

EXPLORING TEACHERS' MEANING METHODS AND PERCEIVED
EFFECTIVENESS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION
ON STUDENT COLLEGE READINESS IN AN URBAN
SECONDARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that significant numbers of urban students are underprepared for post-secondary education at four-year universities. The purpose of the qualitative phenomenologically informed dissertation is to explore teachers' meaning, methods, and perceived effectiveness of culturally responsive instruction on student college readiness in an urban secondary school district. This study used qualitative methods of in-depth interviews, a focus group session and a document analysis were used to collect data from twenty educators including thirteen national board certified educators. The data analysis procedures followed procedures outlined by qualitative researchers (Creswell, 1998; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln (2000); Ritchie and Lewis (2003). Interviews were transcribed verbatim to provide a data set for analysis. An analysis of interview data revealed three themes: empowering students with support, equipping students 21st century skills, and engaging students with quality instruction. Findings from the dissertation study will inform systematic practices structured to enhance the college readiness of urban secondary students. The main findings revealed key factors such as positive relationships with students and high expectations for student achievement contributed to college readiness and global competence. Recommendations of this study include establishing relationships built on trust and authentic caring and integrating college-level work and resources for all courses. This study will aid secondary schools in closing achievement gaps and increasing student academic success of traditionally underrepresented urban secondary students.

DEDICATION

*For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
Jeremiah 29:11*

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who has believed in me, encouraged me and prayed for me. An African Proverb declares: *It takes a village to raise a child.* I will add that it also takes a village to support the completion of a dissertation study. I dedicate this dissertation to “my village.”

My Family: To my *husband* Mark and my children, Timarkus, Markayla, and Tamryn for their love and support through this entire process and beyond. To my *grandmother*, Mrs. Marie H. Paige, who has been my mentor, my encourager, and my prayer warrior. I am grateful beyond measure for her unconditional love, devotion and spiritual guidance. To my *parents*, Twyanna and Stanley, for always supporting my endeavors. To my *brothers*, Stanley Farrell and Jarrett, for being supportive. To my *cousins*, Jacalyn, Latina, Leslie, for being my first true friends. To my *aunts* for your lifetime of encouragement and support. I love you all!
Lula, Adella, Sandra, Sharron, Veronica

This dissertation is also dedicated in loving memory to my ancestors who sacrificed so much to make sure I achieved. I stand on the shoulders of soldiers who exemplified optimism, perseverance, and responsibility for me. Although they did not have the opportunity to get a post-secondary education, they sacrificed for me and encouraged me to do so.

My Ancestors: My grandmother – Mary E. Ferguson,
My great grandmothers – Lula P. Hunter, Evelyn W. Bates,
My Grandfathers – Will Paige, Carl E. Ferguson
My great grandfather – George Bates

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¹⁸ In everything give thanks...”
1 Thessalonians 5:18

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Almost four hundred years since the first African slaves landed in Jamestown, Virginia, 155 years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, 64 years after the Supreme Court ruled out segregation with the landmark case *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education*, and 53 years since the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965 - a vast percentage of African Americans enter higher education unprepared for college-level course work (Historic Jamestown). Secondary and post-secondary educators as well as local, state and national leaders and policy makers have voiced this concern. The lack of college readiness of urban secondary students remains a concern for secondary and post-secondary institutions and educators.

Although African Americans have made progress in higher education enrollment and attendance, a major concern exists with the college readiness of these students. Historically, African Americans are considered a marginalized group when it comes to educational opportunities and endeavors. For this reason, numerous national and state initiatives and projects have focused on enhancing the higher education opportunities for African American youth. These initiatives along with a powerful message from educational leaders that education is a necessity have broadened post-secondary opportunities and closed the achievement gap. Despite the progress made over the last few decades, African Americans continue to lack in college readiness in comparison to other groups of college students.

The lack of college readiness of high school students is a critical concern for secondary and post-secondary institutions across the United States. Despite the efforts of national, state and local educational stakeholders, many high school students leave high school and begin college unprepared for the rigor and challenge of college-level learning. Reid and Moore (2008) conveyed that American schools continue to be faced with challenged meeting demands of student achievement, which includes preparing students to be successful for postsecondary education.

To resolve the dilemma of the lack of college readiness, national leaders, educational policy makers, curriculum planners, and corporate leaders have directly addressed the problem. With a national focus on 21st-century skills and a more diverse American population, the term college readiness has evolved into college readiness and global competence. Therefore, for African-American college-bound students, there is a need to not only be prepared to succeed with college-level course work but also be prepared to interact in a global and diverse setting.

College readiness is generally defined in terms of access, ability, and equity. However, this study broadens the general definition of college readiness. This study will conceptualize college readiness, therefore, broadening the reference to college readiness as global college readiness. This conceptualization is imposed and directed by the fact that multiple educators, academic practitioners, economists, and researchers agree that today's college-bound students need a globally conscious education. Mansilla and Jackson (2011) explained students need a worldwide perspective on ideas, ideologies and human beings. "Globalization, the digital revolution, mass migration, and the prospect of climate instability are triggering new concerns and demanding a new kind of graduate, (p.1)."

Higher education itself has become more global over the last few years. This fact emphasizes the need for college-bound students to be globally competent. Global competence involves the gained knowledge of students to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one's environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological informed study was to explore teachers' Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in Urban Secondary Schools. Specifically the impact of urban students who are bound for four-year colleges and universities.

Wide-ranging studies and reports (Conley 2007) maintain that an expectations disparity exists between competencies students are normally bringing to college and what college teachers deem the students should bring. Therefore, potential research issues are the influences and perceptions of several factors on college readiness: initiatives and programs, the social economic status, student's self-efficacy, academic optimism and teacher perceptions. Based on the scarcity of research on teacher perception and reading as it relates to college readiness, this study will focus on this area.

Conley (2008) reported years of SAT and ACT data revealed reading comprehension is a crucial college-level skill. Post-secondary students are required to read a vast amount of information throughout varied academic disciplines, which requires college students to understand and engage with material critically. Firm reading comprehension skills are a primary scholastic ability necessary for students to be college-ready.

Sullivan (2006) conveyed that standardized tests such as the SAT and the ACT assess the reading comprehension of college-bound students. According to Sullivan's research, college-prepared students like to read. Sullivan reported that students who do not like to read, find college challenging. College-prepared students who have read books of literary merit and have some knowledge of cultural history. To college-bound students, reading is a pleasure and is not viewed as labor and distress. Sullivan described reading as the "most paradigmatic activity of a liberal arts education."

Horning (2011) reported that in order to improve academic performance, academic institutions should focus on reading. Horning emphasized that it is crucial for colleges and universities to target and monitor students' reading deficiencies, and to teach critical reading and thinking in college courses throughout the college curriculum in order to improve graduation rates.

Rationale and Justification of Study

Throughout America, there is a major concern regarding the readiness of urban African-American college-bound students. There is also an emerging ideology to equip students with the necessary 21st-century skills to achieve in a global society. To be college and career ready in the 21st-century global economy, every student (urban and others) needs to be equipped with global and cultural competence skills. Research discloses that excessive amounts of high school students enter college underprepared for postsecondary success despite the progress that has been achieved over the years to close achievement gaps of underrepresented college students. Due to the lack of college-readiness, many students are assigned to developmental or remedial courses and programs. Educational reform efforts have led many high schools and colleges to embark upon programs and strategies to close the achievement gaps and better prepare students for

academic success at postsecondary institutions. College-readiness is an imperative component for success at the postsecondary level for all students regardless of institution type.

This study is significant because it addressed the increased diversity in American schools. Because of the heightened classroom diversity, the challenge for teachers to responsiveness to the needs of diverse learners increased. Urban classrooms are impacted the most by teachers from inadequate teacher preparation programs. Through this study, the researcher expects to learn about the impact of educating for global college competence. Although there is a plethora of research on college readiness and its access, there is limited research that directly addresses college readiness from a global competence perspective.

College readiness needs studying to address and to close the achievement gap that exists in many American schools. Education significantly influences socioeconomic gaps and the overall quality of life for all people, particularly minority individuals. College readiness continues to be a challenge for American schools, especially in urban high schools. Researchers and educators continue to probe the dynamics that contribute to a lack of college readiness. Reid and Moore (2008) indicated that the lack of college readiness is equivalent to the academic gaps that exist between underrepresented students such as students from urban school districts. Urban high school college-bound students often experience a higher rate of unpreparedness than other groups of students in higher education. “Low-income, Hispanic and African-American students are more likely to need remediation than their wealthier, white peers. Forty-one percent of Hispanic students and 42 percent of African-American students require remediation, compared to 31 percent of white students (Bautsch, 2013).”

The majority of high school graduates in the 21st century in American schools are not academically prepared for the rigor of postsecondary education or to enter the workforce.

Researchers (ACT 2009, Conley 2007, and Flippo & Caverly 2009) continue to report the majority of high school graduates in the 21st century in the American schools are not academically prepared for the rigor of postsecondary education or to enter the workforce. Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, & Sum, (2007) revealed that according to the Educational Testing Service (ETS) large numbers of students over fifteen years of age did not demonstrate the literacy and proficiency skills to be effective in postsecondary education or have the awareness of how to assimilate themselves into the diverse and global society. ACT (2009) reported that only 23% of the nation's 2009 graduating seniors were expected to be successful in basic college level courses.

For African American students, the successful transition from high school to college is even more critical. There is an even wider gap for urban students who attend college and their readiness for college-level work and global preparedness. Consequently, a large number of urban students enroll in four-year universities and do not graduate with a bachelors' degree. Complete College America (2012) reported African American, Latino, and low-income students enroll at the highest percentages in developmental course work due to the lack of college readiness. ACT (2012) informed only 5% of African American students and 13% of Hispanic met all four ACT benchmarks while 32% of the white students met all four benchmarks.

The adoption of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and mathematics offers an opportunity for policymakers and educators to marry skill development and acquisition of core content needed to develop globally competent citizens with rigorous skills and core content needed to prepare all students for college, careers and global competence (Millar, 2015). It is imperative that schools and school districts employ methods so that students

achieve success by graduating with a shared sense of global awareness and the critical skills to be college and career ready.

Although the research addressing the multiple dimensions of college readiness is plentiful, there is a gap in the research. There is limited research on college readiness as it relates to National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT), culturally responsive instruction and global competence of college-bound students. This research study was informed by scholarly research literature in the areas of college readiness, culturally responsive instruction, global competence, and urban students. This study sought to close the current gap that exists in relating college readiness to the global competence of urban students.

To adequately understand the impact of culturally responsive instruction on the college readiness of urban high school students, key concepts need to be thoroughly explored. One essential concept is educational reform and policy. Reform efforts to reduce the achievement gap and increase college-readiness expand across national, state and local levels. A sense of urgency is widespread across America as high schools and colleges attempt to address the critical matter of unprepared college students. For many years, there were federal mandates under the *No Child Left Behind Act* that penalized schools who fail to diminish the disparity. Schools must go beyond simply increasing the graduation rate and intentionally and deliberately implement strategies and initiatives to ensure that students are prepared for college success. A new goal was set for American in February 2009 when President Obama asserted to Congress “by 2020 America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world (p.7).”

Nationally, additional steps have been taken to enhance the college readiness of all students. President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015. ESSA, a bipartisan bill intended to focus on the deficiencies of NCLB, became effective

July 10, 2016. The Act aims to make major changes to the United States educational policies, one of which directly focuses on college and career readiness. According to Travers (2016), under ESSA states are required to use state-determined standards to prepare all students for higher education matriculation and success.

High school graduation rates are at an all-time high of 81%, but despite this success, employers are reporting that most recent college graduates lack the 21st century skills needed to compete in a global job market. In addition to righting the missteps taken under *No Child Left Behind*, ESSA promises to ensure that all students, regardless of “race, income, background, the zip code where they live,” will be prepared for college and career success. Sufficient forms of postsecondary preparation include internships, college and career counseling, and higher-level classes, resources previously available only to particularly privileged or high achieving students. Kati Haycock, president of Education Trust, predicts that this stipulation will “prompt schools to prepare all students — not just the privileged few — for postsecondary study.”

In an effort to prepare college-bound students for global competence, educational policies must be in place to ensure readiness. Policymakers and educators have the power to help students close the achievement that hinders students from being college-ready. Local school districts have instituted varied policies in an effort to narrow the achievement gap of students in sub-groups. The State of Alabama like many other states have established multiple educational policies that target college-readiness. An active educational policy in Alabama is the *A + College Initiative*, which aims to enhance the college readiness skills of students in Alabama schools. The United States has also developed educational policies that focus on college readiness factors. Two well-known policies are *Race to the Top* and *ESSA*. These policies range in the influence of funding to actual access. In addition to local, state and national policies, there are numerous

agencies and organizations devoted to addressing the critical issue of college readiness. Organizations such as the Education Policy and Leadership Center, Bill Gates Foundation, National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education allocate large amounts of funding and research to how to close the achievement gap of underrepresented college-bound students.

Mansilla and Jackson (2011) verbalized that there is a need for educational organizations to initiate policies and actions that promote global competence at the local, state and national levels. “The task ahead is to take these nascent efforts to scale by making global competence a significant component of education and workforce development policy (p.89).” Mansilla and Jackson recommends, “promoting global competence as a policy priority through four key strategies: redefining expectations and high school graduation requirements to include global competence, increasing educators’ capacity to teach about the world , making world languages a core component of K-12 curriculum , and providing greater opportunities for students to connect worldwide (p.89).”

Study Questions. To probe the central phenomenon of culturally responsive instruction and the college readiness of college-bound students, the researcher developed a central research question. The study probed the following primary research question: *What does culturally ‘responsive instruction’ mean to urban educators, and how is this meaning enacted in the instructional strategies they use to prepare the students they serve for college readiness?* This question allowed the researcher to effectively probe the impact of culturally responsive instruction on the college readiness of urban students.

Sub-questions: The investigator developed the following research sub-questions to better understand the varied aspects culturally responsive instruction and college readiness.

1. How do study participants define ‘culturally responsive instruction’? This question allowed the researcher to gauge the interviewee’s perception of culturally responsive instruction and its impact on the college readiness of their students.

2. How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of college-bound students? This question allowed the researcher to explore the specific instructional strategies used by teachers in urban classrooms. It allowed teachers to share their rationale for the use of specific strategies. This question shed light on the level of rigor and engagement in urban classrooms.

3. How do secondary teachers in this study cultivate college-readiness skills in their students? What specific instructional strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college-bound students they serve? This question provided insight into what additional factors (other instructional tools and literary texts) contribute to college readiness and global competence.

4. What implications do these findings have for educational leadership and policy?

This question allowed the researcher to gauge the impact of the phenomenon of college readiness on the educational policy issues and concerns.

Research Design and Methods

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological informed design. Creswell (2009) denoted that the qualitative approach is “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, the event, activity, process or one or more individuals.” Two areas of importance in this study: culturally responsive instruction and urban school students. The approach was useful in bringing to convey the interaction between individual and context, highlighting the practices that contribute or hinder college readiness. The researcher utilized the phenomenological informed method to thoroughly examine qualitative data. The phenomenological informed method has proven to be an effective approach to inspecting the contexts of a school setting. The phenomenological informed approach allowed precise data collection from NBCT English Language Arts and social studies teachers.

In order to gain multiple perspectives in culturally responsive instruction, and college readiness, this study used the maximum variation sample strategy. To achieve this, thirteen secondary English Language Arts and social studies teachers were recruited. The secondary teachers will be selected based on a three primary factors: National Board Certification (NBCT), secondary ELA and/or SS, and teacher in the specified school district. Utilizing English language arts and social studies teachers as participants will directly address literacy (reading and writing) instructional practices. The English Language Arts and social studies teachers are directly responsible for the teaching of literacy skills, which has been identified by several researchers as essential for college readiness.

Conley (2008) reported years of SAT and ACT data revealed reading comprehension is a crucial college-level skill. Post-secondary students are required to read a vast amount of information throughout varied academic disciplines, which requires college students to

understand and engage with material critically. Due to the rigor of college courses, firm reading comprehension skills are a primary scholastic ability necessary for students to be college-ready.

An urban school district in Jefferson County, Alabama was the studies site for this study. The school district serves as the site location for two prime reasons: the number of NBCTs in the secondary schools and the diverse school settings. Using an urban school district will provide a clear perspective on college readiness. This element provided valuable information regarding instruction in this geographic area of the state.

This study used qualitative data methods to explore perceptions of secondary English Language Arts and social studies teachers regarding college readiness. Data was collected in the forms of semi-structured interviews, teacher demographic questionnaire, artifacts (curriculum documents, school websites, policy documents, lesson plans and reading lists). The teachers were interviewed individually. The 45 – 60 minutes interview session were audio-recorded while the researcher took notes. An interview protocol was developed for this study. The protocol consisted of thirteen questions about culturally responsive instruction, teacher leadership roles, and college readiness. The demographic questionnaire inquired about gender, age, education levels, educational experience and professional experiences. The purpose of the non-participant observation was to acquire additional information about instructional practices and teacher leadership.

Data Analysis. The researcher organized and secured all collected data. The researcher transcribed all interviews, observations, documents and field notes before the data was analyzed. For precision, the researcher requested formal permission of interviewees and participants to record and transcribe interviews. Reissman (1993) denoted that transcribing is a critical step, which allows the researcher to become familiar with the data. After the completion of the

transcribing process, the researcher conducted a member check. Data was coded for meaning in an effort to develop themes from the evidence. Rossman and Rallis (1998) reported that coding is a process of organizing the material into portions of the transcript prior to assigning the value to the data (p.171). For accuracy, the researcher created electronic files of interviews, observations, and documents. All files were saved and password protected. Overall, this study used a linear and hierarchical approach to research and data analysis. Creswell (2009) exclaimed that researchers should view qualitative data analysis as following steps from the specific to the general while involving multiple levels of analysis (p.184).

In an effort to present credible and accurate research, this study used various validation strategies: triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Creswell (2009) reported that validity is one of the benefits of qualitative research because it based on verifying whether the results are accurate from the perspective of the researcher or contributor (p. 191).

Risks and Benefits. For this research study, there will be varied risks and benefits. An obvious risk is a bias because of familiarity with the participants and research site. The investigator exercised intentional and deliberate strategies to avoid bias. Creswell (2009) explained that researchers should clarify the bias the researcher brings to the research study (p.192). Reflexivity and subjectivity will be acknowledged throughout the research study process to ensure accuracy and eliminate impartiality.

Overall, this research study employed qualitative research security measures to ensure confidentiality, access, and human participants' protection. Confidentiality was guaranteed for all participants. All transcripts, notes, and audiotapes will be stored in a secure file in the researcher's home. The identities (names) and schools are concealed. The researcher secured the consent of each participant with a written consent form.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may benefit varied audiences. Primary audiences will include Secondary and post-secondary instructors, leaders, and policymakers. These educators and leaders may gain an understanding of the challenges and areas of concern for college bound urban students. This understanding may lead to better preparation for college-bound students. Higher education faculty and administrators may better plan for initiatives and programs for incoming students. This awareness may lead to a broadened knowledge of urban student's cultural capital.

Definition of Terms

College Readiness. Schmeiser (2010) described college readiness as the state being prepared with the academic and social knowledge and skills needed to engage in college level studying and learning. Conley (2008) referred to college readiness as possessing meta-cognitive and self-management behaviors required to transition from the secondary level to the postsecondary level of studying.

Culturally Responsive Instruction. Gay (2000) defined culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students.

Global Competence. Singmaster and Manise (2014) defined global competence as the skills and dispositions required for students in the interconnected world.

Study Limitations

This study is a single contribution to the ongoing discourse on higher education and secondary education leaders. The study is subject to the following limitations.

1. Participants will represent only secondary urban school district teachers' perceptions on the college readiness of their students.
2. Participants will represent only English Language arts and social studies teachers
3. The educators' interpretations of college readiness will limit the study
4. The study will include data collected from one school term (two semesters)
5. The study is limited to focusing on the college readiness of students attending four-year institutions of higher education
6. The study is limited to focus on college readiness and global competence of urban students.

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one includes an introduction, rationale, and justification for study, the purpose of the study, a summary description of research design and methods, the definition of key study terms, limitations of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter two includes a comprehensive review of the literature providing a discussion on college readiness, global competence, culturally responsive instruction and urban students. Chapter three provides a description of the qualitative research design and methodology for conducting the study. Chapter four presents an analysis of the gathered data. Chapter five provides a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological informed study was to explore teachers Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in Urban Secondary Schools. This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to this research study. It is divided into four sections: (a) college readiness, (b) culturally responsive instruction, (c) urban students, and (d) global competence. The literature reviewed included books, book chapters, articles, research reports, and journals.

The basis of this research argument is that a significant number of urban African American high school students enter college lacking the necessary skills for successful completion of college-level course work. There continues to be gaps between urban students' college bound goals and their preparedness for the post-secondary experience. Due to these continued gaps, disturbingly crucial numbers of urban students are placed in remedial courses or do not complete college due to the lack of college readiness. When it comes to enrollment in post-secondary institutions, African Americans and minorities continue to fall short. Aud et.al. (2012) denoted only 66% of African-Americans and 60% of Hispanic graduates entered college directly from their secondary graduation. College Board (2010) reported remedial and developmental support is necessary during the first year of college for African Americans and other minorities who are generally first generation college students. ACT (2012) informed that

only 5% of African American students and 13% of Hispanic students met all four ACT benchmarks in comparison to the 32% met by the white secondary students.

Research discloses that an excessive amount of high school students enter college underprepared for postsecondary success despite the academic progress that has been over the years to close achievement gaps of the underrepresented college students. The lack of college-readiness causes many students to be assigned to developmental or remedial courses and programs. Educational reform efforts have led many high schools and colleges to embark upon programs and strategies to close the achievement gaps and better prepare students for academic success at postsecondary institutions. The focus on college-readiness is an imperative component to ensure success at the postsecondary level for all students regardless of institution type.

This research study echoes the major role of K-12 education, which is to prepare students for higher education. Despite this major task and the multiple educational reform efforts, throughout America, there is a major concern regarding the readiness of college-bound students. Concurrently, there is also an emerging ideology to equip students with the necessary 21st-century skills to achieve in a global society. To be college and career in the 21st-century global economy, every student (urban and others) need to be equipped with global and cultural competence skills.

For urban high schools, the demand for global competence and college readiness is even more challenging. In many cases, urban students lack the academic and cultural exposure needed to be college and career ready. Although educational leaders, organizations, and initiatives are in place to remedy this problem, the challenge remains to prepare urban students adequately for college readiness and global competence. There is a plethora of literature on college readiness, college and career readiness, culturally responsive instruction and urban education. The research

informs that despite national, state and local efforts, a vast amount of secondary students enter college unprepared for the rigor and challenge of college-level learning

Conceptualization of College Readiness

College readiness is the major concept and focus of the dissertation study. The issue of college readiness is complex with varied determining and inhibiting factors. A working definition of college readiness is necessary in order to effectively examine the concept of college-readiness. College readiness is defined in varied ways. The most prevalent definition expresses that college readiness is a high school graduate prepared to learn at the college level. Schmeiser (2010) described college readiness as the state of being prepared with the academic and social knowledge and skills needed to engage in college level studying and learning. Conley (2008) referred to college readiness as possessing meta-cognitive and self-management behaviors required to transition from the secondary level to the postsecondary level of studying.

A working definition of college readiness is necessary in order to effectively examine the concept of college-readiness. Conley (2007) presented an operational definition of college readiness as the level of training a degree-seeking student needs to enroll and succeed without a need for remediation in a course at a postsecondary college or university. According to this definition, a college-ready student is competent and efficient enough to manage college-level courses and content knowledge. The college-ready student is equipped to embrace the college experience by grasping the academic, culture and social environment of a postsecondary education (Conley, 5-6).

Conley (2007) defined college readiness as the amount of preparation and skills vital to succeed in entry-level, credit-earning college courses at a college or university without the

requirement for developmental courses. The researcher contributed the lack of readiness to the varied differences between high school and college. There are large variations between the amount and type of reading and writing required in secondary schools in comparison to higher education courses. There is also a difference in the analytic and critical thinking skills needed to be college-ready. College-readiness also requires that students have a grasp on study skill behaviors such as organizational skills, time management, exam preparation and using resources. “College-readiness is a multifaceted concept comprising numerous factors internal and external to classroom environments (p.6).”

Conley provided a four-dimension framework of college readiness: major cognitive strategies, academic content, academic skills and behavior, and contextual skills and awareness. This research indicated that student’s exposure to college prep programs and efforts develop their self-confidence as college students, provide modes for organization and time management, and afford students significant socialization opportunities. Conley expressed that the college-ready student is aware of college course expectations, can manage college content, understand the college culture, and social environment. The research explained how college is different from high school. The transition from high school to college is considered one of greatest tasks an individual can encounter. Another key distinction is that college courses are taught at a faster pace.

Researchers and educators continue to probe the dynamics that contribute to a lack of college readiness. Many studies indicate that the lack of college readiness is equivalent to the academic gaps that exist between underrepresented students such as students from urban school districts. According to researchers (ACT 2012, College Board 2010), urban high school college-

bound students often experience a higher rate of unpreparedness than other groups of students in higher education.

Barnes, Slate, & Rojas-LeBouef, (2010) examined the issue of college readiness and its connection to the concept of academic preparedness. The researchers questioned the extent to which high school graduates are academically prepared. They argued that college readiness should be conceptualized as academic preparedness. From their perspective, the term “academic preparedness,” better captures the intent of college-bound students and the standards of college readiness. The current definition of college readiness does not adequately reflect the set of skills required to be a successful college student. The researchers proposed that policies, practices at all levels should be fostered and applied to support all students to be successful in rigorous coursework and develop a college-bound mindset. Secondary and post-secondary institutions must collaborate to ensure that all students are academically prepared for post-secondary experiences.

Porter & Polikoff, (2012) reported that there is a serious concern about the transition of secondary students to higher education. The achievement gap, which is evident in many K-12 schools, continues to filter into post-secondary schools institutions. The author defined college readiness as bare qualifications needed to enter college. Readiness is “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program (Conley, 2007, p. 5).” In terms of being academically ready for college, a freshmen’s grade point average (GPA) is a determining factor. Many researchers have declared the GPA has a primary indicator or readiness. A second widely used indicator is avoidance of remedial or developmental courses. “Being assigned to remedial coursework is an indication that

the institution views the student as “unready” to enroll in regular credit-bearing courses that count toward a degree (p.398).” The author mentioned other indicators of readiness that are more long term: completion of the degree, completion of a degree in four years, and cumulative GPA. In addition to indicators, the researchers clarified the varied predictors of readiness: aptitude scores, ACT/SAT scores, high school GPA and high school class rank. The author proposed the development of national predictor of college readiness. “A well-designed and validated readiness assessment could help schools, districts, and states provide more uniform expectations for students across the country (p.402).” The goal is to have predictors of college readiness at multiple levels (state and national) and be able to distinguish for varied colleges and universities.

Varied researchers have presented multiple definitions of college readiness. There are varying degrees of the definition through academic organizations in America for this reason many educational leaders advocate for an established definition of what actually means to be college and career ready. According to Education Commission of the States (ECS) reported in *The Progress of Education Reform* (2012), there is a sense of urgency among education reform leaders to establish a national definition of college readiness. This demand and advocacy are due to a varied catalyst such as the Common Core State Standards, No Child Left Behind waivers, Race to the Top initiative, high post-secondary remediation rates, and interest in, demand for postsecondary completion. ECS explained, “Some states are creating a “college readiness” definition that describes what a student will know and be able to do in such core academic courses as English language arts and math, and that identifies items or benchmarks on state assessments that demonstrate attainment of those skills and knowledge (p.1).”

A case in point is the State of Alabama. According to Bice, et.al, (2012), Alabama Department of Education has adopted a definition of college and career readiness and included it

in its Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility request. “Being college and career ready means that a high school graduate has the English and mathematics knowledge and skills necessary to either (1) qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing courses without the need for remedial coursework, or (2) qualify for and succeed in the postsecondary job training and/or education necessary for their chosen career (i.e., technical/vocational program, community college, apprenticeship or significant on-the-job training).”

Some researchers such as the Education Commission of the States (2005) reported that being college ready and career ready are one in the same. The ECS denoted that today’s students need a minimum of two years of higher education to be adequately prepared for the demanding advanced skills in today’s workforce. According to Baker, Clay & Gratama (2015) explained that it is imperative that secondary and postsecondary educators have a clear understanding of college readiness in order to effectively address the needs and concerns of the complex issue. “College readiness is generally defined in the literature as the level of preparation a student needs to be ready to enroll and succeed in postsecondary institutions or gain viable employment (p.1).” The researchers asserted college readiness is a complex issue that includes multiple factors such as awareness, eligibility, and preparation. “College readiness requires having all three elements (college awareness, college eligibility, and college preparation) work together in a synergistic but balanced fashion to ensure postsecondary student success (p.2).”

College Readiness Factors

In regards to college readiness, multiple factors and trends emerged throughout this literature review. These factors include access, awareness, success, equity, collaboration, assessments, first generation, and skills. Each of these represents the dynamics associated with the phenomenon of college readiness. These factors are symbolic of the key areas that

educational leaders (both secondary and post-secondary), policy makers, educational researchers, and organizational leaders have deemed significant areas for balancing the often inequitable and unbalanced matters of college readiness. In an effort to close these gap and inadequacies, varied organizations and leaders have developed and implemented programs and initiatives. These efforts generally fall under one or more of these many mentioned factors.

Access

Access is a critical theme of college readiness. Access is conceptualized as an opportunity for marginalized populations (low-income families, racial and ethnic minorities) to receive higher education. Access efforts can range from course offerings to specialized programs and initiatives, which often begins or should begin middle school. Access involves equitable access to advanced-level math courses and equitable opportunities to secure college credit through a program such Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment. Erisman (2008) reported, “College readiness an access initiatives, defined as efforts intended to increase the likelihood to students will graduate from high school fully prepared to enroll and succeed in college, could benefit from this type of strategic resource targeting.” The researcher explained college readiness and access programs guarantee that students are college ready for post-secondary academics.

Goldrick-Rab & Mazzeo, (2005) disclosed that the No Child Left behind Act (NCLB) presented a straightforward policy principle: improved educational consequences for all students. The NCLB mandates that all schools eliminate the achieve gaps between middle and upper-socioeconomic White students and urban and lower-socioeconomic students. The article also mentioned that the success of academic progress could be influenced by organizational and

instructional reform efforts in American schools. These efforts can seriously affect student preparedness and access as well as the overall success of college-bound students.

Greene, & Forster, (2003) presented statistical facts that on college readiness after high school. One statistic revealed only 70% of all students in public high schools graduate, and only 32% of all students leave high school qualified to attend four-year colleges. The study demonstrated how students could be academically ready for a four- year college after graduation. It indicated that college-readiness requires that students fulfill three major tasks: obtain a high school diploma, complete college-prep courses in high school and demonstrate proficiency levels of understanding in literacy skills. The investigators utilized federal data to predict the percentage of college-ready students by minority groups and locations.

Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, (2009) focused on the significance of strengthening higher education readiness for underrepresented urban high school students. The authors highlighted the necessity of educators and legislators to effectively communicate educational goals and expectations. Their research broadens the precollege alignment strategy and proposed two recommendations to increase college readiness: raised standards and an integrated data system. Four major skill sets were acknowledged essential: core knowledge, essential skills, content awareness, behavioral competence and college awareness. The researchers indicated that while academic strategies and behavioral skills are essential, college readiness “moves beyond academic and behavioral skills to acknowledge the role of social capital in college access and success (p.190).” Colleges have determined three fundamental gauges for college success: completed college-prep courses, achievement tests results, and grade point averages. These indicators reveal disparities among many under-represented groups. School districts must be more proactive in their efforts to assess students for higher education studies. “If educators are to

use college readiness as a strategy for accomplishing the goal of college access and success, they must couple academic preparedness with the knowledge and skills students need to navigate the college –going process (p.200).”

Klopfenstein & Thomas (2009) probed the connection between experiences in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and Early College courses. Advanced Placement was initially designed to prepare college-bound students for opportunities to receive exposure to college texts, materials, and credit while enrolled in high school. The research study concluded that the AP experience does not consistently signify first semester college achievement or retention the second year. The study lead to uncertainties regarding state mandates on AP recruitment, inclusion and admission criteria for AP participants.

Lewis (2009) focused on dual enrollment as a transition method for higher education. The researcher probed twenty-one students on their viewpoints of the dual enrollment experience. This study defined dual enrollment as an opportunity for secondary students to earn high school and college credit simultaneously. Lewis addressed both the benefits and concerns of dual enrollment programs. The benefits include exposure to a comprehensive selection of courses and college credit while still in secondary settings. Dual enrollment outweighs Advanced Placement courses because dual enrollment grants credit based on the student’s performance during the tenure of the class. Advanced Placement grants credit based on a qualifying examination score. The concerns of dual enrollment include the maturity level of the secondary students in an adult environment. Educators and school leaders are also concerned with the funding sources, curriculum rigor, and transportation. A major concern is the impact of dual enrollment participation of the routine high school involvement. According to Lewis (2009), Dual enrollment is a valuable endeavor for college bound student.

Overall, access is a significant element in a quest for college readiness. The research has clearly suggested that students remediate any deficiencies before actually entering college. This can be achieved through enrollment and participation in afterschool and summer programs that foster academic enhancement.

Awareness

Awareness is a major factor in the college readiness pattern and is often considered an all-encompassing view of college readiness. College awareness requires providing college-bound students with information about the multiple facets of college enrollment. This information includes an array of topics: educational goals, career exploration, course selection (middle and high school), college admission requirements, college life (social and recreation), and financial support. Baker, D. et.al. (2005) declared “College awareness is an overarching aspect of college readiness, and it should be present overtime (middle and high school years) and should involve several groups of people (students, parents, teachers, counselors, mentors, etc.(p.4).” The researchers explained that the development of college readiness prepares students for postsecondary educational opportunities and global competence.

Researchers recommend that college awareness activities begin no later than middle school. So that parents can support their college-bound students’ efforts, it is imperative that college awareness activities target families, not students only. It is at the middle school level that an awareness about college admissions, requirements and assessments begin. During middle school or early, is an ideal time to establish a college-bound support system and continue through a student’s high school tenure (Wimberley and Noeth, 2005; Tierney, et al., 2003).

Wimberley & Noeth (2005) articulated through this policy report post-secondary planning should begin early in middle and high school. The U.S. Department of Education recommends that college-bound students begin planning for higher education as early as sixth grade. The purpose of this study was two-fold: to examine the degree of early exploration and planning of in varied college readiness areas and to explore how parents, school staff, and school experiences aid students with their primary academic planning. The study utilized a survey and focus group discussions with middle and high school students to probe how people and school-based dynamics influence students' academic and higher education planning. The researchers proposed four policy recommendations that can support school in their efforts to facilitate effective early educational and post-secondary planning: 1) college readiness should begin in the middle school; 2) Schools should explain to students and their parents the effects of taking a challenging curriculum on their future educational, career , and income options; 3) Schools should use multiple sources of information, including standardized assessments, to help inform students and their parents of the students' progress toward college readiness; 4) Schools should work with families to calculate college costs and develop a plan to meet these costs. Overall, this report disclosed that endeavors to advance and promote academic preparation could transpire through fostering parental involvement and supporting students in the planning of their higher education.

College awareness requires active involvement with students, schools, and parents. Researchers indicate that schools should make it a priority to implement a college awareness program into their school's overall operation and curriculum. Schools can employ the services of programs and initiatives such as GEAR UP and CollegeEd, to enhance college awareness in middle and high school settings.

Leonard (2013) explored a partnership between a traditional, suburban high school (600 students) and a community college to extend college credit increase for students from the middle academic quartile. The author reviewed the multiple approaches to enhancing college readiness for all students and presented a phenomenological informed study of a partnership between a Massachusetts high school and a local community college. The author noted that although educators often utilize varied strategies to broaden the college readiness of students, parents are a critical component in the steps toward college readiness particularly for students in the middle quartile. “Parents provide support around student choice when children are wavering before daunting task of getting ready for college (p.188).” The author also examined the role of parents in recruitment, enrollment, and support of academically averaged students in an early college program. The author concluded that parents played a significant role in this program: recruitment and enrollment, financial support, and emotional guidance. “The Early College program, combined with strong parental engagement, opened the doors for underachieving students to get ready for college (p.200).”

Overall, college awareness involves several stakeholders (school leaders, teachers, parents, community groups, government officials and business community). Baker et.al. (2005) reported college awareness must be present throughout the school’s curriculum and student’s academic experiences. “A primary strategy includes implementing a college awareness program in middle school years to develop an early awareness that is culturally relevant and tailored to the needs of the students (p.6).” The researchers also denoted activities such as college visits, identifying scholarships and completing college-related forms contribute to the general awareness of college.

Success

Success is another vital factor of college readiness, which refers to initiatives and programs established to ensure and/or enhance the college readiness. Success is conceptualized as efforts to ensure eligibility of college-bound students. In an effort to ensure an effective transitioning of college readiness from K12 system to four-year universities, researchers have identified effective ways to ensure college readiness. Many school districts have implemented programs such as Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, career academies, International Baccalaureate Program, Early College and GEAR UP programs to ensure that students are successful and eligible with post-secondary experiences.

The success factor is also considered an eligibility factor referring to completing the required courses for college admission. Not every state requires students to complete a college and career readiness curriculum. However, college-bound students must complete courses beyond the set requirement in an effort to be academically prepared for higher education. ACT (2005) explained that high school courses count significantly towards college readiness. ACT recommends four years of English; four years of mathematics (algebra I, geometry, algebra 2, and more upper level math courses such as trigonometry); three years of natural sciences (biology, chemistry, physics); and three years of social studies (American History, world history, American government). ACT (2005) and other researchers recommend that college-bound students complete one or more years of a foreign language.

ACT (2013) reported, “Within subjects, ACT has consistently found that students who take the recommended core curriculum are more likely to be ready for college and career than those who do not. A core curriculum is defined as four years of English, and three years each of mathematics, social studies, and science (p.10).”

Conley (2007) argued higher education is different from secondary education and college readiness is essentially different from high school proficiency. The article reported that research recommends that a key cause of college readiness deficits is the gap between, the high school experience and the college expectations. The researcher proposed four strategies that can assist secondary schools to enhance the percentage of college-ready students. The first recommendation is to align high school curriculum and instruction with college expectations. Along with comparing the secondary course content with college readiness and state content standards, secondary schools can examine the extent of progress in rigor during the four years at the secondary level. “Developing college readiness standards is the first step toward ensuring that the content and grading in high school courses are in sync with post-secondary expectations (p.24).” The second suggestion is to develop high-quality syllabi in all courses. It is necessary for high schools to conduct school-wide syllabus reviews and development process. The third recommendation is to implement senior seminars. “Senior seminars can create a college-like experience in high school without teaching the college-level material. The fourth proposal is to broaden content to high school courses. It is imperative that high schools enhance the areas of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. The author pointed out, “Few high schools have successfully and intentionally implemented all the elements necessary to align their programs for college success (p.26,)” The author concluded secondary and post-secondary schools must collaborate and align their academic programs.

Conley (2008) referred to college readiness as acquiring critical thinking and self-management behaviors as necessary factors to transition from the secondary level to the postsecondary level of studying. The article suggested that schools produce increased percentages of students who are equipped for college and careers. Conley stated that it is

imperative for students to obtain necessary admission traits and engagement abilities. Students prepared for higher education studies must be set to engage and function at the college level. The goal is to outfit students for the transition into the higher education environment.

Contreras (2011) reviewed K-12 intervention in varied organizational contexts and addressed the issues that often hinder minority scholars from obtaining their ultimate capacity. Contreras discussed the varied strategies to increasing the academic achievement of minority scholars. Four major efforts were identified as key areas: school, community, non-profit and post-secondary procedures. The researcher examined the K-12 intervention programs intended to promote the transition to post –secondary education for underrepresented students who have demonstrated strong academic potential. The article mentioned a basis and background for supporting academic achievement and college readiness through academic endeavors. Contreras advocated specific intervention programs that are devised to resolve the challenge of access for all students.

Robbins, et.al (2004) identified nine factors connected to college preparedness: contextual influences, academic-related skills, general self-concept, academic self-efficacy, social involvement, perceived social support, institutional commitment, academic goals and achievement motivation. The study focused on two college outcomes: educational performance and retention. The authors concluded that the most reliable sign of academic achievement was self-efficacy and achievement motivation. Self-beliefs outweigh cognitive measures in determining college success.

Rothman (2012) focused on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and their relationship to college readiness. The author reported that the new common core state standards could assist with the challenge of preparing high school students with college readiness. The

CCSS were developed by multiple stakeholders to address inadequate and unaligned curriculums. Academic experts such as Achieve, ACT, and the College Board compiled the standards. Business leaders, policymakers, and school leaders also contributed to the development of the standards. These experts were able to share what skills were necessary for employment or postsecondary education. The standards writers “defined readiness as the ability to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs (p.12).” The CCSS at least reflect the expectations of colleges. “In the end, the standards define some clear expectations for what students should know and be able to do (p.12).”

Adelman (1999) addressed attendance and academic performance. The study explored the connection between four-year degree completion, secondary institution achievement, and undergraduate success and demographic factors. The study found the completion of higher-level math courses increases student’s chances of attaining a bachelor’s degree. Adelman asserted that the most rigorous courses taken in high school, the better the rate of success in higher education endeavors. Adelman’s results suggested that a key factor for a student’s degree completion is the academic rigor of the high school curriculum as opposed to college entrance tests such as the ACT or SAT. The final analysis revealed that good attention and rigorous courses contribute to college readiness.

Adelman (2006) analyzed the comparison of academic qualifications such as counseling, choice, responsibility and opportunity. The researcher reviewed transcripts evaluation to conclude that accomplishing a rigorous high school curriculum is an effective gauge of college readiness and the effect is even larger for African American students. The study chronicled the educational process of students who attended four-year institutions of higher

education. The researcher affirmed that U.S. Department of Education's "policies rightly say that college and career readiness needs to mean that students are actually college ready," indicating that America has established a set standard for all public secondary American students.

Hooker & Brand (2010) conveyed that college-bound students require a clear understanding of the overall college experience including college admission, selection process, academic requirements, tuition and funding and the cultural differences of a secondary experience and a post-secondary experience. The researcher explained that many students lack a thorough preparation or counseling on postsecondary opportunities. Many of these students leave high school with limited direction on how to align their personal academic goals and aspirations. Many youths in low-income, inner-city schools often lack role models with college experience. Often times, these youth have limited college knowledge in their immediate communities.

Lundell, et al (2004) examined the contextual skills and awareness needed for college success. The researchers concluded that one major part of contextual awareness is "college knowledge." College knowledge included conventional and unconventional, stated and implied information needed for effective college admission and entrance and for steering through the higher education process. This research suggested that is important for students to be familiar with key college areas: college admission achievements, entrance testing, financial aid, tuition rates, the rigor of college courses and the overall expectations of the college experience.

Overall, college eligibility is a critical element in the college readiness quest. College eligibility can be determined using multiple methods including course offering results, high school transcripts, and ACT benchmark results. Baker et.al (2005) exclaimed that the completion of advanced or college prep course is essential for college-bound students. "Students and

families need to understand that they must go beyond what is minimally required for graduation to be ready for postsecondary education and viable employment opportunities (p.7).”

Equity

Equity is also a significant factor of college readiness. Equity is conceptualized as equal access and success in post-secondary education amid historically marginalized students (ethnic minority and low-income students.) Researchers view equity from varied perspectives: representational equity, resource equity, and equity mindedness. Bensimon (2009) reported, “Within the post-secondary education community, “equity” is further defined into three terms including: (1) representational equity, which refers to the proportional participation of historically underrepresented student populations at all levels of an institution; (2) resource equity, which takes account of the educational resources, when unequally distributed, that are directed at closing equity gaps; and (3) equity madness, which involves institutional leaders and staff demonstrating an awareness and a willingness to address equity issues (p.1).”

Davis, et.al (2013) disclosed the equity issue of college readiness and African American students. The authors indicated that efforts to close the achievement gap between African American students and the general population are evident through varied academic efforts. “According to the literature, negating the ability to transition from high school to college and careers is the presence of serious issues such as (a) inequalities in the level of education among some ethnic groups, (b) high school dropout rates, and (c) the persistent achievement gap in postsecondary attainment.” The authors reported that multiple researchers have concluded that an enormous amount of secondary graduates are not college-ready implying that a gap exists between what students learn and what is expected when they enter higher education. The researchers also denoted that “Students who participate in rigorous class work have been known

to accomplish higher scores on formal exams, including state assessments, SAT and ACT exams.” Many states reported the development and implementation of college readiness initiatives. These college-readiness initiatives are considered essential components of their accountability and efforts to close the achievement gaps: International Baccalaureate Programs, Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment Programs, Access, Equity, and the Achievement Gap, high school achievement, and access to the advanced high school curriculum.

Tierney & Sablan (2014) reviewed issues and matters related to college readiness. It affirmed that college readiness is continuous to be a major area of concern for academic policy leader, school leaders, and researchers. College readiness is an interest for all levels of academic leadership: national, state, local, secondary and post-secondary. The researchers focused on historically underrepresented students and the preparation of higher education success. This concern is because a lower percentage of minority students complete their degree within six years. It was concluded that college readiness could encompass varied areas and perspectives: curriculum content, academic performance, cognitive approaches and college awareness. Many underrepresented and unprepared students fail to complete their college degrees. This is attributed to a lack of skills in time management and financial literacy.

Collaboration

Collaboration is an important factor related to college readiness. Collaboration refers to the partnerships that exist between public and private organizations in an effort to broaden the college readiness of college-bound students. Collaboration involves stakeholders (school, community, families) working together to enhance the college preparedness of students. These collaborative efforts can range from funding efforts to support programs. Collaborative efforts require efforts that ensure students are prepared emotionally, socially and academically.

Venezia (2006) reported that America needs to take specific actions to avoid an education crisis with post-secondary education. The author explained, “State policies send important signals to students about what they need to know and be able to do, to educators about what is important to teach and to researchers and policymakers about what students need (p.16).” Students often face challenges transitioning under from distinct secondary standards to higher education standards. Many underrepresented students (African-American, Latino) are not adequately prepared for college and a low percentage actually completes their college programs. The research disclosed that four policy levers foster K-16 educational reform: alignment of courses and assessments, finance, data systems and accountability. “Traditionally, states, systems, schools and colleges responded to student needs by adding new policies and programs while manufacturing existing policy structures. In order for these reforms to affect all students, states must move beyond limited approaches and adopt more lasting and ambitious changes to their underlying policy structures (p.18).

Kirst (2008) discussed that college completion rates are steady among recent secondary graduates. The researcher denoted that often times policy systems hinder college readiness efforts. “Underlying all these difficulties are the deeply rooted policy differences between the secondary and postsecondary systems (p.142).” The researcher indicated that there needs to be a collaboration between secondary and postsecondary schools to enhance the college readiness of high school students. It is imperative for school leaders, policymakers and educators to align curriculum, policies and programs to focus on the same college preparation objectives.

Holcombe-McCoy (2010) explored and described tactics for improving college readiness skills. The researchers examined parental participation principles, approaches and behaviors of secondary guidance educators. The secondary educators’ perspectives on engaging

parents and guardians in the post-secondary admission procedures as surveyed. The study concluded that advisors consider their role to be a significant one. It is crucial for parents and advisors to establish a working relationship in an effort to promote preparedness for college-bound scholars. The study demonstrated parental involvement as an effective approach to enhance college readiness.

It is imperative that educational stakeholders collaborate from middle school to high school to ensure that all students are prepared for success beyond the secondary experience. Barnes & Slate (2013) revealed the historical happenings that preceded the existence of college readiness as the principal value affecting the secondary curriculums. The researchers closely investigated the one-size-fits-all college readiness itinerary. They declare that college-ready does not seem ready for all levels of post-secondary education. The researchers proposed that there are two major political tactics that have affected the one-size-fits-all college readiness agenda. The first key tactic is a political movement beginning with the unveiling of Sputnik, a minor synthetic satellite. Sputnik influenced the distinction of the scientific research and development community, which led to the establishment of the National Defense Act (NDEA) of 1958. The authorization of the NDEA fortified considerable amounts into the American academic system to advance students in math, science, computer technology, and foreign language. The second main political ploy occurred in 1983 with former President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education a Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform. The committee reported through A Nation at Risk American wealth and safety was at-risk. The researchers also recounted the varied college readiness research. They denoted that the majority of policy makers, administrators, advocates, researchers, and practitioners agree that rigorous academic preparation is vital for college-bound students to accomplish 21st-century global

competence. The authors indicated that ACT (2011) tests scores revealed that only 25% of secondary students who completed the ACT were considered college-ready on all four college-readiness benchmarks. They also noted that distinctions between in college-readiness percentages were disclosed for African American and Hispanic graduates for three academic years. The report indicated that a sizeable difference between college-bound African American and White students. The article concluded all stakeholders (educators, academic leaders, and policy makers) have a significant responsibility in the role in preparing students for college and career readiness

Assessment

Assessment is an additional college readiness factor that focuses on the benchmarks and measurements utilized to determine the college-readiness of secondary students. Specified assessments are utilized to measure college-bound students' preparedness for college-level courses. Nationally, two assessments are used to determine students' college readiness: SAT and ACT. Two and four-year institutions employ these assessments to determine student's readiness in core subjects. Bailey (2009) conveyed that assessments are useful but not absolute in determining the needs of entry-level college students. Researchers continue to debate how to effectively implement remedial education. Some argue assessments should be mandatory with available student support services.

Venezia & Jaeger (2013) summarized the state of college readiness of high school students. The article discussed transitions from secondary schools to higher education. It captured the major endeavors that been developed and implemented in multiple states and schools to improve college readiness. "Students determined to be proficient or advanced have demonstrated a competency over a challenging subject matter that would be expected of entering

college students, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to the real-world situation, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter (p.118).” The authors noted that multiple common assessments (ACT, SAT) are utilized to determine college readiness. Several academic and non-academic factors were identified as reasons secondary graduates are not college ready including family variables and peer influences. The author concluded, “Finally, it seems likely that to support postsecondary readiness for more students, reforms should take a systemic, comprehensive approach to providing students with both academic and nonacademic resources and opportunities (p.132).”

ACT (2014) disclosed the progress of the 2014 graduating class of the state of Alabama. In 2014, fifty-seven percent (1, 845, 787 students) of the nation’s graduating class, and eight percent of the Alabama’s graduates (37, 985 students) completed the ACT college readiness assessment. Alabama experienced an increase in ACT-assessed graduates. Alabama exceeded the nation in the English category. “Alabama has a good opportunity to improve the college and career readiness of its students, especially in English, reading, science, where at least ten percent of the students were only one or two points below the Benchmark (p.3).” The annual report indicated that an effective way to broaden students’ college and career readiness is to enroll more students in college preparatory core curriculum courses. According to the report, “Alabama saw 36% of core-taking students meeting the math ACT College Readiness Benchmark, compared to 15% of non-core-taking students meeting the Benchmark (p.3).”

Olsen & Brown (1992) reported disclosed that there is a strong correlation between students who have studied a foreign language and ACT scores. The study aimed to determine whether English and Mathematics performance levels differed among students who had and had not completed a foreign language course. The study used investigated student ability with the use

of three main categories: the amount of English, Mathematics, and Foreign language. Data was collected from 17, 541 students who were seeking admission to Northeast Missouri State University from 1981 to 1985. The participating students were from diverse backgrounds and academic abilities. The ACT profile data form provided information regarding student's foreign language interest and experience. The data compared students who had taken at least one semester of foreign language course work to those who had not taken any. The math and English sub-scores were used for the analysis. The study revealed that students who had taken foreign language scored significantly higher on ACT math and English as opposed to those who did not complete foreign language. (Olsen & Brown, 1992) highlighted another study that found that college students of Latin, French, German and Spanish who completed foreign language courses had significantly higher than those who did not study a foreign language course. The researchers concluded that foreign language study should be considered an essential component of curriculum options.

Through a research brief, Heller (2011) provided a snapshot summary of college readiness as it relates to the theme of assessment. The report conceptualized college readiness as the "ability to do college-level work." The brief reported varied factors are consistent when determining the college readiness of students. One critical factor is the use of admission tests such as the ACT or SAT. Entry test scores are losing some credibility as predictors of college readiness or success. Secondary grade point averages in core academic courses seem to provide a vivid indicator of college course success. Researchers deem college readiness is measured best by assessments of what is actually taught (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate exams, end of course tests). Because the determination of college readiness encompasses varied

factors, education policy makers and school reformers now prefer the phrase “college and career ready.”

First Generation

First Generation is an essential factor linked to college readiness. First generation college students are identified as those students whose parents did not enroll in higher education. ACT (2013) conveyed that first generation college student’s deal with similar challenges to college readiness as their peers. In many instances, first generation undergraduates confront these obstacles without support or knowledge of college processes and procedures. Without ample support, these students do not perform academically on college readiness benchmarks in central core subjects.

ACT (2013) recommended that in order to support first generation undergraduates that schools collaborate with neighboring colleges to offer dual enrollment for first generation college-bound students. Other than dual enrollment, college access programs have been instrumental in providing support to first generation students. College access programs such as TRIO and GEAR UP provide academic tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and other supportive services to marginalized students and first generation students.

The literature review denoted that the transition from secondary to post-secondary or career is a critical crossroad for young people and even more devastating for marginalized students like African Americans and Latino. There is a considerable disparity between students’ ambitions to attend college and their academic preparedness for college-level courses, which often leads to students only attending college and not graduating. ACT (2012) reported that data

revealed that 25% of secondary graduates who completed the ACT were academically ready for college-level course work.

Jones (2012) disclosed that numerous post-secondary students are required to enroll in remedial courses. Twenty percent of first-year college students at four-year academic institutions and 52% of those two-year colleges are required to enroll in some type of developmental course. The majority of the students enrolled in remedial courses are African-American, Latino, and students from low-income families. Underprepared secondary graduates cost states and students \$3 billion annually. Bailey (2009) stated despite a student's post high school option, there are specified skills that have to be obtained in order to reach their full potential for college or career achievement.

Reid & Moore (2008) probed the dynamics that contribute to a lack of college readiness. The researchers identified five areas in which first-generation college students varied from their peers whose parents were college graduates. The identified areas included assistance in the application process, limited preparation, low academic rigor, unsubstantiated perceptions, and self-esteem issues. First-generation college students often lack the parental and school support needed to be adequately prepared for the college experience. The researchers noted that when those support measures were in place students were successful in college. The study revealed that the urban (African American) participants indicated that Advanced Placement (AP) course definitely helped to prepare them for college. This researcher indicated that the lack of college readiness is equivalent to the academic gaps that exist between underrepresented students such as students from urban school districts.

Sullivan (2009) expressed two main reasons for the lack of college-preparedness: social class and miscommunication problems. Social class plays a vital function in how students

contemplate about their educational goals. Class-based parenting is a significant part of this factor. First generation college students are often unacquainted with college processes and procedures, which affect their higher education experiences. First Generation College often lacks direct parental support and guidance in comparison to students with college-educated parents. The author noted that a gap exists between the skills students need.

ACT (2013) indicated that almost 94% of ACT-tested first generation students want to earn a higher education degree. Two out of three completed ACT's recommended core curriculum, which encompasses four years of English and three years each of math, science, and social studies. The study revealed that college access programs such as TRIO and GEAR UP and students in college readiness. The researchers noted that it is significant for educational and community leaders to develop policies to promote college readiness for first-generation college students. The report emphasized the necessity of schools and educational agencies to integrate supportive services into the essential curriculum to generate a college-bound culture so that all students are on an equal path to higher education.

Some college ready initiatives and programs cross over several themes. Programs such as Upward Bound, Dual Enrollment, and Summer Bridge Programs all target First Generation students. Many of students also reside in urban cities and attend urban school districts. These programs contribute significantly to the college readiness of minority students. In many educational locations, these programs are administered by community colleges but four-year colleges benefit from these programs. Most of the first generation students participate in these programs but actually enroll in four-year universities.

Kallison & Stader (2012) reported bridge programs ordinarily focus on first generation, low-income secondary students who lack college readiness abilities. The objective of bridge

programs is to impart interventions that assist participants with ambition, preparedness and achievement for college completion. Bridge programs are facilitated and implemented by community colleges and universities, which consist of varied components: scholastic instruction, tutoring, study skills instruction, mentoring and admission procedures.

Skills

There are a set of necessary academic standards for college-bound secondary students to have reached proficiency if not mastered in order to be successful at the post-secondary level. It is necessary that students are aware of the expectations of them when they enter their first year of post-secondary courses. According to the Knowledge and Skills for University Success (KSUS) standards, there are six academic content areas necessary for a success first year of college: English, mathematics, second languages, natural sciences, social sciences and the arts. Conley (2005) reported that the KSUS standards were the results of three years of research compiled by twenty of the most notable American college and universities. The standards communicate the effort by higher education leaders to strengthen the connection between secondary expectations and post-secondary expectations. According to Conley (2005), a university education is largely about learning how to think in particular ways. Content is a means to that end. That end is the ability to think about things differently and in deeper, more systematic and complex ways. For students who think of college strictly in terms of mastering content knowledge, the experience will be less valuable and probably more frustrating. “Content is to be understood and mastered in the context of particular ways of thinking about that content. This is what the foundational skills capture and reflect (p. 170).”

Tucker (2011) addressed the overshadowing of “college and career readiness.” The author denoted that college and career readiness disdains the current significance of learning and

challenges the principle that success can be about current priorities and age-appropriate goals. “Education is defined by what can be accomplished in the remote future, not in the present.” The author conveyed that students need to understand the importance of strong reading and writing skills. “Students should know the value of reading and writing in the present, so they are not forever prodded by deferred goals such as admission on to the college of their choice (p.115).” The author explained that in many cases educational efforts do not promote or encourage students for future success. Instead, schools should promote efforts that inspire students to see learning in a meaningful context.

Sullivan (2009) presented six essential college-readiness skills: reading, writing, thinking, listening, Grit, and attitude toward college. Reading was identified as a critical college-level skill that is crucial for all areas of college learning. College-ready students enjoy reading and often read for pleasure. These students have been exposed to books of literary merit while in high school. According to Sullivan, reading is considered the most definitive pursuit of all liberal arts learning. Writing skills were recognized as a necessary college skill. College prepared students generate numerous drafts of essays. Good writers routinely re-read assigned articles and books. Good writers use the writing process to complete writing tasks. College-prepared students embrace feedback about their writing from peers and instructors. The thinking was pinpointed as a principal post-secondary ability. Students with strong thinking skills are naturally curious and interested in varied viewpoints and perspectives. Listening was discovered as a valuable higher education talent. Listening skills benefit students during and after college. Listening skills enable students to develop positive connections and relationships with their peers, instructors, and higher education officials.

Horning (2011) reported that in order to improve academic performance, academic institutions should focus on reading. The report noted that the primary challenges with college completion are inadequate reading skills that restrict students' success. Researcher deemed reading as a critical academic skill to college success. This point emphasizes the need for high schools to have students to engage complex texts and rigorous language arts programs.

Horning (2011) emphasized that it is crucial for colleges and universities to target and monitor students reading deficiencies, and to teaching critical reading and thinking in college courses throughout the college curriculum in order to improve graduation rates. Some American colleges and universities have taken the initiative to address the reading predicament: Long Island University, Xavier University in New Orleans and Kentucky Christian University. According to college instructors and administrators, it is imperative for students to be inspired, mandated, and trained to read sustained nonfiction text using critical reading skills such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application. Training in critical reading is a necessary action to enhancing decreasing graduation rates.

Researchers agree that secondary and post-secondary educators should collaborate on academic practices such as reading. Jolliffe & Harl (2008) denoted higher educational decision makers need to be well informed about students reading habits and practices. Although English department faculties are central educators in core post-secondary educational processes, all college-level instructors need to be knowledge about how students learn to read prior to, how to advance reading during college, and how students develop reading abilities and practices.

Achieve (2011) disclosed that supporters for a national curriculum and standardize testing contend that all students will be adequately equipped for higher education and are afforded more life opportunities if when there granted the same academic standards. The report

included key findings of college and career readiness. Standards have been revised and updated to signify the knowledge and skills desired by colleges and employers. English Language Arts and math standards were adopted by forty-seven states and the District of Columbia. In 2010, forty-four states adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in an effort to enhance college and career ready expectations. Graduation requirements have also been broadening in many states. Twenty states have instituted prerequisites that at secondary graduates should complete a college and career ready curriculum. “Every state that has raised its graduation requirements to the college- and career-ready level has also adopted college- and career-ready academic content standards (p.3).” Multiple states modified their assessment method to evaluate student’s level of college and career readiness. Fourteen states administer assessments to secondary students that higher education institutions use to make determinations regarding students’ college preparedness. A case in point, the State of Alabama administers the ACT to all eleventh grade students in an effort to measure their college and career readiness. Other progress efforts include the launching of longitudinal data systems for K-12 schools and accountability systems to monitor college and career readiness. Table I summarizes the eight factors that highlight the phenomenon of college readiness.

Table 1: Eight factors that influence college readiness.

Factors that Influence the Phenomenon of College Readiness	
Factors	Descriptions
Access	Opportunity for marginalized students to receive post-secondary education
Awareness	Knowledge of information of programs and services that involves multiple stakeholders including parents
Success	Efforts, programs, and initiatives that prepare students for college curriculum and experiences (Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual Enrollment, Early College, GEAR UP, etc.)
Equity	Equal access and success in college prep courses and programs, enrollment in post-secondary education for underrepresented students
Collaboration	Partnerships with public and private organizations in an effort to enhance college readiness. Collaboration involves multiple stakeholders (schools, families, communities)
Assessments	Focuses on benchmarks and measurements used to determine college readiness
First Generation	Marginalized students whose parents who did not attend college
Skills	Academic standards needed to be successfully engage in college level curriculum: reading, writing, etc.

Conceptualization of Culturally Responsive Instruction

The research literature review provides an engaging and limited understanding of the influence of culturally responsive instruction on the college readiness of urban students. In education, there has been a long-standing belief that in the classroom the teacher is a critical factor and has the most impact on student achievement. This belief is echoed in this study as it proposes that in addition to an engaging high school experience students need culturally responsive instruction to be college ready and globally competent.

Culturally responsive instruction acknowledges the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups as factors that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as valuable content to be taught in the prescribed school curriculum. This approach fosters positive relationships and connections between home, school and community experiences.

Gay (2000) defined culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students. Utilizing the components of culturally responsive instruction enhances the total classroom atmosphere and experience. When culturally responsive instruction is employed, literature instruction often reflects multiple ethnic perspectives and literary genres while Math instruction incorporates everyday-life concepts, such as economics, employment, consumer habits, of various ethnic groups. In order to teach to the different learning styles of students, activities reflect a variety of sensory opportunities-visual, auditory, tactile. Culturally responsive instruction encourages students to understand and appreciate the differences and similarities of their own and other's cultures.

Researcher Ladson-Billings (1992) strongly advocated for culturally responsive instruction as a weapon against deficit thinking. The utilization of culturally responsive instruction will limit deficit attitudes and behaviors in schools. Ladson-Billings (1992) explained that culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (p. 382)." Ladson-Billings (1994) studied teaching in elementary classrooms and observed the culturally responsive values being demonstrated. She concluded that when students were included in a collective effort intended to encourage academic and cultural merit, expectations, skills and interpersonal

relations were communicated and displayed. Students assisted, supported and encouraged each other like members of an extended family. Students were held accountable, as part of a larger group, and it was everyone's task to make certain that each individual member of the group was successful. Ladson-Billings (2004) indicated that culturally relevant pedagogy uses cultural situations and examples to instruct and expose students. Utilizing students' cultural capital hinders the negative effects of the dominant culture, which is generally the white middle-class culture.

There have been numerous research studies to support the advantages of culturally responsive instruction in American classrooms. Howard (2002) facilitated research that explored African American students' accounts of teaching practices and learning atmospheres in urban school settings. These and other studies confirmed students entering classrooms bring varied experiences, traditions, frameworks and learning styles with them. A key premise of culturally responsive instruction is that education advances from students' strengths and not students' weaknesses. The culturally responsive method will ensure that all students African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic are provided with equitable opportunities to be academically successful. Currently, the many school districts use a minimum of strategies to capitalize on students' cultural wealth. Ladson-Billings' (1995, 2001) recommended schools provide ongoing professional development on multicultural education. Ladson-Billings also recommended that teachers examine their own cultural biases and prejudices. Teachers need to learn more about how to use the students' culture as a basis for learning throughout the curriculum and across disciplines. Another beneficial strategy is to strengthen their connections with families and communities by taking neighborhood walks. Teacher education programs must require multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy as a significant component when

preparing teachers for the culturally diverse classrooms. Culturally responsive instruction and pedagogy's goal is to enhance the academic achievement of all students; therefore, it is not limited to students of color or low economic status.

Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that educators and policy makers need to make more of an effort to pedagogy as part of educational reform. She proposed three criteria for culturally relevant teaching: an ability to develop students academically, willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of sociopolitical or critical consciousness. "Thus, culturally relevant pedagogy must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically (p.13)." The researcher highlighted the pedagogical practices of eight successful teachers of African American students. The work of these teachers demonstrates culturally relevant pedagogy in action. Students were held accountable, as part of a larger group, and it was everyone's task to make certain that each individual member of the group was successful.

The research also disclosed that the culturally responsive method would ensure that all students African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic are provided with equitable opportunities to be academically successful. Chisholm (1994) focused on the importance of pre-service teachers to be acclimatized to multicultural preparation and practices. The author proposed the utilization of organizational practices and procedures that will prepare future and current teachers for diversity in classrooms. The researcher emphasized that globalization has increased the need for multicultural preparation of teachers. Due to this expansion of cultural diversity, American schools have become more diverse.

To adequately embrace diversity, educators have to be better equipped with pedagogical and social knowledge. "Teaching effectively in culturally diverse classrooms means

using culturally sensitive strategies and content to ensure equitable opportunities for academic success, personal development, and individual fulfillment for all students (p.2).” The researcher presented interesting demographics regarding the teaching population. “Demographics reveal that 92 percent of the teacher education students are white, and over 80 percent are female. The steadily increasing minority population brings about a certainty that teachers will lead classrooms with culturally diverse students. The author recommended several methods to increase pre-service teachers’ effectiveness with multiculturalism:

- To become reflective practitioners
- To develop skills to enhance their cultural competence
- To become effective cross-cultural communicators
- To understand the interrelationship between language and culture
- To recognize the cultural roots of cognition and its close link to language

The author also denoted that it is vital that pre-service teachers have multiple opportunities to be active participants in multicultural practices and experiences. “A broad interdisciplinary foundation, varied practical experiences, and repeated opportunities to critically analyze ethnic race, class, and gender issues are key ingredients in producing skilled, knowledgeable, reflective, competent teachers (p.6).” Exposure to a liberal education has also proven to be an advantage to pre-service teachers. A liberal arts education affords future teachers a foundation for cultural competency and cross-cultural awareness.

The article concluded that all teacher educators must be prepared to provide quality education for all students. Teacher education programs must intentional in their efforts to provide future with opportunities to enhance their cultural competency. Because teaching is a multicultural experience, pre-service multicultural education is vital. The main objective is to produce culturally competent teachers. “Culturally competent teachers must have an awareness

of their cultural, ethnic, and gender attitudes, expectations, learning preferences, teaching style, and personal biases (p.10).”

There have been numerous research studies to support the advantages of culturally responsive instruction in American classrooms and beyond. A case in point is the research of Irvine & Armento (2001) which investigated how teachers’ awareness of students’ cultural backgrounds contributed to students’ academic achievements. Empowering and equipping culturally competent teachers remains a constant challenge for teacher education programs. Teacher education programs are tasked with developing teachers equipped and skilled for diverse classrooms. Jenks, Lee & Kanpol (2001) reported that multicultural education is a major element in teacher education programs. “Teacher education programs in colleges and universities must make the commitment to encouraging the kind of transformative learning in preserves educators that eventually will result in powerful multicultural programs for students (p.89).”

Varied research has suggested that it is crucial that teacher education program students be properly prepared to address issues of race, culture, class, and gender in curriculum and instruction. Ladson-Billings (2004) stated that CRT could be applied to explore how teacher education students and educators learn to teach in essential multicultural manners or to continue the normality. “Critical pedagogy must be performed by critical pedagogues, and few if any, teacher preparation programs systematically prepare such teachers. CRT’s project is to uncover the way pedagogy is radicalized and selectively offered to students according to the setting, rather than to produce critical pedagogy (p.60).”

Investigators indicated that teacher education programs limit pre-service students with one required multicultural course offering. The single course is not proficient for discussing a multitude of diversity issues. Often the lack of infusion of multicultural education prohibits

students from developing a more comprehensive knowledge of students' lives and teacher pedagogy. Jenks, Lee & Kanpol (2001) conveyed multicultural infusion is a critical factor of a teacher education program that strives for cultural-competency. Multicultural programs should be a part of the entire college or university. "Departments can incorporate a multicultural perspective into many of their courses can include a social justice component that, by making connections between course concepts and experiential learning in the community outside the institution, takes a reconstructive or social action approach to multicultural education (p.102)."

Researchers note that Critical Race Theory (CRT) acknowledges the strength and diversity of people of color. CRT theorists encourage the recognition of the lived experiences of people of color, which should be addressed in pre-service teacher programs. Solórzano (1997) explained that the CRT advocates for pre-service students to have experiences that encourage a discourse of difference and community strength, while many of the existing programs bolster a negative view of culturally and linguistically diverse learners and their communities. Cochran-Smith (2000) affirmed the significance of teacher educators undergoing transformative learning in their own understanding of multiculturalism. She recommends, "The inclusion of theories of practice developed by and about people of color, along with "rich and detailed analyses of successful teachers of urban children, particularly poor children of color, who use a variety of pedagogies (p.129)."

Cochran-Smith (2003) emphasized the significance of teacher educators examining themselves and their own practices in addition to probing students' constructions of race in the teacher education classroom and more broadly in teacher educators' experience. After examining her personal work and student teachers' perspective of race and was able to reveal that exist in the teaching and outlook of race in teacher education. Darling-Hammond, L. (2005) suggested

that teacher education programs design programs that bring awareness to diversity, equity, and social justice in all courses and field experiences for prospective teachers. “Teachers need to be supported in developing the commitment to teach all children to high standards (p. 274).”

Once teachers exit teacher education programs and enter “real world” situations in actual classrooms, embracing culturally and linguistically learners often remains a challenge. It is necessary that school districts continue the efforts of teacher education programs by providing job-embedded professional development and teacher support. The professional development activities should focus on ways to capitalize on cultural capital wealth as it relates to curriculum and classroom instruction. This approach is generally known as culturally responsive instruction or culturally relevant pedagogy.

The exposure to culturally responsive strategies and techniques are vital for pre-service and full-service teachers. Teacher education programs are currently revisiting multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy as a significant component when preparing teachers for the culturally diverse classrooms. Culturally responsive instruction and pedagogy’s goal is to enhance the academic achievement of all students; therefore, it is not limited to students of color or low economic status.

Brown (2007) described how teachers could prepare to be more culturally responsive. The researcher highlighted the research of Gay (2002) and identified five important areas that are necessary when preparing a teacher for diverse learning opportunities: developing a culturally diverse knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula, demonstrating cultural caring building a learning community, building effective cross-cultural communications, and delivering culturally responsive instruction. “One of the most important aspects of a culturally responsive classroom is the teacher’s belief that students from CLD backgrounds want to learn. The second

is that the instructional strategies and teaching behaviors used by the teacher can engage the students and lead to improved academic achievement (p.60).” The researcher pointed out that all teachers should aim to develop instructional programs and activities that counteract failure and enhance success in all students. Not only should teachers strive for culturally responsive, but also school districts should strive for to culturally competent educational systems. The researcher concluded that “School administrators must gain a better knowledge of CRT practices, recognize the benefits these practices have for all students, and support teachers in their efforts to transform their teaching , classrooms, and schools so that they will be more responsive to the students they serve (p.61).”

Gay (2002) asserted that the educators facilitated culturally responsive classrooms and instruction the academic achievement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds would improve. There is also a need to modify and transform school educational policies and practices to broaden the learning of all students. The researcher reported that teacher education programs have a vital responsibility to prepare future teachers to work effectively with diverse learners. The researcher explained culture embodies many dynamics that have a direct impact on teaching and learning. It is necessary for teachers to identify and recognize these dynamics. The knowledge of cultural diversity that educators need extends beyond basic awareness and transcends into acknowledging and valuing the differences that exist. All students should be afforded the opportunity to learn in natural conditions. If this is to happen, teachers must equip themselves with strategies to become culturally responsive to diverse students.

Villegas & Lucas (2007) explained teachers must see students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as competent academic learners in order to engage them in academic

tasks. Culturally responsive teaching extends beyond knowing teaching strategies but encompasses being able to understand the role of culture and language in learning. Culturally responsive teachers will support students by connecting students' prior knowledge to what needs to be learned. Teachers can also capitalize on immigrant student experiences. The researcher concluded, "Approaching a student's education in these culturally and linguistically responsive ways- rather than emphasizing deficits-has the potential to truly engage all students in learning, both in school and beyond (p.7)."

Tucker & et al. (2005) explained the significant influence teachers have on the student achievement of culturally diverse students. The researchers pointed out those recent studies have revealed that teacher involvement has a direct impact on the academic engagement of African American students. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy supports the idea behind teachers' beliefs about their influence on students. Teachers' sense of efficacy is one of the few teacher characteristics consistently related to student achievement (p.29)." The researcher explained that teacher efficacy has a connection to teacher beliefs about challenging teaching situations and the decisions that accompany them. Teacher efficacy is also linked to racial attitudes and perceived capacity to work with diverse students. The researchers conducted a study investigating whether public school teachers would benefit from professional development training in the Model Program (a program promoting teacher efficacy for working with students from diverse backgrounds). The researchers discussed that "teachers can also provide learning experiences that are designed specifically to promote the self-empowerment of culturally diverse students and all other students in their classrooms (p.32)." The study highlighted a key point that culturally diverse students react positively in academic situations where they are sincerely respected, appreciated and secure. The study concluded that training would enhance the teacher self-

efficacy of teachers who work with diverse students. It is imperative that teachers make all students feel valued, important and comfortable.

Ladson-Billings (2000) focused on the lack of information about preparing teachers to teach African American students, the efforts by researchers and scholars to fulfill this void and the necessity for continuous research. The author denoted the historical viewpoints and contexts on teaching African American students. The article featured the research of Foster (1990) which noted “effective teaching of African American students almost always involves some recognition and attention to the ways that race and racism construct and constrict peoples’ lives.” The researcher proclaimed that there is not a single strategy or experience, which prepares pre-service teachers for culturally diverse students and classrooms. She recommended a systemic and comprehensive approach to teacher preparation. “Work that uses autobiography, restructured field experiences, situated pedagogies, and returning to the classrooms of experts can each provides new opportunities for improving teaching (p.209).” The use of autobiography allows teachers and students represent themselves in their own context. The use of restructured field experiences is beneficial to pre-service teachers. “Spending limited time in urban classrooms often serves to reinforce students’ stereotypes and racist attitudes toward African American students because they are not accompanied with requisite understanding about African American culture and cultural practices (p.209).” According to the author, culturally relevant teachers not only promote learning and academic achievement but also encourage and support the development of cultural competence. It is important for teacher educators to equip potential teachers with skills to recognize the influence of race and racism on the daily experiences of all citizens. “Ultimately the work of education in a democracy is to provide opportunities for all citizens to participate fully in the formation of the nation and its ideals (p.212).”

Howard (2001) discussed the progress of culturally relevant teaching practices for ethnically and linguistically diverse students. The author highlighted a research study that focused on African American student's perspectives of culturally relevant teaching in urban contexts. The phenomenological informed study encompassed four inner-city elementary schools located in the northwestern United States. The interviewed students shared that their academic skills improved due to their teachers' approaches. The collected data revealed potential resolutions for classroom practices and further research: caring, establishing community, and engaging classroom environment. The results of the study imply that all teachers can meet the educational needs of African American students. "The data suggest that one of the primary keys to helping African American students have an equitable opportunity for school success is teachers' understanding of various cultural and learning characteristics they bring to the classroom (p.147)." The author concluded that is vital for school leaders and teachers construct mutual spaces for students to express their perspectives on educational practices that enhance their academic experiences.

Schwieger, Gros & Barberan (2010) addressed intercultural relationships within a multicultural university classroom setting. The researchers asserted that when educators claim to be multicultural educators the teachers and students are part of the broader multicultural organization. A major task of educators is to provide educational opportunities where that grant all diverse voices and perspectives to coexist. "Teacher should not only treat the diverse classroom as an opportunity to instill tolerance and respect but also understand diversity as an actual necessity for the highest quality of education to take place (p.149)." The researchers conveyed the importance of educators striving to further develop the pedagogical methods that focus on student-teacher roles, literacy, and identity in multicultural classrooms. The authors

concluded that the assertion of culturally diverse classrooms generates opportunities that benefit students and teachers. "...A culturally diverse classroom...is the foundation for successful university education in the 21st century, and that the teachers are blessed with the unparalleled opportunity of becoming epistemological Medicis, but also face the challenge of managing it responsibly (p.154)."

Godley, A. J., and et.al (2006) focused on teacher preparation and dialect understanding. Throughout the article, the researchers proposed research-based suggestions for valuable approaches to dialect diversity. The researchers stressed the significance of pedagogical applications of sociolinguistic approaches. They explained that schools would serve as agents of social change. "As researchers and educators, we are fundamentally concerned with addressing the social and educational inequities reproduced in such moments (p.30.)" The researcher clarified linguistic research defines language associated with specified groups or regions. The article's main argument is teacher education rooted in sound linguistic research and principles can influence educators' dialect-related perspectives and practices. The researchers shared that they believe all students benefit from "a teacher who is prepared to approach student language from the sociolinguistic perspective that expects, values and affirms diverse ways of speaking (p.31)."

"Another promising approach for overcoming teachers' resistance to language diversity is to ask teachers to study the variations present in their own linguistic repertoires. The authors mentioned that another way to address the dialect issue is to place written and spoken English in a broader context so all students can make relevant connections. There is also a great need for teacher education programs to provide varied opportunities for teachers to observe and confront their own attitudes toward language usage. "Preparing teachers to think critically about the role of language in social stratification, teachers should also be pushed to consider the pedagogical

implications of the link between language and personal and cultural identity (p.33).” The article concluded that it is imperative that “teacher education make a difference in the way that teachers are prepared for dialect diversity (p.35).”

Culturally responsive instruction allows secondary teachers to equip themselves with necessary strategies to move cultural conflict from the classroom and better equip students to be successful beyond the secondary experience. Delpit (2006) focused on the need for educators and society to be concerned about the educational needs of all children. The researcher addressed the negative assumptions that are often made about children from marginalized groups. Too often society’s power imbalances and cultural conflicts occur daily in classrooms across America. There is a need for schools to focus more on relationships with minority children instead of viewing them as “other peoples’ children.” Delpit proposed that educators and school leaders take the lead in being culturally competent.

Conceptualization Urban Education/Students

Urban education is defined in many ways. For the purposes of this study, urban students refer to students who attend schools in metropolitan communities that are characteristically diverse. Urban students are generally characterized as students who often reside in urban areas and school districts. In most cases, urban students are a minority (African American, Hispanic) and attend secondary schools with large enrollments of socioeconomic students. Urban students represent varied ethnic minorities, multiple languages. These schools are often considered high poverty schools with large percentages (40 percent or more) receiving free or reduced-price lunch compared to only 10% at a suburban school or 25 percent of rural schools.

It is frequently reported that on average, many urban students have deficient achievement results in the core content areas (reading, writing, mathematics, science) in comparison to students in suburban and rural schools. Urban students face issues of safety and security at larger rates than other kinds of schools. These students spend less time on homework and more time watches excessive amounts of television time. All these factors and characterizations contribute to a lack of academic preparedness for college-bound students. Due to the complexities of life situations (drugs, crime, violence broken families), urban students require varied methods of academic and behavior support to substantiate their academic progress as they represent multiple cultures, ethnicities, and socio-economic groups.

Due to the complexities of urban schools, students in urban schools are often deprived of the academic preparedness essential to college readiness at a four-year university. For urban students, the transition from high school to college is even more challenging due to ill-equipped urban schools they attend. Bryant (2013) exclaimed, “High poverty and high minority schools generally lack the rigorous education and support elements necessary to prepare students for graduation and matriculation into post-secondary options (p.1).” It was also noted that graduation rates are lower for African Americans than white or Hispanic students (Balfanz, R. et.al.2013).

Research data reveals an even tougher challenge for African American males in urban settings. Toldson and Lewis (2012) explained that African Americans ninth grade males are 12.6 percent less likely than ninth grade white males to enroll and complete honors classes and 7.9 percent less likely than African American ninth grade females (p.1). Research reports reveal urban schools generally consists of African American and Latino students are among the fastest-growing populations in public schools and on average, they score lower on standardized tests than their white and Asian counterparts. Nearly half of all students in urban public schools do not

graduate from high school. According to the U.S. Department of Education for Civil Rights (2014), there are continuous concerns for the gaps that exist among African American students and other minorities in comparison to white students. The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) presented a data view on college and career readiness revealing that although legitimate programs and initiatives have been employed in an effort to close achievement gaps disparities continue in schools across America mainly negatively affecting urban schools.

The CRDC (2014) disclosed opportunity and deficits across America in student access to college and career preparation. According to the CRDC, there is limited access to high-level math and science courses. Nationally, only 50% of secondary schools offer calculus and only 63% offer physics. There is also a lack of offerings in other subjects such as Algebra I and II, geometry, biology and chemistry (10-15% of high schools do not offer more than one course in the general sequence). This access is even less for African-American, Hispanic students and other minorities. Twenty-five percent of secondary schools with the highest percentage of black and Latino students do not offer Algebra II and 33 % do not offer chemistry. African Americans make-up 37% of students enrolled in high school, but only 27% enrolled in at least 1 Advanced Placement course, and 18 % of students scoring a qualifying score of three or above.

Crosby (1999) reported a powerful force is required in the educational field if urban schools are to provide their minority students equity and access to academic opportunities and options. The researcher discussed the multiple factors that influence the failure of urban schools. Several of the factors include bureaucracy, buildings and sites, overload, a new population, cost of security, professional staff, and lack of political courage. The researcher expressed that “the decision-making process in urban schools contributes to their failure (p.298).” In many cases, institutional bureaucracies interfere and resist change. This resistance to change prevents schools

from academic progression. The author denoted that environments influence learning. In many cases, the school buildings cannot accommodate changes. There is also identified overload of responsibility in urban schools. “Among the necessary services it provides are recreation, cultural growth, emotional development, basic health care, food service, voter registration, driver education, sex education, employment service, immunization, and the collection of census data (p.300).” Urban schools will continue to fail unless educational organizations restructure and transform. There has also been a major shift in the population of urban schools. The urban population has shifted from white middle schools to immigrants, African Americans, and poor. This is accompanied by the delinquent behavior of urban youth. Overall, there are multiple factors that need to be addressed by educators, community leaders and policymakers to aid urban schools in dealing with these factors that hinder academic success.

Morrell & Duncan-Andrade (2002) addressed the need for teachers to meet the challenge of forming meaningful relationships with diverse students. As American schools become more diverse, there is a strong need for “critical educators who wish to promote curricula and pedagogies that value and affirm the cultural practices of urban students and members of urban communities (p.88).” The researchers highlighted the efforts of an urban high school in northern California to use Hip-Hop music and culture to connect with students. “We ultimately decided we could utilize Hip-hop music and culture to forge a common and critical discourse that was centered upon the lives of the students, yet rescinded the racial divide and allowed us to tap into students’ lives in ways that promoted academic literacy and critical consciousness (p.88).” The researchers argued Hip-hop texts are literary texts and can be employed to support literary terms and concepts and advance interpretation. Using the framework of Hip-hop music and culture, the school district constructed a classroom unit. The

classroom unit was developed to encompass Hip-hop music into conventional senior English poetry unit. The unit writer intended to encourage the urban youth to consider popular culture through a critical perspective. “Further, we wished to encourage youth to view elements of popular culture through a critical lens and to critique messages sent to them through popular media, as well as to help students understand the intellectual integrity, literary merit, and social critique contained within elements of their own youth culture (p.90).” The researchers concluded that there are numerous potentials for urban educators to make powerful connections with traditional texts with all students.

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Conceptualization of Global Competence

New research literature suggests that there is a need for American schools to focus on global competence and cultural competence. Perhaps the new term for college readiness is cultural competence. This is due to the call for a globalized society. Singmaster and Manise (2014) focused on how teachers can prepare students to be globally competent. The authors proclaimed that students must be afforded opportunities to develop global and cultural competence skills. Global competence was defined as the skills and dispositions required for students in the interconnected world. Although there are several required global competence skills, having an interest in learning and exploring the world and how it works is major. It is also important to mention that globally competent students envision themselves as advocates for change.

Another demand for culturally competent students stems from demands of corporate America. “Global competence skills align with what business is calling for in workers (p.48).” Corporate leaders maintain, “All students should have educational experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own (p.48).” The author testified that is imperative for schools to provide high-quality instruction that infuses global perspectives. A school’s curriculum and culture are vital to building globally competent citizens. Educators revealed that student engagement broadens when students have opportunities to delve into real-world topics related to their coursework.

Singmaster and Manise (2014) reported, “To take advantage and prepare for careers in these markets, we must give students the opportunity to develop the right skills, including global and cultural competence (p.46).” The researcher explained that global competence skills align with the future workforce. “All students should have educational experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own (p.48).” To be competitive in the 21st-century global economy, every student needs to be equipped with global and cultural competence skills. Millar (2015) It is imperative that schools and school districts employ methods so that students achieve success by graduating with a shared sense of global awareness and the critical skills to be college and career ready.

The literature disclosed that one of the most effective ways to prepare students for global competence and citizenry is to develop educators’ cultural competence. It is imperative that teachers provide an environment in which culturally and linguistically diverse learners understand the world around them and their place in that society as constructive citizens. Teachers have to be equipped to acknowledge and appreciate student’s individual significance. Teacher education programs, culturally responsive instruction and teacher leadership are key methods for preparing educators to provide effective academic environments for all learners and to meet the academic challenges of a global society.

Delpit (1995) reminded educators, “Knowledge about culture is but one tool that educators may make use of when devising solutions for a school’s difficulty in educating diverse children. (167). It is imperative that educators have knowledge of children’s lives outside of school in order to recognize strengths and skills. Delpit like many other educational scholars reiterated, “If schools are to successfully educate all of our children, we must work to remove the

blindness build of stereotypes, mono-cultural instructional methodologies, ignorance, social distance, biased research, and racism.”

Balistreri et al. (2012) provided a comprehensive overview of globalization and education. It addressed, reviewed and summarized the significance of preparing students for global competence. It implies that the term college-ready is outdated due to the strong demand for students to be globally competent. According to the researchers, there has been a transformation from preparing students to be college and career to preparing them to function in a global society. The report examined the role of education in equipping and enabling students with skills and aptitudes required for the 21st century. The author noted that other countries have surpassed the United States when it comes to preparing students for college and career readiness (global competence). Although there are multiple obstacles (cultural, economic, political), the United States educational organizations can prepare students to be globally competent. The researcher noted the strong efforts of organizations like College Board who broadens access and equity efforts through their academic programs.

Millar (2015) discussed the connection between global competence and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The author clarified that the adoption of the CCSS for English language arts and mathematics in 45 states and the District of Columbia grants an opportunity for school leaders and educators to merge academics and core content necessary to prepare college-bound students. “The adoption of new and rigorous college and career ready standards creates a historic opportunity for individual schools, districts, and states across the nation to work independently and collaboratively to rethink the curriculum, resource materials, and texts used in classrooms and online instruction (p.1).” The author indicated the need for an educational reformer, policy makers and educators to use the flexibility and opportunity of the CCSS to

contemplate instruction and curriculum that integrates global competence into the preparation of college-bound students.

Summary

In conclusion, this literature review provided a snapshot perspective on the critical issues of college readiness, culturally responsive instruction, urban students and global competence. Although there is a plethora of literature on college readiness, there is a limited amount of research on global competence as it relates directly to the college readiness of urban students. The review of the literature relevant to the research questions revealed several major points about college readiness. This study disclosed the themes, gaps, and overall quality of the literature for this study.

Definition

First, College readiness is conceptualized in multiple manners. Some researchers view college readiness as the ability to complete college-level courses without remediation or developmental courses. Some researchers and educational leaders view college readiness as having completed a set number of advanced courses. Most significantly, this literature revealed that college readiness is transcending into meaning global competence. In essence, the study proposes that the definition of college readiness encompasses global competence. The K-12 educational system is now accountable for preparing students to be 21st-century learners. This implies that students are to be equipped for the knowledge-based economy.

With the emergence of globalization and internationalization, many academic institutions strive to prepare college-bound students to be globally competent graduates. Globally competent graduates encompass the idea that students are equipped to function in diverse

cultural settings and have an understanding and appreciation for external cultures and histories. Researchers suggest that these students have the capacity to comprehend the universal perspectives of health and ecological issues. The literature revealed that an increased number of secondary and post-secondary schools have incorporated global competence as a major dynamic in their vision and mission statements. This gesture is an indication that schools are aware that students need to be prepared for the “knowledge economy” or a diverse society and workforce.

Factors

Secondly, this literature review revealed that college readiness can be viewed through the lens of multiple factors: access, awareness, success, equity, collaboration, assessments, first generation, and skills. Each of the themes discloses significant dynamics of the college-readiness of college-bound urban students in public schools. Collectively these themes demonstrate the essential dynamics for college preparedness. The research reveals that all eight themes are essential and must be synchronized during the tenure of a secondary student’s academic years. “The implication for schools is that they must create rigor, relevance, and relationships to catalyze the rise of all students to college readiness (Conley, 2007), p.ii.”

The identified factors signify that college readiness is established when stakeholders collaborate to increase the preparedness of college-bound students. This preparedness involves readiness in terms of academic, personal and college knowledge preparedness. Academic readiness involves students being exposed to a rigorous college ready curriculum which begins in middle school. It is imperative for secondary and post-secondary schools to collaborate secondary graduation requirements and expectations. Personal readiness implies that students acquire skills such as time management, self-awareness, and goal setting in an effort to be prepared for emotional, financial and social challenges of the college experience. College

knowledge readiness requires students and their families to have an awareness of the overall college experience and its factors such as the admission and financial aid application processes.

From the eight identified factors, three factors seem to dominant the research literature: access, equity and success/eligibility. According to the included research these three themes equate to an overarching theme of college preparedness. This factor is critical for urban students who in most situations are faced with equity and access challenges when it comes to pursuing higher education.

Gaps

Thirdly, this literature review reveals that although there is a plethora of literature on college readiness, there is a limited amount of research on global competence as it relates directly to the college readiness of urban students preparing to attend four-year colleges and universities. The literature clearly expressed that when secondary schools provide students with rigorous and relevant skill development along with all the elements of the defined factors students are better prepared for college-level course work and generally complete their intended college programs. However, there is little to none literature that directly states that the added component of culturally responsive instruction will enhance the college readiness of urban students. This proposed research study would significantly impact the dialogue of school reform and college readiness because it would add a fresh and unique perspective by adding global competence to the conceptualization of college readiness particularly as it relates to urban students.

The literature review also disclosed strengths and weaknesses in the literature about college readiness, culturally responsive instruction, and global competence. The

theoretical/conceptual literature is strong. The empirical and professional literature is weak when it comes to exploring the college readiness of African-American urban students. The theoretical/conceptual literature is formidable and progressive. It is comprised of years of research on educational reform and policies that impact the college readiness of varied subgroups. The theoretical/conceptual research disclosed a key dynamic in the discussion of college readiness which how it is conceptualized. The literature indicated that there are varying views of the college-readiness definitions. The literature signified the vital concern for college readiness at the local, state and national level explaining how nationally multiple organizations and institutions have and are contributing to the efforts to improve the college readiness of all students. Due to the major concern for college readiness, numerous entities such as *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, College Board, the Diploma Project*, have contributed to the research and funding efforts to improve the condition of college readiness for students across America. Considering, the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps of the literature review; this research study probed the impact of culturally responsive instruction on the college readiness and global competence of urban secondary students in the classrooms of National Board Certified English/ Language Arts teachers. The researcher intended to construct a research study that supported the efforts of schools and school districts to broaden the educational opportunities for all students. The investigator emphasized that due to a more global focus in the realm of education and the world at large, there is a critical need for all educators to be culturally competent so they can effectively prepare students to be globally competent. The premise is if a student is globally competent, he or she is college and/or career ready. Today, the truth is when a college-bound student is genuinely ready for post-secondary work it means they are prepared to competently

think critically as literate citizens who are opened minded and diverse not only in their thinking but their interaction with those from diverse backgrounds.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter three profiles the research methodology employed to study and explore the teachers' meaning, methods, and perceived effectiveness of culturally responsive instruction on student college readiness in an urban secondary school district. The chapter begins with a brief introduction of the problem being addressed and the purpose of the study. The research design is reviewed, including four guiding research questions and the qualitative, phenomenologically informed study methodological approach. The unit of analysis is presented to provide a clear view of English Language Arts and social studies teachers. The data collection section describes the four methods used in this research study: semi-structured interviews, demographic surveys, focus group and artifacts reviews. The sample and sampling strategy section presents a clear view of the data collection as it relates to participants. The data analysis section describes how the study will be analyzed. The chapter concludes with a review of researcher bias/situating oneself as a researcher and summary of the chapter. The findings of this study could lead to school districts increasing their use of specific instructional strategies to that promote college readiness and global competence. The findings could lead to an increase in academic achievement of urban students who are bound for four-year colleges and universities.

This chapter presents the research methods for this study by including the qualitative research approach, phenomenological informed study approach, narrative research, and unit of analysis, data collection methods, sample and sampling strategy, data analysis methods,

researcher bias and summary chapter. This study is based on the constructivist paradigm to explain the impact of Culturally Responsive Instruction on the college readiness and global competence of urban students. Guba and Lincoln (1994) found constructivist researchers focus on the knowledge of meanings that people maintain about the specified research topic. With dialogue and reasoning, constructivists generate understanding through interaction between the qualitative researcher and the research study participants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Rudestan and Newton (1992) reported that constructivist investigators proved the sources of data clarify meanings to participants and the researcher.

Research Design

The research study used a qualitative research approach to explore the teachers’ Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in Urban Secondary Schools. This section communicates the background of qualitative research, phenomenologically informed research, and narrative inquiry. There are varied renowned phenomenological informed study researchers who have authored considerably about the phenomenologically informed study approach. The most notable contemporary phenomenological researchers include Clark Moustakas, Max Van Manen, and John Creswell. They offer effective recommendations and techniques for organizing and conducting this research approach, the works of Moustakas, van Manen and Creswell along with other prominent qualitative investigators were used most often in this research study. Hancock (1998) explained that qualitative research focuses on the opinions, experiences, and individuals generating subjective data. “It aims to help us to understand the world in which we live and why things are the way they are (p.6).” Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that the qualitative approach grants the researcher an opportunity to inquire about the focal topic by exploring the participant’s

emotions and perspectives that may be complex to evaluate through standard research methods. Creswell (1998) explained qualitative research in the following description: Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researchers build a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p.15).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explained that qualitative research is:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p.3).

Lichtman (2013) disclosed qualitative research included the analysis of a lived experience or account. Lichtman defined qualitative research as the following: It is a way of knowing in which a researcher gathers, organizes, and interprets information obtained from humans using his or her eyes and ears as filters. It often involves in-depth interviews and/or observations of humans in natural, online, or social settings. It can be contrasted with quantitative research, which relies heavily on hypothesis testing, cause and effect, and statistical analyses (p. 7).

Qualitative research is applicable when “we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue...to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a

problem or issue” (Creswell, 2007, p.40). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) clarified that qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Merriam (2009) reported that qualitative researchers are attentive to the experiences and the meanings of the subject. Merriam (2009) exclaimed, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.” The use of the qualitative research approach allows the researcher to adequately explore the issue of college readiness and thoroughly answer the guiding questions.

Qualitative research originates as far back as the 1800s when used by anthropologists. It eventually evolved into a legitimized and formalized field of educational research in the 1980s. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) expressed that qualitative research can be traced back to the seventeenth-century social researchers who contended that knowledge about the world could be obtained through direct observation of the human experience. The researcher explicated that qualitative research is a compilation of historical developments (empiricism, positivism, interpretivism) and philosophical methods (ontology, epistemology) which focuses on understanding subjectively meaningful experiences:

The interrelatedness of different aspects of people's lives is an important focus of qualitative research and psychological, social, historical and cultural factors are all recognized as playing an important part in shaping people's understanding of their world. Qualitative research practice has reflected this in the use of methods which attempt to provide a holistic understanding of research participants' views and actions in the context of their lives overall (p.7).

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) clarified that qualitative research main intention is to provide the researcher with a comprehensive view of people’s social and material conditions,

experiences, perceptions, and histories. Qualitative research has been impacted throughout the twentieth century by multiple philosophical outlooks. “The development of qualitative research was strongly influenced by ideas about the importance of understanding human behaviors in their social and material contexts, and by the need to understand the meanings that people attach to their own experiences (p.22).” Heath (1997) reported that the goal of qualitative research is to explain and clarify specified human phenomenon by capturing their perspective through observations. Strauss and Corbin (1990) denoted qualitative methods assist to provide an understanding of information that may otherwise be difficult to obtain.

Guiding Questions. Investigation and analysis of Culturally Responsive Instruction in the classrooms of English Language Arts and social studies teachers provided a clear insight to the issue of underprepared college bound students. Merriam (2009) reported that those guiding questions direct the topic of exploration methods to be used in order to answer the questions. To probe the central phenomenon of culturally responsive instruction and the college readiness of college-bound students, I developed a central research question. The study probed the following **primary research question:** *What does culturally ‘responsive instruction’ mean to urban educators, and how is this meaning enacted in the instructional strategies they use to prepare the students they serve for college-readiness?*

Sub-questions: The researcher developed the following research sub-questions to better understand the varied aspects culturally responsive instruction and college readiness.

1. *How do study participants define ‘culturally responsive instruction’?*
2. *How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of college-bound students?*

3. *How do secondary teachers in this study cultivate college-readiness skills in their students? What instructional-specific strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college-bound students they serve?*
4. *What implications do these findings have for educational leadership and policy?*

Phenomenologically Informed Research. This phenomenologically informed research study approach that focuses on experiences, events, and occurrences without consideration of external factors. Creswell (2009) informed phenomenological research as a strategy of inquiry “in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experience about a phenomenon as described by participants (p. 13).” Comprehending the lived experiences denotes phenomenology as a philosophy and a method. Byrne (2001) denoted a phenomenological informed study is designed to explain a phenomenon through lived experiences of the study’s participants.

This research approach allowed the researcher to generate a comprehensive outlook of a particular phenomenon from the perception of the research study’s participants who directly experience it (Creswell, 2013). This phenomenologically informed inquiry is an appropriate approach to focus on meanings and perspectives of research study participants. Schwandt (2000) conveyed the major focus of phenomenological inquiry is to understand “how the everyday, inter-subjective world is constituted” from the participants’ perspective. van Mann (2007) reported the main intention of phenomenology is to understand human experiences. Diekelmen (2005) explained phenomenology has a primary conception that significance is rooted in human existence. Varied researchers have conceptualized phenomenology:

Patton (1990) ... phenomenological study...is one that focused on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience. One can

employ a general phenomenological perspective to elucidate the importance of using methods that capture people's experience of the world without conducting a phenomenological study that focuses on the essence of shared experience (p.71).

Creswell (1998) explained researchers search for essentials, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experiences and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image and meaning (p.52).

Phenomenologically informed studies are driven by varied epistemologies including post-positivism, constructivism, and critical theory. This qualitative research study is framed in the epistemology of constructivism. The majority of qualitative research is influenced by the researcher's epistemologies. Clotty (1998) explained that through many situations constructivism varied showing that people will experience the same event but will construct meaning in diverse ways. Post positivism is devised to generate a suitable societal structure where the researcher examines progress or lack thereof. The truth is a virtual idea in positivism. Constructivism is considered as storytelling where researchers profile of individual perceptions, meanings and essential importance of the specified research study.

Basing this study in constructivist paradigm allowed this phenomenologically informed approach to effectively explore Culturally Responsive Instruction on the college readiness and global competence of urban students. Clotty (1998) discovered multiple theories of constructivism, three which are applicable to this research study. One assumption is human beings construct meaning and develop interpretations during their lived experiences. Another assumption is people connect with their surroundings and interpret its value based on their

historical, social and historical context. An additional assumption of constructivism is that meaning is continuously social and interaction occurs in the human community.

Creswell, (2013), Marshall & Rossman, (2010) reported phenomenology is a research design with a philosophical basis from hermeneutics and from existentialism. Research discloses several principle researchers who have contributed to the development of phenomenology: Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger, and Edmund Husserl. The philosopher Immanuel Kant used the term “phenomenology” to distinguish mental representations of objects. Litchman (2006) reported that phenomenology is conceptualized as the philosophy or school that clarifies the state of being and mindfulness considering the observable phenomena. Another key figure associated with phenomenology is mathematician Edmund Husserl. Husserl discussed phenomenology as transcendental phenomenology and proposed that the focus should be on the phenomena themselves as they appear to consciousness. Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, developed another view of phenomenology, which differed, from his teacher. Heidegger proposed that an understanding of nature of existence as ontological.

Rossman and Rallis (1998) explained: Phenomenology is a tradition in German philosophy with a focus on the essence of lived experiences. Those engaged in phenomenological informed research focus in-depth on the meaning of a particular aspect of the experience, assuming that through dialogue and reflection the quintessential meaning of the experience will be reviewed. Language is viewed as the primary symbol system through which meaning is both constructed and conveyed (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). The purposes of phenomenological informed inquiry are descriptions, interpretation, and critical self-reflection into the “world as world” (Van Manen, 1990) Central are the notions of intentionality and caring: the researcher inquiries about the essence of lived experience (p. 72).

Literature revealed several types of phenomenology: transcendental, existential, hermeneutic, and heuristic. Each approach pursues to ascertain and depict the meanings of experienced phenomena as described by the research study participants. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is more concerned with capturing the descriptions of those lived experiences. Two types of phenomenology in qualitative research are hermeneutical and transcendental. Hermeneutic phenomenology is credited to Max Van Manen who combined hermeneutics with phenomenology. This genre of phenomenology focuses on the communication aspect of the lived experience. It emphasizes interpreting the texts of life with consideration of the language and communication through textual data. Transcendental phenomenology is credited to Clark Moustakas who suggested that an individual's rich description could serve as a foundation for the inquiry to comprehend the core of the experience.

Creswell (2013) clarified the concept of transcendental phenomenology:

In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher... analyzes the data by reducing their information to significant statements to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes. From these themes the researcher develops a textual description... what the participants experienced and a structured description... how they experienced it in terms of conditions, situations or context the combination.

Phenomenologically informed inquiry requires the use of bracketing. Nieswiadomy (1993) indicated the researcher "brackets or sets aside his or her experiences in order to understand those of the participants." According to Husserl (2001), Bracketing, a key component of phenomenological informed research, is the suspension of judgment about the natural world preceding phenomenological informed analysis. Husserl denoted how perceived thoughts and

beliefs of a specified phenomenon has to be eliminated until all the steps of a study have been completed. This qualitative research study, the focal point is on collecting data, analyzing data, and presenting the perspectives of English language arts teachers. Guba (1990) explained Critical theory is regarded as social activism where investigators aim to motivate members of disenfranchised members of society to work toward change and enhancement.

This research study followed suit with the majority of education qualitative phenomenologically informed approaches and use the constructivist framework This phenomenologically informed research study is the use of culturally responsive instruction in the NBCT English language arts and social studies teachers' classrooms. Johnson and Christensen (2008) and understanding of a complex matter. The central topic of interest in this study is college readiness and global competence of underprepared urban students. Investigating varied sites and teachers where culturally responsive instruction is applied would be instrumental in obtaining data on the college readiness topic.

As two areas of importance in this study are culturally responsive instruction and urban school students, a phenomenologically informed approach was useful in bringing meaning to the interaction between individual and context, highlighting the practices that contribute or hinder college readiness. The researcher utilized the phenomenologically informed study method to thoroughly examine qualitative data. Phenomenologically informed study has proven to be an effective approach to inspecting the contexts of a school setting. The phenomenologically informed study approach allowed precise data collection from National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) English Language Arts and social studies teachers.

Unit of Analysis

A vital component of qualitative research is the unit of analysis. In qualitative research, the unit of analysis was linked to the research questions that are generated by the inquirer. For this study, the unit of analysis is teachers, more specifically English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies teachers. ELA and social studies teachers served as the unit of analysis in an effort to investigate the impact of culturally responsive instruction in English Language Arts classrooms. A teacher is conceptualized as a person whose professional activity involves the transmission of knowledge, attitudes, and skills to students enrolled in an educational program. Considering that the influence of the teacher is the single most important factor in determining school success, teachers are the most suitable and appropriate unit of analysis.

Shulman (1986) advocated for teachers capturing their lived experiences. Teachers should write and publish their knowledge. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) discussed narrative (stories) as an effective way to share what teachers know and do. They identified three types of teacher narratives of practice, secret stories cover stories and sacred stories. They reported that each type is distinctively found in a teachers' narrative understanding of student's unique professional knowledge landscape. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) focused on action research and fractioned inquiry as a method of disclosing teacher knowledge.

Shulman (1986) reported that teacher knowledge could be distinguished in three categories of content knowledge: subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge. The first kind of content knowledge refers to the amount and organization of knowledge in the mind of the teacher. Teachers have to go beyond general recall of knowledge to ensure accurate thinking about content knowledge. Researcher Joseph Schwab declared that it necessary to have an understanding of the structures of the subject

matter. Teachers must be skilled at explaining the significance and relationships of propositions. Effective teachers must be able to convey the subject matter content in its entirety. “The teacher needs not only understand why it is so, on what grounds its warrant can be asserted, and under what circumstances our belief in its justification can be neutral and even denied” (p.9).

The second kind of content knowledge is pedagogical content knowledge that extends beyond subject matter knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge involves an understanding of the most useful forms of teaching ideas. These ideas or forms stem from research, experience, and practice. In order for teachers to be considered effective, they need a knowledge base of ideas and tools to make their subjects understandable to students. “Teachers need knowledge of the strategies most likely to be fruitful in reorganizing the understanding of learners because those learners are unlikely to appear before them as blank slates (p. 10).”

The third type of content knowledge is curricular knowledge that entails knowledge of varied instructional and curriculum materials for subjects. Curricular knowledge necessitates teachers being acquainted with the related content of other subjects. Teachers must be familiar with the prerequisites courses as well as the completed curriculum. Fenstermacher (1994) showed that teachers are a valuable source of knowledge. Teachers benefit from the formal and practical knowledge. In essence, students benefit the most when teachers are well versed in teacher knowledge are better able to enhance student achievement. It is vital that research continues to explore teacher knowledge for the sake of student achievement. “The challenge for teacher knowledge research is not simply one of showing us that teachers think, believe, or have opinions but that they know. And, even more important, that they know they know” (p. 51).

Data Collection Method

The qualitative inquiry approach required the researcher to collect detailed information using multiple data methods. According to Labuschang (2003), a qualitative methodology intends to acquire participants' valid descriptions of situations, occurrences, and behaviors. This study used qualitative data methods to explore perceptions of secondary English Language Arts teachers regarding college readiness. Data was collected in the forms of semi-structured interviews, demographic questionnaire, focus group and document review (curriculum documents, school websites, policy documents, lesson plans and reading lists). Creswell (2009) conveyed that qualitative researchers often used multiple sources of data to examine an issue (p.175).

Yin (2009) confirmed the use of varied sources of evidence to allow the researcher to grant a wide range of behavioral issues. The significant benefit of employing multiple sources of evidence was "the development of converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation" (Yin 2009, p. 115). Qualitative approaches present innovative means to probe a topic or condition. "A strategy of inquiry comprises a bundle of skills, assumptions, and practices that the researcher employs as he or she moves from paradigm to the empirical world. Strategies of inquiry put paradigms of interpretation into motion" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.22).

The gathered data will be analyzed, organized and categorized into related themes to discover meaning and significance. This research study used qualitative data methods to explore perceptions of secondary English Language Arts teachers regarding college readiness. Data was collected in the forms of semi-structured interviews, teacher demographic forms, non-participate observation (field notes) and artifacts (curriculum documents, school websites, policy documents, lesson plans and reading lists).

Phenomenologically informed Study Protocol. The researcher used recommended tasks and procedures for a phenomenological informed study. The protocol included a progression of responsibilities: identification of selected case studies, identification of focus group participants, review of proposed data collection methods, and formation of letters of introduction and consent. This research study collected data in three segments. The first phase involved gathering data from participant's demographic forms and review of documents such as course syllabi, class newsletters, and lesson plans. The second phase consisted of individual interviews of the participants. The third phase was the review of documents and artifacts. The fourth phase of data collection was comprised of focus group interview sessions. The fifth phase involved the researcher examining sample lesson plans for evidence of academic rigor and text complexity.

Demographic Questionnaire/Survey. To investigate the impact of culturally responsive instruction on the college readiness of urban students, the researcher began the data collection process by acquiring demographic information from study participants. The demographic sheet included inquiries about education levels, educational experience, and professional experiences. The researcher conducted thirteen face-to-face interviews. (Appendix A)

Semi-structured Interviews. In phenomenological research, the most appropriate data collection is the interview. The educators were interviewed separately. The 45 – 60 minutes interview session were audio-recorded while the researcher takes notes. An interview protocol was developed and used for this study. The protocol consisted of thirteen questions about culturally responsive instruction, global competence, and college readiness. The demographic

sheet inquired about gender, age, education levels, educational experience and professional experiences.

Interviews are considered the normal method of data collection in phenomenological informed -research (Moustakas, 1994), p. 114, and in general, are the favorite methodological tool (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), p. 353. Marshall and Rossman (2010) denoted the phenomenological informed -interview should be semi-structured. According to Warren (2002), the qualitative interview is a guided discourse between the researcher and participants obligating the researcher to focus on the participants conveyed significance. In this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with English Language Teachers. Merriam (2009) reported that interviews are a standard form of data collection in qualitative research. Kvale (1996) explained that the qualitative research interview aims to portray and the value of central themes in the life experiences of the subjects. The main task of interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. Valenzuela, D., & Shrivastava, P. (2002) articulated interviews are useful for disclosing the chronicles behind a study participant's experiences. Through the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer engaged in an in-depth information gathering session. Interviews are considered as a practical approach to following-up to certain respondents to surveys and questionnaires to further investigate their responses.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) described phenomenological interviewing as “the deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals” (p.113). The phenomenological interview is appropriate for participants to reveal their reality in an authentic setting. Researchers (Marshall and Rossman, 2010; Rubin and Rubin, 2012) expressed that the focus of the phenomenological interview is the explanation of the phenomena's meanings. The phenomenological informed interview required the examiner to employ effective communication skills (paraphrasing,

clarification, reflection, self-revelation and listening) in an effort to study the phenomenon with and clarity (Padilla-Díaz, M., 2015).

The researcher collected the data for this phenomenologically informed study through one-on-one interviews in an effort to acquire thick, rich data, which is often found in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). The thirteen teachers were interviewed separately. The 45 – 60 minutes interview session was audio-recorded while the researcher takes notes verbatim. An interview protocol was developed for this study. (Appendix B). The protocol consisted of thirteen questions about culturally responsive instruction, urban students, and college readiness. Patton (2002) explained that in order for the researcher to fully understand the research topic, qualitative research questions being with how or what.

The following questions were used in the semi-structured interview sessions:

RQ1 - How do study participants define ‘culturally responsive instruction’?

IQ1 – As an educator, how do you perceive culturally responsive instruction?

IQ2- How do you tailor or adjust instruction to capitalize on the cultural richness of students?

IQ3- What is your classroom experience with your students when you implement culturally responsive instruction in the ELA classroom?

IQ4- How do you connect with your students who come varied culture and social status, which differs from yours?

IQ5- How do you draw on African American and Hispanic students culture/experience in your approach to teaching?

RQ2- How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of college bound students.

IQ1- As an educator, how do you define college readiness?

IQ2- What academic skills do you consider essential for college readiness?

IQ3- What should students know and be able to do in order to be college ready?

IQ4- What role does culture play in college readiness?

RQ3 - How do the secondary teachers in this study cultivate college-readiness skills in their students? What specific instructional strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college-bound students they serve?

IQ1- What is your personal philosophy for working with your students?

IQ2- What instructional strategies or resources do you consider essential to prepare students for college readiness?

IQ3- What is your classroom experience in an urban secondary classroom?

IQ4- How do your personal values steer your current position as an English Language Arts teacher?

Hancock (1998) expressed that during the semi-structured interview the interviewer has the liberty to use cues and prompts in an effort to gather more data. “In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer also has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on the original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee (p.13).” Esterberg (2002) discovered that the interview is considered as a discourse between the interviewer and interviewee, which requires the interviewer to ask questions and the interviewee to respond truthfully. Varied researchers agree that relationships and rapport must be formed and linked with trust. “The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind. We interview people to find out from them those things we can’t observe (p. 196).”

The phenomenologically informed interview method allowed the researcher to capture accurate data without interference. Esterberg (2002) presented an archetype for qualitative research questions that are general and specific an open-ended. Esterberg recommended that qualitative researchers avoid dichotomous or leading questions so the interviews will be conversational. A favorable interviewing environment is established when the researchers

facilitate interviews where the participants are comfortable. Therefore, the researcher interviewed all participants at their assigned work site or alternate site in their school district.

Teachers with varied years of teaching experience from varied teaching sites in the school district were invited by email to participate in the semi-structured interview sessions to ensure diversity within the samples. (Appendix C) Interviews were facilitated at the teachers' schools, audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Creswell (2009) explained, "Qualitative research is conducted in natural settings as the home or office of the participants to allow the researcher to develop a level of detail and becomes highly involved in the participants' experience." Process content was utilized throughout the interview process to allow for unexpected accounts or experiences revealed by participants. It is customary to conduct face-to-face interactions during phenomenological informed study research. Due to the humanistic nature of qualitative research, this interaction allows the researcher to witness first-hand the realities of the participant's experience and perceptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam 1988). Johnson (2002) reported the qualitative interviews grants the researcher to gather data from study participants that will be analyzed for values and relationships. At the close of each interview session, each participant was allowed to see the notes recorded and afforded an opportunity receive or review a printed transcript of their interview and invited to make any necessary changes.

Focus Group. The focus group approach was an additional interviewing method where multiple study participants shared similar lived experiences and characteristics in a group setting at a specified time and location. The purpose of the focus group was to acquire further information about instructional practices and teacher leadership. The researcher sought to further investigate the instructional strategies and practices shared by interview participants. Because

most study participants shared a limited view of their instructional approach, the researcher used the focus group to gain more insight into their instructional strategies and literary text usage.

Edmunds (1999) affirmed focus groups could serve as guided or unguided discussions focusing on a precise topic of study or inquiry. Krueger and Casey (2000) explained focus group is conceptualized as a “carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (p.5).” The focus group method relied on open, trusting environment that does not attempt to influence or force individual’s opinion. A focus group session generally consisted of participants and a moderator or the researcher. Krueger (1994) recommended a focus group size of seven participants. Hancock (1998) suggested a focus group size of 6-10 people. After inviting several teachers, the research conducted the focus group session with educators.

Hancock (1998) disclosed that focus groups allow researchers to adequately obtain information while employing specific skills such as listening, observing, moderating, facilitating and analyzing (p.11). Berg (2001) explained that the moderator’s role is critical to facilitate the discussion about the participants’ lived experiences. The moderator's job, like the standard interviewer's, is to draw out information from the participants regarding topics of importance to a given research investigation. The informal group discussion atmosphere of the focus group interview structure was intended to encourage subjects to speak freely and completely about behaviors, attitudes, and opinions they possess. Therefore, focus groups are an excellent means for collecting information from young children and teens, as well as from elderly adults (p.109)

Berg (2001) conveyed the advantages and disadvantages of focus groups in qualitative research. The researcher noted that one key benefit is the researcher is able to first hand observe the interaction of participants (p.115). “Like traditional face-to-face interviews, focus group

interviews also allow researchers to access the substantive content of verbally expressed views, opinions, experiences, and attitudes” (p.115). Another advantage is focus groups require less time for the researcher. However, focus groups generate less data for the researcher.

Berg (2001) suggested an essential tool for focus group sessions – the moderator’s guide. The guide is significant for providing an outline for what the moderator should actually say to the participants. The main task of the moderator is to explain to the participants the purpose of the research study and how the focus group functions. Krueger (1997) explained that typical focus groups manage with brief discussions facilitated by the moderator.

Berg (2001) asserted that in addition to the moderator’s guide, a focus group should also contain key components when facilitating a focus group interview session: a clearly defined and/or researched problem, the nature of the group atmosphere/environment and rapport, and aware and listening facilitator, a well-organized and prepared facilitator, structure and direction, but restrained direction to the discussion, research assistance, and systematic analysis. The researcher explained that an ultimate crucial element is confidentiality during and after the focus group interviews. Ensuring confidentiality is critical if the researcher expects to get truthful and free flowing discussions during the course of the focus group interview. The researcher suggested that if group members feel apprehensive or inhibited by the fear of somehow being exposed, they not fully disclose their feelings and perceptions (Berg, 2001, p. 128).

Document Review. Qualitative researchers expressed that not all-qualitative research requires direct interaction with study participants. Hancock (1998) asserted that written materials and artifacts could provide thick, rich data for qualitative research (p.13). For this research study, a document review was employed as part of the data collection to ensure a thorough view of the research study issue. The data review included an examination of critical documents used

for teachers such as lesson plans, assignments, class newsletters, course syllabi, curriculum guides, pacing guides and data reports. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) denoted that document review is beneficial to researchers because it grants an opportunity to comprehend the content or clarify meaning. These utilized methods are described as naturally occurring data (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.34). The document review allowed the researcher to examine the artifacts for evidence of instructional strategies, text complexity and the level of academic rigor based on Blooms Taxonomy and Webb's Depths of Knowledge (DOK). The researcher employed the use of both tools in an effort to gain a holistic view of the teachers' classroom instruction. The researcher deemed both tools as necessary because they measure to distinct areas. Armstrong (2017) contended that "framework to assist in instruction and when measuring the cognitive rigor of a lesson." The Blooms framework consists of six categories: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create. With Blooms learners move from the simplest to most complex with the expectation that learner masters the lower levels before progressing to the next. Francis (2017) exclaimed that Webb's framework focuses more on the complexity of thinking. DOK consists of four levels: DOK 1 acquired knowledge, DOK 2 knowledge application, DOK 3 analysis, and DOK 4 augmentation.

Many of the methods used in qualitative research are developed to allow investigation of phenomena in their natural settings. They provided data that was an 'enactment' of social behavior in its own social setting, rather than a 'recounting' of it generated specifically for the research study. They are of particular value where behaviors and interactions (whether acted, spoken or written) need to be understood in 'real world' contexts (p.34).

When using qualitative research, it is imperative that qualitative researchers use triangulation or congregate the data sources in an effort to guarantee comprehensive results that

reveal the participant's understandings accurately. Through triangulation, the researcher was allowed to use the data to cogitate on the factors not disclosed through the phenomenological informed interview.

Research Site. The research site for this study was an urban school district in a Central Alabama County. This school district was used in an effort to amplify the depth and accuracy. Since case studies permit researchers to comprehend the gathered data in the natural setting and context, these sites are ideal for this research study. More specifically, the school district served as the site location for two prime reasons: the number of NBCTs in the secondary schools and the diverse school settings. Using an urban school district provided clear perspective perspectives on college readiness. This element provided valuable information regarding instruction in this geographic area of the state.

There is a need to establish boundaries for each case in an effort to analyze data according to the distinctive context of the school's characteristics, socio-economic dynamics, and teacher training/experience. Baxter (2006) explained that boundaries are necessary to avoid a research study that is too broad or too unreasonable (p. 546).

Sample and Sampling Strategy

In order to gain multiple perspectives in culturally responsive instruction and college readiness, this study used the purposeful or purposive sample strategy. Purposeful sampling is one of the most common sampling strategies used in qualitative research. According to M. Gall, Gall, & Borg (2007), purposeful sampling is the process of selecting research study participants who will provide pertinent information for the research study. Purposive sampling encompassed the researcher selecting participants who disclose vital information about their lived experience

while informing the research questions. Purposive sampling is ideal for the qualitative model and is preferred “over random sampling” (Pan, 2003, p. 84). Creswell (2008) explained that purposeful sampling involves researchers intentionally selecting participants and/or sites to thoroughly understand the research topic. Maxwell (2005) conveyed that “a selection strategy in which particular settings, persons or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (p.88).

With the use of purposeful sampling, the researcher was better able to grasp direct and precise data. In qualitative research, the use of small samples is necessary due to the time consumption involved in data collection. Hancock (1998) expressed that, “Qualitative sampling techniques are concerned with seeking information from specific groups and subgroups in the population (p.6).” Stringer (2004) has clarified that responsibility for selection of the participants is the researcher’s, that the selection process should be coordinated to implement the purpose of the study, and that the selection process should not be random. Stringer (2004) clarified purposive sampling needs to represent the “variation of perspectives and experiences across all groups and subgroups that affect or are affected by the issue under investigation” (p. 50). Pan (2003) supported this particular method for qualitative researchers in order to seek and select “participants who are likely to provide useful information” (p.84).

This research study employed homogenous purposeful sampling. Patton (1990) explained how homogenous purposeful sampling involves deliberate selection of participants who share similar demographic characteristics. This study used homogenous purposeful sampling to conduct a study on the phenomenon of the impact of culturally responsive instruction to gain an understanding of how better to prepare for urban students for college

readiness and global competence. The qualitative phenomenological informed study purposefully sampled participants are English language arts teachers who teach in secondary urban schools.

Participants and Site. Creswell (1998) advised that the phenomenological informed study group consist of three to fifteen participants. It is essential that the participants be able to communicate their lived experiences. The author suggested the more distinct the lived experiences, the more complex it will be for the inquirer to discover the primary mutual meanings to the attached probed phenomenon. To achieve this, thirteen secondary English Language Arts teachers were selected to participate in this qualitative research study. Doyle (2006) indicated it important to select the appropriate number of participants in an effort to identify, obtain, and include participants who will provide rich and valuable information. Sorensen (2007) explained it is beneficial to employ a small and purposive group to attain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

The thirteen secondary educators were selected based on two of three criteria: English Language Arts and/ or social studies certification, secondary certification and National Board Certification. Utilizing English language teachers as participants directly addressed literacy (reading and writing) instructional practices. The English Language Arts (ELA) teachers are directly responsible for the teaching of literacy skills, which has been identified by several researchers as essential for college readiness. The researcher invited the fifteen teachers to be a part of the study via email and telephone to participate with the intention of achieving twelve for saturation. In a qualitative study, the task of selecting the applicable number of research study participants is crucial. Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006) disclosed that saturation commonly transpires within first twelve participants. Multiple researchers confirmed that after twelve

interviews, redundancy occurs and no new data is revealed. The study's researcher concluded that to ensure data saturation, thirteen participants was the target number of participants.

Merriam (2009) explicated, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (p.77)." The sample of teacher participants were employed with an urban school in the State of Alabama. The researcher searched the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) website for a complete list of National Board Certified English Teachers in the specified geographic area. The geographic area of research interest for this study is central Alabama. From this area, the sample was refined to one urban district. The School district was selected because it is a large urban school district with a rich history of educating African American students in an urban setting. To ensure confidentiality of those involved in the research study, all districts, schools, teachers were assigned pseudonyms.

The central Alabama area is fitting for this study because it has a diverse student population in both ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The school districts had National Board Certified Teachers who could serve as research study participants. Since the researcher is employed in central Alabama district and lives close proximity, the district was accessible for the researcher. After Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission to conduct this research study, the researcher will obtain permission from the selected school district to be involved in the research study. (Appendix D) The school system educated 25,000 students. Students are distributed throughout forty-nine schools: 21 elementary schools, eleven middle schools, nine K-8 schools, seven high schools and one alternative school.

English language Arts teachers served as the unit of analysis because ELA and SS teachers directly teach literacy based tasks and build literacy skills. According to Tatum (2005),

literacy is the fundamental component for school achievement. Conley (2008) reported years of SAT and ACT data revealed reading comprehension is a crucial college-level skill. Post-secondary students are required to read a vast amount of information throughout varied academic disciplines, which requires college students to understand and engage with material critically. Firm reading comprehension skills are a primary scholastic ability necessary for students to be college-ready. With these factors in mind, ELA and SS teachers were the most appropriate participants to gather thick, rich data.

Data Analysis Methods

The primary objective of qualitative data analysis is to recapitulate the participants' experiences. The researcher initiated the data analysis by organizing the data and setting aside all prejudgments and bracket all experiences. The researcher transcribed all interviews, documents and field notes before the data was analyzed. For precision, the researcher requested formal permission of interviewees and participants to transcribe interviews. (Appendix E)

Moustakas (1994) conveyed phenomenological informed data analysis involves the use of the procedures that encompasses the "horizontalization" of data, textual and structural analysis. Textual analysis denotes the description of "what" is communicated by the research study participants. Structural analysis signifies the interpretation of "how" meanings are stated by study participants. Both types of analysis are significant, but structural analysis directs towards mutual meanings, which reflect the conscience. During this process, the researcher employed Creswell (2013) step-by-step approach to phenomenological informed analysis:

1. The researcher described her own experience with the object of study in order to identify personal judgments and prejudices so that they do not affect the process of analysis.

2. The researcher proceeds with the “horizontalization” of data. This refers to the process wherein the researchers lists each of the relevant quotes on the studied topic and gives them equal value with regard to the expressions of the group. This is where the textual description begins: what are the participants saying? What are the relevant topics expressed by the research participants?
3. The researcher grouped the relevant topics into units of meaning.
4. The researcher wrote the textual description and includes “a verbatim” quotations.
5. The researcher wrote the structural description.
6. Finally, according to the textual and structural analysis, the researcher proceeded to identify the essence of the phenomenon. What are the common elements repeated in each of the researched participants?

During the analysis process, the researcher examined the lived experience and interpretation of the participants. Creswell (1998) denoted that phenomenological informed data analysis ensues through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of precise statements and themes and a probe for potential meanings. As directed by the phenomenological informed approach, the researcher bracketed her experiences by setting aside all prejudgments. Denzin (1989) clarified that bracketing involves specific actions: examine key phrases and statements that directly address the phenomenon, decode the meanings of the statements and phrases, attain the study participant’s interpretation of their expressions, and propose a conceptualization of the phenomenon.

The researcher used the member checking process and provided participants with copies of the transcribed interview. After conducting the semi-structured interviews, the researcher

recorded and transcribed the audio-recorded interview using the Audacity program. The researcher transcribed each interview while searching for the meaning of the lived experience. Reissman (1993) denoted that transcribing is a critical step, which allowed the researcher to become familiar with the data. The researcher will begin the analysis phase of the research study by reading each interview transcript. The documents were read meticulously to focus on common words and phrases that have a potential to become categories. Data was coded for meaning in an effort to develop themes from the evidence. Rossman and Rallis (1998) reported that coding is a process of organizing the material into portions of the transcript prior to assigning a value to the data (p.171). For accuracy, the researcher created electronic files of interviews, observations, and documents. All files have been saved and password protected. Overall, this study used a linear and hierarchical approach to research and data analysis.

The researcher conducted follow-up interview when applicable with participants by telephone to clarify information. Collected documents and artifacts were also be probed for additional information about the participants lived experience with culturally responsive instruction and its impact on the college readiness/global competence of urban secondary students. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher continued to bracket the focus of the research study to gain a clear understanding of the study's participants. Creswell (2009) explicated that researchers should view qualitative data analysis as following steps from the specific to the general while involving multiple levels of analysis (p.184). Creswell (2013) reported phenomenological informed data analysis seeks probable meanings through analysis of participants' distinctive declarations and themes.

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is essential to a research study. In an effort to produce a quality research study, the researcher provided evidence of all used procedures.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) reported that the intention of trustworthiness in a qualitative research study is to validate the argument that the researcher's findings are valuable considerations. Gibbs (2002) explained that matters and concerns of trustworthiness must address. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four main principles of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

The researcher employed and analyzed all the varied data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest six forms of data: raw data, data reduction and analysis notes, data construction and synthesis product, process notes, materials (intentions and dispositions) and preliminary development information. The use of these six forms will result in the use of an audit trail. Koch (2006) through the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend the use of an audit trail as a way to confirm validity for qualitative research. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) reported that an audit trail is a transparent description of the research actions used throughout the research process. The audit trail included a copy of the interview questions, data prompts and a timeline of all action steps. The employment of the audit trail assisted the researcher in maintaining the logic of the research study.

In an effort to present credible and accurate research, this study used various validation strategies: triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Creswell (2009) reported that validity is one of the benefits of qualitative research because it based on verifying whether the results are accurate from the perspective of the researcher or contributor (p. 191). Creswell (2013) explained that triangulation is a qualitative research strategy used to validate the accuracy of the study's outcomes. To reduce bias and increase internal validity, triangulation of data collection and analysis was employed in this research study (Creswell, 2013). This approach added depth and understanding to the phenomenon study.

Interview pilot study. A pilot study was employed to confirm the validity of the interview questions and procedures. Gall, Gall & Borg (2007) explained that a pilot is small-scale testing of the procedures that the researcher proposes to use in the phenomenological informed research study. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) for relying "...entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in a natural interaction, typically one that occurs as part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork" (p. 239). The pilot study was beneficial and allowed the researcher to obtain a preliminary analysis of the intended procedures and processes before engaging in the actual research study. Based on what the pilot reveals, the researcher makes necessary adjustments (Kvale, 2007).

Pilot Interview protocol. The pilot interview was conducted to confirm the interview as a logical and appropriate source of data collection for this phenomenological informed research study. Because of the pilot, the researcher was able to reflect on the interviewing process including scheduling the interview, locations for interviews, questions (wordings, prompts), audio recording, transcription and member checking. The process led the researcher to revise the intended research questions. The data from the pilot session was secured in a locked file cabinet and a password secured digital file.

Ethical Issues. Moriarty (2011) expressed key ideas about principled practices in qualitative research that ensure ethical research. Researchers should conduct themselves in a manner that they are not persisting and repeating existing inequalities in their research. Due to the access to power and control with participants' information, researchers to make certain that their actions do not exploit the accounts of the participants. During the research process, it is necessary for researchers to establish a relationship of trust with the study participants (p.24).

To enhance the rigor and credibility of this research study, the researcher employed several methods member checking, reflexivity, and triangulation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that the focal point of credibility is confirming the data collected with the research study participants.

Researcher Bias/Situation Once Self as a Research

Patton (2002) declared, “What people ‘see’ is highly dependent on their interests, biases, and backgrounds” (p. 260). This point emphasized the need for the researcher to address the influence of researcher bias. Moustakas (1994), through the work of Creswell (1998), explained that it is imperative that the researcher maintains a balance between subjectivity and objectivity by “establishing the truth of things.” Moustakas and Creswell recommend that the researcher reflect on the meaning of the experience of oneself by turning outward to those being interviewed and ascertain “intersubjective validity.

As a researcher engaging in a qualitative research study of *National Board Certified Teachers’* perceptions of culturally responsive instruction and its impact on the college readiness of urban high school students, the researcher acknowledges her backgrounds and experiences that may influence how she perceives participants and data to be collected in this study. The researcher had many life experiences that have shaped my view of college readiness, which must be bracketed in order to study the phenomenon from a fresh perspective. The researcher is an African American female who is a lifelong resident of the state of Alabama in which the data was collected. The researcher is an African American female with a strong interest in the academic progress of college-bound students. She has been involved in varied educational and personal experiences regarding college readiness.

The researcher is an African American female from a middle-class background who was born and raised in the South and is a lifelong resident of the South. During the research study's process, the researcher was a public school educator and a post-secondary education adjunct instructor. In her former secondary education role, she was responsible for writing and designing the curriculum for high English teachers grades 9-12. While in this role, she trained secondary teachers to engage in learning tasks and activities that promote college and career readiness through rigorous and relevant English language arts instruction. In her adjunct instructor's role, she taught college-level courses to first and secondary year college students at a public community college. She also worked with the Advanced Placement English program.

In addition to her role as a secondary educator, she had personal life experiences that are noteworthy to college readiness. As a parent, she have actively dealt with the issue of college readiness as an advocate for her biological children. She enrolled her children in college-readiness activities throughout their secondary experience. She encouraged her children and her students to capitalize on activities and courses that enhanced college readiness. During her high school matriculation, she aimed to be college ready. Mentally and socially, she was prepared for the college experience. Based on the twenty-first-century definition of college-readiness, she was not college ready for a college experience. Although she was a four-time college graduate, she recognized her unpreparedness for the undergraduate experience. The reasons for writing this research proposal were personal and professional. As an educator, she believed she could share her personal experiences with college readiness and understand more holistically how this lived-experience is evident in many urban high school students.

Although the study's researcher had personal and professional experiences with the topic of college readiness, she was aware of her own biases and preconceived ideas college

readiness. Despite these experiences, she felt comfortable studying this topic. She is aware that there are varied conceptualizations and viewpoints of college readiness. She remained cognizant of her feelings as an educator and a parent and how these responsibilities play a role when the data is analyzed and interpreted. Although she is somewhat familiar with the participants and the location, she clearly understood that her acquaintance does not denote that she comprehended their experience exclusively. To avoid this, she heavily relied on peer debriefing and other validation strategies. Creswell (2009) recommended the use of multiple validity strategies to enrich the accuracy of research findings (p.191).

The study's researcher was optimistic that her research on college readiness will be beneficial to secondary educators, parents of college-bound students and post-secondary educators who strive to prepare college-bound students for higher education. As an African American mother and educator, she felt obligated to pass this knowledge to others who like her have a sincere interest in Culturally Responsive Instruction, teacher leadership, and college readiness.

This research study involved varied risks and benefits. An obvious risk is bias because of familiarity with the participants and research site. I will have exercise intentional and deliberate strategies to avoid bias. Creswell (2009) explained that researchers should clarify the bias the researcher brings to the research study (p.192). Reflexivity and subjectivity was acknowledged throughout the research study process to ensure accuracy and eliminate impartiality. Overall, this research study employed qualitative research security measures to ensure confidentiality, access, and human participants' protection. Confidentiality will be guaranteed for all participants. All transcripts, notes, and audiotapes were stored in a secure file

in the researcher's home. The identities (names) and schools were concealed. The researcher secured the consent of each participant with a written consent form. (Appendix E)

Subjectivities Statement. Peshkin (1988) discussed the search for subjectivity. He pointed out that researchers should intentionally and actively seek out their subjectivity in the research process. "If researchers are informed about the qualities that have emerged during their research, they can at least disclose to their readers where self and subject became joined (p.17)." Peshkin (1988) addressed the notion of self-monitoring as a key element of subjectivity. "The point is this: By monitoring myself, I can create an illuminating, empowering, personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject intertwined (p.20)."

Preissle (2008) conceptualized a subjectivity statement as a brief account of "who researchers are in relation to what and whom they are studying (p.3)." The subjectivity statement emerges because of the researcher's personal histories, cultural standpoints, and professional experiences. The subjectivity statements serve two main purposes: "help researchers identify how their personal features, experiences, beliefs, feelings, cultural standpoints, and professional predispositions may affect their research and to convey this material to other scholars for their consideration of the study's credibility, authenticity, and overall quality or validity" (p.3).

Summary of Chapter

This chapter outlines the epistemological framing and the methodology and methods for this study. The constructivist paradigm and rationale were explained for qualitative research methods. This explanation of methodology and methods facilitate the comprehension of the participants and data sources for this phenomenological informed study research. The first phase of data collection involved gathering data from a demographic questionnaire of participants. This

phase provided basic data for English Language Arts teachers and their experiences with Culturally Responsive Instruction and Urban students. The second phase of the study involved the use semi-structured interviews. The information gathered in the interview provided rich data about regarding the participants' perceptions and practices. The third phase involved the review of participants' documents and artifacts. The fourth phase involved focus group session that probed participants for in-depth information regarding engaging strategies and literary texts. The fifth phased included a second review of document artifacts to denote the level of academic rigor used by the study participants in their instructional approach. The researcher employed specific phenomenological informed study guidelines to ensure validity, reliability, and credibility. Yin (2009) explained that during data collection multiple sources should be applied to allow for "convergent lines of inquiry" (p.42). Stake (1995) recommended qualitative researchers to avoid narrow thinking and not impose their own assumptions. Stake explained that in qualitative research, protocols are referred to as "triangulation" (p.109). Merriam (2002) clarified that researchers need to employ specific strategies to be ethical and trustworthy" triangulation, member checks, and peer review. To ensure a credible and trustworthy research study, qualitative researchers need to apply certain approaches: reflexivity, engagement, maximum variation, audit trail, and rich description.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Chapter Four summarizes findings for this qualitative phenomenologically informed study. This chapter identifies themes from data analysis regarding the Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in Urban Secondary Schools. As noted in chapter one, the researcher was interested in exploring this phenomenon specifically with National Board certified teachers in secondary educators in urban English Language arts and social studies classrooms with students who are bound for four year colleges and universities. This chapter is organized in four main sections: data on study sample (participants), reflections on data collection and analysis process, emergent codes, logic, and schemes, and research questions. To clearly explore the phenomenon, the researcher presents the semi-structured interview data first and follows with the focus group data. The researcher presents descriptions of participants and their schools, based on the information from the Participant Data Sheet, as well as a description of participant responses, will follow. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research questions and themes that emerged during data analysis.

Data on Study Sample

A qualitative phenomenological informed design was selected in order to understand how culturally responsive instruction affects the college readiness of urban students. The researcher sought to construct a comprehensive report of the lived experience from the perspective of the participants in the study. Qualitative data collection methods of one-to-one in-depth interviews and a focus group interview were conducted in the setting of an urban school district site. As described in chapter 3, the sample consisted of English language arts and social science teachers, several of which are National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT). Twenty participants consented to participate in the study in either the individual interviews, focus group or both.

The researcher identified "specific characteristics of individuals to study" (Lichburg, 2014, 192). The researcher included twenty secondary educators with four or more years of teaching experience at the middle or high school level. During the research study, thirteen participants participated in the individual interview sessions, seven participated in the focus group only and three of the thirteen participants participated in both the semi-structured interviews and the focus group. Each of the thirteen interview participants were National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) in one of two areas English Language Arts or social studies.

All the study's participants were employed by the same urban school system. This research study was conducted in a large urban school district in central Alabama. The urban district consisted of 43 schools including seven high schools, eleven middle schools, twenty-one elementary schools, nine K-8 schools and one alternative school. According to the school district's website, the urban school system enrolled 25, 000 students with 90% percent of the students on free or reduced lunch, which deems the district a Title I school district. It is one of the oldest and largest school districts in the state that serves a minority population with many of

the students in the district being from low income families. The school district has experienced both academic progress and academic obstacles.

In terms of academic progress, the district offered students multiple opportunities for college prep activities through programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual Enrollment, Early College, A plus College Ready grant and the Gear Up grant. The district currently has three Blue Ribbon Schools and several Torchbearers Schools. All seven high schools offer career readiness opportunities through participation and enrollment in one of the career academies programs, which includes engineering, nursing, hospitality, and tourism. Only one school in the entire district received an “A” rating on the 2018 State Report Card. The school is the only magnet high school in the district. Students who attend the school must pass an entrance exam and must be able to show successful mastery of a rigorous curriculum from their previous school. Many of the students who applied to the school have been exposed to a magnet or accelerated programs on both the elementary and middle school level. In the last four years, the school has sought to create a “school within a school” program with the addition of an International Baccalaureate program and an engineering academy. The school has had a 100% graduation rate with 98% of the students going to college and the other 2% going into the military. In the last graduating class, all ten of the IB students passed and received credit in IB English Literature, five students received credit in IB History of the Americas and three are possible IB Diploma recipients. The school offered fourteen Advanced Placement courses (more than any school in the district) including AP Studio Art and AP Computer Science Principles. Approximately 98% of the school’s students are African-American with 1% white and 1% other.

The district's academic obstacles include providing adequate programs and support for its increasingly growing Latino student enrollment. In 2017, the district had multiple schools on the state's "Failing" schools list with 14, up one from 2017. "Failing" Schools as defined by the Alabama Accountability Act of 2015 is (a) is designated as a failing school by the State Superintendent of Education and (b) does not exclusively serve a special population of students and is listed in the lowest six percent of public K-12 schools based on the state standardized assessment in reading and math.

This section also includes data from the participant data form: to provide information educational experience, teaching experience, perspective on teaching role, and reason for teaching in an urban district. This section also includes each participants' view of culturally responsive instruction. The information for each participant was found on transcribed transcript and the state's teacher certification portal. The Participant Data form is reported in Table 2. In addition to the participant's data form, the researcher compiled biographical narratives for each study participant. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher assigned each study participant a "pseudonym."

At the time of the study, twelve of the twenty participants were assigned as classroom teachers while the other eight participants were employed in an alternative teaching position as a reading coach, school counselor, assistant principal or resource teachers. All study participants either taught at a specified school site or supported a secondary school or site in the school district. All twenty participants held an Alabama teaching certificate in English Language Arts or Social Studies. Twelve of the participants held a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification, one had gone through process, and two were currently pursuing the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification in English Language Arts. The

study included nine Caucasians and eleven African American educators. Six of the participants are male and fourteen are female. The average years of teaching, experience is sixteen years.

Participants' demographic data is summarized in Table 2.

Participant	State Certification	NBPTS Certification	Teaching Experience	Highest Degree	Teaching Level	Ethnicity	Gender
Emily	ELA	ELA/AYA	21 years	ME	9-12	W	Female
Alice	ELA	ELA/AYA	16 years	Ed.D	9-12	AA	Female
Zora	ELA	ELA/AYA	23 Years	Ed.S	9-12	AA	Female
Maya	ELA	ELA/AYA	20 years	Ed.S	9-12	AA	Female
Rita	ELA	ELA/EA	21 Years	ME	6-8	AA	Female
Toni	SS	SS-H/EA	20 years	MS	9-12	AA	Female
Lorraine	ELA	ELA/EA	21 Years	MS	6-8	AA	Female
Gordon	SS	SS-H/EA	9 years	MS	6-8	W	Male
Carl	SS	SS-H/EA	13 years	BS	6-8	W	Female
Emily	SS	SS-H/EA	20 years	Ed.S	6-8	AA	Male
Harper	ELA	ELA/AYA	30 Years	Ed.S	9-12	W	Female
Jane	ELA	SS-H/EA	27 years	MS	9-12	W	Female
Kenya	ELA	ELA/EA	12 years	JD	6-8	AA	Female
Willa	ELA	NA	20 years	M.Ed	9-12	AA	Female
Scarlet	ELA	NA	4 years	M.Ed	9-12	W	Female
Walt	SS	NA	4 years	M.Ed	9-12	W	Male
Nikki	ELA	NA	30 years	B.S.	9-12	AA	Female
Alex	SS	NA	3 years	M.S	9-12	W	Male
Ida	ELA	NA	25 years	Ed.S	9-12	AA	Female
Franklin	SS	NA	22 years	M. Ed	9-12	W	Male

ELA= English Language Arts,
SS=Social Studies,
EA=Early adolescent,
AYA= Adolescent Young Adult
NA= Not National Board Certified

MS= Masters of Science Degree W=Caucasian
M.Ed= Masters of Education AA=African American
Ed.S- Educational Specialist 6-8= Middle School
Ed.D- Doctor of Education 9-12=High School
J.D. = Juris Doctorate

Emily, a white female, had been teaching for sixteen years. She held a Master's degree (M.Ed.) in education and was National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). She had taught ninth and tenth grade English in the urban school district for ten years. Prior to working at the high school site, she taught middle school English Language arts. She taught at three different schools in the one school district during the course of her teaching career. She described her school and district as a "large Title I School containing grades 9-12 with a student body that lacks racial diversity (majority African American). She described her position as a teacher as one who designed and implemented reading and language arts lessons for students of mixed ability. She exposed students to a range of diverse age appropriate literature and created lifelong learning while providing emotional support and behavioral management. She was led to teach in urban setting after a general job search and has remained there for 21 years. She expressed her personal teaching philosophy:

My personal philosophy. I try to be fair. I try to be kind. I think those are the most important things. To be fair and to be kind and I try treating people ... especially since I have been a mother, I mean that makes a difference. I try to remember that someone is going to be the teacher of my child and he is a handful already. People are people, people make mistakes, and it is my job to be their teacher.

Alice, an African American female had been teaching for sixteen years. She held a Master's Degree (M.Ed.) in school counseling, an Educational Specialists degree (Ed.S), doctorate degree (Ed.D) in school counseling and was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). She had taught ninth and tenth grade English and Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) prior

to becoming an elementary school counselor. She described her school district as “a large urban school district that serviced predominantly black/African American students.” She applied for a job in the urban district and has remained for her entire teaching career. She believed:

My personal philosophy for working with students ... I am hesitating because it has changed over the years. When I first became a teacher, my personal philosophy was every student can learn, and it is not that I do not believe that they can learn, but I have learned that they all learn differently. So, my personal philosophy with me as a teacher is that learning is my responsibility when it comes to the students, and I believe that learning takes place when students know what is expected of them, and that my role as the classroom teacher is to model my expectation.

Zora, an African American female had been teaching for twenty-three years. She held a Master’s Degree (MS) and An Educational Specialist Degree (Ed.S) in educational leadership. She had taught Pre-Advanced Placement English Language Arts, Language and Composition Advanced Placement and IB English Literature and Composition. She described her school district “an urban school district with mostly African American students (955 or more).” She described her role as a teacher as one that prepared students to be both college and career ready. She taught the standards needed to help students excel in Advanced Placement English Language Arts classes and in life. She chose to teach in an urban district because she wanted to teach in a district that she attended as a student. She recounted her personal values affected her teaching:

Basically it was just using my prior experience and knowledge to guide them through whatever it was they needed to know. Since I know you need to know this in 12th grade then this is what I’m preparing you for. It was that kind of thing. I tried not to push my beliefs on them but, I did try to give them the other side of the spectrum. In other words, the other view point.

Maya, an African American female had been teaching for twenty years. She held a Master’s Degree (MS), an Educational Specialists Degree (Ed.S) and was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). She had taught English grades 9-12 and Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition. She described her school district as “urban school district

that is predominantly African American with some ELL and Caucasian students.” She described her position as a teacher as one that provides students with intensive, scaffold instruction in reading and writing to prepare them for Advanced Placement exams and college instruction. She explained that she chose to teach in an urban setting because “I have an inherent passion for teaching urban students. I am a product of the district that I now serve in and I believe that these students deserve a high quality, challenging education. MAYA voiced her personal values:

Well, I really value being well read. So, that impacts greatly what I do, because I had children reading a ton of things. They didn't just read about them, but they had to write about them, and we would get on Edmodo.

Rita, an African American female had been teaching for twenty one years. She held a Master’s Degree, a certification in Gifted Education and was a National Board Certified Teacher. She had taught middle school English Language arts and middle school gifted education as a resource teacher. She described her role as teacher as one who provided weekly resource time for gifted students. She collaborated and consulted with classroom teachers to provide research and instructional strategies. She described her school district as “a large urban school district.” She chose to teach in an urban setting to fulfil an urgent need to work in school setting that requires a specific skill set that is best for minority adolescents. She only taught in one school district but in multiple middle schools. RITA mentioned her personal philosophy for working with students:

They must feel accepted and respected from the very beginning. They want structure, they want discipline. Everybody can learn. They learn differently, they learn at different rates. All students should experience some level of success on something. They do something well. It's our job, it's our responsibility to find out what that is. Even as a regular classroom teacher. Gotta find out what they do well and give them an opportunity to show that in a classroom. Gotta learn to take it. Help them understand that what I'm learning today will have a positive impact on my future. Gotta find value in it.

Toni, an African American female, had been teaching for 20 years. She held a Master’s Degree (MS) and was a National Board Certified Teacher. She described her role as a teacher

and curriculum coach as one who identifies strengths and areas of growth of students. She described her school and district as “a pre-k- through eighth grade instructional program.” She chose to work in an urban setting because she “loves working in an urban setting. I feel as though I am giving back and helping others.” She has worked in one school district throughout her teaching career. TONI asserted her personal values for working with students:

I believe my personal values ... I believe it's important to treat people the way that you want people to treat you. I think that's a big part of how I work with people, how I work with other teachers, how I collaborate with them and with the students. A lot of that is that I have expectations and it's important to be able to relay them to students but to do it in a respectful way.

Lorraine, an African American female, had been teaching for twenty-one years. She held a Master’s degree (M.Ed), certification in gifted and talented education and was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). She described her role an English teacher most recently as a Gifted and Talented Program coordinator who supports middle and high school ELA teachers. She described her district as a “Title I school district serving both urban and suburban communities.” She has worked both in a rural and urban school district with most of teaching years spent in the urban setting. Lorraine shared her personal philosophy:

My personal philosophy always involves helping them to become better people, to become better citizens of the world, to ensure that they learn about cultures and their own culture to begin with, but also other cultures and people in the world. That they have diverse learning experiences, that they are exposed to a lot of talents, a lot of careers, and that they have options so that they see themselves functioning in a world that is sometimes pushing them out.

Gordon, a white male, had been teaching for nine years. He held a Master’s Degree and was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). He taught eighth grade world history. He described his role as a teacher who also coaches after school activities and one who collaborates with colleagues. He described his school as an “urban magnet pre-kindergarten through eighth

grade in a midsize city district of approximately 24,000 students.” He chose to teach in an urban setting because he enjoys it. Gordon expressed his personal values:

I think my personal values are holding relationships above everything else, and so if you were to observe me for an entire year, you might question whether I actually care about content at all. Because I would hope it would be obvious from visiting my classroom that I care more about the students than the content, or even the teaching strategies or teaching at all. I value hard work, so I have a high expectation for students to do hard work. Which may seem a little entertaining considering I teach middle school, but. So I work hard, and I make sure they see me working hard, and I think that it rubs off.

Carl, a white male, had been teaching for thirteen years. He held a Bachelor’s Degree and was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). He taught seventh grade civics and geography. He described his role as a teacher as one who created and implemented lesson plans based on best practices and state mandated standards. He acted as a liaison between the school and the parents. He described his school district as an “urban, troubled, but populated by both concerned and apathetic teachers, students, and offered him an opportunity to teach. He remained in the district for all thirteen years of his teaching career. Carl disclosed his personal philosophy:

I'm trying to create in them the desire to see a world where they can respect others and others can respect them, but at the same time I want to make sure that I guess it's important to me that whatever arguments they might make and whatever points they might have in their life I want them to be able to defend, and I want them to be able to defend it not with feelings and not with emotions, but with facts and with reasons for why they feel the way they do.

Langston, an African American male, had been teaching for twenty years. He held an Educational Specialist Degree (Ed.S) and was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). He described his role as an educator as one who leads students to become an independent researchers and lovers of history. During his teaching tenure, H\he worked in two schools in the same urban school district. Langston described himself as a “man of faith” and recounted his personal values:

I think when they see that you're fair, you're consistent, and you really care ... You want them to be successful. That's when, it helps with the school culture and the climate and also the relation. They treat you with respect, they don't have to, they have to respect the fact that I am their assistant principle, in their eyes I can be just another man. There is a saying that people don't care about how much you know. Until they first know how much you care.

I take that very seriously. Treat them how you want to be treated. I don't care what position you are. Teacher, Principal, Assistant Principal, Superintendent, even with themselves how they treat each other. It's about respect. It's all about respect. I really spoke from my heart.

Langton elaborated on the significance of showing care to students:

I believe ultimately we have to care. For our kids. We want the best for them. You want to see them succeed. Even in your failures, you [students] can bounce back. You can make a difference. Don't be afraid to fail. You're afraid of failing today. It's okay to fail. Get back up. Your faith and who you believe in is gonna be your strength. Even, if you don't have that. Don't quit. Quitters never win. I'm not saying that for my students here, but just even us in life.

Harper, a white female, has been teaching for thirty plus years. She held an Educational Specialists degree (Ed.S.) and was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). She taught English 12 British Literature. She described her role as a teacher as one who teaches students how to become better readers, writers and literature. During the course of her teaching career, she has worked in three school districts and four urban schools. Harper explained her personal values:

I guess, my personal values... I guess I believe in honesty, I believe in hard work, I believe there's no free lunch, and I hope that I impart those things to my students. That I teach them that it is important to do your own work. That you can't go copying it from somebody else, or off the internet and have it be something that's acceptable. I hope that they learn that you have to make an effort to be successful at anything, that you have to work at it. It's not going to be given to you. And school is not always fun, regardless of all these people that want you to make it fun. And a lot of people don't like it at all, and don't like teachers.

Jane, a white female, had been teaching for twenty-seven years. She held a Master's Degree (M.Ed) and was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). She taught seventh and

eighth grade civics, geography and world history. She described her role as an educator as one who teaches history, lyrical dance and mentor teachers. She described her school district as an urban, inner city, and Title I school. She has worked in only one urban school district. Jane shared how her personal values impacts her classroom practice:

These are my kids. They're as much my kids as the ones I brought into the world. You have to treat them that way, and you have to mean it. I've met teachers that I've mentored before. I'm like, "Honey, you need to go home. This is not for you." Because they can't get their heart out. Because this is a job for the heart, and if you can't love them. They know the difference, you can't fake kids. They know what's in your heart. But if you can't love them and you can't dedicate your life to them, and you can't reach out to them in a way that they want to reach back, then you're not going to help them. You're not going to be effective and you're actually going to damage them. You need to go on and do something else and get somebody in here who can do what they need done with these kids.

Kenya, an African American female, had been teaching for twelve years. She held a Juris Doctorate Degree (JD) and was a National Board Certified Teacher. She taught seventh and eighth grade reading and English Language arts. She has worked in two urban school districts, nine years in one district and four in the current district. Kenya explained how she tries to connect with her students:

I am constantly trying to see that I am in tow with where the children are, seeking to change the texts so that I can balance the texts that kids enjoy with the classics. So everything is set up for all the students. I use their assessments, multiple intelligence surveys, and student surveys.

Willa, an African American female, had been teaching for twenty years. She held a Master's Degree (M.Ed). She had experience teaching both middle and high school English language Arts. She described her role as an educator as one who motivated, cultivated, and facilitated learning for young adolescents. She described her school district as a "Title I district

which is predominantly African American.” She had only taught in one urban school district.

Willa offered a view of how she uses literature to establish rapport with her students:

I start out by giving my students a survey at the beginning of the school year just by getting some background information on them as well as, I think one of the first novels we read is *To Kill A Mockingbird* so I tie in about their heritage. They get a chance to share with the class. We get a community feel about who’s in our learning environment and respect each other from that point, and make these connections.

Scarlet, a white female, had been teaching for four years. She held a Master’s Degree (M.Ed). She had taught ninth and tenth grade English, Advanced Placement Language and Composition. She described her role as a teacher as one who makes students deeper readers, writers, and critical thinkers. “I help teach them to think and in the process, help them grow in all of their reasoning skills so that they can excel in whatever field they choose.” She had only worked in one urban school district. Scarlet described his approach with creating a student centered classroom:

It is really obvious when kids walk in the room on the first day of school and I look very different than they do. And that’s okay, I am naming that. Letting them know that if they feel comfortable saying, “white teacher” that is okay to do. And then through. I do articles of the week and a lot of times trying to pick an article of the week that will be of some interest and having Socratic discussions. My first year here, Michael Brown was shot and so that had a he impact on the students and the community and the whole United States. So taking some time to like talk to about what this does for us, to you, what this says about this relationship. How do we have this dialogue across lines of racial difference especially, in this conversation in this trying to model these? Like hey, I am a white person, and I don’t have all the answers, but we can talk.

Walt, a white male, had been teaching for four years. He held a Master’s Degree (M.Ed). He taught twelfth grade economics and government. He described his role as an economics teacher as one who introduced adolescent learners to the basic economic principles and apply

concepts to real-world applications. He had worked at only one urban school district. Walt exclaimed his passion and approach to relating to students:

So I seek to try to relate to my, draw connections to where they live successfully or unsuccessfully. Try to say I haven't been to communities like your neighborhood. I haven't been just living in suburbia in my life. In my context area of economics, we look at it from varied perspectives that persons from means and persons who are struggling to get by. They are looking at the glass from completely different perspectives. So I embrace diversity and willing name it that there is different perspectives.

Nikki, an African American female, had been teaching for thirty years. She held a Bachelor's Degree and pursued the national board certification. She has taught all high school grade levels 9-12 including Advanced Placement Language and Composition and International Baccalaureate Literature and Composition. She described her role as a teacher, as an English teacher, I develop, implement, facilitate and assess lessons based on the state and district curriculum standards." She taught in one urban school district and taught seven years in a private school in an urban area that served a primary urban population. Nikki provided her view on preparing students for post-secondary experiences:

We don't think about that part but giving students and opportunity to think in class, because so many things ... It's just so easy for them not to have to think. I mean the technology is in their hand. They don't have to really try to think through a whole lot of things but creating classroom environments where they have to actually sit and think things out, it's beneficial. Because what happens too many times with our young people is that they see a problem, and they go look for the solution on their phone instead of giving that opportunity to ... You have nothing else but each other, because that's the way college will be.

Alex, a white male, had been teaching for three years. He held a Master's Degree (MS). He had taught ninth grade world history and tenth grade US history. He described his role as a teacher as a one who implemented daily practices that involve reading, writing, and interpreting

sources. He has worked at one urban school district. Alex expressed the view on the need for sincerity and honesty in the approach to teaching urban students.

One of the things that I try to do is be authentic. I don't try to be someone that I am not. So they know that I grew up in a different setting. I grew up in a rural setting. I went to high school in a setting slightly more rural than where I lived. So stop trying to pretend that I know what their life is like but in that try to find out connections to experiences. So they now I am not trying to be something that I am not. This is something that builds relationships with the students.

Ida, an African American female, had been teaching for twenty five years. She held an Educational Specialists Degree (Ed.S). She described her roles as an educator as one who provided support to English Language Arts teachers and designed and developed professional development. She had only worked in one urban school district. Ida responded described her approach to building relationships with students:

I connect with my students by sharing. Well I connected with my students when I was in the classroom by sharing a little bit about my person background and letting them know that I was not always in the classroom. And I had some of the same struggles that they are having or they were having are the same struggles I had as a seventh grader. And I also try to consider them when I am selecting novels and I let them self-select or give them options and choices in selecting what novels they are interested in reading. I try to connect that with their environment and culture as well.

Franklin, a white male, had teaching for twenty-two years. He spent seven and half years in a middle school and fourteen years in a high school setting. He held a Master's Degree and taught eleventh grade United States History and eleventh grade Advanced Placement United States History, twelfth grade International Baccalaureate History, And International Baccalaureate Theory of Knowledge course. Franklin explained the importance of teaching students about perseverance:

Students have to have the understanding is you're not going to like everything that we're studying or that we learn about. You create passion for inquiry, yeah, that's great, but there are some things you don't want to do.

Sometimes you're going going to take a class you don't like, and we've got to teach these kids about perseverance a little bit, and if you teach them skills to get through that event, not everything ... You don't have to like and enjoy everything all the time

Data Collection and Analysis Process

Data collection for this study resulted after obtaining consent from the Instructional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Alabama.(Appendix D) The researcher contacted the central Alabama urban school district, and the official NBPTS website for an official list of National Board Certified Teachers. Within one week of IRB approval and the school district's approval, the researcher extended an invitation through the district's email system and with follow-up personal phone calls. Some of the teachers who declined indicated scheduling issues and prior obligations as reasons that prevented participation. The researcher's initial plan was to interview English Language Arts teachers only. However, for varied reasons only seven teachers agreed to be interviewed. The researcher decided this number was not sufficient to reach saturation for the research study.

The study initially attempted to interview only English Language Arts teachers who were National Board Certified teachers in the urban school district. According to the NBPTS website, the urban school district had five in high school English Language Arts (ELA) and seven NBCTs in middle school which totals to twelve total in ELA. Out of the twelve teachers only eight ELA teachers agreed to participant in the research study. The researcher decided that more participants were needed in order to obtain an in-depth perspective and reach saturation into the research study. So the decision was made to also interview NBCT social studies teachers. The researcher then reached out to the urban districts six NBCT social studies teachers and five teachers agreed to participate in the study.

As a result, the researcher then decided to expand the participant pool to include social studies teachers. The researcher based this decision on the academic principle that the social studies teachers are critical to the teaching of literacy skills such as reading and writing. Literacy skills include reading, writing, and thinking, listening and speaking. Both ELA and social studies contribute to the teaching of these skills in secondary classrooms. The first thirteen respondents who consented were included in the sample meeting the goal for data collection intended by the researcher. Each consenting participant was provided a Participant Data Sheet (see Appendix B) to collect demographic information. The information obtained from the Participant Data Sheet consisted of each teacher's current position, years as an educator, prior teaching experiences, teaching and certification areas, and urban school teaching experience.

At the on-set of each one-to-one interview, the researcher informed each participant of the semi-structured interview protocol containing instructions for the procedure of the interview and a list of the open-ended questions to be used during the interview (Creswell, 2005). Each interview was conducted at the school where the teacher was assigned or at another site within the specified school district. Interviews, which were completed within a one-hour time span, were recorded and later transcribed by the researcher.

To validate the responses of the participant interviews, the researcher conducted a follow-up interview after the transcription of the interviews. Using the standard verification procedures, the researcher provided participants transcripts of their interview to affirm that the transcript data accurately reflected the participant's perspectives and experiences. Participants confirmed the accuracy of the collected data.

To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants, the researcher stored interview recordings and transcripts on a password-protected computer and used

pseudonyms throughout the data collection process. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher kept a reflection journal. As a gesture of appreciation, the researcher provided each study participant a \$10.00 gift card and “teacher treat bag” for contributing valuable feedback to the research study.

Overall, the research process productive. All participants were cordial in their participation during research process. Many of them expressed their desire to provide the researcher with valuable information. One epiphany that occurred during the individual interviews process was the limited mention or reference to the process of “reflection.” This served as a startling moment because all thirteen of the interview participants were NBCT and “reflection” is a key aspect of the NBCT process. I was anticipating more references to specific NBCT elements. However, only one participant mentioned reflection as part of teaching and learning.

Another notable moment in the process was at the end of the focus group session. The majority of the participants expressed their enjoyment and benefit of the focus group sessions. Most considered the session as a professional learning experience and welcomed to the opportunity to discuss their educational practice. The participants expressed that the focus group session was a valued opportunity to engage in discourse. Many of the participants viewed the focus group session as form of professional learning. Franklin summed of the consensus of the groups perspective:

This is [the focus group] effective professional development. We talk about professional development, because we're reflecting on our practice, and to me the second step is when we collaborate and we ... Because of the mission of language arts teachers and history teachers, we actually take, put it on paper and collaborate and do these things together. One of the things that I did for my class was we had to do professional development, and you can learn from your colleagues without going somewhere else and doing something else.

Good PD is reflective and thinking I don't do that enough and really, literally having these types of conversations. It helps with your Educate Alabama and all that kind of stuff, but really I think we need to have these types of conversations more than tedious things that don't connect to anything.

Peshkin (1988) indicated that researchers should intentionally and actively seek out their subjectivity in the research process. In reflection of the research process, the researcher admitted anticipation of interviewing participants who at one point were colleagues or associates of the same school district. However, the researcher was intentional and deliberate in her efforts to ensure an ethical measures and practices during the entire research process. As noted in chapter three, the researcher was aware of her own biases and acknowledges her backgrounds and experiences which may impact how she perceives participants and data to be collected in this study

Creswell (2009) recommended the use of multiple validity strategies to enrich the accuracy of research findings (p.191). In an effort to present a credible and accurate research, this study will use various validation strategies: triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing.

Emergent Codes, Logic, and Schemes

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological informed study was to explore the Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in Urban Secondary Schools. During data analysis, the researcher intentionally and deliberately examined the semi-structured interview transcripts data. Because of the close examination of the transcripts, the researcher discovered three major themes and multiple subthemes. The emerged themes helped the researcher answer the central research question and sub-questions.

Based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the focus group session, the researcher identified three dominant themes and seven sub-themes.

The three emerged major themes are:

1. Engaging students with quality instruction
2. Equipping students with skills
3. Empowering students with support

The seven emerged sub-themes were:

1. Connections
2. Caring
3. Academic Rigor
4. Autonomy
5. 21st Century Skills
6. Engaging Instructional Strategies
7. Literary Texts.

These seven identified sub-themes were consistently conveyed by the participants in the one-on-one semi-structured interview sessions and focused group session.

The examination of qualitative research data is an effective to gauge the phenomenon of culturally responsive instruction in urban schools. As noted in chapter 3, Merriam (2009) exclaimed, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.” The use of the qualitative research approach allows the researcher to adequately explore the issue of college readiness and thoroughly answer the guiding questions. Strauss and

Corbin (1990) denoted qualitative methods assist to provide an understanding of information that may otherwise be difficult to obtain.

Engaging with the data in a meaningful way was a calculated effort. This data analysis process immersed the researcher in the data. The process involved clustering concepts, revisiting the data, revising the clustering and repeating the process. The data was clustered in varied ways in an effort to capture the integrity of the teachers' experience and understanding of culturally responsive instruction and college readiness. Through the data analysis process, the researcher identified 196 statements as significant to the research study. The researcher repeatedly received the initial groupings of meaning of the participants' responses. This enabled the researcher to cross-reference overall meaning with emerging clusters.

The researcher initial groupings organized into 12 coded clusters: Instructional strategies, connections, relationships, relevancy, 21st century skills, autonomy, literary texts, choices, rigor, academic programs, caring, and standards. Upon further analysis and reviewing the data was refined to more specific clusters. After repeated reviews and analyses, the researcher furthered condensed the primary twelve clusters into to seven coded clusters: connections, caring, academic rigor, 21st century, autonomy, instructional strategies, and literary texts. These codes were deemed dominant based on the high frequency in their mention in the participants' responses.

The researcher then further refined the seven clusters to three general themes. Three themes emerged as a result of repeated reviews of the data clusters. After thorough reviewing and reflecting, the researcher identified patterns and relationships among the codes. The researcher concluded that the emerged theme are consistent with varied educational researchers and practioners as well as with the general philosophy of the NBPTS.

In an effort to capture the lived experiences and understanding of the phenomenon of the teachers, the researcher encompassed direct quotations from the participants. These direct quotations vividly disclose the perspectives and voices of the research participants. Each of the seven emerged major themes and minor themes depicted below is authenticated below with vivid accounts below. Research study themes and sub-themes are shown in Table 3.

Table 3; Revealed Themes and Sub-themes

Major Themes and Sub-Themes						
Empowering students with support		Equipping students with 21st Century skills		Engaging students with quality instruction		
Connections	Caring	Skills	Autonomy	Engaging Instructional Strategies	Literary Texts	Academic Rigor
Relevancy	Relationships	Teaching With technology	Interest	Collaboration	Literary Merit	Standards
Rapport	Respect					Academic Programs

The first theme *empowering students with support* demonstrates the value teachers expressed as significant to teaching students. The research participants shared their perspectives on key areas of support needed for urban students to be successful and achieve academically. From the data analysis two dominant elements emerged connections (relevancy, rapport), and caring (relationships and respect). Through multiple responses, the participants referenced the need for connections and providing opportunities for students to find relevancy in their experiences. The educators expressed the need for students to feel that they are valued. The theme depicts how secondary educators conceptualize supporting students to achieve academically and socially.

The second theme *equipping students with 21st Century Skills* shows the significance of skills teachers deem are essential for academic achievement. The educators indicated skills such as communication, technology, reading and writing as essential. The research participants fervently revealed their principles in equipping students with 21st century skills in an effort to prepare students for college and career readiness. These skills include digital literacy, critical thinking, and effective communication. They also mentioned the demand for teachers to have autonomy and for students to have opportunities for choice and interest. The essence of this theme communicates which skills teachers believe to be vital for academic success for urban students.

The third theme *engaging students with quality instruction encompasses* focuses on the value teachers placed on providing all students with learning environments and situations conducive to learning. The research participants disclosed their experiences with effective instructional strategies, literary works and texts. They also shared the value of academic content standards. Many of the educators referenced academic programs used in their classrooms and

schools to supplement classroom instruction. Teachers shared that they are driven to provide students with high quality instruction by using multipole instructional techniques.

Theme One: Empowering students with support

Participants in the study acknowledged that that connections was a critical component in the teaching and learning process of African American students. The concept of connections surfaced on varied levels during the research interviews. On one level connections refers to the ability to interact and relate with students. On another level, connection signifies the linking of knowledge. The research participant expressed that establishing and maintaining a humanistic practice in their classrooms as critical. Many of the educators declared the criticalness of connecting to students through establishment of relationships and rapport. Similarities were observed as participants denoted factors that they deemed as important to supporting students in their academic journey.

In an effort to illuminate and confirm the research study's findings, the researcher provided a discussion of the participants' comments and reactions. These direct quotes from the individual interview sessions and the focus group session provide clear depiction of participants lived experiences in the secondary English Language Arts and Social Studies classrooms. Through the authenticity of the individual voices, the investigation participants reveal their experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon.

Toni captured theme one as she suggested:

Well, I usually make references to things that I know are going on in their culture, so different songs that can relate to or connect to another topic. I try and include that. dances, television shows that students like to watch, and other types of music, not just rap that they listen to but things that they are aware of and use in their daily life and try and connect that to things in the past or different articles or reading of stories and things like that.

Participants offered experiences related to varied cultural aspects. Many of the participants used direct examples and knowledge from actual classroom experiences to clarify the phenomenon.

Alice reflected on a past teaching experience and provided a real-time example of connections in the classroom:

All of our students being from the same background. racial background. But I did have a lot of the diversity when it came to. I had some students who were some Muslim students that became a challenge as a theater teacher. Sometimes when we did programs for holidays and such. So I their faith always wanted to make sure that we did not exclude those students that was Christian based holidays. I did include them. I was talked to them about their comfort level. Also said I would talked to their parents about what would be appropriate and what they would feel comfortable doing. And their parents were always very receptive. They understood that their children attended a public school that was a, recognized Christian based holidays. I never had any issue with them participating but I did make sure that they were comfortable and I look to see what they wanted to do in our production

Many of the respondents described their deep concern for supporting students. Most of them shared that they were deliberate and intentional and in their effort to support students.

Langston supported this notion with his response:

I want to create an environment where it's safe to ask questions, I want to create an environment where student's not afraid to fail. I might even create situations in the classroom where I purposely make a mistake. We work together to make the corrections so they can see that we're learning together. First of all, I want my classroom, my cultural to be more of a family type environment. Where it is safe to rely on another for assistance, for help. Over the years my class has been pretty much 90 percent African American. Maybe another five mixed of Hispanic. But, even in that I am big on diversity I teach respect, regardless of sex, regardless of race, skin color. It drives my curriculum. In teaching content, I'm teaching the whole person.

William recounted her perspective on connections in the classroom:

I start out by giving my students a survey at the beginning of the school year just by getting some background information on them as well as, I think one of the first novels we read is *To Kill a Mockingbird* so I tie in about their

heritage. They get a chance to share with the class. We get a community feel about who's in or learning environment and respect each other from that point, and make these connections.

Walt echoed his standpoint on connections in his classroom:

I think I take a strikingly different approach in that at the very offset, I try to relate to students through my background being a community organizer coming from a very diverse South Florida community whereby I was an ethnic minority. Yet, one who was in a grouping who had most of the land and the capitol within that context. So I seek to try to relate to my, draw connections to where they live successfully or unsuccessfully. They are looking at the glass from completely different perspectives. So I embrace diversity and willing name it that there is different perspectives.

Another characteristic or minor theme that participants regarded as vital was relevancy. The educators considered relevancy important. May expressed that using curriculum and academic lessons that connect, interest, matter actually benefit students.

Emily supported this idea with her comment:

With English/Language Arts, there's a push, as you know, for us to teach the classics. I've learned that we can find classic that are relevant and interesting for the urban students. You just have to find them. I think that maybe sometimes as being a non-African American teacher, I think it's maybe even more important for me sometimes to try to go that extra mile to do that for the students. I really try to find material that I feel is relevant and find those stories and the material that is relatable.

Lorraine also affirmed that students appreciate engaging in academic tasks that are relevant to their actual lived experiences:

As an English Language Arts teacher, I've always included literature that reflected the lives of the students that I've taught. If it happened to be historical fiction, that it may be historical fiction based on some struggle in spite of if the main character may have been Hispanic, African American, or Caucasian, that the main characters, their struggles were identifiable and relatable. Or that the family structures were identifiable or relatable

Jane furthered the idea with her response:

I think the more cultural reach I can make in the environment, the more the kids are gonna learn. Above all else, you want them to be accepting of other people and other cultures, and that stays on the top of my mind no matter what I'm teaching, whether it's literacy or basic social studies skills.

The research participants shared viewpoints on discourse and conversations in classrooms in an effort to enhance student interest and achievement. Carl revealed that discourse in the classroom allows the teacher to address misunderstandings and misconceptions before moving forward.

Carl described how effective discourse in the classroom promotes the theme of empowering students:

If you're not connecting it to something that they can understand, something that they're bringing to the classroom, then you're not really doing anybody any service. With that being said, I guess what I mean by that is you have to allow the kids to have those conversations where you can find out what their background knowledge is, misconceptions, misunderstandings that you can then connect to and straighten out for them. You have to get them talking. You have to get them discussing the issue.

Participants shared the significance of conversations and sharing. A case in point, Maya shared:

I made sure that the class is full of conversations. Not dominated by me, but I'm always trying to pick their brains, because I want them to always trust their own genius, their own ability to construct knowledge, deconstruct knowledge if it is presented to them, and present it to others, their opinions and things of that nature. They did a wonderful job of that once we set the parameters of what intellectual conversations and things look like. We always have those healthy challenges going, and they became unafraid to speak.

Many of the contributors described the significance of providing a classroom environment that is conducive to discourse and learning in general. Maya further explained her perspective on embracing diversity in the secondary classroom:

Another thing I love, they began to really, really celebrate one another, and I think that is so important in the urban classroom. For children to celebrate excellence, of another's excellence. Not just their own, to be able to recognize when someone else has a fantastic idea, because just that recognition and the celebration encourages the other student, as well as build the person who gave the recognition. Because it is a lot to be able to say, "That was a good job." You know? Because oftentimes children can be so competitive, and you know, but I would always nurture a spirit of generosity and love, because I think that's a really important in the urban classroom. That you celebrate and uplift one another. So they did a lot of that.

Rita agreed with her secondary colleagues that conversing in structured discussion is essential in the secondary classroom:

Conversation with the student. Find time to just have one-on-one dialogue with them. I never want to assume anything. And I think that covers a lot of things that you can check off. You show interest in them as the individual. You create a relationship built on mutual respect. Because I don't want to just talk about me and what I've done and what I've experienced. I want to give them an opportunity to share.

Theme Two: Equipping students with skills

The study participants communicated their views on skills needed for secondary students to be successful for post-secondary studying. The research study participants advocated for multiple skills: critical thinking, communication, reading, writing, and technology.

Emily explained her perception of necessary skills for secondary students:

I think critical thinking. Being able to figure out the why. Not just be able to answer the question. Being about to figure out why that is the answer to the question and be able to go back and provide the supported details. To be able to do more than just identify the answer. To think through. I think that helps all aspects of life. Even the ones that don't plan on going to college, in any kind of job, it's going to help you if you can think and I think you can

teach people how to think, to be critical thinkers. I think writing skills are so important as well.

Kenya contended that social skills are essential for urban students to be college and career ready:

I try to help them see themselves in the classroom, that the classroom is designed for everyone, that their voice matters, that what they have to say matters, what they think matters, how they feel matters. We talk a lot about social and emotional learning that their social skills, the instruction of social skills, the exemplars of great social skills is important, and also their emotional learning be almost just as important as their instructional learning because you can't teach them if you haven't addressed their needs first.

Rita mentioned the importance of preparing students for post-secondary opportunities.

Critical thinking, communication, collaboration.That's 21st century skill because when you talk to people who are in the workforce, that's two things that I keep hearing from practicing professionals that students aren't coming in able to read and write on a certain level and critical thinking and collaboration skills. Team building, team networking because that's from what I see, that's corporate America.

Kenya shared the same perspectives that critical and intellectual thinking is required for higher education. Kenya strongly advocated for multiple skills for college and career bound secondary students:

Being able to analyze is important. Being able to think. Honing in on these metacognition skills, thinking about the thinking, thinking about the text and how it applies to your life. Comprehension as far as them being able to summarize. Being able to synthesize text, the ability to use inferential thinking. I know inferential is basic but inferencesbeing able to draw a conclusion. Look at argumentative text, informational text that may be labeled with those appeals. So being able to understand text structure, understanding the vocabulary, the connotation, is important. With the vocabulary word they can understand the text. Being able to understand the connotation, the context... We do a lot of summarizing and annotating. We annotate every single text that we read because in college, you are reading and you are writing and you are basing it on textual evidence. We are constantly annotating, it is a big thing in my room. Being a thinker....thinking, reading, writing. But every day they are reading and

annotating looking for those language demands. In order to understand setting, you have to understand mood, characters, I do a lot of stuff with that language. So yea, all the essential reading skills are important. But if you [teachers] want all kids to be college and career ready, critical thinkers which they have to be, they have to read and write. The pen will get you into college. So we are constantly annotating. Constantly making them think about their thinking. I teach them to question the author and this kind of teaches them and helps them to be college and career ready.

Lorraine viewed study skills and technology as essential skills for college bound students:

The first resource is always study skills. The instruction of study skills, how to plan, how to write down what task oriented days may look like to get things done. I rely heavily on technology now, that we make Google and other platforms a tool of instruction because the students have made it a tool of instruction. They know how to use technology, and if we are not moving forward with them, we get left behind by them. Technology becomes obsolete all the time that we are constantly moving forward.

Alice considered writing skills as an essential skill for college readiness:

The skill is the writing. That is utmost and everything, and because the writing includes the grammar, it includes their sentence structure, it includes their critical thinking, their ability to analyze, to synthesize ... Every aspect of those cognitive skills that's necessary for success in college, and if they don't college, but they pursue just a career outside of college, they need to have those skills that come with being able to write.

Gordon agreed that communication and critical skills are vital:

Yes. I would say that communication skills, broadly speaking, is one of, if not the most important one for success in academia. It has a myriad of benefits outside of academia as well, but being able to read, write, stand in front of your peers and give a presentation, talk to small groups, talk to a professor, talk to someone you don't get along with. Being able to refine all those different communication skills throughout, only I see that as my job, is being able to foster and develop those communication skills. It may look logical in ways, but I think that's really high up there. In terms of my content area, the skills that I want them to be able to have that to me are important, are critical thinking, being able to analyze sources. Being able to deliberate with one another. Being able to solve problems. Those are kind of the ones that I hit hard in Social Studies. First communication is one that I collaborate across curriculum, as like a really important overall.

Rita perceived that technology as significant to the secondary classroom:

Technology integration. Because of where we are right now in 21st century skills, it's gotta be more than just ... Web 2.0 tools when it comes to tech integration. Because web 2.0 tools helps you create. You can design, you can create, you can share, collaborate. It's not just what you're using the computer for, it's what you're using ... It's how the computer is helping you produce design. There has to be the reading and the writing and the critical thinking must all go hand in hand. It should be like a cycle. Everything is connected. Because I'm a fervent believer in traditional standards and skills. Reading and writing, communication, speaking especially. Because of how the global economy is set up, it's gotta be some technology in it and it's gotta be beyond cut, paste, and print. It's gotta be beyond cut, paste, and print or use a computer and look up definitions.

Carl concurred with other participants that exposure to technology in the secondary classroom is beneficial for college bound students:

Technology is going to be important. You got to get them on the internet. You got to get them using computers, because that's where everything is going. But also just because they're on the computer doesn't mean they don't need to be reading and writing. The writing might be different, it might not be pencil and paper writing, but they can still be writing.

Harper voiced research skills as a beneficial skills for college bound students.

I think students need to know how to find any kind of information, no matter what it is that they need to know, that they need to have the skill of being able to research and find that information. I think that's very important. That when they leave high school, that they aren't dependent on somebody telling them how to go find out about something. I think that they should have the skill of putting their priorities in order. They need to realize that they, there's nobody gonna be there to tell them what to do. They need to be able to edit themselves on their work, whether it's English or history, or whatever. That they need to be able to edit themselves. Look at what they've done and determine, is this going to be good enough? Technology, being able to use and access technology is an important resource.

Autonomy was another minor theme that surfaced during the research study one-on-one interviews. Participants articulated a strong belief in autonomy. The data revealed autonomy is viewed in two regards from teachers' perspectives. One is the teacher's direct autonomy to direct and lead classroom instruction. The data also indicated that teachers value choice for students. This is an indication of teachers who operate student-centered classrooms.

Alice provided a view on student choice as an advanced academic teacher:

Well, the bulk of my career has been with 11th grade English Language Arts, and I made sure that I met the state requirements for teaching American Literature, because that's the time period of 11th grade ELA. But I did have autonomy as an AP teacher in making choices as to what we read, as long as I kept with that time period. As an IB English teacher, the content of the IB English course allowed for free choice. We had a turn where we could choose what we wanted to and I always chose the American Lit that was typical for the 11th grade, but I wanted to choose things that would be challenging. Classic literature, but I stick to what is required for that grade level, and what would be considered rigorous for a college prep students.

Maya echoed the perspective of an advanced academic teacher on the advantages of teacher autonomy and students choice:

As an AP teacher the last five years, there was ... I was saying in advance placement, there was way more autonomy than I had had in previous years in teaching to the 9th, 11th, and 12th grade curriculums.....In terms of subject matter and things of that nature, because I always want them to dig and see that it's not just one thing, it may be many different things. So, I just had a lot of autonomy and just because I had it, I didn't use it haphazardly. I chose works that would help them to stretch.

Toni explained:

We have our district mandate that we have to follow. We have to do that, but you also have to supplement. I think there is some autonomy on how we supplement our instruction. We have to do this, but we can't take away from it but we always can add to it. I think it's a balance between finding those supplements and resources.

Theme Three: Engaging students with quality instruction

The study participants described engaging strategies, literary texts, and academic rigor used in lesson plans and daily instruction in an effort to increase academic achievement. The research participants shared that the reading of essential literary texts were vital to the success of college-bound urban students. Teachers shared multiple books from the literary canon that are deemed of literary merit for their students reading curriculum. The research study participants expressed perspectives about their approach to providing rigor in their classrooms and lesson planning.

The study participants revealed that engaging instructional strategies are essential to preparing college bound students for success.

Maya explained the use of graphic organizers as instructional tools for teaching writing and rhetorical skills:

One thing I think is, to prepare children for college, they're going to do a lot of writing. So I think as instructors, one thing I thought was essential is the step-by-step writing toward critical analysis. I think that was essential. Starting with words, understanding significance of words, and being able to write about them. Moving on to phrases, being able to write about them. Then taking entire sentences and entire paragraphs, and being able to write to that, but teaching them through the critical thinking process for writing. Letting children understand that writing is not such a difficult task if you take it in phases, and one thing that helps children with writing is making sure they have those graphic organizers. And I'm talking about a graphical organizer such as TP-CASTT and SIFT, and graphs that help them understand rhetorical analysis

Gordon suggested:

Strategies and resources. Honestly, I think it's less about specific strategies and resources as it is giving students opportunities to practice skills. Talk about critical thinking, problem solving, collaborating, communicating, deliberating, giving them practice to do that and feedback. So I guess feedback is could be like a teaching strategy, I guess. But there's tons of great resources, and there's tons of great strategies, and you can't, no

teacher can do all of them all the time. If you tried to, you'd be a terrible teacher because you'd be just bouncing from one thing to the next. And it'll be really hard to learn. You want to build your strategies around what your core, what the core is that you want to teach them. So if my core is communication, I want to find strategies around communication. Writing is a great example because we teach writing in my class, and it's collaborative with the writing teacher as well as the science teacher, and the strategies that we choose to use will look a little bit from each of those classes, where we're all like on the same team trying to develop the writing,

Literary Texts:

Emily mentioned the exposure of varied genres to students:

I think they need to be exposed to a wide variety of literature. They need to be well read, they need to be confident writers. I think that's one thing that our students lack, is confidence with their writing. And I'm not sure where that comes from but I think that they have so much to say, but they don't want to put it down. They need a lot more confidence with their writing. And a lot more confidence with their reading too.

Harper shared that students are required to read a varied literary texts that will help students to understand:

In my advance placement class, we often read *Their Eyes Were Watching God*,it's a book of literary merit because of its uniqueness of style and its metaphorical information and back ground, that it helps them to understand all the elements. That book is a great book for using to help teach the elements, because you can see them so plainly. And so, maybe, in the beginning, I may have thought, well, this is a good book, we'll use it because Zora Hurston's African-American, it will help in that way, but I would teach it to any class. And I rarely have Caucasian students, but I think the Caucasian students would understand it as well as the African-American students in my classes do because of the kind of book it is.

Kenya explained the use of literary texts:

So we do the House on Mango Street. The textbook's unit 3 starts with the Outsiders. So I start with House in Mango Street. It is culturally diverse book written by a Hispanic American. So she talks about the middle class, low middle class, so that the children can connect. I can them excited about reading. So they can see themselves. Then I go in teach those other books. I try to use books that kids can relate to and see

themselves in. We have Piece of Coats, Forged by Fire, and The House on Mango Street. We have done Edgar Allan Poe. I try to use texts that the can see themselves in. You want the kids to go beyond inferential level so they synthesize what they are reading and make those connections. So they can read critical which is what is required for a college student. Not just relying on what's on the paper. But make their own connections. I really try to use texts that I can kids can see themselves in, not every text will do that. I do Shakespeare and there are some other texts that are kids may not want to read but because are layers are there the kids enjoy them.

Similar to other respondents, Alex replied:

On the history side of things, I try to bring in works that are from different point of views than they would traditionally get in the textbook. I know (Franklin) uses this textbook too, but Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States does a good job of that. And then also one I started using this year is called An Indigenous People's History of the United States, so just those points of view that traditionally or could easily get overlooked in a lot of classes, just because there's a lot of strands to especially American history. And so trying to pick up pieces of those strands throughout the story to show that there are multiple aspects to it. It's not just this happened, this happened. There's literally thousands of things going on at the same time. And depending on where you are, who you are, when you are, those stories are all different things. So try to connect those stories to it.

Franklin confirmed Alex's literary choice and explained:

And the reason why I like the People's History of the United States is he (Zinn) defines a people as all people. And so in social studies, in history class, minority students generally do not like history, because it's not a history that they can directly relate to. This book is good, because it comes from a perspective of other, no matter what that other is

Franklin continued:

The kids, even kids who don't like to read at times will pull something out of Zinn go, "I never learned it this way." One thing about kids in urban settings is reality and authenticity. Don't blow smoke. Let me know what's

going on, and when you give them this alternative perspective, it really helps.

The research participants reflected on the use of academic rigor and content standards to prepare students for academic and career success.

Langston recounted the use of standards:

I go by the standards that asked of me to teach from the state curriculum. I first look at the standard that the state curriculum provides what need to be taught. What the curriculum guide is. Cause I want to teach standard based instruction, first of all. And then I look at the needs of my students in the classroom. I look at the makeup of the population of the students, and I have to look at the level of my learners. I want to know what their individual strengths are. And teaching the content that I know they need to be, I need to also know where they are so I can pull them from whatever low-level they may be to a high level that the standards ask of them to perform.

Kenya affirmed the use of academic standards:

If you want the students to master content, you look at those key standards, standards that they need to know. I look at the standards for six grade and seventh grade and eighth grade. I look at all three and the commonalities and choose which ones I need to hit and which ones I can supplement..... That's the power of being National Board Certified. You teach students and you try to find ways to make sure their needs are being met with everything included.

Research Questions

Data for this qualitative research study were collected through the use of in-depth, one-to-one interviews and focus group reactions and perceptions of secondary English and Social Studies teachers and/or National Board Certified secondary educators. The central research question for this investigation was as follows: What does culturally 'responsive instruction' mean to urban educators, and how is this meaning enacted in the instructional strategies they use

to prepare the students they serve for college readiness? In an effort to gain an in-depth view into the experiences and perspectives of the participants, the following sub-questions were used.

1. How do you perceive ‘culturally responsive instruction?’
2. How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of college-bound students?
3. How do secondary teachers in this study cultivate college-readiness skills in their students? What specific instructional strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college-bound students they serve?

A set of interview questions were developed and used to facilitate each participant interview session in an effort to obtain data for the research questions. (See Appendix B).

The first five questions were aligned to research question 1. The research questions were as follows:

1. As an educator, how do you perceive culturally responsive instruction?
2. How do you tailor or adjust instruction to capitalize on the cultural richness of students?
3. What is your classroom experience with your students when you implement culturally responsive instruction in the ELA classroom?
4. How do you connect with your students who come with varied culture and social status which differs from yours?
5. How do you build upon students’ prior knowledge, experiences and or cultural backgrounds in your teaching?

Interview questions 6 through 9 supported research question 2. Those questions were as follows:

6. How are instructional materials selected for your classroom? How much input or autonomy do you have in curriculum choice- what gets taught? When? How?
7. What are the concepts or skills you feel are vital for the academic success of your students? Why are these so important?
8. Explain how you plan a lesson for your students? (When creating a lesson or project, how much of it is influenced by student interest? Engagement? Rigor?)
9. How do you motivate your students to learn and or achieve?

The last four questions supported research question 3:

10. What is your personal philosophy for working with your students?
11. What instructional strategies or resources do you consider to be essential to prepare students for college readiness?
12. What are/were some literary works or texts that you have assigned for your students to read during the school year? How much choice were students given, if any?
13. How do your personal values steer your current position as an English Language Arts teacher?

The research study's primary and secondary interview research questions are shown in Table 4.

Table 4:

Primary/Central research question: What does culturally 'responsive instruction' mean to urban educators, and how is this meaning enacted in the instructional strategies they use to prepare the students they serve for college readiness?		
Secondary Research Question	Interview Research Questions	Emerged Themes
How do study participants define 'culturally responsive instruction'?	<p>As an educator, how do you perceive culturally responsive instruction?</p> <p>How do you tailor or adjust instruction to capitalize on the cultural richness of students?</p> <p>What is your classroom experience with your students when you implement culturally responsive instruction in the ELA classroom?</p> <p>How do you connect with your students who come with varied culture and social status which differs from yours?</p> <p>How do you build upon students' prior knowledge, experiences and or cultural backgrounds in your teaching?</p>	<p>Major Themes:</p> <p><i>Empowering students with support</i></p> <p>Sub-Themes:</p> <p>Connections</p> <p>Caring</p>
How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of college-bound students?	<p>How are instructional materials selected for your classroom? How much input or autonomy do you have in curriculum choice- what gets taught? When? How?</p> <p>What are the concepts or skills you feel are vital for the academic success of your students? Why are these so important?</p> <p>Explain how you plan a lesson for your students? (When creating a</p>	<p>Major Themes:</p> <p><i>Engaging students with quality instruction</i></p> <p>Sub-Themes:</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Autonomy</p>

	<p>lesson or project, how much of it is influenced by student interest? Engagement? Rigor?)</p> <p>How do you motivate your students to learn and or achieve?</p>	
<p>How do secondary teachers in this study cultivate college-readiness skills in their students? What specific instructional strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college-bound students they serve?</p>	<p>What is your personal philosophy for working with your students?</p> <p>What instructional strategies or resources do you consider to be essential to prepare students for college readiness?</p> <p>What are/were some literary works or texts that you have assigned for your students to read during the school year? How much choice were students given, if any?</p> <p>How do your personal values steer your current position as an English Language Arts teacher?</p>	<p>Major Themes:</p> <p><i>Equipping Students with 21st Century Skills</i></p> <p>Sub-Themes:</p> <p>Instructional Strategies</p> <p>Literary Texts</p> <p>Academic Rigor</p>

Results of Semi-Structure Interview Data

The following discussion is devised to illuminate and authenticate the outcomes of this qualitative research investigation. To portray the lived experiences of the study participants, the researcher included direct quotes and responses from the interview sessions and the focus group session transcripts. The following discussion denoted the insights of the studied phenomenon.

Secondary Research Question One: How do study participants define ‘culturally responsive instruction’? This question allowed the researcher to gauge the interviewees’ perception of culturally responsive instruction and its impact on the college readiness of their students. Interview questions 1- 5 revealed the themes of Connections and caring. The research participants’ responses disclosed that the educators deemed connections and caring as significant

factors in the urban secondary classroom. Based on the analysis of their responses, effective educators make learning relevant and relatable. They expressed that genuine interaction and rapport demonstrates caring to the students.

Teacher responses found in the specified research questions revealed that secondary teachers place strong value connections, relevancy and cultural understanding with their students. The teacher responses supporting these conclusions and emerged theme and sub-themes are provided below. Participants revealed varied thoughts on connections and relevancy.

Interview question one (IQ1): As an educator, how do you perceive culturally responsive instruction? Participant responded as follows: The research study participants shared multiple views of the conceptualization of culturally responsive instruction. Others echoed the NBPTS core proposition one: Teachers are committed to students and their learning. According to the NBPTS, signifies that teachers recognize the individual differences in their students and adjust their practice. The majority of the participants shared the same perspective on culturally responsive instruction.

Harper stated that culturally responsive instruction necessitates educators being cognizant of their classroom dynamics:

All students come from different cultures, and different backgrounds, different family lives, different homes. I think that, as a teacher, you need to be aware of the diversity in your classroom, and work towards making everybody comfortable in the classroom. Not talking about anything in a negative way, to always discuss whatever the situation is, in a positive light.

Kenya defined culturally responsive instruction as a means to addressing students' cultural needs and enhancing the relevancy of students' experiences in the learning environment:

Instruction that appeals to students cultural needs. For example, if you have an ESL student you are trying to find ways to inject their culture or some of their experiences to help add to the classroom instruction. Being aware of the diverse needs of your classroom. Add diversity to the instruction so that the child feels a sense of ownership and that their background is present. In essence, making the instruction relevant through making sure their background is present.

Willa explained culturally responsive instruction as follows:

Culturally responsive instruction can be defined as purposefully promoting empathy through literature, media, discussions, etc. within the classroom. Teachers strategically infuse concepts that require students to understand and question varying perspectives to fully comprehend the world in which we live. Culturally responsive instruction is a staple in today's learning environment.

Ida described culturally responsive instruction as follows:

I define culturally responsive instruction as instruction that recognizes the various cultures of students in their classroom, and often incorporates literature and project- based learning assignments that recognize and celebrate those cultures.

Interview question two (IQ2): How do you tailor or adjust instruction to capitalize on the cultural richness of students? The study participants revealed that gaining a sense of students' backgrounds and cultural histories is useful in enhancing student achievement. The offered outlooks on the multiple ways they access student's cultural history.

Rita explained her process for gathering information on a students' cultural richness:

Find out what they know, find out what they like. I think contemporary Issues, you know a little bit about their culture, the music they like, the things that seem to spark their interest, and then try to make it relative to the subject matter and integrate it as much as you can

Gordon described his approach to adjusting and tailoring instruction to match the students' cultural richness. Gordon mentioned the importance making sure students' feel respected:

In Social Studies class it is easy because I have a lot of freedom to work around the state standards, which are not African American centric at all. In fact, there's a lot that's left out of Alabama State's curriculum when it comes to the cultural context that I'm in.

However, I've only worked for principals that have supported me adjusting, adding. Sometimes completely reworking units, curriculum, to make it more relevant. Giving students opportunities to share their culture, I think is something that any, not even Social Studies, could do.

If you're a human, you naturally default to your own culture. So being aware and conscious that there are things that my students are going to value differently, and that that's okay and make sure that they feel comfortable sharing. Make sure they feel that I wouldn't judge them for that. Even if it's different from what I believe or the way I act or behave, but always making sure that ... I think that's the biggest one, is making sure that they feel that their culture is something worth being valued.

Harper regarded community building in the classroom as a requirement for capitalizing on students' cultural richness:

I try to learn students' names early as possible, so that they feel welcomed into the classroom. If they are from some different background from me, then they won't feel uncomfortable being in my classroom. Because they'll start viewing me as the teacher, instead of someone different. I have an assignment at Thanksgiving where I ask them to do something to help someone in their community. It can be in their family, or their neighbor, or in their church. And then they have to help that person for more than two hours, and then they have to write about their experience. And have the person write a comment on their essay. So that they feel some responsibility of doing something good for someone else, to show their thanks for all that's done for them.

Kenya advocated for the use of instructional tools to gain a sense of students' cultural background. She also shared that through the use of these tools teachers are better able to make learning relatable to students and promoted the idea of critical literacy:

The first thing I do every school year is assess how students learn. I give them a survey. I do a multiple intelligence survey to see how they learn and then we do a survey of things that children do to learn. I created a Facebook page template that goes in the front of their notebook. I ask what their favorite hobbies are, family traditions, favorite books, that they have read. With every unit, I do a poll. So I can see what the kids are interested in. I like to stay current as far as child instruction pedagogy is.

While most study participants shared that they have used varied ways to assess students' cultural backgrounds, P2 reflected on her limited experiences with dealing with individual students and their diverseness.

Well, in my experience in an urban school district for 22 years, I have not had many culturally different or diverse classes, and in those situations where I did, it was because of perhaps differences in beliefs, faith-based beliefs. I would make sure that I would respect as well my students would respect beliefs that other students might have. That's different from what they would consider to be the norm or the average, and on occasion, I have had some students who were ... English was not their first language, and so I have made adjustments to make sure that they have understood instructions, or they understand the content of what we're doing

Interview question 3 (IQ3): What is your classroom experience with your students when you implement culturally responsive instruction in the ELA classroom? This question provided vivid perspectives on the subtheme of respect Participants responded as follows:

Alice ruminated about a past teaching experience when she specifically dealt with the implementation of culturally responsive instruction:

One particular event that stands out to me is when I was teaching theater and drama, and I was responsible for producing and directing a play for

Christmas, and I had a student who was Muslim. Out of respect for her, I did have a conversation with her, asking her to make sure it was okay with her parents that she participates, in a Christian-based production. Even though the play itself was not, since we were a public school, we didn't base it on the birth of Christ, but it was in recognition of Christmas, of the holiday. So I told her to speak with her parents to make sure it was okay for her to participate, and she came back and told me that her parents were fine with her participating. So I gave her a role as supposed to being a role in the play, I made her as my student director, and both she and her parents were pleased with that choice.

Rita explained that in her attempt to reach students' cultural richness she employs music and movement:

They enjoy it. They can connect with it. I try to touch all types of learning styles. So there's an opportunity for movement, if there's an opportunity for music, if there's an opportunity for a relevant video clip, something to get that spark going. Something that they connect with and understand. That's my hook at the beginning of the unit, the lesson, the activity, whatever it is, and if I find it's something that may be beyond their realm of understanding that goes back to my planning and I gotta find some time to try to make them do it.

Toni echoed a similar perspective:

I've learned that they're able to make a connection and expound on that connection. It's more relatable to them, so they have a prior knowledge of it. When they have a prior know, they can bring more to it and add to it and make other connections as well.

Interview question four (IQ4): How do you connect with your students who come with varied culture and social status which differs from yours? The study participants' responses revealed that teachers and students benefit from situations where teachers make a strong effort to tap into students' world and lens. The participants expressed that a mutual respect between students and teachers will surface through positive relationships formed in classrooms. The teachers shared

how they teach tolerance and assign value to students through classroom activities that celebrate culture.

Emily asserted that connections and relationships are strengthened when teachers use writing tasks such as journaling to connect to students:

I think that one of the things I learned from National Board (NBPTS) training was knowledge of the student is so important. I am still a big journal person and I have students do a personal writing and respond back to them to get to know them. I think that when you establish a rapport with your students, if it's verbal, written, or some way that you learn about them and they know that you know about them more than just their name or that they're in the band or on the football team. They start confiding in you things. I try to learn about all of my students that way.

Toni shared:

I try and learn about their culture, learn about what's important to them, and try and make that connection with them. It's important to know a little background about them and their prior experiences. I think that helps to connect our thinking, connect how we think of each other. They expect that you're trying to learn about them, and it helps with the relationship the students and teachers have. I think it's very important.

Gordon voiced the learning becomes reciprocal when teachers and students establish a rapport:

So you really have to capitalize in the classroom with those students making connections, making them feel valued, building the relationship, building the rapport, and it's no small task but the greater the rapport with the students, the more they learn from you.

Carl provided a different perspective on understanding culture. CARL warned that educators have to be careful and cautious when addressing students' culture so that he/she does not offend or intrude.

Understand that the culture that you come from and the culture that they come from has its positives and its negatives and that value systems can be different and that you don't need to not touch on ... You don't need to ignore the differences in the value systems, but you do need to be careful when assigning values to things so that you're not stepping on toes or making an enemy out of someone before you can even try to educate them.

Langston echoed the importance of acknowledging differences and embracing tolerance in classrooms:

I created my classroom to be the type of classroom where that we understood that we are not alike. I'm not like you, you're not like me. You can still learn from me. You don't have to agree with me, but I want you to understand me.

Harper provided a depiction of her approach to connecting to students whose cultural and social backgrounds differs:

I try to never make any student feel like I'm looking down at them, in any way. About their race, or culture, or social status, or ... I want my students to feel, because they are comfortable enough to come into my classroom and talk to me, as a student to a teacher. I try real hard to be pleasant and kind, instead of forbidding. I really feel like my position here is to teach, not to judge. And that if, once students realize that you care about teaching them how to do something, and that you're not judging them, that they become more interested in your class and perform better in many ways.

Jane reiterated the notion of celebration in the secondary classrooms:

The kids love that. So all that, that's part of somebody's culture. It's like I tell the kids, we celebrate culture, and we celebrate diversity. The more you can reach for, the more you reach out, I think the better the kids respond to it.

Interview question five (IQ5): How do you build upon students' prior knowledge, experiences and or cultural backgrounds in your teaching? The participants' comments disclosed that the educators use conventional and novice ways of to enhance students background knowledge.

Emily recounted the use of technology in an approach to access students' knowledge:

I always have to find out what their prior knowledge is. Sometimes, that's surprising, as well, because you think that they know when they don't know. With our new textbook, they always have a jumpstart with a video and that's a good way that I use from the class discussion or from the writing journals and then sort of take it from there. And when I find out what they do know, then we can watch video segments, see if there's more historical information that we need to know. There's so many good articles that are available now. They're so easy to pull up online with technology.

Zora viewed the question differently because she shares the same culture as her students.

She expressed that this commonality is often an advantage when it comes to connecting to the students.

I'm from an urban background. I was born and raised in this same school district and graduated from a high school in the school district so, I'm from the same background they are from. Now, what I do tell them is some of the same things you go through I've been through as well. Like the bible says, "Nothing new under the sun." I let them know, "There's nothing that you can tell me that you've been through that I haven't already been through myself." So, I understand.

Maya shared how she used contextual frames to connect to students. Through class discussions and inquiry-based activities, she is able to gain a sense of students' prior knowledge, experience and cultural background. Maya explained how she uses effective questioning to connect to students.

What is your opinion about dot, dot, and dot? If this were to happen to you, how would you react? And that gets their wheels to turning about their own experiences, so when they read eventually read the piece, they are less likely to be judgmental, and more likely to be able to see what the other character is seeing from that character's perspective. Because what we have to realize, what I want them to realize when we're going background knowledge is this, I ask you [students] about your personal experience, because your contextual experience is extremely significant. We have a contextual frame that our families, our histories, our cultures and our experiences build, and you're going to come out of that frame with your experiences. So when we read these authors, that author has a contextual frame, but we also have a commonality with some of the people

that we're reading, because they are universal themes that cross all barriers. Love, forgiveness, caring, and things of that nature. So I tap into what they know through writing, and intense discussion, and then discussing with one other, discussing with me. Just basically whole class discussion and in small group, so they can walk into the piece with some kind of knowledge what may be going on.

Rita expressed the idea of making learning meaningful and engaging through student-centered activities:

When I can find opportunities to incorporate interviews with family members, parents. What's the second half of that? Make sure I get it right. If there's a type or theme, I'll have some type of an opening activity that is individualized or small group where it's strictly them documenting or sharing what they know. And I use that as a guide to help determine what it is I need to touch on, clarify, build on, or scaffold on. Allow them to teach their peers that all can share. I just turn and talk and guide those dialogues and purposeful conversations so that it's on task, it's on target. But it allows them that authentic expression of what they know. So it's not so much teacher driven, or textbook driven. It's their voice, their experience, and at times I will document it so that it's up. So that it gives them the idea that their contribution is valued, it's a part of the instruction. They take ownership in that and I think that helps keeps them engaged.

Jane indicated that brainstorming is an effective approach to gaining insight into a student's knowledge, culture and experience:

Well, it's important to me when I start a new unit, or if I'm going to read a new story, that we brainstorm. The kids love to brainstorm, because that makes their ideas come out. That's when you can work those things like, self-esteem. Or you can make them feel that their ideas are important too. You [students] know, what you've got to say is a part of this classroom, a part of this learning environment. So I brainstorm a lot, because sometimes I'm shocked at the things that they do have in their previous knowledge. Then sometimes I'm shocked at the things that they don't have. You should try to talk a little bit about not having a cell phone. These kids don't remember 9/11, so you can't make any references to pre 9/11 because they won't get it. You pick these things up by that brainstorming.

Kenya shared her use of surveys, web quests and web sites to gauge and build students' background knowledge:

I do surveys. I create web quests a lot. I do web quests a lot of times. I give background information. I do the Holocaust and I have speakers to come in... I basically make... When I do our units, I use anticipation guides. Web quests are really big in my room, virtual field trips. So depending on the setting of the text. Through the web quests, I bring in images.

Research Question Two: How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of college-bound students? This question allowed the researcher to explore the specific instructional strategies used by teachers in urban classrooms. It allowed teachers to share their rationale for the use of specific strategies. Through the teacher responses the researcher to find out that teachers use the instructional strategies recommended by college-bound agencies such as the College Board and ACT. The teacher responses revealed that the teachers provided a high level of rigor and engagement in urban classrooms. Interview questions 6-9 revealed the themes of 21st Century Skills, Autonomy, Engaging strategies, Collaboration and relevancy.

Interview question six (IQ6): How are instructional materials selected for your classroom? How much input or autonomy do you have in curriculum choice- what gets taught? When? How? The research study participants' replies disclosed that educators place a strong value on teacher autonomy and student choice.

Zora expressed the consensus of the participants' perspective on the autonomy of their English Language Arts and social studies classrooms:

Well, we are given standards. In the pre AP line, you have more autonomy than you have in regular English language arts. So, I can take the standard and then I can pull in whatever I need to connect to the literature to teach that particular standard. It's not one size fit all. I can pull in whatever I want to connect to whatever standard we're doing.

Gordon discussed the sovereignty of teaching and learning in their secondary classrooms:

I have been fortunate enough to have virtually complete freedom to choose and rework my curriculum. I think I have yet to work for a

principal that has ... And part of it is Social Studies not testing me out there, all right, so I automatically get that little freedom. But then I have been able to persuade every principal that I've worked with that just the Alabama courses study is not enough, it's not sufficient, and when you look at that it's certainly not culturally appropriate for an urban context. And you understand, it's made at the state level, right, so it's like broadly speaking, yeah, probably. I don't know. Could use some work on it, especially in the Social Studies side.

Langston shared a similar perspective:

I was part of TAH (Teaching American History), which was the grant, Social Studies History grant that was implemented back in the late, mid to late 2000s. I was blessed to be a part of that cohort. Being a part of that cohort, we got a plethora of resources, software, cds, workbooks, primary documents and having those documents and those resources. It helped teaching the content, my students got firsthand information, first had knowledge of words from other players in history, not just what that the textbook's stated. They read firsthand account of individuals that we was currently studying. That helped broaden their understanding of the big picture. Following the standard as best as I could, the resources that I had, that helped move my students, I believe to be successful in my class.

Interview Question seven (IQ7): What are the concepts or skills you feel are vital for the academic success of your students? Why are these so important? The study participants revealed that a variety of instructional strategies are used in ELA and SS classrooms. Teachers shared that they are deliberate and intentional in strategies that promote and enhance literacy skills. Teachers shared that the use of strategies are used with the intention of preparing students for post-secondary opportunities. The participants regarded multiple skills as vital to the academic success of college bound students: reading skills, writing skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, research skills, and social skills.

Zora reported that she uses analysis strategies in an effort to prepare students for argumentative situations. ZORA stated:

I think what I really like for them to do is analysis, that's important. Logic, that is very important. I'm trying to think of some others, I want them to have an argument, I want them to give reasons why they agree with or disagree with whatever, whatever it is. I want them to be able to use those skills wherever they may work.

Maya deemed writing as an essential skill for academic success:

Our children need to be prolific writers, being able to express what's on the inside of them, and I have to say this: In order to operate in today's work, we don't have to be in Standard English, you know? Being able to do it in a manner that you come across, and people understand what you're trying to say, and being able to speak. Making sure that they can articulate their thoughts in a manner that will command the listening ear of someone else, and doing so with confidence.

Toni considered communication skills as crucial for post-secondary achievement:

The listening is an important part. It's a soft skill that they need to be able to listen and interpret what other people are saying. I know that's a skill that I think is very important. Speaking as well. Being able to articulate their thoughts and their perception of things is very important to them. I know that a lot of my students, they still struggle with their writing portion. Some of them really can speak and get their thought across but when it's time to come to put it on paper, it's not as easy for them. I'd say and other soft skills, just how to work with people, cooperation, and how to respect other people's opinion and acknowledge it. You don't have to agree with it but acknowledge it.

Lorraine took a different view of essential skills. Lorraine contended that students must first have a sense and acceptance of self before success is accomplished:

The main concept, a concept of self. Knowing the type of student, knowing what my strengths are, that we don't discuss with students that they have multiple intelligences and where they are weak. I always know that I wanted my students to know their reading level. That if you weren't a good reader, you could spend time becoming a good reader. That if I wasn't a good math student, I would be practicing at the math, and to do all of it I need great study skills. Often the students that I teach don't have any study skills and are not self-motivated, do not study, because no one has ever shown them how to study, and that is a continuous task for the department where I work. They definitely need, for college readiness a high level of mathematical skill, communications.

Langston viewed critical thinking and communication as a desirable skills for college bound secondary students:

Every student who leaves out of a secondary classroom needs to be able to critically think. They need to be able to think on a higher order thinking skill. They need to be comfortable asking the question why. A lot of times we get basic information, we know the what, or sometimes we may now how, but why? Be able to explain why something took place. Why something happen. What were the consequences for it? What were the connections to previous events that that's taking place in history and how it could probably create a path to something new in the future? Because their gonna be the leaders of tomorrow and I want them to be able to think along those lines on their own feet. Based on the information they have. They need to be able to research, learn how to conduct research, find information on the -- for themselves. Find other avenues ... resources could be connected. To help them, with whatever it is that they're trying to do or where they maybe be trying to go. With communication, there are different ways of communicating. Knowing how to use those tools to communicate, email.

Harper advocated for reading and writing skills, but also voiced concern for students' ability to focus and be attentive in academic learning situations:

Well, all students should be able to read and write. I think the basic, the most basic, idea that students need to understand before they go into higher education, is that they need to attend and they need to pay attention, and they need to participate. And if they learn to attend, pay attention, and participate, they should be successful in whatever they choose to do, whatever kind of further education they select. Students who are often absent, who do not pay any attention in class, who refuse to do any of the work of the class, those students are not going to be successful, it doesn't matter what class they're in.

Jane agreed that literacy skills are crucial for college and career readiness:

They have to read. I'm a big advocate of reading because I like to read. No matter what you do, you have to read. Not just read the words, but understand what you read. So one of the things that I really, really push in my classes, whether its social studies classes or intervention or whatever I'm teaching, is that reading is fun. There is joy to reading which is why I try to pick books and things that they'll like. In the classroom, when we're

doing things, every day we read a little bit, we write a little bit. I try to find stories I think they'll enjoy. I read out loud to them sometimes.

Interview Question eight (IQ8): Explain how you plan a lesson for your students? (When creating a lesson or project, how much of it is influenced by student interest? Engagement? Rigor?) The study participants' comments revealed that teachers are concerned with academic rigor and relevancy when planning effective lessons. The teachers expressed that they desire to have student-centered lessons and classroom environment.

Alice mentioned the effort to create interesting and fun lessons, but ensures that lessons are rigorous enough to prepare students for higher education:

Because I do think that especially with the college readiness, that rigor is probably the most important to prepare our kids for what to expect in college. But I feel like that I'll lose so many of them because they'll lose interest. But if I could make it more fun, that the rigor could come from it. If I could hook some of them and get them interested in the story or get them interested, because if they're not even attempting the project, does it matter how vigorous it was?

Rita explained that she considers multiple factors when planning instruction:

Number one, student interest is important, but on a scale of one to 10, I think we'd have to look at concept and standards. Concept and standards and then you take what they're interested in and try to align it. I forgot to put on since I've been doing a writing project and assignments matters, assignments matters is really redesigning writing instruction and everything is like a backwards design go find texts, songs, whatever that addressed those four and bring it back together.

Toni considered student interest as important when planning a lesson:

I think it's very important to have their buy-in. I like to give things that they are interested, that's relatable to them. I also think there should be expectations, so I try and develop a rubric and to have some general expectations. However, I do allow them to improvise as long as they meet the standard. If it's something that they want to add to it, that is perfectly fine, and I find make them think and to be more creative.

In contrast Langston shared a different perception. Langston advocated for standards to be the key factor in lesson development:

When I'm planning a lesson, I'm looking at the course of study, I'm looking at the standards that need to be taught. I'm looking at the needs of the kids that's in my class. Not lowering those standards, I'm gonna stay as strict as possible as close as I can to the standards. I'm gonna do all I can to get them involved in the activities by first pre-assessing. I want to know what they know. I want them --- this is also their way of figuring out where we going. So they can kind of almost assess themselves.

Harper shared another perspective. HARPER used the Backward by Design approach to lesson planning:

I think that when I go to plan the lessons that I'm interested in them learning specific concepts. They are learning to read a particular piece of literature and understand it. And so my assignments would be directed in that direction so that they would be able to read something and understand what they read. And then, other assignments would be directed for engagement, because I often give projects that are based on whatever the unit of study.

Interview Question Nine (IQ9): How do you motivate your students to learn and or achieve?

The research study participants' comments disclosed that motivation is challenging task for most teachers. Teachers expressed an awareness of the need for motivation at the secondary level in an effort to engage students in academic matters.

Alice regarded technology as way to motivate and engage students in academic tasks:

I do want students to be interested, but I recognize that not all students share the same love for literature and writing that I have, but I want to at least create an appreciation for it, even if they don't love it as I do. I do want them to appreciate what you can get from literature, and the importance of writing. So, I do try to have activating strategies that will be attention grabbing. I pay attention to what ... we know that technology is what grabs students' attention and keep their attention today. So, I use quite a bit of technology, and I make my choices for technology based on student interests, as well as the type of technology that they will probably

use once they're in college. In using Blackboard or discussion boards and things like that.

Zora shared how she uses varied approaches to capture students' attention:

I have them get up and walk to an area, write down their thoughts and feelings all around the room and then come back. It's just different things, even down to the power point. Try to make it colorful for those people that are visual, because I'm a visual learner so I try to make it colorful with ... I try to incorporate different charts and graphs even with their work that they're doing. When I'm presenting, I try to incorporate the stuff, you know, try to make it well rounded so if you didn't get it from us talking about it, then I know you'll get it from doing this chart or I know you'll get it from standing up walking around because it caters to the different types of learners. I try to incorporate all kinds of learners when I'm doing a lesson too.

Maya continued by explaining how she created a positive classroom environment to enhance motivation among students:

Then having them share those feelings, because I would always comment specific. "I love your idea on this. I never thought about it that way. Where did that come from?" Being specific, not just saying, "Great job," but, "I like your idea on dot, dot, and dot. How did you come up with that?" And then having other kids get in on it. So I would motivate them through my praise, specific praise, but also I found it to build ... Just to build a culture of motivation where they begin to motivate one another, where the culture was a culture of students motivating students. I thought that was just extremely important.

Toni considered the building of relationships as a way to acquire motivation

I think a lot of it is about relationships. They don't necessarily have to love you but at least respect and know that you have their best interest at heart. I think a lot of it too is gaining that interest from them and setting high expectations for them. I've learned that they usually, if you see that they're at least trying in any matter, so I think those high experiences also helps to motivate them, and just being compassionate with them. Everybody isn't on that level and it's important to recognize where students are recognize their progress.

Gordon affirmed the need for relationships in order to motivate:

If I don't already have the relationship or rapport. And it actually doesn't start, and I'm an eighth grade teacher right now, but it doesn't actually start on that first day of school in eighth grade. I work really hard to try to be the type of person that kids look forward to having next year, or two years down the road. Whether that means I'm tutoring them, or coaching them in something, or just being present and talking to them in the hallway. But building up those relationships gives me the opportunity to A, know where they are and where their motivation level is. Sometimes their motivation level is that they are more interested in video games than achieving academically right now, but sometimes it's because they just aren't understanding, or sometimes it's because they really hate social studies. I mean there's lots of reasons why they might not be doing well in a test 1.2, right. Why they're not successfully turning in their papers. There could be lots of reasons why. If you don't know the kid, how can you adequately motivate them?

Carl expressed a contrasting view on motivation:

You have to make multiple efforts at teaching the material in a myriad of ways, be it group activities or one of those carousel things where they walk around the room and they look at something and they take notes on it, stuff like that. Lots and lots of different ways of teaching the same thing. Lots and lots of activities so that they hopefully never get bored.

Langston confirmed Carl perspective that teachers should use multiple ways to motivate:

I create different avenues where there incentives in the classroom for those students that perform well. Groups that may have the higher averages, or performance based on a presentation, I may give them what I would call group points.

Harper explained:

I think that it's a daily task to keep your students interested. And if you come in every day and you have a plan of organization for the class, and you follow that every day, that the students know what to expect and they know that they have to come in and actually do some work in the class. It's not going to be, well, today we're not going to do anything, we're going to have a day off. You know, it's not going to happen. They know it's not going to happen. It's going to be something that is important in a daily basis, and they expect it. And I think it's important for all the students to be participating.

Research Question Three: How do secondary teachers in this study use culturally responsive instruction to cultivate college readiness skills in their students? What specific instructional strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college bound students they serve? This question provided insight into what additional factors (other instructional tools and literary texts) contribute to college readiness and global competence. Teachers shared their perspectives on which factors help to ensure and enhance college bound urban students with college readiness and global competence. The teacher responses revealed the themes of 21st Century Skills, Literary Experiences, Caring, Connections and engaging instructional strategies.

Interview question 10 (IQ10): What is your personal philosophy for working with your students? The study participants revealed that their personal philosophy impacts their learning environments.

Maya declared:

My personal philosophy is this: Every child, every student that I've worked with has their own genius, and it's incumbent upon me to cultivate it and help it to grow. I always understand that people, my students, are books in the midst of being written. So in order for them to grow and mature, and to become productive young adults, I have to be careful in what I say, how I design for them, and how I design the things that they do, so they can become what they need to become. I always place a very, very ... Let's say weighted responsibility on myself, because I felt that as the teacher in that classroom.

Toni asserted his philosophy of working with students:

I believe that if you plant a seed it will bloom. You may not be there to see it bloom, but eventually it does. I try and to give them something that they can take forward to the next grade, later on in life, something that helps to build them. I may not see it bloom, but I believe it will.

Gordon reiterated the sub-theme of relationships:

Those relationships. I see myself as a facilitator. I see myself as someone who encourages. I want to encourage the students. I want to facilitate the class. I don't want to know that I have high expectations for them, but then I want to help them get there. I want to be there for them. I think a lot of teachers think of them as the students are there for them. I want the students to know that I'm there to serve them.

Langston explained his personal philosophy for working with students. His philosophy supports the theme of connections:

I'm more of a pragmatist, realist. I want to always be able to make a connection with whatever is being taught. I want them to see how it parallel to where they are today. Having taught history you hear students complain, that was way back in the past, what is has to do with me currently. As we live in the year ...yes? ...pragmatist slash realist, I want to be able to make connections with what's currently taking place in the world with what's being learned in the curriculum. There's always a connection. It may not be as huge depending on what the lesson or the activity or the assignment is. I have to make that connection.

Interview question eleven (IQ11): What instructional strategies or resources do you consider to be essential to prepare students for college readiness?

Alice:

Collaboration. Any strategy that involves students collaborating with one another, whether it's with pairs, or small groups, or whole group. And then instructional strategies, I learned this from the investigator about strategic teaching. I believe I was doing parts of it, but it was not on purpose, and once I became more aware of strategically teaching students, I started doing it on purpose, and I got that from the investigator.

Jane:

Geography skills and reading skills ... and writing. They struggle with writing. I really think writing is, to me my biggest area of concern for when they go to college. Because you know that's all you do in college is write.

Instructional strategies used in participants' classrooms as shown in Table 5.

Table 5:

Participant	Instructional Strategy and/or Resource (IRQ 11) and (FGQ)	Recommended Skills and/or Concepts
Emily		
Alice	Journals, Videos, Small groups, collaborative groups, Socratic Seminar, Technology, Think Alouds	Writing, Critical Thinking,
Zora	Annotating, Socratic Seminar, Flip Charts, T'Charts	Allusions,
Maya	Graphic organizer, TPCASTT, SIFT, graphs, collaborative pairs and groups	Writing, listening,
Rita	KWL	
Toni	KWL	Listening skills,
Lorraine		Study skills
Gordon		
Carl		
Langston		Critical thinking,
Harper		Reading, writing,
Jane		Geography skills, writing skills, reading skills
Kenya	Surveys, Annotation, Summarizing, Web quests, Anticipation guide	
Willa		Critical thinking, Research skills,
Scarlet	Annotation	Research skills, Critical thinking, Critical reading
Walt	Socratic Seminar	
Nikki	Annotation, Socratic Seminar,	Writing Skills, Vocabulary Skills, Critical Thinking, Listening skills
Alex		Research Skills,
Ida		Communication skills,
Franklin		Critical thinking, writing skills

Interview Question twelve (IQ12): What are/were some literary works or texts that you have assigned for your students to read during the school year? How much choice were students given, if any?

Research participants shared literary texts that they deemed as essential for college preparation.

Many of the respondents made direct references to literary cannon or books of literary canon.

Interestingly, the books indicated would constitute being multicultural. Collectively the list exhibits a diverse group of writers by gender, ethnicities and literary movement periods.

Zora explained the use of literary texts in her classroom:

I try to make connections to my students through the literature that they're reading. I try to make it as relative as possible to the backgrounds of my students. Even if I have a diverse background, like you may have a classroom with students where you have 25 African American or black students and then you may have five Hispanics. But, I want to cater to every student that's in my classroom. So, the literature that I choose will relate to the students in general. It may relate to their culture, whatever that may be. Because I'll choose different because I want to introduce them to other cultures as well and it will relate to their age group and the situations that they encounter on a daily basis.

Toni shared her perspective on literary texts:

Well, we would always read, but I don't know how much choice there was, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*. We would read, because it interacted with our history and English language arts curriculum ... Shoot. I can't really think of the rest of them. But I think it's very important that they have a choice and maybe not an entire ... Because I teach on the other end of secondary, so they may not be able to read an entire novel or an entire book. It was important to know that excerpts and to let them get the important parts of that. But they always had a choice as to if it wasn't what they read, it's how they presented it back to me. It wasn't always paper and pencil or something like that.

Gordon expressed a different perspective. He explained the significance of non-fiction or information text in classrooms:

Well, over the years I have done a lot with current events. And that's looked a couple different ways including *Time Magazine*, including scholastic puts out of current events for the kid's kind of thing. We have done a couple, so

most of the reading is current events and then resources that I pull specifically about content, that kind of thing. When it comes to like a book that I've had my students read, and there are books in the English Language Arts that will do something in my class that takes a Social Studies perspective on what they're reading for English Language Arts

Langston asserted the need for collaboration when using literary texts in secondary classrooms. He explained his work experience as social studies with English language arts teacher.

We work together a lot. We collaborated on "Diary of Anne Frank". When I would teach about World War II, I would kind of pull in that piece of her story of the Jews mistreatment. The dialogue was huge. We had several books that we collated, worked together with.

Literary Texts data mentioned and referenced by study participants is summarized in Table 5

Table 6: Literary Texts

Recommended Literary Texts and/ or Authors			
Participant	Secondary Level High School Grades 9-12	Participant	Secondary Level Middle School Grades 6-8
Emily	The Scarlet Letter The Tempest Julius Caesar The Skim I'm In Walter Dean Myers	Rita	Tears of a Tiger The Watsons Go to Birmingham The Color Purple
Alice	Shakespeare Mark Twain Zora Neale Hurston Edgar Allen Poe Langston Hughes Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	Toni	The Watsons Go to Birmingham
Zora	Romeo and Juliet To Kill a Mockingbird Julius Caesar Martin Luther King, Jr. speeches Barack Obama Speeches John F. Kennedy Speeches	Lorraine	Shakespeare The Hunger Games To Kill Mockingbird The Outsiders The Devils Arithmetic
Maya	Frankenstein Works of Shakespeare Claude McKay Their Eyes Were Watching God The Awakening	Gordon	Time Magazine The Alchemist
Harper	Macbeth Beowulf Canterbury Tales Their Eyes were Watching God Tess of D'Urberville's A Passage to India	Carl	Animal Farm Anthem (Rand)
Willa	To Kill a Mockingbird Of Mice and Men I know Why the Caged Bird Sings Romeo and Juliet	Langston	Diary Anne Frank Autobiography of Malcolm X
Scarlet	Romeo and Juliet Julius Caesar Hamlet The Scarlet Letter The Grapes of Wrath Superman and me	Jane	Eighth Grade Bites The Chronicles of Vladimir Todd Dracula A Long Way Gone

	Absolutely The Diary of a Part time Indian		
Walt	The Education of Little Tree (Carter)	Scarlet	House on Mango Street Forged by Fire The Outsiders
Nikki	Beowulf The Canterbury Tales		
Alex	Howard Zinn's A Peoples History of the United States Indigenous Peoples' History Works from the Enlightenment Voltaire John Locke		
Ida			
Franklin	Howard Zinn's A Peoples History of the United States Things Fall Apart Black Boy Antigone		

Interview Question thirteen (IQ13) How do your personal values steer your current position as an English Language Arts teacher? The study participants' responses suggested that

Alice asserted that her personal faith values steers her current position as an educator:

My personal values come from my faith, and that is what steers me to try to treat people fairly, and I believe that a child ... And even high school students are children, and that children have their place, and adults have their place. I was taught that growing up, that a child should be a child and the adult is the adult, and I conducted my classroom the same way. Sometimes that may have come off as being stern, but I also believe in using humor, and that probably goes back to your question about how to keep students motivated. So you know, using humor sometimes, but ... And the reason I connected those together is because even though I run a classroom that some people ... I didn't consider to be necessarily too strict, but as I've run a classroom that some students may have considered to be strict, I always said I may be strict, but I'm fair. I want to treat everyone the same way and try to be as consistent as humanly possible, but I will have some light times to try to ease up those moments that could be tense.

Rita commented her on her personal values:

My personal philosophy is that the field of education is ever changing, it's evolving and we've got to stay abreast as much as possible and be open to change. Change is not good sometimes, but change is necessary because our students have changed. Just in my years. My early students, they're adults. A lot of them are ... I'm sitting next to them at PTA meetings because their children are the same age as my children.

Lorraine expounded on her decision to become an educator:

It was a personal issue because I grew up in a rural area as a gifted kid who was, we didn't have a gifted program, a pullout program, or a class, but I was a reader in second grade who was sent to fourth grade and fifth grade to read with their classes. It was intimidating to be with the older kids, and I didn't have any connections to them. It's important for me that my students know that there's always a connection to what you're learning, what you're experiencing, what you're seeing.

Focus Group Data Results

The focus group participants consisted of ten secondary educators. Three of the ten focus group participants also participated in both the semi-structured interviews and the focus group (Alice, Zora, Harper) and seven of the participants participated in the focus group only (Willa – Franklin). The focus group participants were selected based on the following criteria: English language Arts teacher, social studies teacher and/ or National Board Certified teacher in a middle or high school in the studied school district. The researcher determined that a focus group was necessary to further investigate the actual instrumental strategies and literary texts used by the research participants. The focus group was an opportunity to delve further into this phenomenon.

The research study's primary question remained the focal point during the focus group investigation. The primary question: *What does culturally 'responsive instruction' mean to urban educators, and how is this meaning enacted in the instructional strategies they use to*

prepare the students they serve for college readiness. Five key questions were posed to the focus group including four questions (IQ4, IQ7, IQ11, and IQ12) that were also presented to the participants during the semi-structured interviews.

Focus Group Questions and themes are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Primary/Central research question: What does culturally ‘responsive instruction’ mean to urban educators, and how is this meaning enacted in the instructional strategies they use to prepare the students they serve for college readiness?		
Secondary Research Question	Focus Group Questions	Emerged Themes
How do study participants define ‘culturally responsive instruction’?	As an educator, how do you perceive culturally responsive instruction? How do you connect with your students who come with varied culture and social status, which differs from yours?	Major Themes: <i>Empowering students with support</i> Sub-Themes: Connections Caring
How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of college-bound students?	What are the concepts or skills you feel are vital for the academic success of your students? Why are these so important?	Major Themes: <i>Engaging students with quality instruction</i> Sub-Themes: Skills Autonomy
How do secondary teachers in this study cultivate college-readiness skills in their students? What specific instructional strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college-bound students they serve?	When you hear the term “college-ready” what comes to mind? What instructional strategies or resources do you consider essential to prepare students for college readiness? What are/were some literary works or texts that you have assigned for your students to read during the school year? How much choice were students given, if any?	Major Themes: <i>Equipping Students with 21st Century Skills</i> Sub-Themes: Instructional Strategies Literary Texts Academic Rigor

Participants began the focus group session with a brief introduction of who they were, what they taught and their total years in the education field. The researcher chose this way to open as an ice breaker for the group. Roulston (2010) addressed this same point, “For researchers using a constructionist conception of interviewing, ‘all is data,’ and both interviewers and interviewees interactions may be subject to analysis of how and what is said.” (p.104) Roulston (2010) also declared that researchers conducting interviews must carefully frame questions in order “to elicit valuable data that will be useful for examining their research question.”

The researcher carefully framed the questions so the participants felt comfortable with responding freely. It was critical that the questions fit the teacher’s experience. Charmaz (2006) addressed the importance of effective questioning during interviews. “Framing questions takes skill and practice. Questions must explore the interviewer’s topic and fit the participant’s experience (p.29).”

Although the focus group participants all were employed with the same school district many of them had not met and some currently at the same site or had done so in previous years. Roulston (2010) addressed the matter of reflexivity and subjectivity and qualitative research. “Qualitative researchers and interviewers are inevitably part of the studies that they make explicit the connections between their subject positions and the ways in which these impact the outcomes of their studies in their reports (p.115).”

The researcher strategically posed questions to gain insight into how secondary educators perceive engaging instructional strategies that promote college and career readiness. The investigator sought to capture secondary educators’ beliefs and perceptions on what specific methods and tactics prepare college bound urban students for successful post-secondary experiences. During the focus group session, the researcher posed each question and allowed

respondents to share and discussion with their colleagues. The researcher remained neutral during the discussion and recorded each comment and observation.

The first question to the group: How do you connect with your students who come with varied culture and social status, which differs from yours? Participants conveyed multiple aspects of how they connect to the students. The focus group respondents shared their daily practices building relationships and making connections with students. Irvine & Armento (2001) which investigated how teachers' awareness of students' cultural backgrounds contributed to students' academic achievements.

Franklin asserted:

I also think that we use the term “urban setting” ... you know kids in an urban setting are not monolithic anyway. They... there is not one culture, there is multitudes of cultures. They may be interested in a multitude of things. The first thing I do is get to know their names immediately. I let them know that I am invested in them and it creates that trust factor. And yes my culture is different from yours and my background is different than yours but I have an investment in you as a human being and because of that they can be open to tell me anything about anything. Just ... you don't teach one class to one class. Each class is gonna have its own personality. But kids in urban settings probably want more hands on, more authentic teaching. Teaching teachers how to teach in urban settings is teaching teachers how to teach period.

Nikki commented:

I agree with you [Franklin] with that you cannot just say it fits with one group because my experience is kind of unique. I started off with... for the most part in an urban setting but the kids were...when you talk about economics, the kids has quite a bit so it wasn't like urban and poor. It was for the most class, urban and middle class or above. So I started off there, then I left there and went to one of the poorest schools in the district so then I had to try to connect with those kids. I had to connect different levels and then come over here and there is a mix of both. Each time is different like [Franklin] said, each class is different. I usually start with the idea that, “I am human.” Teachers are people. That's one of the things that students need to hear and don't realize at first. Yes, I go to the

grocery store. I do the things that you do. I am human but I make Mistakes. I am going to get your name wrong.

The second question posed to the focus group was: *When you hear the term “college-ready,” what actions or words come to mind?* This question was posed to the focus group but not the semi-structured interview participants. The researcher deemed this question as essential because the one-to-one interview respondents did not fully address this area. The researcher considered this question as vital to the research study. The focus group participants affirmed that college readiness as the state being prepared with the academic and social knowledge and skills needed to engage in college level studying and learning. Many of the respondents believed college readiness encompasses meta-cognitive and self–management behaviors necessary to transition successfully to higher education. The participants disclosed multiple perspectives as follows:

Ida expressed college readiness as:

When I hear the words college ready, I think of students who are exiting high school of course, a high school graduate, prepared to enter college and ready to take a credit bearing college course. That's what comes to mind when I hear those words, college ready.

Nikki believed college readiness does not require remediation or developmental courses:

I like the idea that Alice brought up, that they don't have to take any remediation. The whole concept of getting them ready for college says that when they get there they're actually prepared to take on the course load of a college student, not going back to repeat anything or lacking skills. And of course not all students are going to be exceptional in every area, but being ready means that on each subject they have enough information to be able to handle at least the first level of it.

Scarlet suggested that college-ready students have strong behavior management skills:

What I think too, not only handle the information but how to manage their life at the same time, like if they're truly college ready, they're going to be able to take four classes or five, depending on the credit system of the university, and not flounder and not get a D. I mean not only will they go to college and take credit bearing courses, but they will do well in them.

Franklin asserted that college readiness involved exposure to rigorous curriculums:

Also when I think of college ready, the key word to me is rigor, and we use it in K-12, and we don't use it as authentic as it could be. But in college it is rigor, and when I think of college ready, I think of independent learning. I think this is on them. The word to me for college ready is and, what we did and what they're doing there. And so what we should have done is gotten them ready for where they're going to be, and we don't know where, what classes they're going into, but just to me college ready is when those light bulbs go off in college about something that they connect with what they learned in high school. What we did wasn't done in vain. It was actually purposeful learning.

Alice used an altered description of college readiness:

And college ready doesn't mean they know everything or that they would necessarily make an A in every college class, but it means that they have the tools to be those independent learners, that they aren't flustered when they get new information, because they said, "Okay, like he said about making a connection. I remember we did something similar to this. And then that's similar to that," and they're able to know how to find more information, because we've given them those tools and foundation and groundwork, that they can learn something. They know how to find what they may not know, but they're not flustered by it because it's new information.

Walt viewed college readiness from a behavior aspect:

When I think about it, the first word that came to my mind was self-sufficiency because a lot of the work is left up to you [students]. There's a measure of curiosity and resiliency even, that if you do struggle with something that you just don't give up, but you have the awareness that you need help and knowing how to use the resources that are around you. Because working at a college for several years, one thing that there's no shortage of is resources, but they don't just

throw themselves out there. You {students} have to be smart enough to know what you need, where to seek it and how to use that outside of that. So the tools that we give them as far as the basic things like being able to read at level, being able to write a basic paragraph, if they just keep that information self-contained in class, they're not college ready, because they're having to take everything that we do in all the classes and the science and math and art, and they're having to put that into real life situations. And somebody that is truly college ready is somebody that can take their learning and apply it beyond the classroom and to the real world.

The third question posed to the focus group: What are the concepts or skills you feel are vital for the academic success of your students? Why are these so important? The focus group respondents corroborated with the interview responses. The focus group comments expressed that literacy skills (reading, writing), research skills, critical thinking, and behavior management skills. Reflective sharing of actual classroom experiences often followed the participants' comments pertaining to academic skills.

Alice advocated for writing skills:

As an ELA teacher, I have to say they have to know how to write a multi-paragraph essay and be able to do so clearly succinctly, concisely. They need to know how to answer whatever the prompt is, use evidence and be able to present their thoughts in a cohesive manner that makes sense for someone else to read and understand whatever their thoughts and feelings are about the topic. That's, I think, regardless of what they pursue in college or university, that that's key. But I'm sure a math person would say that might not be the key, but that's how I see it.

Ida furthered supported the obtainment of writing skills:

And I agree with {Alice}, but in addition to writing well, I think that they also need to be able to communicate or articulate their ideas. They should be able to collaborate and work well with others, because they're going to have to eventually enter the workforce, so they need to know how to work with a team, and I think knowing how to research things are equally as important as well.

Ida replied:

They {Students} have to be able to problem solve. You're going to have so many issues that come before you, and you have to know how to deal with that and problem solve, so I just wanted to add that as well.

Walt furthered supported the idea articulating your thoughts:

I was thinking about what [ALICE] had said about articulating your points and concisely, and I thought to add onto that would be also, coming from the urban setting, to be able to convey your [students] ideas within I'm assuming your new context. And potentially there's value in your cultural references, but getting that across to your new setting that may not be as monolithic will be a challenge, if that made sense. Make the most of your unique perspective, and convey that to someone who's other.

Harper provided a clear view on essential skills:

Students need to be able to read at least with some understanding. They need to be able to read and look up the words that they do not know, which are many in a lot of students' cases. They have very limited vocabularies, and they need to be able to accept that challenge of reading something with a dictionary next to them, so they can find out what they're actually reading instead of just reading the words and get to the end of the page, and they have no clue about what they just looked at.

Zora elaborated for the acquirement of communication skills:

But also you need to know how to speak in front of a group, and I know all students are not going to have that, but they can at least get like an introduction to it before they leave high school. Because when you get to college, there are going to be a lot of opportunities for you to participate in different clubs, different groups, and it gets political. Political aspect, they want to run for SGA and all that stuff, they need to know how to speak in front of a group and articulate their viewpoints.

Willa reiterated the idea that sound critical thinking and problem solving is important:

And I want to just add metacognition is very important as well, because they need to know what they don't know. I always reference to watching a movie or a television program, and you have that look on your face like I'm missing the first thing. That's where you rewind

it, but they won't turn the page back in the book or whatever they're reading to go back and reread it. I had a student today to say, "I don't comprehend well."

I said, "Read the page and take notes. Then go to the next one." I said, "Then go back after you've gotten four pages and read over your notes." I said, "That way it'll help you with your comprehension. Don't go through the whole text. Then you said, 'I don't know what it was about.'"

Franklin agreed with Langston that

If you create that environment where taking risks is acceptable, you not only broaden your horizons to create passion. They become better. They become more articulate. They become better speakers, better writers, and better readers, because you created that ... and I think it's good for them to see us think. I had a colleague that sometimes would have questions about history, and I would have a question about history, and we would come together, and we would do it, and we often did it secluded. But there were ... I remember a few times she would come to my room, or I would go to her room, and we would think in front of the students. I know you can see thinking, but you could see us thinking and going through a situation about what was going on. And I said, "Do you realize these kids are really paying attention to you and I having this conversation? We're showing them how we're thinking together and from different perspectives."

Ida believed that teachers should model the process of thinking:

But Mr. [Franklin] they can see that you're thinking. We call it a think aloud in ELA, so if you're sharing your thoughts as you're thinking it, like as I'm reading this, these are my thoughts, but you're sharing with them what your thoughts also are, so they can see the thinking or hear the thinking that's going on in your head. And what good readers do as they read this or as they're working through or grappling issue, they can see it if you share with them.

Nikki expressed the process of thinking can be complex but necessary:

It is, and thinking is messy. It's not something clear cut and clean, and it's going to be just right. Ideas are going to come up that you're not sure that you want to address at that time, but it's still thinking. And sometimes a conversation goes in a direction you weren't really planning for it to go, but there's still some thinking. And there's some things that you can gain from that, they can gain from that. And it actually creates that safety, when students feel that it's okay for me to

say this, then they're more willing to participate in other activities in the class.

The fourth question posed to the focus group was: What instructional strategies resources do you consider essential to prepare for college? The focus group comments echoed many of the responses shared during the interview sessions. The participants highlighted strategies and resources used in their classrooms. The participants described instructional strategies that they believed to be effective and valuable. Several of the respondents referred to the Socratic Seminar as an effective instructional strategy for the English Language Arts and social studies classrooms:

Nikki shared the impact of the Socratic Seminar as an instructional strategy:

I would have to agree that one of the strategies that I use, that I have found is really beneficial is Socratic seminar. Socratic seminar works, because one, it doesn't just give them an opportunity to speak, but it forces them to have to listen. And I always tell them that the Socratic seminar is more about listening and learning what other people have to say than it is about just getting your point across. They learn how to address other people, how to agree and disagree and do it in a way that they respect other people's ideas and thoughts. So Socratic seminar, if they can do that, they can be successful with anything in a career, because you got to be able to listen. If they are able to listen, they can always move to that next level.

Alice further supported the use of the Socratic Seminar and other tactics for learning:

I think I was going to say two things. The first thing I was going to say was the Socratic Seminar, for everything that she just said. It's what we are doing right now, and we are experienced then and teachers and adults and educators. But to get a 16 year old to do this is phenomenal and to teach them that. And the second thing I would add, the strategy that I think is imperative is modeling. Going back to the think-alouds, one of the things I did in getting students to develop writing a thesis statement that is a well put together, thought out thesis statement, I would use a passage, and I wanted the students to watch me think it through. So I'm writing it on the board and getting suggestions. I'm trying to think of a word for ... Y'all know a word? I'm trying to say this or that, and they say, "Use this."

The majority of the participants conveyed that annotating is vital academic tasks.

Zora affirmed that annotation benefits students:

So just basically I like annotation, because it shows the student that one time reading something is not how you comprehend. You have to go through it a number of times, and some things I've read four, five, six times and still get something new from it.

Ida supported the belief that annotation is necessary:

I too think that annotations are important, and students need to understand how effective and resourceful it can be in supporting your comprehension as you're reading a piece of text. In addition to annotation, I think that they should know how to summarize, be able to read a passage and be able to summarize that and understand that a summary does not take ... It doesn't take you an entire page to summarize a piece that you've read, but understanding and mastering that concept of how to summarize is important, to be able to shorten and summarize that in a short piece of information that you've read.

Alex advocated for use of research skills:

One thing that I try to do a lot, I probably don't do it as much as I should, but teach them how to take multiple sources and combine it into one argument. On one of the assignments we did the other day, we had five documents, and they had to read all five documents. Then they had to answer one question. Because I think if you just look at one document, especially in history, you're missing some part of the picture, or you're missing some point of view. So I try to give them multiple documents and then have them read through everything, and we can discuss each document individually, whatever they need to help out, but to be able to form one central thesis out of these sometimes very diverse points of view I think is something that is really beneficial, at least from the history side of it.

Franklin explained how good writing is important:

I Good writing is good writing no matter how many paragraphs it is, but also the flexibility to know if the teacher says, "I want a five paragraph essay," you better give them a five paragraph essay, regardless of how you were taught by your previous teachers. So the ability to categorize and put things in ... What we call them in AP sometimes is buckets, like you put in a bucket over here and a bucket over here, and each bucket is your topic sentence and your paragraph. So I know that's a small little thing, but political, if it's political you

put it in a bucket, if it's. And sometimes they give you the buckets, like talk about the political, social and economic ramifications of something. You put all the politics here, your economics here and your social here. And then that's the way you can frame your argument.

Walt described how students need to embrace the idea of a productive struggle:

Along the productive struggling, when you encounter a course that you're not inclined to do well in or you're struggling in, the mnemonic devices, developing those to help you get to the point where you can articulate knowledge and present to the professor, whoever is evaluating, that you know what you're talking about. If you're in that Socratic seminar or seminar class, it's probably very middle school, but those mnemonic devices can ... developing the skill of let's put together.

Franklin advocated for college bound students to be equipped with “GRIT” in order to be college ready:

You talk about classes that you don't do well or classes that you may not like, one of the things that kids have to have, students have to have the understanding is you're not going to like everything that we're studying or that we learn about. You create passion for inquiry, yeah, that's great, but there are some things you don't want to teach, some things you like teaching better. I have a friend who likes teaching the second half of American history. She thinks I like the first half, because, "You do it well."

I'm like, "That doesn't mean I like it," but the point is, sometimes you're going to ... You're not going to take a class you don't like, and we've got to teach these kids about perseverance a little bit, and if you teach them skills to get through that event, not everything ... You don't have to like and enjoy everything all the time.

The final question posed to the focus group was: what are or were some of the literary works or texts that you have assigned for your students? The majority of the focus group participants suggested exposure to quality literary texts, major work or author for college bound students.

Scarlet recommended that college bound students be exposed to the major works of William Shakespeare:

Shakespeare, all of them. Not all of them, but I'm just saying, I think actually it's an equity thing. I don't think it's fair that urban kids often don't get exposed to Shakespeare. Because the kids ... I'm pointing, because the mountain is literally right there. On the other side of the mountain, they are. Across the country, kids are exposed to Shakespeare, and I think on some level ... Whether it's Romeo and ... I know here [current school site] we do Romeo and Juliet. We do *Julius Caesar*. We do *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and so I know they get good Shakespeare exposure, but they also read the real text. I may put in some no fear to help them out, but we're always going back to the original struggling. And I just think ... And giving them those access points, to where like the struggle for power with *Julius Caesar*, they can connect that to any part of their lives, no matter where they're coming from.

Alice believed that college bound students need to be familiar with American literature:

And reading also, just mentioning, so American authors, Twain, Edgar Allen Poe, The Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, all of those things, that part of American literature and then what's so rich of what was happening in the history of that time period, any of those things. And I think about any time we talk about the literature, and we talk about the history, I became a little bit of a history teacher, just enough to engage them.

Nikki explained that students embrace literature better when it is made relevant to their actual lives.

I guess with British lit it's the same way, because really we look at American lit, I love American. I think I've taught grades 9-12, so I've taught it all. But British lit has a different element, because once you get to that 12th grade, there's been very little literature that appeals to male students. But British lit grabs those boys. Teaching stuff like Beowulf, there's a monster. He's killing people. He's eating them. He's drinking their blood, but then you get to heroism. Who's a hero? How do you define a hero? Who's the champion? How do you know this? So you get a chance to really get some real questions, and then I can bring in relevant material from now and pair that with this British literature, and it works, and it gets students reading. Canterbury Tales, hey, everybody can come in on society. What comment do you have on society? That's all Chaucer

is doing. He's saying, "Here these people are, and this is what I think about them." Now what do you think about the people around you?

So British lit has, even though for students it's old, the ideas and the things are so real and so new and so fresh that I can pull in a whole new group of students who have kind of given up with reading. Because boys, by the time they're 17, 18 year of age. First of all, after 13 there's very little is written for boys. I mean everything changed to all girl literature, and so boys just quite. They give up on actually reading. But I have the best classes with my classes that are full of boys, because when I talk about chivalry being dead and what it means to really go into courtship and how courting worked with knights and stuff like that, it changes the perspective. And it makes them begin to love literature again.

Scarlet advocated for modern literature for students literary experiences:

I don't know how long this one will stand the test of time, but I loved it this year, and I've used the same article two years in a row. But Superman and Me is the article by Sherman Alexi, and then Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian was our summer read, and I really like it.

Zora supported the use of informational text to enhance students' literacy knowledge:

And then another thing that I want to say is I don't think anybody mentioned it but analyzing the nonfictional writing, that's also like a good text that you can use within your classroom. Like I would use Martin Luther King's speeches, addresses, and his letter from Birmingham Jail. I would also use the JFK inaugural speech, and then I will compare the two. Then I would do a three-way comparison between like JFK, Barack Obama and then another inaugural speech, just to show the similarities and the differences between the people and the words and stuff like that. That nonfiction writing, some students cannot grasp that, but when they do, when they learn to analyze that, then some of their issues with political context.

Zora furthered the idea of non-fiction text with another literary recommendation:

And I would also use the Willie Lynch letter as well, and then we would talk about persuasion and the power of persuasion. And we would talk about that when we read that letter.

Franklin provided another point of view as he advocated for using standards to guide the literary selections for classroom reading assignments:

I think it's good to have a list of standards, like you're always going to teach these things, but it's also good to have that other list of when you get to know your kids. I'm going to use this lesson. And even to me, I don't want to be too bored and do the same exact thing over and over and over again. If it's new to me when I'm reading it and doing it and my perspective on it, then it's going to be exciting for them.

Overall, the focus group session yielded significant data on the core of the investigation: culturally responsive instruction and college readiness preparation. The group's respondents passionately described their classroom experiences in urban classrooms. Each of the ten participants conducted themselves as if they were in a professional learning situation and context.

Document Review Results

The researcher examine multiple documents (lesson plans, course syllabi, web site pages, reading lists, curriculum guides) from the research study participants. After transcribing the interview questions from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interviews, the researcher examined the artifacts using the Blooms Taxonomy chart and the Webb's DOK chart. After careful examination, the data revealed that only twelve out of the twenty educators were consistent with using academic rigor with instructional approach. All the participants expressed a desire and intention to implement academic rigor. From a Bloom's perspective, most of the indicated assignments measure at the "apply and "analyze" level. This implies that most of the academic tasks requires students to follow a procedure or examine a concept. Although there was clear evidence that teachers attempted to impart rigor, most assignments did require strategic or critical thinking. From a DOK's perspective, most of the assignments and tasks were at a Level two. This suggests that the instructional tasks involved skills and concepts as opposed to strategic thinking. This was indicated with twelve of twenty research study participants: seven

ELA teachers (Zora, Maya, Lorraine, Kenya, Scarlet, Nikki, Ida) and five social studies teachers (Toni, Gordon, Carl, Alex, Franklin).

Summary

In Chapter four the researcher presented findings that depicted how secondary teachers experience the meaning, methods, and perceived effectiveness of culturally responsive instruction on the college readiness in urban secondary schools. The researcher described her research purpose, methods, and analysis. The researcher intentionally and deliberately developed research to accurately gain insight into the lived experiences of the study participants. The investigator provided a summative narrative of each participants to clarify their inclusion in the research study. The researcher strategically handled the data to gather valid and reliable data through discussion of data cycle and navigation of data clusters and emerged themes. Data tables were provided to clarify and support the data findings and emerged themes and sub-themes.

Chapter four conveyed responses provided by secondary English Language Arts and Social Studies teachers in this research study through information gathered during individual interviews and a focus group session. The thirteen questions posed in the individual interview sessions and the five questions posed in the focus group revealed that perceived effectiveness of secondary teachers. The analysis disclosed that the instructional efforts of the secondary educators in this urban school district are intentional and deliberate. College readiness was viewed as an essential factor for their assigned students.

Chapter four identified four major themes, seven sub-themes, and ten characteristics consistently throughout the data. The themes that emerged from the data depicted teachers who are concerned for their students' academic progress. The emerged three dominant themes were empowering students with support, equipping students with 21st century skills, and engaging

students with quality instruction. Participants denoted value in sub-themes: connections, caring, skills, autonomy, instructional strategies, literary texts, and academic rigor. Teachers expressed that key characteristics such as relevancy and rapport, relationships and respect, technology, interest, collaboration, literary merit, standards and academic programs. Teachers placed value of connections and caring in the urban classroom. The sub-theme of connections continued to resonate through multiple respondents' statements.

The secondary educators reflected on the instructional experiences in their urban classrooms. Many of the teachers shared varied moments academic challenges and success. The teachers perceived their role as teacher as a critical one that impacts the achievement of students.

Chapter five will further explain the three major themes and seven sub-themes and their characteristics. The central research question will also be furthered clarified. Implications of this research study and recommendations for further research will be explored in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter five presents a summarization of this research study's key findings. It is organized into six sections: Introduction, recapitulation of the study, interpretation, meaning and significance, Meta-Reflection on Research Design and Methods, Practical and Policy and next steps in research on topic.

The researcher conducted this study to determine to what extent culturally responsive instruction influences the college readiness of urban secondary students in a southeastern urban school district. The researcher used a qualitative phenomenon study. The data were collected from two primary sources: semi-structured interviews and a focus group session. Participants were selected from a purposeful sampling of English Language Arts and Social studies educators. The majority of the participants were National Board Certified Teachers or NBCT candidates. Participants included twenty educators: twelve English Language arts and eight Social Studies.

This chapter weaved together the literature and findings, discussed secondary practitioners implications, and offers recommendations for future research. The purpose of this

qualitative phenomenologically informed study is to explore the Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in

Urban Secondary Schools. Specifically, the impact of urban students who are bound for four-year colleges and universities.

Within an eight-month data collection period, twenty participants were interviewed on their practice and perspectives of their daily classroom experiences. The researcher also examined lesson plans and curriculum documents used by the teachers and school district.

Recapitulation of Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenologically informed study is to explore teachers' meaning, methods, and perceived effectiveness of culturally responsive instruction on student college readiness in an urban secondary school district. Specifically, the impact of urban students who are bound for four-year colleges and universities. College readiness needs studying to address and to close the achievement gap that exists in many American schools. This study is significant because it addresses a key issue facing schools, which is the lack of preparedness for post-secondary learning. This crisis affects urban students and school districts most often. This study attempts to close the research gap that directly addresses college readiness from a global competence perspective as it directly influences secondary students and educators

The following central question guided the research study:

What does culturally 'responsive instruction' mean to urban educators, and how is this meaning enacted in the instructional strategies they use to prepare the students they serve for college readiness?

The four research sub-questions included the following:

1. How do study participants define ‘culturally responsive instruction’?
2. How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of students?
3. How do secondary teachers in this study cultivate college-readiness skills in their students? What specific instructional strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college-bound students they serve?
4. What implications do these findings have for educational leadership and policy?

The researcher used a qualitative phenomenologically informed research study design to capture the lived experiences and perceptions of twenty educators from a central Alabama urban school district. The conceptual framework driving this study applied two theories: constructivism and critical race theory. Semi-structured interviews, a focus group session, and an examination of course syllabus and lesson plans provided the central data for the emerged themes. This study holds significance as a bridge discourse to connect educational practice and educational policy with the actual needs of urban students and urban educators for the principle of college preparedness and global competence.

Interpretation, Meaning and Significance

College readiness continues to be a challenge for American schools, especially in urban high schools. Urban classrooms are impacted the most by varied factors: inadequate resources, inadequate learning contexts, and inadequate teachers (from inadequate preparation programs). Researchers and educators continue to probe the dynamics that contribute to a lack of college readiness. Reid and Moore (2008) indicated that the lack of college readiness is equivalent to the academic gaps that exist between underrepresented students such as students from urban school districts. Urban high school college-bound students often experience a higher rate of unpreparedness than other groups of students in higher education

The researcher based this study on three key research topics: culturally responsive instruction, college readiness and global competence. The study's findings reveal that the studied urban educators are purposeful in their efforts to teach students from diverse backgrounds. The respondents disclosed that they are considerate of the cultural richness and cultural capital of the urban students. For the purpose of this study, urban student is operationally defined as people of color who attend a school district in an urban district or a student who is a resident in an urban city and attends a school within an urban city setting.

Chapter two of this research study focused on the current literature of college readiness, urban students, and the researcher presented a foundation and culturally responsive instruction. The researcher vetted the findings through the lens of the literature: empirical, professional, theoretical/conceptual, and critical. The researcher used current and relevant literature to provide a clear and consistent conceptualization of the emerged themes.

The research participants' comments and responses yielded three major themes: Empowering students with support, equipping students with 21st century skills, and engaging students with quality instruction. Seven minor themes also surfaced during the data analysis.

Overall, participants' data revealed that similarities and contrasts existed among the respondents. The most obvious similarity is that all the participants' work in an urban school district at the secondary level. They shared that they all attempt to engage in student-centered instructional practices. The participants demonstrated a comfortable level of knowledge about the cultural richness and cultural capital of urban students. A revealed contrast is that the participants contrast their actual use of instructional strategies and resources and daily task. Another apparent contrast is the educator's personal educational experience and background.

Some of the educators experienced strong teacher preparation programs and some experienced inadequate in reference to preparing pre-service for diverse learners.

This study concludes that based upon teacher perceptions multiple factors contribute or improves the college readiness of college bound urban students. The analyzed teacher data revealed that the elements of best practices are critical for teachers in urban classrooms. A collection of various strategies and approaches seem to be effective among the studied teachers as opposed to the single use of a specific strategy. As suggested by this study, classroom environment is significant to the general learning of urban students. According to the respondents' comments, it is vital for students to experience connections, rapport, and respect in a community-like atmosphere in classrooms. This includes establishing an active and positive relationship with students while preparing them for college-level expectations. Best practices in ensuring college readiness focus on rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. Six of the twenty research participants taught Advanced Placement courses and all twenty taught pre-AP courses. The participants shared their perceptions on how the rigorous or advanced courses prepare students for college-level course work. This research investigation determined that best practices in ensuring college-readiness includes constructing partnerships with varied stakeholders. The study's data indicated partnerships could include local community colleges dual enrollment programs, Alabama's *At College Ready* initiative or *Gear Up Alabama*. This study indicated that an additional best practice requires teachers to be knowledgeable of college ready standards. Research participants shared how they planned lessons and academic tasks according to content area standards. This study concluded that teachers, schools and school districts must intentionally construct environments that create a college-going culture. Largely, the best practices are not necessarily

effective in a single manner but collectively improves the college readiness of secondary students. Therefore, best practices that contribute to the college readiness of urban students is multidimensional.

Based on these conclusions, this section will explain the interpretations, meanings and significance of this research study's findings. The findings are organized by the central research question and the four sub-research questions and three emerged themes: Empowering students with support, Equipping students with skills, and Engaging students with quality instruction,

The central research question sought to answer, "*What does culturally 'responsive instruction' mean to urban educators, and how is this meaning enacted in the instructional strategies they use to prepare the students they serve for college readiness?*" This question sought to investigate the impact of culturally responsive instruction on the college readiness of urban students that is the overarching purpose of the research study. The data disclosed that the research study's participants are aware and knowledgeable about the basic concepts of culturally responsive instruction. The participants' statements and responses disclosed their desire to prepare students for academic success beyond the secondary academic experience. They expressed their intentional and deliberate methods and approaches to close the academic deficiencies and gaps of their students. The researcher probed participants' basic knowledge of culturally responsive instruction by asking them to define the term on their demographic form (see appendix). Fifteen of the twenty participants directly stated their definition of culturally responsive instruction. All twenty of the participants showed overall knowledge of the term.

The first research question asked, "How do study participants define 'culturally responsive instruction'?" This question allowed the researcher to gauge the study participants' perception of culturally responsive instruction and its impact on the college readiness of their

students. Participants' statements lead to the emergence of one the study's major themes: *Empowering students with support* and the sub-themes of connections and caring. As reported in Chapter 4, teacher responses revealed that secondary teachers deemed connections, relevancy, caring, and cultural understanding as essential factors in a classroom. The majority of the twenty educators expressed that connections, relevancy and rapport as necessary for the secondary classroom.

The respondents' comments supports the meanings in empirical literature and research. Participants' comments and data revealed varied thoughts on connections and relevancy. The participants shared that teachers have to first build rapport with students and develop a sense of community before academic tasks can be effectively achieved. The research findings suggest that the participants conceptualized culturally responsive instruction as intentional attempt to make instruction relatable to students and their culture.

Harper stated that culturally responsive instruction necessitates educators being cognizant of their classroom dynamics:

All students come from different cultures, and different backgrounds, different family lives, different homes. I think that, as a teacher, you need to be aware of the diversity in your classroom, and work towards making everybody comfortable in the classroom. Not talking about anything in a negative way, to always discuss whatever the situation is, in a positive light.

Kenya defined culturally responsive instruction as a means to addressing students' cultural needs and enhancing the relevancy of students' experiences in the learning environment:

Instruction that appeals to students cultural needs. For example, if you have an ESL student you are trying to find ways to inject their culture or some of their experiences to help add to the classroom instruction. Being aware of the diverse needs of your classroom. Add diversity to

the instruction so that the child feels a sense of ownership and that their background is present. In essence, making the instruction relevant through making sure their background is present.

Franklin specified culturally responsive instruction as:

Culturally responsive instruction recognizes that the standards do not need to change but the pedagogy might need adjusting to ensure adequate learning takes place.

Connections. Students thrive when teachers foster a genuine attitude of caring, connections and relationships. Tsoi-A, R., & Bryant, F. (2015). expressed, “Teachers must believe that African American students are capable of these skills and cultivate them with culturally relevant methods. Teachers must also have authentic relationships with students to build a foundation of trust” (p.9).

Delpit 1995) reminded educators, “Knowledge about culture is but one tool that educators may make use of when devising solutions for a school’s in educating diverse children. The Culturally Responsive Teaching movement scholars (Gay, Ladson-Billings, Delpit) constantly send the message that teachers and school leaders must not assume deficits about students and focus on weaknesses but locate and teach to the students’ strengths. It is imperative that educators have knowledge of children’s lives outside of school in order to recognize strengths and skills. Delpit like many other educational scholars reiterated that “if schools are to successfully educate all of our children, we must work to remove the blinders build of stereotypes, monocultures instructional methodologies, ignorance, social distance, biased research, and racism.”

Caring. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Valenzuela (1999) addressed teacher-student relationships and the connection to caring. Two types of caring were examined at Sequin: aesthetic and authentic. At Sequin the teaching staff did not view students as sincerely interested in school while students did not view teachers as genuinely concern or caring about them. Valenzuela explained that these barriers prevented the connection needed for effective teaching and learning. Valenzuela stated that, “the difference in the way students and teachers perceive school-based relationships can bear directly on students’ potential to achieve.” (p. 62) This is such a detriment to students because it hinders them from succeeding academically. Valenzuela also reported that school leaders and teachers are expected more so than the students to provide the necessary aesthetic caring. (p. 62)

Valenzuela expressed, “To make schools truly caring institutions for members of historically oppressed subordinate groups like Mexican Americans, authentic caring is necessary, but not sufficient. Students’ cultural world and their structural position must also be fully apprehended, with school-based adults deliberately bringing issues of race, difference, and power into central focus.” (p.109) American society often employs stereotypes, which is often view as detrimental and interferes with education of young people. As Valnezuela pointed out much, too often as in the case Sequin adults are unable to perceive the differences of others because of their own culturally blocked vision. Educators must acknowledge and respect the similarities and differences that exist among people.

Much too often teachers mistake cultural differences for lack of interest in the attitudes of poor or minority youth. In many cases, it is not a disinterest on the part of youth, but a cultural disconnect. This disconnect of language usage causes teachers and school leaders to misread students’ intent and abilities. Due to cultural differences, teachers utilize instructional and

discipline practices that conflict with culture of the students. Educators must realize that students are people and people are different. Again, differences must be acknowledged and respected. Awareness and knowledge of culture is one way schools can educate diverse populations of students.

Current research data reported that most classrooms consist of more than forty percent of the children in America's classrooms are African American, Hispanic, Asian American, or Native American, yet most of those students' teachers are white. It is imperative that schools and communities do not allow inequalities and miscommunications to hinder children from receiving a quality educational experience. Another solution to this problem is to want the same quality education for other children, as they desire for their own.

The second research question inquired, "How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of college-bound students?" The researcher sought to find out whether or not teachers are using the instructional strategies recommended by college-bound agencies such as the College Board and ACT. This question proved a significant one because it permitted the researcher to explore the specific instructional strategies used by teachers in urban classrooms. Respondents expressed statements revealed the emergence of the major theme *Equipping students with 21st Century skills* and two subthemes: skills and autonomy. The question allowed teachers to share their rationale for the use of specific strategies. This question shed light on the level of rigor and engagement often encountered in the secondary classrooms. Participants expressed their viewpoints on which skills were necessary for academic success and college readiness.

21st Century Skills. The research participants fervently revealed their principles in equipping students with 21st century skills in an effort to prepare students for college and career readiness. Crockett, Lee et. al.; 2011) disclosed the significance of 21st century skills which are skills that have been identified as skills needed to thrive successfully in college and careers in the 21st century. These skills include digital literacy, critical thinking, and effective communication. Tsoi-A, R., & Bryant, F. (2015) reported, “Students need access to high-level courses with quality instruction to prepare them for rigors of college by increasing their content knowledge and cultivating their higher order thinking skills” p. 4).

Autonomy. Autonomy was another major theme that surfaced during the research study’s one-on-one interviews. Participants articulated a strong belief in autonomy and autonomy in two regards from teachers’ perspectives. One is the teacher’s direct autonomy to direct and lead classroom instruction. The other implied by the data suggested that teachers value choice for students. This is an indication of teachers who operate student-centered classrooms.

The third research question searched, “How do secondary teachers in this study cultivate college-readiness skills in their students? What specific instructional strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college-bound students they serve? This question probed for insight into what additional factors (other instructional tools and literary texts) contribute to college readiness and global competence. The researcher sought to identify which factors help to ensure and enhance college bound urban students with college readiness and global competence. The major theme *Engaging students with quality instruction* and three sub-themes: instructional strategies, literary texts, and academic rigor.

Engaging Strategies. Another sub-theme that emerged during the data analysis is the engaging instructional themes. The respondents revealed the use of instructional strategies as a means to build off the strengths of students and capitalize on student's cultural knowledge when students lack instructional knowledge (Gay, 2000). The teachers reported that they often use varied strategies on the premise that all students can learn. The teachers echoed the sentiments of the use of anticipation guides, surveys and other background building and priming activities "creates shared schema to optimize student learning" (Al-Faki and Saddiek, 2013). Coyne, Kame'enui, and Carnine, (2007).

Teachers described their practice of using instructional strategies to enhance student achievement. During the interview sessions and focused group session, teachers stated how they taught students to use different strategies during instruction. The educators also mentioned how they used research-based strategies to enrich student-centered classrooms and learning environments for the secondary learners.

The secondary teachers explained questioning and making connections as strategies used to engage students during classroom instruction. The educators used these strategies to foster literacy skills (reading, writing, and thinking) during instruction.

Literary Texts. One of the main task of an English Language Arts and social studies educator is to teach literacy skills. The chief literacy skills are reading and writing. Reading is considered a critical skill for college bound students. Sullivan (2009) presented six essential college-readiness skills: reading, writing, thinking, listening, Grit, and attitude toward college. Reading was identified as a critical college-level skill that is crucial for all areas of college learning. College-ready students enjoy reading and often read for pleasure. These students have been exposed to books of literary merit while in high school.

According to Sullivan (2009), reading is considered the most definitive pursuit of all liberal arts learning. Writing skills were recognized as a necessary college skill. College prepared students generate numerous drafts of essays. Good writers routinely re-read assigned articles and books. Good writers use the writing process to complete writing tasks. College-prepared students embrace feedback about their writing from peers and instructors. The research participants shared that the reading of essential literary texts were vital to the success of college-bound urban students. Teachers shared multiple books from the literary canon that are deemed of literary merit for their students reading curriculum.

The majority of the teacher participants noted that the selection and use of literary texts was critical for effective college preparedness. In some instances, the varied literary texts were clearly essential for college bound students. The researcher was able to examine eight (William, Franklin) of the teachers' lesson plans to investigate the direct use of literary texts in classroom instruction. However, the researcher visited six of the teachers' classrooms for an examination of the classroom libraries. The researcher's findings reflects documented studies. Multiple researchers considered teachers' meticulous selection and use of literary texts important to effective instruction (Mooney1990, Frey and Fisher 2007).

Academic Rigor. The research study participants expressed perspectives about their approach to providing rigor in their classrooms and lesson planning. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2017), secondary schools that effectively engage students actually, “set high academic standards and provide rigorous, meaningful instruction and support so that all can meet them.” The interviewees shared that relevancy is key component in their classrooms.

Blackburn (2018) explained rigor as “creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so he or she can learn at high levels, and each student demonstrates learning at high level. The document review and participants’ comments revealed that although participants’ are aware of the need of academic rigor, it is not consistently implemented in their lessons. The study’s findings disclosed that all twenty-research participants expressed an awareness on research-based strategies.

The fourth research question asked, “What implications do these findings have for educational leadership and policy?” This question allowed the researcher to determine the impact of the phenomenon of college readiness on the educational policy issues and concerns.

In essence, the research study participants’ educational practices and the study’s findings are aligned and consistent with current literature with matters of support. The study’s findings clearly indicated that the participants in this urban district are in align with the NBPTS expectations for accomplished teachers. This is a significant conclusion considering the majority of the twenty teachers are national board certified teachers (13 NBCTs and three NBPTS candidates). NBCTs are those who have achieved the NB distinction while candidates are those who are pursuing the certification in the process. The collected data disclosed that the participants the educators’ practices are aligned with the five core propositions. The core propositions are mutual intentions of all teachers across all grade levels and content who vow to enhance students’ academic success. The intrinsically linked core propositions are pivotal to teachers’ classroom practices. According to the NBPTS, the five core propositions are:

Proposition 1: Teachers are committed to students and their learning

Proposition 2: Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students

Proposition 3: Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning

Proposition 4: Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience

Proposition 5: Teachers are members of learning communities

The study participants disclosed that four of the five propositions are strong in their classrooms and school districts. Proposition one focuses on teachers' belief that all students can learn and achieve. This core expresses the notion that teachers recognize and identify the uniqueness of all students. These skilled teachers demonstrate a commitment to building relationships and connections to students. According to the NBPTS, this core proposition, "Teachers Recognize Individual Differences in Their Students and Adjust Their Practice, Teachers understand how students develop and learn, teachers treat students equitably, and teachers know their mission transcend the cognitive development of their students." The study's findings reiterated these ideas with emerge theme of *Empowering Students with Support*.

Proposition two concentrates on the commitment and dedication of teachers to ensure that students are well informed on the social, cultural, ethical and physical aspects of subjects. It places emphasis on a teacher's obligation to engage students with quality instruction. According to the NBPTS, proposition two, "Teachers appreciate how knowledge how knowledge in their subject is created, organized and linked to other disciplines, teachers command specialize knowledge of how to convey a subject to students, and teachers generate multiple paths to knowledge. The study's findings echoed this proposition with emerged theme of *Equipping Students with Skills*.

Proposition three focuses on the teachers' actions to sustain high expectations for all Students by creating and maintaining student center learning environments that are conducive learning. According to the NBPTS, proposition three, "Teachers call on multiple methods to meet their instructional goals, teachers support learning in varied settings and groups, teachers value student engagement, teachers regularly assess student progress, and teachers engage students in the learning progress." The study's findings depicted these same concepts in the

emerged theme of *Engaging Students with Quality Instruction*.

Proposition five centers around teachers engaging in collaboration for with other professionals, parents and other stakeholders. According to the NBPTS, “Teachers collaborate with other professionals to improve school effectiveness, teachers work collaboratively with families, and teachers work collaboratively with communities.”

Overall, this research study’s findings are consistent with the current literature; however, there are some inconsistencies and surprises from the data. One notable inconsistency is the lack of reflection in the daily teaching practices and approaches among the research participants. The research participants did not indicate that through their responses that core proposition four is evident in the routine educational practices. Holistically, the core position asserted that in general teachers should embrace a commitment to life learning and reflection. While the participants indicate a commitment to continuous growth, there was no direct acknowledgement to reflection. According to the NBPTS, core proposition four, “teachers make difficult choices that test their professional judgement and teachers use feedback and research to improve their practice and positively impact student learning. The use of reflection is one key dynamic and practice that the researcher expected to hear frequently expressed by the participants.

Meta-Reflection on Research Design and Methods of Study

As reported in chapter four, the researcher performed a data analysis on the data gathered from three sources: face-to-face interview sessions, a focus group session and an examination of sample lesson plans. Three major themes and seven minor themes merged from the data analysis.

In reflection, the research study proved to be a valuable one. Conducting a qualitative phenomenological informed investigation, allowed the researcher to engage in meaningful qualitative research with resourceful research participants. Using the phenomenological informed permitted the researcher to capture the lived experience of secondary educators. The use of the semi-structure interview was beneficial. Using the interview sessions, granted the researcher an opportunity to directly capture the essence of urban classroom experience. The focus group was an invaluable experience for the researcher and the participants. Although it was intended to be a research session, participants expressed appreciation for an opportunity to engage in meaningful discourse with their colleagues. The researcher also observed participants' lesson plans and course syllabus. Observing these documents afforded the researcher a chance to capture details not captured in the interview session or focus group.

The individual interview sessions were the most challenging aspect of the research process. The interview sessions expanded from June 2017 through December 2017. This six-month range was due to challenges with scheduling interviews with educators. Most of the educators were on vacation and engaging professional development sessions during the summer months. Teachers returned to school in August and then another obstacle was working around school schedules. Despite the oppositions with scheduling issues, each interview session was resourceful and informative.

Given the opportunity to facilitate this research examination, the researcher would modify three tasks. One would be he researcher would conduct two focus group sessions. The focus group sessions was beneficial to both the researcher and the participants. The focus group session yielded powerful and insightful responses from the participants. During the focus group sessions, participants were more relaxed and generous with their responses.

The second modification would be to use more participants, which would include participants from other urban school districts as opposed from the one. Participants in this study worked primarily at one school district for their entire teaching career with limited experience other urban districts. This factor limits how well the findings apply to the general body the participants of research on this specific topic.

A third modification is to survey the participants on their own educational experiences. Beyond the basic demographic profile form, the researcher did not further probe the research study participants' personal educational background. If granted the opportunity, the researcher would inquire about the participants' educational lineage and examine how the respondents' educational path influenced the educators' perceptions and teaching experiences. This question transpired as an epiphany for the researcher during the focus group session. At this point of the research process, the researcher recognized that another lens would also benefit the study. The identity theory became apparent as a tool for understanding how educator lived experiences impact their perceptions of classroom practices with urban students. It would be advantageous for educators to investigate how personal experience and identity influences the way teachers perceive diverse learners.

Practical and Policy Implications of your Study

This qualitative phenomenological informed research study voiced secondary teachers' practices and perspectives of culturally responsive instruction from interviews, focus groups, lesson plans and course syllabus. The researcher applied the rich and vivid descriptions evolving from teacher responses to construct recommendation for practice and policy. This research study will be applicable implications for secondary teachers, educational researchers, academic leaders and policy makers. Through the perceptions communicated by the research participants, valuable

insights were acquired that may be employed by educational practitioners and educational leaders to produce change in varied school contexts.

Based on the study's gathered data and findings, this section identifies implications for secondary educational practitioners and policy leaders. The implications are constructed with the intention of informing educators on how best to improve the college readiness of college-bound students.

Implications for Classroom Teachers:

Implication 1: A prevailing implication in this research examination is the significance of connections, rapport and caring. The gathered data denoted that the perception of teachers in this investigation were cognizant of the importance of establishing connections and build rapport with students. Overall, community building was evident in the teachers' classrooms and practices. The significance of rapport was clearly expressed in the interviews in this research study.

Morrell & Duncan-Andrade (2002) addressed the need for teachers to meet the challenge of forming meaningful relationships with diverse students. As American schools become more diverse, there is a strong need for "critical educators who wish to promote curricula and pedagogies that value and affirm the cultural practices of urban students and members of urban communities (p.88)."

Implication 2: Another leading implication in this research study is need for engaging strategies. The secondary educators resonated their use of engaging strategies. Particularly, strategies that promote literacy. Studies have proven that literacy powerful and even more so for urban students. However, not all of the secondary educators revealed successful use of engaging

strategies. The assembled data in this research study indicated that the instructors would benefit from additional support in learning to effectively engage students. Professional learning must be a continuous part of teachers' practice.

Implication 3: The study data suggested for consideration that classroom teachers are critical factors in classrooms. Studies show that, teachers have a major influence on academic achievement. Researchers Flores (2007) and Reid and Moore (2008) contended that three critical elements are essential for students to achieve and be college ready: high-level instruction in challenging courses, high expectations from teachers, and positive relationships with teachers and other school staff. This idea was supported and echoed from the data of this research study.

The study's data implied that students who enroll in rigorous courses taught by strong teachers are adequately prepared for post-secondary learning. Conley (2010) recommended that enrollment in rigorous content-area courses (English, math, science and social studies) and programs are ready. Effective courses and programs include but not limited to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Early College, and Dual Enrollment. Through these programs, students have an opportunity to experience high quality instruction, high expectations from teachers and positive relationships with educators. Advanced Placement have proven to be increasingly beneficial preparation factor for urban schools.

Implication 4: A dominant implication in this study is the criticalness of teachers to facilitate a 21st century classroom to prepare students for global opportunities. School districts need to establish ongoing professional development to ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge on best practices for teaching diverse learners.

Singmaster and Manise (2014) focused on how teachers can prepare students to be globally competent. The authors proclaimed that students must be afforded opportunities to develop global and cultural competence skills. Global competence was defined as the skills and dispositions required for students in the interconnected world. Although there are several required global competence skills, having an interest in learning and exploring the world and how it works is major.

Implication 5: Teachers need to be knowledgeable of content standards and plan lessons accordingly. Common Core Standards – Alabama College and Career Ready Standards (CCRS) are part of continuous debates in the Alabama legislature and in school districts across the state. The CCRS is Alabama’s version of the Common Core Standards. The CCRS is a state-led initiative to enhance the success students need for college and careers. They are intended to provide students, parents and teachers with a clear and consistent set of expectations.

The State of Alabama is one of the forty-four states who voluntarily adopted the Common Core State Standards. In November 2010, the Alabama State Board of Education sanctioned the adoption of the global standards along with the state’s own tailored standards. Dr. Tommy Bice, former Alabama Superintendent of education is a strong advocate of the Standards.

“Incorporating the Common Core Standards into our already highly regarded content standards brings a new level of rigor and perceptual understanding to teaching and learning.”

According to the Alabama State Board of Education website (alsde.edu), the Alabama College and Career (CCRS) or the Common Core State Standards focuses on increasing the rigor in the curriculum with the intention of increasing the number of students who are college and/or career ready.

“With students, parents, and teachers all on the same page and working together toward shared goals, we can ensure that students make progress each year and graduate from school prepared to succeed and build a strong future for themselves, our communities, and the country. These new standards are designed to be relevant in the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in both college and career. When American students have the skills and knowledge needed in today's job market, our communities will be strong and competitive in the global economy.”

Implications for instructional leaders (lead teachers/curriculum leaders/department heads):

Implication 6: Instructional leaders whether lead teachers, curriculum coaches or department heads have a significant role in schools to influence the college readiness of secondary students. This study's depth suggested that one of the best ways to continue to develop culturally competent teachers is through teacher leadership. Teacher leaders are ideal for facilitating in-service activities on culturally responsive instruction and other diversity issues. Schools districts can employ the support of veteran teachers as well as build the capacity of teachers coming from strong multicultural teacher education programs.

Current research and this study's data implied that teacher leadership is vital to the success of schools. Schools and leaders such as principals and superintendents must embrace the concept of distributed leadership to function effectively. Teacher leaders are vital components of the organizational structure of schools. In order to adequately address the diverse needs of today's schools teacher leaders must be empowered and equipped to lead because leaders cannot lead alone. Many teachers have years of experience with curriculum, assessment and parent involvement. The study's data suggested for consideration that leaders must capitalize on that gained knowledge and experience by allowing teachers to share their expertise.

Researcher McEwan (2003) expresses a more formal definition of teacher leadership. A teacher leader is an individual who exhibits leadership skills in one of the following areas: (a) mentoring and coaching new teachers; (b) collaborating with all staff members; (c) learning and growing with a view to bringing new ideas to the classroom and school; (d) polishing writing and presentation skills to share knowledge with others; (e) engaging in creative problem solving and decision making with increased student learning as the goal; (f) willingness to take risks in front of peers; and (g) willingness to share information, ideas, opinions, and evaluative judgments with the instructional leader with complete confidence.

Research suggests that teacher leaders can positively affect schools and student achievement. If given the opportunity, teachers can utilize their expertise to promote improvement without leaving the classroom. The notion that leaders cannot lead alone is expressed through the research of Richard Elmore (2000, 2004). Elmore states that it is the work of school leaders to ensure that teachers continue to develop. He bases this concept on two principles: (1) the purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, and (2) instructional improvement requires continuous learning (2000, p.20).

Many researchers believe that teacher leadership can positively influence and impact school wide multicultural efforts. Three main reasons have appeared in research: 1) to take advantage of teacher knowledge and expertise in the design and operation of educational programs, activities and curricula; 2) to recognize and reward highly accomplished teachers, which encourages their retention in the classroom; 3) to benefit individual teacher leaders, their colleagues and their students (Leithwood & McCall, 2003).

Varied researchers support the belief that teacher leadership is a worthwhile endeavor for schools to support teachers' cultural competency. Educational researchers such as Michael

Fullan (2008) explained that teacher leadership would develop a collaborative culture among teachers. He strongly suggests that school systems engage in distributed leadership to develop professional learning communities where leadership is shared. Furthermore, McEwan (2003) states that effective instructional leaders recognize the importance of distributed leadership for developing the vision, making decisions and implementing programs. Also, Drago-Severson's (2009) reports that teacher's leadership provides individual and systemic growth. "Leadership roles support individual growth and learning, build capacity of the system, promote change across the school, and strengthen learning communities" (P.108).

Liberman & Mace (2008) addressed teacher leadership and teacher learning and proposed that a resolution to improving teachers practice is teaching each other. "In plain terms-people learn from and with others in particular ways. They learn through practice (learning as doing), through meaning (learning as intentional), through community (learning as participating and being with others), and through identity (learning as changing who we are) (P. 227)."

If implemented effectively, teacher leadership will continue the task of higher education by continuing the learning of teachers in their effort to obtain cultural competency.

Implications for School-based Leaders:

Implication 7: An additional implication is for schools and school districts is to create a "college-going" culture at their school. It is important for high schools to create a culture and climate that promotes college readiness. These cultural initiatives could range from celebratory practices and programs to course offerings. As reported by varied researchers and educational organizations, a college-going culture is essential for urban schools because urban students often

attend schools that do not properly prepare them. It imperative that schools reverse this trend by deliberating planning for success.

Researchers have disclosed that schools with strong college-going cultures help students to successfully transition from high school to college. A case in point, Consortium on Chicago School Research (2008) reported that Chicago students from high school to college found that “The single most consistent predictor of whether students took steps toward college enrollment was whether their teachers reported that their high school had a strong college climate; that is, the teachers and their colleagues pushed students to go to college, worked to ensure that students would be prepared, and were involved in supporting students in completing their college applications. (p.4).

College Board, a leading college readiness organization, encourages school districts to create college-going cultures in their schools. College-going culture is conceptualized as the environment, attitudes, and practices in schools and communities that urge and foster students and their families to acquire the information, tools, and perspective to heighten access to and success in post-secondary education. College Board (2006) advocates that a College Board school environment benefits all students regardless of their long-term plans. A college-going culture promotes the belief that all students can plan to have options encompassing of a profitable future and productive life. “A college-going culture builds the expectation of postsecondary education for all students—not just the best students. It inspires the best in every student, and it supports students in achieving their goals (2006).”

According to College Board, urban students are more likely to experience college-planning obstacles (social and language barriers, less access to information and guidance, less exploration because of low expectations, decreased access to the Internet, and underestimation of

the amount of financial help available. It imperative that urban school districts provide urban students with a learning environment that provides resources and opportunities that eliminate academic and access gaps.

College Board (2006) indicated that schools and school districts must first facilitate a review of goals and a needs assessment including the assessment of their school or district's current culture. For many schools, establishing a college-going culture will require a shift. Researchers (Achieve.org, 2004, Fast Forward to College, 2005) disclosed that creating a college-going culture requires a change in attitude on a global scale.

After a thorough and honest evaluation of needs and goals, schools should determine small scale and large-scale plans and programs that advance a college-going culture. Small-scale ideas can be simple but impactful. College Board (2006) suggested schools these ideas: appearance of school grounds, appearance and attitude of faculty, available and informative course handbook, inviting and helpful counseling office, and curricular ideas (applicable to college and beyond). Suggested large scale initiatives include: *Advanced Placement* Programs, College Ed resources and curriculum, AVID program, TRIO program (Upward Bound), *GEAR UP* program, and other outreach programs.

Implications for School District Leaders:

Implication 8: An implication is for school district leaders to recruit and maintain high quality teachers for urban classrooms. Strong teachers, not race or culture, affect a student's success the most (Moore et al., 2010). Although students often face many obstacles outside of the school context, the presence of a strong teacher will heighten academic success. Thompson, Warren, Fthreery, & Dickerson (2008) declared that quality teaching and instruction is the most

influential in-school factor for student achievement. Tsoi-A, R., & Bryant, F. (2015) believed that, “Students need strong teachers who are well-educated, experienced, and equipped with cultural proficiency (p. 9).”

Implications for teacher education programs:

Implication 9: An implication is teacher education programs need to prepare teachers for multicultural classrooms. Current research suggested that students benefit when teachers are well informed on how best to teach students. It is imperative that high-quality teachers teach those students. For this reason, teacher education programs should prepare preservice teachers for diverse learning environments.

Empowering and equipping culturally competent teachers, remains a constant challenge for teacher education programs. Teacher education programs are tasked with developing teachers equipped and skilled for diverse classrooms. Jenks, C., Lee, J. & Kanpol. B. (2001) reported that multicultural education be a major element in teacher education programs. “Teacher education programs in colleges and universities must make the commitment to encouraging the kind of transformative learning in preservice educators that eventually will result in powerful multicultural programs for students (p.89).”

Varied research has suggested that it is crucial that teacher education programs properly prepare students to address issues of race, culture, class, and gender in curriculum and instruction. Ladson-Billings (2004) stated that CRT could be applied to explore how teacher education students and educators learn to teach in essential multicultural manners or to continue the normality. “Critical pedagogy must be performed by critical pedagogues, and few if any, teacher preparation programs systematically prepare such teachers. CRT’s project is to uncover

the way pedagogy is racialized and selectively offered to students according to the setting, rather than to produce critical pedagogy (P.60).”

In many cases, investigators discovered that teacher education programs limit pre-service students with one required multicultural course offering. The single course is not proficient for discussing a multitude of diversity issues. Often the lack of infusion of multicultural education prohibits students from developing a more comprehensive knowledge of students’ lives and teacher pedagogy. Jenks, C., Lee, J. & Kanpol. B. (2001) conveyed multicultural infusion is a critical factor of a teacher education program that strives for cultural-competency. Multicultural programs should be a part of the entire college or university. “Departments can incorporate a multicultural perspective into many of their courses can include a social justice component that, by making connections between course concepts and experiential learning in the community outside the institution, takes a reconstructive or social action approach to multicultural education (P.102).”

Solorzano (1997) explained that the CRT advocates for preservice students to have experiences that encourage a discourse of difference and community strength, because many of the existing programs bolster a negative view of culturally, linguistically diverse learners, and their communities.

Cochran-Smith (2000) affirmed the significance of teacher educators undergoing transformative learning in their own understanding of multiculturalism. She recommends, “The inclusion of theories of practice developed by and about people of color, along with “rich and detailed analyses of successful teachers of urban children, particularly poor children of color, who use a variety of pedagogies” (P.129). Cochran-Smith (2003) emphasized the significance of teacher educators examining themselves and their own practices in addition to probing students’

constructions of race in the teacher education classroom and more broadly in teacher educators' experience. After examining her personal work and student teachers' perspective of race and was able to reveal that exist in the teaching and outlook of race in teacher education.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2005) suggested that teacher education programs design programs that bring awareness to diversity, equity, and social justice in all courses and field experiences for prospective teachers. "Teachers need to be supported in developing the commitment to teach all children to high standards (P. 274). "

Urban classrooms are impacted the most by teachers from inadequate teacher education programs because most of their teachers are white, middle class and female. Urban schools benefit when teachers exit teacher education programs well equipped to embrace diverse learners. It is essential for educators to be cross-culturally competent and have high expectations for all students along with being willing to empower urban students to reach higher levels of achievement.

Implications for Professional development programs:

Implication 10: This study's findings implied that once teachers exit teacher education programs and enter "real world" situations in actual classrooms, embracing culturally and linguistically learners often remains a challenge. It is necessary that school districts continue the efforts of teacher education programs by providing job-embedded professional development and teacher support. The professional development activities should focus on ways to capitalize on cultural capital wealth as it relates to curriculum and classroom instruction. This approach is generally known as culturally responsive instruction or culturally relevant pedagogy. This approach fosters

positive relationships and connections between home, school and community experiences as evident in the study participants' responses.

Varied researchers have reported that teachers in teacher education need to become better equipped to teach and address the needs of all students. Research has established that teacher leaders are ideal for leading and facilitating job-embedded professional development that enhances teachers' cultural competency. Obiakor (2008) asserted, "Professional development must be directed toward enabling teachers to focus on their conceptions of themselves and others, their cultural knowledge, and their classrooms' social structure."

The culturally responsive method will ensure that all students African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic are provided with equitable opportunities to be academically successful. Currently, the district uses a minimum of strategies to capitalize on students' cultural wealth. Ladson-Billings' (1995, 2001) recommended schools provide ongoing professional development on multicultural education. Ladson-Billings also recommended that teachers examine their own cultural biases and prejudices. Teachers need to learn more about how to use the students' culture as a basis for learning throughout the curriculum and across disciplines. Another beneficial strategy is to strengthen their connections with families and communities by taking neighborhood walks. As reported in Chapter two of this investigation, researchers have suggested for consideration that teacher education programs must require multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy as a significant component when preparing teachers for the culturally diverse classrooms. Culturally responsive instruction and pedagogy's goal is to enhance the academic achievement of all students; therefore, it is not limited to students of color or low economic status.

Implications for policy makers:

Implication 11: A final implication for this research investigation is for local, state and national policy makers to provide guidance and resources for urban schools to prepare students for global competency in the 21st century. Bryant (2015) explained that schools and school districts not only need policies that are responsive to all students be subjected to racial equity to ensure equitable teacher distribution and resources. With suitable policies in place, schools are able to enhance student achievement. “By strengthening school practices, as well as district, state, and federal education policies, we can open doors to post-secondary success” p.15).

As reported in Chapter two of this research study, Ladson-Billings (1995) explicated that educators and policy makers need to make more of an effort to pedagogy as part of educational reform. She proposed three criteria for culturally relevant teaching: an ability to develop students academically, willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of sociopolitical or critical consciousness. “Thus, culturally relevant pedagogy must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (p.13). The researcher highlighted the pedagogical practices of eight successful teachers of African American students. The work of these teachers demonstrates culturally relevant pedagogy in action. Students were held accountable, as part of a larger group, and it was everyone's task to make certain that each individual member of the group was successful.

Study findings suggest that policy makers and leaders should take an active role in ensuring that policy and procedures are in place for schools and school districts to provide resources, curriculum and support for preparing students for global competency in career and college readiness. (Balistreri et al., 2012) provided a comprehensive overview of globalization and education. It addressed, reviewed and summarized the significance of preparing students for

global competence. It implies that the term college-ready is outdated due to the strong demand for students to be globally competent. According to the researchers, there has been a transformation from preparing students to be college and career to preparing them to function in a global society.

Conley (2005) and Conley (2010) have recommended that policy address the critical aspects of college readiness and college success. Conley (2005) advocated that all levels of policymakers have to collaborate for positive change. “Policymakers need to contemplate bold steps that break down the barriers between high school and college (p.161).” Conley (2005) denoted that state policymakers should make a strong effort toward changing policies that directly affect college success. The investigator recommended changes ranging from modifications in high school graduation and college admissions to curriculum revisions (p. 161-162).

The research on college readiness is positive and plentiful, but there is a need for more research on the impact of policy issues such as the Common Core Standards on college bound students from urban high schools to college.

In essence, the findings of this study will make momentous contributions to advance the development of college readiness initiatives, programs and curriculums. It is the intention of this study to contribute to the body of research on college readiness as an effort to close the achievement gaps of college students in Alabama and throughout America.

Thorpe (2014) explained,

Teachers, administrators, and others whose work is designed to support best practice in our schools must seize this moment to rethink every aspect of the trajectory people follow to become accomplished teachers. Getting that path right and making sure all teachers follow it asserts the

body of knowledge and skills teachers need and leads to a level of consistent quality that is the hallmark of all true professions. The government cannot do it. Business cannot do it. Only educators can make it happen, and we need to seize the opportunity we have now to do just that.

Next Steps in Research on Topic

This phenomenologically informed research study extends a primary view encompassing the core of how teachers experience and understand the impact of culturally responsive instruction on the college readiness of urban students.

In light of this study design, methods, and findings, the researcher will extend the line of inquiry to focus more on the culture and climate of the urban schools and its impact on teachers and students college readiness efforts.

For further study, the researcher proposed four additional steps to this research study:

- Ask the participants questions that will yield direct information on school culture and climate
- Interview English Language Arts and social studies teachers from other urban school districts with similar demographics
- Expand the target population of participants to include more urban school districts
- Interview students of the teacher participants to gauge their college readiness, access and success

Learned Lessons from Study

As an urban school educator, the researcher learned it is crucial to read, connect and reflect. As a qualitative researcher, the investigator read the relevant literature, connected the

theoretical foundations to the respondents' comments. The connection enabled the researcher to comprehend the wealth of knowledge gained in the collected data.

This research experience has been an unforgettable experience. This study has changed the researcher's perspective not only on preparing students for college learning but beyond. The researcher now realizes the impact of leadership and culture on the college readiness of urban students. The researcher is convinced more than ever that competent leadership is an absolute necessity in urban schools. It is often argued that a quality teacher is a critical factor in the classroom. This study has led to the conclusion that competent leaders are critical to urban schools. Competent leaders who employ strategic leadership is vital to closing the academic gaps that exist in urban schools and urban communities.

A strategic leader is necessary to lead today's schools. Current research and education trends have suggested that changes in our global society have transformed educational leadership to the point that it needs a more active role in college preparedness for urban students. Educational organizations have shifted from a maintenance approach of leadership to a strategic style of leadership. Educational organizations and corporate leaders often refer to "twenty-first century learners" referring to the connecting of core subject learning with collaboration and learning. It has been said many times over that teachers must change their traditional ways of teaching in order to effectively prepare and address the needs of twenty-first century learners. In reflection, this same notion is true for today's educational leaders. It is crucial that today's leaders are strategic in their approach to leading schools and educational organizations to better prepare marginalized students for college access and college success.

Effective leaders acquire a vision that they are able to communicate. In other words, these leaders need to be strategic in their daily execution of leadership practices. These leaders must be

willing and able to make sound decisions about the varied contexts of their urban schools. If leaders are to be effective, they have to stay abreast of local, state and federal policies. The idea of strategic leadership is supported by sound research.

Guthrie and Schuermann (2010) described the varied conceptions of leadership and discussed the importance of nature and nurture in developing leaders. It is necessary for organizational leaders to have knowledge of varied leadership theories and styles that influence education. It is imperative that today's school leaders are strategic in their attempt to lead educational organizations. Johnson and Kruse (2009) discussed the value of decision-making for educational leaders. The authors presented several assumptions about decision-making. A key assumption is that the core of leadership is decision making. Patten (2004) presented a narrative to demonstrate how leaders handle leadership and decision making in actual experiences.

As result of this research study, I realize the criticalness of effective and competent leadership in schools. The readings have brought me to a complete perspective on what it means to be a competent leader in the twenty-first century. A strategic leader is necessary to lead today's schools. This week's readings denoted that changes in our global society have transformed educational leadership. Educational organizations have shifted from a maintenance approach of leadership to a strategic style of leadership. We often hear the term "twenty-first century learner" referring to the connecting of core subject learning with collaboration and learning. It has been said many times over that teachers must change their traditional ways of teaching in order to effectively prepare and address the needs of twenty-first century learners. In reflection, I believe this same notion is true for today's educational leaders. It is crucial that today's leaders are strategic in their approach to leading schools and educational organizations especially as it relates to college and career preparedness for students.

This research experience lead me to conclude that effective leaders acquire a vision that they are able to communicate. In other words, these leaders need to be strategic in their daily execution of leadership practices so that teachers and other stakeholders are equipped to empower engage and equip students. These leaders must be willing and able to make sound decisions about the varied contexts of their organizations.

I have come to the conclusion that if leaders are to be effective, they have to stay abreast of local, state and federal policies. Johnson and Kruse (2009) discussed the value of decision-making for educational leaders. The authors presented several assumptions about decision-making. A key assumption is that the core of leadership is decision making and theorizing.

As a twenty-four year educator, the entire teaching experience has been in an urban school district. From a professional perspective, I desired to enhance my knowledge base of college readiness strategies. Recent understanding gained through this study has broaden my perspective on education and teaching. As a result, the researcher is even more committed to providing students with opportunities to be college and career reading and globally competent for future endeavors. Education significantly influences socioeconomic gaps and the overall quality of life for all people, particularly minority individuals.

Although I encountered some days when I second-guessed my decision to do this, I have benefitted tremendously from this research experience. I experienced several epiphanies during this process. One memorable epiphany is that the achievement gap cannot be closed or narrowed until educators and the public is aware that achievement gaps exist. Although academic disparities have existed for many years, schools and governments limit efforts. Closing or eliminating the academic gaps is the responsibility of all stakeholders not just teachers.

I encountered two groups of people during this research process: those educators and parents who know the gaps exist and believe with strong efforts, difference can be, and those educators who are educators and parents who chose to ignore that the gaps exist. I am grateful for the encounter with those teachers and parents whose students are excelling in spite of academic gaps. I am appreciative to those teachers who are considerate enough to share their expertise and what works for students. Most teachers want students to be successful and are willing to go beyond to ensure that students achieve.

As a parent of three children of color, this study has enhanced my determination to make sure my children and relatives are afforded all the opportunities to be globally competent for diverse learning and living situations. I am even more determined to support their efforts and choices to become productive members of society.

In essence, this research study has stimulated my interest in college readiness. My thinking has expanded to other areas of impact as it relates to college readiness and global competence. I am willing and ready to take the discussion of academic disparities and college readiness to the next level. I have always embraced the idea of professional learning experiences. However, after four years of reading tons of literature on college readiness and cultural responsive instruction, I desire even more opportunities to learn about this topic at conferences, seminars and workshops. My goal is to enhance my knowledge based with tools and strategies that will equip me to share with colleagues and students. Ultimately, I plan to use this newly gained knowledge and share with schools and school districts how to create and develop college-going cultures in urban school districts.

In the final analysis, cultural diversity in American classrooms range from encouraging a mutual culture to celebrating different cultures. It is imperative that teachers, school leaders and

school districts provide an environment in which culturally and linguistically diverse learners understand the world around them and their place in that society as constructive citizens. As indicated in this study, teachers have to be equipped to acknowledge and appreciate student's individual significance. Teacher education programs, culturally responsive instruction and teacher leadership are key methods for preparing educators to provide effective academic environments for all learners and to meet the academic challenges of a global society. (Delpit 1995) reminded educators, "Knowledge about culture is but one tool that educators may make use of when devising solutions for a school's difficulty in educating diverse children. (167) The CRT movement scholars constantly send the message that teachers and school leaders must not assume deficits about students and focus on weaknesses but locate and teach to the students' strengths. It is imperative that educators have knowledge of children's lives outside of school in order to recognize strengths and skills. Delpit like many other educational scholars reiterated, "If schools are to successfully educate all of our children, we must work to remove the blinders build of stereotypes, mono-cultural instructional methodologies, ignorance, social distance, biased research, and racism.

It is imperative that educational leaders, practioners and policy makers collaborate with the intention of providing more culturally responsive educators and programs for underrepresented students or students of color. Dr. Montrisha Williams of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) contended that, "culturally responsive college readiness must be race conscious and equity minded." Williams argued that in an effort to gain college readiness, culturally responsive educators need to consider the cultural knowledge and qualities of urban students and employ this knowledge to close achievement gaps and provide learning opportunities for all students.

To be college and career ready in the 21st-century global economy, every student (urban and others) needs to be equipped with global and cultural competence skills. As informed by participants in this study, progress to close achievement gaps of underrepresented college students is possible. College-readiness is an imperative component for success at the postsecondary level for all students and even more so for urban secondary students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Study: Exploring Teachers' Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College Readiness in Urban Secondary Schools

Attention: Study Participant

Fill in the following information about you. Your answers to the following questions will be used for research purposes only and will be kept strictly confidential.

Interview Details	
Date and Time	
Interviewee Identifier	
Interviewer Initials	
Location of Interview	
Basic Demographic s (Interviewee completes)	
Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31 to 40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41 to 50 <input type="checkbox"/> Over 50
Gender	<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female
Race	<input type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Mexican <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Educational Details	
What training/qualifications do you have that are of relevant to your current position or occupation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, AB, BS) <input type="checkbox"/> Some graduate school, no degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree (for example: MA, MS) <input type="checkbox"/> Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, JD, PsyD) <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)
Do you have any other specialized training or certifications? NBCT ?	
How long have you worked in this position?	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 years of experience <input type="checkbox"/> 5 to 10 years of experience <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 15 years of experience <input type="checkbox"/> 16 to 20 years of experience <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20 years of experience

How many years do you have in education?	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 years of experience <input type="checkbox"/> 5 to 10 years of experience <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 15 years of experience <input type="checkbox"/> 16 to 20 years of experience <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20 years of experience
What subjects and grades do you teach?	
Describe what you do in your position as a teacher?	
Describe your school/school district?	
How many urban schools or school districts have you worked?	

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured- Interview Protocol

Research Study Interview Guide

Welcome, _____! Thank you for participating in this interview session.

I am Tineka Peoples, a doctoral candidate student in the Department of Educational Leadership Policy and Technology in the College of Education at the University of Alabama. I am conducting a research study on “Exploring Teachers’ Meaning, Methods, and Perceived effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College Readiness in Urban Secondary Schools.”

In this interview, I am interested in learning and understanding teacher perceptions of college readiness in English language arts classes. Over the next 45-60 minutes, I will ask you some questions about culturally responsive instruction and college readiness. If you feel uncomfortable answering a question, you are welcome to pass on the question. If you need a break, please let me know. I will be recording this session because I do not want to miss any of your comments. Because we are recording, please be sure to speak up so that we do not miss your comments.

Your identity will be kept confidential. Are there any questions about what I just explained? If not, let’s get started!

The following questions will be used in the semi-structured interview sessions:

RQ1 - How do study participants define ‘culturally responsive instruction’?

IQ1 – As an educator, how do you perceive culturally responsive instruction?

IQ2- How do you tailor or adjust instruction to capitalize on the cultural richness of students?

IQ3- What is your classroom experience with your students when you implement culturally responsive instruction in the ELA classroom?

IQ4- How do you connect with your students who come with varied culture and social status which differs from yours?

IQ5- How do you build upon students’ prior knowledge, experiences and or cultural backgrounds in your teaching?

RQ2- How is culturally responsive instruction perceived to enhance the readiness of college bound students?

IQ1- How are instructional materials selected for your classroom? How much input or autonomy do you have in curriculum choice- what gets taught? When? How?

IQ2- What are the concepts or skills you feel are vital for the academic success of your students? Why are these so important?

IQ3- Explain how you plan a lesson for your students? (When creating a lesson or project, how much of it is influenced by student interest? Engagement? Rigor?)

IQ4- How do you motivate your students to learn and or achieve?

RQ3 - How do the secondary teachers in this study use culturally responsive instruction to cultivate college-readiness skills in their students? What specific instructional strategies and tools are perceived by study participants as essential to the preparation of the college-bound students they serve?

IQ1- What is your personal philosophy for working with your students?

IQ2- What instructional strategies or resources do you consider to be essential to prepare students for college readiness?

IQ3- What are/were some literary works or texts that you have assigned for your students to read during the school year? How much choice were students given, if any?

IQ4- How do your personal values steer your current position as an English Language Arts or social studies teacher?

APPENDIX C

Interview Email Invitation/Script

EMAIL Script

Dear Educator:

My name is Tineka B. Peoples and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Alabama. I am conducting a research study to investigate the Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in Urban Secondary Schools

You are receiving this email because I am recruiting individuals to participate in a short questionnaire and interview of which should take no more than 45- 60 minutes to complete. The information you provide will be completely anonymous. In fact, neither your name nor the school name will be mentioned in the study. You will only be referred to as "Participant A, B, C," etc. and the school as "School 1, 2, 3," etc.

Your participation will involve responding to a brief questionnaire regarding your involvement with urban students and your instructional practices. Knowing how teachers instruct urban students is critical to the prepared of secondary students for successful matriculation at four year colleges and universities.

Your participation in this questionnaire and interview is voluntary. The results of this research will be presented without disclosing your name and school. Individual teacher and school data collected will be kept confidential and secured.

It is the intent of this study to provide secondary and post-secondary educators with further knowledge to improve college readiness initiatives and efforts and to better prepare urban students for college readiness and global competence.

Again, your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call (205) ***** or email me at tbpeoples1@gmail.com or tlbates@crimson.ua.edu.

Sincerely,

Tineka Peoples, Ed.S

APPENDIX D

IRB Approval

April 26, 2017

Tineka Bates Peoples
ELPTS
College of Education
Box 870302

Re: IRB # 17-OR-149, "Exploring the Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College Readiness in Urban Secondary Schools"

Dear Ms. Peoples:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on April 25, 2018. If your research will continue beyond this date, please complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped consent forms to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



Carquato T. Myes, MSW, CHM, CH
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office for Research Compliance

APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT

AAHRPP DOCUMENT #193

**UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM**

**CONSENT FORM FOR NONMEDICAL- Semi-structured Interviews
and Focus Group**

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

Individual's Consent to be in a Research Study

You are being asked to be in a research study. This study is called
“Exploring the Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of
Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College Readiness in Urban
Secondary Schools.”

This study is being done by Tineka Bates Peoples. She is a doctoral
candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership Policy, and
Technology in the College of Education at the University of Alabama.

The study is not supported by any special funding or grants.

What is this study about?

The lack of college readiness of high school students is a critical concern
for secondary and post-secondary institutions across the United States.
This study is seeking to understand the influence of culturally responsive
instruction on the college readiness of college bound urban students.

Specifically, the investigator would like to know how the
Culturally responsive instruction impacts urban students bound for four
year colleges and universities. You will also be asked about your
instructional practices and resources and some of your personal or family
characteristics such as age, education, occupation, and income level.

Why this is study important—what good will the results do?

The findings will help educators, educational leaders, higher education
administrators better prepare urban students for successful college
studies. This will help them to plan and implement

Why have I been asked to take part in this study?

You have been asked to participate because you teach English Language arts or social studies, you teach in an urban school district, and/or you are a National Board Certified Teacher.

How many other people will be in this study?

The investigator hopes to interview 5 - 10 people during the focus group session.

What will I be asked to do in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, Tineka B. Peoples will interview you in your home or school, or place of your own choosing about your experiences in an urban classrooms and with urban students. The interviewer would like to tape record the interview to be sure that all your words are captured accurately. However, if you do not want to be taped, simply tell the interviewer, who will then take handwritten notes. The interviewer will ask you to complete a 5-7 minute written demographic survey. The interviewer may request to view your teaching documents and artifacts such as lesson plans and curriculum guides.

How much time will I spend being in this study?

The interview should last about 60 minutes, depending on how much information about your experiences you choose to share.

Will being in this study cost me anything?

The only cost to you from this study is your time and availability.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?

In appreciation of your time, you will receive a \$10 gift certificate to a local grocery store when the interview is completed.

What are the risks (problems or dangers) from being this study?

The chief risk to you is that you may find the discussion of your experiences to be sad or stressful. You can control this possibility by not being in the study, by refusing to answer a particular question, or by not telling us things you find to be sad or stressful.

What are the benefits of being in this study?

There are no direct benefits to you unless you find it pleasant or helpful to describe your experiences with your colleagues or students. You may also feel good about knowing that you have helped secondary and post secondary educators learn how to help families or adult children better.

How will my privacy be protected?

You are free to decide where we will visit you so we can talk without being overheard.

We will visit you in the privacy of your home, classroom or in another place that is convenient for you.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

The only place where your name appears in connection with this study is on this informed consent. The consent forms will be kept in a locked file drawer in Mrs. Tineka Peoples, which is locked when she is not there. We are not using a name- number list so there is no way to link a consent form to an interview. When we record the interview, we will not use your name, so no one will know who you are on the tape. Once back in our office, a research assistant will listen to the tape and type out the interview. When the interviews have been typed, the tapes will be destroyed. This should occur within one month of the interview. You may also refuse to be audiotaped, in which case the interviewer will take handwritten notes.

We will write research articles on this study but participants will be identified only as “persons from an urban school in central Alabama”. No one will be able to recognize you.

What are the alternatives to being in this study?

The only alternative is not to participate.

What are my rights as a participant?

Being in this study is totally voluntary. It is your free choice. You may choose not to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. However, if you stop the interview, you will not receive the gift card. Not participating or stopping participation will have no effect on your relationships with the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board is a committee that looks out for the ethical treatment of people in research studies. They may review the study records if they wish. This is to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

If you have questions about this study right now, please ask them. If you have questions later on, please call Mrs. Tineka Bates Peoples (tlbates@crimson.ua.edu) or Dr. Bob Johnson, Faculty Advisor, University of Alabama, (bob.johnson@ua.edu).

If you have questions or complaints about your rights as a research participant, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066..

You may also ask questions, make a suggestion, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html . After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that are online there, or you may ask Tineka Peoples for a copy of it. You may also e-mail us at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

___ **Yes**, I agree to be recorded during the research study's focus group.

___ **No**, I prefer not to be recorded during the research study's focus group.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX F

Focus Group Invitation

FOCUS GROUP EMAIL Script:

January 15, 2018

My name is Tineka B. Peoples and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Alabama. I am conducting a research study to investigate the Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in Urban Secondary Schools

I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group (small discussion group) on **Tuesday, January 23, 2018**, about the *Meaning, Methods, and Perceived Effectiveness of Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in Urban Secondary School*. The session will be held at XXXX School at 4:00 p.m. in room 202M.

Your participation will involve responding to brief questions regarding your involvement with urban students and your instructional practices. Knowing how teachers instruct urban students is critical to the prepared of secondary students for successful matriculation at four year colleges and universities.

Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. The results of this research will be presented without disclosing your name and school. Individual teacher and school data collected will be kept confidential and secured.

It is the intent of this study to provide secondary and post-secondary educators with further knowledge to improve college readiness initiatives and efforts and to better prepare urban students for college readiness and global competence.

The focus group should last no longer than one hour. The focus group will provide an opportunity for me to find out about *Culturally Responsive Instruction on Student College readiness in Urban Secondary School*.

If you would like to take part in the focus group on **Tuesday, January 23, 2018**, please let me know by contacting me via email no later than Monday, January 22, 2018.

Again, your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me@ [XXX-XXXX](tel:XXX-XXXX) or tlbates@crimson.ua.edu.

Thank you in advance for your participation and cooperation.

APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Focus Group Interview Session Protocol

Good evening and welcome. Thank you for participating in this focus group interview session.

I am Tineka Peoples, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology in the College of Education at the University of Alabama. I am conducting a research study on exploring the meaning, methods, and perceived effectiveness of culturally responsive instruction on student college readiness in urban secondary schools. In this interview, I am interested in learning and understanding teacher perceptions of college readiness in English language arts classes and social studies classes. Over the next 60 minutes, I will ask you some questions about culturally responsive Instruction and college readiness. If you feel uncomfortable answering a question, you are welcome to pass on the question. If you need a break, please let me know. I will be recording this session because I do not want to miss any of your comments. Because we are recording, please be sure to speak up so that we do not miss your comments.

Your identity will be kept confidential. Are there any questions about what I just explained?

A few ground rules:

There are no right or wrong answers.

We are tape recording, one person speaking at a time

We are on first name basis.

You do not need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others

share their views

Turn off or silence your cellphones. If you must take a call, please exit quietly and return to us.

My role is a moderator to guide the discussion.

Talk to each other and not me.

Focus Group Questions:

- Tell us your name, what you teach, how long you have taught, and whether or not you have taught middle and high school.
- When you hear the term college ready, what actions or words come to mind?
- What are the concepts or skills you feel are vital for the academic success of your students? What concepts or skills do you think that every student should have been exposed to, talked, experienced in order to be successful academically?

- What instructional strategies or resources do you consider essential to prepare for college? We talked about the skills and concept, but what specific instructional strategies or resources do you think is vital?
- What are or were some literary works or texts that you have assigned for your students to read during the school year either presently or in the past? What works that you really feel are significant for every student to have bene exposed to in his or her secondary career?

This ends our focus group session. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I will be analyzing the information you and others provided.