Developing a Culturally Responsive Lens: Diversifying Read-Aloud Text in an Elementary School Setting
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ABSTRACT: As a second grade teacher at a culturally diverse school in Renton this action research project was an initial step in implementing a more culturally responsive approach to my personal practice. Through a designed intervention examining the role of race and equity in my literacy curriculum’s read aloud texts I monitored impact on myself, my grade level Professional Learning Community (PLC), and students. To monitor impact I used interviews with participating students, field notes, and culturally responsive mindset surveys with teachers, artifact collection, and reflective prompts in my personal research journal. Three major findings emerged: increased agency in my practice, increased awareness of the need to openly discuss race and equity in teachers’ personal practice, and a student preference for texts that they related to, specifically, their cultural background. This was the beginning of an ongoing journey of developing my personal practice of becoming a more culturally responsive educator.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
How might literacy-focused, grade-level PLCs be used as a lens for exploring and enacting culturally responsive second grade language arts curriculum in a highly diverse urban school setting?

Sub-questions:
1. How might participation in this PLC impact my own practice as a culturally responsive educator?
2. How might participation in this PLC impact my colleagues’ practice as culturally responsive educators?
3. How might my students’ attitudes about literacy be impacted by a more culturally responsive literacy curriculum?

METHODS: MATERIALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How might participation in this PLC impact my own practice as a culturally</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
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<td>responsive educator?</td>
<td>Questions</td>
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<td>2. How might participation in this PLC impact my colleagues’ practice as</td>
<td>PLC Artifacts</td>
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<td>culturally responsive educators?</td>
<td>Pre/Post Mindset Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. How might my students’ attitudes about literacy be impacted by a more culturally responsive literacy curriculum?</td>
<td>Pre/Post Interview of Sample Group</td>
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EXAMPLES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Example Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Reflective Questions</td>
<td>Do I allow culturally based differences in language, speech, reading, and writing to shape my perceptions about students’ cognitive ability?</td>
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<td>Teacher Mindset Survey</td>
<td>I don’t think of my students in terms of their race or ethnicity. I am colorblind when it comes to my teaching. First Thoughts: Disagree Neither Agree or Disagree Agree 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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METHODS: INTERVENTION

Session 1:
- PLC examined rationale for CRT PLC participated in Neuwirth’s protocol
- Teachers took Common Belief Survey

Session 2:
- PLC examined alternative texts for upcoming unit

Session 3:
- Additional PLC session for evaluating alternative texts and determining success criteria

*I taught the same unit with Anna Hibiscus by Atinuke (2010) and updated the PLC with reflections and data

Session 4:
- Shared results of unit reflections and data collected from student interviews and curricular survey
- PLC members took Post-Intervention Common Belief Survey (see Appendix A) in PLC

FINDINGS:

Impact on Personal Practice:
1) Increased agency in my responsibility of the literacy content
2) Culturally Responsive Teachings as a critical lens rather than a new skill set

Impact on PLC
1) Increased awareness of the role of race and equity in literacy
   
   Participant Voice: N stated: I hate Minnie and Moo now. I do not know if it was the graphic you showed Erika. But it doesn’t feel right reading this book about cows.
   K’s response: You are right. Why are we reading this silly book about cows when there are much more rich text out there that we could be using?

Impact on Student Attitudes
1) Students enjoy books that they relate to on a personal or cultural level
2) Students enjoyed the replacement text-especially who the text represented
   
   Participant Voice: B stated: I don’t like Minnie and Moo. I am bored of the part where they had to visit the farmers. I don’t get it. I have never been to a farm.

IMPLICATIONS:

This action research project was the initial effort of my broader goal of becoming more culturally responsive in my own practice. This project allowed me to take a first step into an ongoing stance as a reflective practitioner. I believe immediate next steps should be:

- Revisit the conversation on the role of race in the literacy and overall curriculum prior to each unit
- Find more texts that reflect students’ backgrounds
- Advocate for more professional development surrounding culturally responsive teaching, race, and equity
- Join a community that supports discussion surrounding race and equity in the classroom