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Introducing Cultural Literacy Content Into Established, Skills-Based Literacy Instruction

By

Barbara Lewis Penny-James

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor P. David Pearson, Chair

Professor Heinrich Mintrop

Professor Ula Taylor

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## **ABSTRACT**

Introducing Cultural Content Into Established, Skills-Based Literacy Instruction: A

Design/Action Research Study

by

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Doctor of Education

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As the growing number of students of diverse linguistic backgrounds attend U. S. public schools, educators and policymakers are faced with the daunting challenges of finding ways to work with culturally diverse students to ensure educational quality and equity for all, especially students of color. Answers to the question of how to improve literacy achievement seem as elusive as ever to educators. The literacy achievement of students of color became a national focus as never before with the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. NCLB legislation with the fidelity to test-driven accountability and instructional prescription, encouraged districts to adopt strict programs around basic skills and consequently fostered a pedagogy around the narrow acquisition of these skills. An alternative to this approach is culturally relevant pedagogy. There is a substantial body of professional literature that addresses the kinds of pedagogy that best meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. This design/action research study is an attempt to merge the two approaches. I developed the design that infuses Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills and interpretive skills into lessons using multicultural literature. With a focus on teacher learning, six upper elementary teachers participated in the study as a Professional Learning Community (study group) for two iterations of six sessions each. With guidance from the researcher, the teachers developed infusion lessons for the two dimensions as co-developers of the design.

For this study, I used qualitative methods and developed a theory of action to guide the design. I consulted the professional literature to identify the goals to ascertain the impact of the infusion design on teacher learning and to better understand the process of learning in a teacher study group. The potential impact of this approach was to transform teachers' assumptions, beliefs, instructional practices and to inspire cultural awareness and sensitivity. Overall, the design contributed to cultural awareness and sensitivity, ability to infuse Standards-aligned

Comprehension Skills and moderate skills of implementing interpretive skills with the multiethnic literature. Based on the findings, the design's theory of action is basically sound, although teacher learning needs to be enhanced. These findings inform potential design modifications as well as implications this study has for teacher learning in a professional learning community.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to the fond memory of my parents who instilled in me a love of learning, to the steadfast patience of my husband Frederick and to the support and encouragement from my two sons and my five brothers and sisters.

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## Chapter 1: Professional Knowledge Base

### Introduction

The growing numbers of students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the U.S. urban schools presents educators with unprecedented challenges. The dramatic shift in the demographic landscape of the United States is pronounced in public schools. The startling changes in student population have, therefore, challenged schools and educators to find ways to work with culturally diverse students to ensure educational quality and equity for all. After decades of failing students of color, particularly in literacy, the American educational system is still in search of instructional methods that positively affect the academic achievement of Latino, African American, Native American and Hawaiian students. No challenge has been more daunting for many educators and policymakers who are seeking to eliminate the disparities in educational opportunities for all students, especially those whose ancestors have been marginalized and poorly served by the educational system in America. The literacy achievement of students of color has become a recent national focus as never before with the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Yet answers to the questions of how to improve the literacy achievement of our students of color seem as elusive as ever to many educators. The large literacy gap between White and minority students is generally viewed as a failure of the American educational system (Hollie, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2002). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Legislation, with the push for test-driven accountability and increasing instructional prescription, encouraged districts to adopt rigid programs around basic skills and consequently fostered a pedagogy around the narrow acquisition of these basic skills. Thus, one answer to the problem of the achievement gap is prescription around basic literacy skills. An alternative to this approach is culturally responsive pedagogy. One is skills-based and the other is content-based. One stresses formal skills, the other the experiential substance of multiethnic texts. How to merge the two is my design challenge. I propose to design the process, strategies and protocols necessary to teach upper elementary grade teachers how to infuse culturally relevant content into established skills-based literacy instruction with the impact or outcome of increasing teacher knowledge and skills along with changing attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and practice in their classrooms.

Why should we be concerned about this infusion? There is a substantial body of professional literature that addresses the kinds of pedagogy that best meets the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Au, 2006; Garcia 1994; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001, Villegas, 1991). The purpose of culturally responsive teaching is to maximize learning for students who have been traditionally failed by the American educational system (Villegas, 1999; Hollie, 2006). By infusing culturally relevant teaching into the existing skills-based pedagogy, it is anticipated that students of color will learn the acquired reading skills while at the same time become more engaged with content that is better tailored to their intellectual interests. So what is culturally relevant pedagogy?

From an educational perspective, culturally responsive education can be defined as educating all students by incorporating their culture and emotional and social experiences into the teaching and learning process.

Classroom teachers in public education, who utilize culturally relevant pedagogy as a framework for their instruction, incorporate the cultural knowledge, prior experiences and frames of reference of students of color into literacy teaching and learning and make instruction more relevant to and effective for their students (Ladson-Billings, 2001). The problem is that 70% to 95% of all urban school classroom instruction utilizes state mandated textbooks or basal readers (Gay, 2000) that often exclude these relevant experiences. Understanding, valuing and respecting the array of different cultures and languages represented in their classrooms helps educators adopt strategies for teaching literacy that will encourage and support student achievement.

To act on these ideas, teachers need to deconstruct and transform some longstanding pedagogical assumptions, beliefs, and practices. Most teachers do not deliberately intend to discriminate against students of color. Instead, their acts of discrimination are deeply embedded within the fabric of educational routines (Gay, 2000). Research evidence, although not as extensive as it needs to be, consistently demonstrates that when teaching and learning are filtered through the cultural frameworks of students of color, their achievement improves substantially (Au, 2006; Garcia, 1994; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Unfortunately, many teachers do not know about the culture or lived experiences of their students of color. Nor do they know how to select and teach culturally relevant materials to students because of the mandated, prescriptive nature of instructional programs around basic literacy skills. Consequently, culturally different students are often not fully engaged during reading/literacy instruction. Furthermore, many teachers have not received professional development in the use of literature and therefore cannot identify reading skills, text features and interpretive potential in an unscripted text such as multiethnic literature.

## **Purpose**

### **Consulting the Research and Professional Knowledge Base**

This design challenge required that I review available knowledge in various fields including culturally relevant pedagogy, cultural competence, cultural awareness and sensitivity, prescriptive teaching, teacher learning, professional learning communities and the selection of authentic multiethnic literature.

### **Cultural Proficiency (Sensitivity)**

With the growing diversity of the student body in United States public schools, it is increasingly imperative that teachers have and continually develop a cultural proficiency that enables them to connect with, respond to and interact effectively with their students. Teachers and administrators in the public school systems come in contact with a wide variety of sub-cultures and are at the forefront of the challenges of bringing diverse groups together within a large American society.

Cultural proficiency refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. It is a model for shifting the culture of the school or district. It is a model for both individual transformation and organizational change. Lindsey (2009) asserts that cultural proficiency is a mind-set, a worldview, a way a person or organization make assumptions for

effectively describing, responding to and planning for issues that arise in diverse environments. For some people, cultural proficiency is a paradigm shift from viewing cultural differences as problematic to learning how to interact effectively with other cultures. Cultural proficiency enables educators, schools and districts to respond effectively to people who differ from one another. It comprises four components: (a) awareness of one's own world view, (b) attitude toward cultural differences, (c) knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews and (d) cross cultural skills.

Six points along a cultural proficiency continuum are proposed by Lindsey, et al, 2009, to indicate unique ways of seeing and responding to difference. Numbers one through three on the continuum are comprised of unhealthy values, behaviors, policies and practices that emerge from the barriers and progress to the healthy values while numbers three through six indicate a move toward cultural proficiency.

1. **Cultural destructiveness**—seeking to eliminate the cultures of others in all aspects of the school and in relationship to the community served.
2. **Cultural incapacity**—trivializing and stereotyping other cultures; seeking to make the cultures of others appear to be wrong or inferior to the dominant culture.
3. **Cultural blindness**—not noticing or acknowledging the culture of others and ignoring the discrepant experiences of cultures within the school; treating everyone in the system the same way without recognizing the needs that require differentiated interaction. The three points at the other end of the continuum are informed by the guiding principles of cultural proficiency and represent healthy individual values and behaviors, in addition to healthy organizational policies and practices.
4. **Cultural precompetence**—Increasing awareness of what you and the school don't know about working in diverse settings. At this level of development, you and the school can move in a positive, constructive direction, or you can falter, stop and possibly regress.
5. **Cultural competence**—Aligning your personal values and behaviors and the school's policies and practices in a manner that is inclusive of cultures that are new or different from yours and the school's and enables healthy and productive interactions.
6. **Culturally proficiency**—Holding the vision that you and the school are instruments for creating a socially just democracy and interacting with your colleagues, your students, their families and their communities as an advocate for lifelong learning to effectively serve the educational needs of all cultural groups.

Anderson, (1984), posits that teachers must understand that they are “cultural workers” not just neutral professionals using skills on a culturally detached playing field. A culturally proficient educator has the ability to infuse cultural knowledge into his instructional program and engages in culturally relevant pedagogy.

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP)**

Several well known researchers in the field of education have offered a variety of related labels and nuances of definitions for culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally coherent instruction, culturally responsive teaching, culturally congruent and cultural proficiency and culturally relevant pedagogy are the most commonly used labels in the research literature. Likewise there is a plethora of definitions. The combined definitions posited by Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1994), are used in this proposal. Gay asserts that:

Culturally relevant teaching uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective [for students]... It teaches to and through strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming.” (p. 29)

Ladson-Billings defines it as “a pedagogy that empowers students, intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge, to impart skills and to change attitudes”. (p. 17-18)

Au (2006), Villegas (1991) and several other researchers suggest that the cultures of schools and cultures of different ethnic groups are often not compatible and contribute to inequities. This cultural discontinuity refers to a lack of cohesion between the two cultures. Traditional schools in the United States perpetuate cultural discontinuity for students from different cultures by promoting only the perspectives, values, beliefs, attitudes and traditions of European American cultures. One crucial strategy to eliminate discontinuity is the use of culturally relevant texts for literacy instruction, which is defined as texts where mention is made of events or information that is within the students’ experience and which draws upon their background and culture (Gay, 2002; Au, 2006).

Beginning in the 1980’s, considerable research that reflected a shift from the cultural deficit model, which blamed the victims or students, to a culturally different paradigm, began to appear, which included the language and culture of students of diverse cultures and the role of these factors on students’ literacy skills development (Gay, 2000; Hale 2001; G.P. Smith, 1998; Villegas and Lucas, 2002). Au and Kawakami (1994) assert that if lessons are conducted in a manner responsive to the home culture, student’s learning opportunities will be improved. Their research indicated positive results when teachers accepted and built on students’ home language and culture. The researchers concluded that multicultural literature is a powerful medium that can help students construct varying perspectives about their culture and roles in society as well as provide opportunities for understanding other cultural surroundings, insights, traditions and beliefs of others (Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001; Banks, 2003; Au, 2006). It cultivates an awareness of other cultural customs and values and promotes communication with people from other countries/cultures.

Culturally knowledgeable teachers infuse multicultural literature into the curriculum. Despite omission and opposition to culturally relevant teaching, CRP has continued to gain the interest of researchers dating back to the civil rights movement of the 60’s. It draws its theoretical bases from multicultural education based on Bank’s (2003) conception of equity in education and concerns for the racial and ethnic inequalities that are apparent in learning opportunities and outcomes that continue to prevail. The multicultural movement started in the 1970’s focusing on African American students, the ideas on which culturally responsive teaching are based, and has been a major part of education for and about cultural diversity from its inception. Consequently, a different pedagogical paradigm is necessary to improve the performance of underachieving students from various ethnic groups—one that teaches to and through their personal and cultural strengths. Ladson-Billings (1992), coined the term “culturally relevant pedagogy” to describe the need for this paradigm shift. Several school reformers have included culturally relevant pedagogy as their major agenda for change in American urban schools.

## **Prescriptive Approaches**

Opposing culturally relevant pedagogy, proponents of the skills-based, prescriptive approach to literacy, specifically Open Court Reading (OCR Teachers Manual, 2002), would argue that their research-based prescriptive approach is the only reading program that provides an educational program based on scientific research and nearly forty years of practical classroom experience. The authors of OCR also assert that their program has been proven successful in schools nationwide due to the systematic, explicit instruction and the use of a literature rich environment. Claims such as these notwithstanding, our nations' students of color continue to lag behind their white and some Asian counterparts in literacy development.

## **Prescriptive Programs**

With the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Legislation, states and school systems responded to the pressures to meet accountability measures by adopting curricula that aligned with state accountability tests and were skill-based and prescriptive. Programs can be either a particular curriculum such as Open Court Reading or a Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program such as Success for All, authored by Slavin (2002). In California, the only two elementary reading programs endorsed by the state, are considered to be prescriptive. Both programs provide curricula that purportedly aligns to the state standards and accountability assessment, teaching guides with instructional scripts that lay out how to teach lessons and pacing guides that stipulate when to teach specific content and skills. The theory is that research-based, prescriptive programs implemented with a high degree of fidelity can develop more effective practices, transform schools and result in higher achievement. Ben-Peretz, (1990), who argues that this notion of replication disregards that curricula that has potential beyond its developer-intended use, that it is subject to interpretation by the teacher and that no curriculum can contain everything. She asserts that teachers as co-developers of learning materials can intentionally bring their own meaning, content knowledge and experiences to curriculum to bring a deeper, more complex, more authentic learning experience to students (Ben-Peretz, 1990). For example, in California schools, teachers are likely to find that English Language Learners need more than the scripted strategies in the teacher guides geared towards mainstream students to engage and scaffold reading comprehension. Yet, they are directed to teach completely to these guides.

The tension between the need for a specified curriculum and teacher autonomy is further played out when one considers teachers' own sense of themselves as professionals and how teachers learn and grow. Valencia's (2006) case study research suggests that the demand for fidelity to the scripted program inhibited their professional growth. One case study teacher who welcomed the support of a highly scripted literacy program with mandated fidelity, did not extend her knowledge and instructional skills to meet the needs of her students beyond narrow boundaries after three years of teaching. A second teacher, teaching a highly scripted program but with more latitude for adaptation, could not after three years, extend the scripted strategies to supporting her students in reading novels (Valencia, 2006). In other words, these teachers' professional growth may have been stunted. It appears that implementation of strategies that promote basic skills may be easier to implement completely than strategies to promote complex learning and higher level thinking. (Correnti & Rowan, 2007; Furtak, et al. 2008).



## **Teacher Learning**

An era of accountability, standards and comprehensive school reform in the past decade has placed tremendous pressure on teachers---the key to school change. Accepting educational reforms on a deeper sustainable level requires that teachers unlearn some conventional practices, learn new concepts of teaching and have substantial understanding of the subject matter itself. To meet this challenge, teachers need extensive learning opportunities to actively engage in the practices and experiences they create for their students. Darling-Hammond (1970) asserts that teachers need sustained time with their colleagues to share knowledge, to build practice, to critique ideas, to polish lessons, to build curriculum, to create assessments, to score students work and so on. She adds, "The most powerful learning for the improvement of already skilled teachers is the fine tuning of practice that can only occur in collegial settings."

Culturally competent instructional action is essential to achieving genuine commitment to educational equity, justice and excellence for students of color. Teachers who genuinely care about students are persistent in their expectations of high performance from them and are diligent in their efforts to ensure that these expectations are accomplished. They understand that a true commitment to transforming educational opportunities for their ethnically diverse students requires that they have knowledge of the cultural characteristics of different ethnic groups and how culture affects teaching and learning as well as pedagogical skills for translating this knowledge into new teaching/learning opportunities and experiences. It requires staff development for teachers that includes cultural knowledge and instructional skills in combination with personal self-reflection and self-monitoring techniques for teaching to and about ethnic diversity.

## **Professional Development**

High quality professional development has three major areas of focus: content, context and design. The content of professional development must be centered on student learning and emphasize active teaching, assessment, observation and reflection rather than abstract discussions (Lenz, 2009). Professional development that focuses on student learning and helps teachers develop the pedagogical skills to teach specific kinds of content has strong positive effects on practice. The context of professional development should be integrated with school improvement. Professional development is more effective when schools approach it not in isolation as in the one-shot workshop approach, but rather as a consistent component of a school reform effort. The third element of effective professional development is the design, which requires active, sustained learning. The design of the professional development focuses on how teachers learn. Active learning opportunities allow teachers to adjust or change their teaching and not simply layer new strategies on top of the existing ones. Most schools, according to Lenz (2009), have two out of three essential elements necessary for effective professional development. The professional development is focused on student learning and is connected to school improvement. What is absent is how the initiative will be sustained over time.

Sawchuk (2009) reports on an extensive review of the research literature on professional development. The review included a synthesis of results from those studies employing the most scientifically rigorous research methodologies. The synthesis found that training programs of a certain duration--30 to 100 hours of time over six months to a year---positively influenced student achievement while those with fewer than 14 hours had little effect. The authors also used qualitative research to outline common features of professional development that appear to be

associated with changes in teacher practices. Such features include a sustained curriculum that is connected to teachers' classroom practices, focuses on particular content, and fosters collaboration among school staff.

### **Professional Learning Communities**

The new paradigm for sustaining quality professional development in schools is provided through a variety of methods of support. One of these methods involves creating Professional Learning Communities (PLC) among the instructional staff. In this model, teachers work together and engage in continual dialogue to examine their practices and student performance and to develop and implement more effective instructional practices.

Research on effective professional development also highlights the importance of collaborative and collegial learning environments that help develop communities of practice able to promote school change beyond the individual classrooms (Darling Hammond, 2009; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). When whole grade levels, schools or departments are involved, they create a critical mass for changed instruction at the school level. Teachers serve as support groups for one another in improving practice. The productive teacher learning communities studied by Little (1990) engaged in what she came to call joint work—"thoughtful, explicit examination of practices and their consequences" (p. 520) that emerged from collaboration on concrete tasks such as curriculum development, problem solving around students and their learning, and peer observations. These communities created norms that valued mutual aid above privacy. They shared responsibility for instructional improvement and supported teachers' initiative and leadership with regard to professional practice.

Assisting teachers in becoming culturally competent requires that they participate in collaborative quality professional development. If improving the quality of instruction for students of color is the goal, professional development is the place to start. While teacher learning may take many forms, several years of research indicates that teacher study groups or professional learning communities are becoming the preferred and most effective method of professional development in the United States because of the interactive format and the myriad of positive outcomes that result from collaborating on issues and concerns specific to their respective schools and students, especially in large, multiethnic urban settings. Birchak, et al (1998), proposes that study groups encourage collegiality among educators while simultaneously providing an environment for discussion and feedback. In 1989, Susan Rosenholtz's study of 78 schools found "learning enriched schools were characterized by "collective commitments to student learning in collaborative settings...where it assumed improvement of teaching is a collective rather than individual enterprise and that analysis, evaluation and experimentation in the company of colleagues are conditions required for teacher improvement. In 1993, Judith Warren Little and Milbrey McLaughlin shared their research that concluded that the most effective schools and the most effective departments within schools operated as strong professional communities characterized by:

- Shared norms
- Collegial relationships
- Reflective practice
- Collaborative cultures
- Ongoing technical inquiry regarding effective practice
- Mutual support and mutual obligation

### Professional growth

Sharon Kruse and Karen Seashore Louis (1996) reported their findings that schools most effective for improving student achievement operated as professional learning communities characterized by:

Reflective dialogue

De-privatization of practice

Collective focus on student learning

Collaboration

Shared norms and values

Other researchers have also documented the manner in which curricular conversations and opportunities to exchange ideas about methodological and pedagogical practices can transform the classroom practices of teachers. Implementation of new practices requires time to learn and plan. Teachers need ongoing planning time as well as feedback, self-reflection and continuous support to translate what they learned into a new program or a new piece of curriculum and time to teach it, discuss, evaluate and reflect as they implemented specific changes overtime (Sleeter, 1992).

Researchers who have studied the process of forming a community have found that it is often slow and fraught with conflicts, silences and misunderstandings. Persistently working through and reflecting on these challenges creates avenues for community to emerge. Grossman, Wineburg and Woolworth (2001) documented how social studies and English teachers in one urban high school developed a professional learning community. Participants gradually began to accept shared responsibility for individual growth, formed a group identity and norms of interaction, and learned to use differences and conflict productively.

A number of different types of collaborative, job embedded professional learning activities can improve teacher practice and student achievement such as peer observations, critical friends, peer review of videotaped lessons, analysis of student work and student data and study groups.

When professional communities form study groups to study, practice and research together, they can make meaning of new strategies and concepts and can support each other in implementing new ideas. Opportunities for self-reflection, sharing “what works with colleagues and renewal of knowledge about new research in teaching and learning should be offered to all teachers. The process of learning with colleagues in small, trusting, supportive groups makes the difference. Professional learning communities can change practice and transform student learning when they have in place the processes and structures that make joint work possible and desirable (Louis & Kruse, 1996). My theory of action frames the design research project and proposes that the new practices, specifically culturally relevant pedagogy, ought to work as teachers gain greater knowledge and skills as participants in the professional learning community.

## **Chapter 2: Theory of Action**

Chris Argyris asserts that “theories of action are conceptions of why a particular practice or policy ought to work” (Argyris & Schon, 1978). In this section, I outline the theory of action for my infusion project behind the proposed use of multicultural literature by teachers. The theory of action for this design development study consists of a number of steps. In the theory of the problem, I define the problem and show what factors contribute to its production and reproduction. In the theory of change, I discuss what kinds of learning processes are needed to remedy the problem. In the theory of intervention, I discuss the kinds of activities that presumably help these learning processes along. In the theory of implementation, I discuss the feasibility of my design in the implementation context. Next I explain the problem that my design attempts to address and postulate the reasons why teachers do not use ethnic literature to engage students of color. Then I propose a theory of change to describe what dispositions need to be addressed in the change process. I continue with a discussion of the proposed interventions that are necessary for effective implementation. Finally I conclude with a description of intended outcomes. Throughout, I draw from research and practical considerations to develop my theory of action as outlined in Table 2.

### **Explaining the Problem**

Instead of affirming and validating students’ cultures through reading culturally relevant texts, urban schools have gone in another direction. In this day and age, reading continues to be commonly taught with scripted texts. This is the case in East Riverside Unified School District (ERUSD), a pseudonym, which in 2002, adopted Open Court Reading as its Reading/Language Arts Program, characterized as a scripted, prescriptive program. The first several years of the adoption involved a planned effort to ensure that teachers implemented the program completely. The plan included frequent classroom visits from district literacy coaches, district administrators, state consultants and weekly visits by principals. Site Literacy Coaches hired by Reading First Federal Grant funds and trained by the California State Department of Education staff, were also required to monitor the implementation of program components with various checklists and feedback mechanisms. The result was that many teachers, especially those who had entered the teaching profession during the past nine years, have been mainly taught reading instruction through the state mandated, scripted texts or basal readers and do not know how to interpret literature or how to teach the skills without relying on the scripted teacher’s manual. Consequently, many teachers are not familiar with the range of multicultural texts available at the grade level they teach or the opportunities to use student’s cultural heritage when planning lessons or curriculum (Gay, 2000). To overcome these challenges, I next propose a theory of change.

### **Theory of Change**

My theory of change addresses those teacher dispositions, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and practices that must be transformed in order to implement culturally relevant pedagogy. Since children’s literature plays an important role in classroom instruction, in my theory of action, it plays a central role in turning teachers’ negative perspectives of students into positive appreciation of their language, culture and learning potential. Through lesson planning for

transfer of vocabulary and comprehension skills, and interpretive possibilities, group sharing, discussions and reflective journal writing, during the process of infusing multiethnic literature into the curriculum, it is anticipated that teachers will accomplish three objectives as follows: 1) come to understand that literature is about the human condition and cultural

Table 2.1 Logic Model of the Study

The Problem: Literacy instruction within the skill-based curriculum is devoid of culturally relevant content. As a result, the diverse student population is often not engaged during the literacy lesson.

Problem Etiology	Theory of Change	Theory of Intervention	Theory of Implementation	Outcomes/Impact
Many teachers do not know other people's reality and may have misconceptions and biases about specific ethnic groups.	Teacher will expand his socio-cultural and multicultural consciousness and awareness.	Teachers will discuss culturally relevant texts as a vehicle for reflection on personal attitudes about race/ethnicity/social justice/anti-racism issues	1. Teachers will be motivated to participate in the study of culturally relevant pedagogy. 2. Stories will be selected by the researcher, based on an anti-bias checklist. 3. Principals of participants will be willing to permit teachers to substitute or supplement Open Court Reading stories with authentic ethnic literature.	Teachers will demonstrate greater cultural sensitivity, a transformation of beliefs, assumptions and attitudes about their culturally diverse students and the value of multiethnic literature
Many teachers lack an appreciation of what it means to be a member of a marginalized group and may have low expectations of their students of color.	Teachers learn about the reality of marginalized groups.	Teachers will learn about cultural reading strategies to help students gain access to the literary content of the text.	4. There will be funds, resources and time to support the PLC. 5. Minimum qualifications of participants will be: • Two years of	Teachers will become adept at interrogating the basal text for cultural omissions and become aware of the need to supplement the basal text with multiethnic literature based on the their findings.
Most teachers have taught mainly through scripted text and are not familiar with the range of multicultural texts available at their grade level.	Teachers understand that literature is about the human and cultural experiences. Teachers have a greater range of authentic multicultural texts available to them and their students.	Teachers will learn about the interpretive potential of texts: what		Teachers will be able to identify and use interpretive skills for the
Many teachers do not know how to interpret literature.	Teachers learn how to read and interpret multiethnic literature			

	through a socio-cultural lens. Once teachers are sensitized to the deeper experiential or cultural levels of text, they are better able to identify these layers or infuse them into their students' texts	they can provide in terms of aesthetics and emotional responses.	teaching experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic classroom management skills</li> <li>• Experience and training in the use of OCR program</li> </ul>	multicultural issues in a text as well as the aesthetic and emotional tone of the text
Many teachers have not had the experience creating interpretive skills and transferring Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills in an unscripted text	Teachers have knowledge of skills transfer and interpretive skills.	Teachers will identify Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills and develop interpretive skills and then transfer identified skills to the literature.		Teachers will be able to transfer Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills from the OCR Unit of study to the culturally relevant texts.
Many teachers continue to work in isolation without the benefit of collaborative problem solving	Teachers learn to solve problems together in Professional Learning Communities (study group)	Researcher will form teacher professional learning communities/teacher study group to accomplish the steps listed above.	Teacher will collaborate to build background knowledge, new practices, beliefs, attitudes,	Teachers will be inspired to establish new study groups and build capacity in their school or district.

experience, 2) learn about the reality of marginalized, demoralized groups and 3) expand their socio-cultural knowledge and multicultural consciousness and awareness. Once teachers learn how to read and interpret multiethnic literature through the social cultural lens and are aware of the deeper experiential or cultural layers of a text, they will be better able to identify and infuse these layers into the students' text.

The change process will begin in the twelve week study group sessions as teachers gain cultural self knowledge, share their own cultural stories and experiences, share others experiences, reflect, inquire, question, engage in deep courageous conversations, give and receive feedback, plan and implement their plans in the classroom with their diverse students. Two target teachers will also critique their video taped lesson.

The change process will also result in teachers having a greater awareness and range of authentic multicultural texts available to them and their students. In addition, they will experience new knowledge of skills transfer and text interpretation by identifying content subject to interpretation, and participating in transfer activities as a study group as well as individually. Themes such as cultural/racial stereotypes, social justice issues, economic justice, racism, privilege, tolerance and historical issues, plus feelings and emotions may be identified and explored through the use of ethnic literature. Accepting new educational change on a deeper level requires that teachers unlearn some conventional practices, learn new concepts of teaching and acquire substantial knowledge about cultures other than their own.

Teachers will also acquire knowledge and strategies for transferring Open Court Reading skills, text features, and state standards into the selected multiethnic text. Themes used in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade Open Court Reading anthology—"Risks, Consequences" and "Survival" in a "Changing America"—will serve as one of the selection criteria for choosing the anti-bias multiethnic texts used in this design study/action research project. By engaging in dialogue and reflection, participants will learn how to talk about ethnic and cultural differences, acquire a heightened level of cultural sensitivity and critical consciousness, reevaluate cultural assumptions underlying behavior and identify themes, ideas and issues that have generative potential for pedagogical renewal in an atmosphere conducive to cross-racial discussions and the constructive confrontation of misinformation and conflict. The theory of intervention and implementation for accomplishing the transformation from scripted basal texts to the use of multiethnic literature is explained in the next section.

### **Theory of Intervention and Implementation**

This section describes the activities that will encourage the learning processes that I assume teachers will have to engage in in order to grow out of the scripted, often mandated, stifling, prescriptive basal texts to teaching multiethnic literacy, incorporating the basic skills and changing the participants' attitudes, beliefs and assumptions about students of color and their learning potential.

Assisting teachers in becoming culturally competent requires that they participate in collaborative, quality professional development. If improving the quality of instruction for students of color is the goal, professional development is the place to start. While teacher learning may take many forms, my discussion of the literature in the previous sections asserts that teacher study groups or professional learning communities are useful and powerful vehicles of learning.



During the study group sessions for this research project, teachers begin by discussing one of their favorite pieces of literature and why it resonates with them. They then discuss the use of culturally relevant texts as a vehicle for reflection on personal attitudes about race/ethnicity, social justice and antiracism issues. Additionally and equally important, teachers 1) learn about cultural reading strategies (Hollie, 2002), to help students gain access to the literary content of the text,(See Appendix 2) learn about the interpretive potential of the text-what they can provide in terms of aesthetic and emotional responses and 3) identify standards-based comprehension skills from OCR (ie. symbolism, figurative language, hyperbole, imagery, author's purpose, prediction, etc.) attached to reading strategies and then identify and transfer those features to the selected multiethnic literature text(s). Accepting this new educational change on a deeper level requires that teachers unlearn some conventional practices, learn new concepts of teaching and gain substantial knowledge of literacy practices. To meet these challenges, teachers need extensive learning opportunities that actively engage them in the practices and experiences they create for their students. Those extensive opportunities are afforded by teacher study groups, as an effective form of professional learning communities (Birchak, B., Conner, C., Crawford, K. M., et al 1998). Intentional collective learning and its application, reflection, shared personal practice, as community members gave and received feedback on their practice, are the components and benefits of small group teacher learning.

To initiate the study group process, interested teacher participants were interviewed individually and selected by the researcher for participation in the study group. Teachers, who were inexperienced with culturally relevant pedagogy and who wanted to improve their practice rather than high quality, culturally sensitive instructors will be sought, with recommendations from their principals. Prospective participants must meet the minimum requirements of two years of teaching experience, basic classroom management skills and two or more years of teaching from the mandated basal text—in this case, Open Court Reading (OCR) Series. Given the strict, mandated directive to implement OCR completely, it will be necessary to contact the participants principals to ensure that they are willing to permit their teacher(s) to supplement or replace OCR stories with multiethnic literature. The literature, skills, sequence of the lessons, etc. will be developed by the researcher in advance of the first sessions. Expected revisions will occur during the collaborative study group sessions as teachers share their knowledge, reflections, discussions, inquiry, suggestions and recreate relevant strategies, procedures and practices.

### **Outcome/Impact**

The predicted outcome, after twelve sessions in a professional learning community, focused on learning about and teaching multicultural literature, was that all six teachers would successfully select and use multiethnic literature to improve the performance and achievement scores of their students of color. Armed with the strategies to identify and transfer skills from the OCR unit to the ethnic literature and to apply the interpretive skills introduced in the basal text to the literature, teachers were expected to effectively demonstrate the use of the newly acquired skills in their classrooms as evidenced by the videotaped lessons of the two focus teachers, researchers classroom observations and teachers' reflection journals and collegial conversations. Of equal importance was the predicted outcome that teachers would have a greater understanding of the depth and

complexity of the stories from a historical and social justice point of view and would thereby change their attitudes, beliefs and assumptions about the learning potential of their students of color. The participants were also to have a greater understanding of the importance of infusing the students realities, life experiences and culture into the instructional program and be able to select high quality, authentic, bias-free multiethnic children's literature.

Additionally, it was my hope that teachers would continue to meet as a professional learning community after the student group sessions ended or that they would use their new methods of practice to organize a new learning community at their school sites to continue the work of using ethnic literature as a vehicle to promote cultural/ethnic sensitivity, interpretation of ethnic literature and continue the practice of applying mandated state standards to authentic ethnic literature. Review of the lesson plans and a pre and post-impact measure were used to determine effectiveness.

## Chapter 3: Intervention and Research Design

### Design of the Professional Learning Community (Study Groups)

Six sessions were well planned, focused and followed with meaningful reflection and feedback. As the design researcher, I taught the criteria, strategies, transposition of basic skills, interpretive possibilities and recognition and teaching of the complexity and the cultural depth of the stories. As a bi-product of learning how to recognize depth and complexity, teachers were expected to change attitudes, assumptions, beliefs and practices. The steps employed were subdivided into six two hour lessons outlined as follows:

**Session 1:** Introductions, norms for group interaction and commitment, goals, an overview of the twelve sessions together and other necessary logistics was discussed and agreed to. Teachers began trust and relationship building by verbally sharing one of their favorite stories followed by an explanation of why the story had an emotional connection for them. Dialogue, questions, answers and reflection based on guidelines followed.

**Session 2.** Two objectives were to be achieved during session two. First, teachers were given thirty five minutes to complete the pre-assessment impact measure by creating a lesson plan for chapter one of *Breaking Through* by Francisco Jimenez. Next Self-Knowledge was identified as the first essential knowledge base necessary for teachers of multicultural literature. Before teachers can address the cultural needs of their students, they must first become aware of the influence of their own culture. Haberman and Post-(1998) define self-knowledge as a “thorough understanding of one’s own cultural roots and group affiliations. A teacher’s culture, language, social interests, goals, cognitions, and values, especially if they are different from the student, could conceivably create a barrier to understanding what is best for children from culturally different backgrounds. Teachers can break through this barrier by reflecting on their own self-knowledge and by learning to respect their students’ cultural ways of knowing.” Howard (2010) asserts that one of the fundamental elements of cultural competence is the development of ongoing critical self-reflection. This requires education practitioners to engage in one or more difficult processes: honest self-assessment, critique and evaluation of one’s thoughts, behaviors, cultural patterns, methods of expression and cultural knowledge. Critical reflection and self-assessment can help educators recognize whether they consciously or subconsciously hold deficit-based thoughts of culturally diverse students, distorted views of low-income communities and negative perceptions of students’ families.

Teachers wrote about their cultural self-knowledge in a reflection journal with use of guiding questions developed by the researcher, such as “What is your culture and how does it shape your habits, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions?” (See Appendix E) This exercise was used as a model for writing about self and provided greater depth of knowledge around issues such as race, culture, inequality and tolerance. It also gave teachers an opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs, assumption and cultural connections. Cultural knowledge acquisition was first modeled verbally by the researcher and then practiced so that the teachers could learn how to communicate these interpretative skills to students. Deep interpretation of the literature for adults was also modeled by the researcher and practiced by the participants so that this experience could be extended to the students. The session continued with a

discussion of the results of the teachers' interactions and responses to this exercise. Time was scheduled for teachers to write in their reflection journals and to share their reactions.

**Session 3.** Participating teachers learned how to interrogate a text for its cultural constraints and affordances. The selected multicultural text was collaboratively analyzed for social justice issues, cultural history/traditions, bias, privilege, migration stories, etc. Interpreting the text for cultural depth, cultural constraints and affordances was accomplished with skillful dialogue and interaction among the participants. Reflection journal writing, dialogue, questions and answers followed.

**Session 4.** Teachers were introduced to a procedure for applying Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS) and deep interpretive skills to the selected multiethnic text. A step-by-step procedure was presented and modeled. Teachers then practiced transferring skills to a passage and shared their experiences verbally and in their reflection journals. Questions, answers and dialogue followed.

**Session 5.** The multiethnic literature book for the first iteration of the design/action research study was distributed. Participants planned the week's unit of study using the text to develop lessons for interpreting the text and transferring Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills to the selected story. The researcher modeled, with the participants, the use of strategies for organizing student groups to achieve maximum engagement and lively discussions. Book Club was the suggested method of grouping students to help them develop critical thinking and comprehension abilities while learning to love and appreciate good literature. In Book Club, students respond to books first in writing, and then through discussion in small group and whole class settings. Students learn critical skills for participating effectively: reading skills, writing skills, discussion skills and skills for monitoring their understanding. Using Book Club, teachers teach students skills and strategies that are grouped in four language arts content areas: (1) comprehension, (2) literary aspects, (3) composition and (4) the conventions of our language system (Raphael, 2002). Participants who were inexperienced in organizing and managing students for small group instruction, could use whatever classroom organizational methods that work for them so that the new method (Book Club) does not become a distraction or deterrent from effectively using multiethnic literature.

Participants were given the homework assignment of teaching the unit to their students during the two week period. The Reflection journal was used after each lesson to record the participants' experience with the lesson. The lessons of two target teachers were videotaped. Other teachers were encouraged to volunteer to have the researcher videotape one of their lessons also to be shared and analyzed during the next study group session.

**Session 6.** Participants shared their experiences of teaching the lesson with the study group. What worked and did not work in the areas of transfer of skills and interpretation of the story? Was the lesson carried out with cultural sensitivity? Was the lesson altered? How did students respond to the lessons? Were there unexpected consequences? etc. The two focus teachers shared their videotaped lessons with the other participants who used a feedback form. (Appendix L) Verbal feedback was shared with the two focus teachers.

**Session 7-11.** The second iteration of the design/action research study convened for a second round. During this time a new multiethnic literature book, *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez was used and sessions 2 through 6 was repeated for a total of eleven sessions.

**Session 12.** Using a model-guided practice, independent practice instructional framework, I, as the design researcher, had selected authentic multicultural literature before the study began, using an anti-bias rubric. (Appendix P) Ethnic booklists were distributed, followed by dialogue about the anti-bias features of the books used for the design/action research study. Teachers practiced analyzing passages from texts for bias using the anti-bias rubric.

Gay (2002) posits that the quantity and variety of culturally authentic, validating books, written in authentic voices and providing insider perspective, are numerous for many ethnic groups and rapidly increasing for others. The *Multicultural Review* was a useful resource for many culturally relevant topics including those contained in books, films, videotapes and microfilm.

This was the preliminary plan that sought to examine the use of multicultural literature to transform attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and the knowledge base for six intermediate grade teachers in a large, predominantly low income urban Program Improvement District in Northern California where the majority of students of color were failing at all levels—elementary, middle school and high school. The timeline for this design appears in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Implementation Timeline

Date	Activity	Plan of Action
January 2011- February 2011	Preliminary work in preparation for the Design/Action Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Approval from the Superintendent and Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning</li> <li>b. Information sharing/approval from the four principals whose teachers may participate.</li> <li>c. Recruitment, interviews with potential participants, final selection.</li> <li>d. Collect/purchase materials, supplies, two multiethnic literature books</li> </ul>
Thursday, March 17, 2011	Session I: 120 minutes (suggested time, 4:30-6:00p.m.) Light dinner served	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Introductions, norms, goals, overview of the twelve weeks together, logistics;</li> <li>b. Administer pre Impact Measure</li> <li>c. group participation in discussing their favorite adult book and explaining why it is a favorite--as a trust building activity,</li> <li>d. questions/answers, reflection; homework-guiding questions for self-knowledge.</li> </ul>
March 30, 2011	Session II: 120 minutes Light dinner served	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Participants reflect on their own self knowledge, e.g., cultural roots, group affiliations, values, beliefs, influences and write this knowledge in their reflection journal. Sharing of self-knowledge is voluntary. (60 min).</li> <li>b. Researcher models deep interpretation of issues related to inequality cultural, racial or social justice based on an excerpt from <u>Richmond Tales</u> by Summer Brenner</li> <li>c. Reflection journal writing, sharing</li> </ul>
April 7, 2011	Session III: 120 minutes Light dinner served	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Participants practice analyzing a text for interpretive skills: e.g. historical references, societal issues, cultural history/traditions, bias, privilege,</li> </ul>

		immigration stories, etc. while building and bridging to the students lived experiences.
		b. Dialogue, questions, answers and journal writing follow.
April 14, 2011	Session IV: 120 minutes Light dinner served	<p>a. Researcher introduces a procedure for transposing identified OCR vocabulary, comprehension standards/skills and text features to a multiethnic text.</p> <p>b. In pairs, participants practice transferring identified skills to a passage and share their results verbally and in writing before sharing.</p> <p>c. Comments, dialogue questions and reflection journal writing follow.</p>
May 12, 2011	Session V: 120 minutes Light dinner served	<p>a. The first multiethnic literature book, selected by the researcher, is distributed.</p> <p>b. Participants jointly plan a week's unit of study. Lessons include interpreting the text for cultural, social justice, equality, etc. issues; transferring skills and text features to the M.C. text make connections to students' cultural funds of knowledge.</p> <p>c. Teachers are encouraged to use Book Club (small grouping instructional strategies) to maximize the use of inquiry, student engagement in lively discussions and writing. Researcher encourages participants to lead this strategy/activity.</p> <p>d. Researcher videotapes two target teachers and others who wish to volunteer to be taped.</p> <p>e. Teachers write the experience in their reflection journal.</p>
June 2, 2011	Session VI: 120 minutes, Light dinner served	<p>a. Participants share their experience of teaching the one week lesson. A Protocol is used to guide the discussion.</p> <p>b. A 30 minute segment of the videotaped lesson is shared with permission from the participant(s).</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Participants provide feedback and discussion of the videotaped lessons.</li> <li>d. Participants are asked to reflect on the six week experience and make suggestions for the second iteration.</li> </ul>
September 8, 2011	<p><i>Second Iteration</i>            Session VII: 120 minute session            Light dinner served.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Review of norms, goals, summary of the first six weeks, overview of the next six sessions.</li> <li>b. Teachers reflect on their cultural self-knowledge with more depth (in writing) and compare this with how their understanding of self has helped to better understand their students' cultures and lived experiences and realities.</li> <li>c. Participants share their new understandings with the group.</li> <li>d. Sharing, discussion and journal reflections follow.</li> </ul>
September 29, 2011	<p>Session VIII: 120 minutes; Light dinner served.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The researcher asks participants to lead the session on interpreting and analyzing a text/passage for societal issues, racial, cultural/historical significance, etc. Participation is encouraged so that they gain experience of interpreting a text for cultural depth and other interpretive potential</li> <li>b. Reflection journal writing, dialogue, questions and answers follow.</li> </ul>
October 13, 2011	<p>Session IX: 120 minutes            Light dinner served.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Strategies for transposing standard-aligned skills are reviewed and modeled by participants in small groups. Participants are encouraged to present additional ideas for transferring OCR skills.</li> <li>b. Participants again practice transferring with a short passage in pairs from a children's story.</li> <li>c. Sharing, journal writing, questions and answers follow.</li> </ul>
October 26, 2011	<p>Session X:            120 minutes            Light dinner served.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The second multiethnic literature book selected by the researcher distributed to participants.</li> <li>b. Participants plan the weeks lesson using the text to develop lessons on</li> </ul>



		<p>interpreting the text, transferring skills to the story. The researcher and participants create the unit collaboratively.</p> <p>c. Book Club strategies are encouraged for teachers who have been effective in using small group strategies for maximum student participation and inquiry.</p> <p>d. Two target teachers are scheduled for videotaping. Others may volunteer to be videotaped.</p> <p>e. Participants are given the assignment of teaching the unit to their students during a two week period.</p> <p>f. Discussion and writing in the Reflection Journals follow.</p>
November 9, 2011	<p>Session XI: 120 minutes A light dinner served</p>	<p>a. Participants share their experience of teaching the unit of study using the second multiethnic book <i>The Circuit</i> by Francisco Jimenez. A protocol developed by the researcher is used to guide the discussion.</p> <p>b. An excerpt of the target teacher's video lesson is critiqued (with permission) using a form (APPENDIX L) developed by the researcher.</p> <p>c. Discussion and reflective writing follow.</p>
November 30, 2011	<p>Session XII: 120 minutes A light dinner served.</p>	<p>a. The post-impact assessment is administered for the first 30 minutes.</p> <p>b. Participants reflect (both in writing and verbally), on what impact the 12 week participation in a Professional Learning Community(study group) had on them—both from the perspective of how they view their students and the professional growth (attitude, beliefs, understandings, skills, instructional practices) gained as a result of participating in the study.</p> <p>c. The researcher initiates a conversation regarding how to select multiethnic literature using an anti-</p>

		<p>bias rubric.</p> <p>d. Participants practice analyzing a passage for bias by using an anti-bias rubric. (APPENDIX P)</p> <p>e. Discussion, reflective writing, questions and answers follow.</p> <p>f. A list of multicultural children's books is distributed for teachers' future use.</p> <p>g. Participants reflect on their future plans to continue the important work of using multiethnic literature to improve their practice for the benefit of their students of color.</p>
December 3, 2011	<p>Session XIII</p> <p>An addendum</p> <p>A light dinner served</p>	<p>a. With the Thanksgiving break and other work demands, participants requested to add a session XIII in order to give the two focused teachers more time to prepare and present a videotaped lesson using the book, <i>The Circuit</i>, by Jimenez.</p> <p>b. Activity (b) and (c) from session XI implemented during this session, which included the video presentations followed by comments and questions by participants.</p>

## Methodology

This section introduces the methodology that was used for this qualitative, transformative, design/action research study. The purpose of this study is to create and use a design to bring about new beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices using multiethnic literature in a study group of six intermediate grade teachers. Teachers learn and practice interpreting and connecting the multicultural text so that it could connect to the lived experiences and emotionality of their students of color while at the same time covering the required reading skills/standards of the state and district-mandated curriculum. My study, which includes participants from multiple ethnicities, represents a more constructivist perspective. Teachers must first become aware of their own personal beliefs and attitudes toward cultures different from their own so that unbiased teaching and attitudes are presented to students during the literacy lessons.

### **Aims of the Design Research Study**

The research that accompanies the design and implementation of my “infusion project” has a twofold aim: To ascertain (1) the impact of the infusion design on teacher learning; and (2) to better understand the process of teacher learning in sustained teacher study groups around literacy instruction. The impact of this instructional approach is to change teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and instructional practices in the classroom. Design research is the most suitable approach for this twofold aim.

Van den Akker (1999) asserts that design research, also referred to as development research, is often initiated for complex innovative tasks for which only a few validated principles are available to structure and support the design and development activities. In those instances, the image and impact of the intervention to be developed is often unclear. Consequently the research focuses on realizing limited but promising examples of those interventions. The aim is not to elaborate on and implement complete interventions but to arrive at prototypes that increasingly meet the innovation purposes and requirements. The process is often cyclic or spiral: analysis, design evaluation and revision activities are iterated until an acceptable balance between ideals and realization has been achieved (Van den Akker, 1999).

More than other research approaches, design development research aims at making both practical and scientific contributions. Van den Akker (1999) asserts that the researchers search for innovative solutions for educational problems in interaction with the practitioners.

While there is an ongoing debate about what constitutes design-based research (Van den Akker et al., 1999) the definition of design-based research proposed by Wang and Hannafin (2005) captures its critical characteristics as follows:

A systematic but flexible methodology aims to improve educational practices through iterative analysis, design, development and implementation. It is based on collaboration among researchers and practitioners in real world settings and leading to contextually-sensitive design principles and theories.

Wang and Hannafin (2005) propose five basic characteristics of design-based research: “pragmatic, grounded, interactive, iterative and flexible; integrative and contextual.” (pps. 5-23) First, design-based research is pragmatic because its goals are solving current real-world problems by designing and enacting interventions as well as extending theories and refining design principles. Second, design based research is grounded in both theory and the real-world context. Third, in terms of research process, design-based

research is interactive, iterative and flexible. Fourth, design-based research is integrative because researchers need to integrate a variety of research methods and approaches from both qualitative and quantitative paradigms, depending on the needs of the research. Fifth, design research is contextualized because research results are “connected with both the design process through which results are generated and the setting where the research is conducted.

This design study fits the criteria listed above. Though my design is structured, it is certainly flexible and subject to course corrections through two iterations. The pragmatic context-use of multiethnic literature with teachers is defined in a real-world context of East Riverside Unified School District. The study groups’ collaborative setting is interactive and iterative. Additionally, design studies have several other key characteristics that support the development of research-based intervention. These characteristics include preliminary investigations, theoretical embedding, empirical testing documentation, analysis and reflection on process and outcome (Van den Akker, 1999). All of these characteristics are present in this study. Preliminary investigations involved consulting the literature for background information and validation of my theory of action. Theoretical embedding refers to the rationale for the intervention based on findings from the research literature and connection to the local context of the problem. Empirical testing is the process by which I investigate the effectiveness of the design. Protocols, in the form of checklists, are used to ensure that my role in the development and investigation of the design is well documented.

The development of this design study is an iterative process. I developed the initial design and piloted the process at my school site during March and April, 2010, in a fifth grade classroom, using the book, *Richmond Tales*. Only one iteration was used during the pilot study. After piloting, I revised some of the design features and elements as necessary. My next step, February, 2011, was to confirm the design/action research study with principals and begin the teacher recruitment and interviews based on principal recommendations and teacher consent. Six teachers were interviewed and selected to participate in the twelve session study. After the completion of the first iteration of the study, I made revisions and repeated the process again for another three months. Action research and qualitative research methods were also used as explained below.

## **Action Research**

Action research methods may be defined as an emergent inquiry process in which applied knowledge is integrated with existing knowledge and applied to solve organizational problems. The central idea is that action research uses a scientific approach to study the resolution of important social or organizational issues together with those who experience the issues directly. Action research works through an iterative, cyclical four step process of consciously and deliberately: (1) identifying a problem, (2) planning, (3) taking action, (4) evaluating the action, leading to further action and so on. (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). It is simultaneously concerned with developing self-help competencies in organizational members. It is an evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry. Action research focuses on research in action, rather than research about action. The central idea is that action research uses a scientific approach to study the resolution of important social or organizational issues together with participants who experience these

issues directly. Action research works through a cyclical four step process of consciously and deliberately (1) planning (2) taking action (3) evaluating the action and (4) preparing for further action. It allowed me, the researcher, to participate in the study group from which I collected data. In action research, the members are co-researchers as the action researcher is working with them so that the problems may be resolved or improved for their system. As action research is a series of unfolding and unpredictable events, the actors need to work together and adapt to the contingencies of the unfolding story. As a change agent, I was able to collect data through engagement and reflection with participants.

### **The Role of Reflection**

Reflection is the process of stepping back from experience to question it and to have insights and understanding with a view to planning further action. It is the critical link between the concrete experience, the judgment and taking new action. Reflection must be brought into the open so that it goes beyond the privately held, taken for granted assumptions and helps the participants to see how their knowledge is constructed. It is the activity that integrates action and research. Reflection on content, process and premise is critical both to the action research and to the meta-learning (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). When content, process and premise reflections are applied to the action research cycle, they form the meta-cycle of inquiry. The content of what is constructed, planned, acted on and evaluated is studied and evaluated. The process of how constructing is undertaken, how action planning flows from that constructing and is conducted, how actions follow and are an implementation of the stated plans and how evaluation is conducted are critical foci of inquiry. There is also premise reflection, which is inquiry into the unstated and often unconscious, underlying assumptions which govern attitudes and behavior, such as might be embedded in language.

Journal writing is a significant mechanism for developing reflective skills. It will help the participants reflect on experiences, see how they think about them and anticipate future experiences before they are undertaken. It enables one to integrate information and experiences and helps the participants to understand their reasoning processes, consequent behavior and so anticipate experiences before embarking on them. Journals may be set to a particular structure. In this design study, the researcher suggested a reflection structure for each session but also allowed for participants' input and in the selection decision. (Appendix C)

### **The Role of the Researcher**

Craig (2009) asserts that action research is considered a field intensive process. A field intensive process is one that requires the researcher to take an active part in the research environment. The researcher is expected to be a participant observer as well as a researcher-as-instrument involved in the research process. A participant observer is a researcher who takes part in all activities of the research and interacts naturally with the participants in the environment, in this case, the study group. The researcher-as-instrument is able to rely on the expertise, draw on experience and use research skills in an unbiased manner in tasks such as conducting interviews and recording notes during observations. It also requires the researcher to collect multiple forms of data, organize the data effectively, analyze the data and use the

data to design an action plan for improvement. All of these features make action research an ideal methodology for my design study.

My perspective as researcher is crucial because it could either slant the analysis or guide it accurately. Therefore, it was necessary for me to examine my perspectives regarding the inquiry before engaging in analysis. I suspended any judgment throughout the research process. I reflected on and removed any biases, perceptions, preconceptions and assumptions regarding the research environment, interactions and related activities before engaging in the analysis process. (Patton, 1990) This was done to ensure valid, informative findings and conclusions by examining the data from a fresh start and by consciously setting aside imposing factors in order to analyze the data objectively.

My role could also be defined as a change agent as I attempted to guide (and be guided by) teachers through a transformation process that would be beneficial to their students. In this regard, I was a concerned researcher and learner who wanted teachers and students to be positively impacted by this design/action research study.

Additionally, during the study group sessions, my role was to establish rapport with the teachers and among group members and model the use of study group facilitation protocols so that the role could be rotated among the six study group members for the duration of the sessions.

## **Qualitative Methods**

This is a study that uses qualitative methods of data collection as well as action research approaches. Qualitative inquiry employs knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry and data collection methods and analysis (Creswell, 2002). Rossman and Rallis, (1998) list the following characteristics which capture both traditional perspectives and the newer advocacy, participatory and self-reflective perspectives of qualitative inquiry.

- Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting, which enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants.
- Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured. Several aspects emerge during a qualitative study which means that the research questions or issues may change and be refined as the inquirer learns what to ask and to whom it should be asked.
- Qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic. It may involve active participation by and sensitivity to the participants in the study. Researchers look for involvement of their participants in data collection and seek to build rapport and credibility with individuals in the study. Additionally, the actual methods of data collection now include a vast array of materials, not just the traditional open-ended observations and interviews. The theory or general pattern of understanding will emerge as it begins with initial codes, develops into broad themes and coalesces into a grounded theory or broad interpretation.
- Qualitative research is interpretive, which means that the researcher makes an interpretation of the data. This includes developing a description of an individual or setting, analyzing the data for themes or categories and finally drawing conclusions about its meanings personally or theoretically.

- The qualitative researcher systemically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his/her biography and how it shapes the study. This introspection and acknowledgement of biases, values and interests typifies qualitative research.
- The researcher uses both inductive and deductive processes. The thinking process is also iterative with cycling back and forth from data collection and analysis to problem formulation and back.
- One or more strategies of inquiry is used by the researcher, as a guide for the procedures in the qualitative study.

Qualitative methodology was the most appropriate paradigm for data collection for this inquiry because it allowed the researcher to use a variety of sources in order to collect information. This investigation was structured in a way that allowed the participants to collaborate in a natural environment. Establishing relationships with the participants required inherently relational methods—interviews, observations and group discussions which were used as forms of data collection. In qualitative research, data sources are typically interviews, observations and documents (Creswell, 2007). By using multiple qualitative data sources, I determined in what ways the experience of study groups' participation and use of multiethnic literature might lead to teacher growth from the perspective of the teacher and the researcher. These data usually come from field work but in the case of this design study, was generated from the researchers' investigation of teachers' implementation of the design intervention.

## **Data Collection**

A systematic and fairly structured data collection approach for this design study was envisioned. Multiple data sources were used. The initial data collection process was to gather baseline data regarding the skills, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, experiences and ethnicity of each participant by using open-ended interview questions developed by the researcher. (Appendix M) One reason for collecting data through open-ended interviews was to capture the precise words of the participants. Before I collected this information, I needed to think through exactly how I intended to make use of the data obtained. At the start of the interview, I told the participants how the data would be used and what confidentiality would be maintained. Verbatim responses were used to provide one of the richest sources of information. To ensure that I had a complete and accurate record, including verbatim quotes, I audio-taped interviews and discussions during the study sessions. A modified version of the open-ended questionnaire was repeated at the end of the project to determine changes in teachers' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. Secondly, direct classroom observations of two selected focus teachers was conducted early in the study to determine cultural awareness in the classroom environment. Additionally, as researcher, I collected data on the intervention in action by using a protocol aligned to the goals and activities of each session as a means of determining if the outcomes of each session were achieved. Audio-taped study group conversations, review of the participants' reflection journals after each session and the reflection journal entries maintained by the researcher were included. Videotaped lessons (as a visual representation of the use of multiethnic literature and text features) after the fifth study group session were viewed and analyzed by the study group participants, with permission from the two focus teachers.

## **Pre and Post-Data Source**

Impact baseline data on teachers competency for infusing cultural content in the skilled based text included two approaches: First at the beginning of the first iteration, teachers developed a lesson plan for Chapter One of the book, *Breaking Through*, by Francisco Jimenez. They were given 30 to 40 minutes to develop a lesson plan that engages students in reading the text. A post-assessment, using the same book and chapter, was used during the last session for a compare and contrast analysis of teacher learning. A rating scale, shown in Table IV, was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the lessons on three dimensions- infusion of standards-aligned comprehension skills, interpretive skills and cultural awareness and sensitivity. The three point scale guided my evaluation and conclusions with a 3 representing YES, a 2 representing SOMEWHAT and a 0 representing NO EVIDENCE.

A comparison of the videotaped lesson of the two focus teachers was the second impact data source. The two focus teachers were videotaped during the fifth session of both iterations for a compare and contrast analysis by the researcher. The same rating scale, Table IV, was used for this evaluation as well.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis generally followed Creswell's steps for analyzing data in a qualitative study. Step one was to organize and prepare the data for analysis (Creswell, 2009) since there were lesson plans to evaluate, many notes from interviews, journals, observation notes from fieldwork, audiotapes to hear and videotapes to view. Next I read through the data to obtain a general idea of the findings—"were the goals of the sessions achieved based on the data?" These preliminary findings helped shape the design development. That is, data from each session became the basis for more detailed analysis of the cumulative data. Analysis of the on-going cumulative data was used to determine if intervention outcomes were achieved.

The amount of data collected to inform inquiry in qualitative action research study can be immense. Therefore the researcher analyzed the data for patterns, themes or categories and assigned the data to data sets. Transcribing, coding and dating were essential to organizing the data before analysis. Coding involved further examination of the data sets and subsets and reorganizing, dissecting, synthesizing and reconnecting the information to create an intricately woven picture of the research phenomenon.

## **Strategies to Ensure Rigor**

Rigor in qualitative approaches and action research refers to how data are generated, gathered, explored and evaluated, and how events are questioned and interpreted through multiple research cycles. How can the researcher be certain that the data is reliable? Sagor (1992) asserts that there is no sure solution, but paying attention to a technique called triangulation will help ensure the quality of the findings. Triangulation involves collecting multiple sources of data for e problem, concern or question being studied. At least three data sources should be used for e problem being studied. Triangulation provides validity for what is being studied.



One of the best indicators of validity of the in action research lies in participants' views of the utility of the outcomes of the action research effort. Where participants are able to construct ways of describing and interpreting events that enable them to take effective action on the issue they have engaged in, they demonstrate the validity of the research. The power of the processes was evident in effective action that emerged from the research. High degrees of credibility were evident since the understandings that emerge from the process of inquiry were successfully applied to actions within the research environment. In summary, the validity of action research was verified through procedures establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and degrees of participation.

These were attained through:

1. Prolonged engagement: the duration of the research processes.
2. Persistent observation: the number and duration of observations and interviews.
3. Triangulation: All sources of data, including the settings observed, materials reviewed, participant interviews.
4. Member checks: Procedures for checking the accuracy of data and the appropriateness of data analysis and reporting.
5. Transferability: the inclusion of detailed descriptions of the participants and the research context.
6. Dependability: Detailed description of the research process.
7. Confirmability: The data is available for review.
8. Utility: Practical outcomes of the research process. (Stringer, 2008)

In carrying out this project, I used as many of these principles as possible to ensure the integrity of the research.

### **Feasibility of the Design**

Superintendents, principals and instructional leaders in many urban districts are in search of what might work to improve the achievement levels of their students of color. East Riverside Unified School District was no exception. Students of color represent the majority of enrollees in ERUSD as well as the lowest performing groups in both language arts and math as indicated by the California State Tests. The large achievement gap between the students of color, primarily African American and Latino students, and their white counterparts, made this an ideal district to test my theory of action.

As a California State Program Improvement District, the District Assessment Intervention Team (DAIT) recently conducted an investigation of all underperforming schools using interviews, observation and records to determine the use or neglect of research-based best practices. Their exit recommendations included English Language Learners only, though the lowest performing students in ERUSD are African American students and Mexican American students as a close second. Culturally relevant pedagogy, a strategy that has the potential for narrowing the achievement gap for both groups, was excluded from the written recommendations and the follow-up conversations.

Despite these disappointing omissions by the DAIT Team, the superintendent and associate superintendent of teaching and learning in ERUSD, wholeheartedly endorsed my design research project and the use of multiethnic literature to supplement Open Court Reading and to transfer skills and standards to the multiethnic literature. The associate superintendent suggested to the District Equity Team, of which I am a member, that the team

provide financial resources for projects that support the equity initiative in ERUSD. I submitted a proposal to secure funds to pay teachers to participate in my design study and funds to purchase multiple copies of two multiethnic books and other supplies for my research. The proposal was approved unanimously. Early during my study, principals recommended teachers from their school sites to participate in my research after learning about the pilot project that I conducted at my school. However, I made the final selection of six teachers who met the qualifications based on the criteria and interview questions and who had volunteered to participate without knowing about remuneration for their time. As mentioned previously, the minimum requirements included (1) two years teaching experience with Open Court Reading, (2) two years of teaching experience in general and (3) effective classroom management. To prevent selection bias and prevent the potential to distort the outcomes, I attempted to select average teachers who were interested in improving their practice for students of color to participate in the study.

Though there was substantial interest among teachers for participating in this study on a voluntary basis, I was successful in acquiring funds to pay the professional development rate to six teachers to participate in two iterations of this study for a total of twelve, two-hour sessions. Paid participation possibly increased interest and motivation for teachers to attend all sessions and successfully implement the goals/outcomes and activities of my design/action research in a professional learning community.

It was anticipated that the impact of this design study to change beliefs and attitudes and to increase teacher knowledge would generate more interest and the capacity to spread to other Title I schools. An expected outcome, though not a part of this study, was that participants would continue to infuse multiethnic literature into their curriculum long after the study ended, share their knowledge with colleagues at their school sites and form new study groups to build capacity within East Riverside Unified School District. With district support, transferability would be realized in many schools in order to change teacher attitudes, beliefs and to increase the achievement scores of our students of color.

This was the preliminary plan with the aim of examining the use of multicultural literature to transform attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and the knowledge base of six teachers in a large, urban and predominantly low income Program Improvement District in Northern California, where a large majority of students of color are failing at all levels—elementary school, middle school and high school.

A qualitative design/action research method describes this prospectus that employed a naturalistic, constructivist socio-cultural perspective and used multiethnic literature to influence changes in teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. What follows in Chapter IV, is the analysis of the findings when I carried out this study of multiethnic literature as a theory of action to transform attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teacher practices of upper elementary teachers in East Riverside Unified School District.

## CHAPTER IV: Findings of the Study

### Introduction

This design/action research project was designed to develop a process for introducing culturally relevant content into established skill-based literacy instruction, relying upon, Open Court Basal Reading (OCR) Program published by SRA-McGraw Hill. The project was developed to engage and impact the practice, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs of intermediate grade teachers from East Riverside Unified School District, who are accustomed to teaching reading only through skill-based approaches and prescriptive programs. The process of introducing multiethnic literature into the scripted skill-based basal readers was the focus. The goals for the teachers were threefold: (1) learn how to interpret culturally relevant texts, (2) implement these practices in classrooms and (3) embed reading comprehension skills development into students' thinking and feelings, in other words to personalize and connect the text to students' lived experience.

In this study, five teachers<sup>1</sup> participated in a Professional Learning Community/Study group during the first iteration and six teachers were involved in the second iteration, to help develop the process during two six-session iterations. All six of the teachers met the criteria for participation, which included, two or more years of teaching experience, good classroom management, two or more years of teaching with the Open Court Reading program, and little or no experience in using supplementary multiethnic literature in their reading /language arts program as determined by an initial written survey and follow-up interview needed for clarification of information. Teaching in a school with an ethnically diverse student population was also a requirement. First, I present a profile chart with qualifications of the six participants. Then I present the pre-impact data analysis, followed by a comparison of the pre-impact data with the videotaped lesson of the two focus teachers. Finally, I compare and analyze the videotaped lesson of the two focus teachers' lessons from the end of the first iteration with their lessons from the end of the second iteration. This helps me to explain how the process impacted the desired outcomes or improved educational practices through iterative analysis, design development and implementation based on the collaborative study group of teacher colleagues and the researchers involvement.

I investigated our efforts by collecting two types of data during this study: design process data and design impact data. Impact data was collected to assess design feasibility and to measure teachers' growth and competency for infusing cultural literacy content into the adopted basal reading series. Design process data was collected and analyzed to determine if the outcomes of each session were achieved and if the activities triggered the

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the only male teacher dropped out of the first iteration after the first session due to what he described as "too many commitments." All five female participants, two Latina, one Caucasian and two African American, faithfully attended most sessions and created collegial, collaborative, respectful, trusting, thoughtful and enthusiastic study group practices through iterative analysis and design development and implementation based on collaboration between the researcher and practitioners.

desired learning processes. I also considered my role as both lead designer and action researcher in the process.

In this chapter, I provide demographic information about the participants and summarize and analyze each type of data and present my findings. In Section I, I present the Design Development Data Analysis and in Section II the Design Impact Data was analyzed. Next, I present strengths and limitations of the study followed by the conclusion of Chapter IV.

## **Participants**

The study began with six participants, five females and one male; however, the male participant dropped out after the first session due to “several leadership obligations at my school, such as chairperson of the School Site Council, and teacher in charge during the principals absence.” Though, the male voice in this study is missing, the five remaining female volunteers proved to be caring, passionate, committed, and enthusiastic about their participation in the study group.

Note that a sixth participant joined the group at the beginning of the second iteration for seven of the thirteen sessions. All of the six participants taught at Title I, high poverty schools in East Riverside Unified School District where 75% to 100% of the students received free and reduced price meals depending on the school. Two schools also provide a breakfast program for their ethnically diverse students, while the other four serve a mid morning snack. All of the schools were Program Improvement schools and had 400 to 700 students in attendance. One school was reconstituted after the 2009 school year under the NCLB regulations for persistent underperformance.

Table 4.1 provides demographic information about the participants, who made a commitment to two iterations of this design/action research Professional Learning Community, also referred to as a study group in this document.

Table 4.1: Demographic Data

Name	Bea	Licet	Mia	Pat	Gigi	Willa
Ethnicity	African America	Italian American	African American	Mexican American	Mexican American	African American
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Geographic Upbringing	Chicago, Ill. (Urban)	Indiana (Urban)	Alabama, Florida (Rural and Urban South)	Mexico and California (Rural and Urban)	Mexico and California (Urban)	California (Small Town and Urban)
Program Improvement Schools	PI 2	PI 5	PI 5	PI 2	PI 6 Reconstituted in 2010-11 under NCLB	PI 5
Grades Taught in ERUSD	4 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> 6 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup>	K-6 <sup>th</sup> , except 1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup>
Years of Teaching Experience in ERUSD	3	6	5	17	8	6
Prior Participation or Training in a PLC	None	None	Yes, in Florida w/a focus on Multicultural Teaching Practices	None	Briefly w/a Latino American group in ERUSD	None
Participation or Training in Culturally Relevant Teaching	Yes, in the Peace Corp & internship in Chicago	None	Yes, in other Districts	Yes, Sharroky Hollie professional development series in October, 2011	None	Yes, while in the PLI at U. C. Berkeley
Prior Experience Using M.C. Literature Outside of OCR	Yes	Yes, biographies of ethnic heroes	Yes, ethnic folktales and fairytales	Yes, to give students a different	Yes, Cinderella stories from around the	Yes

				perspectives	world	
Experience in Infusing Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills	None	None	None	None	None	None
Experience Infusing Interpretive Skills to Multiethnic Literature	None	None	None	None	None	None
Interest in Forming a PLC in Your School	No answer, facial expression indicated, NO	Yes	Yes, with time and resources	Yes	Yes, at least start the conversation	Yes, with teacher buy-in
Size of School	400	700	440	400	450	440
Highest Degree Earned	B.A.	B.A.	B.A.	M.A.	M.A.	M.A.
Absences From PLC	None	1	None	None	1	None

The participants, who had three to seventeen years of teaching experience, teach in large, low income Title I schools, that have been classified as Program Improvement Schools under the No Child Left Behind Legislation. One school was reconstituted during the 2010-11 school year and was awarded large sums of grant funds to turn around the chronically low performing school. The principal, who had worked at the school for only one year, and the participant in my study group, remained at the school. The principal was selected to remain at the reconstituted school where all teachers were released from their teaching assignment and some were rehired, at the principal's discretion, including the participant in this study.

Participating teachers reported that 75 % or more of their students were Latino with a small percentage of other ethnic groups ranging from African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Laotian and a small white population. Consequently all had experience with culturally, linguistically, ethnically and economically diverse students and have had professional development in strategies for English Language Development (ELD). Four participants reported that they have received professional development in Culturally Relevant Teaching and Learning in various settings, such as the Peace Corp or at a university.

I visited the classrooms of four of the five classrooms during the first iteration, primarily to observe classroom management. Such observation was a requirement for participation in the study group. Though I was unable to visit during the language arts block, I observed classroom management during a whole class writing assignment, a whole class social studies lesson, a small group math study session and a buddy reading lesson where the older students were reading to first grade students. E student was courteous, on task and respectful. Likewise the teacher was respectful to the students. Three classrooms attractively displayed cultural images, realia and ethnic literature books e.g. *Esperanza Rising*, *The Patchwork Quilt*, *White Socks and Barack Obama*. Additionally, ethnic pictures were displayed throughout the classrooms. There were student portraits and biographies of Caesar Chavez posted on three walls in Licet's classroom. The principal of the unobserved participant reported that she also had excellent classroom management skills but he could not address the question about cultural artifacts in her classroom.

Only two participants reported prior participation in a PLC, and none of them had engaged in transferring text skills from a basal reading program to multicultural literature nor had they created lesson plans for the interpretive skills of a story according to their responses during the interview/survey results in Table 1. Even the teacher of seventeen years had missed that opportunity.

Despite the geographical diversity of the participants, everyone had a story to tell of their marginalized experiences while growing up in their respective communities. Even the one white participant, part Italian American, tells the painful experience of racism and discrimination against her Italian born mother in the Midwestern United States. Our often unhappy stories served to build trust, commonalities and a strong bond among the members. Participants were given a pseudonym for this study to protect their anonymity. The participants truly enjoyed being together to plan lessons together, share personal and professional stories, and provide collegial support.

## **Context and Participants**

One of the foremost challenges in educational systems today is to create learning environments that maintain the cultural integrity of e child while improving their educational success (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Classroom teachers are in the most critical position to

provide learning experiences that will ensure academic success and cultural integrity for their students. Undoubtedly, the urban public schools' ability to meet this challenge depends on the way that teachers are prepared with skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary to undertake the challenging responsibility of creating or adapting curriculum and instruction for culturally responsive classroom practices as a means to enhance the learning of all students in a culturally diverse school.

East Riverside Unified School District is no exception. The Superintendent and Associate Superintendent of the Teaching and Learning Division of ERUSD were in search of what might work to improve the achievement level of the students of color in our district. As leaders of an underperforming urban school district, considered by the State of California to be a State Program Improvement District, they wholeheartedly endorsed my design/action research project with written consent to conduct the research in ERUSD, by purchasing a class set of the two books used in the research project, for each participating teacher and by compensating teachers with an hourly professional development rate of pay for participating in the research.

Five teacher participants were engaged in two iterations of six weeks each, during which they collaborated with one another and engaged in collegial learning to build a community of practice for their own learning as well as the learning of their students. The baseline data for the two iterations is analyzed next.

## **Section I: Design Development Data Analysis**

E design study has an interesting story. From its initial creation to its final implementation, a design goes through numerous and various iterations, with its designer reflecting and modifying throughout (Van den Akker, 1991). Design development research is an opportunity to investigate systematically what happens during the various phases of the design process. This design began as my personal interest in motivating reluctant readers to self-select stories of interest to them. I observed that many students selected stories from their heritage. Latino and African American students alike, selected stories about their heritage or stories that had front cover character illustrations that looked like them. In addition, I interrogated the stories from the fourth grade OCR anthology for their multiethnic literature content. I chose fourth grade OCR units for this study because the majority of participants in my study group were 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers or had taught 4<sup>th</sup> grade OCR in the past. Interestingly, the first unit of OCR, "Risk and Consequences," omits stories from the Latino heritage, although over 65% of students in low income schools and classrooms in ERUSD are Latino. I was also interested in identifying possible bias as well as cultural inclusion of other ethnic groups in the OCR anthology. Informed by the professional knowledge base, I developed a theory of action for the design. I then began to put into practice this theory of action in a sixth grade class at my school as a pilot study. This cultural inclusion pilot with sixth graders led to the initial design of introducing culturally relevant content into established, skill-based literacy instruction. The recruitment of participants was another major activity to begin my design development research. I recruited five teachers to participate in a design/action research projects professional learning community PLC/study group as the context for the study.

Design development data was collected to link my investigation of the design process with the impact data and teachers' growth in introducing cultural content, specifically multiethnic literature, into the skills-based prescriptive content of OCR. Steps employed in the



design research were subdivided into two iterations, each consisting of six two hour lessons introduced and facilitated by the researcher.

I taught the criteria, suggested strategies for infusing Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS) and interpretive skills of the selected multiethnic literature from 3:45-5:45p.m. on dates determined by the participants. The three dimensions of my design/action research pillars are (1) infusing Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS) into the selected multiethnic literature, (2) developing interpretive skills lessons on the human conditions experienced by the main characters in the story and (3) cultural awareness/sensitivity. To review, the sessions are outlined as follows:

### **Session I**

- Introductions by sharing a favorite adult story and why it is a favorite
- The purpose of the PLC/study group
- Norms agreement
- Rationale for reflection after each session, schedules, meeting places, written consent to participate in the research and other logistical issues

### **Session II**

- Review of norms, Impact Measure/Pre-Assessment of the research
- Writing and sharing of cultural self-knowledge, distribution and homework
- assignment for *Richmond Tales* by Summer Brenner
- Personal reflections of the sessions

### **Session III**

- Review of norms, PLC
- Interrogation of the selected multicultural texts for cultural constraints and affordances, or themes
- Identification of Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills and interpretive skills
- Homework
- Reflections

### **Session IV**

- Teachers share the lessons developed and homework for both Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills and interpretive skills
- Discussion questions
- Reflection journal writing

### **Session V**

- Participants collaborate to develop lesson ideas for the two focus teachers, keeping in mind the three dimensions of the lesson-standards-aligned comprehension skills, interpretive skills and cultural knowledge/information
- Two focus teachers select the lessons to videotape
- All participants are encouraged to teach and videotape a lesson

### **Session VI**

- The two focus teachers share their lesson with the study group, which contributes commendations about the lesson, questions it may have and other comments
- Reflections, goodbyes for the summer

This outline was generally followed during both iterations with only minor revisions.

### **Summary of the Three Dimensions of Work**

My data collection provided me with an abundance of process data to choose from. As Marshall and Rossman (1989) explain, “Data analysis must result in data reduction so that data can be brought into manageable chunks.” (p. 113) While doing the work of analysis and interpretation, I came to realize that I would have to limit my descriptions and evidence, but wanted the data to determine which excerpts would be explored and shared in the findings. The descriptions, explanations and analysis will enable readers to gain a sense of what the PLC/study group participants learned about infusing multiethnic literature into established skill-based literacy instruction, lesson planning for interpretive features and greater cultural awareness/sensitivity among participants. The data sources shared in the findings were culled from audio-taped dialogue during study group sessions, the researcher’s reflection journal, participants’ reflection journals, two videotaped lessons of each of the two focus teacher/participants and initial participant interviews.

From the beginning of data collection, I used a three step process (1) by identifying the objectives, (2) indicating whether the objectives were accomplished or not accomplished during the session and (3) locating the evidence. A matrix of the process was outlined on chart paper to record evidence and reflective analysis. For example, from session IV:

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Accomplished/Not Accomplished</b>	<b>Source of Evidence</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
Use of Interpretive skills	Participants will define interpretive skills w/examples	No	Lesson plans, dialogue	Limited, no depth Revisit during second iteration

### **Chronological Analysis of the Sessions**

The first session of the study, by necessity, contained two major objectives: (1) logistical information, procedures and the purpose of the design/action research; (2) the formation and characteristics of an engaging, motivated, trusting professional learning community/study group.

This session convened for the first time on Thursday, March 17, 2011, in Licet's classroom at Dwight Eisenhower School located in a low income area of East Riverside Unified School District. I knew that it was important to motivate and inspire an emotional commitment from the group of fourth grade teacher volunteers for my research, during the first session. Otherwise, the potential for drop-out and failure of the project would have been predictable.

Fortunately, five teachers had been recruited to participate in the study group, however, only four were in attendance for the first session. There were three females and one male teacher present. Before the meeting started Asa., the only male member of the group, nervously asked, "Why am I here?" I became concerned by Asa's question and wondered if he would remain with the group as the only male participant.

I immediately proceeded to begin the meeting by extending a warm welcome to the group and attempting to make everyone feel welcome and special by saying, "You are a special group of teachers who can advance the cause of culturally relevant teaching and learning in our school district, whose student population is primarily students of color. The current and persistent problem is that our students of color are the underachieving group in our urban school system. That is a common problem for all of us. However, by introducing cultural content that resonates with the students lived experiences into the skilled based Open Court Reading Program, we have a greater chance of closing the achievement gap and creating a life-long love for reading." I further explained that I was conducting a Design/Action Research Study and that they, as a professional learning community, further defined as a study group, would participate in developing the design process of introducing multicultural literature into prescriptive, skills-based content, characteristic of our basal readers.

The first session was probably the most significant because participants had to sign the consent to participate in the twelve session design/action research, had to agree to be audio-taped and videotaped and had to agree to participate for two hours per session. Equally important was the necessity to develop collegial, collaborative trusting relationships and motivation early in the research project. To accomplish this, I presented seven norms or rules of behavior for working together as fundamental for establishing an environment where members felt safe working as a collaborative. Three examples are:

- I will stay engaged in the dialogue and work
- I understand that I may experience discomfort and
- I will accept non-closure

To further create a bond among participants, I asked them to share one of their favorite literature selections with the group and why it was special for them. This activity was designed to achieve multiple purposes including (1) to serve as an icebreaker, (2) serve as a group social/emotional bonding activity for the participants and (3) attempt to help participants realize that their students can be motivated to read, think and discuss at proficient levels if the story piques their interests or involves their lived experiences. As Denman (1991) asserts, Stories are "lenses through which we view and review all of human experience....they have the power to reach deep inside us and command our ardent attention. Through stories we see ourselves.....Our personal experience takes on a cloak of significance....we see what it is to be alive, to be human" (p. 4). I concluded the conversation about our favorite stories by asking the question, "Shouldn't we give our students the same opportunity to enjoy good literature that resonates with them-their culture, heritage or lived experience-, just as your favorite stories have touched, inspired, and motivated you and created a personal connection to your lives."

Throughout the first session, the objectives were being met based on the enthusiasm and engaging dialogue of all participants. Even after the session was over, participants lingered and continued sharing information. Additional evidence of an emerging PLC were comments from participants reflection journals. For example, Bea, who at first appeared quite reserved and cautious and only spoke when called on by me, wrote:

Upon entering the classroom, I did not know what to expect. However, I was pleasantly surprised. I found the fellow teachers friendly, knowledgeable and willing to assist/help. This group seems to have a wealth of information that will enable me to take things to another level. Overall, I am pleased with the group and look forward to what I will learn—expanding and sharing my findings with others. (3/17/11)

It was necessary to conduct an additional introductory session. This introductory session dealt with two added important objectives:

1. to complete the Baseline measure as a pre-assessment of the participant's competence in infusing SACS, interpretive skills and cultural knowledge/awareness into their lesson plans. Teachers were asked to take 40 minutes to read Chapter I of *Breaking Through* by Francisco Jimenez and write a lesson plan that engages students.
2. to create an awareness of the influence of their own culture or self-knowledge. Haberman and Post-(1998) define self-knowledge as “a thorough understanding of one's own roots and affiliations.” Before teachers can address the cultural needs of their students, they must first be aware of their own culture. The self-knowledge activity, during which participants answered two questions further served to build trust and a collegial bond among participants: “Who am I, What is my culture? Everyone shared her culture in turns with Mae concluding that:

People of the same culture share many similarities, yet many differences. Even the dominant culture has many variations in their culture.....This is significant because racial/ ethnic groups tend to be stereotyped. (3/30/11)

Another example of openness and the PLC as a safe environment to share personal stories was demonstrated by Pat, a Latino participant, who became emotional as she described her childhood as:

one of three children from a migrant farm worker family in Salinas Valley, California. My mom and dad worked in the fields picking produce for long hours but refused to allow me to help. They insisted that my job was to go to school and get a good education. I was not allowed to speak Spanish in school and worked hard to learn English as fast as possible. I became a good student and earned scholarships to go to college. Though I was assimilated into American society, I still identify strongly with my Mexican heritage and culture. (3/30/11)

Mae's story also demonstrates a strong connection with the main character from *Breaking Through*, the story used for the impact measure.

Some activities from Session I and II, designed as introductory and logistical sessions that could build trust among participants were briefly repeated during the second iteration as

induction activities for Willa, who joined the study group at the beginning of the new school year. Other participants, who were continuing members of the design/action research project, accepted Willa as a welcomed member of the group. Willa shared in her journal, “I enjoy being a member of this study group. I wish the teachers at my school could form such a group and work together instead of yelling at each other.” (September 8, ’11) With sufficient progress in relationship and trust building, a necessary condition for working together to achieve the objective, I felt that participants were ready to tackle the heart of the design/action research project.

With a seemingly strong PLC, sessions III, IV and V were devoted to the three dimensions of the design/action research: infusing SACS into the selected text, defining and writing lesson plans for interpretive skills and creating cultural awareness and sensitivity. These three dimensions are analyzed across sessions as they were developed and revisited in all three sessions and in both iterations. First, I discuss and analyze standards-aligned comprehension skills, followed by interpretive skills, and finally cultural awareness and sensitivity.

### **Session III: Standards-Aligned Comprehension Skills**

Infusing Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS) was the agenda for the third session. The two major objectives were (1) to identify the skills from OCR that would be infused into the multicultural text and (2) to write lesson plans for infusing SACS. With the aim of preparing teachers to link OCR and multicultural literature, I selected three units from OCR that were readily suitable for use with multiethnic literature—Survival, Risks and Consequences and A Changing America. I also selected two multiethnic selections for participants to experience infusing SACS—*Richmond Tales* by Summer Brenner, used during the first iteration, and *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez, for the second iteration. Both stories have personal appeal for the population of students enrolled in ERUSD. *Richmond Tales* takes place in one of East Riverside’s low income communities where the two main characters live. It has great appeal to intermediate grade students who are the same age as the main characters. Rarely does literature reflect the local experiences of students. Likewise, *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* by Francisco Jimenez was selected because of its potential appeal to the majority Latino student population as well as the potential to provide cultural knowledge and empathy among students of other ethnicities. This emotionally engaging realistic fiction story is told through the eyes of a young Mexican boy. The book tells a story about Latino culture, assimilation, determination and resilience for a family who follow their circuit from picking cotton, grapes, carrots and back again over a number of years.

To begin the process of infusing SACS, I asked participants to pretend that they were employed by the OCR publishing company. I opened the Teachers Manual with the author page facing the participants and said

Imagine that you are one of the authors of the OCR Survival Unit. Your job is to infuse Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills into the literature, *Richmond Tales*, by Summer Brenner, which is being added to the Survival Unit.

I continued by defining Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS) as the California state standards used by the author and textbook writers to convey meaning of the story to the reader.

You will have to identify the SACS from the OCR Survival Unit and transfer them to the multiethnic selection.

Participants were instructed to turn to page 321G of the teacher's manual and find the comprehension skills or other literary devices, such as figurative language that would be transferred to *Richmond Tales*. Participants readily identified 1)sequence, 2)predicting, 3)main ideas and details, 4)drawing conclusions, 5)making inferences, 6)cause and effect, 7)author's point of view, 8)author's purpose, 9)plot and story elements from the Teacher's Manual. After a brief discussion of the theme, survival, participants readily developed many infusion activities and shared verbally. Some examples are:

- Select your favorite chapter. List the sequence of important events from that chapter.
- Inference-How can a person's instincts help him survive in a dangerous situation?
- Summarizing and predicting-Write a summary of the main events in the chapter.

Then write a paragraph predicting what will happen next.

Likewise, participants were adept at infusing SACS into *The Circuit* during the second iteration. Though I spent little time discussing SACS during the second iteration, two participants suggested the use of SACS activities while lesson planning for *The Circuit* with the two focus teachers. I surmised that teachers were close to expert while infusing SACS because of their several years of experience using the skills-based SACS activities from the OCR Teacher's Manual.

Participants expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to "get so many good ideas from the group" for use with their students. Bea, who uses multiethnic literature in her classroom but had never infused skills, stated, "This has been an 'aha' moment for me." (September 8, 2011)

With a clear understanding of the process of infusing SACS into multiethnic literature, I decided to spend more time on interpretive skills, a more elusive concept.

## **Interpretive Skills**

This design attempted to develop teachers' capacity to teach students interpretive reading skills. Several sessions addressed interpretive skills but I first introduced the concept of interpretive skills during the first iteration, Session III. My objectives for interpretive skills were

1. Participants will be able to define interpretive skills and
2. Participants will be able to write lesson plans using interpretive skills.

I defined interpretive skills as "the human conditions that help us to understand the deeper questions of life, death, grief, bias, love, racism, inequities, immigration, poverty, social justice. It may also include the lived experiences of our students or their ancestors. I explained that Survival, the unit theme in OCR, is about a human condition. We then discussed how each story in the OCR is related to the human condition. For example, participants easily identified that *Island of the Blue Dolphin* was about being stranded alone on an island or *The Big Wave* was about surviving a tsunami or war as man made conditions, such as in *The Diary of Ann Frank*. I then asked participants to discuss how *Richmond Tales* is related to the Survival Unit. In response, themes such as unsafe neighborhoods, crime, poverty, bullying, to name a few, were mentioned. As homework, participants were asked to write lesson plans for interpretive skills to

share during the next session. As the lesson plans were being shared in Session IV, I used the rubric (see Appendix N) to unobtrusively rate the lessons. The outcomes were mixed. Compare and contrast activities were used by two of the participants, which is a SACS ranging from word knowledge to ‘discuss the main events with details.’ However, I rated three lesson plans as interpretive. An example, Licet’s lesson, prompted students’ thinking by saying,

Pretend that you are one of the Cooper brothers (Notorious bullies from the story, *Richmond Tales*). Tell your side of the story. Describe the events in your life that shaped you into the person that you are.

This lesson clearly demonstrates an understanding of interpretive skills because students are required to infer based on the information culled from the events in the story. Critical thinking or inquiry, such as “what is a bully or what traumatic life events might cause such disrespectful, incorrigible, bullish behavior?”

Risks and Consequences was the OCR unit theme used with the multiethnic text, *The Circuit*, as a review, during the second iteration. I began by asking participants to define interpretive skills as I wrote the definition on the whiteboard. Their collective definition was almost identical to mine so I assumed that they fully understood the concept. Throughout session III, IV and V, as evidenced by the audio-taped discourse, participants demonstrated an understanding of interpretive skills, however, that knowledge did not consistently transfer to the lesson plans. The homework lessons and videotaped lessons for both focus teachers were more akin to SACS than interpretive or cultural. One focus teacher used the OCR lesson sequence – from vocabulary study to character study while the other focus teacher used both SACS and interpretive features in her multifaceted lesson.

Session V of both iterations was an opportunity for participants to make suggestions for lessons plans that were to be videotaped by the focus teachers. I asked the two focus teachers to “Think and plan the lesson using interpretive features. Tell us what help you need, what ideas are you thinking about for your videotaped lesson?” Many creative and imaginative ideas were offered such as an interpretation of the chapters ‘Cruisin for A Brusin’ from *Richmond Tales* or ‘Death Forgiven’ from *The Circuit*. I encouraged the two focus teachers to use interpretive skills only for their second videotaped lesson. However, the results were mixed. Mae’s lesson infused OCR comprehension skills into the multicultural text while Licet’s lesson was somewhat more interpretive. Mae basically used the same introductory lesson for both iterations and both stories. Licet’s lesson was also SACS, however it contained greater depth and family involvement when she asked students to interview their parents about their culture using a set of guiding questions for homework. As a follow-up the next day Licet asked her students to compare their culture, based on the information from the family interview, with that of Francisco, the main character from *The Circuit*. She then asked her students to write on a T-chart, “How are they alike and how are they different?”

Session VI presents the videotaped lessons of the two focus teachers as described above. Again, The results are mixed. Mae’s lesson instructed students to infer the meaning of vocabulary words based on the context of the story and write the group’s final definition in their journals, while Licet’s lesson was compare and contrast their with the book’s depicted culture and share the results with three students in the classroom.

## **Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity**

One of the major objectives of Session II of the second iteration was to introduce the third dimension, cultural awareness and sensitivity. Due to time constraints, I did not introduce this topic with any depth until the second iteration, Session II. I used the same introductory activity to begin the discussion as in the first iteration, “Who are you culturally? What is your cultural background and who and what influenced your beliefs, attitudes and growth/development.” This activity had three elements:

1. an induction into the study group activity for Willa
2. a get reacquainted activity for continuing participants and
3. most importantly, an activity to help participants become more aware of their cultural beliefs and potential impact, negative or positive on their students.

To reinforce the concept that culture matters deeply and that humans are influenced by their cultural affiliations, I asked participants to again share their cultural backgrounds starting with Willa, our new participant. Everyone empathized with Willa, an African American, as she shared her story of the racism and rejection she endured while growing up in a suburb of East Riverside and she expressed empathy for everyone else who briefly recounted their cultural stories of injustice and prejudice as Latino American or African American. Licet also reiterated the story of racism that her Italian mother experienced growing up in the Midwest and the rejection of her mother by her father’s parents. All participants, again, had an emotionally charged story to tell of their culture and empathized with each others’ account of the hurt, disappointment and emotional distress experienced due to their cultural experiences. I summarized the activity by reminding everyone that we are all immigrants, either voluntary or involuntary and that most immigrants have cultural stories to tell about rejection, oppression or prejudice as part of our cultural experience in America. I concluded this activity by asking, “Are you culturally connected to your students? Do you know the cultures of your student and can you integrate their culture into your lesson plans or personalize your lessons for your diverse student populations?” This was a rhetorical question and I did not expect an answer at that time. However, Pat responded by saying, “It is so important that we are aware of our students’ culture and backgrounds.” (9/29/11) Everyone nodded in agreement as evidence that the participants were emerging as culturally sensitive and aware of the plight of their students which may have an impact on what and how teachers teach and interact with their students. This cultural sensitivity is reflected during the discussions and lesson plans.

As a review during Session III, I asked participants to define what is meant by culture? Participants demonstrated a good grasp of the meaning based on their responses below which I recorded on the whiteboard as they called them out:

*customs, beliefs, values	*habits, deeply engrained	*bi-cultural
*religion, linked to values	*non-verbal, body language	
*language	*geographic influences	
*way of life, things we do	*strong models, mentors that empower	



I noticed that reflections about culture from the second iteration were included in the participants' reflection journals and were thoughtful, meaningful and lengthy. For example Mae wrote:

Last session, I was highly emotional and personal. To hear some of the stories of my fellow educators so different yet so similar to my own life story, was amazing and touching. If only society could benefit from such learning communities. I would really love it if teachers at my site could collaborate and share in this manner. Then maybe we could creatively manifest true, authentic writing and learning from the students we teach...Ideas don't flow as readily when you are the only one thinking of them, but with a professional learning community, you have other great minds to collaborate and generate ideas with. (10/13/11)

This reflection from Mae indicates that the PLC was beneficial because it provided evidence of teachers' deepened cultural sensitivity for the students that we teach. It created empathy. It recognized the value of collective engagement and discussion and lastly, it emphasized the value of learning together in a study group. It also acknowledges the potential capacity for spreading cultural sensitivity to other teachers in our East Riverside Unified School District. .

Licet transferred the concepts of cultural inclusion into her second videotaped lesson Session VI, by asking students to first research their culture by interviewing their parents and then comparing and contrasting their culture with that of the Mexican family from *The Circuit*. This lesson was discussed by the group before Licet used the suggestion to develop her lesson plan. Overall, participants have an understanding of the importance of cultural sensitivity for themselves and for the diverse students that they teach. The lesson objective was achieved.

## Conclusions

The process for introducing culturally relevant content into established skill-based literacy instruction was the focus of this design/action research project. Intermediate teachers who are accustomed to teaching reading through skill-based approaches and prescriptive programs, such as Open Court Reading, participated in my PLC project, which was designed to engage and impact their teaching practice, attitudes and assumptions.

Participants reflection journals, audio-taped discourse and videotaped lessons by two focus teachers provided substantial data to use in my findings and to assess the effectiveness of the process. Teachers verbally reconstructed the process and recorded it on chart paper for public record as evidence that they clearly understood the process. The PLC introduced teachers to a process for introducing ethnic literature into the OCR text using three dimensions-(1) Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS), (2) interpretive skills and (3) cultural awareness and sensitivity. Participants experienced the use of these dimensions by developing lessons for two selected literature books, *Richmond Tales* by Summer Brenner and *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez. I found that participants readily gained skills on how to transfer Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills from the OCR unit to the selected multiethnic text during the first iteration. They also easily recognized the importance of becoming aware of the culture of their students and using that cultural knowledge in their lesson planning.

Finally, I realized that lesson planning for interpretive skills was the most challenging for participants. Even after defining the concept during the first iteration and practicing during the sessions, participants tended to avoid planning for interpretive skills, which requires critical thinking or inferential skills. After introductory activities during the second iteration, all four remaining sessions focused on interpretive skills with cogent ideas, expressed verbally by all participants. However, the two focused teachers resorted back to SACS for the purpose of videotaping. It is not that they lacked an understanding of the concept, but it may have been easier or less threatening to stay within their realm of experience with Open Court Reading. In an attempt to use a constructivist model, I did not provide the specific written guidelines or lesson design for participants to follow when creating interpretive skills, which was the case for SACS. The scripted OCR teacher's manual provided the language and the steps for teachers to use in delivering the SACS lesson. A more didactic process by the researcher with a model step by step lesson plan would have created a more favorable outcome for interpretive skills implementation. The same is true of cultural awareness and sensitivity. I assumed that this category would be the easiest for the diverse participants to grasp based on the fact that five of the six were teachers of color. I now realize that a rubric or specific guidelines for infusing cultural knowledge into the lessons would have also been beneficial to aide the new learning, especially given the limited time-only six sessions per iteration-to complete the study.

Lessons for the follow-up impact measure also indicated that teachers continued to plan more readily with the SACS, which they are most familiar with.

## **Section II: Design Impact Data Analysis**

Design impact data was collected to determine if the design was feasible and whether it led to teacher's growth in instructional practices using multiethnic literature. How did the teachers infuse text skills from the OCR Unit into the multiethnic text and design interpretive skills for their lesson plans to deepen students' understanding, encourage engagement and motivation? At the outset of the study, I collected impact baseline data on teachers' competency for infusing cultural content into multiethnic literature by asking participants to develop a lesson plan for chapter one of the book, "*Breaking Through*," by Francisco Jimenez. Participants were asked to take 30 to 45 minutes to develop a lesson that engaged students in reading the text. A post-assessment, using the same book and chapter, was used to create a compare and contrast analysis of teacher growth throughout the duration of the study.

### **Baseline Findings**

I adapted the baseline data protocol for the Impact Measure by deriving it from three sources: selected tenets from culturally relevant pedagogy, the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, and the adapted National Social Studies Task Force for Ethnic Studies.

The findings, determined by the researcher and derived from the baseline pre-assessment of participants' learning are discussed and analyzed for the three domains on the matrices—Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS), interpretive skills and cultural knowledge and awareness. Chapter one of the book, *Breaking Through*, was used for the impact measure. Participants were required to write a lesson plan at the outset of the twelve research sessions and again at the end of the twelfth session to determine teacher learning.

All teachers successfully and readily employed OCR's text skills, known as Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (**SACS**). This dimension refers to the comprehension skills or state standards that are taught in the mandated basal text, Open Court Reading (OCR). The task that I assigned to participants was to transfer and align the identified comprehension skills to the multiethnic text *Breaking Through* by Francisco Jimenez. Once the specific skills were selected, participants easily created lessons for infusion of the skills. All participants were familiar with the comprehension skills, which they had taught since the adoption of OCR in ERUSD. The skills spiral or repeat in the unit. Consequently, all participants, who have taught OCR for more than two years, are familiar with the strategies and skills. Predicting, making inferences and making connections or comparing self to the main characters, were the most commonly used comprehension skills.

Mae's lesson for example, said "Francisco says that he lives in constant fear of 'la migra' (border patrol). Describe a time when you were fearful of somebody or something."

Several similarities were noted in the lesson plans of the five teachers. Firstly, all participants wrote lesson plans that engaged students in discussions of a concept or questions by asking them to discuss or share a task with their study group or study partner. One participant, for example, instructed students to "turn to your partner and determine the meaning of the word 'dilapidated' using the context of the sentence to help you figure it out." This strategy was useful because discussion can make an important and unique contribution to helping students learn from text. Gambrell (1996) asserts that

Discussion in elementary classrooms supports the notion that such interaction engages students in the co-construction of knowledge, advances student learning and provides opportunities for students to learn important interpersonal skills while conversing, interpreting and negotiating in active and constructive ways.

In another example, Bea asked students to discuss with their table group, various quotes from the story, e.g. "felt empty inside" or "all men are created equal".

Secondly, all participants began the task by writing clear lesson objectives. Three participants used single task objectives while Bea and Pat wrote multitask, extended lesson plans. These lessons might take a few days to complete, unless the teachers intended to give students choice among the several options. However, that possibility was not stated by the two participants.

An example, Mae's two objectives, were:

1. To write an expository composition explaining a time when you were fearful.
2. To compare and contrast your experiences with those of Francisco, (the main character) and his families experiences.

By contrast, Pat's learning objective is that the students will make and confirm predictions about the text while analyzing the main character's feelings, thoughts and actions.

A graphic organizer was required in the 'compare and contrast' lesson plans developed by three of the five teachers. Graphic organizers, or schematic representations of information, can help students understand, organize and remember content information. Types of graphic organizers are timelines, Venn diagram or a T chart, for example. The graphic organizers used by Licet and Bea were Venn diagrams and the T chart. I was first inclined to assign a one (1) rating because the teachers did not model the graphic organizer but instead asked students to "use" the Venn diagram or T chart. On second thought, however, I changed the rating to a two

(2) because the participants must have initially taught their students to use a Venn Diagram. Graphics/visual representations are highly recommended, not only for English Learners but also are strongly recommended in OCR as a strategy to introduce many of the comprehension skills. In fact, a binder of graphic organizers is included in the OCR teacher materials.

The ‘compare and contrast’ activity could be categorized as a higher order thinking activity based on Bloom’s Taxonomy of Higher Order Thinking where compare and contrast is listed as an analysis activity. Overall participants asked students to use a Venn Diagram to compare their culture or an experience with that of the main character, Francisco is a ten year old illegal immigrant from Mexico who lives in constant fear of being caught by ‘la migra’ (border guard). His family lived in abject poverty as low paid migrant farm workers in California during the 1930’s and 40’s.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, participants were quite adept at infusing Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills into the lesson for the first chapter of *Breaking Through* by Jimenez. Though they reported in the interview/survey that they had no prior experience in infusing SACS into other texts, participants seemed experienced in writing lesson plans that infused the SACS, as I observed them writing for thirty to forty minutes without discussion or a break. Nor was there any discussion or mention of SACS in the study group before the impact data assignment was given that might have influenced their lessons. One teacher described the experience as an “aha” moment, which I interpreted to mean that she discovered the new skills infusion strategy for use in the future. She reported during the interview that she used multiethnic literature in her classroom but her “aha” moment led me to believe that she did not infuse the Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills into the multiethnic text. She confirmed my conclusion when asked.

## **Interpretive Skills**

Interpretive skills in literature help us to understand the human condition or deeper questions of life, such as equality, inequality, social justice, hate, love, fear and other emotions. It also promotes an awareness of social and historical issues involving the unequal distribution of power and privilege that limits the opportunity of those not in the dominant group. Realistic fiction and historical fiction were selected for my research because they are most applicable to interpretation and cultural connections with the lives of students and have strong connections with political and social issues.

Interpretive skills development was more challenging for participants than the SACS, based on their own admissions and the limitations in the lesson plans. Participants were less likely to spontaneously create inquiry or critical thinking activities with regard to interpretive skills. Inferential questions, in which students would be asked to answer, “why do you think” questions and justify with evidence from the text, were seldom used in the lesson plans of the participants except for Licet who asked her students to reflect on why the Cooper brothers were incorrigible bullies. During the process of interpreting texts in the study group, participants were asked to identify themes from the stories for interpretation and application to the human experience. Overall, themes are the central ideas and reflect what it means to be human, what it means to be alive and capable of reason or emotion. The readers take the theme and make meaning of the story for themselves. The readers may not see words, such as fear, in the story,

but they would see characters, plot, setting, point of view and tone, all that work together to show fear. (Sadler, p. 93) The readers must read between the lines to interpret and make meaning of the story.

Most participants selected to address the theme of fear in their impact measure. They primarily used the theme as a compare and contrast activity, which is a SACS activity from OCR. The main character expresses his fears of being an illegal immigrant early in the story, making it a logical place to start the discussion. The example from Bea's lesson is a good representative sample:

Ask students to think about a time when they were fearful of something. Use brainstorming to help generate instances one would have fears, (ie. parents going on a trip without the children, being left alone in an unfamiliar place. Ask students what Francisco had feared.

Licet's lesson asked the question "Francisco says he lived in constant fear for ten years, afraid of being caught by "la migra." What would life be like if you lived in constant fear like Francisco?" In the three examples, students were required to compare their culture with the main characters' culture. Compare and contrast activities are considered SACS. A more representative interpretive activity might be " Why was Francisco afraid of la migra? What evidence from the story suggests that he lives in fear?" This activity approaches interpretive inquiry because students must substantiate the claim with definitive evidence from the story by reading between the lines.

## **Cultural Sensitivity**

Cultural sensitivity requires that teachers demonstrate empathy, inclusion, engagement, caring and acceptance of all of their ethnically diverse students in their classrooms as demonstrated in their lesson plans. Culturally competent teachers attempt to deliver more effective education to racially and culturally different students by infusing cultural content into the curriculum and lessons. Thus education is relevant and sensitive to students' culturally and racially different needs. Teaching based on the learner's culture not only addresses the cognitive aspects of learning but the affective as well. Students whose culture is respected are empowered to learn because the negative self-image that accompanies the rejection of their experience is eliminated. When students see the benefits of education for themselves and their community, they are more likely to be willing participants.

I did not review these tenets of cultural awareness and sensitivity with the participants, until much later in the study due to time constraints. Consequently, this concept did not influence the initial baseline lessons. My assumption was that this would be the easiest dimension for the ethnically diverse participants. However, cultural awareness was not significantly reflected in the lesson plans. Generally, I would characterize this category as at the emergent or beginning stages of understanding and development because participants' lesson plans did not include cultural references, only the students lived experiences. I generally rated the lessons with a one (1) or "somewhat" because the lessons did not explicitly ask for or use cultural content. There are several examples of comparing the reader to the plight of the main character, which could be considered cultural and may promote empathy but the lessons otherwise do not focus on cultural connections, characteristics or similarities and differences of various cultural groups. Historical

references to the human condition and socio/political issues for various cultural groups, which often require background knowledge, were also absent from teachers' plans in the pre-assessment impact measure.

Culturally relevant instruction, as defined by Ladson-Billings (1994), empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes. Therefore, cultural connections will be an area of exploration during the remainder of this study because the culture of the learner is at the center of culturally relevant instruction.

### Conclusions Derived From the Pre and Post-Impact Measures

Table 4.2 summarizes the comparisons between pre and post-impact test results from the lesson planning assessment.

Table 4.2 Average Scores for all Teachers on the Pre and Post--tested

<b>2 (YES)</b>	<b>1 (SOMEWHAT)</b>	<b>0 (NO)</b>		
The average was derived by adding the scores of the six participants and dividing by the number of participants				
Impact Criteria for the Lesson Planning Activity				
			Average for all participants	
<b>Standards</b>			Pre	Post-
<b>Group 1: Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills</b>				
1. Employs text skills from OCR in the lesson			2	2
2. Opportunities for classroom discourse and interactions			2	2
3. Application of knowledge through higher order thinking			2	2
4. Employs visual representations of the text e.g. charts, timelines, diagrams			1	2
5. Established clear lesson objectives			2	2
<b>Group 2: Interpretive Skills</b>				
1. Established clear lesson objectives			2	2
2. Identifies and uses themes to focus the story content			2	2
3. Uses points of view or arguments to support claims in an analysis of themes using reasoning and evidence			0	.4
4. Draws content from different subject areas to reinforce student learning across subject areas			.4	.8
5. Uses prior knowledge and the life experiences of students to connect home and community with the text			2	2
6. Incorporates the human condition scenarios (e.g. poverty, justice, bias, inequities)			1.2	1
7. Simulations of plans of action against social, political injustices, inequities			1.2	1
<b>Group 3: Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Skills</b>				
1. Does the lesson help students to better understand their ethnic and cultural heritage?			1	1.8

2. Does the lesson focus on similarities and differences among and between ethnic and cultural groups?	1.2	2
3. Does the lesson include historical experiences, societal issues/problems and some ethnic and cultural group members' experiences, such as racism, prejudice, discrimination and exploitation?	1	1.2
4. Is the multiethnic literature used to promote empathy and understanding of people from various ethnic and cultural groups?	1	2
5. Does the instructor create a classroom climate reflecting an acceptance of and respect for ethnic and cultural differences?	1.6	2

As the data in Table 2 suggests, there were no dramatic changes between the pre or baseline measure at the beginning of the study group and the post or impact measure at the end of the second iteration except for one impressive lesson plan contributed by Gigi. Gigi's post-intervention lesson plan objective required that students write an "I Have A Dream" speech from the point of view of Francisco, the main character and narrator of *Breaking Through*. Gigi's class was just beginning to study the civil rights movement and the life and times of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the same time that the study group was concluding the twelfth session, so she seized the opportunity to make a connection between the conditions in the story, *Breaking Through*, and the conditions that precipitated the civil rights movement. This imaginative lesson plan certainly required the application of SACS, interpretive skills and cultural content. It required SACS because students would need to use background knowledge and point of view, both OCR skills. Interpretive skills require students to exercise a point of view and see through the eyes and life of the migrant family in order to write their dream speech. It includes cultural awareness because the characters are Mexicans and recent immigrants in America with hopes and dreams of survival as they struggle to find a better life in America.

Lessons by the majority of participants generally covered the comprehension skills of compare and contrast, predictions, literal comprehension questions, frontloading vocabulary, character study through small group or partner work and writing assignments. All of these skills are identified as SACS from the OCR Teacher's Manual. Licet asked students to create three examples of cause and effect throughout the chapter. She reminded students that some of the clue words for cause and effect are: because, reason, since, result and therefore. Her post-impact measure also specifically required that students compare their culture with the main characters' culture using the T-chart. Though Licet described the lesson, which I observed, as interpretive, I rated it as a surface level interpretation, a one (somewhat) because it is a SACS activity from the OCR teachers manual, which lacks depth of interpretation.

### **Analysis of the Lessons of the Two Focus Teachers**

It was not surprising that Licet and Mae would volunteer as focus teachers of the study group. They were the most talkative and animated members of the group. However, before accepting their offer, I purposely and publically asked the other three members if they too would be interested in being videotaped as well, a condition of being a focus teacher. I received a resounding "no" from the other three participants. I then reiterated with the two volunteer focus teachers that their lessons would be videotaped between lessons five and six of both iterations, viewed and critiqued by participants during the sixth session and used in my design/action

research project. I also gave them the option of viewing their videotape and re-taping if not satisfied, before viewing with other participants. After viewing their tapes, both agreed that they were acceptable to share with the other participants.

The last session of both iterations was devoted solely to the viewing and commentary of the videotaped lessons, taped in June 2011, just before the end of the school year and December 3, 2011 for the second iteration. The data is culled from videotaped lessons in the fourth grade classrooms of the two focus teachers and from their reflection journals. The criteria for analyzing the lessons is based on the three dimensions of the research, Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS), interpretive skills and cultural awareness/knowledge.

The videotaped lessons were applauded by other participants. Everyone was in attendance for the video-viewing and shared what they liked about the lessons and what activity they planned to use with their class. There were also a few logistical questions such as how much time was needed to prepare students to be videotaped.

Both of Mae's videotaped lessons were an introduction to the story and included context clues to introduce vocabulary words that Mae determined to be challenging for her students. Not only were both of her lessons introductory but they also tended to infuse standards-based comprehension skills and fewer interpretive skills. However, a final activity personalized the lesson by connecting students with their lived experience by discussing and writing a description of their neighborhoods, all of which were in the low income areas of East Riverside. Mae modeled this SACS activity by saying, "does your neighborhood have grass, houses, trees? Talk to your partner about your neighborhood."

By contrast, Licet described her lesson as interpretive and stated that she had already taught the vocabulary and comprehension skills from OCR, a SACS activity. The first videotaped lesson, with minimal teacher involvement, was verbal group presentations of the scenarios about bullies from chapter II of *Richmond Tales*. As stated earlier, Licet's videotaped lesson from the second iteration was a compare and contrast activity in which students compared and contrasted their culture with that of the main characters. Both teachers employed student engagement techniques, such as partner dialogue or small group discussions, to achieve total student participation. Every student in all lessons were 100% engaged during the videotaped lessons.

### **Description of Mae's Lesson**

For the first iteration, I first presented Mae's videotaped lesson, an introduction to the book, *Richmond Tales* by Summer Brenner. I selected this book because of its potential for connecting to the lived realities and experiences of participant's fourth grade students. First, Mae distributed a copy of her lesson plan to the group and verbally introduced the contents of her lesson as outlined:

1. Building Background
2. Prepare/Preview what the story is about
3. Vocabulary Development using context clues
4. Story is read aloud
5. Making Connections with your neighborhood
6. Character Analysis of Maisha, the main character
7. Personal Narrative, Picture Representation of Student's Neighborhood and a Preview of Chapter 2:



The three additional activities in step 7, were included in the lesson plan as a back-up but were not used in the videotaped lesson. The lesson was carried out as listed above and clearly demonstrated that infusion of the SACS was achieved and followed the same lesson format as OCR, in which teachers tell the students what the story is about and then introduce the vocabulary words in context, prior to students' first reading of the text. Character analysis is also a major SACS activity, as taught verbatim by Mae from the OCR Teacher's Manual. This activity is appropriate for an introductory lesson.

Interpretive skills were achieved minimally when Mae made personal connections with students lived experiences by asking them to again turn to their partner and describe their neighborhoods; "What do you see, what do the buildings look like, are there trees or any plants, stores, gardens, etc." This activity is significant because the story, described as realistic fiction, is about 'the Iron Triangle' a real community in East Riverside (both pseudonyms) where many students reside. After circulating and listening to the students' conversations, Mae selected a few students, who had interesting stories, to verbally share with the entire class. Two students connected with the story by excitedly sharing that they had witnessed the shooting deaths of people in their neighborhoods, a situation mentioned in *Richmond Tales*. Lastly, students were asked to create a character chart to use throughout the story to illustrate the main characters' changing mood and attitude. This SACS lesson is more technical and omits deep conversation about the human conditions in the story.

Connecting students to the text by comparing their reality with the content of the story on several occasions is considered interpretive on a superficial level because the lesson connects the home neighborhood with learning at school but it does not consider the human condition on a deeper level. As Freeman & Freeman (2004) assert:

When students see themselves in a text, they connect in significant ways that lead to deeper comprehension...Learners easily construct meaning from a text that contains familiar elements because their background knowledge helps them make predictions and inferences about the story.

Mae's videotaped lesson for the second iteration was similar to the first one, but engaged a new class of fourth graders at the same school at the beginning of the school year, September, 2011. She introduced the story, *The Circuit*, by Francisco Jimenez, to her primarily Latino class, followed by the same vocabulary activity as in the first iteration, in which students were to use context clues to determine the definition of the teacher selected vocabulary words and write the words and the final definition in their writing journal. Throughout the lesson, students were asked to turn to their partners to ponder word meanings or character traits of Francisco, a ten year old Latino immigrant boy.

After completion of the first read, the second half of the lesson, required students to turn to their partners to discuss two issues: "What is the meaning of the title, "*The Circuit*," and "How does the title relate to the Open Court Unit, Risks and Consequences?" After ten minutes of discussion with a partner, students were asked to write their responses in their Writing Journal. This topic for discussion relates more to the human condition that the Jimenez family endured when they took the risk to crawl through a tunnel under the barbed wire to seek a better life in America. The ultimate consequence is to get caught by the border patrol and sent back to Mexico. Given the necessary scaffolding and deeper discussion by the teacher, this lesson could have been considered interpretive rather than a surface level lesson. Instead it ended without a

rich exploration of the risks and consequences of being an illegal immigrant and living in constant fear.

In summary, Mae had accomplished the infusion of Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills and minimally touched on interpretive skills by connecting students' lives with the text. She set the stage for discussing cultural content by asking students about the meaning of the title and the significance of the story to the OCR theme. However, the forty minute videotaped lesson ended with the journal writing assignment and excluded the oral discussion or comment.

### **Licet's Lesson**

Licet's spring and fall lesson help to show us that she fully understood the concept of interpretive skills as well as SACS. Her videotaped lesson from the first iteration of my research demonstrated an understanding of both dimensions as evidenced by the depth of the activities in the videotaped lessons, a baseline lesson as a focus teacher. When introducing her lesson, she reported that she and her students had started reading *Richmond Tales* the day after she received the class set, two weeks earlier. Introductory activities, vocabulary, comprehension study and other infusion activities had been taught during the first week followed by a class visit by the author, Summer Brenner, who is a local resident. During the second week, Licet selected the sub-theme of bullying to develop her videotaped lesson because "This is a major concern at our school and in my class." (5/12/11) She divided her class into four groups and gave each group a scenario to discuss, write about, and present to the class, as a group. The scenarios listed below, which are about two characters who are notorious bullies in the community, required higher order thinking, interpretation, imagination, thought, sensitivity toward the concerns of her students, and time to create the variety of scenarios. The four scenarios used in the sixty minute lesson are mentioned below in the order that they were presented by the student groups.

- Group 1. Cooper Brothers Character Analysis (Describe qualities, examples from Chapter 2)
- Group 2. Cooper Brothers Character Analysis: Why are they the way they are?
- Group 3. Bullying-Personal Narrative: Tell about a time when you were bullied or were a bully; How is this the same or different from the bullies in *Richmond Tales*.
- Group 4. Play: The Cooper Brothers' Future: Write and act out a play with a different ending.

Students were given two days prior to their presentations to engage in discourse about their scenario and then write their personal response to the assignment. It was a heartwarming experience to see the students present their assignments with poise and clarity. Each group, primarily Latino students, experienced an integration of reading, writing, listening and speaking as well as a personal connection to the story. Higher order thinking where students had to infer and locate evidence from the story to validate their thinking, is clearly an interpretive, higher order thinking skill used in all of the scenarios. Student responses regarding the plight of the Cooper brothers ranged from, "Their parent taught them how to steal and are in prison" to "Their parents were killed and the grandmother couldn't take care of them good." The student group assigned to change the ending of the story reported that the Cooper brothers found a good foster home and grew up and went to college-a happy ending. Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills provided the foundation for students to adequately accomplish the interpretive assignments. For example, each activity required that students substantiate their thinking with evidence or details from the story or use the descriptions from the story to infer character traits that were not

explicitly stated. Basic facts, details, and compare and contrast are also SACS skills necessary for students to write a personal narrative about being a bully or being bullied and to compare their experience with the way the main characters were bullied in the story. This lesson wove in cultural awareness in certain ways. Though the lesson did not include ethnic culture, it certainly included the school culture and the conditions that students experience on a daily basis.

The theme of bullying allowed students to identify with a persistent school problem, and provide some in-depth thought to the problem as victims or perpetrators by comparing and contrasting their experience with bullying. They also applied background knowledge when they had to speculate about past events and points of view to make sense of the Cooper brothers past experiences that shaped their incorrigible behavior. Bullying, the human condition and a prevalent societal issue endured by many of our students brought about greater understanding of the hurt and damage created by bullying. As one student said in his conclusion, "I don't bully anymore because I don't want to be mean and hurt people," evidence that the story promoted empathy and understanding among the students. Another scenario assigned to another group was "What do you think the author's purpose was for writing *Richmond Tales*? What lesson do you think she wanted the reader to learn? Why do you think so? Use specific evidence from the story to prove your ideas. Include page and paragraph number." One of the most notable responses from a student regarding the above assignment was that the author wanted the reader to know about a problem area in Richmond so that somebody can help and do something about it."

Licet was minimally involved during these lesson presentations. A student narrator for each group read his scenario to the class and called on group members to make their interpretive presentations. This indicates that Licet had been effective in preparing students to demonstrate their presentation and interpretive skills.

The two and one half month summer break brought about interruptions in not only the study group process, but also in Licet's school assignment. Unfortunately she was transferred to another school due to declining enrollment at her former school, was assigned to a fifth grade class instead of fourth and had to adjust to what she described as a hostile adult peer group. Classroom management of her fifth grade class was a challenge at the beginning of the year. Despite the challenge and changes, however, Licet remained a strong member of the study group and one of the focus teachers.

The second videotaped lesson in December also addressed several features of SACS including (1) classroom discourse, (2) a compare and contrast activity; (3) cultural awareness to help students better understand their cultural heritage by interviewing their parents about their culture and (4) promoting empathy and understanding of a Mexican family. Licet's rendition of interpretive skills connected the home culture with the main character of the story and with the culture of other students in the class. The lesson plan for the new fifth grade class was less detailed than that of the first iteration and simply asked students to use a T chart (a graphic organizer), to compare and contrast their culture with that of Francisco, a Mexican boy, who is a recent immigrant in Southern California. Licet explained that the day before the videotaped lesson students shared what they had learned about Francisco's culture in class, a SACS activity. As homework, Licet selected an interpretive activity to connect home culture to the text by assigning students to interview their families about their cultures in order to compare their findings with that of the Mexican family in the story. The lesson basically picked up on the surface descriptors such as where were you born, what is your favorite food, what does your family do for entertainment, how many people are in your family?

By using the document camera, Licet modeled the process by giving examples from her Italian heritage compared to Francisco, the main character. “How is my culture compared to Francisco?” “How are we alike and how are we different?” “Write five compares and five contrasts.” For example, “I have one sister, I am Italian, and I was born in Indiana.” Students worked with a partner for twenty minutes before presenting their compare and contrast chart with three peers. As an engagement strategy for discussion, students were asked to circulate around the room to the song Labamba, by Richie Vallance. When the music stopped, students were asked to share one ‘compare and contrast’ from their chart, a SACS activity, with the person closest to them and write the name of the person on their paper to document the partner share. This routine continued until everyone had shared three times. Next, students were asked to share with the class one new thing that they had learned about Francisco from a peer. Though the lesson was generally a SACS, it allowed for the use of a student engagement strategy where students could interact and receive information from three sources. Hollie ( 2000) would describe this activity as an example of one of the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy. It is an unconventional, “outside of the box” method of engaging students in a collaborative, kinesthetic approach to learning. This activity was demonstrated in a videotaped lesson by Hollie (2010) during a teacher workshop.

The second videotaped lesson at the end of the second iteration had somewhat more of a cultural awareness focus than the first videotape. The preliminary steps during class discussions and homework created a successful lesson of comparing and contrasting Francisco’s culture with their own. The activity connects text to students and serves to motivate and creates a greater interest in the story. The lesson allowed students the experience of responding to and demonstrating cultural awareness which incorporates the human condition. However, the issues of immigration, poverty, discrimination, family obligations, the life of Mexican migrant farmers in the 1930s and ‘40s, child labor laws or other issues that demand deeper interpretive skills, were not evident in the lesson. This culturally sensitive activity, however, did seem to inspire empathy among students, who learned a little something about others cultural experiences.

The two videotaped lessons produced by Licet, demonstrated an understanding of the three dimensions of this design/action research project. She integrated all three dimensions-- SACS, interpretive skills and cultural awareness- in her lessons. However, interpretive skills and cultural knowledge, such as food choices and celebrations, were at a more surface level.

## **Strengths**

Probably the greatest strength of this design/action research was the formation of a successful professional learning community (PLC). The favorable outcome of this project was dependent on the recruitment and creation of a diverse, engaged, collegial group of teachers, who were interested in making literacy learning come alive for their students. Both laughter and tears were observed as participants shared their cultural stories with the study group during the first two sessions of the first iteration. Their stories were about struggle, racism, disappointment, determination, hope, perseverance and triumph. Likewise, sharing the what and why of their favorite piece of adult literature, was also an experience that served to create a bond among participants. Trust, collegiality, a shared purpose, motivation, reflection, caring relationships, good attendance and all of the components of an effective PLC, were developed during the first two sessions. My research could not have existed without an engaged PLC. Participants were

willing to be transparent, share their emotions, and question and applaud each other for their efforts.

A second strength was the selection and use of the two books, *Richmond Tales* by Summer Brenner during the first iteration and *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez for the second iteration. These books were chosen because of their high interest for participants and the diverse student population that they teach. The multiethnic texts also had lively and meaningful plots, and interesting characters and settings to study. They were both rich in ideas and language. Both books engendered strong emotional reactions from participants as they identified with the plight of the main characters. Participants played an active role in the meaning construction process for the two selected stories and negotiated the topics of discussion that were of interest and concern to them. As a result, numerous sub-themes for discussion were identified and explored for lesson planning. For example, though eight themes were identified, ‘bullying’ became a major topic of discussion from “*Richmond Tales*” and subsequently became the topic of a videotaped lesson by one of the focus teachers.

Another strength was that participants easily developed lesson plans for infusing Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS) into the selected literature. Though they reported that they had never had this experience, it seemed to be an easy task for individual homework as well as group lesson planning during the sessions. Participants understood that the standards do not have to be omitted when introducing multiethnic literature into the existing mandated text. But it was not a major challenge to infuse the SACS into the selected multiethnic literature. Several SACS lesson ideas were developed by participants for future use in their classrooms.

Cultural self-knowledge, and multicultural knowledge and sensitivity to the history, struggles and challenges of other’s cultural experiences was a great learning experience for me, the researchers, and the participants. Openness and willingness to share our personal family experiences was a learning experience that motivated participants to want to learn more about others cultures that shaped their attitudes, beliefs and character. This awakening has potential to have the same effect for the students that we teach.

Lastly, the potential for building capacity and spreading the SACS practices in literacy to meet the needs of our students of color in ERUSD, is an important beginning. To use multiethnic literature to supplement the basal textbook does not mean that the basic skills and standards are abandoned as during the whole language movement in the 80’s. Teachers can easily learn how to infuse the SACS as demonstrated by my design/action research. Additionally, our superintendent and the curriculum and instruction department are interested in sharing all facets of this research with principals and teachers in our district. The concepts of PLCs, use of multiethnic literature, strategies for infusing SACS, the use of reflection as a learning tool, etc. are all topics of interest for building capacity for cultural sensitivity among teachers and students alike. Participants wholeheartedly expressed an interest in sharing their new knowledge and experience at their respective schools by forming PLCs for interested teachers. Therefore, these participants could be teacher leaders who could help develop other teachers’ capacity for infusing multiethnic content in the selected, mandated basal text, OCR.

## **Limitations**

The research project was not without limitations. The most noted limitation was a hesitancy to infuse interpretive skills into the multiethnic lessons, especially the lessons to be

videotaped. Use of interpretive skills was not a strong characteristic of the mandated text used in ERUSD. Consequently teachers were not as experienced in creating and using inquiry-based, inferential lesson plans, though participants understood the concept. Model lesson plans, step by step procedures and more of a didactic approach to the process was needed to guide teachers in creating their lesson designs.

The summer break between the first and second iteration resulted in a need to review all dimensions of the process, especially the interpretive skills, the most challenging of the dimensions. When I asked participants to define interpretive skill upon our return for the second iteration in September, there was a silence until Mae opened her journal and began to read the definitions that the group had discussed during the first iteration that ended in early June. Learning theory teaches us that immediate and ongoing practice is necessary when learning new techniques or strategies. The three month summer break created a barrier to the new learning.

Another notable limitation was the involvement of only one white teacher in my research. This is of concern because the student population of ERUSD is close to 80% minority—48% Latino, 34% African American, etc. and only 9% white. Though this research was not designed for white teachers only, who make up 65% of the teaching staff in ERUSD, it is of benefit to anyone who teaches our diverse student population and serves to build cultural sensitivity, empathy and lessons that motivate, resonate and incorporate the lived experiences of the students we teach. The potential for improving the achievement levels for our students of color lies with the teachers in our classroom, who must be culturally sensitive as one of the conditions for impacting transformation of our teaching practice.

## **Conclusions**

Overall, the two focus teachers had a good grasp of what it means to infuse Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills into multiethnic literature. Both quickly and easily demonstrated the understanding of the importance of using multiethnic literature to motivate students' interest in reading while maintaining an integration of comprehension skills in the process. Lesson objectives for this dimension were clear and were adapted directly from OCR. This indicates that teachers were familiar with the standards-aligned comprehension skills, which made the process of infusing them into multiethnic literature much easier and successful in both the pre and post-assessment.

Interpretive skills were somewhat achieved throughout the lessons, but remained at a surface level. The study group sessions required more discussion among the participants to fully comprehend and apply the skills with open ended inquiry questions, points of view with evidence from the text, reflections/discussions about the human condition during both iterations, identification of sub-themes to use to develop a lesson focus and connections with home/community with school. For example, three participants were unclear about the meaning, during the first iteration and needed examples to gain a better understanding. (See Appendix F) A model lesson or step by step procedures was needed to aid with the new learning.

Use of cultural knowledge was at the emergent or beginning stages of understanding. Without benefit of the rubric or protocols, the two focus teachers, as well as other participants, though culturally sensitive in their expressed beliefs, did not explicitly hone in on cultural content with any significance until the end of the second iteration, though minimally. During that period, Licet asked her students to compare and contrast Francisco's culture with that of their own, while Mae, the other focus teacher, did not include cultural content beyond students

personal experiences. Given more time, this dimension could be developed with the use of historical references, discussion of prevailing societal issues, provocative open ended questions and literature that involves a call to action against inequitable human conditions, such as racism, poverty, discrimination and exploitation.

Overall, the impact on teacher learning on three dimensions (SACS, cultural knowledge and awareness and interpretive skills) was modest with a rating of 1.5 on a scale of 0 to 3 with three being the highest or accomplished and zero as non-existent. SACS was strong with a rating of effective and easily accomplished. Interpretive skills acquisition was minimally achieved and included many surface level activities that lacked depth of understanding or involvement of the human condition. Use of a cultural referent and knowledge was probably the weakest dimension of the study. The participant's lesson plans either omitted or minimally included cultural referents or activities.

## **Chapter V: Summary, Implications, and Recommendations**

U. S. classrooms are experiencing the largest influx of immigrants since the early 1900's, greatly increasing the diversity of students, especially in our large urban schools. Teachers in all parts of the country are most likely to have students in their classrooms from diverse ethnic, racial, national and language groups. Rapid economic, social and technological changes are connecting people across the continents. Knowledge of the world and diverse cultures is a necessity. Students need understandings of both the diverse cultural groups within their own country as well as global cultures around the world. A major paradigm shift in American education with the use of culturally diverse curriculum content in the classroom is essential. It is based on the premise that effective teaching and learning for ethnically diverse students can be enhanced through the use of instructional materials that include the cultural content that recognizes the contributions and experiences that people of these ethnic groups have made. Children's literature plays a crucial role by providing students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in multiethnic literature and gain insights into how people think, feel and live. Culturally responsive teaching strategies and materials should be the focus of this shift in American education. Teachers can become more culturally aware and responsive in the use of multiethnic literature. That being said, there is research showing that "deliberately infusing specific aspects of the cultural systems of different ethnic groups into instructional processes has positive impacts on student achievement." (Gay, 2000)

Consequently, the focus must be on culturally responsive instructional practices that meet the needs of our ethnically diverse students even if it means trying new methods. As principal and instructional leader in ERUSD, I realize that it is my responsibility to provide the leadership for teacher's transformation of practice. I developed the design for engaging teachers in the process of infusing cultural literacy into the skill-based, scripted reading program, specifically, Open Court Reading. I designed the protocols and processes for three dimensions: standards-aligned comprehension skills, (SACS), and interpretive skills and cultural sensitivity and awareness, all within the context of a Professional Learning Community.

### **Summary of Findings**

Baseline findings of this qualitative, design action research indicated that the PLC was the best and most effective context for this study. Without the enthusiasm, motivation, collaboration and good attendance, the study group and consequently, the research project, would not have been possible. Participants, representing three ethnicities, formed a collegial, empathic, culturally sensitive study group who developed trust, compassion and openness with each other. Everyone willingly shared their personal and cultural histories and stories throughout the sessions and followed through with lesson planning and lesson presentations. Baseline findings, however, reveal that the teacher leaning did not translate into instruction in both interpretive skills and cultural knowledge as evidenced by the lesson plans.

The process, which was developed by the researcher before the sessions began, was generally followed as planned with only minor adjustments based on the theory of action. Though participants had no prior experience in transferring Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills (SACS) from the scripted basal text to the selected multiethnic literature, everyone was adept at doing so due to familiarity with the skills after several years of use in the Open Court scripted program. The Open Court Teachers Manual provided the clear guidelines for



participants to follow for their lesson design. However, interpretive skills lesson planning was more of a challenge for participants. Everyone seemed to understand the meaning of interpretive skills-based on the discussions and ideas suggested verbally, but were cautious and reluctant to apply interpretive skills in their lesson plans. The two focus teachers were asked if they needed suggestions for their lessons, but did not formulate their lesson during the session. Several suggestions were offered but the lessons were planned individually and videotaped within the two weeks before the next session. I as researcher did not request to view the lesson plans before the videotaping so as not to influence teacher learning. The implementation results of the interpretive skills by the two focus teachers were mixed. One teacher used interpretive skills in the first videotaped lesson but reverted back to SACS for the second videotaped lesson. The other focus teacher used the standards-based comprehension skills in both of her videotapes, which generally followed the lesson design from the scripted comprehension section of Open Court Reading Teacher's Manual. Just as OCR provided the guideline for lesson planning for SACS, it would have been useful if guidelines for interpretive skills and cultural knowledge had been provided to participants to follow as well, instead of only examples. In retrospect, participants could have benefitted by having the rubrics or protocols for lesson planning that the researcher used to rate their lessons for cultural content and interpretive skills, such as in Table IV. Participants could have also benefitted from use of time to more thoroughly analyze model lessons or their own lessons for evidence of interpretive features and cultural content. It also might have been useful if participants were given the same lesson to try out with their students and report their experiences and questions to the group. Additionally, to change habits and transfer new learnings to practice requires multiple opportunities to practice and receive feedback, suggesting that my research project might have yielded better results with a yearlong study group that has ample time to practice, and give and receive feedback to transfer the new learnings to instruction.

The same results were noted in pre and post-impact measure, which was to use chapter one of *Breaking Through* by Jimenez to write a lesson plan that engages students. The results were again mixed with four of the six participants using OCR Standards-aligned Comprehension Skills in their lesson plans. Clearly, all participants understood the meaning of interpretive skills, but selected the more familiar OCR SACS in their lessons plans.

## **Implications for Educational Practice**

After two iterations and thirteen sessions with the PLC, I recommend the following practices for future design studies that embed cultural content in skill-based, scripted language arts programs. Implications fall into two categories: multiethnic literature and professional learning community.

## **Implications for the Multiethnic Literacy Content**

My design action research project, with a focus on teacher learning, aimed to develop a process with teacher participants to address the needs of the changing ethnic and cultural demographic of school sites. By infusing multiethnic literature into their skilled-based, prescriptive reading program used in ERUSD, teachers provided for incorporation of students' cultural knowledge into the literacy curriculum, specifically, skills aligned comprehension skills

and interpretive skills. The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems asserts that “the power and influence that a teacher possesses to improve student achievement cannot be replaced with high stakes tests, legislative mandates or even a reading program. Teachers who embrace culturally responsive literacy instruction and who are culturally aware and sensitive will serve as a catalyst for improved reading achievement among culturally diverse students.” (Hollie Workshop, September, 2011) I learned that teachers would have a greater understanding of the depth and complexity of multiethnic literature from a historical and social justice point of view and thereby have the potential to change their attitudes, beliefs and assumptions about the learning potential of their students of color. Additionally, teachers would have a greater understanding of the importance of infusing students’ realities, life experiences, and culture into the literacy program and would be able to select high quality, authentic, bias-free multiethnic literature.

### **Implications for Professional Learning Communities**

A Professional Learning Community as the context for my study proved effective and is eminently scalable. After this experience as researcher, I am convinced that teacher learning is most effective in a study group. The dedicated, motivated and enthusiastic participants of my study are interested and eager to form study groups at their school sites as a context for teacher learning. Though the impact of my study was modest in its results, which may be the fault of the process, member of the PLC were engaged and committed to being together, thinking together and planning together.

This design study clearly defines a problem and outlines a new and/or improved strategy for solving the problem by infusing cultural content into the skill-based programs. Other school leaders in East Riverside Unified School District are interested in conducting a similar design project in their schools with the support of the participants in my study group. Additionally, the Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction has requested that my study group make a presentation for principals early next school year, which will enhance the capacity of the participants and increase scalability, especially for infusing SACS while the model for interpretive skills and cultural content is further developed with a more detailed, step by step process and model lessons to practice as a group.

Secondly, as a functional vehicle to support teacher learning about using cultural content in the literacy program, teacher learning communities must be sustained over time, allowing for change to occur developmentally, in turn increasing the likelihood of sustainability at both the individual level and the organizational/school level. Change of practice takes place over a period of time rather than being in the form of a one to two day workshop and involves teachers in active, collective participation. Scripted curricula and pacing guides have created a divide from goal setting, creativity and use of teacher efficacy for planning effective learning opportunities, particularly for their underperforming students of color. Teachers have simply been directed to follow the scripted program completely without regard to the needs, interests or cultural styles of their students. Also, the isolation of years of teaching behind closed doors for many teachers has not prepared them to share their struggles, ask for help or provide critical analysis. A culture of “polite” prevails with many teachers who do not believe that it is their place to challenge, recommend or disagree with their colleagues (Bransford et al., 1999). However this dilemma is overcome with a sustained, intensive PLC, supported by modeling, coaching, and the collective solving of specific problems of practice. PLC’s should be the teaching/learning communities that

are non-threatening venues that allows teachers to notice weaknesses in their multiethnic content knowledge and skills and get help with their deficiencies from peers.

Study groups (PLCs) at the same school, embedded in the day-to day realities of teachers' classrooms, provide a time and place where teachers can hear real-life stories from colleagues that demonstrate the benefits of adopting these new techniques in situations similar to their own. Without that local reassurance, there may be a limited chance that teachers will risk upsetting the prevailing classroom contact (Brousseau, 1997). Being a member of a community of teacher-learners engaged together in a change process, provides the support teachers need to take risks and try new multiethnic literature strategies and techniques.

## **Recommendations**

Given that the impact of my design research on teacher implementation was moderately successful, I would make the following recommendations for my future research.

### **Timing of Action Research Projects**

To guarantee continuity, sustainability and successful recruitment, I strongly recommend that a design /action research project that has two iterations and thirteen sessions, should begin early in the school year to maintain a smooth sequence of sessions. Contrary to this recommendation, my research began in March and concluded in the month of December of the following school year. Though all participants willingly returned at the beginning of the new school year, after a summer vacation, there was understandably a slight lapse of memory for some content and required review. For example, participants could not recall the definition and examples of interpretive skills and did not attempt to use the skill in their second videotaped lesson, perhaps due to the uncertainty of the meaning. Interpretive skills also make significant demands on subject matter knowledge. Teachers need strong content knowledge to ask good interpretive questions, to interpret the responses of their students, to provide appropriate feedback that focuses on what to do to improve and to adjust their teaching at a moment's notice, based on the information they are receiving or gathering about their students understanding of the content. Additionally, teachers need an overview of the subject matter in order to be clear about the big ideas in a particular domain so that these ideas are given greater emphasis. A two and a half month vacation between the two iterations was definitely a disruption in the momentum and creative inquiry of the content and generation of big ideas to explore as a study group.

### **Conditions for an effective Professional Learning Community**

The last point to be made about an effective PLC/ study group is its context. Hord (2004) asserts that the study group is most effective when the participants are colleagues at the same school and that most studies on professional learning communities occur with teacher groups in specific school sites. This has several advantages. First, teachers who work together are more likely to have the opportunity to discuss concepts, skills and problems that arise during their professional development experiences. Secondly, teachers who are from the same school, are likely to share common curricular materials, course offerings or assessment requirements. By

engaging in joint professional development, participants may be able to integrate what they learn with other aspects of their instructional context. Thirdly, teachers who share the same students can discuss strategies to meet student needs across classes or grade levels. Finally, by focusing on a group of teachers from the same school, professional development may help sustain changes in practice over time, as some teachers leave the school and other new teachers join the faculty. Professional development may help contribute to the shared professional culture in which teachers in a school develop a common understanding of instructional goals, methods, problems and solutions (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1993). Ball (1996) posits that “Collective participation in the same activity can provide a forum for debate and improved understanding, which increases teachers’ capacity to grow.” (p. 123)

To begin a study group at the beginning of the school year would possibly improve the recruitment efforts also. A few principals were reluctant to support my research project in March with explanations such as, “We are already involved in other research projects,” “My teachers are already overwhelmed with preparing their students for the California State tests,” or simply, “We are not interested.” Though these responses are disappointing, I fully accept the sentiment toward fidelity to the skill-based, scripted program, which is touted as the best approach to improve test scores. Reluctance to introduce a new approach to literacy so late in the year is understandable.

### **Impact on Student Learning**

What might be the impact on student learning for students of color who participate in a year long multiethnic infusion literature program? The many values and benefits of infusing multiethnic literature into prescriptive, skill-based programs for students, is that it builds bridges of understandings across cultures and countries connecting students to their home cultures and to the world beyond their homes. Secondly, it gives young people who are members of marginalized groups or recent immigrants, the opportunity to develop a better sense of who they are and improve their self-esteem. It potentially leads to social action for a better future.

First, to accomplish text infusion for the students’ benefit, researchers will need to review the basal text to determine which ethnic group stories are included and which are omitted. The treatment or representation of minorities in the basal text as authentic, stereotyped, etc. will also need to be considered by researchers. Once the basal texts are reviewed and the reading program is supplemented with authentic, quality multiethnic literature, as needed, the key research question is, “Was the reading achievement, engagement and motivation of the involved students substantially improved? Was the use of multiethnic literature a significant predictor of academic success for students of color?” Spring California test results are not available until August. However, the participants in my study believed this to be true. Licet reported that she conducted a survey of the stories read during the school year and asked students to select their favorite story. Her students voted for *The Circuit*, used during the second iteration, as first choice. The student choice was unanimous. No student voted for any of the OCR stories as their first choice. All participants also reported that student engagement was at an all time high during the discussion of the multiethnic stories and that their own emotional engagement and empathy for the characters in the stories, was as great as the students.

### **Recommendations for East Riverside Unified School District**

Districts clearly play a unique role in the success of professional development and school improvement by providing a shared vision, time, resources, coordination, evaluation and accountability of efforts. Support at the district level of East Riverside Unified School District was reasonably supportive. By the end of the first two sessions, of the first iterations, funds were offered to pay participants the teacher's hourly rate, to engage in the study group. They were paid for thirteen sessions—two hours per session. Perhaps more teachers would have participated if they were aware that remuneration would be offered. ERUSD's Curriculum and Instructional Department also purchased class sets of the two books used in the study for each of the six participants.

To continue the effort to incorporate multiethnic literature into the scripted, skill-based text, the six participants and I have been invited to present our work of introducing cultural content into skilled based, scripted text, to the principals of ERUSD. I am in the process of developing an overview power-point presentation. For teachers I am creating a workbook that details the process that was used during the two iterations as well as model lessons to be tried out and critiqued by PLCs. It will consist of the rationale for a PLC study group, sample relationship building activities, a rationale for the use of multiethnic literature; and expected outcomes of the experience, such as cultural sensitivity and awareness and ability to align comprehension skills and interpretive skills infused into multiethnic literature. A selected list of multiethnic literature for future use will be included also. The four videotapes of the focus teachers' lessons will be made available for viewing as examples of SACS infusion. I am hopeful that our presentation will inspire the principals to pursue a similar experience for their teaching staff.

Central office staff and school board members can support scalability by offering paid professional development sessions for teachers in ERUSD, who will then serve as trainers/facilitators at their school sites. I strongly recommend that the curriculum/instruction department or the District Equity Committee, as a governing body, develop a three-year strategic plan to ensure that all teachers in ERUSD are trained in the use of multiethnic literature that represents the student population of our district. In an effort to build an infrastructure to support, organizational cultural awareness and sensitivity, the governing body needs to be representative of all levels of the school system—various employee groups, including administration, teachers, instructional support and business services personnel. The composition of the group needs to reflect the racial, linguistic and cultural diversity of the school district and gender balance. The members of the governing body must have a passion or desire to see changes made in the system for the benefit of our diverse student body.

## **Recommendations for Future Researchers**

Overall the evidence indicates that the impact was modest, which suggest that the process needs to be enhanced with more strategies and tools for reinforcing interpretive skills. Additional research that focuses exclusively on creating lesson plans for interpretive skills is needed to provide more time and practice for participants since this level of inquiry or critical thinking is generally devoid in the skill-based prescriptive programs. As noted in the research findings, participants understood and practiced the creation of interpretive features during the sessions, especially the second iteration, however the two focus teachers chose to fall back into their comfort zone for the videotaped lessons, both of which included standards-aligned comprehension skills, similar to lessons from OCR basal program. More experience in collaborative planning for and practice teaching interpretive skills would give teachers more

competence and confidence in designing and delivering interpretive skills lessons to their students, thereby ruling out the possibility of resorting back to the familiar for their demonstration lessons.

As a life-long learner and researcher, I am compelled to repeat my design/action research with three major modifications (1) focusing exclusively on the creation of interpretive skills development for the selected multiethnic literature, (2) implementing the design with the participants who teach at the same school rather than from four different schools as was the case for my original study and lastly, (3) using the newly adopted, national Common Core Standards to guide the planning for interpretive skills. This is a great opportunity to become familiar with the new standards and to create model lessons in literacy. Unpacking and developing activities using the common core state standards with multiethnic literature will not only accomplish the challenge of learning about the new common core national standards, but will also give participants the opportunity to create interpretive skills activities such as use of different perspectives, critical thinking and inquiry and project based learning, which is a requirement embedded in the new standards. For example, the new standards require that teachers understand how to connect concepts and differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

I also propose that researchers conduct research on the trainer-of trainers model for infusing multiethnic literature into skill-based prescriptive texts, where teachers build their own capacity as trainers or facilitators of school-based study groups while achieving spread throughout their school and within ERUSD as a whole.

Researchers may also study the impact and conditions present and necessary for an effective study group or the conditions lacking for unsuccessful groups. Were the trainers responsible for the effectiveness or lack of it or were there other factors such as ineffective school leadership that may have impacted the success of the trainer-of trainers model?

The school principal as a catalyst for change and success of innovative practices presents another research opportunity for capacity-building leadership. The level of effectiveness and support from the site leader may be dictated by an effective management or leadership style. Which leadership style is more effective for achieving desired results? Autocratic, laissez-faire or a distributive leadership model (principal shares the leadership responsibility with teachers). This research project may explain why change does or does not occur.

While teacher learning was the focus of my design/action research, it may be useful for researchers to study the impact of the use of multiethnic literature on student motivation, engagement, and achievement. Gay (2000) asserts that "When students see visions of people who look and live like those of their culture (both contemporary and historically) it not only creates interests but also provides motivation for students to believe that they can achieve, and that achievement is not only expected but valued." Additionally, Heflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) assert that "When students of color encounter characters that look like them and whose stories mirror their own experiences and culture, they are more likely to see how reading can play a role in their lives and to develop a love of reading." That being said, there is an abundance of research showing that "deliberately infusing specific aspects of the cultural systems of different ethnic groups into instructional processes has positive impacts on student achievement" (Gay, 2000). As a low performing Program Improvement District, I propose the use of multiethnic literature as a research project in a number of classrooms in ERUSD, to convince staff and stakeholders alike of the importance and effectiveness of infusing ethnic literature into our skills-based, scripted literacy program.

Would the results of my study have been different if more white teachers had participated in the study group? Research on the impact of use of multiethnic literature on attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and cultural awareness is worth studying. My research group included only one white teacher who was passionate and a major contributor to my study as a focus teacher. Would group dynamics vulnerabilities, openness, collegiality and trust have been different if more white teachers had participated. Given that 65% of the teachers in ERUSD are white, yet over 75% of the students are of color, with Latinos being close to 50%, the conditions would make for an interesting study.

## **Conclusion**

I am encouraged and illuminated by the modest results of my design/action research project, but I think that we, as a school district, are not as far along as we need to be if we want to build a professional development model that can reach all schools in East Riverside Unified School District that need to improve the achievement of our students of color. The perennial issue, as we attempt to scale up, of course, will be the fidelity to a high quality professional development plan for infusing multiethnic literature into our existing skill-based, scripted, reading program. Professional learning engages teachers in working with others to deepen their content knowledge and sharpen their ability to use data for meaningful decision making. It must be an ongoing job-embedded process that supports transfer of newly-learned knowledge and skills to teacher practice. Such learning also needs to be continually evaluated and refined. I must answer the question how can I improve the content and the learning mode so that a reasonable level of impact on teacher practice can be maintained while reaching even more teachers in more schools, especially schools that educate a significant number of students of color?

Though small, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that infusing multiethnic literacy content into the existing skill-based instruction can change attitudes, beliefs and cultural awareness and sensitivity among teachers and thereby improve the literacy achievement of our students of color. There is much work to be done in ERUSD to transform the educational thought and practices there and in our urban public school systems. The challenge has just begun.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: OUTLINE OF STUDY GROUP SESSIONS

#### Session I Agenda

Time	Objectives	Activity
30 minutes	Participants will meet and greet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Welcome and Introductions</li> <li>*Participants will discuss their favorite piece of adult literature and share why it resonated for them. This assignment will be given when participants are notified that they have been selected to participate.</li> </ul>
15 minutes	Participants will understand the purpose of the LEEP research project and the potential value of a Professional Learning Community (study group).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Researcher and participants will define the purpose and value of a study group for improving teacher practice.</li> <li>*Participants will sign the agreement to participate.</li> <li>*A list of characteristics and benefits will be generated by the group.</li> </ul>
15 minutes	Participants will review, discuss, revise Norms	*Sample norms will be presented by the researcher. *Participants will discuss, question and revise the norms until consensus is reached. (Appendix B)
30-40 minutes	Participants will complete the pre-assessment Impact Measure	*Researcher will distribute the first chapter of <u>Breaking Through</u> by Francisco Jimenez and ask participants to develop a lesson plan as the impact measure.
20 minutes	Participants will write in the reflection journal, discuss and question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Researcher will lead the discussion regarding the value of reflection journals, distribute journals and a guide for reflective writing. (Appendix C)</li> <li>*Assignment: Bring Teachers Manual for the OCR survival Unit to the next session</li> </ul>

#### Session II Agenda

Time	Objectives	Activity
5 minutes	Participants will review the norms for working together.	*A participant will be asked to read the norms aloud and ask participants for agreement.
30-40 minutes	Participants will understand the importance of cultural self - knowledge	*Participants will be asked why self-knowledge is important. The poem, “Child of the Americas” (Appendix D) will be read and discussed by participants, as a sample of cultural self-knowledge. *Researcher will distribute and discuss sample guidelines (Appendix E) for writing self-knowledge.
20 minutes	Participants will complete self-knowledge narratives.	All participants and the researcher will write self-knowledge narratives in the genre of their choice, i.e. poetry, a letter to a friend, personal narrative, etc.
25 minutes	Participants will share self-knowledge narratives.	*Volunteers will read their cultural self-knowledge narratives. Appreciations will be encouraged.
25-30 minutes	*Participants will write in their reflection journals, discuss and question. *Participants will be given an assignment.	*Fifteen minutes will be allotted for participants to write in their journals, discuss and question.  *Researcher will ask participants to be prepared to define and discuss the literary and cultural interpretive skills of literature for the next session. * The multiethnic text, “Richmond Tales” by Summer Brenner will be distributed.

### Session III

Time	Objectives	Activity
10 minutes	Participants will review the norms for working together.	*Participants will review the norms and assess how well they are maintaining the agreements. *Agenda for the session to be reviewed
40 minutes	Participants will gain an understanding of interpretive skills of multiethnic literature.	*Participants will define interpretive skills in children's literature, both cultural and literary. A list will be written on chart paper by a recorder. Researcher will type the list and distribute at the next meeting.  * Participants will work in pairs to develop two activities for the cultural and literary interpretive skills using an excerpt from <i>Richmond Tales</i> by Summer Brenner (Appendix F)
30-40 minutes	Participants will gain additional ideas with a group share.	*Each pair will share their activities with the group. *Discussion, critique and comments will be encouraged. * Copies of the activities will be duplicated and distributed to everyone. * The researcher will thoughtfully reflect aloud to build on the ideas that were generated.
30 minutes	*Reflection, discussion and questions show greater depth and richness.  *Participants will deepen their reflection skills with positive feedback from the group and the researcher.	*Participants will be encouraged to volunteer to share comments from their reflection journal. * Researcher to present the homework assignment: Review the standards aligned comprehension skills (SACS) - vocabulary and comprehension skills from the Survival Unit Theme (OCR).

#### Session IV- Agenda

Time	Objectives	Activity
30 minutes	Participants will select vocabulary words from a multiethnic text and use the words to develop activities using OCR vocabulary skills/standards from the unit of study.	Participants will use an excerpt from “Richmond Tales” by Summer Brenner to select words to create activities for the multiethnic text. (Appendix G )
30 minutes	Participants will learn how to use OCR comprehension skills/standards to develop comprehension activities for the multiethnic text.	Participants will identify the comprehension skills from OCR and work in groups of two to four to transpose the skills into the multiethnic text, “Richmond ” (Appendix H)
40 minutes	Participants will learn new knowledge and skills during group share.	*A spokesperson from each group will present the vocabulary and comprehension strategies/ activities developed by their group. *Discussion, critique and expansion of activities is encouraged.
20 minutes	Increased proficiency in written reflection will be evident and acknowledged	*Participants will write in their reflection journals and will be encouraged to share their reflection journal narratives to demonstrate greater proficiency.  *Homework: Participants will be instructed to read all of Part I of Richmond Tales, and be prepared to write interpretive skills during the next session.

### Session V-Agenda

Time	Objectives	Activity
40 minutes	Participants will develop a week's lesson plan using interpretive skills, transposing vocabulary and comprehension skills using the multiethnic text.	Participants will work in groups of two to four to develop a weeks long lesson plan (Appendix I) using the book "Richmond Tales", by Summer Brenner. Interpretive skills, vocabulary, comprehension will be developed.
30 minutes	Group share of the lessons will be presented.	*Each group will present their lesson using the document camera and LCD projector, if possible. *Discussion, questions, answers and suggestions will follow.
20 minutes	*Participants will write in the reflection journal, ask clarifying questions and discuss any concerns.  *Homework will be assigned.	*Time will be allowed for concerns, questions or issues regarding the lessons. *Participants will write in their reflection journal, *Homework: Each participant will teach the lessons in their classroom as a supplement to OCR reading.
30 minutes	Two focus teachers will prepare for a visit and inform the researcher of the time and room number for videotaping and classroom observations.	*Researcher will schedule the time to videotape the two focus teachers while teaching a 30 minute lesson using vocabulary, comprehension and a focus on interpretive skills. * The researcher will visit the classes before videotaping. * Two focus teacher will be given an opportunity to request ideas for the lesson that will be videotaped. *Other participants will also be given an opportunity to be videotaped upon request.

**Session VI-Agenda**

Time	Objectives	Activity
50 minutes	Group share of a weeks experience of teaching the lesson.  *	The two focus teachers will present their videotaped lesson *Other participants will use the form to record what they noted and questions they have.. * All participants will present their experience of teaching the lesson for the week.
20 minutes	Participants will engage in a verbal, audio-taped reflection, discussion and recommendations for the next iteration.	Researcher will encourage all participants to verbally share their experience and reactions to participating in a six week study group. Recommendations for the next iteration will be strongly encouraged.
10 minutes	Reflective writing in participants journal will follow.	Public reflection of the experience will be followed by written reflections
10 minutes	Schedules, locations, dates and other logistics will be planned by participants.	A recorder will agree to notify all participants of the agreed upon time, dates and place for the second iteration.

### Sessions VII-XI-Agenda

Time	Objectives	Activity
Same as the first iteration	Changes will be made based on participants suggestions from the first iteration	Researchers may revise some of the protocols as needed.
	Participants may suggest the titles of multiethnic literature to be used in the second iteration	Researcher with input from participants will select books for the second iteration.

### Session XII



Time	Objectives	Activity
30 minutes	<p>*Participants will develop an anti-bias rubric for selecting authentic, multiethnic children’s literature.</p> <p>*Researcher will distribute a list of recommended multiethnic books</p>	<p>*Participants will brainstorm, create a rubric, then refine their rubric, (after collaboration) for selecting multiethnic children’s literature. *Researcher will participate by adding any indicators that may be omitted.</p> <p>*A list of acceptable multiethnic books and other references for recommended children’s literature, will be distributed.</p>
20 minutes	Participants will use their rubric to learn how to analyze children’s literature for bias.	Researcher will provide short selections for participants to practice analyzing children’s literature for bias.
30-40 minutes	Participants will create a lesson plan for chapter I of “Breaking Through” by Francisco Jimenez as the post impact measure.	Researcher will ask participants to develop a lesson plan for the same book used in the pre-impact measure applying the new knowledge learned from the study group.
15 minutes	Participants will compare their pre and post impact measures	<p>*Researcher will distribute the pre-impact measure and give participants an opportunity to compare the two.</p> <p>*Participants will report any changes noted.</p>
20 minutes	Participants will reflect (both verbally and in writing) on what impact the twelve session study group had on their practice or personal attitudes and beliefs as a participant in the study group.	Researcher will ask participants to reflect, in writing, on the impact (if any) that participation in the study group had on them personally or on their teaching practice. Would they participate in a study group again? Why or why not? Would they be interested in forming a study group at their school?

**APPENDIX B-SAMPLE NORMS (Session I)**

**Norms/Community Agreements**  
(Adapted from West Contra Costa Unified School District)

1. I will stay engaged in the dialogue and work.
2. I understand that I may experience discomfort.
3. I will speak my truth for the good of the group.
4. I will listen without judgment.
5. I will assume positive intentions on behalf of my colleagues.
6. I will support the contributions of all participants.
7. I will accept non-closure.
8. I will maintain confidentiality.
9. I will turn off all electronic devices

## APPENDIX C-SAMPLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS (SESSION I)

### REFLECTION JOURNAL

Possible questions to guide your thinking

1. Were the objectives of the session met?
2. What did you learn from the presentations and discussions?
3. Will you use any of the new ideas in your teaching?
4. How well did the study group work together and why?
5. How did you feel when you had to share your ideas with the group?
6. What did you learn about yourself during the activities in the study group?
7. What role did you play in the study group?
8. How did you assist your group to achieve the objective successfully?
9. What made you feel uncomfortable, if anything?
10. What did you disagree with?
11. Add any additional thoughts that you have about this session.

**Child of the Americas**

**I am a child of the Americas,  
A light-skinned mestiza of the Carribbean,  
A child of many diaspora, born into this continent at a crossroads.**

**I am a U. S. Puerto Rican Jew,  
A product of the ghettos of New York I have never known.  
An immigrant and the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants.  
I speak English with passion: it's the tongue of my consciousness,  
A flashing knife blade of cristal, my tool, my craft.**

**I am Carbena, island grown. Spanish is my flesh,  
Ripples from my tongue, lodges in my hips:  
the language of garlic and mangoes,  
The singing of poetry, the flying gestures of my hands.  
I am Latino American, rooted in the history of my continent:  
I speak from that body.**

**I am not African, Africa is in me, but I cannot return.  
I am not taina. Taino is in me, but there is no way back.  
I am not European. Europe lives in me, but I have no home there.**

**I am new. History made me. My first language was Spanglish.  
I was born at the crossroads  
And I am whole.**

**APPENDIX E—SELF KNOWLEDGE GUIDELINES (Session II)**

- 1. What is your ethnicity? White is not an answer.**
- 2. America is a land of immigrants-some voluntary and some involuntary. What is your migration story as far back as you know?**
- 3. When did your ancestors come to America?**
- 4. Why did your ancestors migrate to America?**
- 5. What challenges did your ancestors experience as newcomers to the United States? Describe.**
- 6. How did your ancestors overcome the challenges as an immigrant or did they?**
- 7. Describe our childhood experiences when growing up in America. Who influenced your thinking, beliefs, attitudes, habits and hobbies?**
- 8. Was your neighborhood diverse? Describe your house(s).**
- 9. What did your family do for recreation?**
- 10. Do you speak another language? Was your primary language accepted at your school when you were a child?**
- 11. How did your childhood schooling experience affect you as a learner? Did you like school? What was your favorite subject?**
- 12. Who were your friends? Did they look like you?**
- 13. As a teacher, are your life experiences similar to any of your students? If yes, how?**
- 14. Include any other information that you would like to share.**

## APPENDIX F-INTERPRETIVE SKILLS OF THE TEXT (SESSION III)

INTERPRETIVE SKILLS REFER TO THE HUMAN CONDITION IN LITERATURE AND REQUIRES READING BETWEEN THE LINES OR CRITICAL THINKING AND INQUIRY. TIME FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION AMONG STUDENTS IS KEY TO THINKING THROUGH INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS BEFORE ASKING STUDENTS TO WRITE. ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS. (WHY DO YOU THINK THAT? CAN YOU PROVE IT, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF...? WHAT IS ANOTHER WAY TO SOLVE IT? HOW DO YOU KNOW?)

### Examples from *Richmond Tales* by Summer Brenner

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1. What is the significance of the Iron Triangle in the story. Write a paragraph to describe how it is used as a metaphor.
2. What is the significance of the chapter "Crusin for a Brusin"? What message is the author attempting to convey? Why?
3. Describe the Cooper Brother's behavior. What conditions in their lives might have created the their plight?
4. What role do the three grandparents play in the story? Cite examples from the story to support your answer. Why do you think the author included the relationships of the grandparents to the main characters in part 1?
5. *Richmond Tales* is considered realistic fiction. As a resident of Richmond, do you think that it is realistic? Cite evidence from the story to verify your answer.

### Examples from *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez

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1. Was it a wise or unwise decision for the Jimenez family to come to America under the barbed wire as an illegal immigrant? Substantiate your answer with evidence from the story.
2. Was the ending of the story a surprise to you? Why or why not? Use details from the story to write a different ending.
3. Read the short history of the accomplishments of Caesar Chavez. How might *The Circuit* be different if it took place after the Farm Workers Movement with Caesar Chavez?
4. Would you describe the Jimenez family as resourceful, courageous, persistent, foolish or other? Write a paragraph to express your opinion and cite evidence from the story to support your opinion?

**APPENDIX G-Transposing OCR Skills to the Multiethnic Text (Vocabulary)**

**Instructions:**

- 1. Identify the vocabulary skills from the OCR Unit of Study. Write them below.**
- 2. What criteria will you use for selecting vocabulary to teach from the Multiethnic text?**
- 3. Use the chart below to write the selected vocabulary words from the excerpt.**

<b>Book/author/publisher</b>	<b>Vocabulary Words</b>

- 4. Develop four OCR skills activities using the words above. Use a blank sheet of paper if needed.**

<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>4.</b>

## Appendix H: Transposing Comprehension skills into the Text

**Instructions: Identify the comprehension skills from the OCR Unit of study. Write them below.**

**Comprehension:**

- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.
  - 6.
- 

**Use the boxes below to transpose two OCR comprehension skills into an activity/strategy for the story**

Comprehension	Comprehension



**APPENDIX I—LESSON PLANNER for FIVE DAYS (SESSION V)**

**Multiethnic Selection** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade** \_\_\_\_\_  
**OCR Unit Theme** \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Day 5</b>
<b>Necessary Background Knowledge</b>					
<b>Interpretive Skills(Literacy and cultural)</b>					
<b>Vocabulary Development</b>					
<b>Comprehension Skills</b>					
<b>Review</b>					

**(Note: This is only a sample. The weekly lesson planner used by the study group will be produced on two sheets of paper.)**

**APPENDIX J- PRE AND POST IMPACT MEASURE**

**Impact Measure for Using Culturally relevant Literature in Intermediate Grade Classrooms to Supplement the Open Court Reading Program**

**Instructions:**

- 1. Read Chapter I of Breaking Through by Francisco Jimenez, to supplement to the Open Court Reading Program.**
  
- 2. Develop a lesson plan to engage students in reading and responding to the selection.**

**You have thirty (30) minutes to complete this assignment.**

**APPENDIX -K PROTOCOL for OBSERVING and EVALUATING the TEACHER STUDY GROUP SESSIONS (Throughout)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Session # \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Each participant is assigned a letter of identity during the study group sessions.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1. Willingness to write and verbalize self reflective analysis of one’s attitudes, assumptions and beliefs								
2. Completes the homework and is willing to share the results.								
3. Fully participates in the discussion								
4. Respect and uses the agreed upon group norms								
5. Verbal comments reflect (positive)attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, values.								
6. Comments and journal writing indicate an understanding of the concepts and objectives of the sessions.								
7. Arrives on time and remains for the entire 90 minutes.								

**During each sessions, participants will be rated on a scale of one to five by the researcher as follows.**

**5= completely engaged and respectful in all aspects of the study session**

**4= generally engaged but not always**

**3=satisfactory engagement, but not always prepared or participatory**

**2=seems afraid or timid to express his/her opinion; needs to be encouraged or prompted**

**1=barely participates in discussions, writes very little in the reflection journal**

**For use by the researcher only!!**

**APPENDIX -L : CLASSROOM OBSERVATION/VIDEO VIEWING PROTOCOL**

Presenter\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_Time\_\_\_\_\_

<b>Observed</b>	<b>What I liked</b>	<b>Questions I Have</b>

## APPENDIX M- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

### General (Optional)Teacher Interview Questions (Getting to know you)

1. Talk about yourself as a teacher. How many years have you taught; what grades have you taught; in what geographic locations have you taught? Why did you become a teacher? How would you describe your teaching practice? How many years have you used the Open Court Language Arts program?
2. Why did you become a teacher in West Contra Costa Unified School District?
3. What aspects of teaching gives you the greatest satisfaction?
4. What aspects of teaching distresses you the most?
5. How do you presently seek out ways to improve your teaching?
6. Describe the professional development that you have participated in during the past five years?
7. What topics should be discussed for improving the achievement of Latino, African American and other low performing students in West Contra Costa Unified School District?
8. How does *No Child Left Behind* impact your instruction for Latino, African American and other students of color?
9. What kinds of academic experiences do African-American and Latino students and other marginalized groups need in order to participate in the “American Dream”.
10. Do you supplement the Open Court Reading Program to meet the needs of your students of color?
11. Have you ever supplemented the curriculum with multiethnic literature? Explain.
12. If yes, how do you infuse the State Standards into the literature? What additional student activities do you create for the literature, if any?
13. What does culturally relevant teaching and learning mean to you?
14. What do you expect to gain by participating in the teacher study group?
15. Are you interested in sharing any new knowledge and skills learned in the Study Group with your colleagues at your school site?

Thank you for the interview. Your responses will remain confidential.

## APPENDIX -N

### Rubric for Assessing the Participants Lesson Plan

**Materials needed: Teachers manual of the scripted text**

#### ***Transfer of Standards Based Vocabulary and Comprehension Skills (SACS)***

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Vocabulary skills/activities are identified and incorporated into the lesson.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ One or more comprehension skills are identified and infused into the lesson.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Inquiry and higher order thinking skills are emphasized.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Other text features, such as imagery, mood, metaphors, genre are identified in the scripted teacher's manual and are used in the lesson.

#### ***Interpretive Skills***

1. \_\_\_\_\_ A theme or key idea to serve as a starting point to focus the discussion is selected.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Activation and use of background knowledge necessary for understanding the multiethnic text is planned.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Open ended questions are used to permit students to express opinions about the complex issues of race and class, poverty, survival, .
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The symbolism of the Iron Triangle (Richmond Tales by Summer Brenner) or The Circuit by Francisco Jimenez as metaphors for poverty, struggle, inequality and other sociopolitical issues, marginalized groups, hope, etc.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Other interpretive skills and activities were identified and incorporated into the lesson.

#### ***Cultural Background Knowledge***

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The culture or ethnic identity of the main characters is identified and discussed.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The lesson connects to the lived experiences of the students, their families or other ancestors.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Concepts from the text are applied to broader social issues in our society.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ High expectations for ALL students are evident.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Engagement strategies, i.e. cooperative learning are observed.

## APPENDIX O

Table O-1: Impact Measure/Standards aligned comprehension skills (First Iteration)

Standards	Participants					
	Licet	Mae	Bea	Pat	Gigi	Willa
1. Employs text skills from OCR in the lesson	2	2	2	2	2	NA
2. Opportunities for classroom discourse and interactions	2	2	1	2	2	NA
3. Application of knowledge through higher order thinking	2	2	2	2	2	NA
4. Employs visual representations of the text ie. charts, , timelines, diagrams,	1	1	1	1	1	NA
5. Established clear lesson objectives	2	2	2	2	2	NA

\*Adapted from the Common Core Standards, California Standards for the Teaching Profession and the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Ethnic Studies Curriculum Guidelines

\*\*To what degree did the participants infuse standards aligned comprehension skills? 2 = yes, 1 = somewhat, 0 = no



## **APPENDIX P: Anti-Bias Rubric**

It is the responsibility of the adults to select literature that provides children with accurate representations of all people. The guidelines below is a tool to use when assessing multiethnic children's literature.

- Is there diversity represented within cultural groups?
- Are characters realistically and genuinely represented?
- Is there anything in the book that might be offensive or embarrassing such as negative terms to describe people of color, ie. savage, primitive, backward, primitive, etc.
- Are the non-English words written or translated accurately?
- Does the author describe other cultures accurately? (history, holidays, customs, religious beliefs, clothing, food)
- Are cultural settings realistically represented?
- Do "good" characters reflect a variety of backgrounds?
- Do the illustrations avoid reinforcing societal stereotypes?
- Do the stories promote understanding of our diverse society?