Toward an Anti-Racist English Language Arts Practice: Engaging in Critical Literacy Education Through Equity-Based Coaching

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Current English Language Arts programming and pedagogy, having evolved from colonial and racist histories, continue to employ instructional practices set to exclude, deculturalize, and assimilate America's marginalized citizens. Today's literacy educators continue to play a crucial role, regardless of intention, by further marginalizing their students and imposing Eurocentric cultural and linguistic standards in the classroom. This study sought to provide teachers with a research-based approach toward sustained, transformational pedagogy that would challenge the Eurocentric standard by providing all students with a critical, culturally sustaining, and anti-racist literacy experience.

Using Django Paris and H. Samy Alim's work on Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Albert Bandura's theory on teacher self-efficacy as theoretical frameworks, this study was guided by the following inquiry question: How might coaching and professional development specific to the literacy curriculum increase teacher self-efficacy in consistently embedding culturally sustaining teaching practices and cultivating an anti-racist learning environment? Six English Language Arts teachers participated in a six-week anti-racist-based coaching model. Data collected throughout the study consisted of field notes taken during classroom observations, professional development sessions, and weekly surveys. A thematic coding system based on Elena Aguilar's "Mind the Gap" coaching framework (2018) was used to provide a precise qualitative

analysis of the piloted coaching model's effectiveness in aiding the participants in increasing their teacher self-efficacy throughout the study.

This study illuminated the importance of building a coaching culture that supports teachers engaging in anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Providing stepping stones for intentional coaching strategies that shift teachers towards sustained, transformational change, this study highlights various types of educators and the dissonance between strong teacher self-efficacy and authentic implementation of culturally sustaining instruction. These findings indicate the crucial role of coaches and effective coaching systems, encouraging the intellectual development of in-service educators, shifting teacher practice, and ultimately school culture toward equitable and impactful change.

Research findings also highlight the need for intentional connections between pre-service educational institutions and school districts to better prepare future instructors for diverse and urbanized classrooms while also auditing existing accountability systems to better support coaches and instructional staff in anti-racist and culturally sustaining pedagogical practices.

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Acknowledgments

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Dedication

To Marley Mariah, Michael Norrice III, and Moses Edward; this work is dedicated to you. My true reasons for daily fighting for educational freedom.

If the stars were made to worship, so will I

If the mountains bow in reverence, so will I

If the oceans roar Your greatness, so will I

For if everything exists to lift You high, so will I

If the wind goes where You send it, so will I

If the rocks cry out in silence, so will I (So Will I-100 Billion X, Hillsong United, 2017)

But they delight in the law of the Lord,

 meditating on it day and night.

They are like trees planted along the riverbank,

 bearing fruit each season.

Their leaves never wither,

 and they prosper in all they do. Psalm 1: 2-3, NLT

I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change, I am changing the things I cannot accept.

 Angela Davis

1.0 Introduction: Moving from a Problem to a Problem of Practice

Traditionally, English Language Arts (ELA) education focuses on the mastery of English language skills for all students in Kindergarten through Twelfth grade within the United States education system (Kridel, 2010). These skills are situated in the pedagogical strands of visual representation, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing (Kridel, 2010, p. 2). Traditional ELA classrooms at the secondary level (sixth through twelfth grade) provide students with the opportunity to expand on their reading comprehension skills through the exploration of canonical literature and nonfiction texts, poetry, essays, and other forms of media while applying reading and writing skills and strategies. Students are supposed to cultivate their writing skills through creative and expository writing and grammar lessons, while teachers are meant to support students in this skill development and prepare them for life beyond the school environment. However, the true goals of Eurocentric national ELA curricula are deeply rooted in a dark history for power and racial superiority.

Current ELA programs evolved from national and educational histories that largely excluded enslaved Africans and forced the assimilation of immigrants, marginalized citizens, and Indigenous populations (Rury, 2005; Tyack 1974), a movement more specifically called deculturalization or the "conscious attempt to replace one culture and language with another that is considered 'superior'(Spring, 2016, p.1). This was and still remains an integral part of American education dating back to the time of English settlement (Spring, 2016, p.1), and in my opinion a major part of ELA programming. In the process of colonization, American settlers developed myriad ways to deal with "captured cultures" (p.5), and their developing education system would be one such way. By advocating for a united American culture, men like Noah Webster formed a

unified language, and a way of teaching and learning this unified language (Spring, 2016, p.15). The cultures, languages, and literacies of Indigenous Peoples, enslaved Africans, Asian Americans, and Latinx/Hispanic cultures, among many others, have been actively snuffed out through our education system, a system that claims to educate not erase.

For racially and linguistically minoritized and marginalized students in the U.S., success in ELA is achieved when they integrate fully into society leaving behind their native languages, literacies, and cultures outside of the classroom (Kridel, 2010), a success defined centuries ago by deculturalization and a desire to both unify this American culture and reject a multicultural country (Springer, 2016). Although varying languages and cultures could be explored in a language arts classroom (or any classroom for that matter), the United States focuses solely on teaching and building a curriculum around standardized English as the dominant language. With the "standard" English language taking precedence in literacy classrooms and ever-increasing assimilation and erasure as part of the curricula for racially and linguistically minoritized students, ELA curricula are not at their core critical or anti-racist. Indeed, without deliberate planning, design, and implementation, ELA educators and their curricula perpetuate the assimilation and erasure that the earliest formal schooling in the U.S. established; as many literacy educators remain unaware (intentionally or unintentionally) of this history our education system stems from, and the pivotal role ELA as a content area still plays in deculturalization, it is necessary for current and incoming literacy educators to both answer to this history, and begin developing and instructing from curriculum counter culture to it. This dissertation in practice rests on the premise that in order to shift schooling toward actually educating and supporting all students, specifically students of color, educators need to engage in critical literacy education in ELA classrooms and beyond.

Critical literacy pedagogy challenges the status quo in an effort to discover alternative paths for self and social development. These kinds of literacies--words rethinking worlds, self-dissenting in society--connect the political and the personal, the public and the private, the global and the local, the economic and the pedagogical, for rethinking our lives and for promoting justice in place of inequity. (Shor, p. 2). In 2005, Morrell argued for Critical English Education in ELA classrooms in order to "develop in young women and men skills to deconstruct dominant texts carefully (i.e., canonical literature, media texts) while also instructing them in skills to create their own critical texts that can be used in the struggle for social justice" (p. 313). Despite the fact that schools are at the center of increasing racism, states are increasingly (and successfully) pushing for the removal of curricula that discuss and center race. In addition, heightened by changes in education due to a current global pandemic, media and literacies are readily available to students, but they are not receiving the support they need to interpret and analyze these literacies in critical ways. Students need language arts programs poised to help them critically navigate all texts surfacing with easy accessibility; literacy programs that not only prepare them to become active citizens but support them in developing the critical analyzing and thinking skills needed to decipher fact from fiction and legitimate source from conspiracy theory, while also bringing together their out of school contexts and their classroom instructional content. Students desperately need schools determined to present the truth, prepare them for a global citizenry, and provide them all with an anti-biased, anti-racist, culturally sustaining equitable education.

Given that the need for students to be able to critically discuss, understand, write and speak about various forms of media, and the need for schools willing to adopt a critical literacy approach within their schools is paramount, my problem of practice focuses on bridging a schools' mission to anti-racist work and the way that is or is not reflected in a teacher's daily instructional practice.

My problem of practice is that the Sustainability Academy's (SA) literacy/English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum and programming remain disconnected from the overall mission to become an anti-racist institution. In my role as Associate Director of Curriculum and Professional Development (AD), in this study, I worked alongside the middle school ELA teaching team to align our current scripted curriculum with the institution's vision and mission to become anti-racist and culturally sustaining. My goal in addressing this particular problem of practice is to ensure families that teachers are providing students with culturally sustaining, critical learning experiences that allow them to learn how to challenge all the texts around them, while simultaneously enabling them to question and reflect as they work to become critical readers, writers, and thinkers. I am approaching these changes by beginning with examining teachers' self-efficacy in working intentionally and consistently to create anti-racist classroom environments and instruction, while simultaneously evaluating the current curriculum and overall middle school ELA programming, ELA teaching practices, and pedagogy at the middle school level.

1.1 SA in Context

The Sustainability Academy (SA) is a Kindergarten through Tenth-grade charter school district within the Pittsburgh Public School (PPS) system focused on a mission to "create global citizens." These globally oriented student leaders experience curricula rooted in real-world problems - both inside and outside their classroom walls - so that they become change-makers with an environmental impact. SA also notes a commitment to Sustainability, Equity, and Diversity, as well as becoming an anti-racist institution. SA's shift toward a more equitable school came from the founding CEO in 2016. He was determined to lead the staff in transforming the

district into an equitable and diverse place, by ensuring all those within each building felt safe, seen, heard, and represented. In the spring of 2019, SA began its journey toward expansion. By the 2019-2020 school year, our district inhabited three school buildings to better serve their current Kindergarten-Eighth grade population and house their newly added ninth-grade academy. Along with acquiring a new building for our middle grades and ninth-grade academy, the district expanded its content offerings to now include an ELA class within the middle school and high school grades.

1.2 A Non-Performative Story

It is important to note the ways in which school districts and other organizations often create and proclaim grand missions bent toward equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. As I seek to challenge educators to align their mindset and practice to a mission centered on anti-racism, I must do so by first acknowledging the non-performative culture this mission began within. SA began its efforts toward a more equitable learning environment during the 2017-2018 school year. Teachers received professional development and gathered in anti-racist and culturally sustaining focused Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and discussion circles after our district appointed willing participants to an Equity and Diversity team. However, the very presence of a team dedicated to anti-racist goals, as Ahmed (2016) suggests provides members within that community with a false sense that the work is getting done because of their presence. In the end, the Equity and Diversity team ceased to exist shortly before our district expansion. At the time of this expansion a new building administration was appointed. As it currently stands, within SA's four buildings we have a predominately Black administrative team, another equity and inclusion

non-performative facade (Ahmed, 2012). A non-performative, as defined by Ahmed (2012) describes the "reiterative and citational practice by which discourse does not produce the effects that it names" (p. 117). Our primary school currently has a White female principal, with no assistant principal support at the moment; the intermediate building has a Black female principal and a White male assistant principal; the middle school building has a Black female principal and a White female assistant principal, and our high school building has both a Black male principal and a Black female assistant principal. It is in front of this diverse backdrop that I begin my work with this dissertation in practice, aware that the presence of Black leadership does not drive our anti-racist mission, but in fact hinders it greatly. In four schools that remain predominantly White spaces each year, three out of four of those buildings provide upper administration, teachers, staff, and other stakeholders with a false sense of success in the equity and culturally sustaining department simply because at least one of their leaders is Black. As Ahmed (2012) states "appointment becomes a story of not being given institutional support, as if being 'just there' is enough. An appointment of a diversity officer can thus represent the absence of wider support for diversity" (p. 23). Although the role of school administration is not a formal equity officer appointment, it is their very presence that allows instructors and staff to believe that "the work" is happening. It is this belief that permeates within the staff. It is this non-performative culture my work must exist within and must find specific ways to address.

The SA Middle School serves over three hundred sixth through eighth-grade students daily. The building is led by two administrators and over twenty teachers on staff. Each grade level includes five content area teachers for Science, Math, ELA, and Cultural Literacy (the only content area that has a dedicated co-teaching model), a special educator who specializes in literacy and another in math, and a grade-level paraeducator who dedicates their time in the science classroom.

The building also includes a school counselor, a social worker, a school nurse, a gifted educator, and an associate director of professional development and curriculum. All the schools within the district share a district-wide school psychologist, a special education director, a curriculum director, and an executive director dedicated to the secondary level of the district; and the other four associate directors of professional development and curriculum often provide support to the middle school depending on their area of specialization and the need of the administrators.

When the ECS middle school opened its doors in 2019, the racial demographics were 58% white, 30% Black, 2% Asian and Hispanic, and 8% Multiracial. In contrast, during the 2018-2019 school year ECS middle school comprised 67% white students, 18% Black students, 3% Asian and Hispanic, and 9% Multiracial. During the chaotic quarantine-heavy 2020-2021 school year, the middle school racial breakdown was 55% white students, 33% Black students, 1% Asian and Hispanic students, and 9% Multiracial. In the current 2021-2022 school year, the middle school is 55% white, 34% Black, 1% Asian and Hispanic, and 9% Multiracial.

Up until the 2019-2020 school year, ECS provided middle school students with Science, Math, and Cultural Literacy, a course that blends English Language Arts and Social Studies, as core content areas. ELA seemed the perfect fit, especially within the school's overall mission to grow citizens, and provide a learning environment "rooted in real-world problems that build active, engaged and empathetic citizens" (www.ecspgh.org). An ELA classroom can provide the tools for these young citizens; an ELA classroom should be at the forefront of this specific learning environment.

1.3 ELA at SA

SA introduced an ELA class to their middle school population as a response to parent complaints after their child graduated from SA and went on to high school. Students who passed cultural literacy classes for three years, who proved themselves to be good writers and engaged readers were suddenly unsuccessful or overwhelmed in high school. As the years went on, more parent and student complaints increased, and SA leadership felt they needed to no longer continue without providing a solution. Initially, the middle school ELA team of teachers set out to build a literacy program from the ground up, one that would fit into the mission and vision of the school, with a consistent arc across all three grade levels. In the summer of 2019, we were introduced to the Lucy Calkins Reading and Writing Workshop, and the district purchased the units of study curriculum for the entire middle school (as well as for the other literacy teachers in our lower grades). The workshop model curriculum seeks to "prepare students for any reading and writing task they will face and turn kids into life-long confident readers who display agency and independence" (www.unitsofstudy.com). Although the curriculum encourages students to consistently read and write, it also seeks to expose students to characters in stories that do not look like them; as well as push students to apply skills and strategies to any text in order to navigate it with independence, taking for granted the foundational reading experience every child may or may not have.

Over the last few years, I found myself questioning the true purpose of an ELA teacher. The problem faced as an ELA teacher at SA reflects the larger lack of autonomy experienced by teachers more broadly. Our task has been to teach the curriculum with fidelity, in hopes that our scores increase because students are reading more; however, many of our students in middle school struggle with reading and writing, with some being two or three grade levels behind their peers. In

addition, as an institution that seeks to be anti-racist, literacy should provide students with an ability to seek truth and examine power, in order to analyze and question myriad literacies--not just fiction with a dash of non-fiction. In order to tackle the aforementioned problem of practice, this project focused on providing teachers with intentional coaching in order to directly address the tension between teaching ELA in a way that forwards critical thinking, calling out and disrupting racism and power structures, and supporting students in becoming critical readers and writers, all while implementing a scripted curriculum focused on improving student test scores, and increasing students' ability to read multiple books independently within a school year. Almost four years ago, our CEO spoke of a charge towards change--a change that sought to stop the school's current trend flow towards becoming a predominately White private school institution masquerading as a public school for all. This project sought to guide teachers towards enacting this charge and aiming for sustainable anti-racist change.

2.0 Review of Existing Literature

The following section reviewed the literature that contextualized my problem in research. The first section, *The Role of Literacy Educators: A Call to Action* examined scholarship from influential literacy education scholars in order to give an understanding of what the role of a literacy teacher means and what it calls for; as well as discuss what is not required out of a literacy/ELA class today given the changes in the texts, the increase in exposure to many kinds of text and the myriad ways students can engage and make meaning of multiple literacies. The remaining sections of this literature review situated the role of literacy education and the call on its teachers within two pivotal theoretical frameworks: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) and Teacher Self Efficacy (TSE). Through a review of these frameworks in literature, I positioned them as anchors for making anti-racist literacy education from a call into action at SA.

2.1 The Role of Literacy Educators: A Call to Action

This section of the review discussed research that helped to provide context for the role of literacy educators. The following questions guided the process: What is the role of a literacy educator? What is required of literacy education today? Language arts teachers of ECS must have an understanding of not just what their job is but apply that understanding within the context of what kind of student this particular class must engage in shaping; more specifically, what environment must be co-created between students and teachers in order for anti-racism practices to take root within the ELA curriculum and class environment.

As the literacy landscape changes and several forms of literacy become more easily accessible, more students are navigating texts at a greater rate than ever before, without the necessary skills to interpret critically the information they digest daily. As SA seeks to move toward an anti-racist institution, so too must all curriculum and content areas. As a place where all students are instructed in learning to read the world around them, the ELA classroom is a powerful place for anti-racist work to be done and done well. What takes place outside of the school walls, greatly affects what takes place within the school classrooms. Scholars like Baker-Bell, Butler & Johnson (2017) pose an important question for literacy educators: what should be the responsibility of all English educators in the wake of terror, death, and racial violence?" (p.123). Morrell (2005) provides an answer to this question by offering up English education and those who teach it as the solution. He contends that the most powerful role in education is that of the literacy/ELA teacher: "the most important participants in our most important institutions are those who teach language at the primary, secondary and post-secondary levels" (p.312). All manner of citizens emerge from this classroom space, and there is an honor, Morrell argues, that comes with "teaching critical approaches to the consumption and production of language" (p.312). Morrell highlights a need for Critical English Education (CEE), a literacy instruction that will intentionally equip students with ways to dissect texts and new media literacies in the context of race, racism, and power (Morrell, 2005). CEE seeks to develop skills that will help students deconstruct texts, I'd argue all texts they may in fact come into contact within their lifetime, specifically those dominant texts in our society (p.313); as well as "instructing them in skills that allow them to create their own critical texts that can be used in the struggle for social justice" (p.313).

More recent research from literacy scholars echoes Morrell's charge for a critical lens embedded in literacy instruction. Johnson (2018) expands on the notion that CEE is necessary, by

calling for Critical Race English Education (CREE). CREE "explicitly addresses issues of violence, race, whiteness, white supremacy and anti-Black racism in the classroom, explores the intimate history and current relationship between literacy, language, race, and education, seeks to dismantle dominant texts and build on Black literacies" (Johnson, 2018, p.108). Johnson demands the intentional inclusion of Blackness in ELA classrooms, in order to incorporate the wealth of literacies that Black youth bring into learning spaces daily. CREE responds to the racial violence enacted on Black students through the lack of integration of the culture of Black students (Johnson, Jackson, Stovall & Baszille, 2017). The racial tensions and violence enacted against Black bodies are woven into language and interpretation, which is taught within ELA spaces. There is a misreading that happens when it comes to the way White people perceive Blackness and Black bodies this misrepresentation begins in English classrooms with the very way educators instruct students and exclude Blackness within their pedagogy (Johnson et. al, p. 60).

Kinloch (2009) speaks to the importance of learning and engaging with literacy as it relates to place, stating the importance of the inclusion of Black students, their communities and the rich out-of-school learning Black students experience in their community when it comes to them making meaning in literacy. She writes: "In this way, knowledge and identity are central factors in understanding multiple meanings, purposes and locations of literacy...the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being" (Kinloch, 2009, p.321). The very work ELA teachers expect students to enter into in their classrooms cannot happen when Black voices, Black literacies, and students' very identities are eliminated from the curriculum. As students engage with various forms of literacies (media, technology, social media, print, etc.) they do so through a lens of identity, rooted in their place. However, traditional ELA classes filter through the same texts and authors, elevating specific

voices each year. This according to Johnson et. al (2017) is violence against Black bodies because the absence of their voice and literacy enacts a type of violence while demonstrating to other students in the classrooms whose voice is valued. This linguistic and symbolic violence experienced by Black students (p.61) "plays an essential role in the spirit murder of Black youth. It polices the language of students by forcing them to adopt the language of the oppressor while dishonoring the linguistic dexterity Black youth bring into the classrooms" (Johnson et. al, 2017, p. 62).

Literacy scholars (Kinloch, 2009; Love, 2019; Muhammad, 2020) like Morrell (2005) and Johnson (2017, 2018) call for literacy teachers to revolutionize their classroom spaces and curricula, include Black literacies, adopt new ways of thinking and engaging with these literacies and allow Black students to bring into class the wealth of genius they already arrive with. All while preparing students to identify the ways in which racism and power are laid bare within texts we place in front of them, giving them ways to speak to and fight against institutional and systemic racism through critical literacy instruction. Kinloch (2009) specifically speaks to the need for ELA teachers "to adopt an ideological view of literacy in order to seriously consider the literate lives of youth during out-of-school time" (p.321), arguing for a revision of our definition of literate, what educators include as canonical and legitimate texts, and how educators determine mastery of ELA standards and skills.

2.2 Implications for Problem of Practice

Specifically for literacy, the aforementioned scholars call for an immediate need in shifting the way ELA is taught and who it is taught for. The times we live in now urge all ELA educators

to lead in the work of intentionally evolving into an anti-racist space, one where white students might break the cycle of white supremacy, power, and privilege, and Black students are seen, culturally sustained, and allowed to participate in education fully as themselves. In order to begin addressing the disconnect between the ELA content area and SA's mission to become anti-racist, it's important to know that the call for this work in literacy exists outside of the district, and yields research to guide and shape ELA teachers in taking up this call to action. These researchers above provide teachers with information regarding what happens when you heed the call to provide students with CEE or CREE within the literacy space, who will benefit (*all students*), and who will suffer if critical literacy is not taught (*all students*). This section of the literature also provides SA ELA teachers with a bedrock of literature and scholars in community with them as they embark on this journey. The next section grounds the work to transform the ELA program in a specific pedagogical approach: culturally sustaining pedagogy.

2.3 Framed in Theory: From Culturally Relevant to Culturally Sustaining

This section of the review discussed the evolution of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) to Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) and its connection for SA ELA educators in aligning their content, in order to aid SA in becoming an anti-racist and anti-biased (ABAR) institution. CSP provides literacy educators with a foundation they can build their practice upon. The call to create ELA classroom spaces that lend themselves to authentic inclusion and activism begins with an understanding of why these classroom environments are truly necessary, what they currently look like, and how they are experienced by marginalized students specifically. In order for SA literacy

educators to implement the school's mission of becoming more ABAR, they must begin with an understanding of CSP.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014) is an educational framework built upon the vast history of resource pedagogies (Paris, 2012, p. 93); more specifically, the pioneering research and teachings of Gloria Ladson-Billings' approach known as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (1995). Ladson-Billings distilled the work of scholars of her time with a desire to provide educators with a pedagogical practice intended to serve students of color. In her landmark article, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" (1995) Ladson-Billings notes the necessity of education (curriculum) finding roots within students' community and culture and implementing this in the way classroom environments and instruction are formatted (p.466-467).

Paris (2012) offers a critique and revision on CRP, aiding teachers in providing what is truly needed to educate the students of today. He questions terms like "relevant" and "responsive" in regard to whether or not this particular language used is truly preparing teachers for the necessary work ahead; work intended to usher in "the language and literacies and other cultural practices of marginalized communities" within classrooms and schools at large (p.93). Paris further evaluates the research and work that ascribes to and submits to the category of CRP as perhaps not authentically "ensuring the maintenance of the languages and cultures" of marginalized groups intentionally left out of classroom learning and scholarship (p.94). CRP sought to bring students' culture and communities back into relevance as they engage in learning, in order to shift Black students' access to success. CSP requires moving beyond responding to or tolerating students' communities, literacies, and languages; it pushes educators to move beyond acknowledging the different cultures in the room or praising them during multicultural moments. Paris (2012) invokes teachers to create classrooms that engage in work to sustain a student's culture, community, language, and literacies within the

classroom. CSP makes room for students to bring their worlds in the classroom, not simply to put their culture on for "show and tell;" but to use them to learn, grow and engage in education alongside others (p.95).

Paris and Alim (2014) offer the terms *heritage practices* and *community practices* as language that provide support to educators in order to elevate their understanding of sustaining culture (p.90). They state: "culture as dynamic, shifting and encompassing both past-oriented heritage dimensions and present-oriented community dimensions (Paris & Alim, 2014, p.90). They argue the importance of sustaining the cultures and communities of marginalized students while maintaining an understanding that authentic *sustainability* means holding knowledge about their students' cultures in the historical sense, and the way the communities create and demonstrate culture today. ELA classrooms are places where students study the lives of people, where the power of storying one's own experience and encountering the lives of others through their storytelling is taught and encountered daily. There is an interconnectedness between literacy education and CSP through the power of storytelling emerging in recent literature (Baker-Bell, Stanbrough & Everett, 2017; Kinloch, Burkhard & Graham, 2019; and Kinloch, Penn, & Burkhard, 2020) that can afford Black students the ability to bring in and share the stories of their lives, and the lives of their people. Baker-Bell, Butler & Johnson (2017) depict how important Black people's stories truly are for all students, not just Black students, within literacy contexts. While also aiding teachers in developing a deeper understanding of the culture their students hold, and the communities they inhabit. CSP through storytelling allows educators to authentically and with fidelity operate from this lens daily.

Kinloch et. al (2019, 2020) echoes the sentiment expressed by Johnson (2018), Johnson et. al (2017), and Kinloch (2009), all of whom point to the impact of Black students' identity being included in literacy classes. At a time where academic success came at the expense of students' cultural roots,

Ladson-Billings sought education for students of color that no longer force them to choose between gaining access to the dominant culture and meeting academic success at the cost of who they are, where they come from, and the worlds they return to at the end of the school day (p.476). According to Paris (2012) CSP "supports young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p.95). CSP does not remove the need to access dominant American English (DAE), rather it supports students' navigation within it, not at the expense of who they truly are or the rich cultural knowledge they enter class with. There is a tension and shifting of power dynamics in literacy classrooms that surface as students seek to access the dominant culture and language; there is an intricate relationship between literacy, the teaching of literacies, and power at play in these spaces. Paris and Alim (2012) discuss the need for educators who allow students to navigate this dominant language power dynamic and break it apart.

Learning to perverse the literacy classroom while keeping their marginalized and excluded identity confidently intact while attempting to maneuver through dominance and power structures is further discussed by McCarty and Lee (2014) who designed another revision to CRP and CSP known as Culturally Sustaining/ Revitalizing Pedagogy. This approach looks to reshape the way learning happens for Indigenous Populations while breaking down power structures historically put in place due to the legacy of colonization (p.103). McCarty and Lee adapt Paris and Alim's notion of the inward gaze to their CSRP approach (p.117). Students of racially and linguistically marginalized and minoritized groups often internalize the effects of colonization they feel presently and generationally and begin to understand their own rich history "by a lens other than their own" (p.117). This inward gaze provides students with ways to look internally critically and counter colonization within their school, themselves, and their communities. As Kinloch discusses the importance of storying for Black

students in literacy classes, this act of gazing inward and reflections made through this process would also benefit both students and educators in an ABAR literacy class.

2.3.1 Implications for Problem of Practice

It is pivotal for SA literacy teachers to ground their work in research and pedagogy. As a district, we have provided resources and professional development centered on CSP. However, any sessions or resources were presented in a way that made CSP additive and optional, something to pick up and place into specific lessons or during certain times of the year (Black History Month). As the SA literacy teachers strive to align the district's mission and commitment to anti-racism, a strong understanding of CSP, its history, and how it impacts students' learning and the classroom environment overall, will transform this from pedagogical theory to practice. Aiding teachers in beginning to embed CSP as the bedrock of the class environment and instruction, not an addition to being weaved in sporadically throughout the school year is paramount.

2.4 Teacher Self Efficacy: Linking Theory to Practice

In order to develop a middle school ELA program that intentionally and consistently implements CSP and ABAR practices, and thus aligns the department with SA's mission to become an anti-racist school district, teachers must have the courage and confidence to move forward without readily available answers or a specific guidebook describing how they can include CSP and ABAR pedagogy in their work daily. This requires stamina, a sense of security in failure, and intrinsic motivation to keep moving when you are the only educator doing the work, and not

meeting success initially. This next section discusses the importance of self-efficacy, a necessary piece needed for success in beginning to align the middle school ELA program with the district's mission and focus on anti-racism.

Delale-O'Connor, Averez, Murray & Milner IV (2017) expound on scholarship around self-efficacy, with a lens sharpened on teachers. This collection of literature began with the work of Bandura (1995) who defined self-efficacy as a perception or personal belief, "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p.71). Self-efficacy transforms the beliefs of educators into actions (p.178), and teachers' beliefs greatly influence their practice and classroom management. Delale-O'Connor et. al (2017) define self-efficacy as a teacher's belief in their "capacity to affect performance" (p.179). That capacity to impact one's performance is enhanced through someone's strong sense of their ability to rise to a challenge and meet it with success. People with a high sense of self-efficacy "approach difficult tasks with challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided...in contrast people who doubt their capabilities shy away from difficult tasks which they view as personal threats" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Since Bandura's exploration of self-efficacy as a means to study human behavior, recent scholarship (Kunemund, et. al, 2020; Zee, Jong & Koomen, 2017) applied this idea of intrinsic motivation to educators, as a means to understand what impacts the success or failure within classroom environments.

Delale-O'Connor et. all focused their attention on classroom management and the impact TSE has on it. Kunemund et. al (2020) further extrapolates on the necessity of TSE more specifically in their article, "The Mediating Role of Teacher Self Efficacy". They offer in-depth discourse around conflict between educators and students, especially when the classroom is "racially mismatched"(p. 1759-1760); specifically white teachers to Black students. Zee, Jong and

Koomen's article (2017) gathered data from a longitudinal study around teachers' perception of their relationship with their students and how this in turn impacts (decreases/increases) teachers' TSE.

Classroom management is defined as not a way to discipline or control bodies, especially Black bodies; rather the way teachers cultivate an authentic and intentional learning environment for students: "classroom management is about students' opportunities and overall access to learning" (Delale-O'Connor et. al, 2017, p.180) This learning allows for inquisitive and intentional interactions about power structures and hierarchies that shape what happens in society and school" (p.180); power structures that greatly impact Black students meeting success in schools, power structures that Paris and Alim (2014) argue students must contest within their literacy classrooms consistently. Delale-O' Connor et. al conclude that teachers will break down their bias and racial barriers, while simultaneously boosting their TSE, by becoming a true part of their students' communities, and building intentional and meaningful relationships with their students that include depositing themselves within the worlds they inhabit (p.181-182); all while creating learning within the classroom that allows students to see themselves (necessary identity work, making connections and storying ones experiences), and tackling power structures in society.

Zee, Jong & Komen (2017) discuss how TSE may in fact shift depending on the context (p.38), and teachers may differentiate their perceptions of conflict depending on that context (p.47). The authors synthesize that highly efficacious educators with some experience in the field build better relationships with students and have more confidence in dealing with problem behaviors (p.998). They are also more likely to diversify their teaching practices and "change their goals according to students' needs, and more positive about the implementation of such instructional strategies" (p.998). They also note that this correlation between strong TSE, in-

service teachers, and their greater experience and knowledge within the field may in fact not last over time, showing a need for a longitudinal study on TSE (p.998).

2.4.1 Implications for Problem of Practice

As Zee, Jong & Komen signify, low expectations for oneself as an educator reflects back on the students and how teachers expected them to perform/learn. "Efficacious teachers frequently engage in professional learning activities, such as keeping up to date with the profession, trying out new approaches to improve their practices, and changing their practice to promote process-oriented student learning" (p.990). Such a strong sense of self-efficacy in fact must exist for CSP and ABAR pedagogy to be embedded in practice consistently. Such strong efficacy is necessary for ELA educators to take up the call put forth by scholars like Morrell who seek a transformation in ELA practices and curriculum development. As ELA teachers at SA middle begin to adapt and transform their scripted curriculum in order to embed CSP and hold fast to SA's charge towards becoming an anti-racist institution, a strong self-efficacy is a critical piece that needs put in place to begin.

3.0 Methods and Design for Action

3.1 Inquiry Question

As made evident in the literature it is the teacher's ability to consistently motivate themselves intrinsically that will propel them to truly implement anything school leaders ask them to do; especially those educational tasks they are asked to execute that carry lasting consequences and come with no play-by-play instructional manual. "Teachers' beliefs--their sense of self-efficacy and confidence--influence their decision making and practices with students" (Milner & Woolfolk, 2003; Milner, 2002; Delale O'Connor, Alvarez, Murray & Milner, 2017, p. 178). After reviewing the aforementioned literature on self-efficacy, having conversations with educators, and observing them in classrooms, I became aware of SA teachers lacking support in building to sustain their TSE to engage in CRP/CSP practices intentionally and consistently. Transformational change in education resides firstly, in finding deliberate and effective ways to provide support for teachers so they can build their self-efficacy. Regardless of the number of professional development opportunities, we send teachers to or provide for them, no matter how many curriculums are purchased, or resources and materials are gathered educators may not consistently implement CSP without simultaneously supporting staff in increasing and sustaining their TSE, if they are implementing these practices at all.

What a teacher believes they are capable of accomplishing is what transforms classroom environments, teacher practice, and overall change in the lives of students. Educators, when implementing ABAR and CS teaching practices, need effective coaching from the beginning. However, at some point, teachers must move beyond formal heavy-handed guidance to feeling

efficacious enough to truly move towards consistent implementation. We must begin our work here with educators before imparting more theories, research or strategies. With this in mind, my study sought to answer the following inquiry question: *How might coaching and professional development specific to the literacy curriculum increase teacher self-efficacy in consistently embedding culturally sustaining teaching practices and cultivating an anti-racist learning environment?*

The study focused on engaging the middle (sixth-eighth grade) ELA teaching team, comprised of three general education teachers and three special education teachers, in an anti-racist coaching cycle model over the course of a four to six-week period. The coaching model guided the teachers through a CSP and ABAR-based professional development cycle, and one-on-one planning sessions purposed to equip each participant with the application of these practices into their teaching daily. Upon the completion of this study, I hypothesized that the teachers would report an increase in their self-efficacy as it related to implementing culturally sustaining and anti-racist teaching practices. Along with their increased self-efficacy, I hypothesized that teachers would feel confident in carrying out this work with more intentionality and begin forming a literacy program in alignment with our public commitment to anti-racist and equitable education for all, without the heavy-handed presence of a coach.

3.2 Participants

The coaching intervention participants consisted of four SA middle school literacy instructors, all teaching a Lucy Calkins unit of study scripted curriculum: the sixth-grade general education teacher, the seventh-grade general education teacher, and both the eighth-grade general

education and special education teachers. Although students would be present and unofficially observed in the classroom setting, this study did not collect data on how TSE or CSP, and ABAR instruction impacted student engagement or learning outcomes. The literacy teachers instruct roughly one hundred and four students daily, across four content blocks. Although how the students engaged with their teachers and instruction mattered this intervention focused on the teachers and how they felt during and after they delivered anti-racist and culturally sustaining instruction to their students.

3.3 Design

Bandura (1994) highlights four ways that self-efficacy may be increased in individuals. Two of these ways apply to the teachers at SA when seeking to increase their self-efficacy, they are mastery experiences and social persuasion (p.72-73). Teachers who experience verbal support and persuasion about their ability from a person or community will more likely "mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise" (Bandura, 1995, p.73); likewise, when teachers are trying to master their skills within the classroom, they must participate in the act of building resilience along with their self-efficacy, and this requires " experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort" (p.72). This perseverance can only come through repeated practice and an environment that allows teachers to meet failure and master their experiences through social persuasion. As Bandura suggests, the SA literacy team participated in a coaching model designed and intended to provide this team with controlled social persuasion and the ability to master experience. The next section will explain in detail the coaching model implemented with the literacy team, and how it supported

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them in increasing their TSE in embedding ABAR and CSP teaching. The study took place during a small portion of each participant's unit of study, lasting about six weeks in order to accommodate the change in schedules and teacher absences due to illness or COVID. The following sections below provide an explanation for the study implemented with the SA middle school literacy team.

1. **Collecting Baseline-Introductory Survey:** All SA literacy teachers, six in total, were provided with a nine-question Introductory survey designed to both collect basic demographic and baseline information, as well as provide all middle literacy staff with an explanation of the study. Teachers were able to designate their level of study participation at the end of the survey as well.

2. **Classroom Observations**: Teachers designated a specific block they wished to be observed in. Qualitative data in the form of field notes were collected during these times, then used in analysis to provide context for teachers' responses given in their weekly surveys; as well as gain real-time data of teachers implementing practices given during professional development, as well as take note of any increase in TSE observed.

3. **Weekly survey**: For a four-week period, extended to six weeks, participants were given the same five-question survey intended to capture weekly reflections and perceptions on increased TSE, new ABAR and CSP practices implemented, and any outside learning engaged in by the participants, along with any questions and thoughts around how they felt the week went. The survey was provided through Qualtrics, and distributed via email on Fridays, the day after our weekly Professional Learning Community (PLCs) meetings took place.

4. **Weekly PLCs**: Every Thursday over the four-week study period, all literacy teachers (those who elected to participate in the study and those who did not) gathered in

community and received specific professional development (PD) on ABAR teaching practices, CS purpose, and methodology, and discussed how these frameworks worked in tandem with the current standards and curriculum they were expected to teach. During these PLC meetings, teachers practiced these newer teaching methods, read scholarly research, and consulted with each other on implementation. An example of one of the PLC sessions can be found in Appendix C and described in further detail in chapter four.

5. **One-on-One Planning Sessions**: Each participant elected to forfeit one of their designated planning periods on a day of their choosing to meet with me. These one-on-one planning sessions were designed to provide each participant with specific and personal time outside of PLCs to get more feedback specific to their classroom, insight into my observation notes, and ask any questions that could not be addressed in PLCs given the more general nature of those meetings. As each teacher set a goal at the start of the study, these sessions were intended to guide them towards meeting their goals with success and provide further support with increasing their TSE by receiving more coaching time.

6. **Exit Interview Survey**: Using Qualtrics, participants were given a six-question exit interview survey intended to provide a concluding perspective from all four of the participants. The questions asked mirrored that of those given in the weekly survey, asking more specifically where their TSE was at the end of the study, what contributed to their perception of their TSE, and what practices and outside learning guided them throughout the length of the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data collected during all classroom observations and weekly planning sessions with the team were analyzed using a thematic coding system based on Elena Aguilar's "Mind the Gap" coaching framework (2018) in order to provide a clear qualitative analysis of the piloted coaching model's effectiveness. All weekly survey results were analyzed according to this thematic coding framework, however, the Introductory Survey and Exit Interview were summarized in order to holistically capture a comparison of each participant's TSE at the beginning and conclusion of the study. Survey data results were used to assess the effectiveness of the self-efficacy coaching model and provided a comparison of teachers' reported increase or decrease in their TSE across the four-week period. Analyses demonstrated a strong picture of what the teachers experienced throughout the study, what impacted the increase or possible decrease in their efficacy, and overall, how the coaching model impacted their teaching practice and classroom environment.

The data analysis generally informed the overall coaching system currently implemented in SA across all buildings through the Associate Director role. The bulk of our work lies in coaching teachers and teams in building up their practice as it relates to their own goals, as well as the overall mission and goals set forth by the district. The study provided me with valuable information about how necessary it will be to focus on teacher self-efficacy in regard to aligning all teachers' practices with the mission of the school, regardless of the content they are responsible for. The study also provided me with data necessary to take to upper administration as it presents implications for implementing coaching as a system with more impact and "teeth" within the SA school district.

4.0 Description of Findings

The study aimed to assess the impact of consistent coaching and professional development on increasing the self-efficacy of educators tasked with implementing ABAR and CS teaching practices, in order to create and sustain an anti-racist classroom environment while teaching with a district-wide mandated literacy curriculum. As described in the prior chapter, qualitative data was gathered through observational notes, an Introductory Survey, an Exit Interview, and a weekly survey given to gather an accurate picture of the participants' efficacy growth throughout the study, and the overall effectiveness and impact coaching had on TSE.

4.1 Thematic Framework

Aguilar's (2018) "Mind the Gap" framework, as described in her coaching text Onward was used to analyze the responses to the weekly survey results. This framework provides coaches with a mechanism to avoid assumptions about teachers' willingness or ability to try a new teaching practice or remove a practice from their pedagogy. It places the teacher in a learner position and the coach as the one seeking to make them more aware of the gap or gaps that exist between the practice they seek and implementation success. Aguilar names and describes six gaps that coaches must be aware of when assisting teachers, they are as follows: the skill gap, or the knowledge about

pedagogy and content; the will gap[1], or the mental and emotional capacity to carry the practice consistently; the emotional intelligence gap, or the ability to emotionally assess yourself and others; and the cultural competence gap, or the ability to put culturally sustaining and anti-racist practices into action, and to have an understanding about how cultures interact with one another. For analysis purposes, Aguilar's six gaps were turned into codes to place participant responses within, in order to suss out commonalities among their understanding, as well as what gaps may lie in their paths prohibiting them from attaining self-efficacy in sustaining anti-racist and culturally sustaining practices. Although Aguilar utilizes these gaps to help ascertain what practitioners may need to get across the gap, or a coachable deficit that exists, the gaps served as both an asset and deficit for the purposes of this analysis. Participants throughout the study exhibited these in ways where they held a strong grasp of the gap, as well as demonstrating ways in which they lacked within this gap.

I created two additional codes: efficacy and teacher intellectual engagement. The research question sought to understand what it would take to increase teacher self-efficacy in implementing and sustaining ABAR and CST practices. Many of the teachers responded to questions about whether their confidence or efficacy changed over time. Or spoke to ways they engaged differently with culturally sustaining practices in their classrooms during a given week. The efficacy code encompassed these responses; while teacher intellectual engagement pertained to all responses regarding any personal learning teachers participated in, both within PLCs or PD opportunities, and more importantly on their own beyond the school walls. As ABAR and CSP are not second

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[1]**A note on the Will Gap**: Aguilar discusses how rare this gap is. Although teachers may on the surface exhibit a will gap, Aguilar has found that it is often a skill gap masquerading as a will gap. She cautions coaches on placing teachers within the will gap without truly analyzing the teacher they are supporting.

nature to instructors, very rarely do pre-service and in-service teachers receive learning around what anti-racist and CS teaching is and how to implement it daily, teachers must challenge what they were always taught and not taught about the ways power, racism, and white supremacy evolve within the education system, by engaging in their own personal intellectual development. Teaching is a practice, continuous learning must remain a vital part of any teaching craft–especially when it comes to creating anti-racist classrooms. Figure 1 below is a table of the gap codes, their descriptions, and participant examples responses collected from the survey. A more detailed code book is found in Appendix A.

Concept/Gap Code	Description of Code	Participant Example
Skill	The ability to execute the technical elements of the task. Can be the application of knowledge.	N/A; no participant responses were placed within this code.
Knowledge	The theoretical or practical understanding of a subject; can also be informational.	Instructor 1: We used games, real-world connections, project-based learning, and opportunities for creativity to create a more culturally sustaining and anti-racist classroom. Instructor 4: I used mirrors and windows for a documentary on Indigenous representation in Hollywood and media.
Capacity	The time and resources to do something; can also be emotional and physical capacity.	Instructor 1: "I still feel as though I need more resources to use for culturally sustaining and anti-racist instruction." Instructor 3: In making lessons exciting or interesting for the students to engage with more. I

		feel like creative and fun activities can't be executed because there are always tough behaviors. But I recognize that if the lessons are not engaging, tough behaviors will persist. It's a vicious cycle and I'm struggling to break it.
Will	Desire, intrinsic motivation, passion, or commitment; usually has an emotional tone.	Instructor 1: I still need more resources for how to provide authentic culturally sustaining and anti-racist instruction, especially surrounding standardized tests. Instructor 3: "Unlearning the education system as I remember it as a student and how that shapes me as a teacher."
Cultural Competence	The ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own; the skill to navigate cross-cultural differences. **Researcher addition:** the ability to intentionally apply cultural competence into instruction.	Instructor 4: I want to plan for my black students specifically, but it is difficult to stay with that as my target and not get lost in planning for the skill.
Emotional Intelligence	The ability to be aware of, manage and express one's emotions; the ability to recognize, empathize with and manage other people's emotions.	N/A; no participant responses were placed within this code.
Efficacy	A person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action. **Researcher addition**: or enact systemic change in prospective situations.	Instructor 1: I'm not sure my confidence has grown. Students have enjoyed the projects we've been doing, but I still feel as though there are gaps in my conceptualization of how to create and teach lessons that are truly culturally sustaining and anti-racist. Instructor 4: I have grown more

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		confident in writing explicit learning targets with an anti-racist framework.
Teacher Intellectual Engagement	The intrinsic desire towards continuous learning to shape and inform their teaching practice; the understanding put into action that learning must be an active part of the teaching practice.	Instructor 1: I did not do any additional [learning]. Instructor 2: Left responses to the questions about new teacher practice and outside learning blank this round. Instructor 4: I read Being the Change by Sara K. Ahmed and have included one of her tracking growth exercises into my next unit.

Figure 1 - Code book Sample

The Introductory and Exit surveys were summarized to give a full picture of how each participant began and concluded the study. The "Mind the Gap" coding framework was not used for these two surveys.

4.2 Introductory Survey

This survey aimed to collect baseline data and engage teachers in the initial self-efficacy-building process/ coaching process by requiring them to establish a goal specifically geared towards increasing their CSP and ABAR practices in the classroom before beginning the study. All six of the SA's ELA instructors (three General Education teachers and their Special Education co-teachers) completed the Introductory survey.

The Introductory Survey also established participant consent by allowing teachers to choose between three specific levels of engagement. The levels were:

- Level one Full Participation: teachers who elected to engage in the study at this level did so by consenting to complete the weekly surveys, Exit Interview, participate in the PLC held each Thursday, classroom observations, and one on one coaching sessions;

- Level two Partial Participation: teachers who elected to engage in the study at this level did so by consenting to complete all of the aforementioned pieces of the study excluding the weekly surveys and the Exit Interview;

- Level three No Participation: teachers who elected to engage in the study at this level did so by consenting to complete none of the aforementioned pieces of the study mentioned above.

However, given that PLCs were an expectation mandated by SA middle school administration, teachers who selected level three still attended and participated in weekly PLC meetings, and if a coaching relationship was established prior to the start of this study, they would continue to receive support along with observations and one on one coaching sessions. Any data collected within these times were not included in this study.

Out of the six participants who completed the Introductory survey, four elected to participate fully in the study; the Sixth grade General Education teacher known as Instructor One throughout the analysis, the Seventh grade General Education teacher known as Instructor Four throughout this analysis, and both the Eighth grade General Education and Special Education teachers, known as Instructor Two and Instructor Three respectively. The sixth grade Special Education teacher elected to participate partially, and the seventh grade Special Education teacher

elected to refrain from participation in the study. Two of the literacy teams, seventh and eighth, had an existing coaching relationship with me prior to the start of the study. Both teams committed an hour a week, during their assigned planning time. The sixth-grade teaching team did not have an established coaching relationship before the start of the study. Instructor One was asked via an email exchange, to decide on a day they would like to meet with the Associate Director/ Principal Investigator (AD/PI) for their weekly planning sessions that would last for the duration of the study. Instructor One requested to maintain her planning routine as it had been all school year as she and her Special Education co-teacher had a well-established routine for lesson planning and did not want to disrupt this. Therefore, no one-on-one planning sessions took place with Instructor One as requested. A table with the participants' years of experience and educational background is provided in Figure 2 below to give relevant context for each participant and present their unique experiences and positionality as they entered this study.

4.3 The Participants

Teacher	Pseudonym & Background Information
Number of Years in Education: ○ **Total number of years combined - 24** ○ **Total number of years at ECS - 7**	
Sixth Grade Literacy; General Education	**Instructor One; completing her second year of service at Sustainability Academy; and four years as a literacy teacher total.** Instructor One's K-12 experience took place in a predominately white upper-middle-class suburb. She obtained a BA from Allegheny but did not initially pursue English Education,

instead, she majored in English with minors in Psychology and Economics. She completed two years in AmeriCorps holding education-related positions, then moved on to completing the Pittsburgh Urban Teaching Corps through Chatham and Propel school district. She was inspired to enter the field of education from the example of her strong ninth-grade ELA teacher. When asked what drew her to SA she writes " *I love [SA] because it is a school where the best interest of students is always the top priority. Students, families, and staff are cared for and valued as individuals, and that is evident to all that enter our doors. I also love that we are allowed to discuss and teach concepts that many other schools shy away from, especially in today's political climate. [SA] is also always trying to do better and to be better for our diverse student body*".

Eighth Grade Literacy; General Education

Instructor Two; completing her first year at Sustainability Academy, with a total of five years in education.

Instructor Two attended a large public school district that decades ago was created due to a community merger of many schools and neighborhoods. The racial tensions are still very present from this merger history. She loved her time at this district, while also noting the differences she witnessed in the treatment she received over her Black peers, largely demonstrated through class tracking. She graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a BA in English Literature, then went on to receive her MAT in secondary English education from their School of Education. Many of her literacy teachers saw her and she always had a connection to literature and the power of stories, pushing her to pursue teaching. When asked why SA she wrote "*I was drawn to SA because of its mission statement. As an educator, I believe it is our duty to teach*

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beyond the curriculum we are given. We are here to aid parents in preparing their children to be citizens of the world".

Eighth Grade Literacy; Special Education	**Instructor Three; completing her first year at Sustainability Academy, with a total of 10 years in education.**
	Instructor Three attended a catholic school K-8, then transitioned into a suburban high school. She received her undergrad degree in sociology and psychology from Duquesne and my MAT in elementary and special ed from Chatham. She wanted to pursue a career in special education due to a cousin with cerebral palsy passed away. She began her journey into education by working in a residential treatment facility for students with behavioral and emotional disabilities. Transitioning out of that role she pursued a Master's (MAT) in special education and has been teaching in middle school settings for the last 10 years. She was drawn to SA because "*I knew it would be a place that would openly support ABAR education and ideas. I am still here because I am hopeful that it will live up to this value and I want to use my skills and gifts to support and advocate for that process*".
Seventh Grade Literacy; General Education	**Instructor Four; completing her third year at Sustainability Academy, with a total of five years in education.**
	Instructor Four is the product of public education, then she attended West Virginia University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in Philosophy. Then she attended California University of Pennsylvania to receive her Master's in Secondary English Education. She grew up and attended public school in a very poor county with the third-lowest income per capita in the state of Pennsylvania, this provided her with a specific perspective on the world and

education. She felt let down by education but had a powerful AP English teacher and felt that in spite of her community the teachers worked hard to provide their students with a strong education. When asked why SA she wrote "*I sought out SA because I really loved the environmental school that I worked for in Brooklyn (Brooklyn Urban Garden Charter School). What keeps me here are my dedicated coworkers and the encouragement to improve our curriculum and practices to better serve our students, such as our work with anti-racist teaching*".

She began her teaching career in middle school social studies and ELA in two schools in the Brooklyn, New York area.

Figure 2 - Participant Education Background

4.3.1 Instructor One

Instructor One began this study with a high teacher self-efficacy regarding her ability to create a CS and ABAR environment noting many ways it already takes place within her classroom. Despite beginning a new grade level-loop at the start of the 2021-2022 school year, Instructor One said "I believe our classroom environment, classroom culture, classroom management, and discipline policies are anti-racist." She continued on to write about not feeling strongly efficacious when it came to CS and ABAR instruction and decor as she struggles to find resources. Her initial goal was to add "4 additional resources (stories, full lessons, short activities, etc.) that are specifically tied to anti-racism to our new literary essays unit." When asked how coaching support could guide her towards meeting this goal with success, Instructor One responded "It would be helpful to reflect on our lessons together and to discuss what kinds of resources we could add."

4.3.2 Instructor Two

When asked about her level of teacher self-efficacy and confidence with CS and ABAR teaching at the start of the study, Instructor Two wrote "I feel like I know what to do, but I definitely have a long way to go before my classroom culture is fully culturally sustaining." She goes on to discuss diverse texts used during a previous unit, acknowledging that the texts only touched the surface of representation without doing a true "deep dive into the role intersectionality played in the books". Her goal at the start of this study was to implement any teaching practices or strategies given during PLCs and PD to help cultivate more meaningful discussions in her upcoming novel study unit, using the narrative nonfiction text *Just Mercy (*2014) by Bryan Stevenson. When asked how a coach would help her in meeting this goal, she wrote about seeking support in pivoting from just representation to a more "meaningful, in-depth use of culturally sustaining texts".

4.3.3 Instructor Three

Instructor Three entered this study with a diminished TSE. She reflected "I feel like I am knowledgeable about some things but still remain actionless when confronted with moments in the classroom. I have a lot to unlearn and learn still." When asked how she currently implemented CS-ABAR classroom practices, Instructor Three noted the incorporation of diverse texts and student choice as the only strategies she used to date. She wrote, "I have tried facilitating some discussions in my pull-out class about racism, sexism, ageism, etc. but it felt like the students were concerned about making comments about white people". She set out to accomplish a goal focused on utilizing anti-racist disciplining practices to strengthen her classroom management: "By the end

of this course, I would like to be able to move away from punitive, behavior control-based classroom management style to one that is intrinsically motivating," and noted that having small actionable steps from her coach would help her succeed in making this goal attainable.

4.3.4 Instructor Four

Instructor Four entered this study noting a high level of teacher self-efficacy: "
I am confident particularly with instruction. I plan instruction that provides students with mirrors and windows, as well as instruction that requires students to look at society and structures with a critical eye. I strive to use classroom management as a tool to help students build routines and feel safe. I encourage all voices and try to teach the students the importance of not only listening and learning from me but each other.

She highlights many CS strategies used in her Historical Fiction unit and the ways that she and her co-teacher have attended to CS and ABAR teaching, like identifying aspects of power and privilege within their shared novel and how this reflects current society; and analyzing how Indigenous People were treated within many texts especially by white Europeans as a few ways she used critical literacies to challenge students and create a more CS and ABAR classroom.

Her goal at the start of this study was to "improve my learning targets by creating success criteria for next week's planning session so that there are measurable checks for understanding and all students can take ownership and be successful in next week's assignments. I will create an end of the unit project before spring break and students will work towards a culminating project, bringing their knowledge from the historical era as well as novel together". When asked about coaching support she requested support with the final unit project and feedback on lessons. She also discussed "feedback from outside perspectives as a means of checks and balances for my

practice helping me to check my own bias and also to provide a critical eye to see what I am missing" as meaningful support.

4.4 The Weekly Survey

This weekly survey consisted of five open-ended questions, written to capture the participants' growth in their teacher self-efficacy over time in weekly increments. These five questions remained the same each week, asking participants about their perceived self-efficacy development that week, new practices they tried, and any outside learning they engaged in. All questions were open-ended in order to allow each Instructor to give a robust and reflective response each time they took it; as well as give a personal account by allowing each teacher to write without hindrance about their experience. Four weekly surveys were administered in total. The weekly survey was created using Qualtrics and administered to participants via a link through their work email addresses. The responses of each participant were analyzed using the "Mind the Gap" six gap pyramid framework turned into codes, plus the two additional codes created by the AD/PI, then placed into a codebook. The information in this section was divided by each week.

4.4.1 Weekly Survey Round One

The first survey was administered via email on April 11, 2022, with the final participant responding on April 12, 2022. With the exception of Instructor Two who left two questions blank, the participants completed the survey and answered all questions. The gap codes capacity, will, cultural competence and teacher intellectual engagement emerged as common themes in the

responses of all four participants. Out of all four participants who completed the survey this week, three or all of them gave responses that aligned with the will, cultural competence, and teacher intellectual engagement codes. Two teachers' (Instructor One and Three) responses aligned with the efficacy code.

Will In order to sustain an anti-racist classroom environment, teachers need an amount of will or intrinsic motivation. As Aguilar discusses, oftentimes teachers lack the will to implement a new teaching practice or shift an existing one. Efficacy requires an intrinsic motivation to propel a teaching practitioner onward despite obstacles populating their path. Instructor One discussed in her survey that no new teaching practices were tried, but she gave students an opportunity to work together throughout the week. Instructor Two talked about building background knowledge for their upcoming unit, describing the intentionality she used in order to ensure that the unit is CS while also uplifting her Black students. Instructor Three wrote about their desire to "unlearn the education system as I remember it as a student and how that shapes me as a teacher". Instructor Four shone a light on a newly implemented teaching practice called success criteria "which allows me to hold all students to high learning standards, as well provides students with ownership over their learning".

Cultural Competence During this round, Instructor One discussed the use of diverse short story texts "Thank You, Ma'am" by Langston Hughes and "Raymond's Run" by Toni Cade Bambara within their classroom this week, which were read and discussed by her sixth-grade students. The other two instructors, Instructors Two and Four, highlighted a disconnect between their desire to create a CS learning environment, while also not truly knowing what their Black/Brown students need or want out of the instruction and environment. Instructor Two stated, "I feel like I'm not confident in knowing what our black and brown students enjoy, or what they

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find engaging". Similarly, Instructor Four wrote, "I want to plan for my black students specifically, but it is difficult to stay with that as my target and not get lost in planning for the skill".

Teacher Intellectual Engagement Instructor Two left this question unanswered this week, while Instructor Four credited the PLC activity around creating lesson plans with Black students at the center of the planning that employed diverse picture books as mentor texts, as a personal learning moment for her; while Instructor Three listed an article they read during the week titled "Educators Who Consider Themselves 'White Allies' Are Dangerous When It Comes to Developing Anti-Racist Classrooms". Instructor One noted that they did not complete any additional learning this week.

Efficacy Two Instructor's responses for this week aligned with this code around efficacy. Instructor One stated "I'm not sure I have grown in the past week," and Instructor Three discussed the Equity survey that she completed, saying " I just finished the equity survey and now I feel even less confident".

Capacity The capacity gap refers to the time and resources an instructor may lack when it comes to implementing a new teaching practice. For the purposes of this study Capacity also referred to the time, resources, and effort an instructor places into seeking to create an equitable learning environment (could be emotional or physical time and resources). Instructor One reported she felt as if she needed more resources to help her implement CS and ABAR practices. Instructor Three discussed her use of a mental health day during this week, which helped her obtain rest, adjust her perspective, and be more effective in the classroom throughout the rest of the week.

4.4.2 Weekly Survey Round Two

The second round of the weekly survey was administered via email, and began on April 22, 2022, with the final participant completing their survey on April 28, 2022. All four participants completed the survey during this round, with all but Instructor Two answering all of the questions. The same aforementioned coding framework was employed to analyze this week's responses.

Knowledge All four Instructors provided responses in alignment with the knowledge gap. As the PSSA testing time period loomed over the school district, Instructor One wrote about their own struggle with implementing CS ABAR instruction during this time of standardized testing. She acknowledged the tension around understanding the test itself is racist, while simultaneously having to prepare students for this test regardless. Instructor Two discussed utilizing a documentary text during this week to help the students make stronger connections to *Just Mercy*: "I haven't shown a proper documentary since pre-quarantine, but it went really well. It gave all the students language to discuss the racial inequities addressed in the book, and also helped them to make connections between the inequities they see continually perpetrated throughout American history". Instructor Three employed a teaching practice called strategic questioning in class to help students "challenge their assumptions, bias, and thinking of how seemingly different systems intertwine". Instructor Four points back to the weekly PLC that took place that week where teachers were asked to plan a lesson intentionally for their Black students, as something that helped her plan with intention and apply her knowledge in the classroom.

Teacher Intellectual Engagement Three out of the four participants discussed the different ways they engaged in their own learning throughout this week. Instructor Four read Sara K Ahmed's *Being the Change (2018)*, one of three CS texts provided to all ELA teachers at the start

of the school year. Instructor Three wrote about building her own background knowledge for the novel *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson (2014) along with other texts engaged with that week: "I read and took notes on *Just Mercy* young readers edition, listened to Man Enough podcast with episode guest Alok Vaid Menon: The Urgent Need for Compassion, episode with guest Eldra Jackson III: Human Work, Not Prison Work, and episode with guest Dean Cain: Let's Disagree to Agree". Instructor Two, the co-teacher working alongside Instructor Three also wrote about building her own background knowledge around Just Mercy, which led to her feeling more empowered to "stimulate the race-based conversations" conducted during that week. Instructor One responded that they did not do any outside learning during this weekly survey round.

Cultural Competence Instructors Two and Three discussed their struggle with implementing a novel study unit solely focused on a Black person's experience, and their expectations regarding how they wanted students, in particular, Black students to interact with this novel. Instructor Two wrote about interacting with this struggle during classroom discussions, stating "I feel like I struggle with encouraging my black and brown kiddos to speak on our topics because I don't want them to feel as though I'm asking them to speak on behalf of all black and brown people". Instructor Three mentioned the tension between learning more about racism and thus more about the oppression of marginalized communities while having to teach students about the more positive and joyful aspects of Black and Brown people. She states: "I don't have confidence in knowing/connecting positive and uplifting aspects of other races and cultures".

Efficacy Instructors One and Three discussed their efficacy specifically during this weekly survey. Instructor One pointed to instituting one on one conferences with students and how this practice helped them feel more confident while aiding students in increasing their own confidence. Instructor 3 talked about an increased sense of efficacy, stating "This week I felt more confident

to directly discuss race and challenge students to consider why it is a factor for poverty and punishment in America, instead of tiptoeing around the subject".

4.4.3 Weekly Survey Round Three

The third round of surveys were issued via email on April 29, 2022, with the final survey submitted on May 2, 2022. Responses this week were collected during the literacy-based PSSA standardized test administration. Due to PSSA testing and makeup days, and a change in the middle school schedule to accommodate all the testing taking place within the building, participants completed the survey sporadically this round, with less participation than in the first two rounds. Two out of four participants completed this survey.

Teacher Intellectual Engagement Instructor Three named the fictional text she read this week titled *Such a Fun Age* by Kiley Reid; however, Instructor One did not complete any outside reading or learning this round.

Efficacy Both instructors that completed this survey reported a decrease in their teacher self-efficacy this week. When asked about new practices implemented into her teaching practice, or current practices being used that are more CS and ABAR based, Instructor Three simply stated "I don't know that we really did this, this week.". Instructor One reported that she does not feel like her confidence has grown this week saying, "I feel about as confident as I have since the beginning of the study.".

Capacity Instructor One mentioned their need for more resources and feedback to "help me to embed culturally sustaining and anti-racist practices into my lessons.". Instructor Three gave voice to wanting to provide students with engaging lessons and activities but having to navigate tough behaviors exhibited in the classroom. She said: "I feel like creative and fun activities can't

be executed because there are always tough behaviors. But I recognize that if the lessons are not engaging, tough behaviors will persist. It's a vicious cycle and I'm struggling to break it".

Knowledge Instructor Three discussed her feelings around feeling as if she did not provide much instruction to her students due to the testing taking place that week. She discussed making an attempt to continue building historical background knowledge for her students as they continue navigating through their narrative nonfiction novel study.

Cultural Competence Instructor One discussed the impact of testing within her classroom this week, by noting that very little instruction took place, however, students watched a film and were able to engage in conversations about race and racism. "For the small amount of instructional time that we had, we watched the movie Holes, which features diverse characters that many of my students can relate to. We discussed the racism present in the movie, and we worked on understanding characterization".

4.4.4 Weekly Survey Round Four

The fourth and final round of the weekly survey began on May 6, 2022, and ended with the final survey submitted on May 9th. Instructors One, Three, and Four completed this final survey, Instructor Two did not complete the survey this week.

Teacher Intellectual Engagement: Instructor One discussed the PLC they engaged with during the week. She writes "I worked collaboratively with other teachers to identify strategies, barriers, and qualities for and of culturally sustaining and anti-racist teaching practices through my PLC". Instructor Three talked about a text written by Imbolo Mbue titled *Behold the Dreamers* that they read this week. Instructor Four discussed the background knowledge they personally engaged in building over the course of this week around Indigenous Activism for their upcoming

unit. She states, "I have been doing a lot of learning and unlearning about the disparities that Indigenous people have faced and still face today".

Efficacy Instructor Four spoke to an increase in her efficacy this week, as it pertains to her goal of writing more explicit learning targets for students with "with an anti-racist framework". Instructor Three wrote about reverting back to old punitive measures of discipline this week thus feeling a dip in her efficacy. She says "It was a rough week. I have more doubts about how I have grown and more disappointment in how I have reverted back to old habits of punitive behavior management". Instructor One presented uncertainty in her efficacy growth this week. She discussed the positive reception she received from students when she planned projects for them to engage in, then goes on to say, " I still feel as though there are gaps in my conceptualization of how to create and teach lessons that are truly culturally sustaining and anti-racist".

Cultural Competence Two Instructors wrote responses around cultural competence this week. Instructor Four discussed a desire to always seek to personally check her biases and blind spots while doing this work, while Instructor Three discussed her struggle with cultural competence. She wrote:

I also think about all the things that I don't understand about how a broader culture impacts individuals and how that plays into interactions in and out of the classroom. And if we are trying to tackle racism by teaching about it and white oppression, are we supporting anti-racist teaching or teaching white patriarchal oppressive culture? Am I trying to teach this to virtue signal that I am "one of the good white women?" Lots of struggles, thoughts, and wonders this week.

Will Instructor One discussed her lack of resources and feedback throughout this process, stating how this led to feelings of less confidence. Instructor Three reflected on her understanding

of discipline in the classroom, suggesting a move towards a more personal one-on-one approach to working with students in the classroom. She stated:

> The one thing that I feel like I am taking away from all this is that we need to approach each student on an individual basis. Not necessarily meet with them all one on one, but when there are behaviors that disrupt their own learning and the learning of others, it needs to be dealt with individually instead of with a "standardized consequence. I struggle with the balance between controlling what I can control but also playing within the expectations of the education system which is centered in whiteness and oppression.

Knowledge Both Instructor One and Instructor Four discussed specific teaching strategies they implemented this week in order to engage students and create a CS and ABAR classroom environment. Instructor One talked about using games, project-based learning, real-world connections, and "opportunities for creativity to create a more culturally sustaining and anti-racist classroom". Instructor Four wrote about using Rudine Sims Bishop's "Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors" a literary framework to engage students while watching a documentary on Indigenous Peoples Hollywood representation.

Exit Interview

The Exit Interview Survey was emailed to participants on May 17, 2022. Teachers received three email reminders regarding the completion of the interview. The first survey was submitted on May 17, with the second and final submission taking place on May 27, 2022. Two of the four participants completed this final step, Instructor One, and Instructor Three. The analysis of this survey did not resemble that of the weekly surveys but resembled the Introductory survey analysis. Teacher responses are placed below in summary form in order to give a holistic picture of how the participants ended the study.

Instructor One This participant entered into this study with a goal to "add 4 additional resources (stories, full lessons, short activities, etc.) that are specifically tied to anti-racism to our new literary essays unit". The study spanned beyond her Literary Essay unit, which led to her goal evolving into finding more "resources and techniques to be able to provide my students with better anti-racist and culturally sustaining instructions". She notes in her Exit Interview feeling "somewhat successful" in meeting these goals. She reflected on and mentioned many of the resources given during weekly PLCs as building blocks towards her success throughout the study, as well as highlighting the benefit of working alongside colleagues when trying to learn and incorporate unfamiliar teaching practices. However, she felt hindered in her success due to not receiving enough coaching support or resources as requested throughout the study, saying "I was not given any feedback or individual coaching on my instruction. I did not really receive coaching or feedback on my instruction, but the professional development in terms of sharing practices and strategies was helpful". Reflecting on her experience with incorporating CS and ABAR practices over the course of the study, despite not receiving enough feedback or resources to guide her she wrote:

> I feel as though I am more aware of practices that are anti-racist and culturally sustaining. So, I'm able to more easily and intentionally incorporate these practices into my instruction. I have always tried to be an anti-racist/culturally sustaining educator, but I don't know that I've always known how to accomplish that goal. Though there is definitely room to grow, I now know more about what I need to do to actually be an anti-racist and culturally sustaining educator.

Instructor Three She began this study with the goal of seeking to move away from punitive behavior management tactics within her classroom. She reflected on ultimately feeling as though

her efficacy did not grow throughout the course of this study, nor did she feel confident in truly meeting this goal. As mentioned in her responses in the weekly surveys, she discussed the tension and inner conflict she faced when attempting to put into action her true thoughts and feelings regarding anti-racist behavior management practices, but the impact of dealing with behaviors in real-time. She stated:

> I think that some of the things that hindered my success was my engaging in power struggles when students and I needed cool down time before we could clearly talk things through. In my head, I felt that listening to the students would be a way to move in a more positive management style, but it often resulted in one-way listening.

Instructor Three further discussed the impacts of the pandemic and the importance of needing to care for oneself as you seek to accomplish anti-racist work, however not being able to take time away given the coverage issues within the building. Despite not feeling an increase in her teaching self-efficacy or attaining her goal, she reflected on the impact of setting the goal, and how this placed her desire for change at the top of her mind. She reflected:

> I feel that by setting this goal for myself, I was aware on a daily basis of something higher to work towards for myself, not just getting through the day, or assessing the lesson for the day. I think that I am much more present in the classroom and in the moment of teaching instead of trying to be one step ahead. It allowed me to understand that a lot of this practice involves giving up control to some level and being and teaching at the moment while also having a blueprint of where you want a lesson to go.

When questioned about the impact coaching and professional development had on her goals and teacher self-efficacy throughout the study, she answered: "It challenged me to branch out of my comfort zone in a way that was not intimidating or overwhelming. It provided positive

support and feedback to help process through the various stages of this practice. It also helped me to absorb ideas and practices of my colleagues".

4.5 Weekly Professional Learning Communities

Literacy-focused PLCs took place every Thursday in SA's middle school building. The middle school Administration, along with a small team of teachers, revised the schedule for the 2021-2022 school year, allotting more time for staff to plan content, and meet in community with fellow content area instructors. These learning communities were also formed as a way to help move the district-wide initiative towards implementing Student Engaged Assessment and standards-based grading. Teacher Leaders plan for and run PLCs using the text *Leaders of Their Own Learning (*Berger, Rugen & Woodfin, 2014) to provide support, Professional Development, and practice for educators as they work to implement new teaching strategies. Each session took place on Thursdays from 3-3:50 PM, during the designated meeting time.

Over the course of the study, SA middle school literacy teachers participated in four specific PD sessions geared toward improving their self-efficacy by providing them with moments within PLCs to learn about the purpose of CSP and ABAR teaching practices, critical literacies, and how to implement these texts and frameworks into their daily instruction; as well as discussions on the important role literacy teachers play in shaping students learning overall, all while remaining aligned to district-level initiatives and the mandated literacy curriculum. Teachers were given time to reflect on their biases and work alongside other grade-level literacy practitioners in their building, to challenge one another through this work. For the purpose of this study, PLC sessions were not recorded in order to create and maintain a brave space (Singleton,

2005) for teachers to openly express fears, and concerns and share ideas. The AD/PI maintained a

facilitator role within each session, presenting information while creating a space for teachers to

turn to one another to learn in community, in order to not rely on the AD/PI solely for answers.

Figure 3 presents the four PLCs along with general descriptions of each session. A more specific

PD lesson outline example, along with resources used or created can be found in Appendix C.

PLC Session	Date/Day/Time	Description of Session
Loving Blackness in Literacy	Thursday, March 3, 2022, 3-3:50	PLC session was created for the purpose of providing teachers with scholarly research on the theoretical framework we would be working within the study, culturally sustaining practices; as well as research on critical literacies, and the importance of implementing them in an ELA environment.
Bringing it All Together	Monday, April 11, 2022, 12-1:30 pm (during our district-wide Planning Days)	PLC session was created to provide participants with the chance to see the interconnected nature of CS - ABAR instruction and Sustainability Academy's district-wide initiatives. Teachers were tasked with using CS picture books, and a character-based lesson from the same unit of study. Their challenge: center this lesson plan around the Black/Brown students within your classroom specifically. A share-out, feedback session, and discussion followed.
Creating CS & ABAR Classrooms	Thursday, May 5, 2022, 3-3:50 pm	This PLC session was created to address participants' question "what does a CS

		classroom actually look like?" In groups of two teachers teamed up to discuss, create and document a collective definition of CS, then list what this "looks like," "feels like," and "sounds like". They then collectively documented what strategies they used currently to create CS spaces, what obstacles stood in their way, and any solutions that existed to their knowledge both inside and outside of the district to help them address these obstacles.
Commonly Used Literacy Practices: A CS Review	Thursday, May 12, 2022, 3-3:50 pm	PLC was created out of a response to participants calling for more resources and teaching strategies that are CS and ABAR. The intended goal was to provide teachers with an opportunity to see that they already had a solid foundation of practices to begin building a CS environment. They needed to work on the intentionality behind why they use these practices. Teachers collectively listed out their commonly used literacy practices, then they discussed why they are research-based or "good" strategies to use, why they personally use them and what makes each practice listed CS and ABAR.

Figure 3 - PLC Session Outline

4.6 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted to provide more robust context to the survey responses from participants; observe the application of practices and strategies presented during PLCs and examine the accuracy of participants' interpretation/portrayal of their self-efficacy (at a glance); as well as ascertain the accuracy of participants' self-efficacy portrayals. The original intent was to complete a classroom observation each week throughout the study. Due to PSSA testing and major shifts in schedule changes, along with a COVID outbreak and diminished staff numbers, one observation was conducted for each of the four participants taking place throughout the four-week study period. All participant observations focused solely on teacher moves within the classroom. Although students were observed throughout, no data or notes were taken that included students. Observational notes in greater detail can be found in Appendix D.

Instructor One Classroom Observation, 4/6/2022, 9:17 am to 10:25 am

This observation took place during Instructor One's first class of the school day. Her learning target for the class was " I Can write a draft of a literary essay". The lesson today would not result in a draft but would help lay a strong foundation to get them there by the end of the week. All twenty-six students were seated four at a table throughout the classroom, except for two specific Black girls seated at a small stand-up podium in the back of the classroom with the middle school MTSS Specialist, a Black woman. The observed lesson for Instructor One was an inquiry-based lesson intended to guide students toward crafting strong literary essays. Students would begin by identifying aspects that make essays strong, as well as parts of an essay specific to literary essays (if they differ from other essays). Instructor One then provided each table group of students with an exemplar literary essay to examine and pull out the aspects that match the list they built together as a whole class. They would use this lesson to aid them the rest of the week as they

created their own literary essays based on the whole class novel they recently completed. Throughout the lesson, Instructor One employed a "sage on the stage" teaching method, allowing very few students to enter into a discussion, making more of the learning connections for the students. She gave verbal praise to those paying attention and following directions by calling out their names, most of these names were that of her white students.

Instructor Two Classroom Observation, 4/6/2022, 11:27 am to 12:45 pm

During this observation Instructor Two provided students with a narrative nonfiction film to watch, which would allow them to connect aspects of the genre with an example text. "I can read texts with purpose and understanding" and "I can ignite my interest in nonfiction" were the learning target and success criteria for the day. Instructor Two began the lesson by introducing their next unit to the class, a narrative nonfiction novel study with J*ust Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson (2014) as their text. She discussed why she chose this text, and how important narrative nonfiction is to their lives, as well as made connections between this unit and future novel studies they may experience in high school. Instructor Two chose the film *Worth* (2021)for the class to watch. For the rest of the block, students watched the film with the option to take notes as they watched.

Instructor Three Classroom Observation, May 9, 2022, 11:37 am to 12:45 pm

Instructor Three created an Agree/Disagree activity for the class to engage in during this observation. The learning target for the day was: *I Can read texts with purpose and understanding*, and the class the success criteria for the day: *I can develop and defend a position on various statements*, and *I can make text-to-self connections to build understanding and knowledge*. For the activity, Instructor Three posted declarative statements about justice, the criminal justice system, and the death sentence in front of the classroom on the screen. The students were expected to take a stance on each sentence, then move towards one of the four corners that had the stance posted

within it. The statements posted around the room on white printer paper read: Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree. After choosing, Instructor Three applied the cold calling teaching strategy to engage students in a discussion, pushing students to defend their stance and support it with evidence. Students were encouraged to move to another option if their opinion changed throughout the discussion portion.

Instructor Four Classroom Observation, May 9, 2022, 10:27 am to 11:35 am.

Instructor Four guided students through an examination of the Trail of Tears and the total amount of land and resources stolen from Indigenous Tribes during this observation. The goal of this class was to provide students with more historical background information so that students could continue to make connections between the historical fiction novel and true events that took place on the Trail of Tears. Resources/materials and texts used in this lesson included: an Interactive Map activity- students were given a visual representation of the amount of land Indigenous Tribes lost, and the number of years it took Colonists to acquire their land; and a short film text about the Trail of Tears. Instructor Four used these varying literacies to engage in a discussion centered around this question: "What kind of a person, leader, or friend are you if you broke your promises but only did harm?" Instructor Four guided students through a surface-level discussion, however, new vocabulary was introduced to students, and clear connections to their novel text were made by students.

4.7 One on One Planning Sessions

One-on-one planning sessions were designed to provide extra support to the participants. As they worked to implement ABAR and CS practices into their daily practice.   While PLCs

allowed for more general conversation in alignment with every instructor's practice, these sessions provided each Instructor with the opportunity to ask questions pertaining to their own practice, efficacy, and classroom environment in a more private manner. These sessions were also designed to engage and push instructors where they felt lacking and encourage and push them where they met success. The sessions would reference the goals each Instructor set for themselves, as well as discuss any recent observations done by the Ad/PI. Teachers could also use this coaching session to ask questions, seek out new resources or present a lesson plan to the PI and receive feedback in the moment. As part of the study, if the participants elected to engage fully one on one sessions were available to all of them. Instructor One was the only participant who elected to partake in the study fully but did not want to engage in the One-on-One sessions. Due to participant and PI absences and schedule changes due to standardized testing, one One-on-One session took place with Instructor Four.

Instructor Four One on One Session, May 11, 2022, 1-1:30 pm

Instructor Four set a goal around creating ABAR-based learning targets and utilizing success criteria in her classroom in order to provide students with more ownership over their learning. During this planning session, I pushed back on her desire to give students "ownership" in order to discover what Instructor Four believed about student ownership, and its connection to CS and ABAR instructional practice. We discussed ownership and the many forms it takes within her classroom. She listed ways she encourages and plans for student ownership: preferential seating choices, positive reinforcement, and allowing students to lead her short block classes were a few examples mentioned. I pushed on the idea of students choosing where they want to sit, given that oftentimes her classroom looks segregated. At the end of our session, I left her with an action item: examine her practice of student seating choice critically - how can she keep creating student

ownership around seating, while also finding opportunities to encourage students to sit with others unlike themselves (building community) while simultaneously working to become more aware of why her Black students in particular always sit with one another, never branching out to sit with others in her classroom.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

Through surveys, interviews, weekly PLCs, observations, and one-on-one coaching sessions this chapter explored the impact professional development and consistent coaching had on improving TSE over time. More specifically, this chapter addressed the initial research question: *How might coaching and professional development specific to the literacy curriculum increase teacher self-efficacy in consistently embedding culturally sustaining teaching practices and cultivating an anti-racist learning environment?* In this chapter, analysis of the data from participating instructors will be discussed through the lens of teacher identity profiles, in order to generally capture the "type" of teachers each participant represents–teachers who are seeking (either on their own or through a schoolwide mandate) to become more efficacious in CSP and ABAR teaching. Each participant's journey highlighted implications for coaches tasked with providing support in school districts working to align their goals with CSP pedagogy and ABAR education policies, teachers (both pre-service and in-service), administrators across the system of education, and those within colleges and universities both in schools of education and outside of it.

5.1 Discussion

This study sought an answer to the question: *How might coaching and professional development specific to the literacy curriculum increase teacher self-efficacy in consistently embedding culturally sustaining teaching practices and cultivating an anti-racist learning*

environment? The findings within this chapter elevated the perspectives of in-service literacy practitioners representing a wide array of teaching experiences, backgrounds, and years in the field. The findings also revealed the important role consistent coaching and professional development played in the increase of teacher self-efficacy of educators who are implementing culturally sustaining practices into a burgeoning and ever-evolving anti-racist and anti-biased classroom environment. This chapter illuminates a disconnect between the feeling of a strong teacher's self-efficacy toward culturally sustaining teaching and what actual implementation looks like.

Teacher self-efficacy is a powerful perception that can impact the day-to-day decisions and practices of educators. However, the disconnection between perceived high self-efficacy and action comes into play when intentionality and will are not present. This study illustrates that TSE requires action steeped in intention cultivated through one's own personal learning experiences, then actively working to apply anything learned in both of these instances. This study further demonstrated the importance of consistent coaching on educators tasked with or personally seeking to implement CS teaching into their practice. However, teachers must be willing to engage in this work, and coaching must be utilized to its fullest extent within the school district's system. A high teacher self-efficacy was maintained within this study by those participants who tried new practices, reflected on their own practice, and engaged in outside learning opportunities, however, these participants often did not recognize this in themselves. Those who remained more stagnant or described a decrease in their self-efficacy did so by keeping CSP and ABAR at arm's length, slightly sprinkling these practices into portions of their lessons, while simultaneously maintaining their comfort and the status quo.

I found that coaching and professional development had an impact on educators in embedding CSP practices or understanding the gaps that prohibited them from building or even desiring to build a consistent ABAR practice. However, the nature of schools to bend toward Eurocentric voice and values, curricula, and privilege greatly hindered each participant in this study. Each Instructor mentioned a struggle or tension with this work, demonstrating it by either claiming to need more resources, thus placing the responsibility to own and implement ABAR instruction outside of themselves, not having enough time to dedicate to this work but unwilling to work beyond the school day this aspect of their craft that was more unnatural to them, feeling overwhelmed by ABAR practices and the system that rejects it, ignoring the critical pieces to CSP and ABAR only planting in the more manageable aspects, or simply ignoring it altogether by not taking on outside learning or embedding new practices into one's own practice.

It is important to note here research that speaks to teachers' education, which grossly under-equips educators, especially White educators with the proper training to provide ABAR and CSP teaching consistently throughout their teaching tenure (Milner, Pearman, and McGee, 2013; Sleeter, 2001 and 2017; and Matias and Mackey, 2016). Schools (K-12 and higher education) devalue or exclude completely anti-racist education in their own school experiences, both currently and historically. White female teachers represent the main demographic of educators across teacher education programs, and as a result the K-12 education system as well (Steele, 2017). The cyclical nature of the education system guarantees all students, White or otherwise, the provision of false historical truths and misrepresentations of marginalized people and their communities heavily dipped in Eurocentric values and ideals within the education system; then finally, equipping students with a lacking awareness, and in turn funneling those misguided students, back into the education system as the teaching force (Flynn, 2018, p.109). Flynn goes on to say that the

national curriculum excluded "critical examinations of the economic, political, social and cultural impact racism has on all our lives" (2018, p.109), therefore teachers lack the skills and willingness to implement this once they step in front of students. Whiteness is privileged, centered, and sustained in American public education "through the public curriculum via media and other institutions" (Flynn, 2018, p.109). The constant messaging in the media and educational spaces vastly under-equips educators to provide counternarratives to the Eurocentric national curriculum when they step into their own classrooms. This education reality places all teachers in the same boat: in need of anti-racist teaching education, or in this case, a coaching and professional development system equipped to address this gap in teacher education.

Teacher responses further highlight the white fatigue in white educators that Flynn discussed in the aforementioned text. All of the participants questioned at different moments why they did not learn all of this before becoming educators, with Instructor Three specifically questioning her own educational experience and how she feels this presented a barrier to providing her future and current students with CSP and ABAR instruction. This study proved the need for schools, once they hire pre-service and in-service, with research-based CSP and ABAR-based professional development and coaching immediately and consistently. All the participants in this study mentioned a desire to provide CSP education to all of their students but lacked resources and often questioned where to begin and just how much of their own education to unlearn, and the time necessary to unlearn it. This chapter presents the limitations of this study and its implications for future research. It also illustrates each participant's journey towards higher efficacy illuminating general types of educators daily working in classrooms around the country that coaches and administrators will encounter while seeking to become more CS and ABAR. This chapter further examines the implications for coaches and coaching as a system overall within school districts like

Sustainability Academy as they continue to receive teachers in the workforce not "ready for primetime" before getting in front of students.

5.2 Instructor Types: The Need for a Deeper Dive

As a current coach at Sustainability Academy, it was important to analyze and discuss each instructor's data through a coaching lens, specifically through utilizing Aguilar's "Mind the Gap" framework. Although each participant represented themselves throughout this process, some general characteristics, gaps, actions, and teaching beliefs emerged that lend themselves to many teachers seeking to or being tasked with embedding CS practices into their own teaching craft. The following section looks closer at each Instructor in a more general sense by placing each of them into an identity type. My problem of practice sought to create a clearer pathway between what teachers are expected to teach (their curriculum) and Sustainability Academy's mission of being an anti-racist educational space for all students and staff members. Given that all four participants entered this study with some level of familiarity with CS and ABAR teaching, I wanted to push each of them to dive deeper into CS teaching, pushing them beyond the surface level they currently inhabit.

Although each participant expressed not truly understanding what CS or ABAR practices looked like in a classroom setting over a consistent period of time, all the participants discussed diverse text use prior to engaging in this study, with two of the four participants (Instructor One and Instructor Three) having taught a CS and ABAR centered unit this school year, prior to the start of this study. Connected to this theme of diving deeper into critical literature work and ABAR-CSP, the four identities were created using nautical terminology to further illustrate the "deeper

dive" metaphor. Using metaphors to illustrate teaching practice comes from a breadth of scholarship (Craig, 2017; Munby & Russell, 1990; Bullough, Jr., 1994 to name a few) dedicated to the practice of storying teachers' experiences and strengthening their practice through the use of metaphor. These and other scholars found that "metaphors…create realities…a metaphor may thus be a guide for future action" (Craig, 2017, p.300; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.156). There is reflective power in giving teachers, administrators, and other school personnel the opportunity to story and metaphor their experiences given that the "human species think in metaphors and learn in stories," (Craig, 2017, p.300) and having teachers look for and write about their own experiences in this way can reveal something about teacher knowledge/ content level or practice, and in turn have an impact on the decisions or actions made by teachers, and in turn affect change (Munby & Russell, 1990, p.116). Craig (2017) found that the metaphors crafted by teachers drew the attention of policymakers and administrators toward important matters weighing on the minds of their staff because solutions were often nestled within the plotlines of the storied metaphor (p.308).

As teachers are the ones tasked with creating their own metaphors, instructors like Bullough (1994) and Munby and Russell (1990) used the practice of metaphor to cultivate a practice of reflecting on one's own teaching with preservice practitioners. However, this analysis created metaphors for the participants in order to further analyze their experiences in this study; as well as to illustrate further the needs expressed by each Instructor. Scholarship speaks to the power of metaphor to illustrate the teaching experience to school administration (principals, coaches, etc.); however, I believe there is power in both the teacher and their instructional coach creating metaphor to move educators from reflection to action as we make meaning of how and why teachers create the environments they do within their classrooms. In this vein, the four instructor metaphor types are Instructor One representing the "Seaworthy yet Ballast" educators, Instructor

Two representing the "Adrift and Jury-Rigged" educators, Instructor Three representing the "Awashed yet Under Way" educators, and Instructor Four representing the "Above Deck and Aloft" educators. This section provides an explanation for the types of educators coaches, and administrators may encounter when venturing into ABAR and CS instruction and policies, as well as recommendations for how to provide support to these types of educators.

Instructor One- *"Seaworthy yet…Ballast" Educators*

The first captain, Instructor One, would have a quality standard ship of quality and standard sailing. This teacher would suppose that in being seaworthy the sea itself knows that they are worthy. What this Instructor One captain hasn't realized is that sailing (teaching) isn't the problem, and the sea (classroom environment) isn't the problem. Racism - and the lack of anti-racist teaching preparation - is the problem and it's lurking in the depths, waiting to attack all no matter their qualifications.

To be *seaworthy* means one's ship is solid, and ready to be operated, while the term *ballast* refers to something that weighs down the ship. Instructor One brings to life educators who present strong and provide their classroom with solid and research-based content because they themselves have a firm grasp of content knowledge themselves. On the surface their classroom management functions successfully, and they are often the type of teacher that administrators strongly desire: the type that meets the standard and follows all instructions. In this way, seaworthy educators have an ideal standard-seeped classroom; they are ready to deliver in alignment with what they ask - so long as it remains within the bounds of what they too were taught. Their teaching practice is, in fact, strong, their classrooms are controlled well, but still, they become weighed down or ballast when asked to introduce new strategies or teaching practices that rock their core knowledge.

Instructor One wrote about a moderate teacher self-efficacy at the start of the study as illustrated by comments like "I am confident in some areas of creating an anti-racist/culturally sustaining classroom environment," yet survey results indicated a more stagnant progression throughout the remainder of the study, illustrated by comments like the one she made in the third round of the study "I do not feel as though I have grown in my confidence with embedding culturally sustaining and anti-racist practices…I feel about as confident as I have since the beginning of the study". She mentioned engaging with PLCs twice but never engaged independently in seeking other ways to learn more about anti-racism, or CS teaching. Her seaworthy classroom and teaching practice provide administrators and coaches with a ready-made and seemingly willing environment to work within, one that does not require a heavy-handed overhaul. It is this very environment that provides teachers with the time, energy, and willingness to embed newer practices within a strong foundation, enabling them, then, to examine their current practice more critically. You spend less time providing them with content support and instead coach up their need for a pedagogical practice that is more anti-racist -and thus more essential for a teacher on the whole. Though the aforementioned teacher is often encouraged by playing toward their strengths, these kinds of teachers become ballast in holding onto their current teaching practices in order to defend their original pedagogical efforts, due to misunderstanding the efforts of their coach or administration - as demonstrated by Instructor One's refusal to attain the anti-racist resources of one-on-one coaching and coach related strategy references. However, this strong foundation often gets high praise and admiration from the administration. In my case, this instructor was low on my radar and our lack of relationship enabled her to refrain from participating in the one-on-one coaching sessions.

The seaworthy nature of these types of educators is both their strength and greatest deterrent when engaging with CS and ABAR teaching practices. These types of educators can be veterans or new to the field, as Instructor One has only been teaching for the last three years, not counting this current school year. As coaches encounter the "*seaworthy yet ballast*" teachers in their districts, it is paramount that one has the administration backing them due to administration often praises these types of instructors which works against a coach's agenda. Coaches must also be prepared to provide support for these teachers' skill gaps and will gaps, as well as their cultural competence gaps.

Instructor Two *"Adrift and Jury-Rigged" Educators*

The second captain, Instructor Two - who is adrift and jury-rigged - is a captain that is not intentionally aligning with standard or quality but is functioning for the sake of functioning. This captain believes themselves to sail effectively and yet sails not. When finally sailing, this captain is without direction. This captain, Instructor Two represents in her writing to know the requirements for addressing the needs of her black students: having taught at a predominantly black school before coming to Sustainability Academy. Nevertheless, in being adrift, the ship mainly stays afloat without really going any great distance in this essential work.

Instructor Two represents educators entering their classrooms with a moderate level of teaching experience, yet when they approach anti-racist instruction, they do so without intention or purpose (adrift) and often bring together myriad strategies and resources (jury-rigged) into lessons that lack vision or intentionality, both for themselves and their students. Instructor Two is concluding their first year of teaching at Sustainability Academy but arrived in their classroom having taught in a predominately Black religious school for the last four years. She mentions once knowing what Black students wanted at one time, but now not being so sure. In the two weekly

surveys, she completed, she never discussed new teaching practices or any outside reading she completed that would edify or strengthen her teaching. Instructor Two also referenced different teaching strategies, building background knowledge or watching a documentary, leaving out the purpose of these strategies or their connection to CS and ABAR instruction.

Teachers like Instructor Two need coaches who will aid them in filling in their cultural competence, skill, and knowledge gaps, despite having a decent amount of teaching experience under their belt. These "adrift and jury-rigged" educators need support in aligning the strategies and practices they have always implemented to standards, high-quality and research-based practice, as well as understanding the purpose behind these practices, when and why one might use them within a lesson–and more importantly, how they connect to creating and sustaining a CS and ABAR classroom environment.

Instructor Three *"Awashed yet…Underway" Educators*

The third captain, captain Instructor Three of the underway (in progress) yet awashed (water level covering the deck/overwhelmed) is bringing in knowledge to the ship, but remains so frightened by potential harm, that they bring in waves and waves of stress that begin to flood their reflective and strong work.

Teachers that Instructor Three represents are the most common when it comes to CS and ABAR teaching. She was the most reflective and engaged out of the four participants. Each week she participated in her own learning and discussed applying this learning to her lessons that week. She employed self-care when she needed it, and consistently questioned her own teaching practice and the system of education that surrounded her, creating an underway (in progress) classroom environment. However, Instructor Three's constant questioning and examination of the racist educational system often left her overwhelmed, lacking confidence, and looking beyond her sphere

of control (awashed). Instructor Four often spoke from a diminished teacher self-efficacy, focusing more on the system around her and where she felt like she failed, as opposed to the ways she was making small but impactful changes towards becoming an ABAR and CS educator.

Similarly, teachers like Instructor Three spend their time questioning the system and the spheres outside of their influence and control. They become overwhelmed by the racist system they are uncovering, and the task before them is to be an anti-racist educators and create a CS and ABAR environment. Despite actively working to unlearn and de-center whiteness and white supremacy, these teachers wonder if they in turn will do more harm than good.

Instructor Four: *"Above Deck and Aloft" Educators*

The fourth and last captain, captain Instructor Four is above deck - positioned to view everything as ship-shape. Their lofty claims of anti-racist practices going well for them, and their class, allows their process to be aloft: the ideal - without diving deep below deck to see what is real. What is real is that the ship is sailing on the surface with calm waters and clear skies. Their instinct to remain aloft results in staying on the surface; where they are effective, instead of going below deck to critically evaluate the reality of what is really missing/amiss in their anti-racist pedagogy.

Instructor Four began and ended the study reporting a high self-efficacy. She and other instructors similar enter their classrooms with a maintained level of positivity, which allows them to prevail and move forward despite hardships and failed attempts in the classroom. Instructor Four created and accomplished a goal within her sphere of control, allowing her to strengthen the high efficacy she began the study with. However, "Above deck and Aloft" instructors rarely go below the surface of their classrooms, or deeply and critically inspect their classroom instruction or practices due to being met with great success on the surface. As demonstrated in her one-on-one

planning session, Instructor Four mentioned many strategies she uses and why she felt they connected to CS practices. However, when propped further she was unaware of how to answer questions about her student choice strategies, or who this practice truly serves.

The implications of coaches when working alongside "Above Deck and Aloft" teachers is to provide them with specific moments in their instruction, specific strategies or tools to inspect critically and deeply when working with their coach, then create action steps to help them incrementally implement change and maintain a critical lens to daily apply to their own practice. These educators are effective and bring with them myriad skills, however, their surface-level success hinders them from truly seeing beyond where they are, blocking their ability to truly shift their classrooms towards being ABAR and CS consistently. It is important to remind them of the skills they developed while focused on maintaining "the deck," and pushing them to utilize CS practices as a lens to develop their cultural competence and turn those skills into deeper knowledge around their content, classroom environment, and students.

5.3 Study Limitations

Given the time of year this study took place, and the nature and subject matter of this study there are a few limitations to note. Firstly, the inconsistent schedule teachers had due to myriad standardized testing taking place in the Spring of 2022. Although schools can be chaotic regardless of the school year, the end of this year was unique in that we were making up a great deal of standardized testing that did not take place while virtual. A coaching relationship like the one implemented during the study needs consistency and a great amount of teacher time and effort, these things were greatly diminished due to the time of year the study took place and the many

changes students and staff were asked to attend to each day. This limited the amount of focus and dedication from teachers (which was already limited), as well as my access to observe them and even plan with them consistently.

Secondly, the sample size was \ small. Although the data collected from them was robust (interviews, weekly surveys, and observations), only being able to glean information from four teachers did not offer enough variety or lend itself to many different types of teaching experiences and perspectives when incorporating CSP and ABAR instruction. Also, critical literacies belong beyond the walls of a typical English Language Arts classroom. Allowing other teachers to participate outside of this specific content area could have also proven beneficial, as all content areas fall under the same mission to be anti-racist that literacy does in SA.

Coaching exists as a part of SA's system of staff support already, however, it is heavily underutilized and seen as optional. This optional nature undermines the effectiveness of any work coaches seek to accomplish within this school district. Specifically, during this study, unless a strong coaching relationship is formed, any advice or strategies given may not be implemented given the suggestive nature of my role and any advice or resources administered during a teacher's time with me. PLCs were not optional, but my role is, which often allowed teachers to minimally interact during these times or refrain from participating in sessions altogether. ABAR and CSP requires a willingness to engage with coaching and a desire to study your craft, however, this is counter to a culture that does not require teachers to. My role within the organization is far more likely to be utilized for struggling teachers or those on improvement plans than for those seeking to better understand their teaching thus tainting and devaluing the powerful purpose of coaches and how all teachers might be served. This perception also serves as a barrier for teachers who believe or are told they are already master educators in the district. Teachers will not change if it

is not required, and staff will not always seek out the chance to learn and grow if the environment does not encourage all staff to intellectually engage no matter how successful they are in their classrooms.

Lastly, the optional nature of implementing anti-racist teaching practices became a limitation, one that existed before the study commenced. Despite working within a school district with a mission to be an anti-racist educational space, implementation of CSP and ABAR practices remains optional for all staff. It is also important to return to the demographics of our body of leadership and how this acts as a false sense of accomplishment in ABAR work across the district. Although some of the participants willingly used diverse texts and introduced some ABAR topics to their classes before the study began, the Eurocentric culture of this school remains powerful and pervasive, naturally acting as a blockade to any anti-racist change taking place. Conversations around CS practices happened within our weekly PLCs, but beyond that teachers and even administrators rarely discussed these practices with regularity. It is assumed that all teachers are working to become anti-racist without an accountability system in place ensuring that teachers are not only trying to do it but are provided with the support they need to consistently strive towards anti-racist teaching or excusing themselves from this institution altogether if this is not the work they are seeking to engage with. This optional stance often placed me and the work I sought to accomplish as counter to the culture within my own district. This counter reality often exhausted the teachers I worked with, pushing them back towards teaching as they always have when everyone else around them was not expected to do the same things they were being asked to do.

<center>**5.4 Recommendations**</center>

Based on the findings from this study, as discussed above, I have four recommendations to make. They are listed and explained below.

5.4.1 Recommendation 1: Coaching is the Core

Flynn's research on the "Miseducation of White Folks" (2018) connects back to Aguilar's call for coaches to examine their own assumptions and bias about educators, believing that all teachers truly want to be better than they are, and if they demonstrate that they do not, it is important to critically examine for any gaps that may exist. This massive education gap for all teachers, not just young white teachers who make up such a dominant force in the field, requires that all school districts that employ a coaching model must be prepared to provide professional development and one-on-one support to the staff in their buildings. Although not every literacy teacher elected to participate, the four who participated demonstrated growth. A coaching model also prepared to name and move teachers from an individual understanding of racism to a systemic one (Flynn, 2018).

All teachers were positioned to question their bias and their own teaching practice in ways they were not made to in years previous. The assumption that anti-racist and critical literacy work happens in each literacy classroom was removed to make way for teachers to critically question whether they were or even possessed all the skills and knowledge necessary to make this a reality. Instructor One may have elected to not receive support, while also consistently writing about the need for support and resources, but as a coach, this illuminated a need (a gap) that would never have shown itself if PLC conversations and surveys did not consistently center critical literacies,

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anti-racism and culturally sustaining practices. Aguilar (2013) writes about the vital role coaches in school systems play:

> A coaching stance views teachers, principals, and all adults in schools as capable of changing practices…coaches analyze larger systems at play as well as historical context…a coach holds space where healing can take place and where resilient, joyful communities can be built…coaching encourages collaborative, reflective practice…coaching supports collective leadership across a school system. (*The Art of Coaching*, p.5-7)

Coaching is a vital part of school systems when it comes to supporting change on every level. As it relates to CSP and ABAR work, to have people specifically positioned to analyze systems alongside all stakeholders, hold space to build resilience, and encourage collaborative and reflective practice is powerful, necessary, and in need of cultivation across all school districts, not just Sustainability Academy. This study, despite its small sample size and limited time period, demonstrated the core role coaches play in ensuring schools become more culturally sustaining and anti-racist. For school districts that have coaching as a system, or districts seeking to implement coaching, I recommend not only embedding this role across the district but giving those within the role weight and teeth to truly accomplish the work educational institutions need.

5.4.2 Recommendation 2: Encourage Teacher Intellectual Development

Teaching is a practice we enter into and must strive to cultivate regardless of the number of years we have dedicated to it. As Paris and Alim (2014) remind us, culture is ever-evolving, students evolve with each passing summer, literacies, media, and messaging constantly change, and the ever-evolving nature of the racist system and society in which education lives demands that educators remain vigilant in their own learning. School administrators must provide

meaningful opportunities both in-house and beyond school walls for their teachers to engage in. We can no longer wait for staff to ask for it, we must begin providing it as a part of their regularly scheduled programming. K-12 Administration must begin cultivating a culture where staff is expected and in time willing and excited to learn, a culture where it is necessary for them to continue their learning and developing their teaching craft, whether they are veterans or new service instructors. As Critical Race Theory continues to emerge misrepresented in conversation, staff within school systems must be aware of their role and how to dialogue with various stakeholders about what the true purpose of education is. Likewise, in order to play a role in shaping future critically aware citizens of this country, one must work to sustain their own critical awareness.

5.4.3 Recommendation 3: Utilizing the Existing Accountability Systems to Support ABAR and CSP

In order for teachers at SA to obtain and sustain high teacher self-efficacy for consistent CSP and ABAR instructional practice, building administrators must assume their responsibility for leading ABAR/ CSP work from their office of leadership. Accountability is vital towards CSP being implemented with fidelity. SA leaders, and other leaders in surrounding districts, need not recreate any systems in order to implement effective accountability, rather they can utilize their existing systems to better support CSP in their schools, not just in classrooms.

The following systems exist in SA and can be used to provide system wide accountability within the district:

- Informal Observations
- Monthly Walkthroughs, and the rubrics that are used during these monthly moments

- Formal Evaluation System

- Monthly Professional Development

- Monthly Staff Meetings and PLC meetings

- Grade level team meetings

Each of the aspects of our system listed above currently exist to support teacher practice, remind staff of the mission and vision of the school, and drive forward all district level initiatives. Each aforementioned aspect of our system provides both a macro and micro aspect of the school system and teacher practice, all are led by building administration in some way. Using CSP and ABAR practices interwoven into each part mentioned above, teachers will be given consistent training, observations and finally place leaders and coaches in union with one another. As the message around ABAR and CSP become clear, discussed at all teacher facing moments, and Administrators become fixtures in classrooms , the work of coaches becomes strengthened as administration and coaches become a team with common language and goals; then ultimately teachers receive the necessary support and the school environment shifts to support CSP and students begin to receive the education they deserve as all systems and their accountability measures work in tandem to support that goal.

5.4.4 Recommendation 4: Building a Bridge Between the Pre-service Education and the K-12 System

Schools are flooded with new staff entering their halls under-prepared to provide critical literacy and anti-racist instruction. Open dialogue between higher education systems and K-12 education systems is necessary for the future success of all schools. As the teacher population continues to be predominately White and female, it is imperative that school districts openly

discuss with higher education the types of teachers they need in order to be rigorous freedom-giving educational spaces. Coaches and administrators are often placed in positions to work backward and provide new staff with years of race-based professional development in a short amount of time, leading them to often move on from that need and work with new teachers on other "more pressing issues" as new staff members. Sleeter (2001, 2017) speaks to how under-prepared teachers are for culturally diverse school settings, however this need for preparation only continues to increase. I do not believe it is the sole responsibility of higher education spaces to prepare teachers for ABAR and CSP, K-12 institutions likewise must begin to speak to teacher preparedness, owning this as part of their responsibility as well.

5.5 Implications for Practitioners and Further Research

This study's findings, limitations, and recommendations lend themselves to a few questions to guide further research for coaches, school administrators, and other key stakeholders not specifically examined within this specific study:

- How might a system of accountability shift the culture of a non-performative (Ahmed, 2012), White-dominated place of practice, and aid in the implementation of CSP and ABAR with stronger fidelity?
- In what ways can PLCs and PD be employed to not only provide practitioners with learning opportunities but engage them in igniting their desire to unlearn?
- How might effective culturally responsive leadership (Marshall and Khalifa, 2018) be implemented in order to provide teachers with consistent guidance in ABAR work?

- What mechanisms must be in place for all educational institutions (i.e. K-12 spaces, colleges, universities, trade schools, etc.) to move from dialogue around creating or implementing CSP and ABAR pedagogy that resist Eurocentric curriculum and educational values towards consistent and intentional action set to decenter whiteness in education, and ultimately break the cyclical nature of racist deculturalizing curriculum (Flynn, 2018); in order to provide all students with a CSP, ABAR and critical literacies based education?

- What role do policymakers play in CSP and ABAR instruction and its implementation? How can educational spaces open pathways of dialogue to policymakers to further bend school culture and teacher practice toward CSP and ABAR?

The culture within education institutions is palatable and powerful and plays a large role in the success of educational improvements and initiatives taken up by school leaders. Ahmed (2012) writes about institutions in a tangible and relevant way for stakeholders seeking to be successful in anti-racist school reform:

> To explain institutions is to give an account of how they emerge or take form...a way of describing not simply the activities that take place within institutions...but how those activities shape the sense of an institution or even an institutional sense…institutions can be thought of as verbs as well as nouns. (p.20)

Likewise, the practices commonly carried out and widely accepted by educators within education institutions are also important indicators of the culture of the organization, and must be examined while seeking ABAR school reform:

What professionals do in their work is not arbitrary. It has regularity, recurrence, and routine. People move and speak in predictable ways…Some practices are less micro-interactive and more formal…much of what we do in educational work settings consists of myriad practices applied to specific situations, and people repeat these practices whenever they think a situation calls for them. Instructional practices are a small part of these practices. (Mintrop, 2016, p. 24)

These predictable and unpredictable patterns of practice must be extrapolated before and all throughout the process of implementing CSP and ABAR pedagogy within not just a teacher's practice but the culture of the school. Culture, not just practice must be examined and addressed, for it is living, breathing and ever evolving to maintain what it already is. This study skimmed the surface of teacher practice examination, and I acknowledge a missing portion is a deeper cultural examination of SA. As a coach, I must navigate and respond to this culture throughout my work, however other key stakeholders like building leadership and families are vital in shifting the culture of an institution in order to provide and sustain an environment where ABAR and equity work might flourish. Further training and research are needed around involving parents in equity work, and how to consistently provide school leaders with ABAR and CSP-based leadership training, perhaps before they even enter schools to assume their leadership positions.

The culture itself must shore up and strengthen teacher practice not actively work against anti-racist reform efforts, as it so often does. Language is culture, and what we speak within schools, hold educators accountable to and evaluate them on are often what teachers come to care about (at least enough to keep their job). Further examination of accountability systems, like those in the medical profession, is necessary in order to cultivate a culture where equity and ABAR work goes to thrive. The review of accountability scholarship (Deber, 2014; Kramer, Solomon &

Dingman, 2009; and Shortt and Macdonald, 2002) by coaches and school leaders around accountability frameworks may prove fruitful as institutions seek to incorporate a system of accountability with a set of clearly defined and outlined procedures to shift culture and make a lasting impact. Likewise, although evaluation systems focus on teaching practice and how students then receive strong or weak instruction, as Johnson, Bryan & Boutte (2018) suggest, the implementation of a culturally authentic assessment by teachers (p.60), and an ABAR and CSP lens applied to monthly school walkthroughs and formal evaluation systems may also strengthen teacher practice and influence lasting change.

This study focused on coaching effectiveness and found that in fact coaches do play a pivotal role in school reform and shifting teacher practice. However, the siloed work I sought to accomplish through this study will not have longevity without building leaders and coaches coming together to work in concert with one another. Coaches and leadership must begin working together, and seeking more CSP and ABAR PD for themselves, perhaps participating in their own PLCs throughout the year, in order to ensure they are on one accord as they both play vital roles in school success, shifting school culture and transforming teacher practice in order to ensure students not only meet success but experience educational freedom (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 1994).

Finally, this study has vast implications for creating connections between the many educational institutions, in order to move all learners beyond the Eurocentric cyclical nature of education. Colleges and universities alone cannot be responsible for rewiring pre-service teaching students in order to prepare them for culturally diverse schools. Many scholars have identified the problem (Flynn, 2018; Matias, 2016; Matias and Mackey, 2015; Sleeter, 2001 and 2016), now it is time for dialogue and collaboration among all educational institutions around the national

curriculum and what changes need to be made sooner rather than later, especially in the face of the misguided debate centered on critical race theory and the rise in the erasure of critical literacies across the country.

As this debate continues to gain more steam, and more voice in the media and government, while blindly leading education law and policy reform, this study also carries great implications for those making policy at the local, state, and national levels that directly affect school institutions. As Paul Gorski (2019) strongly states a racial equity reckoning is long overdue, and "students experiencing racism can't wait for schools to move at their own pace and comfort level" (p.56). It is time to approach equity and anti-racist school reform with the same energy as those fighting to extinguish it. Schools have in fact shifted in response to the pandemic, and we in education still have an ability to use this monumental opening to transform education once and for all.

Week One Data:

Concept/Gap Code	Description	Participant Example
Skill	The ability to execute the technical elements of the task. Can be the application of knowledge.	
Knowledge	The theoretical or practical understanding of a subject; can also be informational.	
Capacity	The time and resources to do something; can also be emotional and physical capacity.	Instructor 1: "I still feel as though I need more resources to use for culturally sustaining and anti-racist instruction." Instructor 3: I took a mental health day last week because I knew I was not going to be effective in the classroom. It helped me to get rest and adjust my perspective.
Will	Desire, intrinsic motivation, passion, or commitment; usually has an emotional tone.	Instructor 1: I did not try any new teaching practices this week. As mentioned above, I used culturally sustaining texts and many opportunities for students to work together. Instructor 2: We are putting in the groundwork that, hopefully, will make this unit not only about our black students, but help them feel that it is for them. Instructor 3: Unlearning the education system as I remember it as a student and how that shapes me as a teacher. Instructor 4: I have been

		creating success criteria which allows me to hold all students to high learning standards, as well provides students with ownership over their learning.
Cultural Competence	The ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own; the skill to navigate cross-cultural differences. **Researcher addition:** the ability to intentionally apply cultural competence into instruction.	**Instructor 1:** "My class read, discussed, and have been working with culturally sustaining texts ("Thank You, Ma'am" and "Raymond's Run")" Instructor 2: I feel like I'm not confident in knowing what our black and brown students enjoy, or what they find engaging. (A lot of what I knew kids liked has changed during the pandemic) Instructor 4: I want to plan for my black students specifically, but it is difficult to stay with that as my target and not get lost in planning for the skill.
Emotional Intelligence	The ability to be aware of, manage and express one's emotions; the ability to recognize, empathize with and manage other people's emotions.	
Efficacy	A person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action (researcher addition: or enact systemic change) in prospective situations.	Instructor 1: "I'm not sure I have grown in the past week." Instructor 3: I just finished the equity survey and now I feel even less confident.

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Teacher Intellectual Engagement	The intrinsic desire towards continuous learning to shape and inform their teaching practice; the understanding put into action that learning must be an active part of the teaching practice.	Instructor 1: I did not do any additional [learning]. Instructor 2: Left responses to the questions about new teacher practice and outside learning blank this round. Instructor 3: [I read] Educators Who Consider Themselves 'White Allies' Are Dangerous When It Comes to Developing Anti-Racist Classrooms Instructor 4: We practiced using picture books for read alouds and characterization work in our PLC this week. We also practiced planning a lesson with only our black students in mind.

Week Two Data

Code	Description	Example/ Data
Skill	The ability to execute the technical elements of the task. Can be the application of knowledge.	
Knowledge	The theoretical or practical understanding of a subject; can also be informational.	Instructor 1: It was difficult to find ways to incorporate culturally sustaining and anti-racist practices in our instruction this week because we did PSSA prep…We worked on preparing for the PSSA, which is a racist test. In our preparation, we held individual conferences with all students, and we used games to engage them.

Instructor 2: We viewed a short documentary and paused to discuss questions as we went. I haven't shown a proper documentary since pre-quarantine, but it went really well. It gave all the students language to discuss the racial inequities addressed in the book, and also helped them to make connections between the inequities they see continually perpetrated throughout American history.

Instructor 3: I used strategic questioning to get students to challenge their assumptions, bias, and thinking of how seemingly different systems intertwine.

Instructor 4: Our PLC where we talked about planning intentionally for our black students because all students would then benefit helped me with my planning intentions

Capacity	The time and resources to do something; can also be emotional and physical capacity.	
Will	Desire, intrinsic motivation, passion, or commitment; usually has an emotional tone.	Instructor 1: I still need more resources for how to provide authentic culturally sustaining and anti-racist instruction, especially surrounding standardized tests.
Cultural Competence	The ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own; the skill to navigate cross-cultural	Instructor 2: I feel like I struggle with encouraging my black and brown kiddos to speak on our topics because I don't want them to feel as though I'm asking them to speak on behalf of all black and brown people.

Instructor 3: I feel like I have been instructed in the oppression of others that I don't have confidence in knowing/connecting positive and uplifting aspects of other races and cultures. |

differences.

Researcher addition: the ability to intentionally apply cultural competence into instruction.

Emotional Intelligence	The ability to be aware of, manage and express one's emotions; the ability to recognize, empathize with and manage other people's emotions.	
Efficacy	A person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action (researcher addition: or enact systemic change) in prospective situations.	Instructor 1: I did feel confident in the results of the individual conferences that we held. It boosted students' confidence and helped them to reflect on their areas of strength and needs. Instructor 3: This week I felt more confident to directly discuss race and challenge students to consider why it is a factor for poverty and punishment in America, instead of tiptoeing around the subject.
Teacher Intellectual Engagement	The intrinsic desire towards continuous learning to shape and inform their teaching practice; the understanding put into action	Instructor 1: I did not complete or participate in outside reading or learning this week. Instructor 2: I have been doing research on all of the events, laws, etc. referenced in Just Mercy which has been empowering and has enabled me to stimulate the race-based conversations we have had. Instructor 3: I read and took notes on Just Mercy young

| | that learning must be an active part of the teaching practice. | readers edition, listened to Man Enough podcast with episode guest Alok Vaid Menon: The Urgent Need for Compassion, episode with guest Eldra Jackson III: Human Work, Not Prison Work, and episode with guest Dean Cain: Let's Disagree to Agree, Articles in this google doc: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_4Dj0z34QD2u_xYZdIaMRSKqYBYWrSo0WgRF_g22FGk/edit?usp=sharing |

Instructor 4: I read Being the Change by Sara K. Ahmed and have included one of her tracking growth exercises into my next unit.

Week Three Data

Code	Description	Example/ Data
Skill	The ability to execute the technical elements of the task. Can be the application of knowledge.	
Knowledge	The theoretical or practical understanding of a subject; can also be informational.	Instructor 3: With PSSAs last week, I did not feel like I did much teaching at all. We did try to provide historical background information for our narrative nonfiction as a way to help students better comprehend the systems we will be talking and learning about in our book.
Capacity	The time and resources to do something; can also be emotional and physical capacity.	Instructor 1: I am still in need of feedback and resources to help me to embed culturally sustaining and anti-racist practices into my lessons. Instructor 3: In making lessons exciting or interesting for the students to engage with more. I feel like creative and fun activities can't be executed because there are always tough behaviors. But I

		recognize that if the lessons are not engaging, tough behaviors will persist. It's a vicious cycle and I'm struggling to break it.
Will	Desire, intrinsic motivation, passion, or commitment; usually has an emotional tone.	
Cultural Competence	The ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own; the skill to navigate cross-cultural differences. **Researcher addition:** the ability to intentionally apply cultural competence into instruction.	Instructor 1: This week was PSSA testing, so we were not able to do instruction very much. For the small amount of instructional time that we had, we watched the movie Holes, which features diverse characters that many of my students can relate to. We discussed the racism present in the movie, and we worked on understanding characterization. For the related assignment, the students were able to choose any character that they were interested in to work with. Every student was engaged in these activities.
Emotional Intelligence	The ability to be aware of, manage and express one's emotions; the ability to recognize, empathize with and manage other people's emotions.	
Efficacy	A person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action (researcher addition: or enact systemic change) in prospective situations.	Instructor 1: I do not feel as though I have grown in my confidence with embedding culturally sustaining and anti-racist practices…I feel about as confident as I have since the beginning of the study.

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| | | Instructor 3: I don't know that we really did this, this week. |

| Teacher Intellectual Engagement | The intrinsic desire towards continuous learning to shape and inform their teaching practice; the understanding put into action that learning must be an active part of the teaching practice. | Instructor 1: I did not complete outside reading or learning this week.

Instructor 3: [I read] **Such a Fun Age by Kiley Reid** |

Week Four Data:

Code	Description	Example/ Data
Skill	The ability to execute the technical elements of the task. Can be the application of knowledge.	
Knowledge	The theoretical or practical understanding of a subject; can also be informational.	Instructor 1: We used games, real-world connections, project-based learning, and opportunities for creativity to create a more culturally sustaining and anti-racist classroom. Instructor 4: I used mirrors and windows for a documentary on Indigenous representation in Hollywood and media.
Capacity	The time and resources to do something; can also be emotional and physical capacity.	
Will	Desire, intrinsic motivation, passion, or commitment; usually has an emotional tone.	Instructor 1: I don't believe I feel any less confident in this area. It would be helpful to have more feedback on my practices and specific

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suggestions for things that I could be doing better.

Instructor 3: The one thing that I feel like I am taking away from all this is that we need to approach each student on an individual basis. Not necessarily meet with them all one on one, but when there are behaviors that disrupt their own learning and the learning of others, it needs to be dealt with individually instead of with a "standardized consequence." I struggle with it being so late in the year and with constant schedule disruptions, that we will not be able to adjust the culture into one that is approached on a case-by-case basis. I also feel less confident because of the pull between what I can control in my classroom while also being part of a team and supporting the rules even if I don't fully agree with them. I struggle with the balance between controlling what I can control but also playing within the expectations of the education system which is centered in whiteness and oppression.

Cultural Competence	The ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own; the skill to navigate cross-cultural differences. **Researcher addition:** the ability to intentionally apply	Instructor 3: I also struggle with the recognition that I honestly may not be able to fairly work through a case-by-case approach with certain students because of my own biases. I also think about all the things that I don't understand about how a

	cultural competence into instruction.	broader culture impacts individuals and how that plays into interactions in and out of the classroom. And if we are trying to tackle racism by teaching about it and white oppression, are we supporting anti-racist teaching or teaching white patriarchal oppressive culture? Am I trying to teach this virtue to signal that I am "one of the good white women?" Lots of struggles, thoughts, and wonders this week.

Instructor 4: My concern is always about checking my own bias and blind spots. |
| Emotional Intelligence | The ability to be aware of, manage and express one's emotions; the ability to recognize, empathize with and manage other people's emotions. | |
| Efficacy | A person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action (researcher addition: or enact systemic change) in prospective situations. | Instructor 1: I'm not sure my confidence has grown. Students have enjoyed the projects we've been doing, but I still feel as though there are gaps in my conceptualization of how to create and teach lessons that are truly culturally sustaining and anti-racist.

Instructor 3: It was a rough week. I have more doubts about how I have grown and more disappointment in how I have reverted back to old habits of punitive behavior management. |

		Instructor 4: I have grown more confident in writing explicit learning targets with an anti-racist framework.
Teacher Intellectual Engagement	The intrinsic desire towards continuous learning to shape and inform their teaching practice; the understanding put into action that learning must be an active part of the teaching practice.	Instructor 1: I worked collaboratively with other teachers to identify strategies, barriers, and qualities for and of culturally sustaining and anti-racist teaching practices through my PLC.
		Instructor 3: [I read] Behold the Dreamers by Imbolo Mbue.
		Instructor 4: I have been doing a lot of research on Indigenous Activism for our upcoming unit, so I have been doing a lot of learning and unlearning about the disparities that Indigenous people have faced and still face today.

Appendix A Survey/Interview Questions

Survey & Interview Questions		
Introductory Survey	**Weekly Survey**	**Exit Interview**
Full Name	What goal did you set out to accomplish at the start of this study?	What goal(s) did you set out to accomplish at the beginning of this research study?
Position/Grade Level		
Number of Years at ECS	What new (or older) teaching practice did you try out this week to help you reach your goals and create a more culturally sustaining anti-racist classroom?	As this study concludes, do you feel you were successful in meeting these goal(s)? **Follow-ups**: 1) What contributed to this success? 2)What hindered your ability to feel successful?
Number of Years Teaching Literacy		
How confident are you currently in creating an anti-racist/ culturally sustaining classroom environment (this includes instruction, classroom management/discipline, decor, etc.)? Please explain.	Reflect on this past week: In what ways have you grown in your confidence to embed culturally sustaining & anti-racist practices within your teaching daily?	Tell me about how you've changed from the beginning of this study to the end of this study?
In what ways have you already begun the work of creating and sustaining an anti-racist/ culturally sustaining environment? Feel free to write about specific units, classroom management/discipline examples, or whatever else you've done!	What areas do you feel less confident in, and need more support with when it comes to culturally sustaining & anti-racist teaching?	Tell me about how you've changed as an anti-racist/ culturally sustaining educator from the beginning to the end of this study?
	What reading/outside learning did you complete this week to help you strengthen your practice, build your confidence & meet your teaching goals?	How did coaching and professional development impact your teaching practice throughout this study?
During our weekly sessions, how can I best help you reach your goals? (This question will help make our time intentional & more productive!)		How do you plan to use what you've learned to make long-term/lasting impacts on your teaching practice?

Appendix B Planning

April 11, 2022
12 pm -1:30 pm

Purpose:
To bring all the strategies learned this year into one lesson by planning a Read Aloud lesson

Learning Target:
I Can *construct* a culturally sustaining - ABAR student-centered and engaged classroom environment.

Norms:
- Speak your truth
- Stay Engaged
- Be Hard on Content, Soft on People
- Embrace Discomfort and Uncertainty
- Talk about students as children, not as problems
- Don't expect closure, bring
   Commitment

Possible Agenda
- G - Greeting/Opening
   - Announcements
   - Teacher Check-In
   - Review Learning Targets
- R - Reflection
   - Looking back over all the strategies in relation to Student Engaged Assessment that we've discussed to date
- I - Initiative
   - Present teachers with PLC Challenge!
   - Plan a CS Read Aloud lesson using a CS picture book, with their current Black students at the center of the lesson (who they're planning for)
- D - Debrief
   - Discussion Questions
   - What's on Deck for Next Week

Time/Who	What	Why	How
	Announcements and Check-in	Important to check in with teachers, give them time to settle in.	Slides, chat with team members
	Reflection on Student Engaged Assessment	Important to take a moment to think about all we've learned throughout the year, before moving on to add anything else! Also, important to prioritize application.	Slides, open discussion review
	Lesson Plan Challenge	Challenges can be interesting; also allows teachers to push to get the lesson planned in the time allotted.	Teachers were given a picture book and unit of study book to plan a Read Aloud lesson for their Black students specifically. They needed to incorporate most or all of the strategies we discussed thus far. They only had an hour to do so!
	Debrief through discussion	Important for each team to share out what they accomplished, allow time for feedback, and the chance to discuss what they experienced and noticed.	Open discussion share out; discussion questions posted on slides.

Appendix C Observations

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted to provide more robust context to the survey responses from participants; observe the application of practices and strategies presented during PLCs and examine the accuracy of participants' interpretation/portrayal of their self-efficacy (at a glance); ascertain the accuracy of participants' self-efficacy portrayal. The original intent was to complete a classroom observation each week throughout the study. Due to PSSA testing and major shifts in schedule changes, along with a COVID outbreak and diminished staff numbers, one observation was conducted for each of the four participants taking place throughout the four-week study period. All participant observations focused solely on teacher moves within the classroom. Although students were observed throughout, no data or notes were taken that included students.

Instructor One Classroom Observation, 4/6/2022, 9:17 am to 10:25 am

This observation for Instructor One took place during their first block of the day during their Literary Essay writing unit. Instructor One opened their class by asking all her students to take out their literacy notebooks and write down the learning target for the day "I Can write a draft of a literary essay". All twenty-six students were seated four at a table throughout the classroom, except for two specific Black girls seated at a small stand-up podium in the back of the classroom with the middle school MTSS Specialist, a Black woman. Instructor One begins by asking students to help her unpack the purpose behind their learning target for the day to understand as a class the overall learning that would take place that day. Instructor One unpacked the learning target for the classroom by doing more explaining and defining terms that might

have been unfamiliar to students, then called on a few students to see if they had any questions. There was a low hum of chatter emanating from the student tables. To bring the attention back to her and the learning, she would point out specific students who currently met her expectations, frequently calling on two young white female students. Then students were tasked with writing the learning target in their own words and rating from one to five how comfortable they were with the target before moving on.

While moving around the classroom to check for understanding and maintain engagement, Instructor One asked a few students to share the learning target sentences they created with the class. She called on one Black male student and two white female students before transitioning into the next activity. Instructor One employed the "sage on the stage" teaching strategy for the majority of the class. She did more of the talking, only allowing students to answer a couple of questions throughout her lesson. Whole class discussions did not take place during the observed portion of the lesson. Instructor One maintained a quiet classroom during the lecture, calling out student's names who were both engaged and off task. Phrases like "I'm looking for eyes, eyes on me," "I'm talking over one [student], now I'm talking over one more" were used to maintain a quiet classroom, which also helped to keep her lesson at a brisk pace. For the remainder of the class, after Instructor One's lecture on elements of a strong literary essay, the students worked with their table mates to find each element within an exemplar essay.

Instructor Two Classroom Observation, 4/6/2022, 11:27 am to 12:45 pm

Instructor Two's Block Two class is usually a co-taught period. However, Instructor Three, her co-teacher, was home ill, and she was assigned no substitute due to coverage needs elsewhere in the building. A slideshow greeted students as they entered the classroom with the

learning targets and Do Now activity posted for the day. "I can read texts with purpose and understanding" and "I can ignite my interest in nonfiction" were the learning target and success criteria for the day. The Do Now activity featured two questions: "*Have you read/watched any narrative nonfiction in the past? If so, did you like it?"* Students milled into the classroom with their assigned Chromebook computers, binders, and writing implements. The total number of students in the class is twenty-four to twenty-six depending on the block, and they each sit at tables of four. After the bell rings, Instructor Two reminds students to start working on the Do Now. Ten minutes into the start of the class, Instructor Two asks for their attention and begins by going over the agenda for the day, also written on a slide for all students to see. She reviews the learning targets for the day and conducts a short discussion around the Do Now activity. Transitioning into the lesson for the day, Instructor Two begins by giving background on the next and final unit of the school year: "[My] hope is to make this unit fun and memorable. This Do Now was meant to ignite your learning…You will experience nonfiction every day". She then tells students that they will watch a narrative nonfiction film in class today and take notes on the film as they watch. They will also preview the text *Just Mercy*, their novel study for the remainder of the school year.

Instructor Two posted on the next slide partial text, two paragraphs, from the novel *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson (2014). She read the quoted text on the slide aloud to the students, implementing the "text preview" teacher strategy; a strategy employed to allow students to begin to build background on a new text and make early connections to a text. She then continues by giving students her reasoning for choosing a novel study to end the school year. She remarks that she "loved this [book] but didn't like nonfiction". She continued by reminding the class that next year they will be in high school and more likely to participate in novel studies more so than book

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clubs and student choice novel units like the ones they usually participated in due to the Lucy

Calkins curriculum used at Sustainability Academy. She also noted that the original narrative

nonfiction unit called for book clubs, but that she disliked book clubs. The class then transitions

into the film portion of the class. Instructor Two begins with instructions for the class. She tells

them that they are to watch the film without their cell phones or Chromebooks, at this time a few

students were playing video games on their computers while Instructor Two was discussing the

upcoming novel and film watching instructions.

The class was given two films to choose from *Worth* (2021), a film based on the realistic

fiction text titled *What is Life Worth?* (Feinberg, 2005) which chronicles the real-life experience

of the lawyer Kenneth Feinberg who was placed in charge of the 9/11 victims Compensation

Fund; and the film *The Boy who Harnessed the Wind* (2019), based on the true story of a

thirteen-year-old Malawian William Kamkwamba, who builds a windmill to save his family

from famine. Both films were chosen as visual text examples of narrative nonfiction, the genre

Just Mercy belonged. Students would be studying both the text itself and the genre. After voting

for ten minutes, Instructor Two chooses *Worth* for the class. She suggested to the class "if you

want to jot some stuff down you can" while they watch the film. As a class, they would discuss

the film after watching it. In an almost seventy-five-minute class block, the students were able to

watch thirty-five minutes of the film, Instructor Two paused the film twice to discuss or clarify

information with her students. The bell rang before she could bring the class back together and

discuss what they saw and connect it back to their learning target and success criteria for the day.

Instructor Three Classroom Observation, May 9, 2022, 11:37 am to 12:45 pm

Instructor Three was solely responsible for planning and executing instruction during this

Block Two class. Instructor Two was not present during this class, instead, she was proctoring

PSSA science make-ups with students in the grade level who did not take the test on the day it was administered. Following their predictable class routine, when the bell rang Instructor Three had the Do Now activity and the learning target posted on a slideshow in the front of the classroom. The Do Now activity was a question that asked: *Why do you think Ch.2 is titled 'Stand'?* Students were given a few minutes to write down their thoughts before Instructor Three asked a few volunteers to answer the question aloud. Three students engaged in the discussion initially before Instructor Three moved on with an explanation of the chapter title for the class. She then transitioned into calling the class back to the learning target for the day: *I Can read texts with purpose and understanding*, and then showed the class the success criteria for the day: *I can develop and defend a position on various statements*, and *I can make text to self-connections to build understanding and knowledge*. Instructor Three created an "I agree/ I disagree" activity that would help students with making stronger connections to Just Mercy, as well as continue to develop strong opinions and use evidence to support those opinions. She posted the activity on the screen while also going over the instruction aloud for the whole class.

Instructor Three posted declarative statements about justice, the criminal justice system, and the death sentence in front of the classroom on the screen. The students were expected to take a stance on each sentence, then move towards one of the four corners that had the stance posted within it. The statements posted around the room on white printer paper read: Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree. After choosing the corner they wanted, Instructor Three applied the cold calling teaching strategy to engage students in a discussion, pushing students to defend their stance and support it with evidence. Students could also raise their hands to participate in the conversation as well. Students were encouraged to move to another option if their opinion changed throughout the discussion portion. All twenty-six students engaged in the

conversation. At times a few students asked Instructor Three for her opinion, and she responded with "my opinion doesn't matter - not for this activity". The Agree/Disagree activity engaged students for the majority of the block, allowing only five minutes for the Exit Ticket. The declarative statements posted, along with the discussion questions that followed are provided in a table in Figure 4.

Agree/ Disagree Statements	End of Activity Discussion Question
People don't change - bad people generally act bad and good people generally act well. **The purpose of the criminal justice system is to rehabilitate those who break the law.** The justice system works well, almost always punishing the guilty and freeing the innocent. **The death penalty is just and necessary.** It is better to let ten guilty people go free than to convict one innocent person. **Each of us is more than the worst thing we have ever done.**	**Why do you think we did this activity?** What new thoughts or questions came up for you as we did this activity? **What did this activity have to do with the "Personal Connection" portion of the guided notes?** **Do Now**: Make revisions according to the "Personal Connection" portion of your notes for the Intro, Ch 1, and Ch 2.

Figure 4 - Agree/Disagree Activity Questions

Instructor Four Classroom Observation, May 9, 2022, 10:27 am to 11:35 am

As students entered the classroom, they grabbed their binders and sat down at their assigned tables. A quote from Red Cloud was posted on the screen at the front of the room: "They made us many promises more than I can remember. But they kept but one. They promised to take our land, and they took it". After the bell rang, students were instructed to write a response to this question

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in their notebooks: How does this quote relate to treaty talk from the book? After writing for a few minutes, Instructor Four employed the teaching strategy "Turn and Talk" to have students share their written responses with a classmate seated at their table. Then she engaged them in a whole group discussion about the question and the quote posted. During the discussion, Instructor Four asked the class "What kind of a person, leader, or friend are you if you broke your promises but only did harm?". This question and the quote aided the teacher in transitioning students into the first activity of the day. Students would watch an interactive map video found on YouTube, to discuss how much land was taken from the Indigenous Tribes. This interactive map video provided the class with a visual representation of the land taken from Indigenous Tribes, in order to help make connections to the main character in the class novel *How I Became a Ghost* (Tingle, 2013), a Choctaw nation trail of tears historical fiction text. All of the students in the classroom engaged in the interactive map activity with Instructor Four facilitating a whole class group discussion and supporting students in making connections between the interactive map and the novel.

During more writing-specific times in the classroom Instructor Four spent time hovering over her Black students grouped at a specific table; however, during the discussion portions of class many of the students she called on came from the back of the classroom where many of her more willing white student participants were seated. After the interactive map activity, Instructor Four transitioned to a short documentary film on YouTube about the trail of tears. Students were encouraged to actively view the text by looking for connections between the novel, interactive map, and the short film text, and take notes while they watched. The students towards the front who received support from Instructor Four during work times in class were asleep or disengaged from the video portion of the class. The bell rang before the class finished viewing the short film.

Appendix D Planning Sessions

One-on-One Planning Sessions

One-on-one planning sessions were designed to provide extra support to the participants. As they worked to implement ABAR and CS practices into their daily practice. While PLCs allowed for more general conversation in alignment with every instructor's practice, these sessions provided each Instructor with the opportunity to ask questions pertaining to their own practice, efficacy, and classroom environment in a more private manner. These sessions were also designed to engage and push instructors where they felt lacking and encourage and push them where they met success. The sessions would reference the goals each Instructor set for themselves, as well as discuss any recent observations done by the PI. Teachers could also use this coaching session to ask questions, seek out new resources or present a lesson plan to the PI and receive feedback in the moment. As part of the study, if the participants elected to engage fully one on one sessions were available to all of them. Instructor One was the only participant who elected to partake in the study fully but did not want to engage in the One-on-One sessions. Due to participant and PI absences and schedule changes due to standardized testing, one One-on-One session took place with Instructor Four.

Instructor Four One on One Session, May 11, 2022, 1-1:30 pm

Instructor Four set a goal around creating ABAR-based learning targets and utilizing success criteria in her classroom in order to provide students with more ownership over their learning. Our usual planning sessions lasted sixty minutes, however, today I covered lunch duty for an eighth-grade teacher cutting our session to thirty minutes. I wanted to push on the idea of "ownership" for students, so I asked Instructor Four this question: "Why ownership over learning?

What connection are you making to ABAR and CS practices? Instructor Four discussed the racist education system, as well as the systems that surround education all of which strip ownership of marginalized people in this country. She wanted to create a classroom culture that intentionally included ownership in each aspect in order to combat this system reality many of her students' face. I then asked her what ways she currently provided ownership to students. Some of her examples were: during class work time she allows students to choose where they want to sit, she tries to use positive reinforcement often and creates a space where every student is heard. She mentioned an activity she recently used in class, where classmates at their tables were able to teach each other, switching power and ownership from the teacher to students., and once a week she allows students to run her short block classes, and has found that many students who do not speak up in whole-class discussions shine in these moments.

I referred back to her recent observation conducted on May 9, 2022. I witnessed students taking ownership and choosing to sit where they wanted at the start of the instruction portion of the class, noticing that all but two of her Black students elected to sit at a table together at a table directly in front of Instructor Four's desk at the front of the classroom. She noted that they always choose to sit together, and despite not disrupting the class, they often talk amongst each other and request her help the most. Pushing her further, I asked her to employ a CS lens to this specific table group asking "why might these students all seek to sit with one another? What might this say about what they are needing in this space? Is this a sign of their comfort or discomfort within your classroom?" Providing her with no answers, I wanted Instructor Four to look beyond surface-level success back pushing on her initial perception of what occurs in her classroom. She pointed out that she noticed that this happens in each block she has with this specific group of students, but never thought to ask why they might do this. Reaching the end of our session, I left her with an

action plan to consider her classroom environment, how she can keep creating student ownership around seating, while also finding opportunities to encourage students to sit with others and digging into why specific students choose to refrain.

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