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Preservice Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices in ELA Lessons in Elementary School Field Experiences

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Abstract
This study examines the experiences of 38 preservice teachers as they engaged with Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices in their English Language Arts (ELA) lessons. Preservice teachers learned about CRT practices in a literacy methods course, developed ELA lessons that incorporated these practices, and taught the ELA lessons to elementary school students at their field placements. They reflected on both their delivery of lessons and the implementation of CRT practices. Data were collected using multiple instruments, including pre- and post-surveys, lesson plans, and edTPA planning and instruction commentaries. Analysis showed that preservice teachers most frequently planned and implemented three specific CRT practices: CRT 5 modeling high expectations for all students; CRT 6 promoting respect for student differences; and CRT 4 bringing real-world issues in the classroom. Their experiences of learning about CRT practices and incorporating them into their lessons prepared them to become culturally responsive teachers.

Keywords: Teacher education preparation, Preservice teachers, Culturally responsive teaching, Elementary field experience

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Introduction

Teacher education preparation programs play an essential role in providing future teachers with skills and knowledge they need to teach all students in K-12 schools effectively (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Scholars address the importance of the teacher education preparation programs because preservice teachers learn content and pedagogical knowledge and practice pedagogical skills they need for their future teaching through their programs (Putman, Cash, & Polly, 2022).

As the student population in K-12 schools diversifies, teacher education preparation programs must respond to this ever-increasing diversity demand. The student demographics within public schools in the United States changed from fall 2010 to fall 2021. During this period, the percentages of White, Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native students decreased from 52 to 45%, from 16 to 15%, and from 1.1 to 0.9%, respectively (Irwin et al., 2023). In contrast, in the same period, the percentages of Hispanic, Asian, and students who were of two or more races increased from 23 to 28%, from 4.6 to 5.4%, and from 2 to 5%, respectively (Irwin et al., 2023). The population of English learners enrolled in public schools in the United States also increased from 9.2% (4.5 million students) to 10.3% (5.0 million students) from fall 2010 to fall 2020; and more than 75% of English learners were Hispanic students in fall 2020 (Irwin et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the population of White, Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native students in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States is projected to continuously decrease by 3% for White, by 1%for Black, and by 0.1% for American Indian/Alaska Native students from fall 2021 to fall 2031 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022). On the other hand, the Hispanic student population is projected to increase from 28 to 30%; and during the same period, the populations of Asian students and students with two or more races are projected to increase from 5 to 6% for each group (NCES, 2022).

Contrasted to the diverse student population, the teacher population lacks diversity in its demographics. In the 2020-2021 school year, 80% of public-school teachers were White and 70% of them were female (Irwin et al., 2023). During the same school year, the percentages of teachers with other race and ethnic backgrounds were as follows: Hispanic (9%), Black (6%), Asian (2%), two or more races (2%), American Indian/Alaska Native (less than 1%), and Pacific Islander (less than 1%) (Irwin et al., 2023). These statistics present a serious racial and ethnic gap between the student and teacher population. Teachers of color contribute to better academic performance and social and emotional outcomes among students with similar racial and ethnic backgrounds (Smith et al., 2023). In addition, scholars argue that all students benefit from teachers of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018).

Scholars document that teachers must understand diverse students' backgrounds, experiences, characteristics, and perspectives and must incorporate these into their teaching (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2021). Teachers need not only pedagogical and content knowledge, but also advanced knowledge of how to incorporate students' various cultures into their instruction (Allen at al., 2017). Despite this documented need, teacher education preparation programs do not provide preservice teachers with adequate preparation in this area (Andrews, 2021). Preservice and inservice teachers often feel unprepared to teach students with culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse backgrounds (Taylor, 2010). Teacher educators should equip preservice teachers with culturally responsive teaching practices (Young & Young, 2021). Research on how preservice teachers engage with culturally responsive teaching principles in literacy instruction is limited (Adams & Kaczmarczyk, 2023). Compared to other subjectes, a literacy course offers a great platform to teach preservice teachers in cultrally responsive teaching practices. Preservice teachers have opportunities to engage in reflecting and analyzing these practices through text selections for children, making connections between prior knowledge and new information and cultural experiences, examining narrative voices, and developing critical literacy skills in literacy and English Language Arts (ELA) courses (Chenowith, 2014; Yang & Ward, 2025).

Therefore, this study attempts to close this gap and aims to support preservice teachers by equipping them with knowledge and skills to use culturally responsive teaching practices. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do preservice teachers plan, implement, and reflect on their culturally responsive teaching practices through their English Language Arts (ELA) lessons for elementary school students?

2. How does their learning about culturally responsive teaching impact their preparation to become culturally responsive teachers?

Literature Review

Frameworks of Culturally Responsive Teaching

A few key foundational studies related to culturally responsive teaching exist. Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014, 2021) developed a concept of *culturally relevant pedagogy* and advocated for engaging learners who come from the under marginalized groups. This teaching approach encouraged teachers "to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.483). She outlined three areas of focus by educators: student learning success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. First, teachers must support students to achieve their academic success. Second, teachers need to support students by including and celebrating their cultures of origin and of others' cultures of origin. Teachers must incorporate integrative instruction, so students learn beyond the classroom and apply their knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems.

Gay (2000) developed a framework of *culturally responsive teaching*. She described it as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002, p.106). She addressed that culturally responsive teaching must include students with different ethnic backgrounds. She broadened a concept of culturally responsive teaching and proposed that educators support students by including their cultural knowledge, lived experiences, and differences of students with diverse ethnic backgrounds. Gay (2000) describes six characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is validating as teachers must use cultural knowledge, lived experiences, and learning styles of students with ethnically diverse backgrounds. Culturally responsive teaching is comprehensive as students need to internalize the concept that learning is reciprocal. Culturally responsive teaching is multidimensional as teaching and learning include various elements such as academic content, the teacher-student relationship, and instructions. Culturally responsive teaching is empowering as this type of teaching approach develops student confidence. Culturally responsive teaching is transformative because it leads all students to become more active in social consciousness to better respond to prejudice and discrimination. Lastly, Gay's culturally responsive teaching is emancipatory as students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to express their voices and engage in a larger society.

Reexamining the frameworks of *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and *culturally responsive teaching* (Gay, 2000), and the dynamic linguistic aspects in society, Paris (2012) coined a term, *culturally sustaining pedagogy*. To respond to an essential question of "What is the purpose of schooling in a pluralistic society?" (Paris, 2012, p.95), Paris developed the culturally sustaining pedagogy while considering best practices in a dynamic multiethnic and multilingual society. Paris and Alim (2014) further noted that the culturally sustaining pedagogy model offers ways for students to sustain "linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism" to be accountable to the communities, and to respond to social change (p.88). Recently, as racial injustice and unfair treatment of the minority groups escalate, Paris (2021) reexamined culturally sustaining pedagogy in the global context. Renaming her framework as *culturally sustaining pedagogies* with the plural of pedagogy, she argued that culturally sustaining teaching and learning require "different forms across different cultural contexts with different communities in different times" (Paris, 2021, pp.366-367).

Muñiz (2020) also offered a guideline for educators to practice eight key competencies of culturally responsive teaching. She outlined the following competencies for educators: (1) reflect on their experiences and backgrounds in contexts and how they impact their beliefs and behaviors, (2) understand the impacts of one's biases on intuitional decisions and policies and advocate for solutions on behalf of all students, (3) understand students' cultures and integrate them into the curriculum, (4) apply real world connections in teaching, (5) model high expectations for all students, (6) respect student differences, (7) collaborate with families and communities, and (8) use different ways of communication and modalities for students to express their opinions. Synthesizing the major culturally responsive teaching (CRT) frameworks above, teachers incorporate students' assets, characteristics, and experiences to guide their instruction.

Field Experiences for Preservice Teachers

Teacher education preparation programs should offer opportunities for preservice teachers to practice and apply content they learned from their education courses within clinical and field experience settings. The Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP, n.d.) defines field experience as "early and ongoing practice opportunities to apply content and pedagogical knowledge in P-12 settings to progressively develop and

demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and dispositions." Standard 2 in the set of the initial level standards by the CAEP (2022) clearly states the expectation for teacher education preparation programs to ensure effective partnerships with schools as well as high-quality clinical practice, so preservice teachers can develop "knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to demonstrate positive impact on diverse students' learning and development" (p. 1).
Darling-Hammond, L. (2010, 2014, 2017) highly values that teacher education programs partner with schools in their communities for clinical and field experiences where preservice teachers practice their lesson delivery, learn from their mentor teachers, and participate in the schools' activities. This is where preservice teachers can make connections between theory and practice.

Putman, Cash, and Polly (2022) conducted a study to examine the impact of intensive, structured field experiences in a local partnered school. They set up two types of field experiences and student teaching assignments for preservice teachers. Among 84 of them, 18 undergraduate students in the teacher education programs participated in the structured clinical experiences (the City Schools Initiative [CSI] program), which offered a year-long internship in a school where the university maintained a strong partnership. The rest of 66 preservice teachers completed their field experiences and student teaching in the traditional program. The researchers assessed preservice teachers' skills and knowledge in the last two semesters (third and fourth semesters) using the Class Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The results indicated that preservice teachers who were in the intensive, structured field experience setting performed better in the domains of Emotional Support, Instructional Support, and Student Engagement. However, no statistically significant differences were found for the Classroom Organization domain among the two groups of preservice teachers (CIS and traditional students). The authors explain the CIS students had more privilege in getting support from their mentor teachers, spending more time and establishing relationships with students than the students in the traditional program.

Zhang at el. (2023) conducted a study to compare two types of clinical experiences. Eighteen preservice teachers participated in the Clinical Experiences and Practices in Teaching (CEPT) model. The first CEPT group participated in the field experience at a high school near the university where the study was conducted. The second CEPT group participated in field experience at a high school in a rural area. Mentor teachers for the CEPT groups received training regarding how to support preservice teachers in appropriate ways. Twenty-two preservice teachers completed traditional field experiences in 17 different high schools. The researchers collected the survey data from the participants to examine their evaluation of the effectiveness of their teacher education programs in five areas: (a) meeting 12 teaching standards; (b) frequencies of participation in teaching strategies; (c) benefits of Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES) elements in improving teaching; (d) frequencies of participation in collaboration, networking, and mentoring; and (e) benefits of teacher-student relationship. The researchers also conducted four focus group interview sessions, two sessions with two CEPT groups and two sessions with two traditional groups. The results showed that no statistical difference was found in the area of meeting the teaching standards between the CEPT and non-CEPT groups. However, CEPT preservice teachers reported more positive perceptions in the other four areas and developed more self-efficacy than the non-CEPT preservice teachers.

Singh (2017) examined the impact of field experience for 28 elementary education preservice teachers. They spent approximately 45 hours over 15 weeks (three hours per week) at elementary schools. During their field experience, they observed their cooperating teachers' teaching, learned about the school environment, and considered how teaching and planning impact students' learning. They wrote a reflection to make connections between what they learned from university courses and what they saw and learned during their field placements. In addition, the participants engaged in one-on-one reading instruction with one student at their field placements. They reflected on their instructional experiences and discussed their reflection with their peers in class. They completed pre- and post-surveys in the beginning and at the end of their field experience. The surveys included 21 Likert-type questions and one-open-ended question to learn preservice teachers' perceptions on different areas in the field experience, such as effective teaching, classroom management skills, content knowledge, and disposition. The results showed that the field experience positively impacted preservice teachers. They reported that the field experience helped them understand the realities of school and classroom, provided them with opportunities to reflect on their professional knowledge and skills, and offered them opportunities to witness effective instructional practices in classrooms.

Putting together, field experiences in teacher education programs play a key role in preparing preservice teachers. They provide preservice teachers with opportunities to build their foundational knowledge, such as culturally responsive teaching practices, to apply their knowledge and skills, and to critically reflect on their practices.

Method

Context

This study took place at a mid-size university in the Midwest of the United States. In Fall 2023, the percentage of undergraduate students was 91.1%; 8.9% of students was graduate students. The university was a predominantly white institution where approximately 88.1 % of students were white. The second major race/ethnicity category was U.S. students of color (10.2%), followed by Hispanic (4.0%). The next two major categories were students with two or more races (3.0%) and Asian (2.2%). The university offered more than 20 undergraduate teacher education programs for four state licensure ranges: Early Childhood Education (ECE) (birth-grade 3), Elementary/Middle Education (EME) (k-9), Middle and High School (Secondary Teacher Education Program) (grades 4-12), and Kindergarten through Grades 12 (k-12).
Participants in this study were ECE and EME undergraduate majors and took an advanced literacy methods course when the study was conducted. The author of this study was their instructor. This advanced literacy methods course was the last course in a three-literacy course sequence. Prior to this course, they took an introductory literacy course and a literacy methods course where they studied the basics of literacy knowledge and skills. The setting of this study is appropriate to investigate preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching because they have foundational knowledge of literacy through previous literacy courses, have opportunities to learn about developing ELA lesson plans in an advanced literacy methods course and to apply their lessons in real school settings.

In addition to the advanced literacy methods course, the participants were required to take field experience at a public elementary school, a Professional Development School (PDS) site where the university had partnership with, in the same semester. All EME and ECE majors went to one of four PDS sites for their field experience. In the school year when the study was conducted, Elementary School A consisted of 64 % white students, 19.2% Asian students, and 9.4 % students with two or more races. Approximately 49% of the total student population was identified economically disadvantaged, and approximately 8% of them were English learners. Elementary School B consisted of 40% white students, 22.7% students with two or more races, and 17.5% Black or African American students. Approximately 84% of the total student population was identified economically disadvantaged. English learners represented approximately 5% of the student population. Elementary School C is a public charter school and consisted of approximately 82% white students, approximately 8% Hispanic or Latino students, and approximately 8% students with two or more races. Approximately 36% of the total student population was identified economically disadvantaged. English learners represented less than one percent of the total student population. At Elementary School D, approximately 85% of the total student population was white students, and approximately 9% were Asian students. The percent of economically disadvantaged students was approximately 31 %. English learners represented 5.5% of the total student population. The author of this study served as a field supervisor for Elementary School A. As a field supervisor for 24 particiapnts and a literacy methods course instructor for all participants, the researcher acknowledges positionality in this research. To protect data integrity and reduce the power dynamics among the researcher's role and participants, the researcher kept the research data collection seperate from course grading and conducted data analysis anonymously post-course completion.

Among 38 participants, 24 preservice teachers completed their field experience at Elementary School A, nine were placed at Elementary School B, and three were placed at Elementary School C. Two ECE majors completed their field experience at Elementary School D (See Table 1).

Participants spent approximately 10-12 hours per week in their assigned field placements throughout the semester. They observed their cooperating teachers' teaching and delivered small group instruction. During the field experience, they were required to develop and teach two sequenced ELA lessons to children and to complete their edTPA planning and instruction commentaries with these two lessons. As a part of their field experience, they were enrolled in a one-credit field experience lecture where they discussed various field related topics such as classroom management skills and diversity.

Table 1. Participants' Demographics

Major	Early Childhood Education	Elementary/Middle Education	Total

	5		33		38
Academic Level	Junior		Senior		
	26		12		38
Field Experience Placement	Elementary School A	Elementary School B	Elementary School C	Elementary School D	
	24	9	3	2	38

Participants

Thirty-eight preservice teachers participated in this study. They were recruited in an advanced literacy course after the IRB approval by the institute where the study was conducted. They were five early childhood education (ECE) majors and 33 Elementary/Middle Education (EME) majors. Among 38 participants, 26 were juniors and 12 were seniors (See Table 1). All were enrolled in an advanced literacy methods course, which was the last required literacy course in the three-literacy-course sequence in their ECE and EME programs. Participants in this study were 100% white. Before they took the advanced literacy methods course, they had taken all foundations courses in education including multicultural education and a curriculum and pedagogy course. After their field experience at an elementary school, they would enroll in another field experience either at a middle school for EME majors or at another school setting for ECE majors; they would student teach in the following semester.

Instruments

In this study, the researcher collected the following data from the participants: pre- and post-survey responses about culturally responsive teaching, two ELA lesson plans, edTPA planning commentary, and edTPA instruction commentary.

Pre- and Post-Surveys

Participants in this study took pre- and post-surveys topically centered on culturally responsive teaching practices in the beginning and at the end of the semester. For validity purposes, questions in the surveys were developed after carefully consulting with a review of literature (see Hu et al., 2021; Moore et al., 2021; Muñiz, 2020; Taylor, 2010). Along with the evaluation of the previous literature on culturally responsive teaching, the surveys in this study intentionally included key elements of culturally resonsive teaching that appeared in previous relatent studies (e.g., Gay, 2000; Hu et al., 2021; Moore et al., 2021; Muñiz, 2020; Taylor, 2010). These elements included developing cultural diverse awareness, desigining, analyzing, and using culturally relevant curricula, creating an inclusive learning environment, setting high expectations, and using strategies culturally responsive ways. The survey consisted of two parts. The first part requested demographic information such as participants' major, and academic level. The second part included 5 questions. The participants self-rated their confidence levels (four-point Likert scale, 1 = not competent at all, 4 = highly competent) to develop and implement ELA lessons using the Muñiz's (2020) eight culturally responsive teaching (CRT) competencies. They also ranked eight CRT competencies from the easiest to the most challenging one when they planned and implemented ELA lessons. As a follow-up prompt, they were asked to provide their reasons why they identified top three CRT competencies they identified as easy and the top three CRT competencies they identified as the most challenging. The pre- and post-surveys were paralleled in format with one exception; the post-survey included three additional open-ended questions asking the participants about how the literacy methods course helped them to develop their awareness, knowledge, and skills when they developed and implemented ELA lessons with CRT practices, how the literacy methods course supported them to become culturally responsive teachers, and their overall assessment of CRT practices. Reliabilities for pre- and post-surveys were .85 and .86.

Literacy Lesson Plans

The second instrument for this study included two sequential ELA lesson plans. Participants developed two sequential lessons and delivered them to children in their field experience classroom at the PDS site. The lesson plan included general information about a lesson such as a lesson title, grade level, English Language Arts (ELA) standards, lesson objective(s), lesson materials, lesson procedures, differentiated instruction/accommodations, and assessment. Participants needed to include CRT practices from the Muñiz's (2020) guideline in their lessons.

edTPA Planning Commentary

Along with two literacy lesson plans, the participants completed their teacher performance assessment (edTPA) using the elementary literacy handbook. The edTPA is a portfolio-based teacher performance assessment to

demonstrate preservice teachers' knowledge and skills to teach content to children in authentic teaching settings. In the edTPA planning commentary, the participants responded to the prompts to describe: (1) the ELA lessons' main focus, (2) knowledge of students to inform teaching, (3) support for students' literacy learning, (4) support for literacy development through language, and (5) monitor of student learning. In addition, the researcher added another prompt which asked the participants to describe how and why they planned culturally responsive teaching practices in their lessons while considering their students in their assigned field experience classroom.

edTPA Instruction Commentary

Participants in this study taught two ELA lessons in their individual field experience classrooms and videorecorded their delivery of lessons. They reviewed their teaching videos and reflected on their teaching by completing the edTPA instruction commentary. They described how they provided a positive learning environment, how they engaged students in learning, how they deepened student learning through teaching, and how they could improve lesson delivery. The researcher also asked the participants to share their overall reactions on CRT practices, describe what CRT competencies they implemented in their lessons, and identify changes they could make to improve culturally responsive teaching practices for all students.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher collected the data identified in the above section through the literacy methods course. To analyze the quantitative data in the pre- and post-surveys, the researcher used the Wilcoxon signed rank test (significance level .05, p-value <.01). For qualitative data in the open-ended questions in the pre- and post-surveys and other instruments, the researcher used the content analysis approach. This research method is selected in this study because it provides "knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study" she examined (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p.314). Qualitative content analysis is not merely counting words from the collected data such as speech/texts to examine meanings, themes, and patterns; rather, researchers critically analyze the meanings and relationships of certain words, themes, and patterns (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2005). The researcher in this study used the inductive content analysis method. She first organized the qualitative data and examined them multiple times until she developed a clear understanding of the overall data. Next, she generated a coding scheme to analyze the data. She reread the data several additional times and took notes about key words/phrases and patternes and developed codes based on the patternes and themes. She coded all the texts and revisited the coding to verify the coding was consistent over time. After all coding was completed, she rechecked coding consistency. She also checked themes that were identified from the data to make sure she could present meanings and interpretations to address the research questions derived from the data.

Results

Pre- and Post-Survey Results

Preservice teachers ranked their confidence levels to plan and implement Muñiz's (2020)'s eight Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) competencies using the four-point Likert scale in the pre- and post-surveys. For planning ELA lessons to incorporate CRT competencies, the results showed statistical significances between the pre- and post-surveys for seven CRTs; the exception was CRT 7 *Collaborate with families and local community*. This indicated that the literacy methods course and field experience increased preservice teachers' competencies in planning lessons incorporating seven CRTs. The means of seven CRTs increased with a range of 0.29 to 0.95 from the pre-survey to the post-survey for planning ELA lessons (see Table 2). In particular, preservice teachers developed the following CRT competencies at the end of the study: CRT 6 P*rompting respect for student differences*, CRT 5 *Modeling high expectations*, and CRT 4 *Connecting real-world issues*.

Table 2. Results of Pre- and Post-Surveys on Development of Lesson Plans

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Competencies	Pre-Survey M	Post-Survey M	*p*	Effect Size
CRT 1. Reflect on One's Cultural Lens	2.55	3.18	<.001	0.68
CRT 2. Recognize and Redress Bias in the System	2.53	2.95	.009	0.46
CRT 3. Draw on Students' Culture to Shape Curriculum & Instruction	2.34	3.29	<.001	1.32
CRT 4. Connect Real-World Issues	2.71	3.50	<.001	1.20

CRT 5. Model High Expectations	3.24	3.79	.001	0.65
CRT 6. Promote Respect for Student Differences	3.58	3.87	.008	0.48
CRT 7. Collaborate with Family and the Community	2.58	2.45	.382	-0.14
CRT 8. Communicate in Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Ways	2.45	3.08	<.001	0.66

For implementing CRT practices in ELA lessons, the results showed statistical significances between pre- and post-surveys for the following three CRT competencies: CRT 4 *Bringing real-world issues into the classroom*; CRT 5 *Modeling high expectations for all students*; and CRT 8 *Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways*. The results indicated the literacy methods course and field experience increased preservice teachers' competencies in these three CRT competencies. The means of seven CRTs (CRT 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8) increased, with a range from 0.39 to 0.66, from the pre-survey to the post-survey for implementing ELA lessons (see Table 3). The three highest post-survey scores for implementing ELA lesson plans were for CRT 6 *Promoting respect for student differences*, CRT 5 *Modeling high expectations*, and CRT 4 *Connecting real-world issues*. They were the same three CRT competencies that preservice teachers reported as the highest confidence levels of planning lesson plans.

Table 3. Results of Pre- and Post-Surveys on Implementation of Lesson Plans

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Competencies	Pre-Survey M	Post-Survey M	*p*	Effect Size
CRT 1. Reflect on One's Cultural Lens	2.53	2.97	.018	0.42
CRT 2. Recognize and Redress Bias in the System	2.50	2.89	.029	0.38
CRT 3. Draw on Students' Culture to Shape Curriculum & Instruction	2.66	3.16	.022	0.43
CRT 4. Connect Real-World Issues	2.87	3.42	<.001	0.65
CRT 5. Model High Expectations	3.24	3.79	.001	0.65
CRT 6. Promote Respect for Student Differences	3.45	3.79	.019	0.43
CRT 7. Collaborate with Family and the Community	2.50	2.37	.387	-0.14
CRT 8. Communicate in Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Ways	2.45	3.11	<.001	0.67

Qualitative Data Results

Qualitative data results indicated several emergent themes when preservice teachers planned and implemented two literacy lesson plans and reflected on their lesson delivery. Overall, the results showed that preservice teachers planned culturally responsive teaching-aligned literacy instruction and delivered these lessons to students in the classroom. This section will present emergent themes in the following five categories: (a) modeling high expectations for all students, (b) promoting respect for student differences, (c) bringing real-world issues into the classroom, (d) reflecting on effective use of culturally responsive teaching practices, and (e) preparing for culturally responsive teaching.

Model High Expectations for All Students

The first category was CRT 5 modeling high expectations for all students. When preservice teachers in this study developed and implemented their literacy lesson plans, they included this CRT competency at the greatest degree. Three major themes emerged within this CRT competency. The first theme was that preservice teachers planned to model behavior expectations for students before having them work on tasks. Many preservice teachers gave explanations of how students should listen to speakers quietly and respect others when planning their lessons. One preservice teacher, Bob, placed in a fourth and fifth grade combined classroom, wrote:

> *I plan on implementing this competency by modeling acceptable behavior through my own actions. Some of these actions include eye contact, letting others talk without interruption, giving speakers full attention, and staying on task. I will also be reminding the students of the classroom expectations and what it means to be safe, responsible, and respectful.*

The second theme that emerged in this CRT competency was preservice teachers' high expectations on students' academic learning. Ella, a preservice teacher placed in a second-grade classroom, reported that she modeled how to pay attention to the ending punctuation and read sentences fluently based on the ending punctuation. She then modeled "*the application activity by reading their [students'] sentence to the class and having the class guess the ending punctuation*." When presevice teachers delivered their lessons in the classroom, they also intentionally modeled academic expectations. Michelle in a second-grade classroom "*modeled how students should be analyzing a book to understand the different points of view that characters may have.*" She further explained that she modeled high expectations "*by showing the students how they should be filling out the given worksheets.*" Another preservice teacher, Abigail from a fourth-grade classroom, modeled high expectations for all students and encouraged her students to complete the tasks, and she and the class "*had sufficient practice together so that they felt comfortable to do it alone*."

The third theme that emerged within CRT 5 competency was that preservice teachers offered tools students needed for their learning or completing tasks. These tools included clarifying tasks explicitly, answering questions before having students work on tasks, and offering learning strategies/guidance. For example, Charlotte taught a lesson on "citing sources" to fourth graders. She described that to implement CRT 5 *Model high expectations for all students*, she used several tools for students. She included introductory videos, an anchor chart for the classroom displays as a visual support and as a resource, and a handout of the anchor chart for students to put in their notebooks for future referencing. These academic tools helped students correctly cite sources.

Promote Respect for Student Differences

The second category was CRT 6 promoting respect for student differences. Preservice teachers intentionally planned to use this particular CRT practice in their literacy lesson plans and delivered them to students. Below are two themes found in this category.

The first emergent theme was inviting students to share during class their own opinions, ideas, and work. Preservice teachers reported that it was essential for students to freely share their different ideas, thoughts, and work and to listen to others as they shared. Preservice teachers wrote that by learning different ideas and opinions, students could realize that there were different ways to interpret the same information, which promotes respect for student differences. Bob, the same preservice teacher above, reported that:

> *I will achieve this competency…by reminding students that their peers may have different thoughts than you. I will remind them that it is important that we are welcoming of all ideas and that there are no wrong answers. This will help to promote the differing opinions that the students may have during the lessons and activities.*

The second emergent theme within this CRT competency was encouraging students to listen to different opinions and ideas without negative judgment. For example, Jackson in a second-grade classroom wrote: *"Students sharing their different answers allowed them to see that people construct different answers from the same information. Allowing them to see this helps introduce them to the idea of differing opinions and can be applied* across disciplines*."* Similar comments appeared in other preservice teachers' lesson delivery. Audrey taught her lessons on "finding the main idea using key details" to second graders. She shared that she incorporated CRT 6 "*by explaining that students may have different ways of stating the key details and main ideas and that that's okay, it doesn't mean one person is right or wrong*."

Bring Real-World Issues into the Classroom

The third category found in qualitative data results was that preservice teachers used CRT 4 competency, bringing real-world issues into the classroom, in their lesson planning and delivery. Two themes emerged in this category.

The first theme was that preservice teachers planned to use reading materials and books that include issues current in society. Abigail, a preservice teacher who taught lessons on nonfiction text features to fourth graders, included this CRT competency in her reading materials. She carefully selected news articles and explained:

> *These articles bring real, current issues into the classroom. I pre-read a number of Scholastic News to find the most appropriate and relevant articles for my class. Since we are currently looking at informational texts, I thought that Scholastic News articles would be beneficial to talk about recent events like protecting the bees, what scientists are doing in space, and migrant workers.*

Many preservice teachers also incorporated reading passages to examine current special issues. For example, David in a fourth-grade classroom taught lessons to analyze multiple perspectives and identify key details that support a main idea. He carefully selected a children's book, "*We Are Water Protectors*" by Carole Lindstrom (2020). The book is about a young Ojibwe girl learning about the importance of water from her grandmother and fighting against an oil pipeline to protect the water supply for her people. He wrote that he provided "*a wide variety of perspectives on the issue that encompassed passages from activists, Native American Tribe members, owners of the pipeline project, concern homeowners, etc.*" He further described that with his students were able to "*critically develop their own perceptions/attitudes to the pipeline controversy itself*."

The second theme found in CRT 4 competency was that preservice teachers planned to integrate real-world issues into their teaching by discussing these issues and making personal connections between them and students. For example, Caleb, a preservice teacher placed in a combined classroom for fourth and fifth graders, planned to use a local news article about a solar panels project at the school where he was doing his field experience. His ELA lessons focused on key information and details in informational texts. As part of a project in the school district, this school added solar panels to the school roof, which was to prompt sustainability for to the next generation. He wrote that many of his students "*expressed interest in learning more about what exactly happened and why*." Therefore, after he taught how to identify key information and details in another informational passage, he included a local news article about this solar panels project and enhanced students' learning.

In terms of delivering lessons, Anna in her fourth and fifth combined grade classroom taught lessons on compare and contrast using primary and secondary sources. When she introduced primary and secondary sources, she used "*a few examples of real-world scenarios of stretching the truth*." She used a historical fiction book, *Levi Strauss Gets a Bright Idea: A Fairly Fabricated Story of a Pair of Pants* by Tony Johnson (2011), as an example of a secondary source because this book includes both true information and stretched/false information. After she read the book, she further "*gave the examples of social media and the news*" to her students, so they could learn about how to determine truth and false information that appear in the social media in their daily lives. This helped them understand primary and secondary sources to support information with real-life examples at their personal levels.

Reflections on Effective Use of CRT Practices

After preservice teachers taught ELA lessons in their field experience classroom, they reflected on their delivery of lessons. Two themes emerged from their reflections. The first theme was reflections on well-delivered lessons of CRT practices. The second theme was reflections for improvement in using CRT competencies.

When preservice teachers were asked to reflect on their lesson delivery and implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices, they shared that they incorporated such practices professionally. Madison taught her lessons on main idea and supporting details to third graders. She implemented CRT 5 *Modeling high expectations for all students* and CRT 6 *Promoting respect for student differences*. Reflecting on her lesson delivery, she shared that she was satisfied with her implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices and was intentional about implementing these two CRT competencies during her teaching. She wrote:

> *Whenever I asked a question…, I reminded myself to take the time to thoroughly listen to each student's response to promote respect for them and model the high expectations I have for my students, and this was directly specified in my lesson*.

Other preservice teachers also noted that they ensured that their elementary students listened to their peers for different opinions with respect to promoting respect for student differences. They also created a safe learning space for all students so they could feel valued and welcomed in their classrooms.

While preservice teachers acknowledged that they successfully delivered some CRT competencies in their lessons, they critiqued other CRT competencies to improve for future teaching. Michelle who taught her lessons to second graders, including a few multilingual learners, noted that she would like to put more emphasis on drawing upon

students' cultures. She realized how important it is for students to relate their learning to their own cultures. She wrote "*I wish I incorporated their background cultures into my lesson. These students would have created more of a personal connection drawn on their cultures*."

Anna taught lessons on compare and contrast using primary and secondary sources in the fourth and fifth combined grade classroom. She reflected that she could have used primary and secondary sources examples that were personal to students. She had many Hmong students in her classroom; she noted that she could have incorporated and had her students analyze "*a Hmong poem and an article about Hmong poetry*" because she thought this approach "*would have made a lot of students feel more supported*."

Preparedness toward Culturally Responsive Teaching

Preservice teachers planned, implemented, and reflected on delivery of their lessons including CRT practices in their elementary school field placements. Toward the end of the semester, they reflected on how the literacy methods course and their field experience at the elementary PDS sites impacted their views and preparations for future teaching. Two main themes emerged. First, the preservice teachers felt prepared to plan and implement CRT practices, especially through actually teaching lessons in their field experience classrooms. Second, they intended to use CRT practices in their future teaching.

Preservice teachers learned about CRT practices through the literacy methods course, interacted with elementary school age students through their field experience at their PDS sites, developed ELA lessons, and incorporated CRT practices in their teaching. At the end of the semester, they felt prepared to plan lessons including CRT practices and to deliver them in the future as they actually practiced a few CRT competencies in a classroom. One particular preservice teacher reflected on her experience of learning and implementing CRT practices in her lessons. She stated that she developed her awareness, knowledge, and skills to develop and implement CRT practices because she developed "*a better overall understanding of what each of the 8 competencies appeared like in the classroom and potential means to encompass each one*." Another preservice teacher reflected on her lessons, saying "*I do not feel anxious about incorporating those [CRT] practices into my teaching, like I felt in the beginning of the semester*."

Preservice teachers noted that their experience in actual planning and delivering lessons to elementary school students made a positive impact on understanding what it means to become culturally responsive teachers. Another preservice teacher validated the value of field experience in the real elementary school classroom and opportunities for preservice teachers to discuss their teaching experiences with their peers in their field experience lecture. She wrote:

> *We were able to talk through culturally responsive teaching practices in class as well as work on implementation in our lessons. It helped that we got feedback on our lessons [from our field supervisor] so we could truly see where we stood in doing so*.

Another preservice teacher echoed that all experience in developing and teaching CRT lessons in the real classroom helped her develop her knowledge and awareness of these issues. She wrote that opportunities to talk with her peers and field supervisors about her teaching CRT lessons and interaction with students as well as to "*actually plan lessons and include several [CRT] competencies were really helpful*."

Not only were preservice teachers highly satisfied with their implementation of lessons including CRT practices, but they also indicated that they plan to use CRT practices in their future teaching. One preservice teacher noted "*I hope to include all of the CRT practices, especially through incorporating my students' culture into the curriculum, modeling high expectations for all students, and respect all students' differences*."

Many preservice teachers realized that by incorporating CRT practices in their future teaching, they may better be able to develop a safe and inclusive learning environment. One preservice teacher reflected as follows: "*I do see myself using culturally responsive teaching practices in the future because of the benefits. This helps to create a much more inclusive and welcoming environment for all*." Another preservice teacher wrote: "*Every student should be respected and heard, and I think that using these [CRT] competencies really aids in creating an environment that supports each and every student*."

Discussion

In this study, the researcher addressed two research questions. The first research question was "*How do preservice teachers plan, implement, and reflect on their culturally responsive teaching practices through their ELA lessons?*" Overall, preservice teachers planned three CRT competencies: CRT 5 *Model high expectations for all students*; CRT 6 *Promote respect for student differences*; and CRT 4 *Bring real-world issues in the classroom*. In the lesson planning stage, they intentionally set aside class time so they could share their expectations with their students. They planned to remind their elementary school students of the importance of respecting peers' different opinions. Preservice teachers also prepared their lessons by providing as many students as possible with opportunities to share their ideas, answers, thoughts, and questions. In their lesson plans, they also selected reading materials and sources that were relevant to real-life issues and/or students' lives. Preservice teachers carefully planned ELA lessons based on students' needs such as interests and academic levels. The quantitative results support these findings as statistically significances were found in these particular three CRT practices when preservice teachers planned ELA lessons. The results of this study is aligned with Adams and Kaczmarczyk's study (2023) where they reported that preservice teachers demonstrated elements of CRT practices in their read-alouds lesson plans for elementary school students.
While implementing CRT practices in lessons, preservice teachers also used the same three CRT practices as they did in their planning their ELA lessons. This result demonstrated that there was consistency between how preservice teachers planned their lessons and how they actually implemented the lessons. The quantitative results also supported these findings as statistically significances were found on CRT 4 *Bring real-world issues in the classroom* and CRT 5 *Model high expectations for all students*.

However, the researcher found a discrepancy between the survey results for self-reported implementation of CRT practices and preservice teachers' actual use of CRT competencies in their teaching. A statistically significant difference was found on CRT 8 *Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways* when preservice teachers implemented ELA lessons on the post-survey; yet, this CRT practice did not appear in preservice teachers' actual delivery of lessons in the classroom. One explanation of why this discrepancy occurred is that preservice teachers may have communicated with students in linguistically and culturally responsive ways using gestures, body movement, eye contact, and other means. However, they may not recognize they were doing this practice because it already became natural for them to use this practice after they spent over 80 hours in their field experience classroom. They may have not clearly thought about articulating and documenting this practice in their lesson plans and/or reflections of their lesson delivery. Kruger and Dunning (1999) explain that while unskilled learners may overestimate their abilities, skillful learners may underestimate their abilities. As the Dunning-Kruger effect shows, skillful and knowledgeable participants in this study may have underestimated their implementations of CRT practices. As the student population becomes diverse in K-12 schools, it is important for teacher educators to teach preservice teachers how to support students with linguictially and culturally diverse backgrounds in thier courses.

One noteworthy point for discussion is that the post-survey scores on CRT 7 *Collaborate with family and the community* for both planning and implementing lesson plans decreased from the pre-survey scores. In the beginning of the semester, preservice teachers thought they could plan and implement this CRT practice into their ELA lessons, which was explained in the scores for CRT 7 on the pre-surveys. However, at the end of the semester, they did not report they planned and implemented this CRT practices as they expected. The decreases of these scores over the semester make sense because they had very limited opportunities to engage with family and the communities in their field experience. They participated in their field experience only for three mornings per week, and they realized they did not engage in this CRT practice as much as they had hoped and planned. It is challenging for preservice teachers to actually address these complex issues when only developing and teaching a few full lessons.

In addition, teacher education preparation programs globally have not kept pace with the growing emphasis on developing school, family, and community partnerships (Ryan, Walsh, & Liston, 2025). The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) (2022) in the U.S. calls for the need of family, school, and community partnerships in the teacher education preparation programs. Therefore, teacher educators must address this important need to better equip future teachers through their teacher education preparation programs.

Preservice teachers reflected on their experience of planning and implementing ELA lessons including CRT practices. They reflected that overall, their lessons were successful because they were able to incorporate some

CRT practices and because students actively responded to their lessons. Preservice teachers also critiqued their lesson delivery and planned to improve their teaching for the future.

While the researcher found a statistically significance in CRT 2 *Recognize and Redress Bias in the System* in preservice teachers' develpement of lesson plans, qualitative data analysis did not apper to have distinct or emergent themes around CRT 2. The literacy methods course covered institutional and systemic biases that could advantage or disadvantage certain groups of students. However, the limited time of field experience (three mornings per week for one semester) and resources may have challenged preservice teachers in this study to critically analyze biases in the system and advocate for all learners. The researcher found a statistically significance in CRT 3 *Draw on Students' Culture to Shape Curriculum & Instruction* from the pre- and post-surveys when preservice teachers evaluated their development of lesson plans. An effect size for CRT 3 in developing lesson plans was also considered large effect. The qualitative data analysis revealed some patterns (e.g., planning to use textbooks or reading passages that depict different family dynamics, culture, or students' backgrounds; planning to draw students' culture and experience in teaching) in CRT 3. However, these partterns in CRT 3 were not as evident as other CRTs with stronger evidence (i.e., CRT 4, 5, and 6). Therefore, preservice teachers may have more of a challenge to integrate complex CRT practices (CRT 2, 3, and 7) than in other areas.

The second research question in this study was *"How does their learning about culturally responsive teaching impact their preparation to become culturally responsive teachers?"* Overall, they felt prepared to become culturally responsive teachers. They developed awareness, knowledge, and skills of CRT practices through the literacy methods course because they had opportunities to analyze each CRT competency and to carefully plan their lessons while incorporating various CRT competencies.

In particular, preservice teachers found the opportunities to apply what they learned from the literacy methods course into their field experience classrooms extremely helpful and powerful. This result demonstrates the necessity of field experience and hands-on experience for preservice teachers. Field experience offers preservice teachers opportunities to apply theoretical aspects of their course work to the real classroom (Choy et al., 2014; Hillman et al., 2012). Preservice teachers can also enhance their pedagogical knowledge and subject matter knowledge through field experience (Singh, 2017). In this study, through interaction with elementary school students, hands-on, first-hand experience, and immediate and frequent feedback from mentor teachers and field supervisors, preservice teachers grew in their abilities to select strategies to support their students, to establish a rapport with these students, and to deliver and adjust lessons as needed. The result of this finding in this study aligns with the one from the study by Putman, Cash, and Polly (2022), which concluded an intensive, structured field experience was beneficial for preservice teachers to better engage in teaching.

In addition, preservice teachers recognized the power of CRT practices that could positively impact students' learning for a longer period of time. The Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) (2022) states that high-quality clinical practice is an essential element to teacher preparation and that preservice teachers must develop their knowledge, skills, and dispositions to demonstrate positive impacts on diverse students' learning. Preservice teachers in this study appreciated CRT competencies after they incorporated these CRT competencies into their teaching at elementary school field experiences. The positive impact of their experiences was that they planned to further use these CRT practices in future teaching. Teacher preparation programs must incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices (Moore et al., 2021). In their study, they found that education majors/preservice teachers developed CRT practices and awareness after field experience and that they advocate for CRT practices to better prepare teacher candidates. Worldwide, while student diversity varies from one country to another, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reports that 13 % of students in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-opertation and Development) countries remained with immigration backgrounds (OECD, 2023). Within this global context, teachers, regardless of thier location, must implement cultually responsive practices to support students with diverse bacgkgrounds (Santoro & Kennedy, 2015). Therefore, this study offers an important implication for teacher educators to emphasize culturally responsive teaching in thier teacher education preparation programs.

Conclusion

This study examined how preservice teachers planned and implemented their ELA lessons while incorporating CRT competencies in elementary PDS sites and how they reflected on their lesson delivery. They planned lessons including three major CRT practices: CRT 5 *Model high expectations for all students*; CRT 6 *Promote respect for student differences*; and CRT 4 *Bring real-world issues into the classroom*. They taught their lessons while incorporating these CRT practices. Because these preservice teachers were able to practice important CRT

competencies through their interaction with students at elementary schools, this study positively impacted them to become more aware of and condifent in integrating culturally responsive teaching practices.
This study offers insights about how preservice teachers develop their awareness, knowledge, and skills for CRT practices. The researcher offered detailed analyses of what kinds of CRT competencies preservice teachers planned and used in specific lesson contexts. She also revealed their reflection processes as they critically analyzed their lesson deliveries and how they practiced CRT competencies. There are a few limitations in this study. The first one is a small sample size with homogeneous participant demographics from the single-institution sample. The results of this study may not be able to generate for other groups of preservice teachers. The second limitation is that the pre- and post-survey data from the preservice teachers were self-reported responses. There may be discrepancies between their self-evaluation and actual lesson planning and implementation. This point leads to recommend to future researchers that they observe and analyze actual delivery of CRT practices among preservice teachers. This will strengthen their ability to document actual implementation of preservice teachers culturally responsive teaching practices.

In this study, the positive impact of CRT 7 *Collaborate with Family and the Community* remained minimal. As explained above, the teacher education preparartion programs must design the curriculum and programs by intentionally and structualy embeding diversity research, school, family, and community partnerships. Literacy instructors must intergrate culturally responsive teaching practiecs by introducing culturally responsive teaching practices, giving concrete examples of how to apply culturally responsive teaching practices to literacy/ELA lessons, and having preservice teachers practice how to use these approaches in their own teaching. Field supervisors also need to support preservice teachers by observing their lesson delivery and interaction with children and by giving them opportunities to reflect on their teaching with guided, intentional feedback on culturally responsive teaching practices.

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