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**THE EFFECTS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION AND  
MULTICULTURAL TEXTS TO SUPPORT FIFTH GRADE STRUGGLING  
READERS IN AN RtI TIER 2 CLASSROOM**

By

Dana Marie Teague

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Education  
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of  
Master of Arts in Reading Education

at

Rowan University  
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Susan Browne, Ed. D.

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## **Dedications**

This thesis is dedicated to my family, Sam, Anthony, and Jeremy. They have been my rock and my support system. My husband, Sam, was left many nights to watch our two boys while I worked on this thesis. My two boys, Anthony and Jeremy, sometimes liked to help mommy work on the computer. I love you more than words!

## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Abstract**

Dana Marie Teague

### **THE EFFECTS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION AND MULTICULTURAL TEXTS TO SUPPORT FIFTH GRADE STRUGGLING READERS IN AN RtI TIER 2 CLASSROOM**

2015-2016

Dr. Susan Browne, Ed. D.

Master of Arts in Reading Education

The study being presented reviews the journey that five students had over the course of three weeks. I took five struggling readers that were already accepted into a Response to Intervention (RtI) Tier 2 classroom and created a culturally responsive environment for them to learn. This environment was created through a series of choice and freedom of opinion that was displayed throughout discussions and worksheets. In addition to being a culturally responsive teacher, I also integrated multicultural texts into their reading repertoire. The purpose of the multicultural texts was to get the students familiar with other cultures in the world and to see the similarities and differences that occur between cultures. The ultimate goal was to see how the use of culturally responsive instruction and integrating multicultural texts effected fifth grade struggling readers.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Scope of the Study**

“Sometimes it seems as if there is little a teacher can do in the classroom that could possibly help students overcome a variety of conditions. Yet literacy may help some students understand and come to terms with the challenges in their lives” (Au, 1997, p. 193). Each year, teachers have students in their class who are struggling readers. Those students tend to shy away from the classroom discussions or are often found staring into space instead of reading his/her independent novel. As teachers, we try different activities or small group instruction to build their reading abilities, but these students often remain in the same cycle throughout the entire year.

For nine years, I was a special education teacher. I prided myself in using culturally responsive instruction to invite students in my classroom to enjoy reading. To me being culturally responsive means to get to know the students from all aspects of their life. We need to know what interests them, what their home life is like, what traditions they have in their home, their religion, ethnicities, and so much more. It is about knowing what makes them who they are and respecting it as well. I worked with all kinds of students on making personal connections and building their schema in order to promote reading within my classroom. I chose novels that related to their interests and reading abilities. This year I was pulled out of the special education classroom and moved to the basic skills teacher position for fifth grade students. My goal is to follow the Response to Intervention (RtI) model that the district has put in place. This has been a slight change for me because in the past my students have come to me with an

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and their strengths and weaknesses in Reading were indicated for me to follow. With the basic skills students, I am charged with the responsibility of determining their needs and strengths, along with their interests.

Each day, I enter different fifth grade classrooms and go along with the lessons and bounce off of the ideas the Reading teacher has put in place. Unfortunately, the Reading teacher's lessons are not always culturally responsive and there is minimal differentiated instruction to meet the needs of the struggling readers. As I worked with the students' day in and day out, I noticed that they were not connecting with the texts. I also noticed that the struggling readers came from different cultures and bilingual homes, but those differences were not addressed in the classroom. For example, two of the five struggling readers came from homes that spoke primarily Spanish, while one student has the ability to speak Spanish, but does not share this with the class. Two of the boys were African American and have strong ties to their own ethnicity because their parents taught them to respect who they are and others. I began to work with these students in a small group and get to know them through discussions and interest surveys. This slowly led me to the decision to do a research study on how these students can be effected by the simple task of infusing multicultural texts and culturally responsive instruction. Would they enjoy reading the texts if I pulled from different cultures and beliefs? Would the students be able to make connections if the text related to their cultures or interests? Would these students be able to infuse the mandatory skills that were imposed on them through the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) if the teacher just used different texts outside of the basal reader? All these questions raced through my head and the only logical way to

find out the answers was to do teacher research on this topic. I could not be the only one with these questions, right?

### **Story of the Question**

As part of the requirements to obtain the Reading Specialist Certification, we are required to have a clinical experience. Within this experience I had the opportunity to work with a young second grade student who was a struggling reader. In addition to tutoring this young boy, I met with other colleagues and the professor to discuss culturally responsive instruction within the tutoring experience. Although, I felt that I was a culturally responsive teacher, I learned so much about the different cultural experiences of students and how to show that I value them on a deeper level. During the summer, I was able to apply so much knowledge into a tutoring opportunity that allowed me to reflect on how I really am as a teacher and learner. This experience brought me into the new school year in my district with fresh eyes.

As I mentioned previously, I was in a new basic skills teaching position that was different from my previous teaching experience as a special education teacher. In addition to being in a new position, the school instituted a new RtI model that needed to be followed. The model is divided into three levels of instructional tiers. The students I would primarily focus on would be in the middle tier, Tier 2. This tier was geared for students that were struggling readers and needed additional support within the Reading classroom about three periods per week. My first thought was, ‘how could this really help them become a better reader?’ This prompted my first thoughts regarding the effectiveness of the RtI model the way my district was asking us to use the model.

One of the classrooms I was placed in had eight students that needed basic skills Reading support. My first few periods in the classroom was spent observing the students and the teacher. The teacher was a veteran Reading teacher, that stated, “I am used to smart kids.” This statement prompted me to ask her, “What do you mean by ‘smart kids.’” We then began a dialogue that helped me to understand that it was not the students, it was the curriculum and new basal reader in conjunction with the mixed level of students within the classroom, not the students itself. The teacher explained that she had to utilize the district programs in order to fulfill the requirements and rigorous expectations of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments. “Why? Why do you have to use the basal reader exclusively?” I asked her this question and her only response was, “because this is what I was given to teach from.”

As I looked around the room at her class and saw the diversity radiating through, I devised a plan that lead me to my question. What if we did not use the basal reader exclusively? What if we brought in different genres of books that still could teach the skills that were expected from the CCSS? Again, more questions and thoughts were racing through my mind. This new position made me excited to teach and get the students that were considered to be struggling readers excited about reading.

I remembered that so many of my graduate courses discussed the importance of thinking outside the box. During one class, a colleague stated, “I cannot find texts that are on my student’s reading level.” The professor responded simply with, “and...” As we gazed around the room, awaiting an answer, there was none, only silence and our own personal thoughts. This has been asked many times in my district at professional

developments and the response has always been, “go to the library or look online.” A discussion emerged from this silence between colleagues that led to the thought of thinking outside the box. Teachers can write their own stories, or use lower level stories that the students are interested in. One colleague stated, “it does not matter the reading level, but the interest level.” Students who have a high interest in a text should be given opportunities to read the text even if the reading level is above their ability. Teachers can work with these students to read the text aloud and develop their listening comprehension. Again, thinking outside the box and thinking about the student as the center of your universe in the classroom. This is what makes reading successful. In the end, the teacher needs to be creative and go beyond the scope of the basal reader. Overall, these thoughts and observations led me to my research question.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The research question for this study is: How does the use of culturally responsive instruction and multicultural texts support fifth grade struggling readers in a Response to Intervention (RtI) Tier 2 level classroom? What kinds of multicultural texts do struggling readers relate to? The overall purpose of my study is to analyze the ways culturally responsive instruction and multicultural texts support in a Tier 2 Response to Intervention (RtI) level. My goal is to utilize culturally responsive instruction by taking into consideration my student’s culture, hobbies, gender, and interests when choosing texts. Also, I will be using multicultural texts to broaden the horizons of my student’s knowledge of the world. My students have already been accepted into the basic skills Reading program and will be receiving additional teacher support within their Reading



classroom. I will be the one providing support and guidance based on their specific needs within the scope of reading comprehension.

The problem that lead to this question was the strong emphasis on the basal reader in the Reading classroom. The teacher's focus is weighted very heavily on one textbook and there is not opportunities for students to explore other outlets through reading. By being culturally responsive in one's pedagogy as well as integrating multicultural texts in the classroom, it is possible to awaken those struggling readers in the classroom.

### **Purpose Statement**

In today's classroom general education teachers are being asked to put on many hats to address each of the individual needs of their students. It is nearly impossible to touch upon 25 students in a given lesson, especially when you have a few struggling readers in the bunch. General education teachers in my district and many other around the country have been given programs to assist them with reaching those struggling readers. Response to Intervention (RtI) is an intervention process where students are placed in tiers and given prompt instruction to improve their academic outcomes. The tiers are leveled based on the student's individual needs (Kelley, Goldstein, Spencer, & Sherman, 2015). For example, a student who is struggling with reading would start with Tier 1 interventions within the classroom setting and the teacher will be doing the interventions. This could include pulling them to a small group or reviewing a lesson with more explicit instruction. Students who are still struggling even after the teacher has assisted them, will move to Tier 2 instruction which is when a basic skills teacher is involved. My district refers to this program as ACES (Academic Coaches Enhancing

Skills). For the purpose of this study and my research, I will be focusing on Tier 2 levels of instruction.

When reviewing research that has been conducted previously regarding RtI and comprehension for struggling readers, I came upon many articles that gave their methods and data around how to improve comprehension in struggling readers. One article in particular uses quantitative analysis of the different foundational skills that should be taught prior to teaching comprehension. Edmonds (2009), discovered that most middle to high school students struggle with comprehension because there are other areas that they are weak in including fluency, decoding, and vocabulary structures (Edmonds, et al., 2009). Older students are believed to be given limited instruction within comprehension and just expected to comprehend text. However, struggling readers should be taught the same skills that a younger student would receive and it should be taught with fidelity.

Another research study focused on the screeners and progressing monitoring that is embedded within the RtI model. Solis (2015) states, “the use of benchmark testing and ongoing progress monitoring is critical elements of the RtI framework for implementation in the middle school setting” (Solis, PhD, Miciak, PhD, Vaughn, PhD, & Fletcher, PhD, 2014). There overall goal was to maximize the accurate assessment, but to limit the number of assessments given. In my district, we are given many assessments, but we need to focus on an assessment that can monitor the students’ growth as well as give us accurate baseline data. Overall, teachers are expected to give “systematic instruction which is teaching that clearly identifies a carefully selected and useful set of skills and then organizes those skills into logical sequence of instruction” (Bursuck & Damer, 2015, p. 7).

After reviewing some research on RtI, I also focused more research on Kathryn Au and her Culturally Responsive Instruction theory. Au (1980) has focused her career on demonstrating the positive effects of being culturally responsive in the classroom. Being culturally responsive within your pedagogy is just one aspect of student success. Getting to know your students and allowing them to choose texts that are geared towards their interests, culture, or hobbies opens up a new level of thinking to them. When they are interested then they learn better. Au (1997) discusses, in her article, “Ten Steps Toward Making a Difference,” the importance of creating an inclusive environment for all students, especially struggling readers. This study will allow me to see how using culturally responsive instruction with fifth grade struggling readers will improve their comprehension strategies.

Another area of research that I focused on was through the use of multicultural texts for struggling readers. Our world is growing increasingly smaller and the opportunity for students to see the similarities and differences that different cultures have to offer is a great opportunity. Wasserberg (2012) states, “the goal of an educator should be to cultivate an environment where students can develop perceptions of peer potential that are not based on race or gender” (p. 3). In essence, teachers should be introducing texts that demonstrate the world around them and how we are not that different after all. Teachers are expected to give “systematic instruction which is teaching that clearly identifies a carefully selected and useful set of skills and then organizes those skills into logical sequence of instruction” (Bursuck & Damer, 2015).

The research that I looked into merely brushes the surface of my study. It shows that questions about culturally responsive instruction, RtI, and multicultural texts are all

being researched. Teacher researchers are questioning and looking into the benefits and limitations faced within each of the aspects I am looking into in this study. The overall purpose is to find what works for the students and to find success in reading.

### **Organization of the Paper**

Chapter two provides a review of the literature revolving around the study. It is broken down by the different aspects of my study including research on culturally responsive instruction, multicultural texts, and RtI. Chapter three goes into the design and methodology behind the study. In this section I discuss the dynamics of the students, the school, and the type of research that is being done. Chapter four looks at the overall data that was used to conduct the research. This section analyzes the data and looks at it from an overall perspective in regards to how the question was answered. Finally, chapter five discusses the implications and future research for this study. This is an in depth look at what could continue to be done with this line of research for the future.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

“Students reading beyond a Basic level cannot extract the general meaning or make obvious connections between the text and their own experiences or make simple inferences from the text. In other words, they cannot understand what they have read”

(Bursuck & Damer, 2015, p. 2).

### **Introduction**

With the rise of struggling readers in our schools, teachers are struggling as well to come up with a variety of strategies that can appeal to the masses of students while also fulfilling the state required curriculums. Students are falling below average and losing interest in reading at an alarming rate (Bursuck & Damer, 2015). On the other side, “dramatic increases in the number of English-language learners (ELL) in North American schools have been well documented” (Lovett, et al., 2008, p. 333). How do we as teachers address these concerns with increased ELL students and increased struggling readers?

Programs such as Response to Intervention (RtI) have been implemented into schools to allow for increased interventions and support for those struggling readers. However, students need more than just increased intervention strategies and teachers need more repertoire to add to their pedagogy. Students need to feel welcomed and accepted into the classroom. They need to know that their opinions matter and that they are being heard. Culturally responsive instruction is a way for teachers to show students that they are being heard and respected in the classroom. Another method for teachers to

increase reading skills is to include multicultural texts into the classroom. Students need to be able “apply their learning to current problems” (Norton, 2013, p. 13) and this can be done through multicultural texts.

This chapter is a review of the literature on RtI, multicultural literature in the classroom, and infusing culturally responsive instruction into reading lessons. It also demonstrates the importance of effective intervention programs, such as RtI, and how these programs increase student’s reading achievement. In the end, culturally responsive instruction, multicultural literature, and RtI programs will allow students to excel beyond their expectations in reading.

### **Working with Response to Intervention (RtI)**

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a multi-tier model that allows teachers and schools to support students who are struggling with reading (Bursuck & Damer, 2015). The original concept of RtI was meant for early readers who were identified at a young age to have possible reading difficulties. Kindergarten students would be identified to have reading concerns and would be placed within the tiers in this model. The model is broken into three tiers where interventions are increased at each tier based on the students’ needs. For example, students in a Tier 2 level would receive moderate intervention services in a small group setting approximately three Reading periods per week. Whereas a Tier 3 level student might receive one on one instruction four or five Reading periods per week. Early on in a child’s development it is imperative to take notice of the oral language and vocabulary development. The earlier an intervention system is put in place, the better and more effective it is for the child. “Without high-

quality, systematic, individualized language intervention, children's language difficulties may persist into elementary school and lead to reading and academic problems in adulthood" (Spencer, Kajian, Peterson, & Bilyk, 2013).

Addressing the concerns of struggling readers at a young age is the most effective use of the RtI model. However, teachers must implement the interventions thoroughly for the students. One study in particular titled, *Strategy Implementation Project*, focused on implementing the RtI model to struggling students. The project gave teachers pre-service trainings on how to "provide high-quality, evidence based strategies to address the targeted needs of struggling students" (Hoppey, 2013, p. 3). Teachers were trained on data collection and progress monitoring and students were given universal screening assessments, such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to determine their level of need. It was crucial to identify a goal for the students to work towards based on the results of the universal screening assessment. Then a detailed plan was created using scientifically based programs, including Orton Gillingham's Wilson Reading Reading System. This multisensory approach focuses on the principles of decoding and encoding skills that need to be mastered in order to fluently read the English language. In the end students showed significant growth after six weeks of intervention strategies based. The key to the RtI success was the proper training for teachers, universal screening, and scientifically based programs that allowed the students to thrive (Hoppey, 2013).

Research supports RtI with adolescent learners, which is included in the study by Solis, PhD, Miciak, PhD, Vaughn, PhD, & Fletcher, PhD (2014). For older students, screening tools such as DIBELS may not be as effective, therefore the use of criterion-

referenced reading assessments or standardized assessments may be necessary to utilize in order to determine the student's reading needs. Once a student's need is determined, even at an older age, it may be necessary for Tier 2 or Tier 3 students to receive explicit instruction in areas including word study, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. While providing explicit instructions for struggling readers, it is beneficial to also have continuous progress monitoring through formative and summative assessments. This allows teachers and students to track their progress within the program and make any adjustments as needed for students (Solis, PhD, Miciak, PhD, Vaughn, PhD, & Fletcher, PhD, 2014).

As students get older, reading needs become more complex. Adolescent reading needs transfer from comprehension of fiction text to content area literacy. “For adolescents with low reading skills, intensive interventions should be considered using texts that build background knowledge and understanding of content learning (e.g., social studies, science, English) throughout the secondary grades (Solis, PhD, Miciak, PhD, Vaughn, PhD, & Fletcher, PhD, 2014). Even within the RtI intervention process, teachers should take into consideration both narrative and expository texts to use with struggling readers. Students whose universal screenings have shown their concerns are geared towards comprehension concerns, need to be given systematic and long term skills and strategies to benefit their overall reading needs in all subject areas. Roberts and Vaughn (2013) researched that by using these strategies teachers can continue to narrow the gap, but may not close it. The study continues to suggest that progress monitoring and data driven instruction in all subject areas is key to their success.



Research of RtI has taken a journey through preschool age students and into adolescents. All the research points to success when a program is infused with fidelity and teachers are highly trained in data driven instruction along with continued progress monitoring. RtI research has also branched into a growing population of students that include English-language learners (ELL). These student benefit from a highly intense intervention program on top of being infused into the everyday language of the classroom. Through intense intervention, these students received phonological awareness and decoding skills that can be carried over into the classroom. Studies revealed that “children who had received the research intervention outperformed their peers who received an equivalent amount of special education reading remediation, and these children demonstrated greater rates of growth over time in their reading and reading-related skills” (Lovett, et al., 2008, p. 347).

Overall, whether a student is in preschool, middle school, or an ELL student, RtI has been proven to be effective for student growth. However, certain measures must be taken including proper trainings of teachers, scientifically researched progress, extensive progress monitoring through formative assessments, and data driven instruction guided by a variety of assessments. According to Roberts and Vaughn (2013), implementing this model is truly a challenge, but ongoing research to make the program more feasible and building upon the program will allow everyone to maintain its effectiveness.

### **Infusing Multicultural Literature**

Our world is increasingly becoming smaller and smaller. Families are coming to America from all over the world and making themselves home in this country. Our

classrooms are becoming more diverse because of the increase of immigrants. In order to live in the real world, students need to learn to accept and understand that everyone is different and has different traditions. Why not infuse these lessons directly into reading? According to Norton (2013), “encouraging students to relate themes, conflicts, and characterizations in books to current national and international news helps them to apply their learning to current problems. It also leads to the development of higher cognitive skills as they learn to read, discuss, criticize, and evaluate what they read and hear” (Norton, 2013, p. 13). Research shows that infusing multicultural texts into the classroom opens up an endless world of possibilities for students to engage, compare, and use higher order thinking skills to decipher text.

Engaging readers through multicultural texts and promoting these higher order thinking skills takes some practice and teachers should be trained in removing cultural and gender stereotypes from the classroom. According to Wasserberg (2012), students who are taught to remove these stereotypes and actually immerse themselves into multicultural and authentic texts are more likely to become well rounded adults. In addition to becoming well rounded and accepting of others, students who are exposed to these texts receive higher test scores when compared to classrooms without multicultural texts. This is believed to be because when reading multicultural and authentic texts students are taught to use critical literacy skills to question the text, the author, and the world around them.

Cochran-Smith (2003), states that many multicultural theorists, such as Paulo Freire, are critical with traditional teacher education. It is believed that the diversity being taught in schools is one-sided and does not go beyond the scope of what truly is

multicultural education. Freire (1970) believes in diving beyond the surface and working with the oppressed to educate them in the same manner that those “white middle class” students are educated. Cochran-Smith (2003) continues to discuss a possible framework to infuse multicultural education that includes analyzing the school’s curriculum, asking key questions about diversity, viewing outside forces that are in the community, and looking into the bigger picture in the world. By analyzing our personal and school wide discourse the multicultural education programs can be very beneficial to all students, including our struggling readers.

### **Creating a Culturally Responsive Environment for Students**

Bringing light to other cultures and social injustices of the world proves to increase student achievement when teachers use multicultural texts with fidelity. However, you have to allow students to feel comfortable in your classroom and this is where culturally responsive instruction is beneficial. Au (1997) a leading theorist in the area of culturally responsive instruction and her article, *Literacy for All Students: Ten Steps Toward Making a Difference* discusses the ways in which teachers can easily make students feel accepted within the classroom. Some of her steps include reflecting on teaching, making change a focus, establishing clear learning goals, sharing your own experiences, making literacy meaningful for the students, allowing students and parents to be a part of all goals and changes, and allowing time for changes to occur. These steps are effective for teachers to make positive changes to being culturally responsive in their classroom.

Those struggling readers within your classroom setting are typically the students that would benefit from texts that interest them the most. The use of culturally responsive instruction is most beneficial to those struggling readers within the classroom. This is due to the fact that when students are reading a text that is engaging to them because of interest, they tend to think less about their deficits in reading and more about their knowledge of the topic. Klingner and Edwards (2006) refer to this as best practices as opposed to being culturally responsive. King and Simon's (2014) research refer to this as "building student awareness" and trust (p. 168).

As students get older the need to motivate and build trust within the classroom increases dramatically. When students are younger, trust is gained quicker and interests include sports and movies. Older students, especially those that struggle in reading, shut down much quicker and trust needs to be gained through teacher persistency and positive reinforcement that is relevant to their age. When choosing reading texts for older struggling readers, Edmonds et. al., (2009) state that teachers must, "teach students how to approach text to better understand the content....and instruct students on how to read for learning and understanding" (p. 263). Texts should be chosen with the student's interest, ability levels, and subject in mind. Again, the overall goal is to be culturally responsive to the individual needs of each of your struggling readers.

## **Conclusion**

After reviewing the research above, struggling readers have shown to benefit from explicit instruction that includes exposure to the world and books that interest them. Klingner and Edwards (2006) state, "we must ensure children have received culturally

responsive, appropriate, quality instruction that is evidence based” (p. 109). RtI, when done effectively, is an evidence based program that benefits struggling readers. When you include their interests, you then include them into their learning. Students want to be a part of the learning not just told what they are learning and this is where being culturally responsive comes into play.

Besides including students in their learning, they should be taught about the world around them. Some of these students could grow up to be world travelers, translators, or even government officials. The knowledge of the world around them is essential and this is taught through exposure to multicultural texts. Students should be able to form opinions and question the world around them through critical literacy strategies learned when reading multicultural texts. According to Wasserberg (2012), students should be taught “to alter stereotypical perceptions of gender and cultural roles through classroom literature” (p. 1). Everyone wants to make the world a better place, and this can be done by gaining knowledge through literature.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Design/Methodology**

The framework for this study will revolve around the qualitative research paradigm. The method of the qualitative researcher is to “uncover, articulate, and question their own assumptions about teaching, learning and schooling” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 46). Whereas, quantitative research utilizes “data, knowledge, evidence and effectiveness” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 46). Quantitative research is more scientific and mathematics driven because the study relies on the numbers as evidence. With qualitative research, the study relies on reflections, anecdotal notes, documents, and occasionally utilizes numbers or data, but it is not the focus of the study. Teacher and practitioner research typically fall under the category of qualitative research because “teacher research is based upon close observation of students at work” (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p. 5).

Practitioner and teacher research tends to focus on social or ethical issues within the classroom or district. Sometimes, “other practitioner-based classroom and school based studies focus on student engagement through improving content area-pedagogy and curricula in subjects” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 13). The goal of teacher and practitioner research is to make a change in one’s own classroom or in the whole school. Teachers are continuously evolving and wanting to gain further knowledge into their own methods, the methods of the curriculum, and/or the methods used by the students. Qualitative research methods is the most effective way to achieve the purpose of teacher and practitioner research studies.

According to Shagoury and Power (2012), “teacher research in recent years has received significant new support and validation from existing education research communities. In our own field, literacy education, teacher-research studies, have emerged as dominant research methodology during award competitions” (p. 7). This information speaks very highly to the importance of teacher research in the area of literacy. More and more ideas and methods are researched to better improve the students reading abilities and to keep up with higher text complexities and rigorous demands of state assessments. What better way to find out if programs and methods are effective, then through teacher research!

On a daily basis, teachers are being challenged to gather more evidence regarding their students and their results through formative, summative, and standardized assessments. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) briefly mention the concerns that revolve around the NCLB program that was instituted by the federal government. NCLB only utilizes basic data and numbers to analyze each student and school. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) state, “the professional knowledge and understanding teachers derive from their local experiences and relationships with students are missing in the NCLB equation” (p. 81). Relationships and experiences are key words to successful qualitative research that drives teacher research. Teacher research can guide teachers to understand the whys and hows behind student experiences and relationships and this is where true change occurs in the classroom and within each student.

Teachers need to be immersed into their classroom in order to properly gather data that will reflect the needs of the classroom. Shagoury and Power (2012) emphasize different ways to collect data that is meaningful to a study within your classroom. These

methods include anecdotal notes, teacher reflections, student interviews, surveys, and questionnaires are just a few that can be used within the classroom. Shagoury and Power (2012) state:

“When you become a teacher-researcher, you become your own most important tool. Your written notes, recordings, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews are good tools, but as Shirley Brice Heath reminds teacher researchers, ‘you are the key instrument, and you must keep that instrument on all the time’ (quoted in Power 1995, 27). This requires a special kind of mindfulness, a willingness to be wide awake to learning, which can provide you with a different presence in the classroom, one that can be a gift to you as well as to your students” (p. 118).

Within this study, the qualitative research methods that will be used are student interest surveys, multicultural literature interview, teacher reflections, and student progress monitoring data. Each piece of data will come together to document the results of the study and answer the research question in its entirety.

The overall purpose of my study is to analyze the ways culturally responsive instruction and multicultural texts support struggling readers in a Tier 2 Response to Intervention (RtI) level. My goal is to utilize culturally responsive instruction by taking into consideration my student’s culture, hobbies, gender, and interests when choosing texts. Also I will be using multicultural texts to broaden the horizons of my student’s knowledge of the world.

### **Procedure of Study**

In the beginning of the school year, I analyzed the students that I was overseeing within the basic skills program. The school was requiring me to provide small group resource room support, approximately two times per week for 40 minutes each time.



While working with these students in the small group setting, I made informal observations regarding the transitions between the small group and the large group settings. The fifth grade students were learning such complex tasks in the large group setting, yet such basic tasks within the small group setting. After noticing major differences in the depth of student learning, I spoke with the homeroom teachers in the fifth grade about their opinions for basic skills instruction. It was suggested that a push in support or co-teaching setting would be more beneficial to the students within the Response to Intervention (RtI) model. Since the students in basic skills are given specific goals related to their Tier 2 instruction, I expressed concerns with achieving those goals while providing push in support. After further conversations, it was decided that push in support would be beneficial for these students, however, I needed to make some changes to how I would support them in the classroom while both achieving their individual goals and promoting the complex strategies within the large group setting. This led to the RtI research and how push in support is effective.

Next, I looked at the culture and diversity of the students in the fifth grade that are in the Tier 2 level of instruction for basic skills. The students each had different interests, different family dynamics, and were different ethnicities. The homeroom teachers were taking these differences into consideration during free writing time, but Reading time was for the basal reader. Informal observations made it clear that the students were typically not interested in what they were reading. This lack of interest in conjunction with a reading deficit made progressing in reading lessons very difficult for these students. Therefore, I looked into further research regarding culturally responsive literacy

instruction and infusing multicultural texts in order to take into consideration the students differences and similarities.

During the course of the study, the students will be given surveys and interviews to dive deeper into their likes, dislikes, and past experiences with multicultural literature. The students will also be given opportunities to choose multicultural texts that fit their interests. I have chosen eight texts for us to read together and for them to read in small groups and/or independently during the course of this three week study. Appendix A displays the books that were chosen for this study and the reading levels that would correlate to the reading levels of the students in this study. While reading these books, I plan to do read aloud, silent reading, and partner reading methods with the students. Conversations will be held in a group about the texts read and each of their opinions. Also, there will be comprehension questions given about the texts that promote the rigor of the learning goals from the Common Core State Standards. The questions will be similar to the style of questions that are used in the basal reader, however, the students will be given a variety of texts outside of the basal reader to promote culturally responsive instruction.

### **Data Sources**

For this study I used multiple qualitative research techniques that included an informal reading inventory, student interview, student survey, and teacher reflective notes. First, I gathered baseline assessment data on the student's reading levels. I utilized the reading inventory that is provided with the reading curriculum, Wonders. This baseline data allowed me to understand the level of texts that the students can utilize at an

independent level. Next the students were given two different surveys. One of the surveys was a student interest survey, while the other was a multicultural text interview. The student interest survey allowed me to get a better look at the student's interests. The information from the student interest survey is beneficial to me with guiding the student through making connections and building background knowledge about the different texts. Besides the written student interest survey, I also conducted an informal interview with the students on their previous exposure and experiences with multicultural literature. Finally, the last two data sources include student progress monitoring data, that is required within the RtI process and tracking their progress, and my teacher reflections. After each lesson, I took notes as to how the conversations and results of the day went from my perspective and comments the students made. Overall, the use of data triangulation, or the ability to look at all the data in one big picture, allowed me to cross reference all the qualitative research method techniques used in this study to come to an effective conclusion for this study.

### **Data Analysis**

Each piece of data is important to the overall outcome of this study. After the initial baseline assessment is collected, I will get a grade level equivalent to see how the students performed on the Informal Reading Inventory. I will be looking at the miscue analysis, Oral Reading fluency expression and rate, semantic versus syntactic errors within the miscue analysis, retelling ability, and style of comprehension questions they had errors on including text based, inferential, and critical response. This multicultural literature interview will be analyzed to see what students have been exposed to in the area of multicultural texts. This will guide me in knowing what exposure they have each had

and will allow me to differentiate my instruction according to their exposure levels. In order to gather information about their likes and dislikes, I would like to have them complete an interest survey so I can guide the students through making connections regarding the texts. Also, the students will be given free choice of a set of texts that would be of interest to them personally. I will be taking anecdotal records to monitor how they did on the assignment and what I did to guide them. Since each student has a specific remediation skill that they are focusing on, I will be taking notes of how the lesson being worked on reflected their comprehension remediation skill and what I did to guide them. Finally, two to three times a week I will take the time to think about my reactions and how I felt the lesson went overall. Was the lesson beneficial to the child's comprehension needs? If the lesson was not addressing their needs, how did I use my time in the room to address their needs? Did the students have any "aha" moments during a lesson? Was there any conflict or emotional concerns that occurred during a lesson?

Overall, this data will drive the research throughout the course of the study. I will be analyzing each piece of data to determine the overall effects that culturally responsive instruction and integrating multicultural texts has on struggling readers. The analyzed data will be viewed as a whole to make one clear picture as to how each student experienced the lessons, the texts, and the overall atmosphere of the classroom.

## **Context**

**Community.** The SW School District is located in two towns in Southwestern New Jersey in the county of Gloucester. Students that live in the New Jersey town can attend one of four schools spanning grades Pre-K to Sixth. The town is considered suburban to rural towns with a wide range of socio-economic statuses including people that are on welfare and people who are considered upper class. There are a lot of new developments, but a very small commercial shopping area. Some children live in larger houses, others live in single family dwellings, some live on farms, and others live in small apartments that were built as low income housing. Click on the links to get a more detailed view of the town statistics.

**School.** The school that I will be focusing on is the CH School. This school is grades 3 through 5 and as of the 2014-2015 school year has 743 students enrolled full time with 371 being male and 372 being female. The demographics include 77.5% white, 11.8% black, 6.3% Asian, 4.3% Hispanic, and 95.8% of the students speak English as their primary language. In the school, there are 82 students that are considered economically disadvantaged and qualify for free and reduced lunch, but the homeless population is unknown. The students that are a part of the ELL (English Language Learners) program are at 1% of the population or 8 students total. The students that are involved in special education services and receive an IEP are at 17% of the population or 129 students total. Finally, the average attendance in our district is a 5% chronic absenteeism rate and the school met the state target.

The school provides opportunities for a variety of after school clubs and programs. There is homework help provided two days a week for students that sign up and are given permission from their parents. There are also several clubs that are both academic and extracurricular including Mad Science, volleyball, basketball, drama club, cooking, handwriting, writing, gym, and many others. These clubs are all provided with a fee to the school, unless you are a free and reduced lunch student and then the fee is waived.

Parent involvement at the school varies and is inconsistent. There is a PTO and they run a few school-wide events to promote parent involvement including a book fair night, family night bingo, Harvest Festival with activities for kids and Chinese Auction for parents, and a few dances for the students and parents. Besides the PTO, the school also offers a few times for the parents to come to school including, open house before school opens, back to school night to meet the teachers, parent conferences, and a Fun Day for the kids where parents are able to volunteer and join in on games. Overall families that fall within average income have average attendance, parents that have above average income are more involved, and parents that are below average income have little to no involvement.

According to the NJ Performance Report Card from 2013-2014 school year, our school outperforms 52% of schools statewide, 35% of school with similar demographics, and we are meeting 43% of the state's academic performance targets. In regards to student growth, our school outperforms 70% of the state and 68% of its peer schools and the school is meeting 100% of the student growth targets. According to the 2013-2014

standardized test scores, 68% of the students score proficient and above in Language Arts, while 85% scored proficient or above in Math.

At the CH School, the teacher demographics for female teachers are 93.3% white and 6.7% black, for male teachers 92.9% white, and 7.1% black. The majority of the teachers have a bachelor's degree, while some have a masters, and there are currently no doctorates, but some teachers are working towards this achievement. The experience of the teachers is on average less than ten years.

**Classroom.** As one of the Basic Skills Teacher at the CH School, I oversee the Reading and Math needs for twelve students in grades 4 and 5. Within the twelve students that I oversee, eight of them are in for Reading comprehension concerns and five of those students are in grade 5, receiving push in support through the Response to Intervention Tier 2 model. Overall the twelve students consist of three fourth graders and nine fifth graders. There are six females and six males. Five of the students are African American, one is Indian, two are Hispanic, and four are Caucasian.

**Students.** The students being looked at in this study are five fifth grade students that are in a push in setting for Reading comprehension concerns at a Tier 2 level. Their names have been changed to pseudo names for the purpose of this study. Those students are Ray and Darrell, African American males, Rabi, Hispanic male, Kimora, African American female, and Gianna, Caucasian female.

These students were placed in basic skills instruction at the beginning of their fifth grade year and all have similar learning goals that revolve around Reading comprehension. Previous interventions for the first five weeks of school were in a small

group resource setting. For the second instructional period for basic skills they are being placed in the whole group setting with the addition of the basic skills teacher in the classroom with them. They receive this benefit of two teachers five times per week for one 40 minute period of Reading. The rest of their Reading period is with only their homeroom teacher.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter four presents the findings in response to the research question that asks: How does the use of culturally responsive instruction and multicultural texts support fifth grade struggling readers in a Response to Intervention (RtI) Tier 2 level classroom? What kinds of multicultural texts do struggling readers relate to? Since being culturally responsive in one's pedagogy stems from getting to know each student individually, I chose to organize my data by analyzing each student. I wanted to highlight their individual experiences throughout the study. When analyzing the overall data, each student had different experiences, revelations, and growth within their own reading abilities. Prior to discussing each students' individual experiences, I gathered baseline data and surveys to get to know the students and their levels, which will be presented in the chapter.

#### **Revisiting the Study**

In chapter three, I discussed the data that I collected in order to answer my research questions. The study took place over the course of three weeks where students were pulled during their reading program to work in a small group 40 minutes per day. The students were given a multicultural survey to see what kinds of exposure that have had to multicultural texts. Next they were given a student interest survey, so I could gather more information on their likes and dislikes to drive my instruction and be culturally responsive to not only their different ethnicities, but also their different

interests. Next I gave them an Informal Reading Inventory that was provided to me by the school district's approved curriculum program, McGraw Hill's Wonders. This allowed me to gather baseline data on their reading levels, including strengths and weaknesses in reading. Throughout the study I gathered progress monitoring data worksheets to monitor the students' improvement within the small group setting in regards to the Common Core Standards (CCSS) that are expected of them in the Reading class. Finally, I took note of teacher reflections and student discussions that occurred throughout the study.

### **Getting to Know the Students**

In the beginning of the study, I gathered information about five students. These students were chosen to be a part of the study because they were experience reading difficulties. Each of them were placed into the Tier 2 level classroom as part of the RtI process for different reading difficulties. Each of them had a focus skill specific to their remediation needs and those skills are highlighted in the case studies section. I was already aware of their different races that included, Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic, but I wanted to dig deeper and gain information to begin my research. First, I met with each student individually and had a discussion with them about who they were, which was documented within the interest survey and learning styles inventory seen in Appendix C. I got to know who they were and their interests. I was also able to see how they learned, whether it be through notes, pictures, numbers, or hands on. Next, I met with the students individually again, but shifted the focus from their own interests into their knowledge and exposure to multicultural texts. I asked the students a series of four

questions about multicultural texts, which can be found in Appendix B. Table 4.1 displays the results of the interview and interest survey.

Table 4.1

*Getting to Know You Results*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Multicultural Interview</b>	<b>Interest Survey</b>	<b>Learning Styles Inventory</b>
Ray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did not know what multicultural texts were</li> <li>• would like to learn more about Native Americans</li> <li>• thinks it is important to learn about other cultures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interests include football, basketball, video games, and Math</li> <li>• dislikes include homework, long division, always falling and mowing the lawn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learns best through words and pictures</li> </ul>
Rabi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• believed that multicultural texts had to do with different things that we have not experienced yet</li> <li>• has read about the Spanish culture in a book for class, but did not really understand it</li> <li>• he would like to learn about France because his sister speaks French, she learned from school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enjoys soccer, sleeping in late, playing video games</li> <li>• dislikes oversleeping because then he misses things</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learns best through pictures and hands on</li> </ul>
Kimora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• thought multicultural texts had to do with the times tables</li> <li>• wants to learn about France to understand what they say</li> <li>• wants to learn about the other cultures to get to know them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enjoys soccer, riding bikes, hula hoop, arts and crafts, playing the clarinet, and having fun</li> <li>• dislikes drying dishes and reading</li> <li>• wants to be a teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learns best through words and music</li> </ul>

Table 4.1 (continued)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Multicultural Interview</b>	<b>Interest Survey</b>	<b>Learning Styles Inventory</b>
Darrel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• did not know what multicultural texts were, but knew it had something to do with someone's culture</li> <li>• would like to learn about the German culture</li> <li>• wants to learn about other cultures that he would be interested in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enjoys soccer and playing outside</li> <li>• dislikes homework and tests</li> <li>• wants to be a police officer when he grows up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learns best through numbers and hands on</li> </ul>
Gianna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• thought that multicultural texts were about different cultures</li> <li>• stated books from different cultures are boring because they just give facts</li> <li>• wants to learn about Germany because it sounds cool</li> <li>• Does not want to learn about other cultures because she prefers fairytales (I shocked her when I told her there were fairy tales from other cultures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enjoys gymnastics, cheerleading, playing the flute, Fox News, YouTube, hanging out with friends, and driving a four wheeler</li> <li>• dislikes talking back and her huge thighs</li> <li>• wants to be an accountant because she is good with numbers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learns best through numbers and hands on</li> </ul>

They each have different interests in sports including Ray enjoying football and basketball, Rabi, Kimora, and Darrel enjoying soccer, and Gianna enjoying gymnastics and cheerleading. Each of the students also have different interests when they are at home, some like to watch YouTube and hang out with friends, while others prefer video

games. Knowing their unique interests allowed me to gather different style stories that the students could relate to or make connections in different texts.

Embedded within the student's interest survey was a series of eight sentences related to a learning style. The students were asked to choose two different sentences that they related to. When looking at their learning styles, common trends related to learning best through words, pictures, or hands on activities. In my teacher reflection journal I noted, "I was shocked to see that some students stated they learned best through words, when reading was an area of concern for them" (Teague, reflection journal, November 12, 2015). My assumptions prior to this study was that students who struggle in reading learn best through hands-on or math related skills, so this was an area that surprised me in my findings. Even though it was still only two students that put that they learn best through words, it is important to be culturally responsive to their interest and needs. The rest of the students indicated they learn best through hands on activities.

The next piece of data I looked at was the student's experiences with multicultural text. It was clearly unanimous that they had never even heard the term before and also had minimum understanding of what the word culture means. In regards to the first question, which asked, "Do you know what multicultural texts are," students had unique responses. Ray stated, "I think it is about combining stories" (Ray, personal communication, November 13, 2015). Kimora stated, "Is it about multiplication?" (Kimora, personal communication, November 16, 2015). Rabi stated, "It has to do with different things we have not experienced" (Rabi, personal communication, November 13, 2015). The other two students knew it was in relation to culture, but were not quite sure. After completing the interviews and realizing there was a clear lack of knowledge

in what multicultural texts and even cultures were, I decided to begin my first lesson by discussing about cultures. Further details regarding how the multicultural discussion went can be found within each student's mini case study.

### **Gathering Baseline Data**

After gathering information about each student, I decided to also gather baseline data regarding their reading levels. The Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) was done using the McGraw Hill Wonders program, which is our district approved curriculum. The students were all given 5th grade level texts and Table 4.2 displays the results.

Table 4.2

*Baseline Data from Informal Reading Inventory*

		<b>Fiction</b>		<b>Nonfiction</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Highest Word List</b>	<b>Oral</b>	<b>Silent</b>	<b>Oral</b>	<b>Silent</b>
Ray	5th Grade	Instructional	Independent	Frustrational	Frustrational
Rabi	5th Grade	Instructional	Instructional	Instructional	Instructional
Kimora	6th Grade	Instructional	Frustrational	Frustrational	Frustrational
Darrel	4th Grade	Instructional	Frustrational	Frustrational	Frustrational
Gianna	3rd Grade	Instructional	Independent	Instructional	Frustrational

After gathering the results of the word list, I was able to determine that two of the students, Darrel and Gianna, may have concerns in reading because of their decoding and sight word abilities. With that in mind, I wanted to choose texts that they could read and enjoy that had a lower reading level. Overall, the students had definite weaknesses with nonfiction text in both oral and silent reading comprehension. Therefore I chose to begin with a nonfiction text to model the texts and expectations.

## **Introducing Multicultural Texts**

The five students each had different experiences and related differently to each of the stories. The journey for each of them begins with introducing our study and relating it to the student's RtI goals and background knowledge of multicultural texts.

**Ray.** Prior to this study, Ray's primary goal in the RtI Tier 2 classroom was to focus on citing text evidence independently within grade level texts. He began the study having minimal experiences with multicultural texts. In the interview he stated, "I think they are informational books and they tell me about where people come from," (Ray, personal communication, November 13, 2015). He was also interested in learning more about Native American culture to find out what they do and who they are.

After completing all of the initial surveys, interviews, and reading inventories, our first class was focused on cultures and what multicultural texts are. He was very quiet and participated very minimal. In our group discussion about their cultures he stated, "I am half African American and half Irish," (Ray, personal communication, November 18, 2015). When I asked him to elaborate he would not. I chose not to push the issues as I wanted to earn the students trust.

**Rabi.** It was clear from the initial testing and interview that Rabi was the highest reader in the group that I was working with. His focus goal with the basic skills program was to increase his independence with written responses to grade level texts. As for his experience with multicultural texts he stated, "Teachers have never said we couldn't read different texts, so once I read a book about the Spanish culture, but couldn't understand it," (Rabi, personal communication, November 12, 2015). He demonstrated an interest in



learning about multicultural texts and was excited to learn about other cultures. His family is from Mexico and he speaks Spanish at home and he wanted to learn about other families like him that speak another language.

**Kimora.** Kimora began the study as one of the lowest readers along with the least willing to participate in discussions. She initially did not enjoy being pulled and made comments about how reading is stupid and the books are stupid. Her original focus goal for basic skills was to improve fluency to understand grade level texts. When getting to know Kimora and her knowledge of multicultural text she believed the multicultural texts had to do with multiplication. As I continued to get to know her and ask her questions about herself she opened up. In the interest survey she stated, “I really like to create superheroes in Art class and want to be a teacher when I grow up,” (Kimora, personal communication, November 16, 2015). She was also one of the students to explain that she learned best through words in her learning style inventory. I found this interesting because of her low reading levels.

Before we began our first story, Kimora opened up and told the group, “I am African American, but my grandma is from Mexico and she speaks Spanish. I learned how to speak Spanish at home,” (Kimora, personal communication, November 18, 2015). It was exciting to hear her share that about herself with the class and I wanted to use that to my advantage.

**Darrel.** Darrel, like Kimora, began at a lower reading level when compared to his peers and his skill was also to improve his fluency when reading grade level texts. However, Darrel was always upbeat and tried his best on every assignment. When

he was wrong he had no problem correcting his answers. During our initial discussion about cultures he told the class, “I really don’t know much about my culture except that I am African American and I celebrate Christmas,” (Darrel, personal communication, November 17, 2015).

**Gianna.** On the initial survey and interview, Gianna was portrayed very differently than what I saw while working with her during the study. She stated, “I hate reading about other cultures because I only like fairy tales” and “I like YouTube, Facebook, and hanging out with friends,” (Gianna, personal communication, November 12, 2015). Gianna was the only student in my study that was Caucasian and gave an initial impression of being a stereotypical, pre-teen girl in the 21st century. Her goal in the basic skills program was to identify main idea and important details in grade level texts. As we continued to venture through the study and the students were opening up and discussing about cultures, she shared that she was Greek and that her parents make items from nature like pottery bowls and hair bows. This was an interesting fact that was not portrayed at all in her initial survey and interview.

### **Multicultural Texts and Student Interests**

The first book I chose to share with the students was called, Hoang Anh: A Vietnamese American Boy. This informational book was chosen for a few reasons. First I saw similarities in the text that related to the students interests including, playing football, hanging with friends, and going to school. Second, I wanted to begin with a nonfiction text about a culture that was unknown to the students. Since nonfiction was an

area of weakness for the students, I believed that modeling a nonfiction text would be in their best interest to support in understanding of the text.

**Ray.** During reading, Ray remained very quiet and did not share any thought about the text. I gave them each a reflection paper (Appendix E) after each story we read to gather information on how they were relating to the stories and cultures we were reading about. Ray wrote minimal phrases on the paper including, “I like it because it is a different culture” and “In the picture the play football and I play football,” (Ray, personal communication, November 19, 2015). There was no further elaboration of any kind. Ray’s reflection was similar to other students, which you will see in their case studies, but this lead me to take a moment and reflect on the text choice. I documented in my teacher reflection journal:

“The students did not react as I thought they would with this story. There was minimal participation and the students barely spoke to each other when I allowed them to discuss. What should I do? Should I choose a different book? I thought this related to the student’s interests, but apparently not,” (Teague, reflection journal, November 19, 2015).

**Rabi.** With the first story, he related the text to the skill Author’s viewpoint that they were learning in class. He discussed about how the author wanted people to see that people from other countries like Vietnam are similar to us. In my teacher reflection journal I noted:

“Rabi definitely is displaying a higher level of thinking in this class. He looks beyond the text and is really trying to figure out the culture with a purpose. Can I use his energy and line of questioning as an example to pump up the other kids’ excitement?” (Teague, reflection journal, November 19, 2015).

By using Rabi's intelligence and excitement, I was hoping to entice the other students to participate more within the study.

Rabi was the only one that searched for connections from day one. He stated, "In the story, they go to school and we go to school. Also, it talks about football and I kind of play football for fun too," (Rabi, personal communication, November 19, 2015). Even though Rabi's connections were just brushing the surface of the story, he was trying and participating. I planned to focus on him digging deeper into stories, since he was starting at a higher level than the other students.

**Kimora.** When reading our first book, I drew attention to the fact that the child is bilingual, but Kimora did not react at all. Even though she did not open up verbally to the group, I noticed that when she wrote her reflections, she had a lot of positive information to bring. For example, she wrote, "I do love the story because it talks about a boy that is Vietnamese and is starting to talk English. It basically talks about a real boy and I thought that was cool to read about a real person," (Kimora, personal communication, November 19, 2015). I wanted to use her writing abilities to her advantage and demonstrate that she can convey her thoughts in writing to others and not have to always participate in group discussions.

**Darrel.** Darrel immediately connected with the fact that the boy's dad is a fisherman. He excitedly talked about how he goes fishing with his dad. Initially, his peers did not react to this comment, but it was nice to see him make these connections to the text and discuss them with his peers. In writing he made similar reflections to Ray, where they were very much on the surface and not digging deeper. He stated, "Hoang

Anh and I both go to school and like karate and we both like to fish,” (Darrel, personal communication, November 19, 2015). I would like to see him dig deeper into his responses along with the other students in the class.

**Gianna.** The first text was boring to her. She shared, “this is why I do not like to read about other cultures. They are boring and only tell me about facts and stuff. I want to read about fairy tales. The only interesting thing was the fishing because I like to fish with my Uncle,” (Gianna, personal communication, November 19, 2015).

Her passion towards this text made me rethink my next move as to how I was going to proceed with the study. Gianna was going to be the biggest concern as far as sharing and being positive about the multicultural texts and I had to think of a way to get her motivated.

### **What Does Making a Connection Truly Mean?**

After thinking about the reflections and reactions that the students had about the first text, I realized that they really did not relate to the story. Simply because they shared commonalities like being bilingual and playing football or going fishing, that did not mean they could connect with the text. Therefore, I chose a text that related to the Hispanic culture and race of some of the students in the class. The book was called Martina, the Beautiful Cockroach and it was a Cuban Folktale that infuses the Spanish language with a lot of humor. The text was definitely enjoyed by all the students.

**Ray.** Ray laughed throughout the story and made predictions about what would happen next. A conversation between Ray and Rabi was interesting:

Ray: That was so funny with the coffee test

Rabi: I never heard of a coffee test before

Ray: I think that is the Cuban culture

Rabi: The pictures were so funny and I want to see if there are more books like this one.

Ray: Yeah. I would like to read more folktales because they are funny.

This conversation between the two boys told me that this choice was a better fit for the class and Ray definitely enjoyed it. He participated and responded to the text. Although he did not have any connections, he enjoyed it and was able to independently discuss what the story is about and talk about the characters in detail using the text evidence.

**Rabi.** Rabi absolutely loved the story. He loved the pictures and immediately related to the Spanish speaking characters. During the group discussion, as we were giggling about the characters, Rabi and Ray had their discussion, which is shown above, and then after Rabi stated, “The characters are very exaggerated in the pictures and that is what makes the coffee test and the story so funny,” (Rabi, personal communication, November 23, 2015). I made sure to bring light to his use of more advanced vocabulary, “exaggerated.” He was able to share with the other students what he meant by that term and the students agreed both physically through nodding and verbally. It is safe to

assume that Rabi's more advanced reading abilities were making the discussions about the texts more invigorating.

**Kimora.** Kimora was smiling while we read, but when it was time to discuss and I asked questions she would not participate or speak to her peers. We talked about the lesson the story was trying to teach and she stated, "The lesson is do not get married," (Kimora, personal communication, November 20, 2015). I commended her on participating and thanked her for her opinion about the story. Yet again when we were writing down our reflections of the story, she stated, "I do love the story because it is funny and I love folktales. I also like that the cockroach found a husband and it was the blind mouse," (Kimora, personal communication, November 23, 2015). Kimora's written communication was much more positive than her verbal communication and teachers should be taking this into consideration during reading discussions. Allowing her to write could bring out a more positive side to her thoughts about stories.

**Darrel.** Darrel reacted the same as the other students and found it amusing. His connections were again on the surface and he enjoyed the story, but when asked to discuss the lesson or moral the story was trying to teach, he was very confused. At first he responded with, "do not go near someone with coffee" then he stated, "Do not listen to your grand mom," (Darrel, personal communication, November 23, 2015). It was clear he did not understand the important details in the story. After he completed his reflection, I went through and reviewed the story with him. We went page by page and discussed what was important versus what something he found interesting. I took note in my journal, that his skill may need to be revamped for the basic skills program and we

may need to look at his ability to identify the important details that drive the stories main idea.

**Gianna.** This book really shocked Gianna because it was a folk tale about a beautiful cockroach. She was so excited and could not get over the fact that there were folktales and fairy tales from other cultures. I wrote in my journal:

“I cannot get over the fact that Gianna had never been exposed to folktales and fairy tales from other cultures. Was she really exposed and did not realize it because it was part of the reading series and not a separate book? Maybe I will talk to the librarian to see if they do a unit on multicultural texts with the students?” (Teague, reflection journal, November 23, 2015).

It was nice to see her brighten up and really show interest in multicultural texts. She was so excited and planned to find more fairy tales from other cultures. Talking to the librarian about future units is definitely going to happen and I think this would be so beneficial to those students from other cultures in the school.

### **Moving from Teacher Led to Student Led Discussions**

Now that I have modeled two different stories and had discussions with the students, I wanted them to have some choice in the next book we read. I also wanted to see what they were capable of doing when working with a partner. I placed the students in partners and laid out several multicultural books for them to choose from. I made sure the books ranged in both reading levels from third grade to fifth grade and also with genre.

**Ray and Gianna.** Ray and Gianna chose If You Lived with the Cherokees. They worked together to read the text and discuss the story. There was minimal participation



on Ray's part again and even though I allowed him to choose the text with his partner and read it at their own pace, there was minimal discussion about the text. I sat with his group and asked some questions:

Mrs. Teague: Why did you choose this book?

Ray: I like Native Americans and wanted to learn more about them

Gianna: I love nature and the Native Americans are all about nature.

Mrs. Teague: Are there any connections you are making with this story?

Ray: On this page they are showing how they shoot a bow and arrow to get their food and I was able to shoot a bow and arrow before, but not to get food.

Gianna: I make bowls out of pottery and I like making things from nature.

Clearly, Ray is making improvements with his conversations, but needs some prompting from the teacher. This will be a process that will take some time to guide him to initiate conversations without teacher support.

Gianna was so adamant about reading fairy tales and I was surprised she chose this text to read since it was nonfiction. Her passion for nature came out in her responses to the text in regards to the characters in the story. We discussed about character traits and the how they played an important role in understanding the main idea of the story. She stated, "The Cherokee people must have been happy and nice because they were around nature all the time. They wore brown clothes made from leaves and animals and they made everything around them from nature," (Gianna, personal communication, November 25, 2015). I was glad to see her relating and making connections to another

genre of story and I was also learning more about her who was as a person and what she enjoyed.

Since my primary focus is on providing progress monitoring data to show they are growing within the standards, I gave them a worksheet about Author's Viewpoint, which focuses on CCSS RI 5.8. Ray was able to answer the questions about Author's Viewpoint, but needed support to cite the text evidence and further explain. Gianna was able to answer the questions and assist Ray as needed. Their final answer to the question, what is the author's viewpoint of your story, was "The author's viewpoint is to learn about the Cherokee and where they come from. The author must like the Cherokee tribe because he knows a lot about them and writes about where they leave, what they eat, and how they survive using the land," (Ray and Gianna, personal communication, November 23, 2015). This answer was done together and they were a good partnership. Ray and I learned new interests that Gianna had with nature and the Native Americans that we did not learn before.

**Rabi and Kimora.** Rabi and Kimora chose Folktales from China and I purposely asked Rabi to work with Kimora because her reading levels were lower and I thought the support would be beneficial. He was happy to help and I explained that I expected him to lead discussions and bring out the best in both his responses and try to get her responses to be the best as well. He was excited to be a leader. He stated, "In my classroom, no one ever picks me to help others in Reading, and I have a lot to share, you know," (Rabi, personal communication, November 24, 2015). This told me that he was feeling ownership in this Tier 2 classroom environment and that I was being culturally responsive to his personal needs that were not written in a survey. On the other hand,

Kimora was not happy about the decision I made for her to partner with Rabi for the next book, she wanted to read alone. I let her choose the book and Rabi was kind enough to agree. When asked why she chose the book she stated, “I like the stars on the front and I want to know why they are there,” (Kimora, personal communication, November 24, 2015). This was definite progress because her typical verbal responses up until this point have been negative or non-existent.

For this text, the students were asked to answer questions that were geared towards their progress monitoring for the CCSS. I was assessing standard RI 5.8 which was regarding author’s viewpoint. Rabi, was able to see the different viewpoints from each story. I told him to focus on his favorite folktale from the text and give me the author’s viewpoint from that story. He was able to analyze the first story and independently respond to the question with details. He was able to support his partner with answering the question and explaining it as well. In my reflection journal I noted:

“I watched Rabi assist his partner with the author’s viewpoint question. At first, he answered the question on his own and his answer was very confusing to read and did not really answer the question. Next he helped his partner by showing her where in the story there were clues to state the author’s viewpoint of the story. He explained to her how the author is teaching a lesson and the lesson is to give people help when they need it. I went over and talked to them about the word sacrifices and explained what that meant. After Rabi and Kimora gave examples they were able to discuss. I noticed that after Rabi was done helping his partner he relooked at his answer and redid the whole thing. The second time around it made sense. Clearly giving him the responsibility to teach another student and talk about the answer allowed him to keep his thoughts clear to answer the question” (Teague, reflection journal, November 25, 2015).

It was beneficial for me to see the positive effects of Rabi assisting a fellow classmate during this assignment. It also brought out a confidence in him that I could see being carried over into his general education classroom.

I listened to Kimora's fluency and heard that she was repeating more frequently because she was trying to understand the story. Again her reflection was a positive one in writing, however, this time the students were given the worksheet and she did not want to complete it. Rabi did a great job assisting her with the questions, but she chose to write down what she wanted to write down and it was not correct. I wrote in my reflection journal:

"Kimora definitely likes the reflection journal because she gets to write freely and does not have to answer any difficult questions, but how can I get her to take her writing passion into the actual comprehension questions. Is she giving up because she usually gets them wrong? Is it a confidence thing?" (Teague, reflection journal, November 25, 2015).

If it is a confidence thing and she just gives up then she may need some more intense remediation with the RtI process and this will need to be looked at closer.

**Darrel and Student A.** Darrel partnered with another student, not included in this study to read the text The Tortoise Shell and Other African Stories. He chose the book because he liked the designs on the tortoise shell on the cover of the book and wanted to know about the designs. This led me to have a discussion with him about why we read. I stated, "We read because we want to find the answers to something. In this case he wants to know about the tortoise shell designs. When picking books to read, you have to find something that interests you and you want to find answers to something" (Teague, personal communication, November 24, 2015). He was excited to find the answer to his question and did great job reading aloud with his partner. They discussed about the tortoise shell and he found the answer to his question. When completing his worksheet about author's viewpoint, he stated, "The author wanted to teach you about the

lesson of how the tortoise got his shell and it was because he needed protection from the vultures. The designs are to help him hide from the vultures in the leaves and grass,” (Darrel, personal communication, November 25, 2015). This was an excellent response and shows that, in Darrel’s case, when you are interested in a story you can answer higher level questions.

### **Positive Discussion Transitioning to Understanding the Standards**

It was great to see some positive dialogue occurring during the partner reading, however I was concerned with the responses from the CCSS worksheets covering Author’s Viewpoint. The students definitely needed more support on the standards, but I wanted to continue the positive direction that our lessons were moving towards with discussions. With that in mind, I decided to do another group text. This time I wanted to address a culture that some of the other student’s in class would relate to. The text I chose was a biography, Henry’s Freedom Box. The text discussed the horrible time period with slavery and losing one’s family. I was hoping to evoke some more emotions from the students and get the discussions to dig slightly deeper than past discussions. I also wanted to model the next reading standard related to cause and effect.

**Ray.** Ray immediately showed interest in this story and stated, “I know a lot about slavery and learned about Harriet Tubman” (Ray, personal communication, November 30, 2015). He was showing definite improvement and positive energy with the different multicultural texts that I was choosing. In his reflection he asked questions to learn more including, “Did other people mail themselves to slavery? What happened to his family and wife? Did he ever see them again?” (Ray, personal communication,

November 30, 2015). Ray was showing an interest in different style books including nonfiction and asking question showed me he wanted to learn more. He was also able to show improvement with his original focus skill of citing text evidence. When asked about the cause and effect in the story, he was able to state the cause and effect independently and show where it was in the story.

**Rabi.** The next story, Henry's Freedom Box, was a story that Rabi connected to, but on a different level. He chose to focus on more of the meaning behind Henry's story as opposed to the concrete elements the other students focus on. In his reflection piece he stated, "I connected with this story because Henry asked for help when he needed it. You should always ask for help," (Rabi, personal communication, December 1, 2015). This is showing me that Rabi is showing some growth with digging deeper into the stories. When it came to the CCSS standard RI 5.3 and proving that he is able to comprehend the skill of cause and effect with the story, he definitely proved that he understood the skill and demonstrated an example of cause and effect. This skill was a struggle for him when it was done in the homeroom a few weeks prior.

**Kimora.** Kimora related to this story and actually participated in discussions. She talked about how she knows a lot about slavery and the problems that African Americans had years ago. She even made connections to things that were happening in the news with Muslims and people discriminating. Clearly this story struck a nerve with her and she enjoyed it. Her responses to both the reflection and the comprehension questions were positive and she worked hard to find the answers using the text. I decided to introduce her to other stories about African Americans including Bessie Coleman and Pink and Say. I let her borrow these books to read on her own for

fun. I was excited to see her finally make a breakthrough because she related to the topic, but how could I get her to be ok with reading about other cultures?

**Darrel.** Darrel continued to progress and respond to the text both verbally and in writing. Although he needed guidance and support to organize his thoughts when writing down it was clear that he enjoyed the text and that was reflected in his writing. During the class discussion he stated, “I remember my grandpop telling me about slavery and how Africans were mistreated. I am so glad that people are not treated that way anymore” (Darrel, personal communication, December 1, 2015). This then lead to a discussion about how Muslims are being treated similarly today because of bombings. I let the students continue to talk together and watch as they were discussing the similarities and differences between Muslims today and African Americans in the past. It was interesting to listen to their perspective and I chose not to comment.

**Gianna.** In the end, Gianna displayed strong passions and emotions towards some of the stories we read that she did not display during her general reading class. She cried when we read this text. She could not believe they took his family and that he would not see them again. Out of all the students in the class, she brought out the most emotion while reading this story and while reading many of the texts. I am hoping to see her passionate side in the classroom more frequently. It means that she is really getting into the story and understanding the morals and lessons being demonstrated with each text.

Her passion about the story lead to excellent responses with the reading standard related to cause and effect. She was able to give several examples from the story that

reflected cause and effect including, “Because Henry lost his family, he decided to be free” (Gianna, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

### **Final Thoughts from the Students**

To end this unit, I allowed each student to pick any multicultural text they wanted from the library in my classroom. I had over ten text options to pick from and they could read this text independently. I chose to walk around the room and observe and guide students while they were reading. The students, surprisingly chose the same two books to read. The boys all chose a Scandinavian folktale and the girls all chose the German fairy tale. Clearly the folktale and fairy tale genre is the area the students enjoyed the most. In the end, I asked the students to compare any two texts they read over the past three weeks.

**Ray.** Ray chose a Scandinavian folk tale, Why the Sea is Salty. He chose it because his favorite text was the folk tale that we read and he was hoping this was funny as well. Again he was able to reflect on the text and compare his family to the family in the story. He discussed about the similarities, differences, and state, “I was annoyed at the rich man in the story because he would not help his poor brother and his brother just cried and that is not fair, (Ray, personal communication, December 3, 2015).

Overall, Ray began this study with minimal conversations and minimal understanding of multicultural texts. During the three weeks we focused on multicultural texts, he demonstrated an increase in positive discussions with the teachers and classmates. He still needs support and guidance during citing text evidence, but demonstrated more effort with the stories we provided. At the end of the study, he



demonstrated that he enjoyed multicultural texts and “wants to read about other cultures and their folk tales to see different traditions they have,” (Ray, personal communication, December 4, 2015).

**Rabi.** Rabi also chose Why the Sea is Salty and he chose it because, like the other students, their favorite story we read was a folk tale. As I walked around the room to monitor the students and their reading, I took note in my reflection journal:

“Rabi is showing some clear emotions with this story. He wrote down notes on a post-it like, ‘this guy is so mean’ and ‘how could he not help his brother out’ and ‘I wonder if that is why the sea is salty from the guys tears.’ His emotions were definitely clear in his notes and I am glad to see him making progress and having connections” (Teague, reflection journal, December 2, 2015).

Overall, Rabi made some definite progress, both with connecting to the text and sharing with his classmates. He was able to dive into the stories and use his knowledge from the story to carry over into answer grade level comprehension questions. His main focus of increasing independence of written responses increased since he usually enjoyed the multicultural texts he was reading.

**Kimora.** The last book she chose to read was The Golden Goose and this book was a German fairy tale. I laid out other African American books, so it surprised me that she chose this book to read independently. I sat with her and listened to her read out loud a bit to analyze her fluency rate and she was reading the text at 98 words per minutes which is an increase from the last assessment where she was reading at 79 words per minute. We then had a conversation:

Mrs. Teague: Why did you choose this book?

Kimora: I like fairy tales and this was the only fairy tale option.

Mrs. Teague: What do you think of the story so far?

Kimora: I like it

Mrs. Teague: Do you know that you read faster with this book then the last time we read? Why do you think that you read faster?

Kimora: Yeah I read faster because I wanted to find out about the golden goose and see what happens with the tree.

Mrs. Teague: Do you think you read faster when you like a story?

Kimora: Sometimes because when I like the story I want to read it.

This conversation was intriguing because it shows a direct correlation, in Kimora's case, between her interest in a story and her fluency.

In the end, I saw that Kimora performed better in writing than she did orally. This could be based on her confidence and interest level for these texts versus the texts in the classroom. Getting to know these aspects of Kimora was very beneficial and could only be known over the course of time I worked with her in the small group.

**Darrel.** Darrel also chose, Why the Sea is Salty? for his final independent text to read. He sat very quietly while reading the text. When I sat with him to see how he was doing, he said, "I like this book, but it not what I thought it was going to be," (Darrel, personal communication, December 3, 2015). When I asked him what he expected from

the book he stated, “I thought it was going to be funny, but this was sad like the story about Henry,” (Darrel, personal communication, December 3, 2015).

For the last assignment, I had all of the student compare two different texts that they read throughout the course of the study. I found it interesting what he wrote regarding comparing Henry’s Freedom Box with Tortoise Shell and Other African Stories:

“The different texts and the different cultures I read were Henry’s Freedom Box and Tortoise Shell and Other African Stories. First they are different cultures. The one story is from the African culture, but the other is from the African American culture. I thought they were the same, but they are not. Both stories teach you a lesson. Henry taught you to fight for freedom and to be with your family. Tortoise taught you how it got its shell. They both have problems. Henry had his children taken from him and the tortoise had mean vultures trying to get him,” (Darrel, personal communication, December 4, 2015).

Darrel truly displayed a sense of growth in this study. He learned about new cultures and was proud of his new knowledge. Overall, he enjoyed the texts that were provided and it showed definite effects with his personal reading growth.

**Gianna.** As stated before, Gianna was the most emotional one of the bunch and was the most shocking. Her initial student interest survey displayed one perspective, but as we proceeded with the unit we saw a different side of her. She chose to read The Golden Goose for her last book and she compared it to Henry’s Freedom Box she wrote about the similarities and differences from the two books and one part of her writing showed a higher level of thinking that I was hoping to achieve. She stated:

“They both experience hardships in life. For example, in The Golden Goose the older brother did not want to give the old man his food so the old man put a bee under where he was sitting and it stung him. In Henry’s Freedom Box, Henry’s

family was taken from him so he put stuff to hurt his hand to make him not go to work,” (Gianna, personal communication, December 4, 2015).

I was glad to see she experienced this higher level of thinking and was able to convey it through writing.

## **Conclusion**

All the pieces of data collected and analyzed to see the individual growth of each student. Each student displayed different experiences, emotions, and opinions during the course of this three week study. It was unanimous that the choice of Hoang Anh: A Vietnamese American Boy, as the initial text to start this unit, was not the best choice. The students really enjoyed the folktales and fairy tales and a stronger emphasis was made on these texts. Beginning with a nonfiction text displaying facts was not a great way to get the students interested in the diverse texts. All the texts that were utilized in this study can be found in Appendix D with a breakdown of the reading levels and cultures that were focused on.

The ultimate goal was to see the effects of culturally responsive instruction and integrating multicultural texts. The data displayed the emergence of different themes including, what is truly means to make connections, going from teacher led discussions to student led, transitioning from positive discussions to understanding the standards, and final thoughts that developed from the students. Chapter five will go into detail regarding the conclusions, limitations, and implications for the field.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications for the Field**

#### **Conclusion**

After reviewing all of the data in Chapter 4 it became clear to me the different themes that were emerging included what is truly means to make connections, going from teacher led discussions to student led, transitioning from positive discussions to understanding the standards, and final thoughts that developed from the students. These themes all played a key part in answering the original questions: How does the use of culturally responsive instruction and multicultural texts support fifth grade struggling readers in a Response to Intervention (RtI) Tier 2 level classroom? What kinds of multicultural texts do struggling readers relate to?

First, making connections is always key to be successful with any story, and in order to understand the kind of connections that needed to be made, teacher modeling was put in place. When they came to me, not having much background knowledge around multicultural texts and even their own cultures, it was evident that I needed to begin by guiding them through the process. In the beginning there was little to no conversations about who each of them were and their actual opinions about different topics. However, when I modeled to them that it was ok to say how you feel and not get penalized for it, it opened up more interesting conversations as the unit progressed. I needed to show them that I truly respected who they were as individuals and then they would learn to respect each other.

Second, by moving from teacher led discussions to student led allowed them to feel free and a sense of ownership in their learning. Within the RtI process, the students are assigned a focus skill based on a series of assessments and they have no say in their skill. Even though that is an area of weaknesses for them, it is still important for them to feel a sense of pride in their learning. The data showed that the sense of choice for some students like Rabi, Darrel, and Ray brought out a new level of thinking for them because they were able to be leaders. The partner work helped each student to show their strengths and help a classmate while reading a story that they chose.

Third, transitioning from positive discussions to understanding the standards was essential in the overall learning process. The discussions were so positive and we were making progress, but they needed to carry over their knowledge and understanding to CCSS based questions. By working in the small group, the students were able to use their positive discussions to answer questions that were based off of the CCSS. Working to improve their understanding of the text through increased discussions allowed them to answer more difficult questions based on the increased expectations from the standards.

Fourth, the students were able to end the study with some final thoughts and book choices. We discussed how choosing books that evoked some form of emotion, whether it be anger, sadness, or joy, opens up a new world of discussions. Gianna and Kimora brought their emotions out during the study due to the sadness of the stories read. They felt comfortable sharing those emotions with the class and myself. The classroom was a safe environment and it was made clear, through my modeling, that there would be no judgement on each other's emotions or opinions. The students also believed that choosing books that related to the student's different backgrounds, races, and cultures

helped them to connect better to the stories. The Hispanic students really found Martina, the Beautiful Cockroach to be funny, but also enjoyed the use of the Spanish language that was throughout the book. They felt a sense of pride because they knew what the terms meant in the story and the other students did not know at all. They became leaders, which was a rare occasion considering they typically struggle in the reading class.

So to answer the study questions, culturally responsive instruction effects each student differently. Given the fact that I had only a few weeks with the students, which was not enough time to really dive in and get to know the students on a deeper level. I learned that being culturally responsive is more than just a survey, interview, or series of tests to see their levels. It is about sitting down and getting to know the students and what they like. It is about making connections through their culture, experiences, and lifestyles. The integration of multicultural texts taught students a new level of books they never experienced before. They got to see how other cultures learn new things or experiences those cultures have had in history. The students were able to learn how some cultures are more similar than you think such as the German fairy tale and the Scandinavian folktale. While other cultures are actually more different than the students assumed, like the African American biography and the African folktales. As far as what texts they most related to. The struggling readers related the most to the fairy tales and folktales and this was quite evident in their student choices and final comparison essays. Although, Henry's Freedom Box was an exception to that rule since the students really connected with this text. Possibly due to their increased background knowledge revolving around slavery and how African Americans were treated many years ago.

## **Limitations**

This study provided some definite answers to the questions, however there were also some limitations to this study. Limitations that occurred during this study included time, student differences, and carry over.

Time was the first factor that occurred with the study. Due to my position being the basic skills instructor, my time was limited to forty minutes per day. Which, as we know, is not a lot of time to instruct a full reading lesson and get everything accomplished that we want. Another factor with the time was the time to get to really know the students and be truly culturally responsive. The students had so many layers to their personalities and there was not enough time to dig deeper. The little time I did work with them, did provide me enough evidence to show that being culturally responsive makes a difference in the student's abilities.

Also, with being culturally responsive, came the student's different abilities and personalities. Realistically every teacher wants to know their students inside and out and use their experiences to guide instruction, but is that really possible? When you have an average of 25 students in a class, it is not possible for one teacher to dive into every student's personality. Therefore teachers resort to interest surveys to get a quick read on the student's likes and dislikes. Unfortunately, as this study showed, that is not always accurate and does not always help you in being culturally responsive.

Lastly, since there was minimal time allotted for Reading, it was the hope that the students would carry over the skills we were doing in the Tier 2 classroom.

Unfortunately, that was not the case. The homeroom teacher was limited to following the



basal reader that contained black and white responses to questions. Students were unable to share their own personal experiences and opinions to text or even infuse culture into their text choices. Seeing how the students made progress in their focus goals and skills in the classroom but then seeing them digress in the classroom was a clear indication that carry over is essential to making this study work.

The limitations played a part in the overall potential that this study had to offer. Even though the outline of this study is over, the results that I learned will definitely be presented to promote a valuable change in the way we teach reading.

### **Implications for the Field**

In the classroom there is much potential to be more culturally responsive and integrate multicultural texts into the Reading classroom. Teachers could do an initial interest survey to gather baseline data, but in addition they should have individual and small group discussions about stories being read. Teachers should also develop a classroom that is centered on open and honest discussions with no judgement. This can be done only by leading the way and setting an example to the students. Students should be able to feel comfortable with their environment and be excited about choosing different texts.

Another area could be making multicultural texts a daily occurrence in more than just the Reading classroom, but throughout other subjects as well. Schools can have a discussion with the librarian about finding time to give exposure to the different cultures and the available texts would be a great way to get students interested, at an early age, in the differences and similarities between people. Also, the librarian could help the kids be

opened up to new possibilities and genres of stories that could make struggling readers, like Gianna, interested in different stories. The Art and Music teachers could infuse culture and books about different artists and musicians from around the world into their daily curriculum. Making culture a school wide initiative could change the way we feel about other cultures and other people's differences.

In conclusion, change is in the hands of each individual teacher. Only we can make a difference in the way a child, especially a struggling reader, sees the world. Literature is a never ending resource to learning about so many perspectives in the world. Students should be taught, from a very young age, that their opinion matters and that they can make a difference in the world through their own knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Being culturally responsive and integrating multicultural texts is just one valuable way to make positive change occur starting in the classroom.

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## Appendix A

### Sample Informal Reading Inventory for Grade 5 and Word Lists

#### Informal Reading Inventory Grades 1–6

##### Recording Sheet for Individual Graded Word Lists

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
mother _____	prize _____	started _____
could _____	noise _____	lonely _____
family _____	understood _____	thought _____
there _____	another _____	breathe _____
said _____	piece _____	enough _____
people _____	trouble _____	prepare _____
bake _____	easier _____	actually _____
what _____	afraid _____	waist _____
three _____	scare _____	earn _____
town _____	always _____	delighted _____

Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
adapted _____	approaching _____	countryside _____
communicate _____	crystals _____	heroism _____
bracelet _____	development _____	consented _____
announced _____	territory _____	mercilessly _____
choice _____	astonished _____	appalling _____
requires _____	coarse _____	veterinarian _____
objects _____	moisture _____	spectacle _____
bulge _____	luxuries _____	emperor _____
gravity _____	irregular _____	ravenous _____
resulting _____	resemble _____	exceptional _____

## Passage 5A Oral—Fiction

### The Wolf and the Dog

A scrawny wolf was almost dead with hunger when he happened to meet a house dog who was passing by. “Cousin,” said the dog, “your irregular life will soon be the ruin of you. Why don’t you work steadily as I do, and get your food regularly given to you?”

“I would have no objection,” said the wolf, “if I could only get a place.”

“I will arrange that for you if you come with me to my master and share my work,” said the dog.

So the wolf and dog went towards the town together. On the way there, the wolf noticed that the hair on a certain part of the dog’s neck was very much worn away, so he asked him how that had come about.

“Oh,” said the dog, “that is only the place where the collar is put on at night to keep me chained up. It does irritate the neck a bit, but you’ll soon get used to it.”

“Goodbye to you,” said the wolf, “for it is better to be free and starve than be a fat slave.”

(184 Words) Number of Word Recognition Errors \_\_\_\_\_

#### Questions

- L 1. \_\_\_\_ Why was the wolf almost dead? [Lack of food] (1 pt.)
- I 2. \_\_\_\_ What did the dog do that would make you think he liked the wolf?  
[He offered to arrange for the wolf to work for his master.] (4 pts.)
- L 3. \_\_\_\_ Why was the hair on the dog’s neck worn away? [He had to wear a collar at night.] (1 pt.)
- V 4. \_\_\_\_ What does the word *irritate* mean in this story? [Make sore] (3 pts.)
- L 5. \_\_\_\_ Why does the wolf say goodbye to the dog? [Because he’d rather starve than be chained up] (1 pt.)

Total # of points earned \_\_\_\_\_

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Scoring Table for Oral Reading				
Total Points Earned	# of Word Recognition Errors			Reading Level
	0-10	11-18	19+	
7-10 pts	✓	*	—	Independent <input type="checkbox"/>
4-6 pts	*	*	—	Instructional <input type="checkbox"/>
0-3 pts	—	—	—	Frustrational <input type="checkbox"/>

## Passage 5B Silent—Fiction

### Tracy's Find

Life in Tracy's household became very challenging after her father lost his job. Now the entire family had to watch what they spent, and simple pleasures like buying new clothes or eating out were luxuries that Tracy rarely enjoyed.

With winter fast approaching and Tracy in desperate need of boots, she and her mother visited the used clothing store. Embarrassed and miserable, Tracy searched through the boots until she spied a pair in her size that weren't too worn. When she picked one up to try it on, she noticed something stuffed inside. She was stunned when she stuck in her hand and pulled out a little over \$1,000 in cash.

Thrilled, she raced over to her mother and said excitedly, "Mom, I found all this money in these boots! The person who gave the boots away won't miss it, so we can keep it, can't we?"

Tracy's mother didn't respond, but the sad and disappointed expression on her face spoke volumes. Ashamed of herself, Tracy knew what her mother expected of her, and she did not hesitate to do it.

(181 words)

### Questions

- L 1. \_\_\_\_ Why did life in Tracy's household become challenging? [Because her father lost his job] (1 pt.)
- L 2. \_\_\_\_ Why was Tracy in the used clothing store? [She needed boots for winter.] (1 pt.)
- V 3. \_\_\_\_ What does the word *stunned* mean in this story? [Amazed] (3 pts.)
- L 4. \_\_\_\_ What did Tracy want to do with the money she found? [Keep it] (1 pt.)
- I 5. \_\_\_\_ What did Tracy's mother expect her to do? [Return the money] (5 pts.)

Total # of points earned \_\_\_\_\_

### Scoring Table for Silent Reading

Total Points Earned	Reading Level
7–10 pts	Independent <input type="checkbox"/>
4–6 pts	Instructional <input type="checkbox"/>
0–3 pts	Frustrational <input type="checkbox"/>

## Passage 5C Oral—Nonfiction

### Clouds

Throughout history, people have found clouds to be both interesting and beautiful. Clouds begin to form when warm, damp air is pushed up by cool, dry air. As the warm air rises, it begins to expand and cool. The cooling air is no longer able to hold all of the moisture in gas form that it was able to hold when it was warm. Eventually, tiny drops of water or ice crystals begin to form on bits of dust, taking the shape of a cloud. After the drops or ice crystals form, they can collide with each other and grow by joining together to such a large size that they fall to the ground as rain or snow.

There are four basic families of clouds, with each forming at a different distance above the earth. High clouds form above 20,000 feet, middle clouds appear between 6,500 feet and 20,000 feet, and low clouds appear below 6,500 feet. Finally, there are clouds that are moving upward while their bases are near the ground. These clouds with vertical development range from 1,600 feet to over 20,000 feet.

(185 words) Number of Word Recognition Errors \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions

- L 1. \_\_\_\_ What happens to the warm air as it rises? [It begins to expand and cool.] (1 pt.)
- V 2. \_\_\_\_ What does the word *moisture* mean in this reading passage? [Wetness] (3 pts.)
- L 3. \_\_\_\_ What makes the shape of a cloud? [Tiny drops of water or ice crystals forming on bits of dust] (1 pt.)
- L 4. \_\_\_\_ At what distance above earth do middle clouds appear? [Between 6,500 feet and 20,000 feet] (1 pt.)
- I 5. \_\_\_\_ Which family of clouds would produce the tallest clouds? [Clouds with vertical development] (4 pts.)

Total # of points earned \_\_\_\_\_

**Scoring Table for Oral Reading**

Total Points Earned	# of Word Recognition Errors			Reading Level
	0-10	11-18	19+	
7-10 pts	✓	*	—	Independent <input type="checkbox"/>
4-6 pts	*	*	—	Instructional <input type="checkbox"/>
0-3 pts	—	—	—	Frustrational <input type="checkbox"/>



## Passage 5D Silent—Nonfiction

### Deserts

Most people think of a desert as a wide, empty stretch of coarse sand and low dunes. Although some parts of large deserts do resemble this description, there are other regions that do not fit this picture.

To be a desert, a territory must have less than ten inches of rain a year. These dry areas are widely scattered over the Earth, covering one-fifth of its land surface. The Sahara is the world's largest desert, stretching 3,200 miles across northern Africa and covering an area almost as large as the United States. The Sahara is the driest and hottest of all the world's deserts, creating one of the harshest environments on Earth.

You might be astonished to learn that only one-fifth of the entire area of the Sahara is covered with sand. If you travel through the Sahara, you'll see snow-capped mountains, such as the Tibesti, which are higher than 10,000 feet. There are also lakes such as Lake Chad, which is the size of the state of New Jersey. Also native to the Sahara are canyons, stony plains, and fifty oases, which are desert areas containing water.

(191 words)

### Questions

- V 1. \_\_\_\_ What does the word *resemble* mean in this reading passage? [Look like] (3 pts.)
- L 2. \_\_\_\_ To be a desert, what must a territory have? [Less than ten inches of rain a year] (1 pt.)
- L 3. \_\_\_\_ Where is the Sahara located? [Northern Africa] (1 pt.)
- I 4. \_\_\_\_ What in the passage would make you think that relatively few people live in the Sahara? [It is the driest and hottest of all the world's deserts, creating one of the harshest environments on Earth.] (4 pts.)
- L 5. \_\_\_\_ How much of the entire area of the Sahara is covered with sand? [One-fifth] (1 pt.)

Total # of points earned \_\_\_\_

### Scoring Table for Silent Reading

Total Points Earned	Reading Level
7–10 pts	Independent <input type="checkbox"/>
4–6 pts	Instructional <input type="checkbox"/>
0–3 pts	Frustrational <input type="checkbox"/>

**Appendix B**  
**Multicultural Interview**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know what multicultural texts are? Explain?

Have teachers allowed you to read books from other cultures? What did you think about them?

What would be a culture that you want to learn about?

Do you think reading about other cultures would be interesting during reading class?

**Appendix C**  
**Student Interest Survey**

*Sports:*

My favorite to watch is:

My favorite to play is:

At my school, I play:

*Arts:*

My favorite type of art to create is:

I play this instrument:

*Free Time:*

My favorite things to do on the weekend are:

My favorite things to do after school are:

*Entertainment:*

My favorite television show is:

My favorite movie is:

My favorite type of music is:

*General:*

The thing I like most about myself is:

The thing I like least about myself is:

The thing I do best is:

The thing I do the worst is:

*Family and Home:*

I have these types of pets:

I have this many \_\_\_\_\_ brothers and \_\_\_\_\_ sisters:

I am the oldest, middle or youngest child: (circle one)

I usually go to bed at this time:

I have these chores to do at home:

I work this many hours per week at a job:

*Homework:*

I like to do homework:	Yes	No
I like to eat when I study :	Yes	No
I like to listen to music when I study:	Yes	No
Background noise bothers me when I study:	Yes	No

*Classroom:*

These two rules are important to me in a classroom:

1. 2.

*School:*

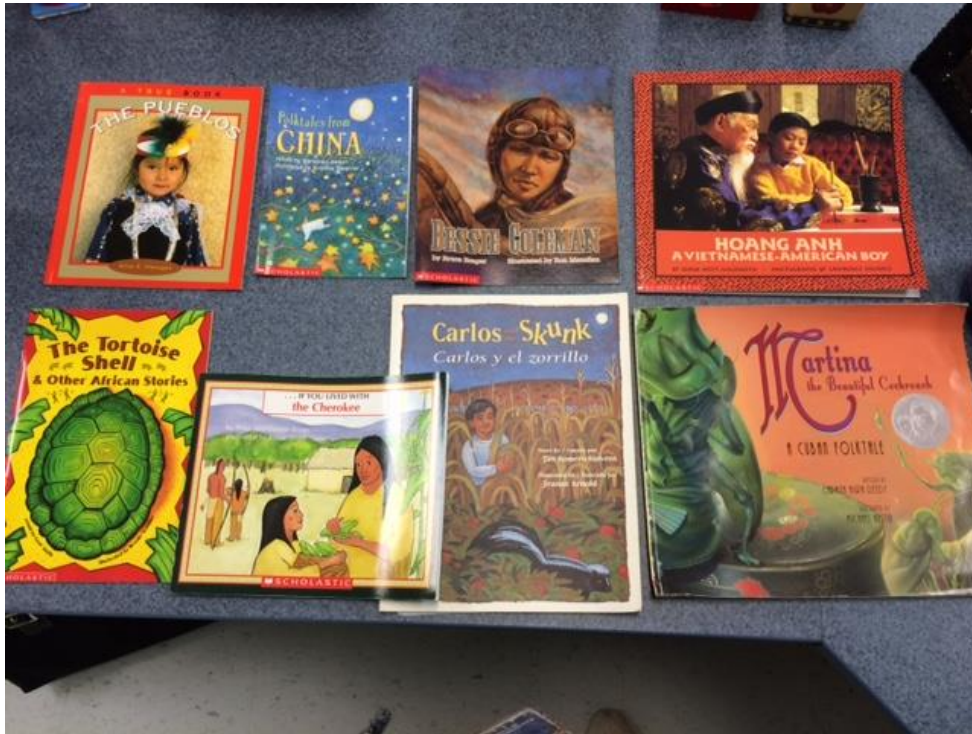
I like to read on my own:	Yes	No
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4. I LIKE music. I appreciate musical expression such as rhythm and melody. Music can make me animated or calm me.
5. I LIKE to be physical and hands on. I am good at athletics.
6. I LIKE to be around people. I like to teach others and can read other people's moods, temperaments, and motivations.
7. I LIKE solitary activities. I understand my feelings and I am self-motivated and strong willed.
8. I LIKE nature. I can pick up on patterns in nature. I enjoy being outdoors. I like studying science topics.

## Appendix D

### Multicultural Books Used Throughout Research



#### A True Book: The Pueblos

By: Alice K. Flanagan

Informational Text

Level unknown, but interest level is grades 3-5

Native American Culture

#### Folktales from China

Retold by: Barbara Lawson

Folktale

Guided Reading Level Q; Grade Level 4.6

Asian Culture

Bessie Coleman

By: Bruce Brager

Biography

Guided Reading Level O; Grade Level 4.3

African American biography (not depicting culture)

The Tortoise Shell & Other African Stories

Retold by: Geof Smith

Folktale

Guided Reading Level R; Grade Level 4.2

African Culture

If you lived with the Cherokee

By: Peter and Connie Roop

Informational

Guided Reading Level Q; Grade Level 3.8

Native American Culture

Carlos and the Skunk (Carlos y el zorrillo)

By: Jan Romero Stevens

Realistic Fiction

Guided Reading Level L; Grade Level 3.1

Hispanic Culture

Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale

Retold by: Carmen Agra Deedy

Folktale (picture book)



Level unknown, but interests if for Kindergarten and up  
Cuban culture

Hoang Anh A Vietnamese-American Boy

By: Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith

Biography

Guided Reading Level U; Grade Level 5.6

Vietnamese Culture

Not Pictured...

Henry's Freedom Box

By: Ellen Levine

Biography

Guided Reading Level Q; Grade Level 2.3

African American culture (Civil War time)

Why the Sea is Salty

Retold by: Lana Jones

Folktale

Guided Reading Level N; Lexile 510

Scandinavian Culture

The Golden Goose

Retold by: Ralph Maynard

Fairy Tale

Guided Reading Level N; Lexile 440

German Culture

## **Appendix E**

### **Reflection on Story**

Title of Story:

---

Genre: \_\_\_\_\_

What culture is this story from? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you like the story? Why or why not?

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What connections did you make to the story?

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Would you read another story from this culture? Why or why not?

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