved subtests <p>If the approved subtests are unavailable, use the <i>total</i> reading and/or <i>total</i> mathematics score.</p> <p>South Carolina End of Year Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a score at the 90th percentile and ties as determine annually by the South Carolina Department of Education
Dimension C Academic Performance	<p>SC Performance Tasks, for students currently in grades two through five for placement in grades three through six</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> primary verbal or nonverbal: 16 or higher for students entering grade three; 18 or higher for students entering grade four intermediate verbal: 16 or higher for students entering grade five; 18 or higher for students entering grade six intermediate nonverbal: 22 or higher for students entering grade five; 25 or higher for students entering grade six <p>Grade point average (GPA) in the academic disciplines, for students at the end of grade five and above for the placement of students in grades six through twelve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.75 GPA or higher on a 4.0 scale

Students who meet the eligibility criteria in *two* of the three dimensions are eligible for **gifted and talented services**. Aptitude test results alone can qualify a student for placement (see Dimension A above). No single criterion can eliminate a student from consideration per Regulation 43-220.

Figure A.1 Three Dimensions and Corresponding Criteria Used for Gifted Identification in South Carolina

South Carolina Department of Education. (2017). Gifted and talented identification. *South Carolina Gifted & Talented Best Practices Manual*. Retrieved from <https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/standards-learning/advanced-academic-programs/gifted-and-talented/>

A student must open 2 of the 3 doors to qualify for the gifted/talented program in the state of SC.

Door A
Aptitude
93%
Reasoning Abilities
To qualify:
Students must score at or above 93rd percentile in either: verbal/linguistic, quantitative/mathematical, or nonverbal on an aptitude test. A composite score of 96th percentile is an automatic qualifier.
The state tests all 2nd graders during the fall semester each year.

Door B
Achievement
94%
High Achievement in Reading or Math
To qualify:
A student must score 94th percentile or above in either reading comprehension or math concepts/problems solving on a nationally norm-referenced achievement test, including ITBS (2nd grade only), SC READY (Qualifying scores vary by grade level), or MAP (only the Fall and Spring MAP scores may be used as a qualifier).

Door C
PTA Performance Tasks Assessment
Intellectual or Academic Performance
To qualify:
If Door A or Door B has been opened but not both, a student may use Door C- PTA Performance Tasks Assessment, usually given in Feb. or March and scored by an independent contractor.
Scoring:
2nd- "16"- verbal or non verb.
3rd- "18"- verb. or nonverb.
4th- "16"-verb. or "22"-nonverb
5th- "18"-verb. or "25"-nonverb.

Figure A.2 Gifted and Talented Identification Graphic

South Carolina Department of Education. (2017). Gifted and talented identification. *South Carolina Gifted & Talented Best Practices Manual*. Retrieved from <https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/standards-learning/advanced-academic-programs/gifted-and-talented>

APPENDIX B:
FIGURES RELATED TO THE LITERATURE

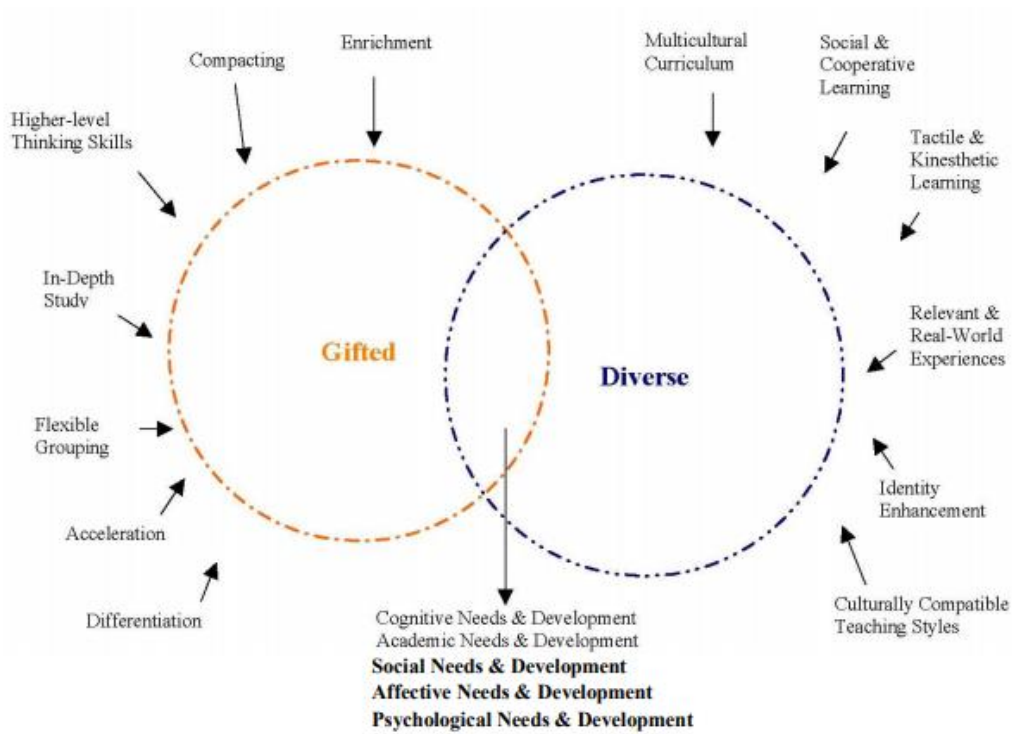


Figure B.1: Venn Diagram Depicting Needs of Students Who Are Gifted and Culturally Diverse: Sample Differentiation or Instructional Strategies (Tomlinson et al., 2004, p. 34)

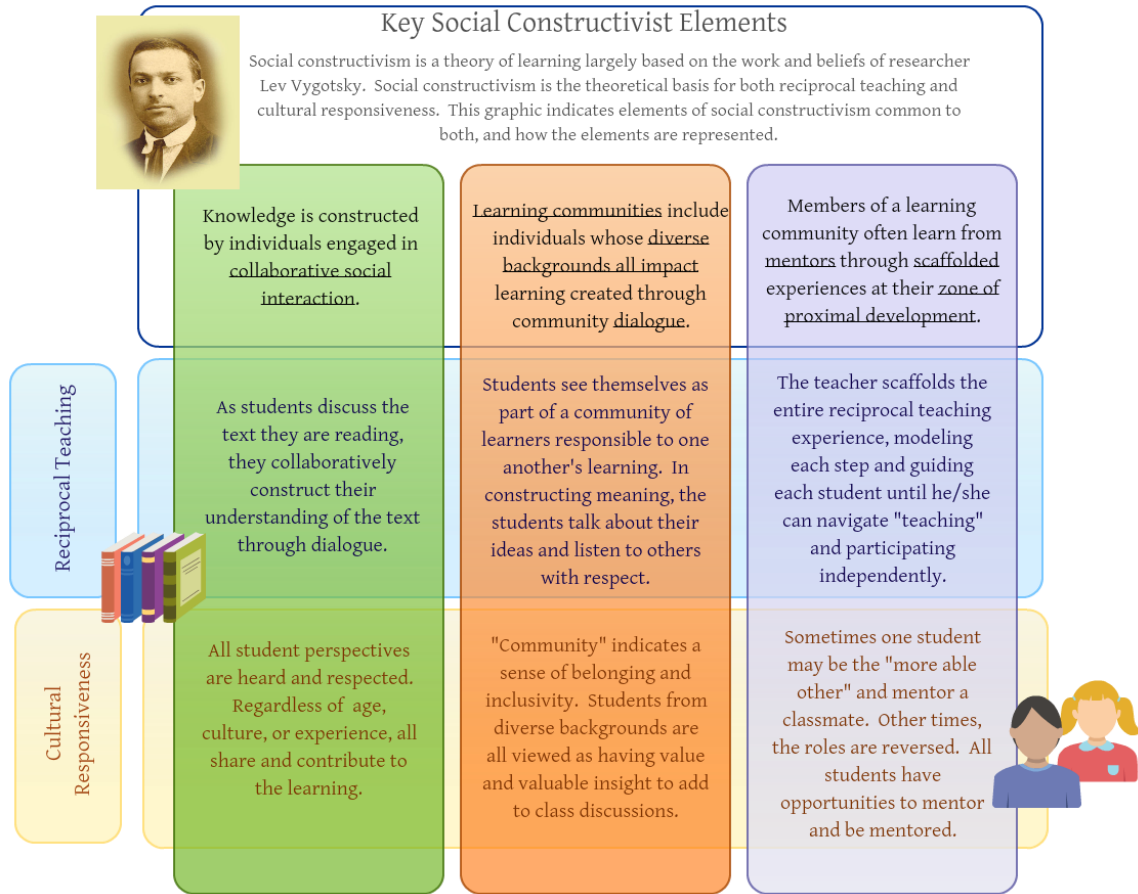


Figure B.2: Social Constructionism Influences on Reciprocal Teaching and Cultural Responsiveness

APPENDIX C:

PARENT CONSENT AND STUDENT ASSENT FORMS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Beyond Standardized Test Scores: The Use of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy to Improve Access to Gifted Programming for Students of Underrepresented Populations

Parent/Guardian Informed Consent Agreement

Dear Parents,

As many of you know I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education at the University of South Carolina. This semester I am conducting research for my dissertation in my 4th grade ELA class. I am writing to ask for your consent to allow your child to participate in this research study.

The purpose of the study is to determine how the use of a reading strategy called Reciprocal Teaching impacts my students' reading comprehension and skill and their confidence and self-efficacy regarding reading. This strategy is one that I have not used before with this class of children, but I am planning to use it with them this year.

What your child will do in the study: During this study your child will participate in our ELA class just as he or she normally would. All students will be included in the lessons and activities just as they normally would in the course of the normal school day. The only things that will be different are:

- I will occasionally audio- or video-record some lessons as a way for me to study my teaching and the students' responses.
- I will have semi-structured interviews with students to ask about their feelings and opinions about the new lesson strategy.
- I will use student data from lessons and observations in drawing conclusions about the study

What you will do in the study: You simply choose to give permission for your child's participation or not; at the end of the study – once all research is completed, you will receive notification about the results of the study.

Time required: The study will take place during class, so it will require no additional time from the students outside of class time. Near the end of the study, I may ask some students to have an interview with me to discuss their ideas and feelings about the strategy we learned and about the study. These interviews would likely take place before school or during WIT.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits: This study may benefit subjects by making them stronger readers because of skills learned that can aid comprehension. It may also help them become more confident in their abilities as readers.

Confidentiality: Throughout this study all information I collect will be confidential, and students' anonymity will be preserved. Any information shared with me will be private. No one except me will know what your child's answers to the interview questions were, and no one but me will see or hear responses if we use audio or video recording.

The information that your child gives in the study will be handled confidentially. Your child's information will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your child's name to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your child's name and your name will not be used in any report. Any audio or video recording created will also be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Voluntary participation: Your child's participation and/or your participation in the study is completely voluntary. If you give your permission for your child's participation, I will still ask your child if he/she wishes to participate. All students will participate in regular classroom activities, but only those students who wish to participate and have parent consent will have their information used in the study (i.e. scores, comments, etc.). No child's grades will be affected by the study, regardless of his/her participation.

Right to withdraw from the study: You and your child both have the right to withdraw your child from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, any records I have collected related to your child will be destroyed. To withdraw from the study, you or your child should simply let me know.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Researcher:

Virginia Pratt
Red Cedar Elementary School
Telephone: (843) 707-0677

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Rhonda Jeffries
Wardlaw College 256
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC
Telephone: (803) 777-5270

Agreement:

I agree to allow my child to participate in the research study described above.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Figure C.1 Parent Consent Agreement

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
ASSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT**

Beyond Standardized Test Scores: The Use of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy to Improve Access to Gifted Programming for Students of Underrepresented Populations

Dear Student,

As you know, I am working to earn my doctoral degree from the University of South Carolina. During this semester I am going to be conducting a research project about using a strategy called Reciprocal Teaching in our ELA class.

I have already asked your parents for their permission for you to participate, and they have said that it is okay with them. Your participation, however, is really your decision. We will be doing the Reciprocal Teaching strategy in class. If you decide to participate in the research you will participate in class just like you normally would. You will also be asked to:

- have a conference with me and talk about what we did in the unit and your thoughts about it. The conference will be in our classroom either during WIT time or before or after school, and it will last for about 10 minutes.

Any information shared with me will be private. No one except me will know what your specific answers to the questions were, and no one but me will see or hear responses if we use audio or video recording.

You do not have to help with this study. Being in the study is not related to your regular class work and will not help or hurt your grades. You can also drop out of the study at any time, for any reason, and you will not be in any trouble and no one will be upset or mad.

Please feel free to ask any questions you would like to about the study either now, or if you think of questions later.

Signing your name below means, you have read the information (or it has been read to you), and that your questions have been answered in a way that you can understand, and you have decided to be in the study. You can still stop being in the study any time. If you wish to stop, please tell me.

Print Name of Minor

Age of Minor

Signature of Minor





Date

Thank you!
Mrs. Pratt

Figure C.2 Student Assent Agreement

APPENDIX D

TEACHER CREATED FORMS FOR USE WITH RECIPROCAL TEACHING UNIT

**Reciprocal Teaching Book Clubs**
Self-Assessment

Name _____ Date _____

Respond to the questions about your participation in today's book club meeting.

1. I participated in the discussion:

a lot some a little not at all

2. I listened to others in the group:

a lot some a little not at all

3. I gave answers/ responses for each of the reciprocal teaching strategies:

Predicting	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Questioning	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Clarifying	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
Summarizing	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no

4. What was the most important or interesting thing you contributed to the book club discussion today? Which of the strategies did it address, and what did you say?

5. What was the most important or interesting thing someone else contributed to the discussion today? Who contributed it, what did they say, & which strategy did it address?

Figure D.1 Reciprocal Teaching Self-Assessment



Reciprocal Teaching Book Clubs



Group Assessment

Name _____ Date _____

Respond to the questions about your group's participation in today's book club.

Group members: _____

1. What went well in today's book discussion?

2. Were there any difficulties in today's discussion? Were you able to resolve them, or will they need further attention later?

3. What do you think you need to do differently next time to improve your group's participation and learning?

*On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is terrible and 4 is great, how did your group do today? _____

4. What was the most interesting thing you heard/ learned today?

Figure D.2 Reciprocal Teaching Group Assessment Form



Reciprocal Teaching Reflection Journal Entry

Think about your work with reciprocal teaching this week. Answer the first questions and then choose one more to write about. Finish by writing your goal for the coming week.

1. Look at your goal from last week. Describe your progress toward meeting that goal. How are you doing? How do you know? What is an example of how you are doing with that goal?
 2. Which of the four strategies do you feel like has been most helpful for you this week? Why?
 3. Write the following in your reflection:

P	
Q	
C	
S	
- Next to each letter, rate how you feel you are doing with that strategy on a scale of 1 - 4:

1 = having difficulty
 2 = making progress
 3 = doing well,
 4 = great; one of my best
4. Choose one of these questions to answer:
 - a. Which strategy is giving you difficulty? What about it seems difficult?
 - b. How is reciprocal teaching making you a better reader this week?
 - c. Which strategy/ strategies do you like the most? Why?
 - d. What strategy would you like help with? What kind of help would you like?
 5. Write a goal for the coming week. You can keep/revise the goal you had last week, or you can write a new goal.

Figure D.3 Reciprocal Teaching Reflection Journal Template

APPENDIX E

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (STUDENTS)

The questions in part A will be used with all student interviews; the questions in part B will be used only after the reciprocal teaching strategy has been taught and used. Other questions will be asked for clarification purposes or if a student brings up a topic not addressed in these questions.

Part A:

1. How do you feel about reading?
2. What part(s) of reading are easiest for you? Hardest?
3. What types of things do you like to read? Why do you select those?
4. When you are reading and you come across something you don't understand or a word you don't know, what do you do?
5. How do you feel when that happens?

Part B:

6. How do you feel about the reciprocal teaching strategy? Why?
7. What do you think about working on reading this way? What do you like? Dislike?
8. What have you learned about yourself during our work with reciprocal teaching? As a reader?

As a group leader? As a group member? As a thinker?

9. What have you learned about reading during the work with reciprocal teaching?
10. How did you feel about using this strategy to work with your reading buddy?
10. What is something that you are proud of from your work?
11. If there anything about this work that I maybe haven't asked you that you would like to share?

APPENDIX F

SURVEYS

Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)

	1 Not at all	2	3	4	5 Very well
1. How well can you get teachers to help you when you get stuck on schoolwork?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. How well can you express your opinions when other classmates disagree with you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. How well do you succeed in cheering yourself up when an unpleasant event has happened?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. How well can you study when there are other interesting things to do?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. How well do you succeed in becoming calm again when you are very scared?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. How well can you become friends with other children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. How well can you study a chapter for a test?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. How well can you have a chat with an unfamiliar person?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. How well can you prevent to become nervous?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. How well do you succeed in finishing all your homework every day?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. How well can you work in harmony with your classmates?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. How well can you control your feelings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. How well can you pay attention during every class?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. How well can you tell other children that they are doing something that you don't like?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. How well can you give yourself a pep-talk when you feel low?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. How well do you succeed in understanding all subjects in school?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. How well can you tell a funny event to a group of children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. How well can you tell a friend that you don't feel well?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. How well do you succeed in satisfying your parents with your schoolwork?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. How well do you succeed in staying friends with other children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. How well do you succeed in suppressing unpleasant thoughts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. How well do you succeed in passing a test?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. How well do you succeed in preventing quarrels with other children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. How well do you succeed in not worrying about things that might happen?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Scoring

A total self-efficacy score can be obtained by summing across all items.
Items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, and 22 = Academic self-efficacy

Items 2, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, and 23 = Social self-efficacy
Items 3, 5, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, and 24 = Emotional self-efficacy

Key references

Muris, P. (2001). A brief questionnaire for measuring self-efficacy in youths. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 23, 145-149.

Muris, P. (2002). Relationships between self-efficacy and symptoms of anxiety disorders and depression in a normal adolescent sample. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 32, 337-348

Note

Three items of this questionnaire were taken from Bandura et al. (1999). See: Bandura, A., Pastorelli, C., Barbaranelli, C., & Caprara, G.V. (1999). Self-efficacy pathways to childhood depression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 258-269.

Figure F.1: Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C)

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

Directions for use

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey provides a quick indication of student attitudes toward reading. It consists of 20 items and can be administered to an entire classroom in about 10 minutes. Each item presents a brief, simply worded statement about reading, followed by four pictures of Garfield. Each pose is designed to depict a different emotional state, ranging from very positive to very negative.

Administration

Begin by telling students that you wish to find out how they feel about reading. Emphasize that this is *not* a test and that there are no "right" answers. Encourage sincerity.

Distribute the survey forms and, if you wish to monitor the attitudes of specific students, ask them to write their names in the space at the top. Hold up a copy of the survey so that the students can see the first page. Point to the picture of Garfield at the far left of the first item. Ask the students to look at this same picture on their own survey form. Discuss with them the mood Garfield seems to be in (very happy). Then move to the next picture and again discuss Garfield's mood (this time, a *little* happy). In the same way, move to the third and fourth pictures and talk about Garfield's moods—a little upset and very upset. It is helpful to point out the position of Garfield's *mouth*, especially in the middle two figures.

Explain that together you will read some statements about reading and that the students should think about how they feel about each statement. They should then circle the picture of Garfield that is closest to their own feelings. (Emphasize that the students should respond according to their own feelings, not as Garfield might respond!) Read each item aloud slowly and distinctly; then read it a second time while students are thinking. Be sure to read the item *number* and to remind students of page numbers when new pages are reached.

Scoring

To score the survey, count four points for each leftmost (happiest) Garfield circled, three for each slightly smiling Garfield, two for each mildly upset Garfield, and one point for each very upset (rightmost) Garfield. Three scores for each student can be obtained: the total for the first 10 items, the total for the second 10, and a composite total. The first half of the survey relates to attitude toward recreational reading; the second half relates to attitude toward academic aspects of reading.

Interpretation

You can interpret scores in two ways. One is to note informally where the score falls in regard to the four nodes of the scale. A total score of 50, for example, would fall about mid-way on the scale, between the slightly happy and slightly upset figures, therefore indicating a relatively indifferent overall attitude toward reading. The other approach is more formal. It involves converting the raw scores into percentile ranks by means of Table 1. Be sure to use the norms for the right grade level and to note the column headings (Rec = recreational reading, Aca = academic reading, Tot = total score). If you wish to determine the average percentile rank for your class, average the raw scores first; then use the table to locate the percentile rank corresponding to the raw score mean. Percentile ranks cannot be averaged directly.

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School _____ Grade _____ Name _____

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

1.	How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?				
2.	How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?				
3.	How do you feel about reading for fun at home?				
4.	How do you feel about getting a book for a present?				

















Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

5.	How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?				
6.	How do you feel about starting a new book?				
7.	How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?				
8.	How do you feel about reading instead of playing?				













Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

9.	How do you feel about going to a bookstore?				
10.	How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?				
11.	How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?				
12.	How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?				

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

13.	How do you feel about reading in school?			
				
14.	How do you feel about reading your school books?			
				
15.	How do you feel about learning from a book?			
				
16.	How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?			
				

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

17.	How do you feel about stories you read in reading class?				
18.	How do you feel when you read out loud in class?				
19.	How do you feel about using a dictionary?				
20.	How do you feel about taking a reading test?				

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Scoring Sheet

Student Name _____

Teacher _____

Grade _____ Administration Date _____

<u>Scoring Guide</u>	
4 points	Happiest Garfield
3 points	Slightly smiling Garfield
2 points	Mildly upset Garfield
1 point	Very upset Garfield

Recreational reading

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Raw Score: _____

Academic reading

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Raw Score: _____

Full scale raw score (Recreational + Academic): _____

Percentile ranks: Recreational

..... Academic

..... Full scale

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Survey designed by Dennis J. Keer, Wichita State University

Figure F.2. Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

APPENDIX G

RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

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